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SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

The scope of the *Bulletin* is broadly defined as theology, especially Scottish and Reformed, whether biblical, systematic-dogmatic, historical or practical, and Scottish church history. Articles submitted for publication should be sent to the Editor, books for review to Rutherford House (see below).

Contributors are free to express their own views within the broad parameters of historic evangelicalism. The opinions of contributors may not be assumed to be those of Rutherford House or the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society.

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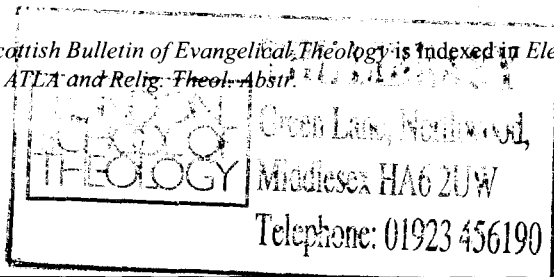
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EDITORIAL

Only a few days prior to writing this editorial (mid-October 2008), I watched television images of stock market traders in London holding their heads in their hands, stunned by the biggest drop in the value of the FTSE in approximately twenty years. So it seems appropriate that I might reflect on money for a short time.

Ben Witherington, III, entitled his useful little commentary on Philippians, *Friendship and Finances at Philippi*,¹ which nicely highlights two of the key issues at stake in this letter. Although it may not appear so at first glance, there is a very real sense in which Philippians is about money. In particular, it serves as an expression of thanks from Paul to his brothers and sisters in Philippi for the gift which they sent to him. Perhaps Paul's comments to these Christians so long ago can help us to get some perspective on the recent turbulence in the world's financial systems.

It is perhaps tempting for some Christians who have no significant investments in the stock market to look on somewhat smugly and murmur, "money is the root of all evil". Of course, this is a *misquotation* of the Bible (and we only have to remember the conversation between the serpent and the woman in the garden to be reminded how dangerous that can be; look for yourself at 1 Timothy 6:10 where the **love** of money is described as the root of all evil). But besides that significant problem, this hardly seems to be a pastorally sensitive response to trying circumstances in which many Christians, churches and charities will have experienced loss as well as non-Christians. It may also be that a trial of a different kind will one day come to their own door and one wonders how they will respond then.

Perhaps a more constructive approach to events which undermine our sense of security is to focus on two closely related passages from Paul's letter which help us to think about our attitudes and actions in trying times.

The first passage is **Philippians 4:12-14**:¹² "I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need."¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me."¹⁴ Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble." [English Standard Version]

Several features of this text seem to highlight aspects of Paul's attitude. Firstly, he recognised that sometimes life is good and sometimes it can be tough and that dealing with these realities requires a process of

¹ *Friendship and Finances at Philippi* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press Int'l, 1994).

learning. We should not be surprised if we find the lesson tough or even painful. We may not grasp it first time round. But if we are willing to learn, we can and will be taught. Secondly, he expresses confidence in the sovereign power of God at work in his life. The Christian may and must respond to loss (and profit), depending on the strength of God to deal with disappointment or undue self-reliance. Paul does not appeal to human endurance but seems to recognise that what the world throws at us would sometimes be virtually unbearable were it not for God's sustaining power. Sad stories in the news media of people crumbling under financial pressures indicate all too vividly how much we need strength that is not our own. Thirdly, Paul truly appreciates the expression of Christian love which the Philippians have shown. Perhaps one of the few aspects of a crisis which some people will be able to look back upon fondly is when Christian love is shown in the midst of the crisis, whether through compassionate words or by sacrificial actions.

But a second passage is also important: **Philippians 4:6-7** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

While Paul appears to ask the impossible ('do not be anxious about anything'), he is simply echoing the words of Jesus on the mountain (Matt. 6:25). Now no-one will claim that it is *easy* to follow Jesus' and Paul's words, but that does not mean that we may ignore them. But Paul does not suggest that we simply sit around worrying about whether we have stopped worrying! Rather we are to take action. We are to pray. This prayer will address the matter of concern, but not without recognition of God's kindnesses already experienced. This requires trust in two fundamental realities. On the one hand, this action is pointless unless we believe that God has sovereign control over everything, even the stock market. Otherwise, why bother? But on the other hand this text demands that we believe that God can provide peace even as everything is going crazy around us. These convictions do not come easily, but I think that we can see a connection between our two texts. The more that we bring our concerns to God in prayer, deliberately putting our trust in him, the more we will be able to trust him in tough circumstances which *appear* to say that he is not present at all.

When a crisis hits, such as the loss of financial security, Christians must be able to make a Christian response, but that will rarely be to identify the reason or explanation for the tough times with any certainty. Trite judgments (such as 'this is God's judgment on you') claim a level of understanding which is simply not available to us in most cases. There may

indeed be individuals who are trying to serve God and Mammon and some financial institutions may be idolatrous to the core, and they will be held to account in due course, but there is little value in generalizing. A more fundamentally Christian response to the recent financial troubles might be for every believer to learn how to deal with whatever circumstances God places us in, depending on him in thankful but earnest prayer.

IN THIS NUMBER

I am grateful to our contributors for their essays which, I trust, will inform and challenge readers of SBET.

Our first paper is by Dr Ian Shaw of Langham Literature and International Christian College. Dr Shaw's article is a revised version of a paper delivered as the Finlayson Memorial Lecture at the 2008 conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society. Dr Shaw reflects on both biblical and historical material which may enable modern Christians to respond more appropriately to the needs of the world around us.

The second paper is by Professor I. Howard Marshall, who takes the Psalms as his starting point in helping us to reflect on sound principles of biblical interpretation.

Dr Fergus MacDonald continues our focus on the Psalms with a paper (also presented at the 2008 SETS conference) which considers how the Psalms may be used effectively as a means of connecting modern people with the truth of God's Word.

Finally, Professor Kenneth Stewart of Covenant College exams the facts regarding the origins of the famous acronym TULIP, popularly used to describe Calvinism. His paper will perhaps require some reconsideration of the significance of this acronym.

As well as thanking all the contributors of articles, let me also warmly thank those who have submitted reviews (an important academic service in its own right) and, particularly, my colleagues in the *SBET* editorial and production team who have worked hard to bring this Bulletin to you. May the Lord use this journal for the good of his church and the glory of his name.

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THEOLOGY AND TRANSFORMATION IN SOCIETY: THE SCOTTISH EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY FINLAYSON LECTURE, APRIL 2008

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In April 2007 it was my privilege to speak at an international conference in Nairobi on the subject of urban mission, attended by evangelical leaders from across Africa. I was asked to bring a perspective from the nineteenth century. Before the conference I spent some time in the vast informal settlement of Kibera in the heart of Nairobi, where several hundred thousand people live in tin or mud houses, most with no water or electricity, and sanitation that at best is a pit latrine. The refuse has not been collected for years, and lies piled beside the pathways as you enter the settlement. It was like walking back into the nineteenth-century slums of the Old Vennel or the Saltmarket in Glasgow, or the Cowgate in Edinburgh. It was also to see responses to urban issues from evangelical churches that mirrored those from the nineteenth century – urgent preaching of the gospel accompanied by a significant number of conversions, alongside deep social compassion expressed in running schools, social relief projects, and micro-enterprise schemes, to give people a chance to begin to earn enough to keep their families. Here was genuine transformation in society through the gospel.

At the conference I sat in on a plenary discussion of the characteristics of a 'true' church. The answers came thick and fast – faith in Christ, the presence of God, preaching from the Bible, love for each other, and then 'social concern'. It was one of the highest priorities amongst that group of African evangelical leaders. When the suggestion was made it elicited no comment, no surprise, it was an entirely natural and non-contentious expression of their being God's people. Indeed the discussion had gone on some ten minutes before the suggestion was made that a genuine church really should include 'the due and proper administration of the sacraments', and that was only because I made it! I wonder how such a discussion amongst evangelical ministers and church leaders would have gone in the UK. I don't think they were right on the sacraments, but I do think that the desire of those African leaders to seek genuine spiritual transformation in the individual through the marriage of gospel proclamation with personal and social transformation, through practical activity, bore the hallmarks of historic evangelical Christianity. David Bebbington sees

activism as one of the four defining characteristics of evangelicalism, and argues that this included not only evangelism, but also social action that expresses the ethics of the gospel.¹ I believe that this activism in both evangelism and social concern was the normal pattern amongst evangelicals from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth, and will survey the ways evangelicals in particular have seen transformation in society flowing from, and being the natural counterpart to, spiritual transformation. I also want to consider how this relationship changed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century before there was a return to the historic position in the late twentieth century. Finally I will reflect on some areas of potential difficulty in this area within contemporary evangelicalism.

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) stands as a foundational figure in eighteenth century evangelicalism. In his work, *Christian Charity*, based on a series of sixteen sermons on 1 Corinthians 13 preached in 1738, he emphasized the ‘duty’ of charity to the poor, a duty ‘enjoined and insisted on’ as ‘absolute and indispensable’. It was to Edwards as much a duty as it was to ‘pray, or to attend to public worship’; indeed there was no command in the Bible more peremptory or urgent ‘than the command of giving to the poor.’ Although it was not necessarily binding in the case of ‘idleness or prodigality’, he warns against too great a ‘scrupulosity as to the object on whom we bestow our charity ... it is better to give to several that are not objects of charity, than to send away empty one that is’. An inconsiderate or imprudent act leading to poverty was not to be considered an unpardonable crime. Even if a person was to continue in what Edwards termed ‘vicious ways’, help should not be denied to their dependants. Furthermore, the existence of a legal provision, important as it was, did not ‘free us from the obligation to relieve... by our charity’.²

¹ D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 12 quoting H. More, *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*, (London, 1808 edn), p. 146. There is significant debate about the historic genesis of evangelicalism, and the aspects of continuity with the Reformation and Puritan eras. See K. Stewart and M.A. Haykin, *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Continuities in Evangelical History*, (Leicester: IVP, 2008) (including a chapter by the author of this lecture). For the sake of narrowing the scope of the material to be surveyed, I will begin in the eighteenth century, yet I believe the same point could be argued from the Reformation and the Puritan period.

² J. Edwards, ‘Christian Charity: or, The Duty of Charity to the Poor, Explained and Enforced’, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, 1834, reprinted

Not much has been written of Edwards' social concern activity, and it was not his life's work to be a great social reformer. Living in a context where the North American colonies were unsettled by regular threats of war from the French and Native Americans, he was inclined to social conservatism. Although the family followed many others in keeping a domestic slave, he stressed the need for humane treatment of slaves, and wrote opposing the slave trade.³ Edwards condemned the unfettered operation of the free market, whereby ruthless merchants bought grain cheap and then sold dear in times of grain shortage, which caused great suffering amongst the poor. A Sabbath collection for the poor was also instituted in the Northampton church.⁴

This Edwardsean tradition was continued by Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), Edward's grandson. Dwight became President of Yale in 1795, where he remained for over 20 years. His theme in the 1819 graduation exercises was 'On Doing Good', from Galatians 6: 9-10, 'let us not be weary in well-doing'. Following Edwards, Dwight spoke of a 'duty' to labour in doing good, to be pursued with 'firm resolution and unremitting energy'. He urged his hearers not to 'become feeble and spiritless' in their exertions advocating such causes as running day schools and Sunday schools, overseas mission, and the relief of the poor. He gave both anthropocentric and theocentric motivation for such activism – doing things which are 'not only to be beneficial to mankind', but with such a disposition as 'will render the performance morally excellent and lovely in the sight of God'.⁵

JOHN WESLEY

Another key figure in early evangelicalism was of course John Wesley. He approached these issues from an evangelical Arminian perspective. During his life a series of personal religious transformations were worked out in terms of social transformation. His transition from nominal Anglicanism to devoted high church Anglican piety produced the ordered life of the Oxford 'Holy Club', with an active social concern which included charity to the poor and prison visiting, although that system did not bring the assurance of salvation he longed for. His evangelical conversion expe-

(Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979), pp. 163-173.

³ See J. Edwards, 'Draft Letter on Slavery', *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, (New Haven: Yale, 1998), Vol. 16, 72-76; and K.P. Minhenan, 'Jonathan Edwards on Slavery and the Slave Trade', *William and Mary Quarterly*, Oct. 1997, 823-30.

⁴ G. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), p. 304.

⁵ T. Dwight, *Sermons*, 2 Vols., (New Haven: Hezekiah, Have, Durrie and Peck, 1828), Vol. 1: 535, 537, 552.

rience yielded that assurance, and continued endeavours in social concern were an activist outflow from his experience of grace. A central feature of this was concern for the poor. As a Fellow of Lincoln College he resolved to live on £28 per year, to give the rest of his income away. The three points of his famous 'On The Use of Money', first preached in 1744, and published in 1760, summarized his living creed: 'Gain all you can; Save all you can; Give all you can'.⁶ From his extensive writings he earned the huge sum of over £1,000 per year, some £30,000 in total, almost all of which he gave away.⁷

Wesley set a pattern for Methodist lifestyle and practice: charity was a key Christian duty. In 1741, members of the Methodist Society in London were urged to bring clothes and 1d per week for poor members, and support was offered to the sick. Avoidance of strong drink and simplicity of dress were all advocated to help Methodists save money, although the man who sold all his clothes to support the poor was described as 'mad'.⁸ Social concern was not simply restricted to the household of faith – in 1740 Wesley begged money for the poor who received no help from the Poor Law. There was even evidence of a bias to the poor in his thinking. He had, on the whole, a higher regard for the genuineness of the faith of the poor than of the rich. He found in many of them 'pure, serious grace, unmixed with paint, folly and affection'. The 1748 Conference debated whether rich adherents should have a longer probationary period before membership than the poor. Compassionate activity to the poor was to be matched by disposition. Wesleyan Methodism was to be a system of scriptural holiness. In 1747 Wesley wrote 'Abstain from either sour looks or harsh words. Put yourself in the place of any poor man, and deal with him as you would God should deal with you.' He even urged those giving assistance to the poor to do it personally, rather than to send it.⁹

Wesley was also interested in wider social transformation, as demonstrated in his *Thoughts on Slavery* (1774), in which he argued for abolition on the basis of both Christian teaching and enlightenment humanitarianism. Wesley declared that liberty was 'the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air, therefore a slave should be acknowledged as "thy brother"'. To the slave traders he appealed on the basis of common humanity: 'Do you never feel another's pain? Have you no

⁶ J. Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions [53 Sermons]*, (London, 1771), repr. Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room, no date, Sermon L, 702-715.

⁷ J. Wesley, *Journal of John Wesley*, (London, Nelson, 1940), Vol. 8, p. 80. note 85; H.D. Rack, *The Reasonable Enthusiast*, (London: Epworth), p. 361.

⁸ G. Whitefield, *Journals of George Whitefield*, (repr. Banner of Truth: Edinburgh, 1960), p. 267.

⁹ Wesley, *Journal*, Vol. 4, pp. 358; Vol. 3, p. 301.

sympathy, no sense of human woe, no pity for the miserable? When you saw the flowing eyes ... or the bleeding sides and tortured limbs of your fellow-creatures, were you a stone or a brute...'¹⁰ Wesley's views were to prove influential in mobilising Methodist opinion against slavery.

The need for faith, the reality of which was to be demonstrated in works, was emphasized not only by the key players in the Evangelical Revival, but also by their heirs, be they Arminian, Evangelical Calvinist, or Moderate Calvinist. All stressed the need for good works in the life of the believer. Charles Simeon's model evangelical parochial work in Cambridge included not only preaching and pastoral work, but schemes to sell bread to the poor cheaply, the running of a Provident bank, and visitation schemes to administer relief to the poor.¹¹ Evangelical social compassion was but the fruits of the gospel itself. When John Venn, faced opposition to his ministry at Clapham from 'solfidians' for stressing the importance of the fruits of personal faith, his father Henry Venn wrote to reassure him – 'Every Prophet and every Apostle insists as much upon the fruits of faith, as upon faith itself, and the glory of Christ's Person.'¹²

WILBERFORCE

John Venn's ministry at Holy Trinity, Clapham, was attended by a group of noted evangelicals, the most well-known of whom was William Wilberforce. Evangelical conversion awakened Wilberforce's social conscience, and led him to embrace the cause of anti-slavery. Around him gathered a talented group of thinkers, writers and MPs, nicknamed the 'Clapham Sect,' who began to exercise a very significant moral and social influence. Living out their personal spiritual transformation through acts of social transformation gave moral impetus and drive to the abolition campaign, a movement that crystallized into the first popular mass movement to use widespread propaganda techniques, letter writing, lecture tours, fund raising, and the distribution of large numbers of tracts. There were even boycotts of the produce of slave labour, especially sugar, and attempts at elections to persuade Parliamentary candidates to oppose slavery. Wilberforce had profound Christian motivation for what he did. Evangelicals remained in a religious and political minority in the early nine-

¹⁰ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 1774, in *Wesley, Works* (3rd ed: 1872), (repr. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), Vol 11, p. 79f.

¹¹ R. Carus, *Memoir of Rev. Charles Simeon*, (London: Hatchard and Son, 1847), pp. 80, 440.

¹² H. Venn, Letter to John Venn, 1 January 1796, in ed. Rev. H. Venn, *The Life and a Selection from the Letters of the Late Rev. Henry Venn, M.A.*, (London, 1836), pp. 530-31.

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teenth century, and it would be wrong to attribute success in the campaign solely to their work, yet Wilberforce made it a badge of evangelicalism to oppose slavery. To him, the Bible provided the principles upon which slavery was to be abolished.

The evangelical theological emphasis on redemption brought a stress on deliverance from the slavery of sin; setting slaves free from the bondage of slavery could appear a physical representation of this inward spiritual experience of evangelicals. This brought a political and theological dynamic of liberation,¹³ which was coupled with Enlightenment concepts of individual liberty, and the right to personal happiness, and provided a broad basis of humanitarian thinking to which campaigners frequently could, and did, make their appeal. This enabled those impelled to social transformation through their spiritual transformation to win sympathy and support from those without the same spiritual motivation. For politicians such as Wilberforce, who were politically and socially conservative, operating in a political climate overshadowed by the French Revolution, such tactics were extremely radical, and have been termed 'holy worldliness': a seeking, through alliance with the forces of the world, to achieve a greater Christian good.¹⁴

THOMAS CHALMERS

The dominant figure in nineteenth century Scottish Presbyterianism was Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847). He proposed and experimented with schemes combining evangelism and social concern. Chalmers was a complex figure, drawing not only on his Reformation and Westminster Confession heritage, but also on the thought forms of political economy, which he did much to popularise. He is best known for his scheme of poor relief in his central Glasgow parish, whereby the local parish church supported the poor within the parish from its own resources, without resort to further public funding. Money came from voluntary giving at the church door, and the encouragement of private charity. Chalmers sought to establish a godly commonwealth of interests within the parish, with the wealthy exercising responsibility to support those who were less fortunate than themselves from their providentially given wealth.¹⁵

¹³ R. Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810*, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975), p. 406.

¹⁴ H. Willmer, 'Holy Worldliness in Nineteenth-Century England', in D. Baker (ed), *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), p. 200.

¹⁵ Chalmers' views are set out in his *Right Christian and Civic Economy for a Nation, with a More Special reference to its Large Towns*, (Glasgow: Collins,

His dynamic preaching and visionary leadership mobilised a large volunteer workforce, and significant financial resources. It was a bold scheme, rooted in the Christendom model of the Reformation, and represented the classic Calvinistic holistic understanding of the Christian message, but it was also significantly shaped by Malthusian-paternalist ideas. Although Chalmers conducted a largely successful experiment with the scheme in the St John's parish in the East End of Glasgow, and extensively promoted it, it was not widely followed, and met with an equivocal response from other Calvinists.

Much has been made of Chalmers' horror of perpetuating 'pauperism' (creating a dependency culture), and certainly he did focus on assisting the deserving poor, and discouraging helping more dubious characters. Some of his lay workers were not as sympathetic as they might have been in their emphasis on discouraging mendicancy and indigence, an ethos that was replicated by many Christian charities. Yet he did strive to break down barriers between rich and poor, and preached strongly on the duty of supporting the needy that was laid on the church, especially its more wealthy members and influential members.¹⁶ However, as a scheme it did not fit too well with rapidly changing, and socially unstable, new industrial cities such as Glasgow, when economic forces beyond the control of ordinary workers could plunge many into unemployment and poverty with little notice. It also failed to address the huge environmental problems of the new urban context.

Although Chalmers' scheme was flawed in many ways, it sprang from the conviction that good deeds were incumbent upon believers: 'the proper remedy ... for the wretchedness of the few is the kindness of the many'.¹⁷ That his church did support the poor in his area, and he mobilised a great deal of charitable giving - the church door collection for the poor averaged £400 per annum - is a fact too easily ignored. So too is that this was combined with an urgent, and successful, evangelistic emphasis in his scheme, and a genuine and successful concern to promote education,

1821). The forces influencing Chalmers, and his influence on others, are discussed in B. Hilton, 'Thomas Chalmers as a political Economist', in A.C. Cheyne, *The Practical and the Pious*, (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1985); S.J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).

¹⁶ See T. Chalmers, 'The Blessedness of Considering the Case of the Poor', Sermon IX, in *Works of Thomas Chalmers: Sermons on Public Occasions*, (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1853), pp. 285-314.

¹⁷ T. Chalmers, Preface to 1851 edition of *Christian and Civic Economy*, (Edinburgh, Vol. 1, 1851), p. x.

a vital dimension in social transformation.¹⁸ The scheme represented, in the words of Professor S.J. Brown, ‘the pursuit of social justice, particularly through the spiritual, moral, and material elevation of the oppressed labouring poor of industrializing cities’. The first step to this was the spiritual transformation of individuals, but from it flowed genuine social concern.¹⁹

When Chalmers moved from parish ministry into lecturing posts at St Andrews and then Edinburgh Universities, his influence upon large numbers of students was significant. One such was Robert Murray McCheyne, an earnest evangelistic preacher who extensively visited the poor of his needy Dundee parish, and whose social conscience was keenly awakened. Preaching on a *textus classicus* of nineteenth-century socially active evangelicals, Matthew 25:34-45 he solemnly warned his congregation that there would be some who would not be welcomed into the kingdom: ‘Your haughty dwelling rises in the midst of thousands who scarce have a fire to warm themselves at, and have but little clothing to keep out the biting frost, and yet you never darkened their door. You heave a sigh perhaps, at a distance, but you do not visit them. Ah, my dear friend, I am concerned for the poor, but more for you. I know not what Christ will say to you in that great day ... there are many hearing me who now know well they are not Christian because they do not love to give. To give largely and liberally, not grudgingly at all, requires a new heart; an old heart would rather part with its life blood than its money.’²⁰

Another figure significantly influenced by the example of Chalmers was Norman MacLeod. In his ministry at the Barony Church in Glasgow he offered a range of social provisions, including dinner rooms offering cheap, wholesome food for working men, and evening services for people in working clothes. MacLeod believed that spiritual and social transformation went together, arguing that if the temporal was separated from the spiritual, we ‘leave the world to Satan, and give him the advantage over

¹⁸ On Chalmers and Urban Mission see I.J. Shaw, ‘Thomas Chalmers, David Nasmith and the Origins of the City Mission Movement’ *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXVI, No. 1, Jan. 2004.

¹⁹ S.J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 148. For analysis of the scheme see pp. 90-151.

²⁰ Quoted in T. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997 (Second edition)) p. 40. Chalmers also had a profound impact on the urban ministry of Thomas Guthrie in Edinburgh, which combined extensive social provision with a strong preaching and evangelistic emphasis – see D.L and C.J. Guthrie, *Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie and Memoir by his Sons*, (London, 1877).

us'. Why leave it to 'infidels' to offer 'better houses or better clothing'. He asked whether Christ only has to do with Sundays.²¹

ANDREW REED

Someone who epitomises how evangelism and social concern, spiritual and social transformation, have belonged together in evangelicalism, is the English Independent minister Andrew Reed (1787-1862). Reed ministered in Stepney, in the East End of London, not far from the London docks, a place of growing poverty. An evangelical Calvinist, he was called in 1811 to a church which had 60 members, worshipping in a building that could hold 800 people. Over the next fifty years of his ministry, the congregation grew to number 2,000. Reed's pastoral interaction with the needs of the area brought him into contact with a range of people with serious social problems. Within a year of starting in Stepney, Reed took two small orphan children into his own home, and from this small beginning developed the London Orphan Asylum. By the time of his death in 1862 it had provided care for over 2,500 children. He was to start two further orphanages, all major projects of social concern accompanied by a desire for the spiritual good of the children. They were given regular biblical instruction, ministers visited to take services, and Reed himself was often present to offer support, counsel, and friendship.²²

Reed sought to demonstrate the compassion of Christ to the most vulnerable in society. He discovered that 30,000 children in Britain suffered from severe learning difficulties, without specialist care in hospitals or schools; as adults they often ended up locked in prisons or workhouses. Reed developed a scheme that was to be both hospital and school, and he became a world-leader in the understanding that children with severe learning difficulties could be greatly helped by both education and physiotherapy. First at Park House in Highgate, then later at Earlswood Hospital, Surrey, pioneering care for children with severe learning difficulties was given. No matter how seriously disabled the children were, Reed was convinced they were made in the image of God, and insisted they be given religious instruction and spiritual support. He was appalled at those who believed such children had no souls. In his sixties Reed started one last charity, a hospital for those with incurable and terminal illness, that they might live out their last days in comfort and homely surroundings, with

²¹ D. MacLeod, *Memoir of Norman MacLeod D.D.*, (London, Daldy, Ibsister and Co, 1876), Vol. 2, pp 7-8.

²² On Reed's work see I.J. Shaw, *The Greatest is Charity: Andrew Reed (1787-1862): Pastor, Preacher and Philanthropist*, (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005).

Christian love and care. The result was the Royal Hospital for Incurables, now the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability in Putney. It was a pioneering work in palliative care long before the advent of hospice movement.

This great impulsion to charity towards the vulnerable came from his evangelical faith. In 1828 he advised a minister at an induction service: ‘Whatever has a tendency to meliorate the sufferings of humanity, to disperse the darkness of the mind, to subdue the vices of society, to restore man to a divine obedience, and to attach his hopes and thoughts to an unseen eternity, you will see as in perfect harmony with the spirit and letter of your commission.’²³ Reed’s ethos and practice is an example of holistic transformative mission, which has been characteristic of historic evangelicalism, indeed of biblical Christianity. The Memorial tablet to Reed erected in the London Orphan Asylum exemplified this. On Reed reaches down to care for a group of small children: in one hand is a Bible, in another he offers a plate of bread. The means of social transformation – bread for life, and of spiritual transformation – the Bread of Life, both offered together.²⁴

Amongst Baptists in Britain, the Evangelical Calvinist C.H. Spurgeon continued to stress the duty incumbent on Christians to engage in both evangelism and social concern. His Metropolitan Tabernacle ran almshouses for the elderly, a range of different social relief agencies, and an orphanage. Collections were regularly taken up for the needs of various charities. The Christian was to ‘meditate methods of working, plan designs of good, act out deeds of mercy, persevere in labour, and continue in service before God’. The agency God had appointed for doing good was the Christian showing forth the fruits of salvation: ‘if the poor be fed, it must be by these hands’.²⁵ On Sunday 17th June 1877 Spurgeon preached a sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on behalf of the Hospitals of London, on one of the great social transformation texts – the parable of the Good Samaritan. He expected criticism from preachers who preached only on ‘those doctrinal statements concerning the way of salvation which are known as “the gospel”’. For doing this he would be dismissed for becoming ‘legal’, and a ‘mere moral teacher’. Yet, Spurgeon was not worried: ‘We do not stand in awe of such criticism, for we clearly

²³ A. Reed, *The Man of God: A Charge Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Ebenezer Miller, M.A.*, (London, 1829), p. 23.

²⁴ Mention could have been made here of other evangelicals who sought social transformation alongside spiritual transformation – such as William and Catherine Booth, Thomas Barnardo, Lord Shaftesbury, Elizabeth Fry.

²⁵ C.H. Spurgeon, ‘Where to Find Fruit’, Sermon Preached on February 28 1864 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, in *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopaedia*, VIII, (reprinted Michigan 1984), pp. 85-87.

conceive that our Lord Jesus Christ himself would very frequently have come under it. Read the Sermon on the Mount and judge whether certain people would be content to hear the like of it ... They would condemn it as containing very little gospel and too much about good works ... he lays great stress on the love which should shine throughout the Christian character.²⁶

NINETEENTH-CENTURY MISSIONARY PIONEERS

This commitment to spiritual and social transformation was also characteristic of a number of pioneers in the nineteenth-century Protestant missionary movement. William Carey is rightly remembered for his inspirational cross-cultural work in India, especially in Bible translation, and evangelism. Yet he was a man of profound social concern, sometimes expressed in radical ways. In England he launched a campaign to boycott the use of sugar, as a way of undermining the sugar plantations in the West Indies and their employment of slave labour. In India he campaigned for better care for lepers, and also for the rights of Indian women, especially against *suti*, the burning of widows on their husband's funeral pyre. He introduced a savings bank to resist the excessive payment of interest, founded schools for children of all castes, and promoted libraries. He did much to further the study of agriculture in India.²⁷

Timothy Richard, a Welshman, also served with the Baptist Missionary Society, but later in the nineteenth century in China. After his arrival he served in the Shantung and Shansi provinces where he emphasized the need to find contextually appropriate ways of relating the gospel. This made him a controversial figure, although the problem was not so much promoting theological error, as presenting limited theological content. Richard pushed mission into new avenues when a devastating famine was experienced in northern China in 1876-79, which cost some nine and a half million lives. He used the famine to call people to repentance and a turning to God, but he also disseminated news of the devastation in wealthy areas of China, and overseas. With David Hill, of the English Wesleyan mission, he became a leading agent in distributing relief funds. Such compassionate activity won the gratitude of many Chinese towards the mission; for some the first contact they had with Christians was

²⁶ C.H. Spurgeon, 'The Good Samaritan' Sermon Preached 17 June 1877 at Metropolitan tabernacle, in *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopaedia, Vol. IV*, (repr Grand Rapids, Baker, 1984), pp. 105-106, 116.

²⁷ See S.P. Carey, *William Carey, D.D.*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924); A.C. Smith, 'The Legacy of William Carey', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Jan. 1992.

through their role in disaster relief. It was a decisive moment in developing missionary consciousness, making emergency relief an ongoing concern of overseas mission, undertaken not simply to pave the way for evangelism, but as compassionate service following the pattern of Christ who fed the Five Thousand. Mission was about being and doing, as well as preaching.²⁸

HIGH CALVINIST APPROACHES

This marriage between gospel outreach and social concern was found amongst Arminian evangelicals, moderate Calvinists, and evangelical Calvinists. It was also, surprisingly, found amongst English high Calvinists, who proved to be activists, even though they made little effort to justify that activism, especially in the field of social concern. Two doctrinal emphases appeared to militate against High Calvinist activity in the realm of social concern: a rejection of the concept of progressive sanctification as an Arminian construct; and a reluctance to make exhortations to practical activity, which might lead to a response from the human will, rather than a response prompted by the sovereign grace of God. High Calvinists rejected an ongoing role for the Law in the life of the believer – it was not the believer’s rule of conduct, yet they did not dispute that good works were to be present in the life of the true Christian. As the more cautious John Gill expressed it, ‘sanctification is absolutely necessary to salvation’.²⁹ If there was no evidence of good works, that was a sign of absence of grace.

Robert Hawker, vicar of Charles in Plymouth, was a high Calvinist accused of Antinomianism, yet he demonstrated great generosity, and compassion. His pastoral work in Plymouth, included serving as a chaplain to the garrison, with heroic work visiting in times of typhus fever. He established a female penitentiary, an orphanage, and a society for the relief of the poor. He refused to enforce the payment of tithes owing to him, and used the profits from his books to support his charities. As his friend and biographer commented, although Hawker ‘denied progressive sanctification’, his life gave ample evidence of it.³⁰

²⁸ B. Stanley, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), pp. 175-190. See also A. Walls, ‘The Multiple Conversions of Timothy Richard: A Paradigm of Missionary Experience’, in *The Cross Cultural Process in Christian History*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), pp. 236-258.

²⁹ J. Gill, *A Body of Divinity*, 1770, (repr. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971), p. 559.

³⁰ J. Williams, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Robert Hawker, D.D.*, (London, 1831), p. 262.

High Calvinism became popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century amongst some of the poorest of society. The high Calvinist William Gadsby was reared in poverty, and in Manchester had a special ministry to the poor handloom weavers. As minister of a Strict Baptist Church in one of the poorest areas in the town, he built up a congregation of around 1,000, and became well known for speaking out against forms of political and social oppression. He campaigned vigorously against the Corn Laws, which kept the price of grain, and hence bread, artificially high, in order to protect farmers. They were, to Gadsby, a tax on the urban poor. He was also a man of enormous generosity, giving away around one third of his salary to many of the needy living around him. Such generosity, he believed, was a gift of God: 'O my dear friends, what a mercy what a mercy it is to have a heart to give to the really needy.'³¹ When he died in 1844, his obituary in the local paper remembered him as being 'animated by an enlarged philanthropy. Benevolent, hospitable, and kind to all who needed admonition, advice, or assistance, he was constantly engaged in acts of mercy and in dealing out bread to the hungry'.³²

Much could be said by way of criticism of the approach to social transformation amongst this range of nineteenth-century evangelicals, and some of it is justified. From some there was too much adherence to prevalent social and economic philosophies, such as political-economy, which predominated amongst the middle class. There was too much focus on individuals, and symptoms, without tackling the root causes of social injustice – although campaigns such as those against slavery and the Corn Laws did attempt to deal with structural issues. Yet we could have considered the work of concerned Christians who got themselves elected to local councils and helped to deal with structural issues by working to improve sanitation, drinking water, housing, and education.³³ We should also recognise that many churches were comprised largely of poor members, and that a great deal of giving of a philanthropic nature was by the working classes, for the working classes.³⁴

³¹ W. Gadsby, Letter to a Friends, 17 April 1842, in *Gospel Standard Magazine*, 14, March 1848, p. 72. On Gadsby's social concern see I.J. Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action: Calvinism and the City, Manchester and London, 1810-1860*, (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

³² *Manchester Times*, 3rd February, 1844.

³³ C. Brown, 'To Be Aglow with Civic Ardours' *Records of Scottish Church History Society*, 1996.

³⁴ R. Smith, 'Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare', in ed. M. Daunton, *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past*, (London: UCL Press, 1996), p. 58.

THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the later nineteenth century, the tide began to turn against this combination of evangelism and social responsibility, and the evidence suggests that this was a significant discontinuity with what had gone before. It was a response to a series of contextual pressures of the time, and for which no single explanation can be given. The movement was gradual and imperceptible, but by 1914 unmistakable.

Pressures on orthodox belief brought about by Biblical criticism and Darwinism, encouraged desires for a more intense, defensive, and inward looking form of piety, which offered power to resist the blandishments of the world or temptations to theological compromise. The resultant holiness movement fostered a devotional inward spirituality which moved inclined evangelicals away from social engagement. This was coupled with a popular pre-millennialism, expressed in various eschatological schemes, which brought urgency to evangelism in a failing world, and huge and often sacrificial missionary labours, but also a lessening of concern to be doing good in a world expected to imminently pass away. Premillennialism and social concern were not necessarily mutually antagonistic. Lord Shaftesbury was capable of combining the two, determined to be found doing good should the Lord return. Even D.L. Moody, who included premillennial references in many sermons, and epitomised the primacy of urgent, immediate soul-saving, ran homes for needy children, took relief parcels to troops in the American Civil War, and promoted the virtues of temperance, an issue with a strong element of social concern.³⁵

Nonetheless, this combination of holiness teaching and premillennialism brought a gloomy view of the world: Christ alone would bring a kingdom fit for people to live in. There were concerns that efforts to reform the world were pointless, and might even be an impious attempt to frustrate the purposes of God. Politics was on the whole disavowed. Holiness and premillennial teaching had no place for the 'holy worldliness' of Wilberforce and others. Postmillennialism became, in the United States, largely the domain of advocates of those who focussed their intention on a golden age on this earth, which would be hastened by social and political engagement. The 'Social Gospel' became the domain of those moving towards theological liberalism.³⁶

Alongside these factors should be added the increased prosperity and suburbanisation of much of evangelicalism. Many ministers and congre-

³⁵ L. Dorsett, *A Passion for Souls: The Life of D.L. Moody*, (Chicago: Moody, 1997); W.R. Moody, *Life of D.L. Moody*, (Toronto, E.H. Revell, 1900).

³⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 194; 211-217.

gations no longer experienced the daily converse with chronic poverty and need which had been a powerful motivation to activity. Social concern became less primary, less urgent. Local authorities, and then national governments, began to take a greater role in the resolution of social issues, bringing resources and influence to bear on areas such as education and health-care, far greater than charities or churches could offer. This intervention built on the pioneering work of evangelicals, but in time served to undercut their influence in those areas.

The 'Social Gospel' came to be viewed as the antithesis of evangelicism, despite the evidence surveyed here suggesting that urgent evangelicism, theological conservatism, and social concern existed in close harmony from at least the time of Jonathan Edwards onwards. By the early twentieth century British evangelicals were in retreat from this arena. Although figures such as F.B. Meyer maintained the balance of evangelicism and social concern in his ministry into the 1920s, after 1918 non-evangelical thinkers were those who spoke most clearly on issues of social reform.³⁷ The pattern was repeated in North America, although the trend was more gradual than is often depicted. Fundamentalism is usually seen as the antithesis of the social gospel movement, yet one of the papers in *The Fundamentals* series, 'The Church and Socialism,' by C.R. Erdman of Princeton Theological Seminary, included the appeal, 'A true gospel of grace is inseparable from a gospel of good works. Christian doctrines and Christian duties cannot be divorced ... These social teachings of the Gospel need a new emphasis today by those who accept the whole Gospel, and should not be left to be interpreted and applied by those alone who deny essential Christianity.'³⁸

Later Fundamentalists did not see things in the same way. Timothy Smith described the process as the 'Great Reversal,' and it was explored in a book with that title by David Moberg.³⁹ 'Social Gospel' became synonymous with theological liberalism and anti-evangelicism. Fundamentalists argued that social concern was a distraction from the 'main thing', which was urgent evangelicism.

³⁷ See I. Randall, *Spirituality and Social Change: The Contribution of F.B. Meyer (1847-1929)*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003); B. Holman, *F.B. Meyer: If I Had a Hundred Lives...* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2007); Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 213.

³⁸ C.R. Erdman, 'The Church and Socialism' in *The Fundamentals*, 1909-1915, 4 vols, Chapter 71.

³⁹ T. L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); D. O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism Versus Social Concern*, (London: Scripture Union, 1973).

THEOLOGY AND TRANSFORMATION IN SOCIETY

THE TIDE TURNS BACK

Whatever the cause, or combination of causes, for the great reversal, it prevailed through much of the twentieth century, but the tide began to turn back in the 1970s and 1980s. This reversal of the 'Great Reversal' was expressed in the Lausanne Covenant, produced at the end of the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization. Here a transformative balance between proclamation and action was articulated: mission should embrace both evangelism and social concern. Significantly at Lausanne there was a strong representation from the Two-thirds world, where the issues of poverty and oppression were much more contextually alive and pressing than they were in the West. In the Covenant, evangelism is described as 'the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally, and so be reconciled to God,' but the covenant continues - 'The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world.' Those who signed the covenant expressed regret for having 'sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive'.⁴⁰ John Stott, a key figure at Lausanne, wrote in 1984, 'It is exceedingly strange that any followers of Jesus Christ should ever need to ask whether social involvement was their concern, and that controversy should have blown up over the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility. For it is evident that in his public ministry Jesus both 'went about ... teaching and preaching' (Matthew 4, 23) and 'went about doing good and healing' (Acts 10, 38). In consequence evangelism and social action have been intimately related to one another throughout the history of the church.'⁴¹

CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS

And there the story should end, with evangelicalism returning to the historic position of the need for both evangelism and social concern, with social transformation flowing from spiritual transformation. Yet, the story moves on, and on the basis of this historical perspective, I want to express some concerns about aspects of the contemporary evangelical scene. The first is the tendency by some writers to slip back into placing the primacy on ethical and social action, rather than this historic pattern which includes both evangelism and social concern. Brian McLaren has

⁴⁰ The Lausanne Covenant, in J.D. Douglas (ed) *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, (London: World Wide Publications, 1974), Section 4, p. 4; Section 5, p. 5.

⁴¹ J.R.W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1984), p. 3.

called for a need to look less at 'whose lineage, rites, doctrines, structures, and terminology are right', and place more emphasis on 'whose actions, service, outreach, kindness and effectiveness are good'.⁴² So too Rob Bell, who in *Velvet Elvis* suggests 'Perhaps a better question than who's right, is who's living rightly.'⁴³ A corrective is certainly needed for those parts of evangelicalism where the practical outliving of the gospel is insufficiently expressed, and where the personal morality of professed evangelical believers is little different from those in wider society. But this is an over-corrective. If the message is that we only need to get the action and experience right, then correct doctrine will follow, it reverses the classic Protestant and evangelical understanding that works that are acceptable to God flow as fruit from new life in Christ, and from the correct theological understanding of that new life. Changed spiritual status is demonstrated by changed living, changed theology and active gospel compassion.

Another concern is an increasing discomfort I sense among evangelicals in giving verbal expression to the gospel in the context of social concern activities. It is typified in a phrase I have often heard quoted, and attributed to Francis of Assisi: 'Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary use words'. This troubles me for two reasons. Firstly as a historian, because Francis probably never said it: in Chapter XVII of his 'Regula non-Bullata' (1221), a preliminary version before the Rule approved in 1223, he did say, 'let all the brothers (friars) preach by their (works) deeds,' [Ch XVII, 166] although the phrase is not included in The Rule of Francis itself. But we should not argue from this that Francis thought words were unnecessary, or not always necessary. The same chapter urges preachers to promote the 'utility and edification of the people, by announcing to them vices and virtues, punishment and glory with brevity of speech'.⁴⁴ In the practical dimensions of social concern, proclamation must certainly be proper to the situation, appropriately contextualized, not crass, nor manipulative of those we are showing concern for. Yet it should be a vital part of the expression of wider compassion for a person's blessing in this

⁴² B. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), p. 223; B. McLaren, *The Last Word and After That*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), p. 197

⁴³ R. Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2005), p. 21

⁴⁴ <http://www.Franciscan-archive.org>; *regula non-bullata*, chapter XXVII, 166; *regula bullata*, chapter IX, on preachers. The Roman Catholic Church recently re-asserted the need for missionary activity to include more than humanitarian good works. (*Christianity Today*, Feb. 2008, p. 13, quoting a document from the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith).

world and for all eternity. James tells us that faith without works is dead. Surely works without faith are also dead. Works without words does not seem to me the Biblical or historical pattern for bringing people to faith.

The contemporary world needs to see a consistency between action and proclamation. Where that is absent, people are far less likely to believe. David Wells adds, 'proclamation must arise within a context of *authenticity* ... to embody that truth in the way that the Church actually lives ... What postmoderns want to see, and are entitled to see, is believing and being, talking and doing, all joined together in a seamless whole.'⁴⁵ We must also avoid the situation where evangelicals who speak out against social evils find themselves marginalised by conservative churches, and are therefore pushed towards the radical end of the theological spectrum. Evangelicals need to resist both the drift into liberalism, and the tendency to marginalise those who seek to uphold the cause of the oppressed.

Another more subtle trend is also apparent. Mark Noll observed in nineteenth-century America a shift in the understanding of divine characteristics away from 'ontological' to 'operational' categories, from 'final value' to 'instrumental' values, with a consequent shift from theocentric activism to activist anthropocentrism.⁴⁶ To Jonathan Edwards, true virtue was chiefly 'love to God; the Being of beings, infinitely the greatest and best.' Actions were therefore to have doxological intent.⁴⁷ Without wishing to diminish our anthropocentric activism, I wonder if the theocentric dimension is being lost. It is when our theocentric vision is restored through salvation by God's grace, that anthropocentric activism flows as the fruit. Compassion so channelled means that social concern becomes truly doxological.

A further observation I would offer is how often genuine social transformation has flowed from not only spiritual change, but awareness of deep needs. Increased prosperity among some Christians, and physical separation from scenes of need, has accompanied a declining pattern of activity. Evangelism has often been most effectively accompanied by social concern when there is knowledge of, and regular exposure to, those with real social needs. Christians have a duty to be informed of the chronic needs of the world in which we live, and with globalisation and information revolutions, we cannot plead ignorance. Mike Davies in *Planet*

⁴⁵ D.F. Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers – Christ in the Post Modern World*, (Leicester: IVP, 2006), p. 315.

⁴⁶ M. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 440-42.

⁴⁷ J. Edwards, 'The Nature of True Virtue' in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 8 Ethical Writings*, ed. P. Ramsey, (New Haven: Yale, 1989), p. 550.

of *Slums* argues that the cities of the future are being constructed not from glass and steel as urban theorists expected, but from 'crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks. Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first-century urban dweller squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay'.⁴⁸ What Christian response will follow from this awareness, or from the knowledge that there are some 11 million Aids orphans in Africa? As the recent Micah Declaration puts it, 'If we ignore the world, we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world.'⁴⁹

My last comment would be that as evangelicals affirm the authority, reliability, and sufficiency of scripture, they should be those who are most serious about believing and acting upon what the Bible says. So what *are* evangelicals going to do about the words of Jesus in Matthew 25, 'I was a hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took invited me in'? Will evangelicals do more than pay lip service to the Sermon on the Mount, or the parable of the Good Samaritan, or the challenge to rich oppressors in James 5:1-6? If these verses are ignored we are in danger of a functional liberalism. Evangelicals need to decide whether they stand with the rich history of Edwards, or Carey, or Reed, or Spurgeon, or with those Christians I met in East Africa? Any dichotomy between evangelism and social concern, or a tendency to emphasise one at the expense of the other, appears to me unsustainable either biblically, or from the rich overall history of evangelicalism. Both are central and inseparable. However, as history proves, the balance has remained difficult to consistently sustain.

⁴⁸ M. Davis, *Planet of Slums*, (London: Verso, 2006), p. 19.

⁴⁹ 'The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission', in T. Chester (ed), *Justice, Mercy and Humility: Integral Mission and the Poor*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), p. 19.

SOME THOUGHTS ON HERMENEUTICS ARISING FROM THE PSALMS

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THE MESSIANIC HOPE AND THE PSALMS

We start with a familiar problem. Various Old Testament writers testify to the existence of what has come to be called the messianic hope, the belief that God would raise up in the future an ideal king descended from, or at least patterned on, David, who would establish his eternal kingdom. The term 'Messiah' is commonly used to signify this ruler who is to come. It comes as a surprise to some of us then to read that this term, or rather its Hebrew equivalent, an adjective meaning 'anointed', is not used in the OT for 'the (future) Messiah'. Yet this is a commonplace observation. I cite two examples. 'Out of this hope, but probably not until sometime in the Hellenistic period (after 331 B.C.), Jews came to use *mašiah* (and the Greek equivalent, *christos*) as a designation for a future agent ("messiah") to be sent by God, usually to restore Israel's independence and righteousness'.¹ Similarly, it is said that 'all the references [sc. to the anointed of Yahweh] are to the present king or a past king'.² Thus in Zechariah 4:14 the unusual phrase two 'sons of oil' refers to contemporary figures. The interpretation of Daniel 9:25f. is obscure;³ it is a text that in any case is probably fairly late and marginal to the OT as a whole and it is significantly *not* cited as a messianic prophecy in the NT, a fact that is all the more significant when one bears in mind that the early Christians scoured the Old Testament for messianic allusions and would surely not have missed this one if it was really a messianic reference.

Against the background of this scholarly consensus we now observe that the term 'anointed' is used a number of times in the Psalms (Ps. 2:2; 18:50 [17:50 LXX]; 20:6 [19:6 LXX]; 28:8 [27:8 LXX]; 84:9 [83:9 LXX];

¹ L. W. Hurtado, *DJG*, 107.

² F. Hesse, *TDNT* IX, 504.

³ It is seen as a reference to 'the eschatological Anointed One, the Messiah' by J. N. Oswalt, *NIDOTTE* II, 1123-27. Other evangelical scholars make the same interpretation.

89:38, 51 [88:38, 51 LXX]; 105:15 [104:15 LXX]; 132:10, 17 [131:10, 17 LXX]). We can trace three stages in the history of the interpretation of the texts.

1. *The original setting*

With the exception of Ps 105:15 these references are in the singular and their reference would appear to be to David himself or to [one of] his descendants (Ps 18:50), understood as the presently reigning king (see especially Ps 89:8, where God is said to be very angry with his anointed one, an unlikely attitude towards the Messiah). Sometimes the words are those of the king himself, at other times they are spoken about him by somebody else. On the assumption that these Psalms were composed during the monarchy this interpretation makes good sense. The Psalms were saying something that was relevant to their contemporary situation.

2. *The compilation of the Psalms*

The time came when Israel no longer had a king; after the exile there was no native king, although foreigners like Herod claimed the title. How then were the Psalms to be read? We do not know the history in detail, but two things happened. The first was the gathering together of the Psalms, probably in stages by way of earlier smaller collections to form the collection that we now have. The second was that the Psalms were read in the light of the new situation. I am indebted to J. L. Mays for the attractive suggestion that, now that there was no longer an actual king, the tendency was to read the Psalms as prophetic of what would be the case when Israel again had a king appointed by the Lord. And once the term ‘anointed’ was used of this future king, it would be natural to read other psalms, which referred in similar ways to the king but without the use of this term, as also referring to the same figure; hence Psalms such as 3; 72 and 110 would be understood in this context. The result of this was a messianic understanding of the Psalms.⁴ This is true of the Hebrew Psalter; it is said to be all the more the case with the LXX version.⁵ Hence, and the point is important, the use of the term ‘anointed’ as a way of referring to the figure that we have come to call ‘the Messiah’ is in fact found in the Old Testament, despite the scholarly opinions to the contrary that I have cited, and indeed I could quote myself to the same erroneous effect: ‘The term “anointed” is not

⁴ J. L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 99-107, espec. 100. Cf. idem, *Psalms (Interpretation)*. Louisville: John Knox, 1994).

⁵ J. Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 138-64.

used in the Old Testament with reference to a future king descended from David'.⁶ I now publicly retract that assertion.

Mays, of course, is not alone in this insight and was not the first to voice it. Much the same had already been said, though perhaps not quite as clearly by B. S. Childs:

Indeed, at the time of the final redaction, when the institution of kingship had long since been destroyed, what earthly king would have come to mind other than God's Messiah?

In sum, although the royal psalms arose originally in a peculiar historical setting of ancient Israel which had received its form from a common mythopoeic milieu, they were treasured in the Psalter for a different reason, namely as a witness to the messianic hope which looked for the consummation of God's kingship through his Anointed One.⁷

3. *The Psalms as Christian Scripture*

The third stage that followed on from this was of course the Christian recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, with the accompanying understanding of these Psalms as being prophetic of him.

The consequences of this final stage are highly significant.⁸ P. Doble has provided a summary of some recent research (published and forthcoming) in which he draws attention to the use of the Psalms by Luke, particularly in his passion narrative.⁹ The Psalms are, of course, interpreted messianically. Doble's contention is that they provide the scriptural basis for the assertion that it was written that the Messiah had to suffer and enter into his glory. Moreover, Luke notes that Jesus says that the evidence for this lies in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. But it is principally the Psalms that come to notice in this connection. Here is a picture of God's anointed who is God's servant and Son, chosen and elect. Doble thus finds an alternative source to Deutero-Isaiah for Jesus as servant. Furthermore, this figure is one who suffers. Now the recognition of a suffering righteous *figure* in the Psalms, and the application of this

⁶ I. H. Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 74.

⁷ B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 516-17. Childs cites C. Westermann to the same effect.

⁸ At the time of writing this I have not seen S. Moyise and M. J. J. Menken (ed.), *The Psalms in the New Testament* (London: Continuum, 2004).

⁹ P. Doble, 'Luke 24.26, 44—Songs of God's Servant: David and his Psalms in Luke-Acts', *JSNT* 28:3 (2006), 267-83.

model to Jesus had already been noted by scholars, especially (but not exclusively) by R. Pesch in his commentary on Mark¹⁰. But what is now happening is that here we have a recognition of a suffering *Messiah* in the Psalms, which stands alongside the recognition of a suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah. Of course, one can argue for the 'messianic' character of the Servant,¹¹ but here we have the actual term being used in the Psalms. The righteous sufferer in the Psalms is a messianic figure, and not simply any loyal servant of Yahweh.

THE THREE STAGES IN INTERPRETATION OF THE PSALMS

What is the broader significance of this discovery? Many of us may have been worried about some aspects of the use made of the Old Testament in the New. It has been difficult to see how some of the texts cited or alluded to can be regarded as prophecies or proofs for what the New Testament authors get out of them. More importantly, it has been difficult to see how the usage would have carried any conviction for a Jewish audience (let alone a Gentile one). If there was no messianic understanding of the crucial passages, how could the Christians have hoped to persuade their partners in dialogue? The missing element has now been supplied. While the original reference in the relevant Old Testament passages was to the reigning monarch (or an immediate successor), by the time the Psalms were collected and effectively canonised (cf. Luke 24:44) the references in them were understood, where appropriate, as messianic.

We can thus distinguish three stages in the history of the Psalms:

1. The original composition in which some Psalms were spoken by or to a historical ruler with reference to the concrete circumstances of their time.
2. The re-interpretation of these Psalms as looking forward to the future hope of an ideal king (a hope that was dependent upon the clear prophecies in Isaiah and elsewhere of such a ruler).
3. The recognition of these Psalms as finding fulfilment in Jesus the Christ. Here the process of interpretation was a dialectic one. The Psalms were used to confirm the Christian understanding of Jesus as the Christ since he alone appeared to fulfil them, but at the same

¹⁰ R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), II, 13-14.

¹¹ In Isaiah 42:1 God puts his Spirit on the Servant, but the actual term 'anointed' is not used.

time this fulfilment dictated that the Psalms were to be understood Christological.

The great merit of this understanding of the process of composition and interpretation is that it provides a better basis for the Christian application of the Psalms to Jesus by showing that the messianic understanding was already developing in Judaism, and also by establishing a proper, biblical basis for the use of the term 'anointed' to refer to the future ruler and for the recognition that the Messiah is a suffering figure.¹²

The key factor here is the positing of the second stage. There were two elements in the situation. First, there was the gathering together of the Psalms into a collection with the result that different psalms can be read in the light of one another. Second, there was the influence of the new situation in which the process took place and that led to a new understanding of them.

As a result of these two factors, then, the Psalms could be understood in new ways. This could simply be a new interpretation of existing material that was susceptible of more than one interpretation or application. But sometimes as part of this process of reinterpretation the Psalms could be edited and rewritten over time, in order to adapt them to later situations.

We can see examples of this happening in various places outside the Book of Psalms:

1. One is the scriptural exegesis of the Qumran sect where there is undeniable evidence of the rewriting of texts as they are quoted in order to bring out what the interpreter considered to be the meaning or application of the texts.¹³
2. A second is the usage of the New Testament itself where Paul can quote Scripture in a paraphrastic form that brings out the meaning that he sees in it more clearly. See, for example, 2 Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 4:8.
3. In the patristic period scribes were capable of re-writing the Psalms in particular in the light of their own understanding. The best-known example is the expansion of the text of Psalm 96:10 to give 'The Lord

¹² This raises the question whether Paul's statement that 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures' (1 Cor 15:3) reflects this reading of the Psalms.

¹³ E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 141.

reigned from the tree', an addition found in Justin, Dial. 73 and Apol. 1:41 and the Psalterium Graeco-Latinum Veronense (6th century).

We should not, then, be surprised if the early compilers of the Psalms themselves did similar things. So there can be references to the temple, that were not there in the time of David; to the rebuilding of Jerusalem; to collective needs as well as those of the king.

Here is a summary description of a book that has recently been published but which I have not seen entitled *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006):

[The author] reevaluates the extent and nature of the collective passages in the Psalter. Many of the complaint psalms written by an individual were re-read at a later stage from a national point of view. In the altered religious, political and social circumstances, the earlier texts were reworked and re-interpreted so that they would comply more closely with the prevailing conditions. This collectivizing tendency probably began during the exile and continued until the final redaction of the Psalter (about 200–180 BCE). Most of the ancient contributors are unknown to us, but the Hasideans at least may have played an important role in this process at its final stage, since there are some obvious passages where the Hasideans seem to represent the people of Israel exclusively.¹⁴

From a conservative stance H. L. Ellison identified the following examples in the Psalms:

1. The closing benedictions at the end of each of the sections (Pss 41:13; 72:18-19 [cf. editorial note in v. 20!]; 89:52; 106:48) are part of the editing to indicate the five books of the Psalms.
2. Various Psalms have additions to them, notably Pss 51:18-19; 59:5b, 8b (and perhaps 11a); 63:11; 131:3; 138:2.
3. It is generally agreed that Ps 27 is a combination of two originally separate Psalms (Ps 27:1-6, 7-14); similarly with Psalm 31:1-8, 9-24; and that Psalms 42 and 43 were originally one Psalm.

¹⁴ Publisher's blurb in *Mohr Kurier 2006/1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 10. This hypothesis is interesting in that it stands in contrast to the theory that psalms that were originally collective were understood and adapted to serve as individual expressions of piety in the course of canonisation and afterwards.

THOUGHTS ON HERMENEUTICS FROM THE PSALMS

4. Perhaps the non-mention of the king in Ps 135:19-20 (where one might have expected a reference) indicates an omission made at a time when there was no longer a monarchy.¹⁵

All of this makes us more aware of the way in which the composition of Scripture was a lengthy process which involved not merely the original authors but the fresh interpretation and editing and compiling that went on over a long period of time. It makes clear to us the way in which Scripture might have different meanings or applications at different times.

What now was the rationale for the specific process of messianic interpretation?

It could perhaps be said that the kind of things said of any historical king in any of the Psalms were sufficiently true and general to be applied to any future king who was appointed and upheld by God. Hence the move from the particular to the ideal rested upon the fact that what we are given in a particularised form is the sort of promise that God would make to any king of his appointing.

Consider Psalm 2, which is particularly significant because it comes right at the beginning of the book of Psalms and establishes the parameters for interpretation of what follows.

1. It can be understood originally of a rebellion by some subject people against Israel, its king and its God. Such rebellion is futile because God rebukes them. He has installed his king in Jerusalem, the place of his choice. He made a promise to the king, perhaps conveyed by a prophet, but here reported in words attributed to the king: he tells how God has established a paternal relationship with him; he has only to ask and God will enable him to subdue other nations. Therefore he (or a spokesperson) can turn to the rebellious rulers and tell them of the dire consequences of continued rebellion; better to make their peace with the Lord and his son, and take refuge in him rather than to be exposed to his wrath.

2. At the compilation stage there is no longer a king in office, but the Psalm in effect promises that God will install a king and reverse the present situation where Israel is overcome by its enemies. It becomes a message of ultimate hope for the people. It is also a warning to the enemies that their rebellion against the God of Israel will be brought to an end.

How is this justified? A possible line to take is that the Psalm describes what was originally promised to David and to Solomon. 2 Samuel 7 carries the promise that God will provide a successor for David with whom he

¹⁵ H. L. Ellison, *The Psalms* (London: Scripture Union, 1968), *passim*. Other examples include the apparent splitting of the original Psalm 9 (so LXX and Vulgate) into two (Psalms 9 and 10 in MT) and some corruption of what appears to have been its original acrostic form.

will have a father-son relationship and that the kingdom will endure for ever (cf. Ps 18:50). We have to bear in mind the hyperbolic nature of such language: 'O king, live for ever' (1 Kings 1:31; Neh 2:3; Dan 2:4, et al.) is a rhetorical form of 'Long live the king'. Nevertheless, it is fair to assume that a kingdom that will endure for ever is destined to outlive a number of monarchs.¹⁶ Hence the promise made to David regarding Solomon can be fairly understood as extending to his successors, always provided that they obey God. Psalm 89, recording a vision referring to David and his successors, makes the point clear.

It is, therefore, fair to hope that despite the absence of a king for the time being, God will nevertheless be faithful to his people, and hence the prayers of the people at the end of Psalm 89 are justified: God will arise and have mercy on Zion. Moreover, the language used by the prophets will encourage the recognition that only an ideal king can achieve this purpose. Hence the canonical understanding of the Psalms is justified. David becomes a type for a greater antitype.

3. Then at the final stage we have a specific application to Jesus which leads to some fresh advances in interpretation. The most significant of these is probably the way in which the Father/Son relationship is now to be understood in a different way in the light of the actuality of a Son who enjoys an intimate relationship with the Father that for want of a better word we must call ontological. The 'He said to me' of the Psalm is literally fulfilled or instantiated in the voice that comes to Jesus at his baptism. We can see how the language could be said to be open to this understanding, although it was not the right interpretation at the earlier stages. It also becomes clear that the description of wrath and judgment refers to the final act of divine judgment which is not to be taken literally of warfare.

Further, the reference to actual nations and their rulers can be understood as one instantiation of the rebellion against God on a spiritual level by any and all who reject his rule over them, including ordinary human beings in their secret thoughts and personal actions, as well as nations or other corporate groups actively fighting against the people of God and persecuting them.

A possible weakness in the case for this reinterpretation is that there is little or no unambiguous evidence of alterations in the text to bring about

¹⁶ The language may originally be simply oriental court rhetoric, but its exaggerated assertions if taken literally point to beyond any earthly king in the small town of Jerusalem in a petty kingdom.

this specific desired interpretation.¹⁷ Rather, it is based upon the potential of the text for such an interpretation, and also upon the fact that evidence for the shift can be seen in the way in which the term ‘anointed’ became a term for the expected future deliverer and king in Intertestamental Judaism.¹⁸ In other words, this is how the Psalms were read by Jews at the time. I am therefore not unduly worried by the objection.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERPRETATION

The significance of all this is threefold.

1. The Christian understanding of the Psalms

As already noted, this particular example is of significance in itself because it enables us to understand more clearly what was going on when the early church saw Jesus in the Psalms. A messianic understanding of the Psalms was already in place, and so the early church was justified in drawing out the details more fully in the light of Jesus himself, and was also able to debate with the Jews and carry out apologetic work on the agreed basis that the passages spoke about the Messiah. Both the term ‘Messiah’ and the concept of the Messiah were drawn from the Psalms.

2. The Christian understanding of the Old Testament

We have a pattern for understanding other parts of the Old Testament as Scripture, in that looking for a distinction between the meaning and significance at different points in time is a valid approach.

A conspicuous example of this is the laws in the Pentateuch. These were literally binding upon the people of Israel at the time of canonisation; the precise history of what went on before need not concern us here and lies outside the area on which I can dare to offer opinions.

But by the time of the early church, or rather in consequence of the experience of the early church, these laws are read in a different way. At least some of the laws no longer lay down what the people of God ought

¹⁷ N. Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 99.

¹⁸ Oswalt states that ‘even during intertestamental times rabbis were already understanding the unqualified references in the Ps to find their ultimate significance in this eschatological figure’ (*NIDOTTE* II, 1126). Since ‘no messianic sayings are recorded of Tannaitic scholars who died before A.D. 70’ (M. de Jonge, IV, 786) the reference to rabbis must be anachronistic, and the writer is thinking of written apocryphal and pseudepigraphical sources from this period where there are messianic references (Psalms of Solomon).

to do. Rather we now have an authoritative record of what the Israelites were once required to do. Before Christ Leviticus was understood as a set of laws to be applied literally in the offerings of sacrifices, the observance of festivals, and numerous other specific laws for community life.

But with the coming of Jesus Christians came to realise that they were no longer required to carry out the sacrifices on the twofold ground that they could not take away sin and that sin had been taken away once and for all by the death of Christ. If Leviticus remains as part of Scripture, what are we to do with it?

The problem was not a simple one because Leviticus is a mixture of laws and teachings, some of which were recognised as still valid and authoritative for believers. Hence the early Christians must have had the problem of deciding what to do with them and how to discriminate.¹⁹

We may note in passing the contemporaneous non-Christian Jewish attitude. These laws were in force in the time of Jesus, and the current form of interpretation lay in extending their scope by asking how they were to be applied in detail. A tradition of how to obey them gradually developed. But then came AD 70 after which the Jews were in a similar position to the Christians. Whereas the Christians could not fulfil Leviticus literally because they believed that material sacrifices had been brought to an end by the sacrificial death of Christ, the Jews were unable to fulfil Leviticus literally because the temple had been destroyed and it was not humanly possible to rebuild it. The solution of having a new temple on a different site was not considered because the orthodox belief was that the temple could only be in Jerusalem.²⁰ What did happen was the exhaustive activity of the Rabbis in exploring every detail of the ritual and elaborating upon it, providing instructions for a non-existent cult. Instead of offering sacrifice the Jews read and interpreted the Scriptures that lay down how it should be done.

3. The Christian understanding of the Bible

The third consequence is that our experience with the Old Testament may help us to ask questions about how we read and interpret and use Scripture in the period after the canonisation of the New Testament.

¹⁹ See I. H. Marshall, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker/Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 56-63.

²⁰ The example of the Jews in Egypt who built their own temple at Elephantine was a non-starter.

MEDIAEVAL INTERPRETATION AND THE TASK OF INTERPRETATION
TODAY

One specific clue to help us may lie in the exegesis of the Middle Ages. This is summed up in the famous quatrain of Nicholas of Lyra which distinguished the four senses of Scripture and their uses:

Littera gesta docet,
Quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas,
Quo tendas anagogia.²¹

Roughly translated, the literal sense teaches what happened, the allegorical what you are to believe, the moral how you are to live, and the anagogical where you are going.

A helpful example is given by C. S. Rodd who summarises a passage from Dante's *Divine Comedy* which shows how this would apply to Psalm 114 which describes Israel's exodus from Egypt:

If we regard *the letter alone*, what is set before us is the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt in the days of Moses;
if the *allegory*, our redemption wrought by Christ;
if the *moral* sense, we are shown the conversion of the soul from the grief and wretchedness of sin to the state of grace;
if the *anagogical*, we are shown the departure of the holy soul from the thralldom of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory.

²¹ For this frequently cited 'jingle' (as he dubs it) see, for example, F. F. Bruce, 'The History of New Testament Study', in I. H. Marshall (ed.), *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1979), 28.

Although it has been ascribed to Nicholas of Lyra, and he certainly referred to the four types of sense, he made a clear distinction between the literal and the other three senses; the latter can be grouped together as aspects of the mystical sense: the allegorical (*si res significate per voces referantur ad significandum ea quae sunt in nova lege credenda*); the moral (*si referantur ad significandum ea quae per nos sunt agenda*); the anagogical (*si referantur ad significandum ea quae sunt speranda in beatitudine*) (Migne, PL 113:28, cited by A. S. Wood, 'Nicolas of Lyra', EQ 33 [1961], 196-206 [202]). His major work was a commentary on the literal sense of the whole Bible which is profoundly well-informed and sensible. See C. Patton, 'Selections from Nicholas of Lyra's *Commentary on Exodus*', in S. E. Fowl (ed.), *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 114-28. .

Rodd's own comment on this deserves quotation:

We flinch from such interpretations, and rightly eschew any allegorizing which reads into the Bible meanings we ourselves choose. Yet it may be that a too vigorous determination to discover only what the original writer intended will impoverish our reading of the Scriptures. We should expect God to reveal Himself in similar ways in both testaments, thus creating correspondences between them, if it is indeed the same God who acts in both. Moreover, words which were not intended as allegory, as *Pilgrim's Progress* was, may, none the less, contain within them the figures of a real truth which their authors would not disown. Dorothy Sayers has suggested that this happened in one of her own novels. Thus there is a certain appropriateness in the singing of this psalm on Easter Day, and its use in the last offices for the dying and in the burial service within the tradition of the Western Church since the sixth century.²²

The Psalm in question is the one about Israel coming out of Egypt to become God's people and the way in which the world of nature responded, the sea fleeing away and the mountains skipping like rams; the earth is called on to tremble at the presence of the God of Jacob who turns rocks into pools of water. Thus the literal sense is in fact expressed in highly metaphorical terms as the significance of Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Egypt to be his people is seen in the worship and rejoicing of creation. The allegorical sense is then taken to be the redemption brought about by Christ, presumably understood as elsewhere in Scripture as a new exodus. The moral sense is a bit of a stretch, but it would seem to be an allegory of the conversion of a person to become one of God's people, an event as significant and fearful and glorious as the exodus or the Christ-event itself. Finally, the Psalm is metaphorical of the departure of the human soul from the Egypt of bondage in this earthly life to the freedom of the world to come.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS KIND OF INTERPRETATION?

1. *The literal sense*

It seems clear enough that the literal sense is the intended sense of the passage, and I find it pretty well impossible to believe that the actual writer was thinking of anything else than this. If so, what is the 'message' of the

²² C. S. Rodd, *Psalms 73-150* (London: Epworth Press, 1964), 79. He is picking up on A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 680. The reference is to Dante, *Purg.* c. ii. 46.

Psalm in this original context? Perhaps: here is an event that by worldly standards was fairly insignificant, the expulsion of a minor ethnic group from one of the mighty empires of the ancient world. True, it was accompanied by some remarkable events, as the sea rolled back to let the Israelites walk over, and water appeared from dry rocks in the barren desert to refresh them, signs of God's gracious care. These things encourage the readers to see in the story the establishment of themselves as the people of God whom he delivered from earthly bondage so that God might reign over them and live among them. That is what crossing the Red Sea really means. Hence God is in our midst, and he is mysteriously powerful, *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*! Thus what appears to be a historical description turns out to have an ongoing relevance for Israel.

2. *The allegorical sense*

But the language and concepts of that exodus event are taken up in the New Testament and used to express the significance of what God has done in Christ. Here is a fresh act of deliverance, this time from bondage to sin and judgment, the creation of a way into a new community where God is present to provide for his people's needs. In a curious way the passing through the waters as on dry land becomes an image of baptism, since perhaps the people are thought of as passing through a channel cut through waters piled up on either side of them and threatening death. The thought is that God repeats what he has done at the Red Sea, and with due allowance for the difference in character of the events, the essential similarity can be seen so that it is permissible to describe the Christ-event as a second exodus.

This immediately raises the question whether we can also regard the exodus as a prior Christ-event. It is certainly a prior act of redemption by the grace and power of God, but there is, to be sure, nothing corresponding to the sacrificial death of Jesus in the actual redemption, unless you include the slaughter of the Passover lambs and extend the event to include the whole of the wilderness experience with the provision of the tabernacle and the establishment of the sacrificial system.

What we do have is the provision of language that helps us to see the Christ-event in a different light. Just as the Psalm itself invokes the metaphor of the natural elements fleeing and dancing, so the New Testament uses the metaphor of deliverance from Egypt to express the significance of the Christ-event, a metaphor that might have been especially apt in helping Jews to appreciate the gospel: what we know God did in the past for us as a people, he has now repeated and surpassed in this new saving action. Thus the use of the language is justified by the fact that it is the

same God acting in a new way that is nevertheless the same kind of way to save.

But what actually is going on when we do this kind of interpretation? The mediaevals spoke of it as allegorising the text, but might it be better to see it as the concrete application of broader principles to particular situations?

3. The moral sense

The application to the individual convert is not so clear. Perhaps we might appeal to 1 Corinthians 10 where the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness wanderings are seen as ante-typifying those of believers who share in baptism and the Lord's Supper and are in danger of succumbing to the same temptations. It would then be justifiable to see the deliverance of the individual from slavery to sin and the coming of the triune God to be in him/her as corresponding to the deliverance in the Psalm. Again, what does the Psalm mean or how does it function in this context? Is it again to emphasise the wonder of this cosmic event in which God himself comes to dwell amongst us?

4. The anagogical sense

Finally, the anagogical sense sees the Psalm as picturing the departure of the soul from bondage in this material, corruptible world to enter into the freedom of the new world with God. Note that both the Red Sea and the Jordan are mentioned, and the Christian tradition has tended to think of death as the crossing of Jordan rather than the Red Sea. I wrack my memory as to whether in my childhood somebody tried to teach us that the picture of the Christian life is not Red Sea = conversion and wilderness = this life as a whole and Jordan = entry into heaven, but rather Red Sea = conversion and wilderness = the period before you enter fully into all that God plans for us in the Christian life and Jordan = the second blessing or baptism of the Spirit or revival or whatever it is that we pass through in order to enter the Canaan of perfect life here on earth; some of you may have been exposed to a similar path from Romans 5 and 6 through the wilderness in Romans 7 into the peace of Romans 8. Certainly the imagery of Jordan as the boundary between this world and the next is firmly fixed in Christian symbolism, but I am not sure how the Psalm functions here, unless it is to assure us that, as God has delivered us in the past, so at the end he will act in the same way with final deliverance. But I suspect that I learn this more from the New Testament than from this Psalm.

If we follow that sort of exposition, then the mediaeval scheme tells us:

the literal is the original historical story

the allegorical is the doctrine of Christ

the moral (sometimes called 'tropological') is application to the individual, here soteriological rather than moral

and the anagogical is the understanding of death and the life to come.

Now it may be difficult to see all this as coming out of the Psalm. It is certainly not generated out of the Psalm by itself, but is rather a set of ways in which we can see that what happened in the Psalm is analogous or typical of different events described in Christian doctrine, because the same God is at work throughout, and therefore the language of the Psalm can be used to express these other events and experiences. But it is difficult to see anything new coming out of the Psalm that we could not get out of the New Testament alone, and I wonder if the function is more what might be called 'poetic', in that it provides fresh language and symbolism and metaphor to express the Christian experiences. It adds colour to the description, and that is a good thing, but does it add content?

So what does the Psalm 'do'? How is it meant to function? Does it tell the readers something? Is it addressed to God? Is it addressed to the earth or to the nations?

Certainly it takes the events of salvation and makes them cosmic in their significance. 'Here is the Exodus event, not as a familiar item in Israel's creed but as an astounding event: as startling as a clap of thunder, as shattering as an earthquake'.²³ What is the function of the last two verses? Although addressed to the earth is it actually a call to the nations to acknowledge the greatness of our God (and does it say something about our dignity and identity as his people)? But does the Psalm not also carry the message 'what God did then he can do now in refreshing his people'?²⁴ Yes, for the last verse uses a participle to declare how God's mighty acts continue.²⁵ 'The Psalm has a clearly prophetic message',²⁶ and is capable of repeated fulfilment. Thus the Psalm invites readers to continue to see God's hand at work in their midst.

MEANING AND APPLICATION?

With all this we may be able now to see that perhaps the mediaeval pattern was not so much a set of aspects of meaning but rather of application. But the application rests on principles and it is a case of seeing an

²³ F. D. Kidner, *Psalms 73 – 150* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 403.

²⁴ Ellison, *Psalms*, 96.

²⁵ Kirkpatrick, *Psalms*, 682.

²⁶ W. A. VanGemeren, 'Psalms', in *EBC V*, 718.

appropriateness in this language for future events which were not in the original writer's mind. Were they in the Holy Spirit's mind?

But you will have noticed that when I attempted to explain them and see whether they were justified, what I did was to go back to the New Testament and see whether it supported them. We saw that the New Testament does have the understanding of the Christ-event as a new exodus; by a bit of a stretch the baptism of the individual convert could be seen as an individualisation of this event, and maybe in this way we might also justify seeing the final transition to the heavenly world.

All this reminds me of Charles Cranfield's explanation of dying to sin and rising to new life in Romans 6 as having four senses or moments:

1. Christians die to sin and are raised up in a juridical sense in God's sight in the historical death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection.
2. They die to sin and are raised in a baptismal sense in their baptism (and for Cranfield as an evangelical and also a paedobaptist this was not to be separated from the individual's own personal faith).
3. They are called to die to sin and rise to newness of life daily and hourly in a moral sense.
4. They will die to sin and be raised up to resurrection life finally and irreversibly at their actual death in an eschatological sense.²⁷

The similarity between this and the mediaeval pattern is immediately obvious; the latter must surely have been present in Cranfield's unconscious mind. In this case we might hesitate to use the term 'literal' for the first moment, since it is rather spiritually true of those who are going to believe. But it does refer literally to what has happened historically, and perhaps that very term 'historical' might be more apt.

Here, then, we have what I would regard as a valid example of the mediaeval approach to a New Testament concept, and one that is exceedingly fruitful in bringing out its full sense. Cranfield believed that Paul moved to and fro between some of these different senses of dying and rising with Christ in the course of his exposition, and thus this analytical grid was fruitful in understanding better the passage as a whole. The difference, however, may be that Cranfield obviously believed that these various senses were all present to the mind of Paul: they are aspects or

²⁷ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), I, 299-300.

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facets of a phenomenon which cannot be tied down to one moment in time (say water baptism).

The mediaeval approach has been defended by David Steinmetz in a short but significant essay.²⁸ He contrasts it with the historical-critical approach which he identifies as the search for the one meaning intended by the original human author. We may supplement his comment by pointing out that the failure of the historical-critical method was that it was not interested in application; sometimes one gets the impression that if it has explained a text in the sense of showing how it came into being (e.g. on the basis of particular sources) then it has accomplished its job; the question of truth and applicability is side-stepped so that in theory anybody, believer or unbeliever, can share in the investigation.

For the mediaevalists, however, the meaning is not restricted to what the original author intended or thought that he had said, but there can be further implicit meaning that becomes obvious only to later readers. But this does not open the flood gates so that anything goes. Steinmetz sees rather a field of possible meanings outside of which lies eisegesis. He then illustrates this from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16) where different interpreters took it in different ways:

1. As a picture of the lifespan of an individual, to encourage people to come to Christ late in life.
2. As a picture of salvation-history to show how God welcomed the Gentiles at the last moment and undercut any advantage the Jews who came before them might have had.
3. As a picture of infants who die after only a brief period of service to God but are still rewarded like everybody else.
4. As a refutation of the doctrine of proportionality (our reward is proportionate to the work we have done for God).

All four, says Steinmetz, emphasise the generosity of God and thus 'all fall within the field of possible meanings created by the story itself'. Thus meaning involves the listeners and not just the author. The Bible contains both text and spirit, and we must recognise the existence of both.

I can see what he is getting at, but is it expressed the best possible way? To pick up what I said a moment ago: Is this not another way of putting the situation that a text has one meaning but can have several applications,

²⁸ D. C. Steinmetz, 'The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis', in Fowl, *Interpretation*, 26-38 (originally in *Theology Today* 37 [1980], 27-38).

depending on the different situations that arise and the different readers? The applications are governed by the meaning, which creates what Steinmetz calls the 'field of possible meanings'.

Two, or rather three, points may be made by way of clarification. First, it is arguable that the literal meaning shows how the text instantiates a particular divine principle or action. The various other senses or applications are then fresh examples of the same divine principle or action. Thus the Christ-event is the supreme occasion of the powerful, redemptive love of God seen in the exodus event. So the further meanings or applications or whatever we call them are not so much further aspects of meaning of the text or what is described in the text, but rather of the theological truths that come to particular expression in the text.

Second, when Steinmetz talks of limiting the field of possible meanings, the parameters for interpretation of the Old Testament are in fact set by the New Testament with its revelation in and through the whole of the Christ-event, which for me includes both the life, deeds, teaching, death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ and also the continuing working and revelation of God in the coming of the Spirit, the creation of the church and the inscripturation of the teaching of the apostles and the other inspired writers of Scripture.

Hence I draw the important point that that the applications or fresh meanings arise out of a dialectic between the original text and early Christian insight and experience, as reflected in the New Testament, that is carried on by later readers, rather than being simply between Scripture and its subsequent readers (as would appear to be the case in reader-response criticism where no limits seem to be placed on what the readers may do with the text).

This in fact leads to a third point, for which I am indebted to N. Kiuchi. In his discussion of the permanent value of Leviticus, he makes the point that the laws contained in it represent the expression of latent purposes and ideals such as the principle of sacrifice, the moral distinction between clean and unclean, and the commandment of neighbourly love, so that the New Testament does not so much moralise and spiritualise what was on a lower level as rather bring out in a deeper way what lay behind the laws. So, for example, 'when Jesus averred that cleanness and uncleanness are matters of the heart (Mk 7:20-23), contrary to the commonly held view, it was not a moralization of a "cultic" idea. Rather, Jesus merely pointed out the original meaning of cleanness and uncleanness'. Thus the teaching in Leviticus remains relevant to believers as it points to these important matters.²⁹

²⁹ N. Kiuchi, 'Leviticus, Book of', in *DOTP*, 522-32 (531).

CONCLUSION

How does all this affect our interpretation of Scripture?

1. For me it strengthens the case for the classic distinction between meaning and significance or between meaning and fresh application, and it reinforces the duty of the interpreter to attend to both parts of the process, both the research on the original meaning that creates the control over applications and the determination of valid applications, specifically the application to ourselves and the audience whom we face as interpreters and preachers. There is clearly much to be learned from past applications as we consider their validity in the light of the text and discriminate between the valid and the invalid, but also as we use them as clues to help us forward in our own task of interpretation for today.

2. We have seen something of a rationale for this process within the canon itself as we have seen the development of the Old Testament canon with its implications for the understanding of the books in it and then the incorporation of the Old Testament as the Scriptures of Christian believers, both at the level of use in the early church as recorded in the New Testament and then as part of the twofold canon that commended itself to the developing church culminating in the general recognition of it in the fourth century.

3. The study of Scripture thus contains two elements. One is the better understanding of the original meaning and the meaning at different stages in the canonical process. The other is the way in which Scripture can speak anew to us through fresh application. When John Robinson made his famous comment that 'the Lord hath yet more truth and light to break forth from his holy Word', he was presumably thinking of this latter activity rather than the former.

DO THE PSALMS SPEAK TODAY?

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In today's spiritual climate in the west might the Book of Psalms become a key entry point to the gospel of God's redemptive love in Jesus Christ? This paper is an attempt to answer that question.

Certain features of the contemporary spiritual climate in many modern societies indicate that, in seeking to impact today's sacred landscape, the Psalms face two challenges. The first is the threat that the process of secularisation will ultimately marginalise religion to the extent that it will cease to play any public role in society. The other is the phenomenon known as the 'subjective turn' which manifests itself in the growing number of people who are investigating various forms of spirituality in a search for meaning and identity. I now take a brief look at each of these phenomena in turn.

SECULARISATION

Over the past sixty years there has been a steep decline in Europe and Australasia in traditional Christian practices. For example, in England, Scotland and Wales, taken together, church attendance fell by one-third between 1980 and 2005.¹ A similar trend is discernible in western Europe.² The decline is most notable among young adults.³

Sociologists attribute this decline to the secularisation of western societies.⁴ Steve Bruce, professor of sociology in the University of

¹ P. Brierley (ed.), *UK Christian Handbook Religious Trends 4* (London, 2003b), Table 2.24. Cf. P. Brierley and F. Macdonald, *Prospects for Scotland: From a Census of the Churches in 1984* (London/Edinburgh, 1985); P. Brierley and F. Macdonald, *Prospects for Scotland 2000: Trends and Tables the 1994 Scottish Church Census* (Edinburgh/London, 1995).

² G. Davie, *Europe—The Exceptional Case: Parameters of Faith in the Modern World* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002), 6-7.

³ P. Brierley, *The Tide is Running Out: What the English Church Survey Reveals* (London: Christian Research, 2000), 94-5; cf. P. Brierley, *Turning the Tide: The Challenge Ahead—Report of the 2002 Scottish Church Census* (London/Edinburgh: Christian Research, 2003a); G. Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford, 2000), 77.

⁴ Cf. D. Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford, 1978); S. Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (Oxford, 1996a).

Aberdeen, contends with great vigour that the process of secularisation will inevitably lead to the marginalisation, if not the disappearance, of the Christian churches. However, not all researchers agree that secularisation inevitably leads to the demise of religion. They cite the United States as an example of a highly secularised society where churches and other places of worship continue to be still relatively well attended, despite an overall downward trend in membership especially in mainline churches.⁵ Furthermore, in Europe some studies suggest that religion is not so much dying as assuming new shapes as it gives way to 'spirituality'.⁶ There are also evidences of a similar trend in the United States in the non-churchgoing population.⁷ The *European Values Study* has found evidence that across western Europe in the 1990s belief in God, confidence in the church, and the proportion of people claiming to gain comfort from religion all increased.⁸ Such signs of persistent religiosity have prompted Grace Davie of the University of Exeter to postulate that a 'common religion' exists among a large segment of the European population who may no longer wish to 'belong' to religious institutions, nevertheless desire to affirm some sort of faith in the supernatural.

THE 'SUBJECTIVE TURN'

Alongside this 'common religion' that portrays a distant affiliation with Christian churches, there is an increasing proportion of people aged 45 and over are turning to alternative forms of spirituality which are often grouped under the catch-all title of 'New Age.' Paul Heelas of the University of Lancaster describes this trend as 'self-religion' because, in his view, it reflects the 'subjective turn' that some discern to be the defining

⁵ R. Gill, *The Myth of the Empty Church* (London, 1993), 9; W.C. Roof and W. McKinney, 'American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future' in T.E. Dowdy and P.H. McNamara (eds.), *Religion: North American Style* (New Brunswick, 1997), 68.

⁶ Cf. G. Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, 1994); Davie, 2000; D. Hay and K. Hunt, 'Understanding the Spirituality of People who don't go to Church: A Report on the Findings of the Adults' Spirituality Project at the University of Nottingham', 2000; G. Lynch, *After Religion: 'Generation X' and the Search for Meaning* (London, 2002).

⁷ R. Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (London, 1998); W.C. Roof, *Generation of Seekers* (Berkeley, 1994) and *Spiritual Marketplace* (Princeton, 1999); S.M. Hoover, 'Religion, Media and Identity: Theory and Method in Audience Research on Religion and Media' in J.P. Mitchell and S. Marriage (eds.), *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture* (London, 2003).

⁸ Cf. L. Halman, *The European Values Study: A Third Wave* (Tilburgh, 2001).

cultural development in contemporary western culture.⁹ In this 'subjective turn' people turn away from external authorities towards the autonomous self. One's unique subjective life becomes the only seat of authority as the autonomous self acts on the basis of intuition, inner promptings, the promotion of its own wellbeing, or in the response to another person's need, etc. Heelas and his co-researcher Linda Woodhead detect in the growth of such alternative spiritualise evidence of 'a tectonic shift in the sacred landscape that will prove even more significant than the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century'.¹⁰

The New Age movement is not the only context of contemporary alternative spiritualities. Tom Beaudoin, a North American Catholic analyst of religious trends, has published a study of the way North American young adults – popularly known as 'Generation X' – interact with music videos in order to search for meaning and transcendence. Beaudoin detects in Generation X popular culture 'four main religious themes that represent strands of a lived theology'. These themes are: (1) a deep suspicion of religious institutions; (2) an emphasis on the sacred nature of human experience; (3) the setting of suffering in a religious context; and (4) an exploration of faith and ambiguity. Fundamental to Beaudoin's interpretation of GenX culture are two assumptions. First, that young adults find interacting with popular culture to be a source of meaning. Second, that for them 'meaning-making' is a 'spiritual' exercise.¹¹ The first assumption represents a consensus in contemporary North American media studies, and the second is shared by many current studies on religion and media.¹²

In summary, these studies indicate that western churches are fulfilling their ministry in the face of two significant socio-religious trends. On the one hand, there is the secularisation of society which is attempting to

⁹ Charles Taylor's analysis of contemporary culture perceives it as being characterised by a 'massive subjective turn' towards 'a new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths'. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 26.

¹⁰ P. Heelas and L. Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford, 2005), 2.

¹¹ T. Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (London, 2002), 42.

¹² S.M. Hoover and K. Lundby (eds.), *Rethinking Media, Religion and Culture* (London, 1997a) and 'Introduction: Setting the Agenda' in Hoover and Lundby, 1997b; S.M. Hoover and L.S. Clark, *Practicing Religion in the Age of Media: Explorations in Media, Religion and Culture* (New York, 2002); Mitchell and Marriage, 2003; S.M. Hoover, L. Scholfield Clark and D.F. Alters (eds.), *Media, Home and Family* (London, 2004).

marginalise religious practice by shunting it into the private sphere. On the other, there is a process of sacralisation which, in part at least, may be a reaction against the spiritual vacuum produced by secularisation, and in which new spiritualities of seeking are replacing the older and more traditional spiritualities of belonging.

NEW AUDIENCE FOR THE PSALMS?

In my recent doctoral research among Edinburgh University students aged 18-35, I set out to explore whether the Book of Psalms might hold some appeal for those engaged in this 'new spirituality of seeking'¹³ and thus provide a doorway into the Bible as a whole. I invited a small and non-random sample of Edinburgh University students to undertake a daily meditative 'Psalm Journey' over a period of three weeks. Most of these respondents were on or beyond the fringe of the churches, but all expressed a degree of commitment to and involvement in exploring spirituality.

The contemporary spiritual search presents both a problem and an opportunity for the churches. The problem is that many of the new seekers pass the churches by, dismissing them as unspiritual and rationalist. The opportunity is that a growing number of people in our modern societies, dissatisfied with 'the acids of modernity,' are looking for a spiritual perspective that will enable them to find meaning and purpose in life. I set out to explore whether this contemporary spiritual search might constitute a promising new audience for the Psalms of the Bible. Do these Psalms, which Eugene Peterson – the North American writer on spiritual theology - reminds us, have been the fundamental form of spiritual exercise practised by the church for two thousand years, offer a spiritual gold mine for today's generation of seekers to explore and exploit? The potential of the Psalms can be expressed borrowing the metaphor used by Ambrose, the fourth century bishop of Milan. He called the Psalms a 'gymnasium,' which suggests that in these ancient poems spiritual seekers can find sacred health and fitness. The question I sought to answer is: Will today's spiritual seekers work the mine? Will they visit the gymnasium for daily workouts?

Reference to Ambrose illustrates Prothero's claim that the Psalms have provided 'the breviary and the viaticum of humanity' over many generations.¹⁴ The long history of the Psalms as a spiritual resource commends them to a generation searching for spiritual roots. The Christian tradition

¹³ Wuthnow, *op. cit.* 4.

¹⁴ R.E. Prothero, *The Psalms in Human Life* (London, 1904), 2.

goes back to our Lord himself who interpreted his calling and destiny in terms of the Psalms. It further expresses itself in St Paul's Letter to the Colossians where he exhorts his audience to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God with gratitude in their hearts (Col. 3.16). The practice was commended by Athanasius, the fourth century bishop of Alexandria who wrote:

I believe that the whole of human existence, both the dispositions of the soul and the movements of our thoughts, have been measured out and encompassed in those very words of the Psalter.¹⁵

The liturgical and devotional use of the Psalms was revived by Calvin in the sixteenth century. The introduction to his Commentary on the Psalms contains these words:

What various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury, it were difficult to describe I have been wont to call this book, not inappropriately an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.¹⁶

In our own time the North American Old Testament theologian Walter Brueggemann has declared that in the Psalms 'we enter into the prayer and song of common humanity.'¹⁷ This claim is authenticated by many. For example, Dorothy Day, an early twentieth century protagonist for women's rights in the USA, testifies to the comfort she found in the Psalms while confined in jail for picketing the White House on behalf of women's suffrage. 'My heart swelled with joy and thankfulness for the Psalms' she writes. Another example is Brian Keenan, the Irish writer who was held hostage in Beirut, Lebanon, by a movement known as Islamic Jihad from April 1986 to August 1990. For most of this time Keenan was blindfolded and held in small, very dark rooms with no light. He was fed once a day with food being slid under the door. He tells us in his book *An Evil Cradling*: 'I found great solace in reading the Psalms. The anguished suffering mind that had created them and had cried out to God in his suffering reflected much of our own condition. Exhausted with profound questions and never finding an answer, we took relief in devotional moments.'

¹⁵ Gregg, *op. cit.* 126.

¹⁶ J. Calvin, J. King (tr.), *Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids, 1979b), xxxvii.

¹⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Winona, MN, 1982), 16.

My earlier brief survey of the contemporary sacred landscape in the western world prompts the question: Will the secularization theory or the subjectivization thesis, or a combination of both, bring this three thousand year tradition of psalmic spirituality to an end? Projecting into the future the trends of the past fifty years may well prompt many to give an affirmative answer. On the other hand, we must take into account that trends are not necessarily prophetic, as is well illustrated by Peter Berger's forecast made to the *New York Times* in 1968 that by AD 2000 'religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture.'¹⁸ Moreover, a *theological* view of the future goes beyond extrapolating from past and present trends. Jürgen Moltmann distinguishes between a sociological and theological approach. The future that is calculable by extrapolation and projection he calls *futurum*, the future that will be. He contrasts *futurum* with a second concept which he designates *adventus*, the future that comes.¹⁹ Moltmann's concept of *adventus* is grounded on his theology of hope which rests on the fundamental insight of the Old Testament regarding promise and fulfilment.²⁰

This fundamental insight finds expression in the Psalms as well as in the Prophets. Brueggemann reminds us that 'Israel's liturgy is regularly a voicing of God's alternative future that stands over against every present.'²¹ For this reason alone it is surely appropriate to test the potential of the Psalms to challenge and possibly reverse the trends of secularist irreligion and of selfist religiosity. Trends in society are, of course, important, and are to be analysed for indications of God's purposes (cf. 1 Chronicles 12.32), but Moltmann implies that such analysis ought to be tempered by an expectation of the future, under a sovereign God, bringing something radically new which is not already contained in the present.

¹⁸ Todd Johnson, 'World Christian Trends 2005', http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/page_print.php, downloaded 18/11/2005.

¹⁹ J. Moltmann. *The Experiment Hope*. Ed. and tr. M.D. Meeks. (London, 1975), 52-53. J. Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*. Tr. M. Kohl. (London, 1979), 29-30. cf R. Bauckham. *Moltman: Messianic Theology in the Making*. (Basingstoke 1987), 43.

²⁰ J. Moltmann. *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*. Tr. J.W. Leitch. (London, 1967), 78.

²¹ W. Brueggemann, P.D. Miller (ed.), *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure and Theme* (Minneapolis, 1992), 53.

ANCIENT PSALMISTS AND POSTMODERN SEEKERS

For this reason we need not be discouraged by the fact that the psalms reflect an ancient epistemology and ontology of Iron-age Israelites that differs markedly from the epistemology and ontology of those who constitute today's 'generation of seekers' in the West. Indeed, the history of Christian missions suggests that such clashes are not insurmountable, for there are many examples from different eras of the message of the Psalms (and of other parts of the Bible) speaking meaningfully and convincingly to audiences who initially thought and lived within very different frames of discourse²². Furthermore, alongside this acknowledgement of the different universes of discourse inhabited by the psalmists on the one hand and contemporary 'seekers' on the other, two pieces of data from a pilot research project I conducted in preparation for my main project suggest there is an overlap between these two worlds. First, a majority of the participants in the pilot project affirmed the usefulness of the Bible in exploring spirituality; second, during the focus group discussions on the usefulness of the Bible in exploring spirituality, the psalms were spontaneously suggested as having special potential. Admittedly this evidence comes from a relatively small sample; nevertheless it points to a possible correlation between ancient psalmists and postmodern seekers.

This potential correlation raises some fascinating questions:

1. How far does the robust psalmic spirituality that holds God to account – even urging him to 'Wake up!' (Ps. 59.5) – attract those engaged in what Beaudoin²³ describes as the irreverent spiritual quest of Generation X?
2. How far does the dialogue between the ego and the self found in certain psalms (Pss. 42.5, 11; 43.5; 103.1, 22; 104.1; 146.1) resonate with those who speak the *lingua franca* of the New Age which Heelas²⁴ describes as self-spirituality?
3. If, as Calvin claims, the psalms vividly reveal the 'anatomy of all the parts of the [human] soul', to what extent do they resonate with those who are intent on exploring the inner self as a site where spiritual realities may be constructed?

²² Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*. (Harmsworth, Baltimore: Ringwood, 1964).

²³ Beaudoin, xiii.

²⁴ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. (Oxford: Blackwell/Cambridge: Massachusetts, 1996, 18.

4. How far does the subversive attitude in the psalms to the dominant culture discerned by Brueggemann attract devotees of counter-cultural spirituality?²⁵
5. How far does the plea in some psalms for healing (e.g. Ps. 38.3-10) resonate with those attracted by the therapeutic emphases in contemporary spirituality?²⁶

I raise these questions not to attempt to answer them in this paper, but to suggest that the fact such questions can be asked presents a *prima facie* case for anticipating that the Psalms can indeed speak today.

Such questions informed my preparation of the 'popular hermeneutics' that were given to Psalm Journey participants along with the text of the psalms. The aim of these brief 'helps' was to build bridges between ancient text and contemporary audience context. Each popular hermeneutic offered some simple questions that the audience might put to the psalm in view as a self-stimulus to enter the text and to relate it to their own experience and situation. But on no occasion did the popular hermeneutic attempt to exegete the text. This was in accordance with the Bible Society tradition of providing readers' helps which encourage engagement with the text, but refrain from attempting to say what the text means²⁷. I borrowed my terminology from Gerard Loughlin²⁸ who writes of the desirability of finding a 'minimal hermeneutic that allows the text to speak for itself'. In addition to questions designed to prompt a fusing of the horizon of the text with the horizon of the readers or users, I provided some brief annotations containing cultural information that was available to the original users of the text, but which is generally unavailable to today's users. Examples are brief explanations of terms like 'the wicked,' 'enemies,' 'Zion,' and the provision of some cross-references.

Moving from the theoretical potential of the Psalms to what they actually accomplished in the Psalm Journey, I now wish to highlight the impact made by the Journey on my respondents, and also what this may imply concerning the potential of the Psalms to become a gateway to the wider canon of Scripture. Before doing this I need to stress that my study was not longitudinal and that it focused on only six psalms. Therefore,

²⁵ Heelas, *op. cit.*, 54-8.

²⁶ Heelas, *op. cit.*, 116, 147; Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, 25-7.

²⁷ P. Ellingworth, *Study Bibles: United Bible Societies Guidelines for Study Bibles*. Unpublished paper. (Reading, 1992).

²⁸ Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 77.

what follows is a brief account of the initial impact made by selected psalms over a three-week period on a small and somewhat elite sample of respondents. The findings suggest that the Psalms have a significant potential to impact today's generation of spiritual seekers in five distinct but inter-related ways.

REFOCUSING HUMAN SPIRITUALITY.

First, the Psalms demonstrate a potential to refocus our spirituality. We have already noted that much of today's spirituality is focused on the autonomous self. Spiritual meaning and power for many of today's seekers is sought not from on high, but from within. Meaning and enlightenment are sought in the self rather than in the soul. Eugene Peterson²⁹ argues that much contemporary spirituality 'has become widely secularised in our present culture and consequently reduced to mean simply "vitality" or "centered energy" or "hidden springs of exuberance" or "an aliveness that comes from within." Peterson³⁰ contends that 'in our current culture "soul" has given way to "self" as the term of choice to designate who and what we are. Self is the soul minus God.' In passing it might be helpfully noted that Eugene Peterson sees the focus on the self as constituting a problem in the church as well as in alternative spiritualities. He claims that the self has become the hub of much Christian spirituality even when a traditional theistic framework is retained. 'Our culture,' he writes, 'presents us with forms of prayer that are mostly self-expression Such prayer is dominated by a sense of self. But prayer, mature prayer is dominated by a sense of God. Prayer rescues us from a preoccupation with ourselves and pulls us into adoration and pilgrimage to God'³¹.

The question I want to address here is: Can the Psalms move the focus on this spiritual search from the self to the soul? Is it realistic for Peterson to claim that 'The Psalms are the cemetery in which our Lord the Spirit leads us to get out of ourselves, to rescue our prayers from self-absorption and set us on the way to God-responsiveness'³²?

The Psalm Journey provides some evidence to substantiate Peterson's claim. Although there were no 'Damascus road' experiences, several respondents showed signs of moving towards the transcendental spirituality of the psalmists, although, as far as I am aware, none of these left behind

²⁹ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*. (London: Colorado Springs, 2005), 29.

³⁰ Peterson, *op. cit.* 37.

³¹ Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 102-103.

³² Peterson *op. cit.*, 104.

a 'subjective-life' approach. Evidence of this move from the self towards the soul is found in respondents' journals and in the decision of some (unprompted by me) to attend church. One of those who attended church (and later a 'Christianity Explored' course) had a Hindu upbringing and was influenced by Rama Krishna; he had no previous first hand experience of Christianity. Although it would be unwise to interpret these moves towards a psalmic spirituality as more than 'early shoots,' they indicate that the churches might profitably explore further creative ways of using the Psalms that would facilitate these ancient songs becoming for the growing contemporary audience of spiritual seekers a cemetery of the self and an incubator of the soul. The fact that all respondents indicated that they enjoyed doing the Psalm Journey leads me into the second potential impact of the Psalms today.

SANCTIFYING HUMAN EMOTIONS.

Secondly the Psalms have potential to sanctify our emotions. In their very thought-provoking book entitled *The Cry of the Soul: How our Emotions reveal our deepest questions about God*³³, Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III demonstrate repeatedly that the Psalms are full of human emotion. Allender is President and professor of counselling at Seattle's Mars Hill Graduate School, while Longman serves as professor of biblical studies at Westmont College in Santa Barbara.

Both of these scholars have been strongly influenced by their Presbyterian theological education and have a high commitment to expressing their faith in intellectual terms. John A. Mackay reminds us that 'Presbyterianism, more perhaps than any other Protestant confession, has emphasized the importance of loving God with the mind'³⁴. It is not surprising, therefore, that in these writers opinion emotions seems to be one of the least reliable forces. Nevertheless in this book they argue that our emotions are one of the strongest influences that guide our lives³⁵. 'Emotion,' they write 'links our internal and external worlds.' They contend 'a failure to feel leaves us barren and distant from God and others. We often seem caught between extremes of feeling too much or not enough'³⁶.

Allender and Longman argue that the Psalms help us to explore our emotions so that we come to know God more fully. 'Every emotion, though

³³ Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III, *The Cry of the Soul: How our emotions reveal our deepest questions about God*. (Colorado Springs, 1994).

³⁴ John McKay, *The Presbyterian Way of Life*, (Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ, 1960), 37

³⁵ McKay, *op. cit.* 21.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

horizontally provoked, nevertheless reflects something about the vertical dimension: our relationship with God³⁷. They go on: 'Far more important than the way in which emotions reveal the movement of the heart is the way in which our most difficult emotions – anger, fear, jealousy, despair, contempt, and shame – uniquely reveal something about the heart of God. Our positive emotions, of course – joy, peace, pleasure, and others – have equal potential to teach us about the nature of God. But the darker struggles with emotion can point us to a priceless glimpse of God's character through scriptural revelation of God's own emotions'³⁸.

Regarding such darker struggles, most Psalm Journey respondents found it particularly difficult to handle the psalmist's anger in Psalm 55 where it is expressed itself in a desire for vengeance. The psalmist, as you will recall, has been betrayed by someone he had regarded as 'my equal, my companion, my familiar friend' (v 13), prompting the poet to long that his betrayer might meet a swift and premature death. Suddenly switching from singular to plural – a rhetorical device which, according to Dahood,³⁹ is not uncommon in imprecations – the psalmist prays with impassioned language: 'Let death come upon them; let them go down alive to Sheol; for evil is in their homes and in their hearts' (v 15).

Participants in the Psalm Journey are not by any means alone in finding such a vengeful reaction to an enemy unsettling, and, indeed, numerous commentators take the poet of Psalm 55 to task. George A F Knight, for example, in the popular *Daily Study Bible* commentary on the Psalms dismisses the psalmist's vengeance in Psalm 55 as a 'terrible misunderstanding of the plan and purpose of God for his children in this world which he has created.'⁴⁰ On the other hand, it is such yearnings for vengeance that prompts Walter Brueggemann to say 'The Psalms do "tell it as it is" with us' who live in a world divided by ethno-religious hatred and revenge.⁴¹

Although the respondents were critical of the vindictiveness of the psalmist, several used the psalm to explore and evaluate their own anger. In particular one female respondent was so moved by what she saw in Psalm 55 that she shared with the group the intense pain she had felt when her former boyfriend broke off their relationship. She made the following entry in her journal after her first meditation on the psalm:

³⁷ Allender and Longman, *op. cit.* 13-14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁹ M. Dahood, *Psalms. Vol. 1.* Anchor Bible 16. (Garden City, 1970).

⁴⁰ George A. F. Knight, *Daily Study Bible, vol. 1,* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1983), 257.

⁴¹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 58.

The psalm is in many ways an image of my former relationship. Together we built a city with strong walls made of love, but often we did not pay any attention to it, preoccupied as we were with the strife and violation of covenants that took place in the marketplace. We expected total loyalty from each other, and when felt let down we both wanted revenge and wished that some higher power would teach the other a lesson he or I would not forget. And in wanting revenge, the violation of the covenant was mutual and only the beginning of a vicious circle of despair.

This lady was not alone in finding that Psalm 55 provided a vehicle through which one could express personal anger, suggesting that Walter Brueggemann has good reason to underline the positive value of the cursing psalms. For him these psalms are a spiritual asset, not a liability. ‘Willy nilly,’ he says, ‘we are vengeful creatures. Thus these harsh psalms must be fully embraced as our own so that our rage and indignation may be fully owned, expressed and yielded to the mercy of God.’⁴² A psalm of vengeance, Brueggemann maintains ‘is not action. It is words, a flight of passion in imagination’.⁴³ Brueggemann goes further, contending that in these psalms ‘vengeance is not simply a psychological but a theological matter’ in that through them the vengeance is referred to God.⁴⁴ ‘And when vengeance is entrusted to God, the speaker is relatively free from its power.’ Brueggemann concedes the dissonance between the cursing psalms and the Sermon on the Mount, but suggests that this is in fact a creative tension. ‘In the Gospel,’ he acknowledges, ‘Christians know “a more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31). But,’ he goes on, ‘it is not the first way. My hunch is that there is a way beyond the psalms of vengeance, but it is a way through them and not around them.’⁴⁵

Reflections by my respondents on the vengeance of Psalm 55 were both positive and negative, but overall they can be interpreted as an openness to Brueggemann’s claim that such texts can provide a stepping stone towards the ‘more excellent way.’ From the emotion of anger I now turn to the experience of suffering.

ILLUMINATING HUMAN SUFFERING.

Third, the Psalms have potential to illuminate our suffering. I selected Psalm 22 in the hope that it would resonate with the strong interest expressed by my audience in resolving pain. The desirability of resolving

⁴² Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms*, 1982: 68.

⁴³ Brueggemann, *op. cit.*, 58-59.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

suffering was one of the six main audience values identified in my pilot study, and the experience of pain, both physical and mental, is regarded as a characteristic of Generation X.⁴⁶ Tom Beaudoin's exploration of GenX spirituality provides many examples from popular music and art forms of GenX fascination with pain. In incorporating this focus I was, of course, aware that suffering plays a central role in Christianity, with Christians of all confessions consistently affirming that suffering can be redemptive.

Interestingly, Psalm 22 evoked the largest proportion (two-thirds) of audience internalisation of the text, an internalisation reflecting a general embrace of suffering as well as stimulating empathy with four different types of personal suffering: homelessness, low self-esteem, ostracism, and stress.

Beaudoin's study is published in his book *Virtual Faith* (2002) and is based on a review and analysis of pop culture, rather than on qualitative audience research. Beaudoin, himself an Xer, identifies two reasons why a concern with suffering distinguishes Xers from their parents' 'boomer' generation. The first is sociological:

When a generation bears the weight of many failures – including AIDS, divorce, abuse, poor schools, recessions, youth poverty, teen suicide, outrageous educational and living expenses, failure of governmental and religious institutions, national debt, high taxes, environmental devastation, drugs, parents that need to be parented, violence, unstable economic security, premature loss of childhood – how can suffering not be an important part of one's identity.⁴⁷

Beaudoin's second reason for the GenX preoccupation with suffering is philosophical. Generation X, he maintains, is 'overwhelmed by diversities of all sorts' that characterise 'this postmodern moment.' He goes on: 'In our contemporary situation it seems that everything we do and are is culturally "made" and not innately "given." In this moment of profound ambiguity, suffering is what unites Xers not only with each other but also with other generations'.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ I have regarded Generation X to be composed of those born between 1963 and 1983, that is, those who were in their 20's and 30's when my study began in 2003. This date span is two years later than the original cohort proposed by Howe and Strauss (1993); it begins two years earlier than the smaller cohort proposed by Barna (1994) and followed by Brierley (2001), but ends in the same year.

⁴⁷ Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, 104. cf. 111.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

If these are the reasons for his generation's suffering and dysfunction, what are the expressions of such suffering? Beaudoin's reply is that the suffering he and his peers experience 'expresses itself in psychological and spiritual crises of meaning. Clothing styles and music videos suggest feelings of rage, with the videos expressing this in apocalyptic images. Despair is common and occasionally leaps overboard into nihilism'.⁴⁹ Such suffering, he contends, sparks spirituality because 'suffering is a sort of "boundary experience" that forces us to confront questions about our own human limits.' When human beings suffer they want to know why, for how long, and who or what is responsible. 'If you ask that question broadly enough,' he says, 'you wonder about God and religious experience, whether it is in emotional, resentful, dismissive, ironic, debased, or intellectual ways'.⁵⁰ Beaudoin concludes that 'in and of itself, suffering makes Xers at least pseudoreligious'.⁵¹

There is much in Beaudoin's description of Xer spirituality that resonates with the way my respondents' description of their experience. Both they and he are conscious of a spiritual crisis of meaning. The longing of respondents for 'connection beyond the immediate' and their awareness of a 'personal pursuit of meaning or of place and of enlightenment' echoes Beaudoin's claim that the Generation X pop culture protest against suffering is symptomatic of the despair of human beings of finding any meaning for suffering in themselves.⁵²

In the light of GenX preoccupation with suffering it is surely not insignificant that the most common poetic genre found in the Psalms is lament – another feature of the Psalter that, I think, highlights the great potential of the Psalms to attract today's spiritual seekers. After suffering, doubt is a motive of many psalmic laments. This also makes the Psalms intimately accessible to today's seekers.

SACRALISING HUMAN DOUBT.

Fourth, the Psalms have potential to sacralise our doubts. One of the texts selected was Psalm 74. The reason was that I thought that its theme – a lament on the destruction / desecration of the Jerusalem temple – provided an appropriate text to explore my audience's suspicion of institutions. Psalm 74 recalls with deep pathos what Brueggemann identifies as 'the focal, exemplar case in which Yahweh failed in defense of Yahweh's own

⁴⁹ Ibid., 97.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 97.

⁵¹ Ibid., 119.

⁵² Ibid., 98.

dynasty, temple, city, and people'.⁵³ The psalm is an anguished tribute to the power of Israel's faith in Yahweh to survive despite the traumatic loss of the nation's most sacred institution. In addition, the text raises fundamental questions about divine sovereignty in human history. Interestingly it was these questions more than the survival of Israel's faith that caught the attention of respondents.

Participants in the Psalm Journey were not slow to identify modern instances of religious violence that parallel the desecration of the temple. But in their meditation on this psalm it was theodicy – the justice of God – that becomes the burning issue. 'How can you still believe in God taking care of you when he leaves you alone in your darkest hours?' asked a female correspondent not yet quoted. The respondent of Hindu background resonates with the psalmist's plea that God should cease being a spectator of the disaster that had befallen his flock. Similar concerns about God's care and reliability were raised by several respondents while meditating on other psalms.

On the other hand, my Hindu respondent makes the point that Psalm 74 legitimates asking God hard questions, and thereby implies an openness to viewing such psalms of complaint as expressions of faith. In other words, he implies that lament psalms provide us with a means of finding what Robert Davidson calls 'the courage to doubt.' The language of lament, Claus Westermann reminds us, is juridical.⁵⁴ The complaints he says are 'accusations of God, not condemnations. They are appeals in order to bring about change.' Westermann suggests that the key is to take psalms of lament and psalms of praise together because 'polar thinking is so characteristic of Old Testament theology'.⁵⁵ Lament, he says, is the right side of the vocabulary of faith which can be appreciated only in tandem with praise, the left side. This suggests that faith and doubt are not necessarily opposites. They can coexist as they did in the father of the demon-possessed boy in the Gospels who cried out to Jesus: 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' (Mark 9.24). Doubt ought not to be confused with scepticism or nihilism. In the Psalms the expression of doubt is a religious exercise as psalmists, on their own behalf and on that of the community, bring their doubts to God. This sacralisation of doubt in the psalms is surely a challenge to us to expand the content of our public prayers so that they become vehicles that will carry contemporary doubt-

⁵³ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: testimony, dispute, advocacy*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 321.

⁵⁴ C. Westermann. 'The Complaint Against God'. Tr. A. Siedlecki 1998. In T. Linafelt and T.K. Beal. *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*. (Minneapolis, 1998), 239.

⁵⁵ C. Westermann, *op. cit.*, 241.

ers to the throne of grace. This, of course, is only one of many challenges presented by the Psalms. Another is the way they prompt us to explore the rest of Scripture – a phenomenon that brings me to the final characteristic of the Psalms potential to impact contemporary spirituality.

ENLARGING HUMAN HORIZONS.

Fifth, the Psalms have potential to enlarge our horizons. Some days after the conclusion of the Psalm Journey I interviewed each respondent individually concerning their experience with the six psalms. All – apart from one exception and one ‘don’t know’ – indicated that following the Psalm Journey they believed that they were more likely to explore other psalms and other parts of the Bible than they had been before setting out on the Journey. Some had already begun doing so. In order to encourage such a transition, in preparing the minimal hermeneutics for the six psalms, I attempted to set these psalms in the wider context of Scripture by providing ‘inter-textual readings’ in the form of references to other biblical passages that had a relationship with the psalm. For example, in relation to Psalm 126 I provided narrative references to the Babylonian exile, and I gave Matthew 27 as an inter-textual reading for Psalm 22, pointing out that Jesus quoted the first verse of the psalm while on the cross.

In his book *Selling Worship*, Pete Ward of Kings College, London, contends that worship songs in charismatic services become for participants ‘narratives of encounter’ with God.⁵⁶ Ward maintains that, as such, these worship songs have a different dynamic from traditional hymn-singing which, he says, serve to bond the congregation together, to create points of transition in the service and to provide a means of response in the liturgy. Many of the songs in the Book of Psalms, while fulfilling all of these purposes attributed by Ward to traditional hymn-singing, are undoubtedly also narratives of encounter. Today’s users are challenged to enter into these ancient narratives and find in them their own personal story.

My respondents sought to do this. Some were able to enter the six poetic narratives more fully than others. One, a masters student, initially found it difficult to relate to Psalm 22 because its liturgical overtones awoke in him very negative memories of his Catholic school upbringing, creating what he describes as ‘a lot of baggage’ between him and the text. But persevering in his meditation by concentrating not so much on the words as on ‘the tone of the psalm,’ he came to appreciate the ‘strength

⁵⁶ Pete Ward, *Selling worship: how what we sing has changed the church*. (Bletchley: Paternoster Press, 2005), 198

and power' of the psalm's mood. So much so that he shared with the group how he had repeated the psalm on behalf of a student friend who was going through a particularly hard time. Others also were able to engage spiritually with the psalms indicated that interacting with the Psalms in a meditative way had increased the likelihood that they would go on and explore others books of the Bible.

One of my convictions arising out of the Psalm Journey is that if people interested in spirituality interact meditatively with the psalms and make the discovery that these ancient poems can become contemporary personal and group narratives of encounter, they will overcome postmodern suspicions of the Bible as a metanarrative and seriously consider being drawn into the drama of salvation and ultimately find meaning and purpose in a biblical worldview.

CONCLUSION

The Book of Psalms presents us with an effective missional tool that will help us reach today's generation of seekers who regard the churches as boring and irrelevant. By encouraging users to adopt a meditative reading of the psalms and by stimulating their imagination to explore the text we will help them (a) to refocus their spirituality from the self to the soul; (b) to sanctify their emotions so that even the darkest feelings draw them nearer to God; (c) to illuminate their suffering by learning to lament in the presence of God; (d) to sacralise their doubts by bringing these to God; and (e) to enlarge their horizons though discovering in the psalms narratives of personal encounter and gateways to God's master story. These findings illustrate the ongoing appeal of the Psalms and support Brueggemann's claim that contemporary spiritual seekers can find in these ancient prayer songs a portal to the wider biblical story.

THE POINTS OF CALVINISM: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

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If one gave credence only to anecdotal evidence, one might conclude that the venerable ‘Five Points of Calvinism’, customarily summarized by the acronym of TULIP, have an unclouded future. To name just two pieces of evidence, one could point to the publication by Zondervan in 2004 of Richard Mouw’s title of intriguing name, *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport* and the September, 2006 *Christianity Today* feature story by Collin Hansen, ‘Young, Restless and Reformed’.¹ Surely, any movement with enough momentum to generate a sympathetic volume from the pen of a major seminary president *and* a story in America’s widest-read Christian periodical – a story reflecting a massive ‘twenty-something’ movement, newly-enamored with these same ideas – is not about to expire. Who would have ever anticipated that the evangelicalism of ‘middle America’ reflected in *Christianity Today* would be displaying Calvinism’s contested ‘points’ in a story sidebar? And yet, there they were in all their vigor in the September 2006 issue.

It is the contention of this paper that all such recent appearances of a Calvinist resurgence notwithstanding, the modern Calvinist movement is conflicted – and conflicted over the manner in which appeals to these very points are to be made. I am referring to the points which have been summarized by the acronym TULIP.

I. A DISCERNIBLE DISTINCTION AS TO HOW APPEALS ARE BEING MADE TO TULIP

There exists what I will term a ‘sovereign grace’ school and an ‘apologetic’ school of Calvinism. Before elaborating on this distinction, I must first maintain that both tendencies accept that the points summarized by TULIP are a faithful kind of ‘theological shorthand’ for a much more

¹ Richard Mouw, *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). *Christianity Today*, September 2006, 32-38. Collin Hansen of *Christianity Today* has expanded his magazine article into a book of the same name, *Young, Restless and Reformed* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008).

comprehensive statement of Calvinist soteriology delivered at the international Reformed Synod hosted at Dordrecht, the Netherlands in 1618-19.² Both tendencies realize that this was a Synod summoned to deal with the challenge to Calvinist orthodoxy associated with the pastoral and academic career of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609).

The first tendency, which I designate 'sovereign grace', is concerned first and foremost to champion God's purposing an omnipotent electing grace towards undeserving persons who belonged to the common mass of fallen humanity.³ For the 'sovereign grace' Calvinist, the TULIP acronym is sacrosanct; it is a historic formula understood to have been bequeathed to us by our forebears. Dislike and scorn of TULIP is reckoned as being akin to negative attitudes towards Bible and Gospel; unbelievers misjudge them all. The second tendency, I designate 'apologetic', not because those displaying this tendency are any less zealous in their advocacy of an omnipotent electing grace, but because they show a heightened awareness that the doctrines summarized under the rubric of TULIP are capable of being grossly misunderstood. (Total Depravity, Limited Atonement and Irresistible Grace are the items most often admitted to be problematic). The Calvinist writers I term 'apologetic' are ready both to re-state the doctrines summarized in TULIP and to alter that acronym, as necessary, to more effectively communicate what they consider to be the actual meaning of the points.⁴

² The best two accounts in English of the international synod at Dordrecht are Allan F. Sell, *The Great Debate*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) and P.Y. DeJong, ed. *Crisis in the Reformed Churches* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Fellowship, 1968)

³ Examples of this 'sovereign grace' approach would be such items as David Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Documented and Defended*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963). Jack Seaton, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, (Edinburgh: Banner, 1970), and Arthur C. Custance, *The Sovereignty of Grace*, (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979).

⁴ Examples of the 'apologetic' school would include such writers as Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism: A Study Guide*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), John R. DeWitt, author of *What is the Reformed Faith?*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1981); R.C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); Roger Nicole, *Our Sovereign Savior*, (Fearn, U.K.: Christian Focus, 2002); James Boice, and Philip Ryken *The Doctrines of Grace*, (Wheaton: Crossway Publishers, 2002), and more recently both Richard Mouw, *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport*, (Zondervan: 2004) and Robert Peterson and Michael Williams, *Why I am Not an Arminian* (Inter Varsity: 2004). In a class by itself is the winsome popular work of Timothy F. George, *Amazing Grace: God's Initiative – Our Response*, (Nashville: Life Way Press, 2002).

II. THOUGH DISTINGUISHABLE IN THESE WAYS, BOTH TENDENCIES LABOR UNDER A COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING.

Though my personal sympathies are entirely with the ‘apologetic’ tendency, united in its determination to prevent gross misunderstandings of what TULIP represents, it appears that both tendencies are unwittingly working from a mistaken premise. And that mistaken premise is the common assumption that the acronym TULIP is itself historic. Both ‘sovereign grace’ and ‘apologetic’ Calvinists equally suppose that the points are a time-honored and authentic representation from the dim Calvinist past which gives us a proper distillation of what was achieved at Dordt in the face of the early Arminian challenge. This paper aims to establish that this is an unwarranted belief; in consequence we should be able to locate both more historically accurate methods of summarizing the message of Dordt *and* to consider some faithful contemporary ways of re-articulating this message. Let us proceed by moving from our own times to earlier days.

III.i EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE ACRONYM, TULIP, MAY BE OF MERE TWENTIETH-CENTURY ORIGIN.

Many can remember initially encountering the points of Calvinism through the large booklet of the writers, Steele and Thomas. When in 1963, David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas released their *The Five Points of Calvinism Defined, Defended, Documented*⁵ and in the process helped to popularize the TULIP acronym, a reader might easily have supposed that they were relaying a formula of considerable vintage. Steele and Thomas apparently believed so, and it appears that they were in good company. The renowned Reformation historian, the late Lewis W. Spitz of Stanford University (and formerly of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis) though he disapproved of the acronym, spoke of it in 1971 as by then a ‘familiar caricature of Calvin’s theology’.⁶ Wheaton College’s Earle E. Cairns had

Designed for Southern Baptist readers unfamiliar with, or suspicious of TULIP, the author substitutes the alternate acrostic ROSES.

⁵ Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1963. Roger Nicole, then of Gordon Divinity School, the predecessor of today’s Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, supplied a preface. The 2004 expanded reprint edition of the 1963 volume makes plain that the authors, David Steele (now deceased) and Curtis Thomas wrote their 1963 volume from within a ‘Bible Church’ stance.

⁶ Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, Vol. 2, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971), 417.

just as confidently used the acronym (he called it a ‘mnemonic device’) in his 1953 *Christianity Through the Centuries*.⁷

But to return to Steele and Thomas, the intriguing thing one finds on reading their booklet closely is that of the older works on Calvinist history and theology which they relied upon in their preparation to write on this subject, only *one* utilized the TULIP acronym. Ben A. Warburton, whose 1955 work *Calvinism: Its History and Basic Principles*⁸ was one of their chief authorities, did not. B.B. Warfield (1851-1921), the late professor of theology at Princeton had, neither in his short work, *The Plan of Salvation*, (1915) nor in the shorter pieces published in the posthumous collection of writings, *Calvin and Calvinism*, (1929) used this acronym.⁹ J.I. Packer, who contributed an ‘Introductory Essay’ to the 1959 reprint of John Owen’s particularistic *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1647), was clearly a resource for these authors; yet Packer did not use the acronym.¹⁰ The one clear source drawn on by Steele and Thomas which *did* employ the TULIP acronym was Loraine Boettner’s *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (1932).¹¹ Evidently then, Steele and Thomas were not the originators of TULIP but only among its most successful popularizers; the acronym has a shadowy history extending back to Boettner’s utilization of it, and perhaps beyond.¹²

III.ii THE TULIP ACRONYM IS EVEN MORE ELUSIVE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The nineteenth century had many advocates for Calvinism, and for the theology of Dordt; but not one emerges as an advocate of this acronym. Robert L. Dabney (1820-1898) of Union Seminary, Virginia, and subsequently Austin Seminary, Texas composed a small volume on the subject

⁷ Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, (Zondervan:1953), 336, 7.

⁸ Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1955. One discerns in a reading of Warburton that he writes from a context outside North America.

⁹ Warfield’s essay, ‘Calvinism’, which had originally appeared in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. 2 is reprinted in the *Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), V. 353-372. At p. 363, Warfield describes the points of Calvinism but does not employ the acronym.

¹⁰ I have consulted the introductory essay in a free-standing undated reprint, produced circa 1969. Note especially Packer’s description of the five points at p. 4.

¹¹ Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1932), 59, 60.

¹² Boettner’s discussion and use of TULIP is cautious and restrained.

in 1895. The Presbyterian from the American south was hardly an ‘eager beaver’ for the points, for he introduced his volume with the words ‘this title (the Five Points of Calvinism) is of little accuracy or worth; I use it to denote certain points of doctrine, because custom has made it familiar’.¹³ Like many writers of that century, he wrote on behalf of the points of Dordt and yet took liberty to describe them in his own way. He would discuss ‘Total Depravity’ but as part of a wider discussion of Original Sin and the Inability of the Will; he would *not* expound ‘Irresistible Grace’ but rather effectual calling or regeneration.¹⁴ Election, he expounded primarily in terms taken from his own denomination’s *Westminster Confession of Faith*; Particular redemption, *not* Limited Atonement was the way he expressed his conviction that the death of Christ served a design.¹⁵ He *did* espouse the Perseverance of the Saints in language familiar to those who know TULIP.

William Parks, was the mid-Victorian Anglican vicar of Openshaw, near Manchester. A high Calvinist in the tradition of Augustus Toplady (1740-1778), he utilized the season of Lent in 1856 to preach a series of sermons, published as *Sermons on the Five Points of Calvinism*.¹⁶ The high Calvinist organization, the Sovereign Grace Union, kept these sermons in print into the next century.¹⁷ But for all their associations with rigor, Parks’ sermon themes were hardly abrasive; ‘The Fall of Man’, ‘Election’, ‘Particular Redemption’, ‘Effectual Calling’, and ‘Final Perseverance’ were his way of articulating what he took to be the doctrinal legacy of Dordt. Horatius Bonar (1808-1889), the Scottish minister and hymn writer, had written in defense of Calvinistic doctrines in 1846 in

¹³ Robert L. Dabney, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, (Richmond: 1895). 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 8, 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 38, 60. This same doctrinal posture is discernible in the ministerial career of Dabney’s contemporary, B.M. Palmer (1818-1902). His biographer, Thomas Carey Johnson, reports of Palmer, of New Orleans ‘He even preached boldly and frequently on those points of Calvinism which have been so bitterly attacked in every generation, viz: Total Depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, efficacious grace, and perseverance therein unto the end’; Thomas Cary Johnson, *Life of B.M. Palmer*, (1906, Reprinted Edinburgh: Banner, 1987), 660. I am indebted to a colleague, Dr. Daphne Haddad, for this reference.

¹⁶ Note the brief reference to Parks in Ian J. Shaw, *High Calvinists in Action: Calvinism and the City: Manchester and London 1810-1860*, (Oxford: 2002), 17 and fn.33.

¹⁷ I have used the edition produced by Farncombe and Sons, (London: 1915).

a small volume of published letters, *Truth and Error*.¹⁸ In this volume, Bonar took up the doctrines emphasized at Dordt and felt at liberty to re-phrase them in what he believed to be a timely way. What under TULIP would be called Total Depravity, Bonar tackles as 'God's Will and Man's Will'; rather than Unconditional Election, he speaks of 'Predestination and Foreknowledge'. He will speak of neither Limited nor Particular Atonement by name, but simply of 'The Work of Christ'.¹⁹

C.H. Spurgeon (1834- 1892) devoted a chapter of his autobiography to describing his own Calvinist stance. He gladly identified himself as one believing and preaching the five Calvinist points, and yet refrained from identifying them in the manner we have grown accustomed to in our time. Typical of his viewpoint are the lines:

I do not believe we can preach the gospel if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called...²⁰

Here, admittedly, is but a sample of nineteenth century Calvinism; yet neither in the U.S.A., England, or Scotland were those ready to 'stand up' for Calvinism concerned to state the doctrines in any particularly aggressive or uniform way. Their concern was to restate the doctrines carefully and modestly in an era when theological change was in the wind.

III.iii THE TULIP ACRONYM IS SIMILARLY ELUSIVE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

You may not, by now, be surprised to learn that the acronym cannot be located in the preceding century either, that century which followed immediately on after the epoch of the Synod of Dordt and the Westminster Assembly. As the eighteenth century closed, there were Anglican evan-

¹⁸ *Truth and Error*, (New York: Carter Brothers, 3rd ed. 1850). The volume seems to reflect the Scottish upheaval over Calvinism in the 1840's stirred up by James Morrison, who left the Scottish Secession Church to found the Evangelical Union. The theological controversies of the period are surveyed in Ian Hamilton, *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy: Seceders and Subscription in Scottish Presbyterianism*, (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990).

¹⁹ Letters 2, 4, 5.

²⁰ C.H. Spurgeon: *The Early Years 1834-1859*, (London: Banner of Truth, 1967), 168

gelicals like Thomas Scott (of *Commentary* fame) and his contemporary, Thomas Haweis (a founding sponsor of the London Missionary Society in 1795) doing battle with their bishop of Lincoln, George Tomline. The latter, both in his *Elements of Christian Theology* (1801) and *Refutation of Modern Calvinism* (1811) laid at the feet of these Georgian evangelicals charges such as that they believed that the fall of Adam had meant that his descendants had ‘lost all distinctions of right and wrong’, and that they preached their ‘favourite tenets of instantaneous conversion and indefectible grace’; he was certain that their ‘preaching of free justification’ had led to the neglect of good works and denied that in the atonement of Christ there was any design to redeem particular persons.²¹

Haweis and Scott each replied to Tomline in defense of what they took to be the basic Calvinism of their Elizabethan Anglican Articles of Religion. Each knew that their English church had been represented by delegates at the seventeenth century Synod of Dordt; each also believed that it was the recovery of the gospel of free justification in the awakening of the eighteenth century that was the real target of their bishop’s criticisms. Scott believed that if left unanswered, his bishop would ‘sweep away at once the labors of his whole life’.²² Yet their response to this provocation was measured; they were determined not to contend for the Calvinist ‘system’ so much as what they termed ‘our common Christianity’, i.e. things held in common by all Scriptural Christians. Within this framework, Haweis and Scott were prepared to contend for Calvinist doctrine of the broad-brush variety. It is in defense of ‘Original Sin and Incurable Depravity’, it is ‘On Free Will’; it is on ‘Regeneration and Conversion’ that they write. As to the extent of redemption, Scott – like the Anglican delegates to Dordt- preferred ‘General Redemption’, and yet allowed that there were others holding a narrower view. He maintained ‘Perseverance’,

²¹ *A Refutation of Modern Calvinism*, (London: 1811), 3, 91, 94, 166, 185.

²² Thomas Scott, *A Reply to Tomline’s ‘Refutation of Calvinism’*, (London: 1811), xiv. Beyond Scott and Haweis, there were at least two other evangelical Protestant responses to the provocation issued by Tomline. The Congregationalist divine of Rotherham Academy, Edward Williams (1750-1813) published his *A Defense of Modern Calvinism: A Reply to the Bishop of Lincoln* (London, 1812) while another individual, a nonconformist schoolteacher of Truro, Cornwall, John Allen (1771-1839) rose to the occasion by providing the first nineteenth century English translation of Calvin’s *Institutes*. On Williams, s.v. ‘Williams, Edward’ in the Timothy Larsen, ed. *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* (Downers Grove, IVP, 2003); Allen’s translation of Calvin is discussed in ‘The Literary History of Calvin’s *Institutes*’ in *The Works of B.B. Warfield*, V (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 421

while allowing that 'not all who contend for perseverance will enjoy it'.²³ In a further attempt to resist the disparaging of these central evangelical doctrines, Thomas Scott provided his readers with the first nineteenth century translation, in English, of the actual Canons of Dordt, from the Latin text made available at Oxford in 1804 as *Sylloge Confessionum*.²⁴

The hymnwriter and theological controversialist, Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) – so fierce in his attempts to counter John Wesley's Arminian teaching, similarly conforms to the pattern we have described. In two treatises, *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism* (1769) and *Historic Proof of The Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* (1774), we come no closer to a rehearsing of the 'points' as they are now familiarly summarized in TULIP than references to 'predestination unto life and regeneration by the Spirit of God', and 'gratuitous and irreversible election ... from whence a limited redemption necessarily follows'.²⁵ Only *this* from him who was the best source of information about Dordt, in English, in the eighteenth century!²⁶ The point is *not* that Toplady is a reticent Calvinist, but only that his attempts to uphold the integrity of the system he holds dear do not involve him in the use of the Procrustean formula²⁷ many have come to accept uncritically as a hallmark of Calvinist orthodoxy.

In certain broad features, this approach to the points of Calvinism had been anticipated in the early decades of the century by three writers;

²³ *ibid.* 2-9, 51, 227, 473, 634. The role and stance of the delegates to Dordt appointed by the current monarch, James I, has been explored in two articles by Michael Dewar, 'The British Delegation at the Synod of Dort', *Evangelical Quarterly*, XLVI (1974) no.2 pp. 103-116 and 'The British Delegation at the Synod of Dort: Assembling and Assembled Returning and Returned', *Churchman*, 106 (1992), no. 2, 131-146. See also John Platt, 'Eirenical Anglicans at the Synod of Dort' in Derek Baker, ed. *Reform and Reformation*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1979), 221-43.

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 725. Scott provided an enlarged edition of the Canons of Dordt in 1818, with historical commentary. An American edition, with endorsement of Samuel Miller of Princeton, was published in 1840.

²⁵ Augustus M. Toplady, *Works*, Vols. 1, 2, 5 (London: 1828). The quotations here are found at Vol. 5, pages 5, 46.

²⁶ In his *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism* (vols. 1&2 *supra*) Toplady provides an epoch by epoch account of the embrace of and influence of Reformed theology in the Church of England from Henry VIII forward. He shows that he has digested all the standard seventeenth century correspondence and eyewitness accounts of the English delegates to Dordt at Vol. 2, pages 226-268.

²⁷ I introduce this term advisedly, using it in the sense of 'aiming to produce a conformity by arbitrary means'.

a Baptist, a Congregationalist, and an Anglican. All three took up their pens in a context dominated by the writings of the liberal Anglican writer, Daniel Whitby (1637-1726); the latter had thrown down the gauntlet to Calvinists by his work, *A Discourse on the True Import of the Words Election and Reprobation*, (London, 1710). In this, Whitby had assailed the theological legacy of Dordt by writing dismissively of the imputation of Adam's sin, of election, and particular atonement.²⁸ Taking the respondents beginning with the more recent, we can note that John Gill issued a three-part work, *The Cause of God and Truth*, commencing in 1735. It is significant that the 'heads' under which Gill defends the Calvinist scheme are, once more, not the heads which have become familiar to us in recent times. Gill writes in defense of Reprobation, Election, Redemption, Efficacious Grace, and Perseverance.²⁹

Thomas Ridgley (1667-1734), was a Congregationalist divine and tutor. His *A Body of Divinity* (1731) was a thoughtful statement of Reformed theology using the framework of the Westminster Larger Catechism. As in Gill, the theology of Dordt was safeguarded and protected – but without any fixed method of referring to it. Written as a vindication of orthodoxy against current misrepresentation,³⁰ the *Body of Divinity* is also straightforward theological exposition. Ridgley steers deftly through the contested questions of the decrees of God, election and predestination, original sin, effectual calling, the extent of the atonement, and perseverance – all with an eye to judicious and moderate statement. There is no doubt that Ridgley is a Dordtian Calvinist – and yet he is a writer who feels compelled to be embracive and expansive, and above all Scriptural.³¹

The Anglican, John Edwards (1637-1716) wrote two works in defense of the points of Calvinism: *Veritas Redux*³² (1707) and a smaller book-

²⁸ Whitby had circulated these attacks in his *Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament* (1700-1703) and his *A Discourse on the True Import of the Words Election and Reprobation*, (London: 1710). This latter title was popularly known as *Whitby on the Five Points*. I have argued in an earlier, still-unpublished paper, *The Strange Reemergence of the Points of Calvinism 1700-1820* that it was the polemical writing of Whitby after 1700 which provided an occasion for Calvinist theologians to 'rally round' Dordt when this might not otherwise have been their priority.

²⁹ Gill's separate treatment of the doctrine of reprobation (discussed in conjunction with Election in the Canons of Dordt) tells us something of importance about the theological tendency of this high Calvinist.

³⁰ Preface to *Body of Divinity*.

³¹ *Body of Divinity*, I, 204 ff.

³² Edwards intimated in his *Veritas Redux* that he envisioned this volume being but the first part of a more extensive *Body of Divinity*. There is no evidence

pamphlet *The Scripture Doctrine of the Five Points* (1715). Though the volumes differed in bulk, they were the same in tone. Edwards – a kind of J.I. Packer in his day – used his vivacious writing skills to help his readers to see that Whitby’s attack on Calvinism was an attack on the vitals of evangelical religion.

The Divine decrees, the impotency of man’s free will, original sin, grace and conversion, the extent of Christ’s redemption, and perseverance are interwoven with the greatest and most substantial articles of the Christian faith... There is a necessity of preaching these in order to understand the main principles of our Christian belief.³³

As for the five points themselves, Edwards provided a paraphrase based on his own direct knowledge of the Canons of Dordt. He was ready to sketch out ‘The Eternal Decrees’, ‘Free Will’, ‘Grace and Conversion’, ‘The Extent of Christ’s Redemption and Universal Grace’ and ‘The Perseverance of the Saints’.³⁴ His way of doing so created the impression that there was no ‘rigid’ form of the points needing to be adhered to at all costs.

This writer believes that a sufficient sampling has been surveyed so that we may now move beyond it to something more demanding still – an attempt to learn lessons for the present and future use of the Calvinist points.

IV. OBSERVATIONS AND INFERENCES FROM THE PRECEDING SURVEY

Late twentieth and early twenty-first century advocates of five-point Calvinism – whether of the ‘sovereign grace’ or ‘apologetic’ school – have been wedded to the TULIP formula since at least 1932³⁵ in a way un-

that this larger project was ever realized. It is commendable that Steele and Thomas, in their *Five Points of Calvinism* (1963) are conversant with Edwards and list him in their bibliography.

³³ *Veritas Redux*, vii, x.

³⁴ *The Scripture Doctrine of the Five Points*, (London: 1715).

³⁵ It is not the present writer’s belief that Loraine Boettner himself devised this acronym at the time of the writing of his *Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* in 1932. The writer has simply been unable, to date, to document any earlier use of it. This seems also to be the conclusion drawn by Roger Nicole. In his preface to the fortieth anniversary edition of Steele and Thomas’ *Five Points of Calvinism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004), xiv, he simply states, ‘Ever since the appearance of Loraine Boettner’s magisterial *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* it has been customary to refer to the five points according to the acrostic TULIP’. For a possible allusion to the

characteristic of Calvinists of any earlier era. Even those who have felt that the acronym could be improved upon have done their fine-tuning of it wearing 'kid gloves' as it were, so anxious were they to avoid the appearance of violating a time-honored and venerable formula. As the acronym is apparently no older than the early twentieth century, we must ask ourselves what the pervasive use of this acronym says about those who utilize it. At very least, this use suggests that they have not understood their own past very well. At worst, it may mean that they have willingly consented to take a very loose rendering of the theology of Dort in place of the actuality.

The obverse of this first principle is that Calvinists of the nineteenth century and earlier could be positively 'breezy' in their handling of and naming the points of Calvinism, all the while defending their actual substance. Would any early twenty-first century conservative Calvinist worth his salt speak so casually as Dabney, who – as has been indicated- said that 'the title (five points of Calvinism) was of little accuracy or worth...I use it because custom has made it familiar'? This open-minded eclecticism has given way to a more slavish, unquestioning loyalty and use.

To be fair, we have not often enough heeded the cautions of those twentieth-century writers who, while embracing or alluding to the TULIP framework, have themselves cautioned us not to equate the acronym – or even the doctrines summarized by the acronym - with the Reformed theology itself. Boettner himself judiciously warned, early in the twentieth century against 'a too close identification of the Five Points and the Calvinist system'.³⁶ Palmer, in 1972, made essentially the same point when he began by writing, 'Calvinism does not have five points and neither is Calvin the author of the five points'.³⁷ Packer, while not endorsing the acronym, gave out similar cautions in 1959: 'It would not be correct simply to equate Calvinism with the five points', and 'the five points present Calvinistic soteriology in a negative and polemical form'.³⁸ Our failure to heed such cautions and our still-current tendency to revel in this acronym (however fine-tuned) may indicate that the Calvinism of our age has a vehement, belligerent streak in it. Earlier ages than our own were capable of distinguishing between a Calvinism that was sound and Calvinism that was vulgar, between a Calvinism that was sober-minded and one

idea of limitation in the atonement, prior to 1932, see fn. 42 (below) where there is some indication that Spurgeon was familiar with this conception and dismissive of it.

³⁶ *Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 59.

³⁷ *The Five Points*, i.

³⁸ 'Introductory Essay' to Owen's *Death of Death* (1647), 5.

which was extravagant.³⁹ Spurgeon, for example, insisted that with regard to the hyper-Calvinists of his day, he ‘differed from them in what they do *not* believe’. He maintained that distinctions between distinguishable Calvinist emphases were necessary. Just as a navigational compass, in addition to having North, South, East and West also had ‘a Northeast and a Northwest’,⁴⁰ so there were expressions of Calvinism which had shifted from its true bearings. If such a readiness to make doctrinal distinctions has been lost, the modern Calvinist movement is the poorer for it.

Earlier defenders of Calvinism’s points were frequently embraceive, ready to go some distance toward meeting the concerns expressed in the views of objectors. This is nowhere so obvious as when older writers took up the always-controversial question of the extent of the atonement. The vast majority of older writers surveyed here preferred the language of ‘particular atonement’ or ‘particular redemption’ to the acronym’s suggestion of an atonement that was ‘limited’.⁴¹ But more than this, it is evident that in keeping with Dordt’s original insistence that – as to the sheer value of Christ’s dying, his death was ‘abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world’⁴² – older writers often took pains to spell out the senses in which there were *universal* benefits in that particular redemption won by Christ. John Edwards listed two such benefits and Thomas Ridgley three.⁴³ In the following century, Charles Hodge of Princeton established the same point in his *Systematic Theology* while Robert L. Dabney acknowledged it in his *Lectures in Theology*.⁴⁴ Spurgeon, for his

³⁹ Such distinctions about the Calvinism at the end of the eighteenth century were drawn by David Bogue and James Bennett, *History of Dissenters From the Revolution Under King William to the Year 1838* (London: 1839). II. 37 and Henry Moncrieff Wellwood, *Account of the Life and Writings of John Erskine, D.D.*, (Edinburgh, 1818), 380.

⁴⁰ *C.H. Spurgeon: The Early Years*, 173.

⁴¹ I find it intriguing that Steele and Thomas, writing in 1963 – ostensibly to uphold the –L- of limited atonement *still* evince the strongest preference for the older language of particular redemption. This is a clear example of the way in which the venerated acronym had become a Procrustean formula by the 1960’s. See their *Five Points*, 38 ff. With the exception of Augustus Toplady, (cf. p. 7 *supra*) the literature produced by Calvinists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries consistently speaks of the atonement as ‘particular’ rather than ‘limited’.

⁴² This is the actual language of the Canons of Dordt, Head II, article 3.

⁴³ Edwards, *Veritas Redux*, 383, 384; Ridgley, *Body of Divinity* I. 434.

⁴⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II. 558; Robert Dabney, *Lectures in Theology*, 527. This emphasis is not present, however, in John Murray’s *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955). In his fourth chapter, Murray stoutly defends the acceptability of the term ‘limited’

own part was adamant in resisting ‘some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus; if my theological system needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds’.⁴⁵ There is no pretending here that ‘limited atonement’ was just another name for ‘particular redemption’. The latter view, but not the former, carried with it suggestions of adequacy and capaciousness – ideas which are both noble and capable of addressing the question of ‘room at the cross’. Where Calvinist writers today show no such embrasive interest in defining and defending their Calvinism, it may be an indication that they have accepted that they are now theologizing for an identifiable Calvinist ‘narrow way’, a Calvinism on the ‘margins’, rather than for the evangelical Protestant tradition as a whole. This represents a dramatic reversal, a self-imposed ‘ghettoization’ compared even to the nineteenth century. It is time to ask hard questions as to who led the way in this retreat. Is this ‘ghettoization’ an unacknowledged remnant of the fundamentalist era of the early twentieth century?

This leads to the related observation, that earlier Calvinist theologians believed that in upholding the points of Calvinism (described in broad-brush fashion) they were performing a service to the *whole* of evangelical Christianity rather than pursuing a mere ‘party’ interest. Thomas Haweis and Thomas Scott saw this presciently; their diocesan bishop either could not tell the difference or did not care to distinguish between his clergy of Wesleyan and Calvinist sympathy. He blamed them all for holding gloomy views of human nature, of discouraging human moral effort, of bordering on enthusiasm by holding to belief in a sensible calling to salvation in this life (as opposed to a baptismal regeneration) and teaching that believers might enjoy strong impressions of assurance of salvation. They answered him, as writers consciously standing in the stream of Dordt-style Calvinism in defense of what they perceived to belong to ‘our common Christianity’, i.e. Scriptural religion. One can certainly find the same stance in the nineteenth century Princeton theologian, Charles Hodge, who claimed (however accurately) that he wrote in support of the views of evangelical Christianity as a whole, and was only enunciating ‘the church doctrine’.⁴⁶

Finally, there is the striking fact that twentieth-century writing on behalf of TULIP has only very infrequently engaged with the actual Canons

with respect to the atonement, while maintaining his firm belief in a free gospel offer.

⁴⁵ *C.H. Spurgeon: The Early Years*, 173.

⁴⁶ This feature of Hodge’s writing, so evident in his *Systematic Theology*, was highlighted by David Wells in an essay, ‘The Stout and Persistent Theology of Charles Hodge’ in *Christianity Today*, 18 (August 30, 1974), 10-12.

of Dordt of which the acronym purports to be a paraphrase or summary.⁴⁷ This meant, and means that writers have been implying the fidelity of the acronym as a rendering of Dordt's meaning without ever being pressed to demonstrate that this fidelity exists in fact. To call the paraphrasing of Dordt by TULIP a 'broad brush' approach, is arguably too kind!⁴⁸ Why has there been no inquiry as to whether there is actually a true correspondence between this alleged paraphrase of Dordt, and the actual intention of the Canons – widely available in English? We may well be overdue for a revisiting of the Canons of Dordt themselves - even to the point of quoting them, or making a fresh compressed summary of their actual contents.⁴⁹ And for those who labor in settings where such symbols as the Westminster Standards are still utilized – is it not past time for an articulating of the legacy of Dordt as these themes have come to be enfolded in the doctrinal articles and confessions of faith we *in fact* uphold? TULIP is not, verbatim, in those doctrinal articles – yet the theological legacy of Dordt is.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Welcome exceptions to this rule are found in John R. DeWitt, *What is the Reformed Faith?*, Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, and Richard Mouw, *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport*; the exception is rooted in their standing astride the two worlds of Dutch and English-speaking Calvinism, so that they both know Dordt and more popular expressions of Calvinism in the English-speaking world.

⁴⁸ Just how broad a brush was illustrated, for example, by the late Anthony Hoekema's indication that the terminology of 'Irresistible Grace', (The 'I' of the acronym, TULIP) far from encapsulating Dordt's intended emphasis, actually relays the protest of the Dutch Remonstrants *against* early seventeenth century Calvinism in a way dependent on Jesuit writers of that time. How is it possible that 'Irresistible', a term intended to besmirch and caricature the concept of a grace that eventually prevails over all opposition, has been taken up and championed by those it was meant to portray unfavorably? See Anthony Hoekema's *Saved By Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 104,105.

⁴⁹ The irony of this suggestion, however, is that the Canons of Dordt (alleged to be paraphrased in the acronym) actually have no confessional standing in the vast majority of churches where the acronym is advocated. To this extent, its use involves a kind of interpolation of doctrinal themes or emphases which may be no part of a particular church's articles of faith.

⁵⁰ So, for example Total Depravity is not in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* while a chapter, 'The Fall of Man' (embracing the intensiveness and extensiveness of sin) is. Limited Atonement is not in the *WCF* while a chapter, 'Of Christ the Mediator' (embracing in para. viii the application of redemption 'to all those for whom Christ purchased' it) is. Irresistible Grace, is not present, while 'Effectual Calling' forms a chapter which indicates that awakened sinners are enabled to 'come most freely, being made willing by his grace'.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This survey began by remarking on the current evidences of the resurgence of Calvinism and its often-contested points. It was noted that evangelical Calvinists today tend to belong to one of two types ('sovereign grace' or 'apologetic'). It was maintained that whatever their differences, they were both more wedded to the TULIP formulation than is warranted by good historical or theological inquiry. We ought therefore to proceed with more skepticism towards TULIP as an alleged authentic exposition of Reformed theology than has characterized the Calvinist movement to date. And more of us should read Richard Mouw's *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport* (Zondervan, 2004) which, apart from its unwarranted loyalty to the now-doubtful acronym and its very broad brush strokes,⁵¹ can help us recover the 'big picture' that was more evident to many of our forbears than it has been to us, i.e. that everything of truly abiding value in Calvinism serves the interests of 'our common Christianity'.

EXPOSITIONS OF THE POINTS OF CALVINISM TRACED SINCE 1900

<i>Author/Title/Year</i>	<i>TULIP used?</i>	<i>Comments?</i>
Mouw, Richard, <i>Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport</i> (2004)	Yes	An apologetic approach is taken. The rough edges of some of the points are removed by a generous method of exposition. The supposition that the points actually represent Dordt is not challenged.
Peterson, Robert & Michael Williams, <i>Why I am Not An Arminian</i> (2004)	No	This book provides exposition of critical differences separating Calvinist and Arminian positions. Not a defense of TULIP but an exploration of Predestination, Perseverance, Human Freedom, Sinful Inability, The Operation of Grace and the Design of the Atonement. Apologetic

⁵¹ Illustrative of Mouw's pronounced embracive approach is his eighth chapter, 'The Generosity Option' in which he muses on the possibility of a pervasive Christian salvation embracing a far vaster proportion of the world's population than persons of the Calvinist persuasion have contemplated in recent times.

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Boice, James and Philip Ryken, <i>The Doctrines of Grace</i> (2002)	Yes	An Apologetic approach is taken. Total becomes Radical; Limited becomes Particular, Irresistible becomes Efficacious. Yet, the old supposition that these re-named points actually represent Dordt itself is maintained.
George, Timothy F., <i>Amazing Grace</i> (2002)	No	An Apologetic approach for persons not previously familiar with, or suspicious of Calvinist doctrines. A new acrostic is proposed: R (Radical Depravity), O (Overcoming Grace), S (Sovereign Election), E (Eternal Life), S (Singular or Particular Redemption).
Nicole, Roger, <i>Standing Forth</i> (2002)	Yes	An Apologetic approach. TULIP is said to be 'now quite traditional'. Total becomes Radical, Unconditional becomes Sovereign, Limited becomes Particular, Irresistible becomes Effectual. Limited is denounced as 'a complete misnomer'.
Sproul, R.C., <i>Grace Unknown</i> (1997)	Yes	An Apologetic approach. TULIP endorsed, then modified. Total becomes Radical; Unconditional becomes Sovereign; Limited becomes Purposeful; Irresistible becomes Effective; Perseverance become Preservation.
DeWitt, John R., <i>What is the Reformed Faith?</i> (1981)	No	Apologetic. The significance of the five points is rapidly passed over in favor of five other overarching concerns.
Custance, Arthur C., <i>The Sovereignty of Grace</i> (1979)	Yes	Sovereign grace emphasis. Here, the points of TULIP are given a very unflinching exposition across 140 pages. Yet evidently, on p. 83 the author makes plain that he had viewed the actual Canons of Dordt.
Palmer, Edwin, <i>Five Points of Calvinism</i> (1972)	Yes	Apologetic. Commences by distinguishing Total Depravity (which he affirms) from Absolute Depravity (which he affirms is the case only occasionally)

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<p>Seaton, Jack, <i>The Five Points of Calvinism</i> (1970)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Sovereign grace emphasis. Seaton promptly goes to work to clarify what Total Depravity does not mean, etc. Yet he accepts uncritically that TULIP is conveying the message of Dordt to us.</p>
<p>Steele and Thomas, <i>Five Points of Calvinism</i> (1963)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Sovereign Grace approach. The points are upheld according to the acronym, though Limited and Particular are used interchangeably. There is the appearance but only the appearance of a paraphrase of Dordt.</p>
<p>Packer, J. I., <i>Introductory Essay to Owen</i> (1959)</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>TULIP is named, but Packer does not really use this framework. He argues that this framework is deficient.</p>
<p>Warburton, Ben, <i>Calvinism</i> (1955)</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Seems a more U.K. emphasis. Predestination, not Unconditional Election; Particular Redemption, not Limited Atonement; Invincible not Irresistible Grace etc. Reminiscent of 18 & 19 century writers.</p>
<p>Boettner, Loraine, <i>Reformed Doctrine of Predestination</i> (1932)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>TULIP is introduced for the first time known to the writer. Yet Boettner claims no originality in introducing them. It might be fairly inferred that he has found them already in circulation. He will be less nuanced when, in 1983, he reiterates the points of TULIP in his pamphlet, <i>The Reformed Faith</i>. Now, the cautions of 1932 that the Reformed faith is much larger than TULIP seem to have vanished.</p>
<p>Warfield, B.B., <i>Plan of Salvation</i> (1915) <i>Works</i> Vol. V (1929)</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>In his <i>Works</i> (V. 363) Warfield describes Dordt as reasserting the fundamental doctrines of 'absolute predestination, particular redemption, total depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints'. Here we have three elements of TULIP. Is it possible that Warfield here unwittingly provided the origin from which Boettner (1932) has developed the scheme so familiar to us?</p>

REVIEWS

Essays on Religion, Science, and Society

Herman Bavinck

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008 304pp., \$39.99; ISBN 9780801032417

It is an unexpected gift, and benefit to the church, to have more of Herman Bavinck's writings translated into English and published in our day. On account of the diligent translation work of Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheers, Baker Academic has recently published the newest volume of Bavinck's writings, *Essays on Religion, Science and Society*. This volume, edited by John Bolt, provides a valuable synthesis of Bavinck's theological and sociological contributions. The title succinctly captures the content of these essays giving the reader something of the Dutch theologian's depth of insight into a plethora of social and religious issues. Bavinck impresses the reader with a consistent application of his *weltanschauung* as he grapples with the philosophical, psychological, and religious issues facing the church. Although it may appear anachronistic to describe it in this way, those who appreciate Bavinck's *presuppositional* approach will be delighted to find a consistent Christian theistic worldview worked out in his analysis of such topics as religious studies, psychology of religion, Christianity and natural science, trends in psychology, the unconscious, classical education, and the relation between ethics and politics. Some of the most thought provoking essays are those that deal with the issues of inequality, beauty and aesthetics, the relationship between Christ and culture, and evolution.

In the opening section of his essay on inequality, Bavinck shows how the problem of the one and the many relates to this aspect of society. He then exhibits his true intellectual greatness by contrasting the life and work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau with that of John Calvin. The two French intellectuals both of whom live in and brought great influence to Geneva—while centuries removed—nevertheless, offered variant solutions to the issue of inequality in society. The difference was to be found in their doctrine of man. In regard to human nature, “Calvin sought the cause of all misery in sin...[whereas] Rousseau blamed society and civilization (155).” Interestingly, Bavinck explained that as a French citizen, “Rousseau, in spite of himself, acknowledged the greatness and superiority of Calvin (159).”¹ Indeed, he includes the following quotation from

¹ Bavinck includes the following quote from Rousseau's *The Social Contract*: “Those who know Calvin only as a theologian much underestimate the ex-

Rousseau's *The Social Contract*: "Those who know Calvin only as a theologian much underestimate the extent of his genius. The codification of his wise edicts, in which he played a large part, does him no less honor than his *Institutes*. Whatever revolution time may bring in our religion, so long as the spirit of patriotism and liberty still lives among us, the memory of this great man will be forever blessed."

In his essay on beauty and Aesthetics, Bavinck confirmed his ability to deal with just about any issue on a philosophical level by rooting his conclusions on the place of beauty, in society, in his understanding of unity in diversity. "Beauty is not the good (viz. God Himself)," he wrote, "but is rather a 'divine gift...[that] also must be loved by us (259)." Bavinck offered two thoughts concerning the proper place of aesthetics in a Christian world and life view. In the first place he explained, "beauty does not have its own content, and because it deals with appearance and observation, it is tied more to the luxury of life than to the true and the good (259)." "Art cannot replace worship, nor can the theatre replace church...Beauty can prophecy about the Promised Land and can give us a glimpse from a distance...but it is only religion, reconciliation, and peace with God that ushers us into the Canaan of peace (259)." He immediately went on to acknowledge, however, the rightful place of art in society. "We should be truly sympathetic," he wrote, "(even though there are harmful exaggerations) if, as a reaction to intellectualism in education and nurture, 'aesthetic culture' again has a modest place and if vocational training is again used for the renewal of artful crafts (260)."

One of the greatest strengths of this work is found in Bavinck's analytical ability and logical reasoning. This is demonstrated in perhaps no better place than in his essay on "Christian Principles and Social Relationships." Bavinck took the time to consider the relationship between Christ and culture in light of the social and political situation in the Netherlands in the later part of the 19th Century. The discussion, popularized by Richard Niebuhr in America in the middle of the 20th Century, had already surfaced in the Netherlands on account of the political revolution (i.e. the 1848 release of the new liberal constitution). Bavinck skillfully set out the various options concerning the work of Christ in society. The first group he mentioned were those who said that Christianity was "born from the social needs of the time...After all, [they say] all spiritual ideas

tent of his genius. The codification of his wise edicts, in which he played a large part, does him no less honor than his *Institutes*. Whatever revolution time may bring in our religion, so long as the spirit of patriotism and liberty still lives among us, the memory of this great man will be forever blessed. (Rousseau, *Social Contract*, book II, Chapter 7, note) (n159)."

and powers in state and church, religion and society, science and art are caused ultimately and fundamentally by social conditions in the manner in which material goods are produced and distributed (119).” The theological rationale behind this view was the notion that “social conditions in the days in which Jesus was born were very distressing. They aroused in His soul a deep concern and a great measure of compassion. The gospel that he came to bring was therefore a Gospel for the poor (119).”

Following this synopsis of the social gospel, Bavinck set out the position of those offering a reaction to this view. “Over against these proponents of a social and socialistic Christianity,” he wrote, “are others who believe the very opposite: that the Christian religion has nothing to do with society and the state, and that it has no message for either (120).” As was true of the previous position, proponents of this “Christ verse culture” view have a theological reason for their belief. The manner in which Bavinck outlined their argumentation is noteworthy:

Jesus was a religious genius, to be sure, and answered to a high moral ideal, but the interests of society did not concern Him in the least, nor did He have anything to do with the state, just as He was totally indifferent to all of culture. Religion and morality are on the one side, and society, state and culture are on the other; each live in their own lives and follow their own course. Religion’s place is in the heart, the inner chamber, the church; but politics and the economy go their own way and, as such, have nothing to do with religion (120).

Bavinck ultimately answered the question of Christ and culture by acknowledging the all pervasive nature of the Gospel without falling into the trap of politicizing or socializing the message of the cross. It is the ethical nature of the Gospel that provides the theological foundation of this view. Bavinck concluded the essay with this profound statement:

So that everything may revive and may become again what it ought to be and can be, the Gospel tests all things—all circumstances and relationships—against the will of God, just as in the days of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles. It considers everything from a moral point of view, from the angle in which all those circumstances and relationships are connected with moral principles that God has instituted for all of life. Precisely because the Gospel only opposes sin, it opposes it only and everywhere in the heart and in the head, in the eye and in the hand, in family and in society, in science and art, in government and subjects, in rich and poor, for all sin is unrighteousness, trespassing of God’s law, and corruption of nature. But by liberating all social circumstances and relationships from sin, the Gospel

tries to restore them all according to the will of God and make them fulfill their own nature (143).

In conclusion, anyone who comes to this volume seeking an application of Christian theism to the multifaceted spheres of society will not be disappointed in the least. Bavinck's ability to intellectually stimulate is coupled with his unwavering commitment to the word of God and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a focus on the redemptive nature of revelation with regard to each of the subject addressed. Whether it is beauty, or politics, culture or religion, the value of this work will prove to be a far reaching and long lasting blessing for the church of God.

Nicholas T. Batzig, Christ the King (PCA), Philadelphia

Dictionary of Mission Theology, Evangelical Foundations: An Overview

John Corrie (ed.)

IVP: Nottingham, 2007; 461pp., £24.99; ISBN 978-1-184474-213-4

With the starting-point that world Christianity and its related mission are going through unparalleled change and that the centre of gravity is shifting further 'south', the Dictionary's stance is that Evangelicals must listen to and share one another's contextual perspectives whilst not compromising foundational truths.

It seeks to fulfil this goal through three supportive aims: the integration of theology and mission, the contextualization of theology and mission, and the evangelical foundations of theology and mission. The integration of the first aim involves "creative theological and missiological thinking" – contributors were asked to be original. The growth of 'Majority World' Christianity has "lifted contextualization up the theological agenda" and, in line with this, the second aim provides a 'majority contribution from the Majority World' – 60% of the 160 articles. The third aim offers an evangelical missiology which has its roots in "cherished and recognised evangelical categories", but which also seeks to "move evangelical mission thinking on beyond those categories". It asserts "respect for the priority of the biblical text as the authoritative source of theological and missiological thinking ... and an affirmation of the centrality and uniqueness of Jesus Christ ..." It also incorporates newer areas like dialogue, humanity within a more developed creation theology, liberation as a category of salvation, reconciliation, social justice and political engagement.

This is not a dictionary of particular mission personalities and societies, but of the theology and apologetics of mission, "with a careful use of

biblical material that articulates how the Bible provides a rich resource for mission thinking and how fresh contemporary approaches can yield new insights that remain faithful to the biblical witness as a whole.”

The Dictionary is directed to church leaders, missionaries, students of mission, those involved worldwide in “any and every context in which mission is learnt and practised” and a non-specialist readership. The editors expect its articles to provide the basis for discussion groups and seminars in many different contexts.

Each of the Aims binds mission with theology, but to what extent are the vital theological aims achieved? As the Introduction indicates, culture and contextualization is a dominant theme, appearing in a range of articles such as Accommodation, African Christology, African Theology, Asian Theology, Contextualization, Culture, Folk Religion, Globalization, Inculturation, Indian Theology, Latin American Theology, Minjung Theology, Prosperity Theology, and Youth Culture. Within them there is considerable overlap of thought. In approaching the cultural issue a highly selective quotation from Karl Barth is pertinent, that God is “not the patron saint of culture, but its judge”. In keeping with this, there are contributors, who, whilst pointing to the need to express the Christian faith in the idiom and thought forms of different peoples, stress the dangers of prioritizing culture over faithfulness to Scripture and of syncretism.

Those who like precise, distinctive theological thought will not always find it in the Dictionary. The article on Hell, to select an obvious test, is more a summary of views on the subject than a doctrinal statement. Universalism rejects universal general salvation whilst stating that it may have some pastoral relevance. Salvation: “Whilst agreeing on the uniqueness and unsurpassability of Jesus’ salvific claims, Christian theological responses to other religions’ salvific claims cannot be merely dismissive, and can only remain agnostic as to their eternal value.” Readers will want to consult more specific works on matters like the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation and Prophecy.

The dictionary is superbly presented with an Index of Subjects and of Articles. It is a useful compendium of diverse subjects of which many are unusual, eg, Ancestors, Magic, Shamanism. It is likely to be of most value to missiologists.

Ernest Brown, Belfast

Alexander Boddy: Pentecostal Anglican Pioneer

Gavin Wakefield

Paternoster: Milton Keynes, 2007; 245pp., £17; ISBN 97818422273463 and 18422273469

Gavin Wakefield, the Deputy Warden and Director of Mission and Pastoral Studies at Cranmer Hall in Durham, begins this study with two assertions. He informs us, first, that the modern Pentecostal Movement in Great Britain began in September 1907 in Sunderland and, secondly, that the ‘energetic father’ and ‘key leader’ of the movement was Alexander Boddy, one time Vicar of All Saints Church, Monkwearmouth. In the pages that follow we are introduced to the man and his ministry.

The first four chapters focus on Boddy’s childhood in Manchester (he was born in 1854), his work as an assistant solicitor (1876-88), and the early years of his ministry within the Church of England (he was ordained by Bishop J B Lightfoot in 1880). Intriguingly, we discover that although in 1876 he described himself as “converted to God” (p19) by 1892 he came to a realization that he “was not truly and experimentally ‘Born from Above’” (p69). Two events took place that year which dramatically altered the character of his ministry. The first was a spiritual experience of the personal appropriation of justification by faith. Prior to it, his testimony was “I could not honestly say ... that I knew my sins were forgiven, though in a way, I did seek to preach Christ”. After it, he was able to say, “I arose with full assurance that my sins were forgiven... I now had a real message to give”. The second was of being overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit. This event, one of seven such occasions when he felt the presence of God in a very marked way (p 83), occurred on 21 September at about 8.40am. It was followed by other experiences, most notable of which were his wife being healed of asthma and the discovery, in 1899, that she had a gift of healing.

In chapter 5 Wakefield charts how the Pentecostal movement in Great Britain began in Sunderland. He mentions the impact of the Welsh Revival of 1904 and the influence of events on Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906 as well as those in Oslo during the early months of 1907. More significantly, he asserts that a major reason the Pentecostal movement began in Britain was due to “Boddy’s own spiritual quest and leadership” (p 95).

Chapters 6-8 provide an analysis of Boddy as a leader. As well as charting his travels and the essential features of his ministry, Wakefield demonstrates that “Boddy was primarily a pastor who desired to help people encounter God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit” (p. 156). He shows that Boddy was “very conscious of the way in which the

Pentecostal experience broke down barriers... of gender, denomination, social class, nationality and skin colour” (p 122). He articulates Boddy’s “view that there were three events that God had for people, namely regeneration, sanctification and baptism in the Spirit” (p 162). And he asserts that Boddy was definite in his belief that speaking in tongues “was a necessary gift as the initial sign or seal of baptism with the Holy Ghost, but with two caveats; first, a subsequent manifestation of love was more important than continuing to speak in tongues... and second, he was unwilling to unchurch sincere believers who had not had this experience” (p 168). Chapter 9 describes Boddy’s later years, whilst in the Epilogue Wakefield endeavours to assess his ministry and legacy.

The author provides an accessible and readable biography, one that students of modern pentecostalism and allied charismatic movements will find of interest. Wakefield’s account is primarily descriptive rather than analytical. Tom Wright, in the Foreword, acknowledges that Boddy’s ministry and theology raise questions, both doctrinal and practical, which are not answered. Without a careful and thorough biblical critique of them, the danger is that it will be assumed, possibly too readily by some, that the events of 1907 and over the years that followed were indeed fresh experiences and new movements of God’s Spirit. At least some of the claims made by Boddy, as summarised above, are not endorsed by evangelical and reformed Christians.

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The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of the Atonement

Derek Tidball, David Hilborn and Justin Thacker (eds.)

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008; 360pp., £6.99; ISBN 978-0310273394

The Atonement Debate contains reworked papers given at the joint Evangelical Alliance and London School of Theology 2005 symposium on the atonement. As Derek Tidball explains in the preface, all of the contributors were unified over the following convictions: that Jesus’ death is crucial to Christian faith, that the New Testament’s witness to the meaning and significance of this death is variegated, and that the message of the cross must be communicated in ways that make it meaningful to contemporary culture. However, there was no unanimity on how and why Christ’s death was salvific nor was their agreement on whether penal substitution (PS) should be the exclusive model for understanding Jesus’ death or whether it should be totally abandoned.

The introductory section begins with a chapter by David Hilborn in which he sets the book in the context of the atonement debate in British

evangelicalism. The debate seems to have come to a head in the fundamental denial of PS in Steve Chalke and Alan Mann's 2003 book, *The Lost Message of Jesus*. This denial did not sit well with many evangelicals since 'penal substitution has widely been regarded as the "controlling model" within mainline evangelicalism – the sine qua non of evangelical soteriology' (p19). It was the ensuing debate that prompted the LST 2005 symposium. In chapter two Steve Chalke lays out his opposition to PS. Chalke asks some good questions about the implications of PS for God and mission. In the end, he argues that Jesus' death was substitutionary, but it was by no means a penal substitutionary death. Most of this chapter was greatly disappointing. It is full of uncritical proof-texting, sloppy logic, misleading statements, and theological unsophistication in the extreme. My criticisms here have nothing at all to do with whether I agree with Chalke on the atonement.

The next section, 'Biblical Foundations', begins with I.H. Marshall's account of 'The Theology of the Atonement.' Marshall argues that PS is supported by Scripture and is central to the Christian faith despite recent challenges against it. The Biblical fact that God does have wrath and will judge sinful humanity does not lead to the conclusion that God has unwieldy human emotions. Marshall's strongest case is made on the basis of Rom 3:25-26 and Gal 3:13. In chapter four Christopher Wright provides an interesting "sketch" of various aspects of atonement in the Old Testament. What is striking is that sacrifice is not always the means of atonement in the Old Testament (cf. Genesis and the Psalms) and thus "atonement" is a larger concept than sacrifice. Chapter five focuses on the atonement in the New Testament. Here, Geoffrey Grogan sees PS throughout the New Testament and argues that we do not have to choose between PS, participatory representation and Christus Victor interpretations of the cross since the New Testament bears witness to all of these.

Despite Sue Groom's main title of chapter six ('Why did Christ Die?'), the piece is almost completely about the servant's death in Isa 52-53 with only about 1¼ pages addressing Isa 53 in the New Testament. Groom settles on an "inclusive place-taking" (taken from the German *Inklusierende* [not *Inkludierende*] *Stellvertretung*) (p103) model in which Christ, uniquely as a human being, incorporates humanity as its representative and suffers on behalf of humanity. In chapter seven Rohintan Mody argues that PS is present in Rom 3:25-26 and is at the heart of Paul's gospel. He opts for an exclusive and an inclusive view of Christ's death, but an important distinction must be maintained here: Christ inclusively represents humanity on the cross but exclusively bears the penalty for sin in our place. In his discussion of *hilasterion* in Rom 3:25 Mody mentions Dan Bailey's important 1999 Cambridge Ph.D. thesis ("Jesus as the Mercy Seat") but

does not take it into consideration since he relies solely on Leon Morris' linguistic evidence. Chapter eight is Steven Motyer's hermeneutically informed assessment of the atonement in Hebrews. He attempts to show "that penal substitution does not provide a useful summary of Hebrews' teaching about the atonement..." (p136). Motyer insists, and rightly so, that we recognise that the author of Hebrews' is looking back to the Old Testament's sacrificial cult in the light of the revelation in Jesus and not simply taking it over as it stands. One of the striking differences between the Old Testament and Hebrews is that the goal of OT religion was never to provide access to the Most Holy Place, whereas in Hebrews the goal of atonement is precisely that: to enable believers to enter into the presence of God.

The next section, 'Theological Foundations', begins with Joel Green's contribution in which he is concerned to show that the model of PS is "wanting" (p154). He starts off with a crucial observation: that Jesus' death effects salvation is clearly central to the church's ancient rule of faith but the question of how Jesus' death is salvific is not provided in the rule of faith or the early creeds. Green emphasises that the model of PS often divorces Jesus' death from its context on the incarnation, life and ministry of Jesus. In chapter ten Garry Williams sets out to defend PS against recent criticisms, namely, that it is based on a false view of God and the trinity, that it assumes western individualism, that it encourages doctrinal isolationism (it down plays Jesus' life) and that it is a type of "cosmic child abuse." Williams concludes that PS is the central atonement model that holds all others together. Sadly, he concludes by strongly implying that those who disagree with PS cannot remain in fellowship with those who hold to it because the theological issues at stake are too central. As the title of chapter eleven suggests, Graham McFarlane sets the atonement in the wider context of the doctrine of creation and the triune God. As the fall was fundamentally a relational breakdown, so redemption must restore the relationship between Creator and the human creature. God does so by sending his Son who uniquely identifies with us in his humanity and substitutes for us. The atonement effects individual forgiveness but also "reorders" creation itself. In a very fascinating essay (chapter twelve), Oliver Crisp raises questions about the "internal logic" of traditional arguments for PS. On what basis is guilt transferable from the sin and guilt party to the non-guilty party? In chapter thirteen David Williams argues that to restrict the atonement to PS alone is a mistake because "atonement" is a broader concept than just Christ taking punishment in our stead. The "model" that he offers is one that relates the atonement and salvation to Christ's threefold office of prophet, priest and king.

The section, 'Historical Perspectives', begins with Tony Lane's description of Bernard of Clairvaux's theological genius by outlining how he viewed the cross in more than one way: Christ as second Adam, Christ as moral influence, Christ's death as the defeat of Satan and death and Christ's bearing the punishment we deserved. Bernard does not fall prey to some contemporary criticisms of PS. In chapter fifteen Stephen Holmes offers an instructive account of the history of atonement thinking in British evangelicalism from the eighteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. Perhaps surprisingly, the atonement is usually understood in substitutionary terms but not always in penal categories. I cannot however understand Holmes' insistence that the new perspective on Paul necessarily rules out penal substitution (p.280). In chapter sixteen Ian Randall looks at the relationship between the theology of the atonement and spirituality in British evangelical by considering figures such as Wesley, Spurgeon, L. Morris, J.I. Packer and I.H. Marshall.

The last section, 'Contemporary Perspectives', contains the following three chapters. Lynette Mullings takes her cue from Chalke and Mann's view that Jesus' salvific work must not be limited to the cross event only but encompasses Jesus' life as well (chapter seventeen). She then examines a number of "womanist" thinkers who likewise emphasise Jesus' life as the transformative potential for spirituality and social change. Anna Robbins offers an intriguing proposal for understanding the atonement in postmodern culture, one which does not simply dissolve into postmodernity but nevertheless speaks in ways that may be more understandable in our present western historical and cultural location. Robbins uses Jean Baudrillard's understanding of "symbolic exchange" to aid in her attempt to communicate to postmodern sensibilities. In the last chapter (nineteen) Derek Tidball asks the question, is the penal substitutionary model of the atonement pastorally justifiable? He responds by tackling some of the dominant criticisms of the model and showing how these criticisms are caricatures and simply false.

Although the book reads like conference papers (which it is!) rather than a coherent book, it nevertheless provides the reader with some of the ways in which key evangelical thinkers understand the atonement today. This in itself is worth the price of the book. The debate about the how of the atonement will surely continue and this book is a great place to begin to understand the issues involved.

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Reformed Dogmatics: Volume Four - Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation

Herman Bavinck (translated by John Vriend)

Baker Academic: Grand Rapids; 2008; 944pp; \$49.99; ISBN 9780801026577, 0801026571

This year marks the completed English translation of the fourth and final Volume of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*. Previously, Bavinck has dealt with his prolegomena, followed by God, creation, sin and salvation in Christ. Now, he draws his magnum opus to a close in describing the Holy Spirit's work in redeeming and restoring both church and cosmos. With grace finally restoring nature, the Triune glory of God will be eternally manifested as he comes to dwell among his chosen people, in his chosen place.

John Bolt, the editor of this translation, deserves credit. His helpful introductory essay sets Bavinck's life and work within an historical context, which leads the reader directly into Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation.

As an overall work, *Reformed Dogmatics* has a strongly Trinitarian theme. The previous three Volumes have emphasised that God creates and the Son redeems. Now, Bavinck focuses on the Spirit's role in applying the Son's work. Writing in three sections, he first focuses on the Holy Spirit's role in individual regeneration. Here, in 'The Spirit Gives New Life to Believers', Bavinck provides a veritable tour de force of individual soteriology. His typical style is clear-headed and erudite in equal measure; both are used to great effect in outlining calling and regeneration, faith, conversion, justification, sanctification and perseverance. His discussion of imputation also highlights Bavinck's ongoing relevance to current theological debate.

The second section deals with the Spirit's work in corporate soteriology: 'The Spirit Creates New Community'. Bavinck's handling of ecclesiology is largely Spirit-focused. He deals with the Church's essence, government and power in direct relation to the Spirit. Such a spiritual approach to ecclesiology is far from esoteric. Indeed, Bavinck works through the classic practical debates regarding church government: bishops and elders, hierarchy, the papacy and so on. The correlation between Bavinck's doctrines of God and the church – as organic, rather than mechanical, entities characterised by simultaneous unity and diversity – is highly sophisticated and noteworthy.

His third and final section, 'The Spirit Makes All Things New' – which has been available as an English translation entitled *The Last Things: Hope for this World and the Next* since 1996 – outlines Bavinck's vision for the

fulfilment of God's gospel purposes in the cosmos. He first examines individual eschatology, establishing the reality of life after death and offering a thoroughly Christian perspective on the afterlife. His engagement with Islamic and Buddhist theologies of the afterlife is interesting. As he progresses to discuss ecclesiastical and cosmic eschatology, his writings – perhaps typically of his context and era – have a decidedly amillennial flavour. His amillennialism is a mix of gritty realism (regarding the struggles of the pilgrim church) and cautious optimism (that God may call many more to himself prior to Christ's return). He is not a Zionist and, as such does not believe in the conversion of a literal nation of Israel. However, he leaves open the possibility that prior to the eschaton, the number of believing Jews will be considerably higher than at present. A consistently accurate presentation of competing positions is typical of Bavinck. However, in discussing 'The Wideness of God's Mercy' he attributes a belief in the ultimate salvation of the majority of humankind exclusively to legalists (Socinians and Pelagians) and universalists. Disappointingly, he fails to discuss the possibility that postmillennialism may also facilitate such a position.

In producing an accurate English translation of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, the Dutch Reformed Translation Society has provided a great gift to the Anglophone world: a standardised, comprehensive, readable translation of Bavinck's magnum opus.

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The Barth Lectures

Colin E. Gunton; Transcribed and Edited by Paul H. Brazier
T&T Clark, London/New York, 2007; xxiv+285pp., £24.99pb;
ISBN 9 780567 031402

While Colin Gunton fruitfully enjoyed a life-long engagement with, and formation by, Karl Barth's work, produced numerous articles on various aspects of such, and lectured on the Swiss giant during most of the years he taught at King's College London, he never fulfilled his ambition to pen a monograph devoted solely to this his favourite theologian. Had he done so, these lectures (recorded and transcribed almost verbatim by Paul Brazier, complete with charts, diagrams, live-questions and Gunton's responses) would have served as the basis.

Chapters 1–3 attend to the intellectual, historical and theological background to Barth's thinking. Beginning with a focus on Enlightenment philosophy as it finds voice in Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel – all three of whom 'identified Christianity too closely with modern culture' (p17) – Gunton then turns to Barth's early theological formation in the nine-

teenth-century liberalism of Harnack and Herrmann, as well as to some other voices and ideas that impinged on Barth's theological development – Blumhardt (who also influenced Moltmann), Schweitzer, and Overbeck, through whom eschatology was re-confirmed on the theological radar. Barth's engagement with existentialism (Kierkegaardian and other) and theologies of 'religion', 'crisis' and 'dialectics' are introduced in the second and third lectures, and re-appear subsequently throughout the book. Certainly, for the Swiss theologian, 'no road to the eternal world has ever existed except the road of negation' (p33). Thus when Gunton later comes to unpack something of the charge concerning Barth's 'irrationality' through the continuing influence of *Der Römerbrief*, empiricism, and Barth's 'assertive style', the United Reformed Church minister notes:

The influence of empiricism, especially on the minds of English and American theologians, cannot be dismissed. The English, or to be more pertinent, the Anglican theological mind is shaped by a philosophical tradition that does not find Barth's approach to theology easy to understand let alone agree with ... Part of our intellectual tradition makes it hard for us to understand – particularly an Anglican tradition. Anglicans on the whole like things to be nice and middle way, the *via media*. And there is not much of the middle way in Karl Barth! ... Barth's assertive style does make it difficult for mild-mannered establishment Anglicans to cope with. (p66)

Whether critiquing Augustine, Calvin, Kant, the 'Absolutely Pagan' Hegel (p17), or the 'great opponent' Schleiermacher (p15), Gunton repeatedly identifies that the crucial question for the author of the groundbreaking *Der Römerbrief* remains 'how much of your intellectual method hangs on something foreign to Christianity?' (p. 42; cf. pp. 52–3). To this end, Gunton also devotes an entire lecture (pp53–63) to Barth's 1931 work on Anselm, *Fides quaerens intellectum*, and to the Archbishop's understanding of the relationship between 'proof', 'reason' and 'faith'. He later writes: 'Barth is a post-Reformation thinker with the rallying cry, by scripture alone and by faith alone! Barth found in the Reformation tradition a conception of theology based on a view of God that is linked with human salvation. The problem for Barth with the Scholastic tradition is that they begin with a rational view of God – a rational idea of God abstracted from human salvation. Barth begins with scripture because the God of scripture is about salvation not philosophical argument' (p69). And on a comparison with Schleiermacher: 'the problem with beginning with religion is that it is not theological, it can be, it can lead into theology, but in essence it is not: religion is an experiential concept, not a theological concept. Barth wants a theology that is theological right from the very outset. Barth considers that Roman Catholics and Protes-

tants such as Schleiermacher are wrong in thinking that there can be a non-theological basis for theology. Barth is a theologian you see, to the fingernails' (p69).

From Chapter 4 onwards, Gunton turns to Barth's Church Dogmatics, acutely aware that 'there is nothing as boring as résumés of Barth's Dogmatics' and that 'the way to get into Barth is to select and to read – read him, there is no substitute!' (p71). Over the next 190 pages, this is precisely what Gunton masterfully helps us do; whether on Barth's theological prolegomena, his witness to the three-fold Word, Trinity, the doctrine of God proper, election, christology, soteriology, ethics or creation, we are all along driven by the only thing of theological interest for Barth, the question 'Who is the God who makes himself known in Scripture?' (p77). 'When Barth is at his best', Gunton writes, 'he looks at the biblical evidence in detail; when he is weak he tends to evade it' (p119).

Throughout, Gunton is rousing his 30–40 mostly MA and PhD students (although the lectures were intended for undergraduates and so leave considerable ground un-traversed and engage minimally with secondary literature) to 'read as much of the man himself' not least because 'the people that write about him are much more boring than he is' (p9; cf. p39). In a sense, this is one book to 'listen to' more than to 'read'. At times, it is a bit like the difference between a live album and a studio version. Not all the notes are spot on, but the energy – filled with a depth of theological and pastoral insight that betray years of wrestling with the things that matter – is all there.

Such wrestling means that whether expounding a key motif in Barth's theology or fielding questions, Gunton reveals not only a deep indebtedness to Barth's thought, but also points of divergence. He is upfront in the first lecture:

Not everyone buys into Barth ... I don't, all the way along the line, as I get older I get more and more dissatisfied with the details of his working out of the faith ... over the years I think I have developed a reasonable view of this great man who is thoroughly exciting and particularly, I can guarantee, if you do this course, that you will be a better theologian by the third year, whether or not you agree with him – he is a great man to learn to think theologically with. (p10)

Clearly, Gunton is no clone of Barth. Though they are mostly unnamed, he draws upon Coleridge, Owen, Zizioulas and Polanyi as allies in order to attain a measure of distance from Barth's theology (and that of Barth's student Moltmann), notably on creation, trinitarian personhood (Gunton prefers the Cappadocians), natural revelation, Jesus' humanity, Christ's

priesthood, the Word's action as mediator of creation, ecclesiology, and an over-realised eschatology, among other things. Gunton reserves his strongest criticisms for what he contends is Barth's weak pneumatology (for which he blames Augustine and the filioque): there is 'not enough of the Spirit accompanying and empowering Jesus at different stages of his ministry' (p200). Again: 'the second person of the Trinity is made to do a bit more than he does in Scripture' (p212). However, Gunton is always cautious and respectful: Barth 'never really forgets anything, he is too good a theologian for that. And when you are criticizing Barth it is only a question of where he puts a weight; he never forgets anything, he is too good a man for that' (p171). Even on the Spirit, Gunton suggests that he can only be critical here because of what he has learnt from Barth already: 'That's the great thing about Barth: he enables you to do other things that aren't just Barth but yet are empowered by him. Yes, that's his greatness' (p200).

While the reformed theologian is 'too-multi-layered a thinker to have one leading idea' if there is one, Gunton suggests it is that of covenant: 'that from eternity God covenants to be the God who elects human beings into relation with himself' (p149), that from eternity the triune God is oriented towards us. Gunton's chapter on Barth's revision of God's election in CD II/2 is an astounding example of his adroitness and élan as a theological educator. Not many teachers could summarise so sufficiently and with such economy (just 12 pages!) what for Barth is the root of all things, 'creation, atonement, all' (p115), that is, election. Gunton concludes by suggesting that Barth's effort was 'a huge improvement in the crude determinism of the Augustinian tradition, which did not represent a gracious God. The Augustinian doctrine replaces grace with gratuity: God gratuitously chooses group A and not group B – this is not the God who seeks out the lost [even Judas] and does not reject them' (p121).

This volume is significantly more than merely a course on the theology of the twentieth century's superlative theologian. It is also a reminder that to read Barth attentively is to be introduced to a broader dogmatic and philosophical tradition. Moreover, it is to be led to do so by one of Britain's ablest pedagogues. A foreword by Christoph Schwöbel and a warm introduction by Steve Holmes prepare us for one of the freshest introductions to Barth available. Again, we are placed in Professor Gunton's debt.

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An American Augustinian: Sin and Salvation in the Dogmatic Theology of William G. T. Shedd

Oliver D. Crisp

Paternoster, Bletchley, Milton Keynes; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007; 183pp., £19.99; ISBN 9781842275269

This is perhaps the first published monograph completely devoted to Shedd's writings. William G. T. Shedd (1820-1894) has remained in obscurity for years and we now have our first real serious study on such an important theologian. Oliver Crisp did not merely regurgitate Shedd's thinking, but instead has probed deeply into Shedd's reflections on anthropology, hamartiology, Christology, and the nature of atonement. The introduction gives a very helpful biographical sketch of Shedd while also conveying the goal of the book. Crisp has managed to pull together all the known sources on Shedd's life into one brief essay. It could serve as an excellent entry in any standard biographical dictionaries.

The first chapter unpacks Shedd's traducianism and scrutinizes his theory in the light of modern reflections. How does the soul propagate? Is it fissiparous or does it propagate in accordance with the hylomorphist view of Odo of Tournai? Does the soul divide or reproduce? Crisp offers what he calls a "metaphysical hybrid" to Shedd's answer. His wide reading on this subject enables him to explore this topic beyond traditional ways.

Realism and imputation of Adam's sin are addressed in the second chapter. He considers the problems associated with the transmission of original sin. Three theologians are used as test cases, Shedd, Augustus Strong (another realist) and Charles Hodge (representationalist or federalist). Crisp examines the questions of injustice (Why am I punished for the sins of Adam?) and plausibility (Is there any plausible way to justify making me guilty of Adam's sin?). Though realism seems to give some good answers to these questions, Crisp helps us to see what kind of realism is involved here. He gives two versions of realism, the "common nature view" and the "unindividualized version." Crisp seems to favor the former which teaches that each individual shares a common fallen human nature. One can hardly reflect on these issues without having to interact with Crisp's observations.

"The Theanthropic Person of Christ" is the subject of the third chapter. The nature of the hypostatic union is carefully scrutinized (e.g., anhypostasia-enhypostasia), and Crisp's clear understanding of Shedd's Christology comes to the fore. However, he raised the problem of divine simplicity in Shedd's christological formulation and tries to explain Shedd's position on this question. But this "problem" or difficulty exists

in the very nature of the Christian understanding of the incarnation, and it is not a unique problem to Shedd. On the other hand, Crisp gives a very insightful criticism against Shedd's realism and its implications on Christology (i.e., Shedd argued that Christ's human nature needed to be sanctified before it could be assumed).

Crisp tackles the impeccability of Christ in the fourth chapter. He fills in some of the gaps in Shedd's reasoning and among the several issues related to this topic, he ponders the difficult problem of how any temptation could be innocent. This question is infrequently asked in theological writings and Crisp's clear and cogent reasoning helps the reader steer through this conundrum.

The important doctrines of atonement and federalism are evaluated in the fifth chapter. Crisp wonders why Shedd was not a consistent realist, that is, why Shedd held to a realistic union when it came to Adam but a federal headship when it came to Christ. He suggests that a consistent realistic position may be possible, though he does not seem to commit himself to this alternative.

In the sixth chapter, after developing Shedd's doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement, Crisp seeks to answer Vincent Brümmer's general criticisms against penal substitution from Shedd's perspective. It is refreshing to see how relevant Shedd is in the light of Brümmer's recent theories. I think he has persuasively answered Brümmer.

Crisp's seventh and final chapter unpacks Shedd's formulation of the extent of atonement and his theory of the 'Larger Hope'. This is the only chapter in which Crisp analyzes Shedd strictly in theological terms. Though Crisp's reflections are insightful, other writers have previously covered them in greater depth. He does suggest that Shedd's theory of the pagans who have never heard the gospel is remarkably similar to Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christian." But more should have been done to show the differences between the two.

Overall, the book is very demanding and stimulating. It is not your typical theological volume, since Crisp brings various philosophical issues to the table in conversation with Shedd. He skillfully uses philosophy to unlock the thorny issues raised in Shedd's writings. In a sense, this book is not so much about William G. T. Shedd as it is about probing important theological issues using Shedd as the test case. Oliver Crisp does not rehearse a nineteenth-century theologian's thought to introduce him to modern readers but instead enables Shedd to interact with contemporary theological and philosophical scholarship. I did not necessarily come away from this monograph wanting to read more of Shedd as much as wanting to delve more deeply into the theological doctrines raised in this book. Crisp has done an admirable job in keeping the theological dialogue

alive with Shedd. Crisp wanted to show the relevance of Shedd's writings in our modern context, and I am convinced he has succeeded. No one will now be able to write on Shedd without seriously interacting with Crisp's study. Not all readers will feel Shedd has succeeded in answering some of the questions raised, but Crisp has shown that Shedd's deep reflections are worth considering.

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Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans

David J. Southall

Mohr Siebeck, Tubingen, Germany, 2008; 357pp., \$137.50; ISBN 9783161495366

This book is a revision of David J. Southall's doctoral dissertation at Spurgeon's College, London. His motivation stems from a class on the book of Romans he took in seminary in which he was exposed to New Perspective on Paul (NPP) ideas and righteousness language. However, one of the major reasons for the book is that Southall believes that the NPP's interpretation of righteousness is too narrow because personification and metaphor in Paul's writings are not properly evaluated. Southall's thesis is that when righteousness is used within pericopes that clearly display metaphor and narrative, righteousness is used in a personified way. This personified righteousness undergoes character invention and functions as Christ would in other passages. Southall argues that Romans 6:15-23 and Romans 9:30-10:21 are clear examples where Paul uses righteousness in this way.

In part one, Southall begins by reviewing and critiquing the NPP's use of righteousness language. Southall does not deny the dynamic, relational, covenantal approach but he argues that righteous is not always used in this way. He uses James Dunn as a representative of NPP's thought and a point of departure for his study. Southall shows that the NPP's method and exegesis fails to account for the range of interpretation for righteousness found in the Hebrew Scriptures and concludes that the reason the NPP's fails to see this is due to their understanding of the function of language. This is important to understand because Southall's project is based largely upon modern literary theories, especially the work of Paul Ricoeur.

Next, Southall discusses metaphor and narrative, generally, and how interpretation of Paul's writings must account for such elements. He concludes that the use of Ricoeur's idea of a root metaphor system is highly important for his project. Metaphor, he seeks to prove, leads to semantic innovation. This is why righteousness within narrative and metaphor can

act in a personified way. Southall goes on to show the importance of understanding Paul's writing as narrative, aligning himself with Richard Hays at this point. Paul's narratival writings revolve around the faithfulness of Christ. Southall narrows his project to search for this story within in Romans where personified righteousness occurs.

In part two, Southall examines metaphor, narrative, and the personification of righteousness in Romans 6:15-23. After establishing the presence of these elements, he then provides his exegetical findings for this passage. He concludes that the pericope allows for "righteousness" to function as a personified slave master connoting Christ. In part 3, the same work is done for Romans 9:30-10:21 with very similar conclusions. Southall then seeks to examine the use of righteousness in other Pauline writings.

This book should be commended for the thoroughness of the author's research. There do not seem to be many positions or problems that might counter his conclusions that he does not address. The book is formatted in a reader friendly way with section headings clearly marked and there are many short summary sections. However, the result of such thoroughness makes this a tedious read.

The results of Southall's work are stimulating. He helps interpreters to see elements within Paul's writings that do seem to have been overlooked in most scholarship, especially poetic, apocalyptic, and personified elements. However, one must question the legitimacy of basing a hermeneutic on a modern literary theory. Also, readers should be aware that although Southall critiques the NPP he is largely sympathetic to the position and concludes that his research supports the participationist view of salvation. This book will appeal to those interested in Pauline and NPP studies.

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Metavista: Bible, Church, and Mission in an Age of Imagination

Colin Greene & Martin Robinson

Authentic Media, Bucks, 2008 278pp., ISBN 9781842275061

In an era where almost everything is up for debate, Colin Greene and Martin Robinson take an informative look into what appears to be the emerging coalescence of Biblical knowledge in a transitional society. With backgrounds in missions, theology, and cultural studies, Greene and Robinson draw attention to various historical patterns of both cultural engagement and disengagement. "Old ways of doing things either no longer seem appropriate or do not yield satisfactory results. Accordingly we pro-

pose a new way of doing mission which we call radical cultural engagement” (Introduction, xi). This book serves as an insightful companion for those seeking to understand the transitions Christianity has taken in light of our cultures sociological and economic trends.

Split into three parts this book unravels the ties that bind both modernity and postmodernity to our cultural engagement and societal structure. In part one the reader is carried through an overview of the history and backbone of the transition from modernity to postmodernity. The second part of the book takes a deeper look at the platform we are currently on and how we must adjust in order to reach and not lose our audience. The third part of the book looks forward with imagination as the focus. Understanding the continual state of transition we are in imagination and forward motion become necessary partners.

Unlike the multitude who have dismissed modernity, Greene and Robinson dissect its influence and turn our attention to its constant undertones, “...initially modernity and Christendom formed an alliance because each needed the other to survive” (p15). Drawing out the benefits and limitations within modernity we are able to track its leverage in economics, politics, science, and religious life.

Associated with the artistic avant-garde and literary circles in the 1950’s and 60’s we see the mainstream introduction of postmodernity. “It should never be forgotten that postmodernity, not unlike Romanticism, originated within the humanities as a new aesthetic that began to challenge previously accepted practices and procedures” (p26). Postmodernity ushered in the integration of the narrative to our every day lives. Greene and Robinson point out how we’ve even gone so far as to tailor our lives to be a personally aesthetically pleasing story. As postmodernism has infiltrated our lives a great shift has occurred, “In a postmodern society power no longer resides in old institutions such as the monarchy, the judiciary, the church, or, indeed, parliament. Just where power is actually institutionalized and maintained is not easy to discern, because the dispersal of power cites, as Foucault contended, is going on all the time” (p59). With the flux that postmodernity provides comes opportunities to revamp the way we engage our culture.

While doing a fantastic job at tracking the shift from modernity to postmodernity Greene and Robinson do not lose sight of the practical outworkings for the reader. Fleshing out their concept of radical cultural engagement, Greene and Robinson detail various things that stand in the way. Among this is the secular image and the often over-powering influence of the culture. Despite this large barrier, a vision of creativity is constructed as we are encouraged to imagine a missional community and

reimagine what it means to live a counter-cultural life with a hermeneutic to match.

From cover to cover this book does an excellent job of transitioning from where we've been, where we are, and how to get where we should be going. Greene and Robinson understand the struggles we are up against and provide a clear assessment and a creative solution.

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The Divine Spiration of Scripture: Challenging Evangelical Perspectives

A.T.B. McGowan

Apollos (IVP), Nottingham, England, 2007; 229pp., £14.99; ISBN 978-1-84474-220-2

As a book about (in)Spiration, it is tempting to see this volume as merely as a contribution, from the Reformed perspective, to the ongoing debate on inerrancy and infallibility. However, the book claims to be, and is, more than that. It begins by advocating a relocation of the locus of scripture within the theological system. Then, in discussion of the qualities of scripture, it argues the case for, and proposes, a new vocabulary to replace the traditional terminology – a terminology which the author considers inadequate and misleading. It goes on to re-examine the connection between scripture and the church by, first, discussing the relationship between scripture and creed – which culminates in an argument for developing an evangelical theology of tradition – and, then, by providing some ideas on how scripture is to be preached in the life of the church.

As far as the relocation of scripture goes, the proposal is to shift the locus of scripture from its primary place in theological discussion and subsume it under the work of the Holy Spirit, as an aspect of God's revelation of himself. He recognises logical reasons for maintaining the status quo – in his introduction he says that 'what we believe about the scriptures determines what we believe about everything else.' (Indeed!) - but urges a strong theological reason for change, namely, the need to guard against the idea that God's word is somehow prior to himself and that it can function, as it were, on its own as a source of epistemological certainty apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. So, we should begin with God. Despite arguing his case well, it is hard to say that he succeeds.

First, it is not the doctrine of Scripture as such which really lies at the forefront of our theology but the doctrine of revelation – and where else can Man begin? Moral creation must begin with revelation – after all, is it not axiomatic that we can know nothing of God unless he chooses to reveal himself? In other words, to begin with revelation is, most em-

phatically, to begin with God – as the God who has, first and foremost, revealed himself.

Again – and bearing in mind that later in the book, in a discussion on creeds, the writer goes on to suggest the need for a constant revision of creeds to ensure their ongoing relevance – it seems strange that he should advocate a shift of locus for scripture in the historical era in which the sufficiency, perspicuity and authority of scripture is most challenged by those who claim a special revelation from the Holy Spirit!

More seriously, the emphasis on revelation as ‘encounter’; the distinction drawn between ‘revelation’ and the ‘record of revelation’ and the tendency, at least twice expressed, to put the preaching of the word in the same category of revelation as the ‘incarnation’ and ‘inscripturation’ of it – these are all, ultimately, damaging to a correct view of inspiration. For one thing, all revelation – even pictorial revelation – is designed to be propositional. There is really no need to draw any distinction between the prior revelation ‘event’ and the interpretive record of it – at least in terms of inspiration. Also, with respect to preaching as being the word of God, it is the word of God itself which is revelational – not, particularly, the preaching of it. It is as revelational to say ‘you must be born again’ in a conversation at the dinner table as it is in a pulpit. On the other hand, to say ‘I ate an apple last night’ in the pulpit is no more revelational than it is to say it at home. The distinctiveness of preaching lies elsewhere – not in the precise words spoken alone. It is, all in all, better to limit the revelation of God’s Word of God to incarnational and written forms – bearing in mind, of course, that what is written can also be spoken. To equate the proclamation, as we know and practice it, with the writing of scripture seems more likely to lower the view of the written word rather than exalt the view of the preached word.

As to the attempt to change the relevant terminology, aside from the sheer difficulty in effecting a change – traditional nomenclature is notoriously stubborn in all academic disciplines – the case made for new terminology is, with one exception, unsatisfactory. The exception is ‘Spiration’. The inadequacy of ‘inspiration’ has been long felt and ‘Spiration’, with or without the adjective ‘Divine’ – is undoubtedly a better alternative.

However, the emphasis on the work of the Spirit leads the writer to substitute ‘recognition’ for ‘illumination’ and ‘comprehension’ for ‘perspicuity’. In the first case, the author is really making the case for the outright rejection of the concept of illumination itself – understood, that is, as the illumination of the Scriptures, which he considers (rightly, in my view) to be unnecessary as distinct from the illumination of the human mind, which he (rightly) considers essential. However, by using the word ‘recognition’ there is a move from the Divine agency to the human

response. Would it not, therefore, have been better to drop the term altogether as an attribute of scripture and use it exclusively for the operation of the Spirit on the human mind? Again, in proposing the substitution of 'perspicuity' with 'comprehension' is the author not aware that he has substituted a quality in the reader for a quality belonging to the Bible? The real substitution should be with something like 'comprehensibility' – however, it is possible that this unconscious shift from a quality belonging to the Bible to one belonging to the reader was a mere Barthian slip! In any case, it is hard to see where the real improvement lies.

Least satisfactory of all is the rejection of 'inerrancy' in favour of 'infallibility' as the favoured term to convey the trustworthiness of the Bible. It is hard to see, precisely, what the author is trying to gain by doing so. 'Infallibility' is the traditional term used to designate the reliability of the Bible and conveys the truth that the Bible does not deceive. How can this attribute not be related to the other attribute at issue – that of inerrancy? After all, is it not a fair question to ask of the Bible which claims to be the word of the God who cannot lie - 'does the Bible always tell us the truth'? After many assurances from the writer that we can rest in knowing that we have just the kind of Bible God wanted us to have, the question still remains: is it true? The author is uncomfortable with the question and wishes that it would not be put in those terms, or that it would go away, but it is hard to see why it should.

Part of his difficulty seems to lie in the fact that, for him, the concept of inerrancy is entirely incompatible with the loss of the autographs and the resultant diversity of text. However, bearing in mind that, even if we adopt the conclusions of the most severe critic, 99% of the Bible remains undisputed as to verbal content (i.e. we have the exact words) and that, further, the dispute over most of what remains does not affect the basic unit of meaning (which is the clause, or sentence, and not the word) then do we not have warrant to say that our manuscripts are inerrant? That is, that they teach the truth and not lies?

However, the writer is unwilling to grant necessary inerrancy even to the autographs themselves – on the ground, it seems, that to do so would jeopardise the reality of the full humanity of the authors being involved in the process, reducing them to the level of machines. Here, the usual red herrings and straw men make their customary appearances as we are warned of the danger of the mechanistic notions of inspiration which seem to lurk on every corner when evangelical views of inerrancy are discussed. In fact, it is rare indeed to meet a believer in inerrancy who holds to a mechanical theory of inspiration. I, for one, have never met one. In any case, the true doctrine of inerrancy, if awesome, is yet marvellously straightforward: the God, who cannot lie, used the full and free processes

of the human mind as the means through which he delivered and recorded his message. We are at a loss to discover where the problem with this lies. Inherent in the doctrine of inspiration is a wonder, not a problem. On reflection, it is sometimes difficult to avoid the conclusion that the writer does not hold to inerrancy himself. He just finds it difficult to say so.

On scripture and creed, the author is concerned to justify the existence of a meaningfully confessional church while being equally concerned to safeguard the priority of scripture over the confession. After bemoaning the fracturing and resultant multiplicity of Protestant and Reformed churches as well as the ossified condition of many of our symbols, he suggests that a more satisfactory scripture-confession relationship would be attained by a frequent re-writing of confessions – to ensure ongoing relevance – as well as by the development of a Reformed Tradition. It is not at all clear, however, how this would be achieved and no suggestions are offered but an appeal is made for further thought. Neither is it clear, to this reviewer anyway, to what extent the Reformed churches are without one – it just hasn't been codified to date!

In a very useful, if brief, treatment of preaching, he leans heavily on Calvin to affirm that our preaching of God's word should be authoritative, expository, systematic and doctrinal.

The book is well constructed, well written and interesting to read. It contains a full bibliography and index of names.

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