

Theme:
Inter-cultural Theology

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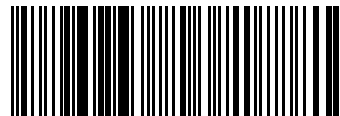
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Editorial: Inter-cultural Theology

It is a truism today that theology cannot be done without a global perspective; sometimes it is important to have different viewpoints on a particular topic, while at other times, the matters under discussion themselves are intrinsically intercultural. In this issue of our journal we present papers which reflect both situations.

The first three papers, by Yung Han Kim of Korea, Sam Hey of Brisbane and William Dumbrell of Sydney, fall into the former category. They come from the Third Annual Conference of the Australia-Korea Theological Society held at St John's College, University of Queensland, Brisbane, 4-5 August, 2000. This society exists as a platform for 'biblical scholars from various countries to meet and become aware of work being done in other locations'. (For more information, contact D.Little@mailbox.uq.edu.au or manschoe@hotmail.com) Following the theme of the conference, 'The Bible and the Church', other papers included discussions of various types of hermeneutical approaches, Hebrew story telling, Bible reading in a non-print culture, the use of the Bible in family worship by pioneer Presbyterian settlers in Australia, Wesley's doctrine of perfection as an example of theological methodology in pastoral practice, and the image of God in Isaiah in relation to Korean reunification.

The remaining papers in this issue

focus on intercultural issues *per se*. Taking up a previously neglected matter, the founder and long-time editor of this journal, Dr Bruce Nicholls, discusses 'Shame and Guilt in a Theology of Cross-Cultural Mission'. In the light of some interesting experiences in cross-cultural teaching, Dr J. Julius Scott, Jr of Wheaton Graduate School reflects on the value of Biblical Theology for non-western theology. Finally, Dr Graham Keith of Scotland moves into an area of inter-religious dialogue and presents a full length evaluation of 'Christian-Jewish Relations after a Century of Great Change'.

Ranging as they do from biblical exposition and hermeneutics through philosophy and church history to missiology and pastoral practice, these papers show how broad is the context for theology. They also emphasize the value of the multi-cultural perspective for appreciating some of the variegated treasures of the gospel and of the grace of God (Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:10).

David Parker, Editor.

The Idea of Transformed Hermeneutics

Yung Han Kim

Keywords: Postmodernism, deconstruction, nihilism, inspiration, confluence, accommodation, biblical criticism, cessationism, faith, church, narrative

Preface

The 21st century is an era of advanced technology and information. Nevertheless, the church has been losing its influence on society in spite of living in a more congenial atmosphere than in any other era of history. The church is in part surrendering to secular religions rather than taking the lead in the new era. There are external influences on the church (namely the historical-cultural atmosphere) but the main reason for

the surrender is internal: the authority of the Bible, on which the church stands or falls, has been deconstructed. It is no longer considered as the Word of God for today. We need a renewed hermeneutical concept that will affirm the spiritual authority of Scripture and to accept Scripture as the Word of God.

In this paper I will firstly diagnose today's hermeneutical crisis and then suggest a new hermeneutic to overcome it.

1. The challenges of deconstructivism: the crisis of text and the discovery of the canonicity of Scripture

Deconstructivism removes the idea of 'book' and suggests the idea of 'text'. The idea of 'book' is a product of western theological thinking. The book, by its very existence, asserts that truth and values are already determined. Deconstructive thought claims an openness of text, denying the idea of book. Text is radically opened, in contrast to the closure of book. This openness is a function of the irreducible contextualization of

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Scripture. All texts reflect their contemporary context.¹ Text is no more than inter-text. In the text world there is no original; all are nothing more than copies of what went before.² There is no fact except the text; no reality outside the text. Here text means a story. A reality is nothing but text.

Deconstructivism denies the canon. The result of denying an objective meaning to text is an anarchism of meaning. By saying 'the play of the meaning is unrestricted'³ there is an infinite variety and choice of meaning. Scepticism is the result of denying the fixed meaning of the letter. Deconstructivism dissolves the truth into the intertextuality of text. It says there is no fixed truth but rather a relative, infinite interpretation of text.

By denying as well as doubting the meaning of text, deconstructivism, falls into radical nihilism, which results in suspicion being cast on the being and significance of self, existence, history, and the cosmos. The root of nihilism, as proclaimed by Nietzsche, is the denial of the existence of God. The being of self, existence, text, history and the cosmos is grounded in the divine creation and the creation thought of God by the logos. The negation of creation thought causes the deconstruction of all the values, culminating in radical nihilism, as Nietzsche said.

Deconstructivism wanders in an endless labyrinth. It wants the deconstructed languages to become the new data for the postmodern imagination. Deconstruction is the hermeneutic of the death of God.⁴ Deconstructivism undertakes to escape from a world where the book makes up the totality of the meaning. Deconstructivism disapproves of archaeology seeking for the first naivety, as it also disapproves of utopian teleology seeking for the last purpose. If viewed through literal logic, deconstructivism has neither a pure origin nor a realized end. The end is regarded as strictly death without life.⁵ Deconstructionist paradise, or the ideal world, is nothing but a world which has lost all meaning. Such a world is one of pure absence.

Deconstructivism reduces the concept of traditional theology into a syntactical phenomenon. Meaning is not univocal but a diverse, equivocal, endlessly drifting phenomenon. Here purpose and salvation are no longer expected. Here writing has no purpose or end; it is a play of endless straying and wandering. So all of the traditional canon can be deconstructed. But this deconstruction comes to nothing, denying even the process itself. A deconstructive theology is an endless maze.

¹ Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: a Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 178.

² Hungghyo Kim, *Deconstructive Philosophy of Derrida* (Mineum Sa, 1993), p. 369.

³ Taylor, *Erring*, p. 173.

⁴ Taylor, *Erring*, p. 6.

⁵ M. Taylor, 'Errance: Lecture de Jacques Derrida: Un essai d'a-théologie postmoderne', (Trad. M. Barat. Paris, Ed. du Cerf, 1985), p. 149.

2. Overcoming deconstructivism

2.1 A new interpretation of inspiration

In order to overcome deconstructivism, the canonicity of the Bible needs to be reestablished and the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible rehabilitated. Canonicity is the doctrine stating that Scripture is the inspired Word of God. Inspiration is the doctrine that Scripture is written by the illumination of the divine Spirit. To confirm the canonicity of Scripture, its inspiration needs to be endorsed. The Princeton theologian, B.B. Warfield, explained inspiration of the Spirit as a 'confluent act' whereby the work of the Spirit and that of the human writers come together or converge. The illumination of the Spirit removes human prejudice and broadens the horizon of understanding. It protects the writer from erring and provides the work with a divine nature not achieved by human power alone.⁶

The Bible is inerrant,⁷ for the inspiration of the Spirit impacts on the author's selection of words in the parts and the whole of Scripture. Today's evangelical theologians generally accept the confluent theory of inspiration.⁸ The inerrancy of Scripture through the confluent act of the Spirit is ascribed only to the autographs of the Bible. Today we

do not have the autographs. However, we have become convinced of biblical inerrancy through the *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*, as Calvin says. As readers, we can repeat today the experience of the confluent act of the Spirit impacting on the writer, for the same Holy Spirit gives today's believers right understanding. The Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, works confluent on believers just as the same Spirit of truth did in the eras of the Old Testament, the New Testament and the historical church. The Spirit, who worked on the original writers in their own context, works today on readers and gives knowledge of truth from the writer for this day and age.

The 1978 Chicago Declaration on Biblical Inerrancy declares that the Holy Spirit, who is the divine writer of Scripture, convinces us of its truth by inward testimony and helps us recognize its meaning, opening our heart.⁹ In the inward testimony of the Spirit there is a confluent act between the Spirit and the reader. The earlier Berkouwer expressed such an organic relationship between the Spirit and the human writer with the notion of adaptation (*aansluiting*).¹⁰ Adaptation means that God comes down to a human level and tells us about himself just as a father communicates by coming down to the level of his children.

⁶ B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, Samuel G. Craig (ed.) (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), p. 158.

⁷ Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, p. 173.

⁸ Don A. Carson and John Woodbridge (eds.), *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 45.

⁹ Norman L. Geisler (ed.), *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), pp. 494ff.

¹⁰ Henrik Krabbendam, 'The Functional Theology of G. C. Berkouwer', in G. Lewis and B. Demarest (eds.), *Challenges to Inerrancy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 287-294.

By the application of critical methods to the extant texts we can reconstruct a copy very close to the autograph, even though we do not have the biblical autograph today. Therefore, the absence of the autograph cannot be the grounds for claiming biblical errancy. As Article 2 of the Chicago statement declares, the range of the inspiration is not partial but plenary. Scripture should be believed in all it claims as the instruction of God, obeyed in all it demands as the commandment of God and accepted in all it promises as the assurance of God.¹¹ So the 1978 Chicago Declaration on Biblical Inerrancy suggests a methodical framework to allow the Word of God to be revealed through Scripture.

2.2 Demanding a new hermeneutical thinking: biblical realistic thinking

A new hermeneutical method, as suggested by Tübingen New Testament scholar, G. Maier, is required to overcome the current, defective historical-critical method.¹² Rhetorical criticism (James Muhlenberg), structuralist criticism (Roland Barthes), canonical criticism (Brevard S. Childs), reader-response criticism and the lesser known lines of analysis are all new efforts to overcome the limitations of the historical-critical method.

What evangelical hermeneutical thinking warns against most is accommodation to the presupposi-

tions of Enlightenment scepticism, agnosticism, rationalism, idealism or existentialism. Whereas Enlightenment scepticism is suspicious of the possibility of recognizing the transcendent, agnosticism insists on not knowing the transcendent, and rationalism approves only the rational or tries to affirm the transcendent within the limits of reason. Moving on from that point, idealism denies the transcendence of God, and existentialism denies that we can come into a rational relationship with the transcendent.

Using the scientific-interpretative method, evangelical hermeneutics does not adopt the presuppositions of the secular, non-biblical and atheistic systems. The biblical text should be interpreted by considering its literary form and genre using grammatico-historical exegesis. This means that Scripture interprets itself, as the Reformers insisted. When analysing the text and questioning the data behind it, biblical hermeneutics avoids relativizing or devaluating the teaching of the text or denying the relevance of the authorship of the texts. In this system, literary tools have a positive role in helping readers to understand the Bible, but also a negative aspect, if the reader is caused to misinterpret Scripture by their use. Therefore biblical hermeneutics uses the tools not absolutely but critically.

True critical interpretation of Scripture is not that form of biblical criticism which uses any critical methodology at all, but rather a self-criticism of Scripture facilitated by the interpretative tools. The funda-

¹¹ Geisler, *Inerrancy*, p. 495.

¹² G. Maier, *Das Ende der Historisch-Kritischen Methode* (Wuppertal, 1975)

mental presupposition in biblical interpretation is the recognition of Scripture as the authoritative God-given canon. The essence of biblical interpretation consists in listening to the biblical message and letting it emerge from the passage and context. It is important to accept the canon in its final form, and to grasp the true meaning of its message. It is not desirable to criticize it on the assumption that the editors changed the contents; when this view is adopted, the contents are hardly considered as facts at all. A true biblical interpretation recognizes the apparent disagreements, conflicts and tensions between the texts.¹³ A hermeneutical thinking is needed to resolve these tensions, but it should be one that does not lead to content criticism. Instead, it possesses an expectation of more accurate knowledge in the future.

In a limited way, true hermeneutical thinking accommodates historical criticism within its framework to reveal the divine revelation using the critical tools that are appropriate for listening to divine revelation. It recognizes validity in form criticism and approves a normal literal meaning in biblical interpretation. This literal meaning is the grammatico-historical one biblical writers used. Genesis 1-11, including the creation and flood reports, are inerrant facts for they are divine, revelatory events, difficult for natural scientific reason to understand. True biblical interpretation understands the results of con-

temporary natural scientific research in the light of the biblical revelatory truth, instead of the reverse.

True critical interpretation claims no hermeneutic uniformity. This allows critics to separate out possible meanings of the text. Those listening to and interpreting it can interpret the text in diverse ways, for the text is speaking to us with authority. As Ricoeur says, it has a surplus of hermeneutic meaning. The method which does not view critically what the Bible actually says but is actually open to its message is a biblical realistic one.

2.3 *A pneumatological hermeneutic situation*

That the Bible is the Word of God is confirmed by the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, and the experience of the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit is a true way of recognizing the canon. The fact that the Bible is the Word of God is not merely a dogmatic tenet, but should be accompanied by subjective assurances. This is one reason the doctrine of the cessation of the charismatic gifts should be revised.

A. Kuyper, B. B. Warfield, A.A. Hoekema, J.D.G. Dunn, R. Gaffin, and others, all in the Reformed tradition, insist on the doctrine of the cessation of the charisma. They deny the continuation of the gifts, affirming instead that the Spirit poured them out once for all in the early period of the church.¹⁴ According to this view, *charismata* ceased when

¹³ Geisler, *Inerrancy*, p. 501.

¹⁴ Youngbae Cha, 'Pneumatology', *Bible and Theology* 7 (1989), pp. 137-151.

the canon was complete¹⁵ because the gifts were meant to be temporary, given in order to consolidate the basis of the church in the apostolic age. 1 Corinthians 13:8, 'when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away' (RSV), is suggested as exegetical grounds for this position, with the 'perfect' thing considered as the completion of the canon.

Donald G. Bloesch critiques the position of confessional evangelicals who build on Reformed confessions and transmit the Dutch tradition, such as Westminster Theological Seminary and Calvin Theological Seminary. He claims that by emphasizing the confessions and the spirit of Reformation, they devalue the living work of the Holy Spirit who was active throughout the history of the church.¹⁶

Such a doctrine not only destroys the relevance of the charismatic gifts for the life of the historical church, but it also lacks biblical grounds.¹⁷ On the other hand, in favour of the doctrine there are some strong voices. First, St Augustine, who withdrew the idea of the cessation of charismata in his later book (*The City of God* 22:8), referred to innumerable instances of the continuity of charisma.¹⁸

Then the work of the Holy Spirit was evident in Jonathan Edwards' revival movement of 1735-40. Edwards understood the work of the Holy Spirit to include giving divine and supernatural light immediately to the human soul. He preached this understanding as 'a biblical and reasonable doctrine'.¹⁹ In this great awakening movement, there appeared such supernatural phenomena as tears, falling down, sighing, bodily pain, crying, violent shaking, visions and ecstasy.

Finally, at 3:00 a.m. January 1, 1739, in the early dawn, Wesley prayed through the night with seven pastors and sixty members in Peter Lane. He witnessed many fall down on the floor as God's power descended strongly; Wesley himself was also included in this number. Because of such phenomena, he was criticized and rejected by the church leaders. In his letter to Thomas church in June 1746, he affirmed strongly that he did not think there had been any age when God had not been acting in sovereignty.²⁰

Even in modern Korea, charismatic phenomena such as speaking in tongues and prophecy have been appearing and spreading widely in the mainline church.²¹ Furthermore, the strong charismatic phenomena

¹⁵ R. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost* (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979)

¹⁶ Donald G. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), p. 38.

¹⁷ Youngbae Cha, 'The view of R. B. Gaffin and problems', and 'The once-character of pentecostal Spirit pouring', *Pneumatology* (1987)

¹⁸ Augustine, 'City of God', in J. Defferrai (ed.), *The Fathers of the Church Volume 24: St. Augustine, City of God, Books 17-22* (DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), pp. 431-445.

¹⁹ Jonathan Edwards, 'A Divine and Supernatural Light immediately imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God, Shown to be both a Scriptural and Rational Doctrine', in *The Work of Jonathan Edwards* Volume 2, pp. 12-17.

²⁰ John Tellford (ed.) *The Letters of John Wesley* Volume 2, (London: Epworth, n.d.), p. 261.

²¹ Yu Youngki, 'On the charisma experience in the Korean Church', *Bible and Theology* 15 (April 1994), pp. 75-81.

are evident in various mission fields. Here they stand over against the systematic opposition of indigenous religions or militant religions, such as Islam, and once again undergird the foundation of the church, and in so doing, witness to the Christ's salvific work.

3. The consequence of historical criticism: the crisis of the Bible – the crisis of the church community

Historical criticism, influenced by the Enlightenment and leading to the negation of the church and tradition, considered the church not as a faith community but merely as an historical religious institution. It made critical reasoning absolute and did not take Scripture as the Word of God, but rather as an historical document which is a product of human religious experience. Historical criticism set up human reason as an absolute criterion for historical research on the assumption that humans can reconstruct objective truth through reason. Thus, in interpreting biblical history, it rejected divine intervention and miracles. In the pre-suppositions of critical historical research lies a Hegelian dialectical philosophy of history or a historical positivism of the Lange school or an existentialism of Heidegger, rather than biblical thinking.

Over against the historicist concept of the 19th century religions-historical school, Gerhard von Rad proposed the concept of salvation-history. In saying biblical salvation-history was a history of Israel's faith confession, he tried to reconstruct it

with a contemporary historical critical method. This resulted in viewing the exodus event of the twelve tribes of the Israelites, their conquest of Canaan and the narrative in the books of Moses and Judges not as real historical events but as events projected by a faith confession.²² Historical criticism loses the real history in which divine salvation has been realized. The history of faith without real history is merely an existential history. Von Rad's concept of salvation-history is nothing more than 'a fideistic-poetical literature construction' (*eine gläubig-dichterische Literakonstruktion*).²³

Through the literary criticism of the Old Testament text and research into the historical geographical background of the Philistines, the A. Alt – M. Noth school drew the conclusion that the history of Israel was not a real history but a kerygmatic one. This school comes into the category of 'historical nihilism', especially in its denial of the history of the patriarchs and the historicity of Moses and the Exodus event.

Historical criticism concentrates only on the illumination of the historical dimension of the text, as seen in the background of the author, his character and the history of the text. It assumes the key to interpretation is outside the text, namely, in its origin

²² G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Volume I, D.M.G. Stalke (trans.) (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p.111.

²³ Helge Stadelmann, 'Hermeneutische Erwägungen zur Heilsgeschichte', in *Glaube und Geschichte, Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie* (1986), pp. 44-49.

and background.²⁴ Thus, it does not recognize the inward message, the salvific revelation of God and the theological implications the Bible conveys. It neglects the effect the biblical text had in Christian history, the faith experience of the church and its members who have understood the inward message of the text. Historical criticism completely breaks the biblical text into fragments by understanding the text merely as a product of human religious experience.

The following critique of the British biblical scholar, I. Howard Marshall, is relevant. 'From the outset the historical-critical method is committed to an explanation of Christianity which is different from that of the Bible. The assumption not simply that parts of the Bible may be false but they actually are false is built into [this] method.'²⁵ The historical-critical method resulted in the conclusion that the Old Testament reports are completely isolated from the real historical events to which they purport to refer. They are viewed as a story made in a faith setting or a historical story which a later faith community has written as a religious document, although projecting the authorship and historical setting into a period earlier than its own.

4. An idea of new hermeneutics: a dynamic relationship of text centred and reader-response – transformed hermeneutics

4.1 Need of a new hermeneutic

Higher criticism has reflected the conflict between opinions and interpretations held among its scholars.²⁶ These conflicts can be seen in the procedures chosen and the various analytical and complex processes of criticism such as text criticism, text translation, literary criticism (data criticism), form criticism, transmission history criticism and redaction criticism.

Such hermeneutic artificiality was mentioned by Gadamer in his volume, *Truth and Method*. Truth is not discovered by method; rather method is a hindrance to discovering truth. Instead of helping us hear the voice of God, today's higher critical hermeneutic has obscured the revelation of truth through the artificiality of its work. Rejecting a methodological approach, Gadamer suggested the hermeneutics of effective history to make the text's own message apparent.²⁷ The proper task of biblical hermeneutics is to listen to the voice of the living God speaking through the biblical text.

Reformed theology should neither unconditionally criticize nor blindly follow contemporary historical criticism, but instead search for a way to

²⁴ Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 1-13.

²⁵ Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, (Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 84 ff.

²⁶ Kim Joongeun, 'What is the evangelical Study of the Old Testament?', *Bible and Theology* 19 (1996), p. 88.

²⁷ Kim Yung Han, *From Heidegger to Ricoeur*, 4th ed., (Pak Young Sa, 1993), pp. 257-265.

overcome its methodical shortcomings. The positive contribution of historical criticism is to provide relevant knowledge of the formative historical process of Scripture (namely, the initial compositional process of writing, content, transmission and final form of the text) and to help understand the meaning of the biblical text.²⁸ Because the Bible itself demands an historical appreciation, historical interpretation is an important task an interpreter has to carry out in order to search for the meaning of the text.²⁹

Historical criticism should be used according to a theory of history informed not by positivism but by biblical faith. Biblical scholarship needs to abandon its one-sided method which on the one hand considers only the historical meaning but neglects theological meaning (Gabler etc.) or on the other hand, considers only the theological meaning, but neglects the historical meaning (Eissfeldt etc.). Instead it should carry out an integrated historical-theological methodology to explain the historical meaning and, by extension, its meaning for today.³⁰

Evangelical scholars affirm that the meaning of text is in the intention of the author and the historical background. They undertake a historico-grammatical approach to biblical interpretation and they endeavour to

interpret Scripture in the light of its historical origins. However, the difference between them and historical critics lies in their identifying the text with its final form, namely, the canonical form. The Old Testament was the canon for the historical Jesus and the early church. As Childs indicated, accepting the Bible as canon suggests a way to overcome higher criticism. Walter Kaiser, especially, uses a biblical hermeneutic to identify the meaning of text and the intention of the author. He applies Hirsch's hermeneutics, oriented to the intention of the author, to biblical interpretation: 'The author's intended meaning is what a text means.'³¹

Evangelical historical interpretation considers the sovereignty of God and the fideistic experience of the church as important. During the 1980s, American evangelical biblical scholars working in the area of gospel studies suggested a new literary criticism as an alternative interpretative method to overcome the limitations of traditional historical criticism. Historical criticism until then dealt with the issues in terms of the source of the whole process of writing, including the origin of the gospels. Thus it was called 'source criticism' or 'literary criticism'.

Such a literary criticism made efforts to explain the world behind the text (namely, the historical Jesus, the situation of the early church and the situation of the author and community) by concentrating its hermeneutical concern on the

²⁸ W. S. Vorster, 'Historical Criticism: Through the Eyes of a Historian', in Hartin, P.J. and Petzer J.H. (eds.), *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 15-43.

²⁹ Vorster, 'Historical Criticism', p. 16.

³⁰ Jung Kyu Nam, *The Pulse of Old Testament Theology* (Doo Ran No, 1996), p. 39.

³¹ W. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), p. 33.

authoring process of the text (origin/event to oral tradition; transmission to proclamation to editing/writing). Thus, in historical criticism, the present text is understood as a kind of window through which to view the world behind the text. Of course, it is necessary to understand the background out of which the text has come in order to better understand the presently available text. In this case, historical criticism should be used as an instrument to help comprehend the intention of the author, as it appears in the text itself

In reality, however, historical criticism was used not as a tool but as an end in itself. As a consequence, the gospel was considered not as a historical biography but as a social (faith/theological/literary) product devised on the basis of the faith of the early church. Historical criticism resulted in the text being cut into fragments, thereby reducing the value of the final text and author by artificially analysing the text according to the origin (source criticism), transmission (form criticism) and editing (redaction criticism) of the source.³²

In contrast, the new literary criticism should have a major hermeneutical concern in comprehending the content and message of the gospel, which is the final text conveyed to us. By concentrating on the meaning of biblical text, it is possible to find the unity (structure, plot) of the biblical text and the intention of the text/author (as indicated by the text itself); this process is assisted by an

understanding of the genre (which is mainly concerned with the form of the text).³³

This new understanding, which takes seriously both the historical facts and the revelation presented by the Bible, argues that general literary interpretation neglects these two aspects and thus uses it in a limited manner. Such an interpretation was developed in the centre of Society of Biblical Literature of North America. The evangelical representatives include Longman of Westminster Theological Seminary, Ryken of Wheaton College and McKnight of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.³⁴

However, special methods, such as the new literary criticism or rhetorical interpretation, are not the only tools for interpreting the Bible. Rhetorical interpretation contributes to the comprehension of the intention of the author as it appears in the text. It also seeks to understand the stance of the audience (reader) through a rhetorical analysis of the structure, and to comprehend the logic and intention of the author corresponding to it.³⁵

The new literary criticism has to consider the following points. Firstly,

³² N. R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), p. 12.

³³ M.A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), p. 6; T. Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books-Zondervan, 1987); L. Ryken and T. Longman III, *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993)

³⁴ Sang Bub Shin, 'The Trends of Evangelical New Testament Scholarship', *Bible and Theology* (April, 1997), pp. 37-70.

³⁵ G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Interpretation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984)

the historical character of the Bible. The Bible is not merely literature, but is based on a history which underlies the creative expression of the work. Secondly, there is the theological character of the Bible. If there was a situation where a new literary interpretation did not accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God but understood it merely as a rhetorical product of religious group, a different interpretation would result. Therefore, the new literary interpretation here needs to be pneumatological, canonical and theological.

Concretely, a new literary interpretation understands the gospel as a genre of 'historical narrative'³⁶ which is based on a history of revelation and the faith of the reader growing out of the historical fact of Jesus' life. In so doing, it takes the form of the text into consideration while maintaining an emphasis on the content of the gospel as a historical fact. Furthermore, this new literary interpretation takes into consideration the intention of the author and the rhetorical effect on the reader.³⁷

Thirdly, this new literary criticism takes account of the power of the Bible to transform the reader. It relates the meaning of the text to the world and also to the structure of the text by understanding it as an autonomous work independent of the world of the author. However, the meaning of the text comes out of the author's intention through the

text and the world of the text is brought into the reader's world. Biblical interpretation does not end in the interpretation of the text, but brings this interpretation into the contemporary situation. This is reader-response criticism.³⁸

This interpretation emphasizes the current situation of the reader of the text. Today's situation is not that in which the text was formed, but it is the situation in which the text reveals its meaning. Through the reception of the text by the present readers, the text secures the position of the canon and carries out the role of the Word of God, namely, being the living text for today. This interpretation accepts the biblical text as a whole without fragmentation, and accepts it as a canon for today's faith community, namely, for the life of church.³⁹

I agree with Edgar Conrad's proposal for interpreting Scripture: the practice of biblical theology needs to be carried out by its readers in communities of faith who explore the otherness of the biblical text. Conrad's contribution is an alternative to, and supplement for, the shortcoming of the historical critical interpretation carried out by critical analysis which does not consider the aspect of the faith-world the biblical text owns. As the Word of God for this age, the Bible transforms the life of the reader and community who accept the text as the Word of God.

³⁶ R.A. Culpepper, 'Story and History in the Gospels', *Review and Expositor* 81 (1984), p. 474.

³⁷ Sang Bub Shim, 'An Understanding on the Historical Essence of the Gospel', *Theological Navigator* 248 (Autumn, 1996), pp. 210-214.

³⁸ Longmann III, *Literary Approaches*

³⁹ Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah: Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), p. 161.

Biblical interpretation used by Reformed theology has to go further than merely searching for the world behind the text or the world of, or in, the text. Instead, the task of interpretation is to illuminate the meaning of the text for today's concrete reality situationally and ethically. However, today's radical reader-centred interpretation as it appears in liberation theology, black, Minjung and feminist theologies, cultural criticism or the late colonialistic criticism, makes an error by changing the text's own meaning and historical context as it transposed the text into the present situation. A true situational meaning of the text is revealed only when the original meaning of the text is rightly elucidated.

Interpretation should not be bound by method. Diverse methods can be used. For the right interpretation, a proper discussion and dialogue between the biblical text and community has to be searched for and a method of multi-dimensional biblical interpretation is required. An integrated historical, literary and theological interpretation should be implemented. No individual or denomination can speak for the whole truth of the Bible. God alone possesses this truth. We can understand biblical truth only by dialoguing in the church community and learning from each other in the Spirit with an open attitude.

4:2 *A transforming power of text*

Paul Ricoeur moves the focus from what lies behind the text to what occurs in front of the text. A hermeneutical concern is to listen to

what the text says to the reader, not simply stopping when the reconstruction of its history is complete.

The individual or collective ego-centred horizon should be expanded in a way that de-centres the ego. The text opens a new horizon for the reader and brings a change. Therefore, the text is related to the author in a way that can productively transform the readers' horizons, attitudes, criteria, and their community and interpersonal situations. The method of transforming reading rearranges the expectation, presuppositions and purposes the readers bring to the text. If the readers respect the distinctiveness of the textual horizon in challenging their own horizon, a creative interaction between the horizons can occur. The distance between reader and text contributes to a positive hermeneutic function. If the readers are caught prematurely by the horizon of the author, they remain locked in his own closed horizon, or worse still, the readers may be captured by the fantasy that the text has spoken to them sufficiently. In the case of premature assimilation, no interaction occurs between the horizons of the reader and text.

It can also happen that no transforming event accompanies the reading of the biblical text in a Christian community. The reason is that the reading process is dominated by the horizon of expectation already formed by the community of readers.⁴⁰ Often preachers draw what they want from the text. The

⁴⁰ Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 44.

congregation likewise reads the text in a way that confirms the identity and lifestyle of the community they are enjoying. In such a situation, biblical reading is made subordinate to dogma and becomes instead an institutional mechanism which confirms the continuity of identity and the collective belief.

The word 'transformed' does not mean the reader views the tradition negatively and negates it. Rather, the word 'transformation' means 'creative interaction'. The reader's pre-understanding of the biblical text and horizon is formed by the tradition of that reader. This preunderstanding comes out of a productive event occurring in the broad context of this tradition.

The biblical text draws the reader from self-centredness and conveys a message of judgement and love. Therefore, an encounter with the text is an encounter with others and, through that, an encounter with God. As Paul Ricoeur says, if a reader encounters others despite the distance in time and culture, then there occurs a true encounter with the text. Through understanding others, the reader searches for a growth in self-understanding. Hermeneutics is self-understanding through understanding others.⁴¹

God's Word encounters readers in the sharpest way when it treats us as an adversary, revising and correcting our old thinking and expectations. When the horizons encounter and interact, the biblical reading has the

capacity to become a transformed reading. A transformed hermeneutics means the biblical text, received as the Word of God, encounters us as a transforming text. The text transforms the recognition, understanding and action of the reader and reading community. The text also suffers from the pain of transformation in the hand of the readers and of the understanding community, because they can misunderstand and misuse the text. This happens when readers use the text as a tool to confirm their own prejudice and belief.

The transforming power of the text stands itself as a potential; its transforming effect becomes reality only as the reader opens up to the text. Markus Barth says as follows: 'The unique power of the Bible flows from the fact that the biblical words [are words] of love . . . between God and man. The reading of the Bible therefore should be compared to reading love letters rather than the study and use of a law book.'⁴² The recipient of a love letter does not respond by acknowledging receipt of information. Reading here becomes transactional. This entails an act of acceptance, commitment and deeper bonding. Texts shape and transform readers in many different ways. For example, a narrative text draws the readers into a projected world in which a flow of events and feelings is imaginatively experienced at a pre-reflective level. In this case, the transaction lies in the readers' willingness to step into this world and to let their

⁴¹ Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essay in Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 17.

⁴² Markus Barth, *Conversation with the Bible* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 9.

feelings and imagination be directed by the world of the text.

All readers bring to the text a horizon of expectation – a mind-set or system of reference. The biblical text challenges and transforms this horizon of expectation. Patterns of habituation in the reader's attitude, experience and reading practice form the horizons of expectation. The representative example is the message of the cross. The message of the cross brings about a reversal of evaluation and, at the same time, conflict and a change in the horizon of expectation (I Cor. 1:18, 23-4). The ground for a transformed horizon of hermeneutics is a theology of the cross. In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-15), the horizon of the readers possessing a general concept of justice is shattered and transformed by the Word so that it conveys a generosity of grace. The parable of the Pharisees and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) clash constantly with the horizons of the every day expectations of the reader. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount breaks up the horizons of hermeneutic expectation. Before he experienced justification by faith, Luther read the Bible in an attitude of anger and fear toward the divine righteousness. After reading Romans 1:17 he was born again and experienced an entry into paradise. Luther came to experience the great love of God as much as he feared divine righteousness.

The closing words

In this 21st century, Reformed theology needs to develop a firm view of

Scripture and a new biblical hermeneutical method, which are faithful to Christian experience and theology. Basing itself on traditional pneumatology, it needs to establish a concrete and experiential pneumatology to explain the worldwide activity of the Spirit today. It needs to prepare for a hermeneutical situation in which the church community receives the Bible as the Word of God.

In the 21st century, characterized as an age of complex technology and advanced communication facilities, the church needs to have a post-critical attitude which goes beyond both a pre-critical and the critical attitude. It needs to go beyond both the pre-critical naivety of intuitive and emotional understanding and the critical attitude of objective, scientific and analytic understanding; yet it needs to include both these understandings. Post-critical thinking is holistic and it is the thinking of transformed hermeneutics. As Ricoeur says, one needs to have a second naivety to go beyond destructive criticism and reach a positive one. This is possible by understanding the spiritual dynamics of the Bible as the Word of God. Therefore, Bible reading in the church should be conducted within the horizons of transformed hermeneutics. The direction of transformed hermeneutics is twofold: to inwardly experience the work of God descending through the Word to the reader, while outwardly transforming the reader, church and society.

Changing Roles of Pentecostal Hermeneutics

Sam Hey

Keywords: Fundamentalism, modernism, post-modernism, baptism in the Spirit, glossolalia, contextualisation, biblical criticism, historical-grammatical criticism

There can be little doubt that Pentecostalism is changing. The movement has grown and its beliefs, practices and the way that it interprets biblical texts have had to be adjusted as its members sought to interact with other religious and intellectual communities. Early Pentecostals held to an uncritical, fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible and showed little concern for the original language of the text and the cultural setting in which it arose. They emphasized doing rather than studying, and text rather than con-

text.¹ Their subjective, pietistic, self-absorption led to interpretations that had little connection with those intended by the original biblical authors. James Barr describes this type of fundamentalism as ritualistic, and to be celebrated and not discussed.² It is the aim of this paper to map the changes that have occurred in the way Pentecostals have interpreted the biblical texts over the last hundred years and to consider reasons for these changes.

Pentecostalism has been distinguished from the rest of Christianity by two distinctive beliefs. The first is belief in a post-salvation experience of the Holy Spirit. This belief can be traced to their Methodist and Holiness roots. It was frequently called the 'baptism in the Holy Spirit', a term that is taken from Acts 1:5.³

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¹ V. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 214.

² James Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments* (London: SCM, 1966), p. 215.

³ G.D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), p. 84.

The second distinctive Pentecostal belief is that tongues (or *glossolalia*) is the normative evidence for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Charles Parham developed this unique belief after he and his Topeka Bible College students searched the book of Acts for biblical references which would be 'evidence' for the baptism in the Spirit.⁴ The term 'evidence' came from the scientific method that was discussed in popular literature in the early twentieth century.⁵ Parham believed that tongues were a supernatural impartation of human languages (*xenoglossolalia*) that would enable rapid world evangelization in the last days before the Messiah's return.⁶ He claimed that this gift would provide the means for missionaries to be sent overseas without first having to study foreign languages. Although this claim is clearly evidenced in early Pentecostal literature, it was soon abandoned when under-prepared missionaries faced difficulties as they endeavoured to evangelize foreign lands.

A lack of concern for the original linguistic and cultural context of biblical passages was evident in early Pentecostal Bible colleges. Hollenweger notes that 'Until recently it was possible to obtain a

doctorate in theology at a Pentecostal Bible College without knowledge of ancient or modern languages, without knowledge of the origin or composition of the Bible, without secondary education, and simply on the basis of six years' instruction on the Bible.'⁷

After an initial period of isolation, Pentecostal churches found increasing opportunity for interaction with evangelical churches that shared common goals. As Pentecostalism has matured and been accepted into the mainstream, its pre-critical fundamentalistic view of the Bible has been challenged by more sophisticated approaches widely accepted by those with whom they interact.

When the large American Pentecostal group, the Assemblies of God (AOG), joined the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942, it recognized the need to adjust its hermeneutics and adopt the more sophisticated methods of their newfound associates.⁸ Upward social mobility, higher incomes and the suburbanisation that followed World War II contributed to change in the Pentecostal's educational and theological aspirations. The introduction of accreditation for AOG ministers in 1959 reflected their increasing concern for conformity.⁹ Liberal arts degree programmes that included a

⁴ James R. Goff, *Fields White unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), p. 15.

⁵ R. P. Spittler, 'Glossolalia', in S. M. Burgess and G. B. McGee, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1988), p. 339.

⁶ V. Synan, 'The Origins of the Pentecostal Movement', Oral Roberts University, Internet Site, <http://www.oru.edu/library/holyspirit/pentorg1.htm#19th> (1999) (Accessed 16 Oct 2000),

⁷ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: the Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1972), p. 292.

⁸ E. L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Hyatt Ministries, 1996), p. 179.

⁹ W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO.: Gospel Publishing House, 1971) p. 376.

greater consideration of modernist methods mostly replaced the Bible-based theology programmes of the 1940s.¹⁰ This led a growing number of Pentecostal groups to adopt historical-grammatical methods that emphasize contextualisation and the pursuit of the original author and his intentions.¹¹ Changes in the attitudes and beliefs of the newly graduating church leaders flowed on into their newer churches.

These changes rang alarm bells with many Pentecostals and they frequently chose to discard modern scholastic methods, labelling them as faith-destroying and even demonic. Many older Pentecostals considered them a threat to traditional Pentecostal beliefs, including the normative, post-salvation reception of the Spirit evidenced by *glossolalia*. Younger, newer graduates were also concerned. They recognized that dependence on critical exegetical methods challenged the vitality and freedom that characterized traditional Pentecostalism.¹² Byrd said that the Pentecostal emphasis on critical exposition in seminaries has produced pastors with a good knowledge of technical exegetical skills but lacking the prophetic edge that characterized

early Pentecostalism.¹³ Sheppard, singling out Gordon Fee as an example, warned that Pentecostals were beginning to pursue the historical-grammatical method at a time when biblical and theological scholars had moved beyond this emphasis.¹⁴

The scholarly methods used by Gordon Fee revealed a virtually unbridgeable historical gulf between the experiences of modern day Christians and New Testament Christianity. The experiences of New Testament Christians were found to be so different from those of modern times that they must be considered irrelevant.¹⁵ The Pentecostal claim to find intended New Testament patterns concerning charismatic gifts for all Christians was found to be unwarranted. *Glossolalia* as the sole evidence of a Pentecostal baptism was found to be untenable.¹⁶ The failure of the historical critical method to satisfy the needs of Pentecostal communities led an increasing number of their scholars to question this approach and to look to other methods that were more supportive of their Pentecostal beliefs.¹⁷

In recent times, most interpreters of the text have recognized that they 'cannot silence their own subjectivity, or achieve an objective neutrali-

¹⁰ Menzies, *Anointed to Serve*, p. 376; Synan, *Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 214.

¹¹ T. B. Cargal, 'Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age', *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15:2 (1993), p. 163; Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 86.

¹² G. T. Sheppard, 'Biblical Interpretation After Gadamer', *Pneuma: The Journal for the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 16 (1994), p. 121.

¹³ J. Byrd, 'Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation', *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15:2 (1993), p. 207.

¹⁴ Sheppard, 'Biblical Interpretation', p. 121.

¹⁵ Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 94.

¹⁶ Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 99.

¹⁷ Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 163.

ty'.¹⁸ Biblical scholars have begun to question all attempts to locate an absolute, intended meaning within the text. Post-modernism grew out of a recognition of the limitations of modernism and a rejection of the claim that 'only what is historically and objectively true is meaningful'.¹⁹ There has been a recognition that both liberals and fundamentalists were perpetuating the same false notion that the original intention of the author could be identified. Both of these 'left and right wing modernist groups' seemed to be pursuing the same impossible task.²⁰

Recent decades have witnessed a decline in church numbers. This can, at least in part, be linked to a growing disillusionment with churches that emphasize centralized, hierarchical structures and complex, cerebral theologies based on historical critical methods. Many in society are seeking religious expressions that value pragmatic, experiential practices and intuitive, mystical ways of knowing. They are seeking religious practices that allow them to be active participants in God's unfolding purposes rather than remaining as detached observers of God's completed work.

Post-modern Pentecostalism

Cargal²¹ and Arrington²² note that most Pentecostal preachers are unaffected by modern critical methods and that their interpretations of the text have had less to do with rationalistic, inductive methods of biblical study and more to do with a creative interaction with the text.²³ Most have continued the practice of interpreting a text in different ways at different times to meet the particular needs of their hearers. Many Pentecostal scholars in recent times claim that traditional Pentecostalism has more continuity with post-modern modes of interpretation than it does with modern historical critical methods.²⁴

An examination of writings in the *Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, *Pneuma*, reveals that the hermeneutical sophistication of Pentecostals has risen dramatically over the last decade as they have begun to integrate the latest hermeneutical practices. This is particularly noticeable in the writings of Cargal (1993), Byrd (1993), Harrington and Pattern (1994) and Arrington (1994). These scholars point out the inadequacies

¹⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), p. 316.

¹⁹ Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 171.

²⁰ Sheppard, 'Biblical Interpretation', p. 121.

²¹ Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 163.

²² French L. Arrington, 'The Use of the Bible by Pentecostals', *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 16 (Spring 1994), pp. 101

²³ Frank D. Macchia, 'Tongues as a Sign: Towards a Sacramental Understanding of Pentecostal Experience', *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15 (Spring 1993), p. 65.

²⁴ R. D. Israel, D. E. Albrecht and R. G. McNally, 'Pentecostals and Hermeneutics: Texts, Rituals and Community', *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15:2 (1993), p. 137.

and dangers to Pentecostalism that come from an emphasis on the grammatical, historical and critical context of the text. Many have looked to post-modern hermeneutical methods for a solution.²⁵

Some Pentecostals, such as Howard Ervin, have suggested that the post-modern questioning of modern scientific certainties provides support for a return to the ancient world-view of biblical times.²⁶ Ervin's view, however, is a naive misrepresentation of both post-modernism and Pentecostalism. While Pentecostalism shares many attributes with post-modernism, their significant differences need to be recognized. Post-modernism is often a 'misnomer for ultra modernity'.²⁷ It remains essentially anti-supernatural and pro-critical. While Post-modernists recognize that reason and rationalism are limited, they do not claim that critical thinking is *passé*.²⁸ Post-modernism is inclusive rather than exclusive. It hesitates to deny the validity of religions, but it also hesitates to accept claims to exclusive truth by any one religion.

Pentecostalism, on the other hand, has different reasons for its suspicion of modernism. It believes in a supernatural God who exists outside of the

closed, determinist worldview of modernism. Pentecostalism holds to values that lie beyond the possibility of evaluation by the critical method. It holds that revelation and spiritual intuition are superior ways of knowing. It claims that truth can be found in an easily comprehended, single source of revelation in the Bible. It is open to guidance by a contemporary interpreter, the Holy Spirit. Pentecostalism claims to provide answers to the overconfidence of modernity and to the uncertainty of post-modernity.

Despite these differences, many people believe that developments within post-modern methods of interpretation hold promise for Pentecostals.²⁹ Cargal, for example, says that the 'post-modern vision of reality opens up the possibility of the transcendent virtually closed by modernity'.³⁰

Church of God pastor and scholar, Joseph Byrd, says that new hermeneutical methods such as those of Paul Ricoeur are needed if the distinctive Pentecostal beliefs are to survive threats from both modernism and post-modernism.³¹ A number of Pentecostals believe that they have found a solution in Ricoeur's method.

Paul Ricoeur

Ricoeur has shown that objectivity and subjectivity need not be consid-

²⁵ Mark D. McLean, 'Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic', *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 6 (Fall 1984), p. 36.

²⁶ H. M. Ervin, 'Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option', *Pneuma: The Journal for the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 3 (Fall 1981), p. 19.

²⁷ D. S. Dockery, (ed.), *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1995), p. 26.

²⁸ Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 178.

²⁹ Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 187.

³⁰ Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 178.

³¹ Byrd, 'Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory', p. 203.

ered as opposites, but as two aspects of the one paradigm that exist alongside each other as 'two sides of the one coin'.³² Paul Ricoeur's post-critical method combines reconstructions of the original meaning of the text with contemporary readings of it.³³ His post-critical hermeneutic also challenges the readers to acknowledge that they project their own interests, desires, and selfhood into the text.³⁴ Ricoeur says that readers typically change over time from naive, intuitive interpreters of the text to increasingly self-critical analysts of their application. He says that the identification of this change brings an awareness of the need to balance the creative and the analytical. Moreover, it brings recognition of the need to listen with tolerance and mutual respect to different interpretations.³⁵ By combining the benefits of the historical-critical methods with a self-critical recognition of multiple prevailing interpretations, the interpreting communities are better equipped to apply the 'biblical' message to contemporary needs.

The hermeneutics of Ricoeur encourage an awareness of the diversity of meanings that the text will pres-

ent to different reading communities.³⁶ His method recognizes the creative effect of symbols, metaphors and narratives on the religious imagination and thoughts. Subsequent generations of religious movements cannot be expected to have the same experience of the text's symbols as the first generation did.³⁷ They live in different contexts, and must be allowed to develop their own interpretations that are appropriate to their own times and situations. The recognition that symbols within the text are re-experienced by succeeding communities and generations in different ways should build greater understanding of the ways in which beliefs change and a greater tolerance for differences in interpretations.

Plurality of Meanings

Michael Foucault has shown that the haste with which modern ways of knowing overlooked pre- and post-modern values needs to be reconsidered.³⁸ Attempts to dismiss early Pentecostal hermeneutics that focused on subjective, intuitive ways of knowing need to be re-examined. Pentecostal hermeneutics that allow for the claim that the Holy Spirit reveals deeper, culturally relevant meanings of the text must be considered as viable.³⁹

³² Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 75, cited in J. Byrd, 'Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation', *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15:2 (Fall 1993), pp. 203-214.

³³ Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy and critique* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1980), p. 217.

³⁴ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 472.

³⁵ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 4.

³⁶ Byrd, 'Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory', p. 211.

³⁷ Byrd, 'Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory', p. 211.

³⁸ Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Species* (New York: Vintage, 1973) (Originally in the French 1966), pp. 217-249.

³⁹ Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 174.

Wolfgang Iser says that biblical texts are deliberately ambivalent, inviting the readers to place themselves into different roles within the textual setting.⁴⁰ This ambivalence enabled fresh Pentecostal interpretations of the texts to develop. These renderings have appealed to large numbers of Christians during this last century. The difficulty, however, with plurality of interpretations, is that it frequently leads to misinterpretations and excesses. The emergence of Unitarian Pentecostalism is an example of this.⁴¹ The 'British Israel' belief and 'prosperity teaching' are further examples. Where other controls do not exist, Fee warns that 'we must abide by rules of good exegesis and exert extreme caution in considering any deeper meanings'.⁴² If a plurality of interpretations is to be accepted, then they must be evaluated against accepted norms within the written text and the contemporary community.

Pentecostals and the Text

The emphasis on the Spirit as the source of multiple meanings of the text is a significant contribution that Pentecostalism has made to post-modern hermeneutics. Cargal says 'the [Pentecostal] recognition of the dialogical role of the experiences of the believer in both shaping and being shaped by particular interpretations of the biblical text is both compatible with certain post-struct-

turalist views of the reader as creator of significations and an important critique of objectivist views of the meaning of the Bible and its authority'.⁴³

Like Post-modernists, Pentecostals emphasize immediacy of the text and multiple dimensions of meaning. This has allowed interpretations to develop that are suited to the particular interests and needs of different groups. Over the decades, Pentecostal interpretations of these distinctive beliefs have continued to be influenced by the social and cultural settings in which *glossolalia* occurred. The charismatic group, and not the individual's experience, determined the effects of *glossolalia* upon a person.⁴⁴ It was not the glossolalic experience alone that made Pentecostalism distinctive, but the expectant social reality in which it occurs.⁴⁵ Texts cannot be read in isolation. They must inevitably be read in the light of one's own social, cultural, ecclesiastical and national histories. Hermeneutics can no longer be a search for one 'true' and 'historical' meaning. It must also investigate the process by which the text creatively sets in motion certain developments amongst particular communities.

⁴³ Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 186.

⁴⁴ H. N. Malony and A. A. Lovekin, *Glossolalia Behavioural Science Perspectives on Speaking in Tongues* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), p. 383.

⁴⁵ Margaret Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee, 1989), p. 184.

⁴⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 517.

⁴¹ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, p. 161.

⁴² Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 39.

The Larger Text

Pentecostals are increasingly recognizing the role of their traditions and communities in shaping their beliefs.⁴⁶ Pentecostal scholars are recognizing that the study of the text needs to be broadened to include the inter-textual connection that exists between the biblical texts, the ritual 'texts' enacted in worship and the relational 'texts' of the faith community.⁴⁷ A trans-contextual basis is needed that enables the comparative evaluation of contextual criteria of interpretation and the purposes 'for which each set of criteria gains its currency'.⁴⁸

The Pentecostal belief in a baptism in the Holy Spirit, distinct from conversion and evidenced by tongues, is an example of this. Fee says that it 'came less from the study of Acts, as from their own personal histories, in which it happened to them in this way and therefore was assumed to be the norm even in the New Testament'.⁴⁹ The expectations of the faith communities and their social settings inevitably guided Pentecostal interactions of the text.

In recent times, the task of Pentecostal hermeneutics has been widened to consider the way in which biblical texts have been used to serve the interests and values of different subgroups within communi-

ties and to maintain and challenge dominant power structures.⁵⁰ *Studies of Pentecostalism* by Margaret Poloma confirms that *glossolalia* provided a motivation for evangelism and support for the Pentecostal protest against modernity.⁵¹ *Glossolalia* was a symbol and practice that was useful in promoting individual, social and racial equality.⁵² Nevertheless, Poloma cautions that while charismatic expressions such as tongues are a factor in the rise and revitalization of religious movements, 'it seems to depart quickly once it has completed the task of institution building'.⁵³ The observed decline in emphasis on tongues among Pentecostals in recent years has been accompanied by an increase in racial, sexual and other forms of inequality.⁵⁴ There is a need for Pentecostal beliefs and practices to be regularly reviewed and renewed in order to survive the pressures of typification, patterned role expectations and institutionalisation.⁵⁵

Conclusion

As Pentecostalism has grown it has had to re-evaluate its hermeneutical methods. Many Pentecostals have been attracted to modern, historical-grammatical approaches. The reception has not been entirely favourable. Other more recent schol-

⁴⁶ Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 69.

⁴⁷ M. W. Dempster, 'Paradigm Shifts and Hermeneutics: Confronting Issues Old and New', *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 15:2 (1993), p. 129; Cargal, 'Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy', p. 163.

⁴⁸ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, p. 69.

⁵⁰ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p. 7.

⁵¹ Poloma, *At the Crossroads*, p. 3.

⁵² Poloma, *At the Crossroads*, p. 3.

⁵³ Poloma, *At the Crossroads*, p. 232.

⁵⁴ Poloma, *At the Crossroads*, p. 232.

⁵⁵ Poloma, *At the Crossroads*, p. 185.

ars favour post-modern developments. These too have their own set of difficulties. Some Pentecostal scholars suggest that a more attractive solution is found in the post-critical method of Paul Ricoeur. His method combines the historical analysis of the text with a self-critical examination of the reader's response. This approach appears to unite the divergent Pentecostal developments. The unity of the Pentecostal movement can be preserved only if the shared hermeneu-

tical methods preserve the values of Pentecostalism, while encouraging dialogue with others and stimulating a self-awareness of the way in which the biblical texts are read. The emerging hermeneutics of Pentecostalism must invite the same Holy Spirit who inspired both Scripture and scholarship to interpret the text anew in relation to contemporary contexts and needs. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the text is at work in the lives of those who interpret and evaluate it.

The Sleep of Death

*Forlorn Saturday, sad Sabbath, gloomy day of rest;
When Jesus entered into that all too final respite
From which there is no waking.*

*Night by night we participate in that little rehearsal,
And gently enter that shadowy interlude which stretches unending
before us.
But morning's light calls us from that netherworld between life and
death,
To recreate the awakening that was His,
And stride into life renewed, assured of the victory that awaits us.*

*From Becoming . . . (poetry reflecting theology) by Garry Harris,
Adelaide, South Australia. (used with permission)*

Genesis 2:1-3: Biblical Theology of Creation Covenant

William Dumbrell

Keywords: Eden, creation, paradise, Adam, Sabbath, fall, dominion, sanctuary, temple, Son of Man, new creation.

Genesis 2:1-3 looks back to the work of the six days with tremendous satisfaction. Verse 2:4a sums up the section, making the count of the words 'create' and 'make' (*bara*', '*asah*') seven times each in the episode Gen. 1:1-2:3. This indicates the wholeness and completion of creation and the interrelationship of Gen. 1 and Gen. 2:13. Gen. 2:1, with its information that in this fashion the heavens and the earth were completed (*wayekullu*), operates as a bridge signifying the

end of the creation account and the opening of the narrative up to the account of Gen. 2.

In Gen. 2:2-3 the narrator informs us God had completed (*wayekal*) his work, and he had brought all (*mikkol*) his work to completion. In a *Commentary on Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1944), U. Cassuto observes that the verb *kalah* in Genesis and Exodus, when referring to completed acts, indicates that the action already stands terminated. God is now in the condition of one who had completed all his work. The LXX, Peshitta and Jubilees 2, aware of the difficulty the account affords for a seven day interventionary work of creation, read the sixth day in v. 2. They correctly recognize that the divine acts of creation had ceased with the work of the sixth day. The tight interrelationship of the first six days from which the seventh is excluded by form, content and subsequently chapter division, provides a contrast of activity and purpose between Gen. 1 and Gen.

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2:1-3. The distinctive presentation of the seventh day is in quite different terms from the previous six days, which had been interrelated either by chronology or by literary relationship in terms of day one to four, day two to five, day three to six.

Genesis 2:1-3 presents a pattern of seven lines rising to a crescendo in 3a, with 3b emphasizing, as a closure, the matter of 2b, 3b: God had ceased from his work. The seventh day is mentioned three times (v. 2 twice, v. 3 once), each time in a sequence of seven words. Gen. 2:2-3 then combines the creation account of Gen. 1 with a 'Sabbath' in a seven day scheme. It is clear that though the noun *sabbaton* 'Sabbath' does not occur, the verb *shabat* is used twice in 2:1-3, making a major function of the account. This is the basis for the later observance of the Sabbath. *Shabat* basically means 'stop' or 'cease'. Sometimes it is translated as 'keep Sabbath', which is its derived meaning later in the Old Testament. The verb occurs some 73 times in the Old Testament, and is generally used of persons. The idea of physical rest or desisting from work is not primary in any of the basic usages.

Completion or perfection, in the sense of bringing a project to its designed goal, is implicit in the meaning of this verb; it is also explicit in terms of the prominence given to the seventh day as completing the creation sequence and giving point to it. The idea of blessing and hallowing the day, and of endowing it with the potential to fulfil its purpose in the divine plan (especially setting it

apart as a holy day) is, as Gordon Wenham notes, without parallel, since blessing is normally restricted to animate beings. The seventh day thus acquires the special status as a day that belongs to God alone. The seventh day of creation seems the day which recognizes the significance of what has been completed, and capitalizes on that aspect. When act (Gen. 1) and purpose (Gen. 2) are put together, then we get a complete sequence, a creation week.

The total account of Gen. 2:1-3 clearly seems to invite creation in general and humanity in particular to keep Sabbath. Most remarkable of all is that, unlike the previous six days, the seventh day is without beginning and end. The intention of the narrative seems to be to underline the distinctly special and unending place of the seventh day, thus advancing the context in which historical happenings yet to come will occur. The idea of a creation rest for the creating deity is commonly found in many of the creation texts of the ancient world. However, as we might expect, the notion of this rest as the item which gives meaning to the account of creation and explains the ongoing purpose for which creation exists, is peculiar to the Old Testament.

Following Gen 2:1-3, Gen. 2:4a serves as the introduction to the first *toledoth* narrative, Gen. 2:4b-4:26. Then Gen. 2:5-7 introduces what follows in 2:8-17 by detailing the provision of rain and a cultivator before the Eden narrative, which requires both, is presented. The unending Sabbath day provides the

context in which the ideal life of the garden is to take place and is to be perpetuated in human experience. Since this note of divine purpose for creation precedes the human Fall, it will clearly continue beyond it. Point here is given by Heb. 4:9-11, which tells us that there still remains a Sabbath rest (Gk. *sabbatismos*) for the people of God. What remains to be experienced is not the Sabbath as such, which on the evidence of Gen. 2 and the assumption of Heb. 4, is continuing, and whose character of life in communication with the divine is always a possibility for humanity. Instead, what remains is the 'rest' associated with the Sabbath, at least in its complete sense. Heb. 4:9-11 endorses the continuing Sabbath but indicates that there are dimensions of the meaning of the Sabbath day which have continued to elude human experience. God's own rest is the divine endorsement of creation and his final intention to emerge from this beginning. It indicates his willingness to enter into fellowship with humanity.

The Garden and the Fall

Genesis 2:8-25 indicates the context and the nature of the fellowship which God and humanity were to share. It is, however, the paradox of revelation that humanity, created to enter into and enjoy the immediacy of the divine presence of which the Sabbath of Gen. 2:1-3 speaks, would, by the Fall, forfeit it. Gen. 2:4-3:24 recounts the sorry tale of paradise gained and lost. The Hebrew syntax of Gen. 2:8 makes the point that Adam was formed out-

side the garden, abstracted from the world at large and placed within the garden. Verses 9-17 explicate the implications of v. 8, with vv. 9-14 dealing with the nature of the garden (cf. 8a) and 15-17 specifying the placement of humanity within the garden with the mandate to work it and take care of it (cf. 8b).

The Garden as Separated from its World

We turn first to the characteristics of the garden. We may notice in this connection the inference contained in the Hebrew word *gan* 'garden.' It refers to a fenced off enclosure, particularly of a garden protected by a wall or a hedge. Walls, such as those surrounding royal gardens, are mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament (2 Kgs. 25:4; Jer. 39:4; 52:7; Neh. 3:15). Also, Eden is a valued, fertile, well-watered place which is constantly cared for. In the case of Gen. 2, this is reinforced by the Greek Old Testament translation of the Hebrew *gan* by the Greek *paradeisos*, frp, the Hebrew *pardes*, itself a Persian loan word. The Persian original has the basic sense of 'what is walled, what is hedged about' and is thus a 'pleasure garden surrounded by a stone or earthen wall'. The Latin Vulgate translated the phrase 'garden of Eden' by *paradises voluptatis*, 'a delightful paradise'.

The existence of parks and gardens as special places in the ancient Near East outside of Israel is abundantly clear from Mesopotamian literature. Kings planted and boasted of extravagant gardens. The notion

of the monarch as a gardener for the deity is also found in the ancient Near East. In view of the royal connotation contained in the notion of 'image' in Gen. 1:26, this role of Adam in Gen. 2 as 'gardener' is further instructive. Egyptian literature and art likewise describe gardens as places of love and happiness.

All of this shows the garden as a special place which is spatially separated from its outside world, a world presumably very much like our own. The differentiation of Eden by division from its world is a notion further advanced by Gen. 3:24, where the cherubim with flaming swords guard the way to the tree of life. Thus, in Gen. 2a, we have a localized Eden differentiated from a world outside, presumably very like the world of our own experience, a world which needs to be brought under the dominion of the divine rule for which Eden is a model. At the end of the canon, however, when history has run its course and a new universe super-intervenes, the end (the new creation) is presented not only in terms of a new Jerusalem (a new covenant whose benefits are now fully accessible), a kingdom of God (whose rule is now fully understood and demonstrated), and a new Temple (in which the contours of the new creation is presented as a holy of holies), but lastly and most significantly as a new and universalized Eden (Rev. 22:1-5).

The Garden as a Sanctuary: Dominion in the Garden and Adam as Priest

The description of the garden in Gen. 2:8a, 9-14 contains many of the motifs describing divine habitations in the ancient Near East. Creation accounts from the ancient world commonly connect creation and the building of a temple or palace. In these mythical, ancient world structures, built in the very centre of the earth and so controlling it, stood the sacred mountain where the deity of the national fortunes presided, and where one could have contact with him. Also at this sacred site, the victory which brought creation into being, was won and celebrated. In the ancient Near East, particularly, the sacred mountain was the meeting place of heaven and earth where celestial glory and mundane reality met. There the gods assembled in council, presided over by the principal deity (*Anu/El*). From this palace, decrees regulating creation were promulgated. It is also frequently thought that a sacred stream whose water teems with supernatural significance issues from the cosmic mountain.

It was also believed that the upper and lower waters of the cosmos met where heaven and earth and the nether world were connected. Sanctuaries and temples were constructed at these places so that communication between the human and the divine worlds might take place. In Mesopotamia, the temple itself could represent the cosmic mountain. The fashioning of just such a temple is narrated in the *Enuma Elish* after

Marduk's victory over the chaos figure, Tiamat, and after Marduk's recognition by the lesser deities of the pantheon. A temple tower (*zigurat*) was built in the temple precinct, and on the top of such a tower, which was conceived of as the cosmic mountain on which the deity descended, the deity was believed to reside on earth. In Canaan, the home of the presiding deity, *El*, was at the point where the double deeps (the upper and lower waters) met. Apart from such general background, the presence of God in Eden points to its character as a sanctuary or sacred space.

The garden, as we might expect of this divine centre, is the source of fertility, for the great rivers take issue from the stream which rises in the garden. There are hints in Gen. 3:22, perhaps, of the ancient world council of heaven held at this source (a motif taken up strongly by later Israelite prophecy) and where decrees are issued which affect the course of human relationships. Eden is thus presented as the *axis mundi*, the point from which the primal stream radiates to the four quarters (Gen. 2:10-14). In the very centre stood the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, indicating the source of life, and the manner by which life was to be conducted.

The garden of Eden in Gen. 2 is thus seen as a special sanctuary, a temple site, quite unlike the rest of the world. Indeed the creation narrative from Gen. 1:1-2:3 contains vestiges of ancient creation accounts in terms of threat to the deity (Gen.

1:2), combat (Gen. 1:2a), victory and the building of a temple. The placement of humankind as 'in the image' in the garden furthers the analogy of 'image' and temple association, drawing kingship and the temple motif together at the beginning of the Bible. Canaan is at times in the Old Testament not only paralleled to Eden (Is. 51:3, Ezek. 36:35), but is also fulsomely presented in Deuteronomy as something corresponding in the Israelite context with Eden (cf. Gen. 8: 7-10; 11:8-17). Canaan in its totality is therefore presented as divine space (cf. Ex. 15:17; Ps. 78:54), and the implication is that Eden is also considered divine space.

Ezekiel 28:1-10 is a passage which clearly bears upon Genesis 2. It portrays the king of Tyre as saying, 'I am *El*'. He is described as being in the seat of the gods and in the heart of the seas. This reinforces the allusion to *El*, whose dwelling place was at the springs of two rivers, midst the channels of the two deeps. The thrust of the oracle lies in the description of how *Yahweh* reveals the fallacy of the king's pride. In the further allusion of Ezek. 28:13-14, Eden is clearly conceived as a mountain sanctuary since 'mountain' occurs twice in the phrases 'holy mountain of God' (v. 14), and 'mountain of God' (v. 16). Ezekiel seems to have drawn upon a creation tradition common to both Ezekiel and the Genesis account, although not upon Genesis directly, since there are differences between Ezekiel and Genesis.

The mountain of God, for exam-

ple, is associated with holiness as opposed to profanity. Ezekiel is saying that even if the king of Tyre were in Eden, he would be cast out; even if he were full of beauty and wisdom he would still go; even if he were a cherub in God's most holy place, his sin would cause him to be expelled for profanity; fire would consume him and he would be no more. The feature common to Eden and the mountain of Ezek. 28 is that of holiness. Ezekiel's identification of Eden as a 'holy mountain of God' is confirmed by Genesis 2 where Eden, clearly elevated, is the source of living water for the world. We may also point to Ezek. 36:33-36, where the garden of Eden is the symbol of fertility and a fitting analogy for the land of Palestine about to be restored. Palestine as a whole is also conceived as a divine garden in Ezek. 47:1-12.

The connections between Eden and the later Jerusalem temple are particularly strong. Wenham points out that the verbs 'cultivate' (*'abad*) and 'guard' (*shamar*) are elsewhere in the Old Testament translated as 'serving' and 'guarding' and in the tabernacle can be referred to as priestly service and guarding (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14; cf. also Is. 56:6). The only other time the Old Testament uses both verbs together is in connection with the Levitical service and guarding of the sanctuary (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26). *Targum Neofiti* Gen. 3:15 underscores the cultic notion by saying that Adam was placed in the garden to do service according to the law and to keep

its commandments.

This is strikingly similar to the language of priestly supervision in the passages cited from Numbers and the *Targum* where two cherubim took over the responsibility of guarding the garden temple (cf. the verb used in Gen. 3:24). Later their role became memorialized in Israel's temple when God commanded Moses to make two statues of cherubim and station them on either side of the ark in the holy of holies. Moreover, in Ezekiel's new temple, the walls of the holy place are profusely engraved with garden emblems. The function of the cherubim as guardians of the divine sanctuary (Gen. 3:24) also reappears in the holy of holies in the Jerusalem Temple.

Eden was the garden of God and God's presence was the central aspect of the garden. That Eden is customarily understood in the later biblical narratives as the earthly centre where God was to be found is clear from Is. 51:3 where Eden and the garden of *Yahweh* are paralleled. Since God's presence is located there or is to be experienced there, the garden is sacred space just as the later temple in Israel was to be. Eden is the representation of what the world is to become. That much becomes clear when, as indicated above, the New Jerusalem is presented in terms of the holy of holies of the Jerusalem temple (cf. Rev 21-22). We may also point to Ezek. 36:33-36 where the garden of Eden is the symbol of fertility and a fitting analogy for the land of Palestine about to be restored. Corresponding to and continuing the sanctuary note

which we have associated with the garden, the Jerusalem temple is the later world source of life-giving streams (Ezek. 47:1-12, cf. Joel 4:18).

Adam in the Garden

It is no surprise to find that the full tenor of Gen. 2:9-17 depicts what seems to have been a sanctuary situation in which Adam as priest/king offers worship in the sanctuary garden, the world centre of which is Eden. Verses 15-17 conclude the account by focusing on Adam. In the LXX reading of Ezekiel, it is noted that the adornments of the king of Tyre, likened to the original cherub in the garden (Ezek. 28:13), correspond fairly exactly to the precious stones set in the breastplate of the Israelite high priest (Exod 28:17-20). By all the implications, this gives to Adam, the original inhabitant of the garden, a pronounced priestly/kingly character. In Ezek. 28:11-19, the king of Tyre is represented as an Adamic figure, made clear by the location of the garden, the use of the Hebrew *bar'a*, the presence of the cherub and the idea of sin leading to expulsion.

The phrase 'mountain of God' is a standard Old Testament description for the Temple (cf. Ps. 48:1-3). Carole Newsom argues cogently that the king of Tyre is also presented as a priest in *Yahweh's* temple. The king's actions in the political realm are seen as a defilement of what is holy. The oracle in Ezek. 28 functions to assert the correct relationship between the king and *Yahweh*. The king is created by and sub-

servient to *Yahweh*. If Gen. 1 emphasizes mankind's kingship, Genesis 2 gives a picture of a priestly role in the divine presence.

Adam's role in Eden raises the question of the relationship of Israel to Adam. The separateness of the garden and Adam's kingly/priestly role there are important for the later understanding of Israel's vocation in Canaan. Indeed, the analogies which can be drawn between Adam and Israel are significant for the subsequent course of biblical eschatology and mission. For Israel, like Adam is created outside the divine space to be occupied. (Note Gen. 2:8 where the force of the Hebrew tense is an English pluperfect: cf. NIV 'had planted'.) Adam, like Israel, is put into sacred space to exercise a kingly/priestly role (cf. Ex. 19:4-6). Israel, like Adam, is given laws by which the divine space is to be retained. Israel, like Adam, transgresses the law, and Israel, like Adam, is expelled from the granted divine space.

The point is that the placement of both Adam and Israel in divine space was conditional. The obedience of both parties to the divine mandate was required for the retention of the sacred space. Adam possessed an immortality that was limited and lapsable, just as Israel possessed a covenant which could be revoked under conditions of national disobedience.

It is very clear, furthermore, that the function of the creation account is to indicate to Israel the nature and purpose of her special responsibility to exercise dominion in her world, a

status which Adam once exercised. The movement from Adam to Israel will be accomplished by a series of divine selections and differentiations designed to bring Israel onto the world stage and to take place from the Cain narrative onwards. This series of divine movements will have as its result the conclusion of the Sinai covenant by God setting up a special relationship with Israel. The Sinai covenant will be designed to bring the world's nations into the sphere of the universal kingdom of God.

The final status of the saved will be as in Rev. 1:5-6; 5:10; 20:4-6, where believers are to be kings and priests unto God. The fulfilment of this expectation is met at Rev. 22:1-5, making it very clear that the function of the creation account is to further indicate to Israel the nature and purpose of her special responsibility to achieve dominion in her world, the same world which Adam had once occupied. The presentation in Ex. 19:5-6 of national Israel in a corporate, royal, priestly role continues the divine purpose for humanity expressed in the early Genesis narrative.

Genesis 2:15-17 thus describes the position of mankind before the Fall, existing in openness in the divine presence which was suggested in the presentation of the extended seventh day of Gen. 2:4a. By all this a picture is also presented of humankind's dominion over nature as king/priest. Moreover, paradoxically, humankind authorized to exercise dominion over the world (Gen. 1:28), exercises that dominion by

worship and service in the divine presence. Service in the garden is denoted by the Hebrew verb *'abad*, the basic meaning of which is 'work' or 'serve'. In the context of Gen. 2:15, the meaning is 'till' or 'cultivate', but the regular use of the verb as 'worship' in the later Old Testament imports into Gen. 2 the further aspect of Adam's response in what seems to be this sanctuary, where the presence of God is directly experienced.

After the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, they are described in relationship to the earth by the same verb (Gen. 3:23). Thus, we may take it that by this verb the very fundamental character of humankind's dominion over the earth is being depicted. Service, which is divine service, is thus the role of humans. They are firstly in submission to the Creator himself and then to the world, paralleling again the later way in which Israel nationally will be presented in Canaan. We may also refer to Mark 10:45 for a Christian analogy – the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

The note emphasized under *'abad* is sustained by the Hebrew *shamar*, 'keep', 'guard'. Other nuances of this verb include 'watching', 'obeying', 'retaining', 'observing'. What this all means is that human dominion over the world consists of concern for the well-being of what is to be supervised. Paradoxically, the world outside the garden will be best served by humankind's service at the centre of the world in the presence of

God. The use of *'abad* indicates the nature of the attention devoted to the garden, in the consciousness of the presence of the Creator from whom the mandate has been derived. Perhaps there is also latent in the notion the watchfulness that needs to be exercised over against the serpent who will appear in Gen. 3.

The presence of spiritual disorder in the garden then speaks, as we know, of the choices which must be made in this initial Eden and the tensions of later human experience imported into history by human misuse of the divine gift of freedom. Since we know that the Eden of the end is without problems of this character, we may expect the intervening flow of history will point to the way in which the glorious end of history will finally be reached.

Finally, mankind was created outside of the garden and placed in it. In reporting this, the narrative makes the point that mankind was not native to the garden. It is *Yahweh*, who is also *Elohim*, who puts Adam and Eve in the garden and it is upon a relationship with *Yahweh Elohim* that their tenure of the garden depends. In biblical terms we may describe this as a movement of grace. We may take it that the occupation of Eden, whatever its description may be, will depend upon this grace factor.

We may sum up our remarks about the garden as follows: Gen. 2 displays, as a paradigm of the end but admittedly under ideal circumstances, the harmony of general orders that the dominion role was to secure for the world at large. The

presence of Adam in Eden presages Israel's later role in her world. It presupposes that Adam's role, transferred to Israel and then to Christ, was to extend the contours of the garden to the whole world, since this is the transition that finally occurs in Rev. 22. At the same time, Gen. 2 indicates what dominion is and how it is to be exercised. Dominion is the service which takes its motivation from the ultimate human relationship with the Lord God on behalf of whom dominion is exercised. Since dominion is the mandate awarded to humanity in Gen. 1:26-28, their position in Eden indicates how dominion is to be exercised.

The Fall will deny to humankind the further possibility that Eden held out; that is, by the relationship in Gen. 2, they might develop and deepen that relationship by which life in God's presence would be retained. For humanity, as created, was endowed only with a lapsable immortality, but the biblical expectation has in mind an inheritance 'that can never perish, spoil or fade' (1 Peter 1:4). It is clear, then, that the immortality to which the Bible finally progresses will be an important advance for the people of God upon the relationship held by the first pair in the garden at the dawn of creation. This harmony of orders will be achieved only when the revelation of Rev. 21-22 becomes a reality. The tabernacle of God, God himself and the Lamb, is with people; the New Jerusalem (the New Eden and the end-time holy of holies) descends; when everything is most holy; and the kingdom of God is with us.

But the possibility existed, even within the garden, for people to exercise their God-given authority independently (Gen. 2:16-17). We know this will happen in Gen. 3 and that it will have disastrous results for the mandate and role of people. The other continuing issue that the Gen. 2 account raises for human experience in the light of the ongoing seventh day is the possibility of life in the divine presence beyond the Fall. The seventh day experience is presented as still possible in a fallen world in which now, beyond Eden, two ways to live are presented. As the account implies, although we are in a fallen world, faith in God's purposes can still bring us into an Eden-type human experience in this extended creation Sabbath where we experience the personal presence of God.

The Effects of the Fall: Mankind in the Outside World

We may mention, very briefly, that the consequences which ensue from disobedience in the garden are recorded in Gen. 3:14-19 in the successive curses which are laid upon the serpent, the woman and the man. These three are cursed in a manner which strikes at the essence of their basic relationship to each other and to their world. The serpent is to be humiliated, there will be the broken intimacy between man and woman, woman will experience the pangs of childbirth, and man is cursed in relationship to the ground.

Paul makes it clear that whatever the nature of this disruption of nature was, it was something that the advent of the new creation would

remove (Rom. 8:18-23). This hoped-for restoration, therefore, becomes an ingredient in the biblical expectation for the end from the Fall onwards. This hope for the removal of the curse upon the ground is to some degree symbolically seen in Israel's gift of the promised land. It is a hope to which the mainly post-exilic doctrine of a new creation is later precisely addressed.

After the Fall, humanity will find that its effort to cultivate the ground and generally to relate to it will be painful and disappointing. But we need to ask: has the change occurred to humanity or in the environment or in both? It is normally suggested that the Fall has caused the ground to become unyielding. Thus a change has occurred both in humanity and in the environment. It seems preferable and in keeping with our argument to suggest that what is impaired as a result of the Fall is our control of the ground. In this connection the Hebrew phrase 'because of you' in Gen. 3:17 is ambiguous. The basic meaning of the Hebrew phrase 'for the sake of' has an inbuilt ambiguity, since it can mean 'on account of', 'for the benefit of', as well as 'because of'. The sense most suited to the context of Gen. 1-3 is 'because of', i.e. the ground yields a curse because of what will be humanity's inappropriate control of the ground in the future; the problem after the Fall is humanity's inability to rightly use the ground. The Fall had left people 'like God' i.e. with power to make decisions by which the course of life and the world could be controlled. But since people were

also unlike God, they did not have, as a result of the Fall, the ability to be sure that the decisions they took would be right in themselves, nor indeed the assurance that such decisions once taken would promote the right consequences. That is to say, as a result of the Fall, people then and now live in their world unable to exercise proper dominion over nature, contrary to what is seen in Gen. 2.

In environmental terms, it has been humanity's failure to serve the world, and thus to exercise dominion, which has resulted in the present spate of global problems with which we find ourselves confronted. We live out of harmony with nature and ourselves in a world in which testing difficulties abound. Unable to administer our God-given charge, our mismanagement and neglect and exploitation serve only to accentuate, to increase and sharpen the inbuilt problems of the natural world over which humanity was set as a steward.

Theology of Creation Covenant

Clearly Gen. 2 sets the basic course of biblical eschatology. We are entitled to ask, then, whether the theology which will direct the course of this eschatology is also to be found in Gen. 2. The parameters of the canon suggest that the eschatology that takes its rise in the presentation in Gen. 1-2 is of a provisional, contingent, limited creation in which a paradigm of the end is seen. The biblical movement takes us from creation and the Fall to the creation of

Israel and her fall, to Christ as representative Israel to the new Israel in Christ putting in train Israel's mission to the new creation, and finally a full complement of the redeemed people of God who are kings and priests in the new creation. In Gen. 2 we find a preliminary picture of the end where redeemed humanity experiences eternal and indefectible fellowship with the Creator. Temple theology, attesting the sovereign presence of God with his people, takes its rise in Eden. The world totally endorsed as sacred space as the New Jerusalem is foreshadowed by the garden narrative.

If I have argued correctly that the Gen. 2 narrative is the substance of an implied creation covenant, the series of divinely imposed covenants in the canon finds its rationale in Eden. This being so, we would have to conclude that the undergirding factor in biblical theology is a creation theology. But how then is the material in between the beginning and the end integrated? The remainder of the Bible is pre-eminently taken up with material relating to salvation history, the history of divine redemptive activity. The difference between the two is that creation itself, both beginning and end, is unmotivated while redemption is 'redemption from' to 'redemption for'. The key to the understanding of the nexus between the two theologies of creation and redemption appears to be that when an understanding of redemption is conveyed in both Testaments, it is in terms of presupposed creation theology.

I have drawn attention to the man-

ner of the first reflection on the significance of redemption in Exodus 15: it is presented in standard Near Eastern creation mythological terms. We may also add the redemptive theology of Is. 40-55 and the theology of Is. 56-66, which designedly focuses redemptive activity upon the goal of the appearance of the new Jerusalem, the new creation. This is also clear in the New Testament presentation of redemption. The explicit Christological connection between creation and redemption is found in such passages as John 1:1-18 and Col 1:15-20.

A biblical theology based on Gen. 2 primarily concurs with the big picture of the Bible. Of course, the further task is to ensure that the details which support the superstructure suggested are all congruent. Biblical theology in itself is a descriptive endeavour. When we have evaluated

whether the total picture and the supporting details present a coherent and a consistent world view (for in the final analysis the Bible is that), then we have to make the personal evaluation whether the picture so drawn and supported is consistent with the reality we encounter in our world and in the psychology of the self of which we are all too brutally aware. But such a movement beyond description is a final and subjective judgment as to which of the two possible world views, beginning with or without the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we are led to accept. For ultimately the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is about a new way of looking at ourselves and our world. St. Paul knew that very well and put it succinctly – that if anyone was in Christ Jesus, there is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Broken

*Help us Lord to understand the nature of your brokenness,
And to perceive that beyond the breaking of tendon and tissue, was
severance from your Father.*

*May we applaud that break which shook Heaven's structure;
As love and justice stood in unflinching confrontation.*

*May we applaud your brokenness, endured to rescue us to
wholeness;
And from a broken-world of separation.*

From *Becoming . . .* (poetry reflecting theology) by Garry Harris,
Adelaide, South Australia. (used with permission)

The Role of Shame and Guilt in a Theology of Cross- Cultural Mission

Bruce Nicholls

Keywords: Salvation, missiology, honour, law, sin, conscience, gospel, contextualisation, spirituality

Introduction

The beliefs, values and lifestyles of people who live in the two-thirds world of Asia, Africa and Latin America are reflected in cultures that are oriented more to honour and shame than to law and guilt. The same is true of the primal tribal people of the world including Maori and Polynesian. As the western world, including New Zealand, moves from the modernity of the Enlightenment

to post-modernity and New Age the same shift from a guilt-culture to a shame-culture is becoming increasingly evident. This paradigm shift has profound implications for our understanding and practice of cross-cultural mission.

Muslims interpret sin as mistakes or ignorance. They have no need of a saviour. In fact the word 'salvation' is rarely used in Islamic literature. Muslims feel shame more deeply than guilt. When a member of their community becomes a Christian his family are deeply ashamed. The convert is an apostate. He has rejected the honour of Allah and the Qur'an, his community and his Islamic culture, for belief and culture are inseparable. Only by killing the son or daughter (or sister) will the honour of Islam and the family be restored. No guilt is attached to such an act. Hindus, Buddhists and Shintoists feel the same when a member of their community converts to Christianity but usually with less intensity.

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As Christian evangelists, teachers and missionaries we have traditionally focused on law, sin and guilt and proclaimed the need for repentance and forgiveness. This unquestionably is the central biblical paradigm and we must reaffirm it. However, we have rarely if ever stressed salvation as honouring God, exposure of sin as shame and the need for acceptance and the restoration of honour. A casual survey of Bible commentaries and theological textbooks written in the West and especially those by evangelicals confirms this bias. Few have articles on guilt and even fewer address the issue of shame. Church and theological leaders in the so-called two-thirds world have in the main been trained in evangelical schools in the West or those controlled by western thinking and they continue the same emphasis. On the other hand, liberal Asian theologians are more culture conscious than many of us. They may be right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny. We need to be more discerning in passing judgement on them. I am thinking of M.M. Thomas, S.J. Samaratha, Wesley Ariarajah, Emerito Nacpil, Chong-seng Son, Kosuke Koyama and even the famed or infamous Dr Chung Hyun-Kyung of the Canberra WCC Assembly.

Ordinary New Zealanders who have no church allegiance (perhaps 80% of the population) have little if any concept of sin, guilt and the need for repentance and justification by faith. These Christian values are meaningless to them. They see the church as irrelevant to their daily

lives and they are turning in increasing numbers to New Age philosophies, seeking new paths of spirituality to peace and inner harmony. This paradigm shift has taken place over the last 40 years. The year 1960 was the high-point in church attendance with 50% of New Zealand children at Sunday School.

The need to re-evaluate our understanding of a theology of mission is urgent. In our mission out-reach programmes we are failing to bring to Christ and to discipleship the educated, the successful people of this world, be they high-caste Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims or the upper-classes of western society. We need to re-visit our theological and missiological understanding of the doctrine of God, the nature of our humanity and of sin and salvation. We need to look afresh at the glory of God in the cross as both a vicarious suffering and a vicarious death. The uniqueness of Christ's resurrection, the promise of the re-creation of all things is fundamental to our response to the ecological crisis which is one of the five faces of a comprehensive theology of mission. In biblical terms salvation involves God's unconditional love for the whole of humanity and acceptance of all who turn to Christ in repentance and faith. The undeserved grace of God reaches out to all who are overwhelmed by their shame and/or guilt.

The Church Fathers and the 16th century Reformers sought to hold together the two great streams of redemption, one focusing on creation and re-creation and union with

God, and the other on the Fall and redemption from judgement to come. Augustine's own dramatic conversion from a life of debauchery compelled him to emphasize the work of divine grace and deliverance from sin and guilt. Luther, who was overwhelmed by guilt in his struggle for righteousness in the context of the medieval church's obsession with guilt, judgement and hell, found liberation and assurance in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Contemporary evangelicals have continued in the stream of this Reformation understanding of salvation.

In the 11th century AD theology centred on Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?* For Anselm the meaning of the cross was found in its objective satisfaction for God's offended honour. His younger contemporary, Peter Abelard, emphasized the subjective nature of the influence of the cross on the followers of Christ whose own self-sacrifice moves people to respond in love, repentance and faith¹. German liberal theology since the Enlightenment has continued this subjective tradition, while Hastings Rashdall has been its most vigorous exponent in the English speaking world. While we recognize the inadequacy of this moral influence theory, we affirm that the compelling love of God in Christ is fundamental to our understanding of the cross and therefore to our theology of mission. It is at the cross that the justice and love of God are revealed

to us.

The development of the social sciences in the 20th century has deepened our understanding of how cultures function and change. Recent studies in pastoral counselling have raised important issues in the relationship of shame and guilt which are significant for both evangelism and the discipling of converts². The School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary has pioneered the role of cultural anthropology in cross-cultural missions. Our task in this seminar is to evaluate how far these insights have impacted our training programmes for cross-cultural missions.

This leads me to enunciate three theses for your consideration and discussion:

First Thesis

The weakness of western theology and western theological education in cross-cultural mission and church growth is in part a failure to recognize the validity of the distinction between guilt cultures and shame cultures and the dynamic relationship between them.

Shame and guilt are distinct but inseparable. People of every culture

² R.H. Albers, *Shame: A Faith Perspective* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1995); D.W. Augsburger, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); K. Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965); C. N. Kraus, *Jesus Christ our Lord* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1990); E. Nida, *Message and Mission* (New York: Harper, 1960); L.L. Noble, *Naked and Not Ashamed* (private:1975); Piers and Singer, *Shame and Guilt - A Psychoanalytic and Cultural Study* (Springfield: C.C. Thomas, 1971); L.B. Smedes, *Shame and Grace - Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993)

¹ See John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), pp. 217-221.

experience both; for example, a Hindu's loyalty to his caste structure is motivated and controlled by the honour of the caste and the fear of the shame of disgracing it. Yet the same Hindu will go on a pilgrimage to the Kumbh Mela at Allahabad to bathe in the sacred river to wash away his sins. A man may feel guilty for committing murder while his family are ashamed to tell friends that their father is in prison. Guilt follows a moral action and shame a loss of face.

Western thought tends to fuse shame and guilt or to subsume shame as the subjective side of guilt. The noted Christian psychiatrist Paul Tournier in his book *Guilt and Grace* makes no reference to shame. All negative experiences are characterized as guilt. It has been suggested that one reason why William Shakespeare's works appeal to both eastern and western cultures is that he uses the concept of honour and shame more frequently than law and guilt, in fact nine times more!

Shame arises in the ontological context of a failure of self-identity while guilt is the consequence of a wrong action. Shame is the failure to live up to our ego-ideal and is experienced as loss of face, humiliation, defeat, ridicule, feeling inferior or worthless. Shame follows exposure before others with no place to hide. It means to be stripped naked. Shame is both personal and social. Fear is closely bound up with shame – the fear of losing face before one's family or peer group and even one's enemies. Shame also functions at a national level, especially in military

defeat. The USA continues to spend millions of dollars trying to find those fallen in Vietnam and so recover their honour. Japan is still unwilling to apologize for its atrocities in the Pacific during the war of 50 years ago.

Shame is the reverse side of honour. For the Muslim Arab, honour is uprightness of character and integrity in lifestyle³. To be faithful to Allah and the Qur'an is the highest honour. Sexuality is another cornerstone of honour. A man's honour depends on keeping his women in seclusion in order to retain their pre-marital virginity and after marriage to restrain them from extra-marital sexual relationships⁴. Lying or cheating may not be considered to be moral issues but ways of protecting the honour of the family or the community. The shame of losing one's honour may be so humiliating that the shamed person commits suicide. The issue of shame is rarely discussed in similar cases in the New Zealand context. Few Japanese soldiers were taken prisoner in the Pacific war. They could not bear the shame of dishonouring the emperor or their country. A Chinese proverb states, 'A murder may be forgiven but an affront never.'

On the other hand guilt is the transgression of law, whether understood as a social contract or a divine revelation. It may also be falling short of keeping the law or the failure to live up to what we perceive to be

³ For an excellent discussion on honour and shame in Arab society, see Bill A. Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam* (Crowborough, MARC, 1995), p. 67.

⁴ Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, p. 69

right. In monotheistic religious cultures, especially in Judaism and Christianity, sin and guilt are moral failures but in polytheistic or non-theistic cultures such as those in India, Thailand, China and Japan, disobeying authority or failure to adequately venerate one's ancestors results in a feeling of guilt and shame. In this context it is difficult to distinguish them.

Shame and guilt are both objective and subjective. Objectively they may be more easily distinguished; one being transcendent and the other social. Subjectively the feelings of shame and guilt may be very similar; both internalize the objective reality. One may be subsumed in the other.

I believe that our failure to understand how shame and guilt function in different cultures and their inter-relatedness is a major reason for the slowness of church growth, especially among people with a developed world-view and a deep self-understanding.

Second Thesis

The biblical story interprets sin as idolatry with its consequent shame and guilt; God's answer in the cross is deliverance from the bondage of both shame and guilt and the experiencing of peace and harmony in God's family, the church.

The Good News of salvation in Christ is God's response to the consequence of human sin against God, against other individuals, against one's self-image and against creation itself.

The story begins with the account of the Fall resulting in the endemic

nature of sin inherent in every human being. This sinful state of the human heart manifests itself in sinful actions in word, thought and deed in 'the wrong we have done and the good we have not done. We have sinned in ignorance; we have sinned in weakness; we have sinned through our own deliberate fault' (NZ Anglican Prayer Book). Being created in the image of God, all human beings have an insatiable desire to know God. As fallen beings we are constantly in rebellion against God.

The tension between these two states is seen in the functioning of conscience which is universal to all human beings. We may have a 'good conscience' but more often have a 'bad conscience'. Because of conscience 'all people are without any excuse' (Rom. 1:20) but also all will be judged by their conscience (Rom. 2:12-16). Conscience is more than a faculty of our being; it is the living God ever speaking through his Spirit to us. Conscience is a dynamic relationship between the creator and the creature and not a static organ of our being. Sadly the word of God in our hearts can be screened out by our selfish will. It is easily manipulated. It is the vehicle of our awareness of shame and guilt.

The balance in the biblical references to shame and guilt is revealing. In the Old Testament, 'honour' and its cognates occur more than 100 times and more than 70 times in the New Testament. 'Shame' representing at least 10 different Hebrew roots and 7 Greek roots occurs nearly 300 times in the Old Testament and 45 in the New Testament. 'Guilt'

and its derivatives occur 145 times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the New Testament.⁵

The relationship of shame and guilt is vividly illustrated in the story of creation and the Fall (Gen. 1-3). God created man and woman for union in marriage (2:23-24) with the added note 'the man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame' (v. 25). But when Adam and Eve transgressed God's law and rejected his Lordship over them their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked and they tried to cover their nakedness (3:7). They hid from the presence of the Lord God in fear because they were naked (v. 8). They were ashamed, not because they had discovered their sexuality as Freud and others have suggested, but because they were totally exposed with nowhere to hide from the holiness of God (v. 10). Fear and shame were inseparably linked. Both were the consequences of a broken relationship with God and with each other. However, their shame was inseparable from their guilt in breaking the divine commandments. They were guilty and they felt guilty. God's judgement fell on each of them, their descendants and on nature itself. Each looked for a scapegoat by blaming the other and the serpent. God in his mercy and grace covered their shame and guilt with the skin of sacrifice. It seemed that they were aware first of

their shame and then of their guilt.

In biblical history sin, which is referred to as coming short of the glory of God and as transgression of law, is described in terms of idolatry. Throughout the Old Testament, idolatry is the Baalisation of Yahweh worship, and the worship of the celestial bodies. In the New Testament immorality, greed and covetousness are described as idolatrous (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5).

Idolatry is the rejection of God's sovereignty and the creation of deity in one's own image or that of nature. By manipulating the image with magic incantations the idol worshipper hopes to achieve his own selfish desires. Idolatry is graphically described in Scripture as adultery. The higher forms of idolatry go beyond conceptual images. The devout Hindu, having sacrificed all earthly support and even the worship of his idols, strives for the moment of enlightenment, of pure bliss when he is able to cry out, '*ahum brahma asmi*' (I am Brahma or God). This may be compared to the action of our first parents who wanted to be equal with God. God's judgement on idolatry is bondage and death (Rom. 1:16-32).

The Decalogue brings out the dynamic relationship of sin, shame and guilt. The first three commandments relate to prohibitions against idolatry. The fourth and fifth are calls to honour God through keeping the Sabbath and the honouring of parents. Failure to do so is to dishonour the creator. The following five commandments are ethical, beginning

⁵ See 'Shame' in *New Bible Dictionary* (Third Edition) (Leicester: IVP, 1996), p. 1085, and Lowell Noble 'Shame versus Guilt: A New Framework for Evangelism and Fellowship in Wesleyanism', *Wesleyan Theological Journal* vol 16 no 1, p. 55.

“Thou shalt not . . .”; they are clearly judicial and guilt bearing.

In the wide-ranging Mosaic laws, the ceremonial laws draw attention to the shame of defilement. On the other hand, the moral laws point to sin and guilt and the need for atonement through sacrifice. On the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) the sacrificing of the goat was a sin and guilt offering but the significance of the scapegoat released into the desert is not clear. I have not yet found a satisfactory answer in the commentaries I have consulted. Could it have been the covering of shame so that the honour of God could be restored?

In the Psalms, shame and guilt coexist side by side. In Psalm 31 David in grief and sorrow cries out, ‘Do not let me be put to shame, O Lord’ (v.17), while in Psalm 32 David confesses his sin and adds, ‘You forgave the guilt of my sin.’ In confessing his adultery David cries out for forgiveness, for a clean heart and for restoration of the joy of the Lord’s salvation.

References to honour and shame dominate the message of the prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah describes idolatry as shameful (Jeremiah 11:13). In Ezekiel the idols are an abomination to God.

In the New Testament the central message is the cross. Death by crucifixion was the most humiliating and shameful death ever devised by man.⁶ Jesus died ‘outside the city

wall’ as an object of shame, yet ‘he endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God’ (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus interpreted the shame of his cross as the triumph of the glory of God. The honour of God was restored. The risen and ascended Christ sat down to reign as King. In his vicarious suffering the awesomeness of his love was revealed. But Christ’s death was also a vicarious death. He took our sin upon himself (2 Corinthians 5:21) and died in our place that we might be forgiven and our guilt covered. Here was the fulfilment of the messianic hope in the suffering servant songs of Isaiah.

Justice and love are joined at the cross. God’s honour is restored, his justice vindicated. We are reconciled and united with Christ through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit and we are also reckoned righteous and can now call God ‘Abba Father’. We are no longer slaves but sons and daughters and heirs of the kingdom (Galatians 4:6f). The glory of the cross awaits its fulfilment in the promised return of our Lord in power and righteousness.

Third Thesis

The proclamation of the gospel across cultural barriers must first address the issue of shame before it can effectively respond to the conscious or sub-conscious awareness of guilt: it is important to discover bridges of communication between such conflicting cultures.

My third thesis is the application of this glorious hope to the task of pro-

⁶ For a detailed description of the shame of the cross, see Jerome H. Neyrey, ‘Despising the shame of the cross; Honor and shame in the Johannine narrative’, (*Semeia*, 68, 1994), pp. 113-149.

claiming Christ and his gospel across cultural barriers to people whose world-view and spiritual pilgrimage is determined by the boundaries of honour and shame rather than of righteousness and guilt.

Where do we begin? Luther is reputed to have said, 'If you preach the Gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues that deal specifically with our time you are not preaching the Gospel at all.' What then are the issues of our time? Are we answering questions our hearers have never asked or are no longer asking?

In many cases people's felt need is primarily physical – healing from sickness and disease, relief from poverty and deliverance from oppressive merchants, bureaucratic government officials or military dictators. Much of Jesus' public ministry was devoted to meeting people's material needs alongside his preaching on the kingdom of God. Vibrant churches today are those that have a similar concern. Jesus used simple bridges of communication to meet his hearer's deeper spiritual longing for peace, acceptance and security.

He talked to Nicodemus about new life from above in terms of rebirth and to the despised Samaritan prostitute about the water of life. He offered a new beginning to a woman caught in adultery: 'Go now and leave your sinful life' (John 8:11). To the paralytic he said 'Your sins are forgiven you . . . get up, take your mat, and go home (Mark 2:1-12). Zacchaeus, the despised tax officer of Jericho, responded with enthusiasm when Jesus accepted him and

publicly identified with him in his rejection by society. No other teacher had attempted to restore his honour. Zacchaeus' life was radically changed. Wherever he went, Jesus accepted people as they were, affirmed their work to God and to society, and he called on them to repent and follow him. Only in the case of the Pharisees did he go directly to their sin and guilt, for they had no awareness of shame.

But perhaps Jesus' method of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom is most clearly seen in his parables. One example is sufficient. In all Asia the parable of the two lost sons is the most loved, retold and dramatised (Luke 15:11-32). People of all cultures can identify with it. It is a story about honour and shame, about unconditional acceptance and restoration. All the characters in the story are shamed: the wayward son whose self-image was destroyed, the elderly father who took the son's shame upon himself and the elder brother shamed because he was not invited to the banquet and jealous of his brother's undeserved restoration to sonship.⁷

Yet the theme of guilt, confession and forgiveness is not absent from the story. The prodigal comes to the realization of his true self, goes home and confesses to his father, 'I have sinned against heaven and against you'. It is a mistake to criticize the parable because the cross and atonement are not mentioned. The cross is implicit in the father's reply. As

⁷ See Kenneth E Bailey, *Cross and the Prodigal* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1973).

with all parables, the story has direct but limited application. It tells us more about Christ's method of building bridges with people in need than about the whole gospel. Parables are meant to illustrate particular truths of the gospel, not to define the gospel.

In the Old Testament, the story of Nathan's approach to David (2 Samuel 12:1-25) is instructive for our understanding of mission today. David had no sense of guilt about his adultery. His marriage with Bathsheba was lawful and accordingly his conscience was suppressed. Wisely Nathan did not rebuke him directly as many of us evangelicals might have done, but rather through his parable of the rich man and the ewe lamb he awakened David's sense of shame. When Nathan came back with 'You are the man' David was overwhelmed with his guilt. He confessed his sin, was forgiven and was restored, as Psalm 51 records.

Paul's address to the court of Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17: 16-34) is a classic model of bridge building with people who have no knowledge of Christian values. Paul found a point of contact in their idolatry and in their philosophical understanding of the place of humankind in the cosmos. By skilfully leading his hearers to the Creator of all things he led them on to the incarnation of Jesus and to the meaning of his resurrection. Having prepared the ground Paul preached judgement to them and called for repentance and commitment to Christ. This condensed sermon does not recall all that Paul said. We could not imagine Paul preaching the gospel without

mentioning the cross, even though it is not recorded in this account. Paul's success in this evangelistic event is seen in the impact it had on the leadership of the city. A few of the decision-makers of society believed. No doubt they sacrificed their future standing in the community. Converts had everything to lose by following Christ.

Summary and Conclusion

By way of summary, some of the bridges for effective communication across cultural barriers include:

1. We must begin with the known and conscious needs of the people we seek to bring to Christ. No one lives in a spiritual and cultural vacuum. Each religious community has an orienting centre and focus in their search for truth. The Buddhist wants to know how to overcome suffering, the Hindu seeks mystical absorption into God, the Muslim seeks assurance of God's mercy on the day of judgement, and the animist wants to know how to placate the unseen world of spirits. Common to all human searches is the longing for inner peace, for harmony in society and for meaning in death. These same concerns are increasingly true for our neo-pagan western world as well.

2. In today's world, people may appear to be rejecting religion but they are searching for spiritual reality with increasing intensity. This is as true for our post-modern secular age as it is for the people of Asia. The search for spiritual truth goes beyond the needs of the individual to the community. This is notably true in

the search for community by those who follow New Age philosophies. In Pakistan I have noticed that Muslims flock to the tombs or shrines of holy saints in greater numbers than those who go to the mosques. At the shrines they seek the help of the spirit world for their felt needs, whereas Allah in the worship of the mosque is distant and personally unknowable.

The challenge to churches today is to be communities of love and acceptance, reaching out to all people in need, living according to the new covenant of knowing God directly and receiving the assurance of forgiveness of sin (Heb. 8:8-12). The motto of Wheaton College, 'To know Christ and to make him known', challenges us to live as members of the kingdom of God and to obey the final commission Christ gave to his disciples.

3. In sharing Christ with people of other faiths, in most cases it is more meaningful to begin with the incomparable uniqueness of Jesus the Man than to argue his deity and sonship.⁸ Hindus who are drawn to Ram as the ideal man are deeply challenged by Christ's lifestyle of purity, integrity, compassion and self-sacrifice, and above all by his vicarious suffering on the cross. The woman at the well used argument to cover her deeper needs. Jesus brushed these aside and spoke to her about the living water of eternal life. Jesus' compassion for the poor, his power over sickness, death, natural forces and the demonic world drew

people to follow him. He spoke with authority, but wept in the presence of death. While Christ's death on the cross is our message, the incarnation is our starting point. We may win a theological argument with a Hindu or a Muslim friend, but in the process lose a potential convert.

4. The cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ will always be the centre of our message, for here the glory of God is revealed in its fullness, transforming shame to honour and giving freedom from a bad conscience. This leads to the forgiveness of sin and the covering of guilt. The resurrection points to the glorious hope of life to come and to the re-creation of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10).

5. To accept Jesus as more than a prophet but as God's own Son revealed in human flesh calls for a leap of faith, not into irrational fantasy but into the outstretched arms of him who was raised from the dead and is alive forever more. Salvation begins by taking the first step. The gospel always calls for a decision. Compassionate service to the poor and oppressed is mission only when service is offered in the name of Christ. The need for conversion and discipleship must always be at the heart of our understanding of mission.

6. The kingdom of God becomes visible on earth when the people of God as communities of faith live out in worship and in daily life the Lordship of Christ. If Christ is not visible in the church then the church is a stumbling block to the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. Conversion to Christ means conver-

⁸ See Bruce Nicholls, *Is Jesus the only way to God?* (Auckland, AFFIRM Booklet No 5, 1998)

sion to the community, for converts cannot survive on their own in our hostile world.

In cross-cultural mission the importance of baptism cannot be overstressed. An unbaptized believer is a contradiction in terms. Baptism, whether as a child or an adult, is the sign of entry into the church. Our Lord's final commission was a challenge to make disciples and not just converts, to baptize and to teach, to manifest the power of Christ in miracles and to rejoice in suffering for Christ's sake. Together we are the body of Christ with many members but with only one head. We are called to be a witness in the world but not to be absorbed by it. Our counter-culture is a signpost towards the kingdom culture yet to be revealed.

7. The Holy Spirit is not only our guide into all truth but he is also the real missionary, opening and closing doors, preparing hearts to hear the gospel and ever calling us to follow in his footsteps. He is the giver of life, converting the lost and empowering God's people for ministry. It is the Holy Spirit who awakens the sense of shame and guilt. To this end personal and communal prayer in praise of Christ's glory and in intercession for the needs of others is foundational to the work of the Spirit in continuing Christ's mission on earth. As with Paul we are to give thanks and pray without ceasing and be filled with the spirit of God that Christ may be all in all.

Implications

The implications of the thesis of this paper for mission theology and for

theological training need to be seriously considered. I suggest the following areas for further discussion:

1. We need to restate our theology of mission so that it is faithful to the whole of biblical revelation, thoroughly contextualized for the plurality of needs in our changing world and pastorally orientated in order to bridge the gap between our Faith communities and the world's disbelief.

2. We need to constantly revise the curricula of our theological schools towards the goal of greater integration of disciplines, give more attention to biblical hermeneutics, to the relationship of the gospel to the pluralities of cultures and to a more informed understanding of cultural anthropology, pastoral psychology and counselling. The spiritual formation of our students must always be our central concern, for without knowing Christ better we will not be effective in making him known to others.

3. We need to maintain a balance between the functions of the chapel, the classroom and the marketplace. Authentic spirituality, academic excellence and practical church-related experience are essential to training for our missiological task. To meaningfully meet these objectives may require longer periods of study and frequent refresher courses in continuous education. In-service training must be mandatory for all who are called to engage in cross-cultural mission.

There is no higher call than the one entrusted to each of us to disciple the nations for Christ.

Biblical Theology and Non-Western Theology

Some Observations on the Contribution of Biblical Theology for Christianity in the So-called Two Thirds World

J. Julius Scott, Jr.

Keywords: Biblical theology, systematic theology, inter-cultural education, culture, logic, biblical culture, worldview, hermeneutics

During my 37 years of college and university teaching I have taught both Biblical and Systematic Theology.¹ For more than the past quarter of a century, my primary, but not exclusive, attention has been on biblical theology, especially that of the New Testament. I have no desire to debate here the relative merits of the two approaches. My thesis is that, in this time in history, biblical, rather than systematic, theology is

probably the best place to start 'doing' theology in and for the non-western, Two Thirds World. This thesis also includes many groups outside of the mainstream of technical, academic theology in the western world, such as ethnic and cultural minorities and those living in small town and rural settings.

Many aspects of the essence of this thesis have been considered extensively by missiologists and scholars of the Two Thirds World. They have produced an impressive body of literature dealing with both corporate and individual attempts to address the need and possible structures for theological statements appropriate to their many geographical and cul-

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¹ Several friends and colleagues have assisted me with this paper. I must mention Dr Lonna Dickerson, Dr John Gration, and my wife, Florence, who have made major contributions to the content and editing. My appreciation also goes to Doug Milford, Director of Distance Learning at Wheaton College, for pointing me to helpful information and to Dr Scott Moreau for computer help.

tural areas.² My concern is with inter-theology methodological approaches.

1. Personal experiences in cross-cultural settings

Three experiences have been significant in bringing me to think about issues inherent in the title of this paper. First, a conversation with a just-graduated student centred around the work he would soon be taking up in his native East Africa. I asked what were some of the important issues that theology should address there that were not a part of the focus of his education at Wheaton College Graduate School.

The content³ and quickness of his answer shocked me and I realized just how provincial we can be, both in our views of international political-social issues, and in choice of curriculum.

Second, as students were leaving the final examination of a course dealing with the biblical theology of a particular New Testament book, a minority student said, in effect, that this [biblical theological] approach would 'preach' in his churches but systematic theology would not. Finally, on the evening of the day in which I had concluded teaching a three-week course in Nigeria on 'The Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament', a delegation of students came to see me. After the traditional expressions of gratitude the leader said, 'We do not believe you understand what you have done for us. Before this class our study of the New Testament required our going

² E.g. John Gration, 'Willowbank to Zaire: The Doing of Theology', *Missiology* 12:3 (July, 1984), pp. 227-309; K. Gordon Molyneux, *African Christian Theology: The Quest for Selfhood* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993); 'The Contribution to African Theology of the Faculty Faculté de Théologie Catholique in Kinshasa, Zaire,' *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 11:2 (1992), pp. 58-89; and Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur, eds. *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts* (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984). See also review of Molyneux, *African Christian Theology* by A. Scott Moreau, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 36:1 (January 2000), pp. 109-112. Insight into another area is provided in the series of essays edited by Cain Hope Felder, *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

³ It included (1) attitudes toward ancestors; (2) circumcision, (3) polygamy, (4) issues related to charismatic theology and experience, (5) diviners, spiritualists, and demonism, (6) the nature of the Christian family, (7) poverty, (8) development in such areas as economics and education, (9) tribalism, (10) Islam, (11) traditional African religions, and (12) AIDS. I could have added more, but this was his list.

Another student, from another part of the world, listed (1) how to present the gospel in an area that has three other main religions and a government that will not permit proselytizing, (2) what should be the Christian response in a society in which bribery is the only way to get things done, (3) the dilemma faced by a Christian running a business in a country in which, by law, 10% of all employees must be Muslims and every corporation must have at least one Muslim on its board of directors, (4) what is a Christian to do when there are national, cultural festivals held in temples, (5) ancestor worship, and (6) the problems inherent in a society in which all marriages are 'arranged' and the family determines that a Christian woman must marry someone of another religion.

from the African world to the western to that of the Bible and then back through the western world to ours. As a result of our study in this course we are now able to go directly to the biblical world.' Another added, 'You know, our world is much closer to that of the New Testament than is yours.'

2. Describing Biblical and Systematic Theology

Both the definition and function of biblical and systematic theologies are controversial. Most contemporary systematicians want to distinguish between 'Biblical Doctrines' and 'Constructive Systematic Theology'. The former involves arranging biblical teachings under a topical outline such as Prolegomena, Revelation, God, Human Persons, Christ, Salvation, The Christian Life, the Church, and Eschatology. The primary structure and methodology for this enterprise usually begins with the study of the Bible, and often includes gathering proof-texts for each category. 'Biblical Doctrines' also draws from philosophy.

'Constructive Theology' attempts to apply religious truth to the contemporary historical-cultural situation by translating its message into the conceptual world-view and framework of the modern world. Its objective includes meaningfully extending and applying both the content and intent of religious teachings to the target society. This requires careful analysis of all religious issues involving human persons and those cultures in which the message is stated. In making these

analyses, the theologian draws from biblical studies, history (both world history in general and that of Christian theology and experience), philosophy, literature, the social sciences, the arts, natural sciences, and any other areas that are helpful in understanding human nature and the environment of the society and/or the individual being addressed. The organization and presentation of this form of systematic theology are then heavily influenced by one or more of the areas used in making the analysis. Thus method and structure of both the study and presentation are different from that of the Bible itself.

In 'Biblical Theology' all statements about God, human beings, Christ, righteousness, and salvation derive their meaning and connotation in terms of their function within the plan and on the plane of the history of the Bible and its times. It seeks to understand biblical truth within the conceptual world-view and historical-cultural framework of the biblical world. Biblical theology derives its content by steadily focusing attention upon the Bible in its original setting. It employs the (critical) tools of linguistic, historical-cultural, and literary investigation.

In addition to ideological ones (such as liberal versus traditional viewpoints), numerous controversies surround virtually every feature of biblical theology. We will mention only two: those involving its organization and its objective.

One has only to look at the table of contents of a number of different books on biblical theology to realize how diverse are the organizational

structures employed by the authors. In general, they are organized along the lines of either an analytic or thematic (synthetic) approach.⁴ The former investigates the various units (such as the Pentateuch, prophets, writings, synoptic gospels, the writings of John, those of Paul, and other divisions) to determine the teachings and emphases of each. Synthetic structures look for common themes and the distinct ways they are dealt with throughout the Bible or in the particular testament under consideration. At times a writer may combine one of these approaches with some of the divisions usually found in systematic theology.⁵ Other approaches include investigations which seek the implications of the New Testament writers' use of the Old Testament⁶ or the

so-called word-study method.⁷

Disagreements involving the objective of biblical theology focus upon whether it is a legitimate study in itself or a step in a greater enterprise; that is, is biblical theology merely descriptive or can it be normative as well? G. E. Ladd is quite clear, 'Biblical theology is primarily a descriptive discipline. It is not initially concerned with the final meaning of the teachings of the Bible or their relevance for today. This is the task of systematic theology.'⁸ On the other hand, Donald Guthrie eloquently sets forth the case for biblical theology as normative.⁹ This is so, he says, because of the sinful nature of all human beings whose need of a favourable relationship with God does not change, regardless of time and place. Guthrie also argues that the Bible must speak to each generation on its own terms.

The distinction between biblical and systematic theology is not always easy to grasp. Not infrequently, students come to me a year or more after taking a class with me

⁴ The thematic or synthetic approach is less often used than the analytic structure. Donald Guthrie in his massive study, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), uses a more-or-less synthetic approach. George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), uses an analytic approach.

A. M. Hunter, *The Message of the New Testament* (1944), expressed the hope that all future textbooks in New Testament theology be written from the synthetic point of view. This is a largely unfulfilled desire.

⁵ E.g., Guthrie, *NT Theology*.

⁶ E.g., C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (1952); *The Old Testament in the New* (1952; reprinted 1963); F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* [British title: *This is That: The New Testament Development of Some Old Testament Themes*], (1968) and *The Time is Fulfilled: Five Aspects of the Fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New* (1978).

⁷ E.g., G. Johannes Botterweck, and Helmer Ringgren, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*; John T. Williams, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974 and foll.); Colin Brown, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967-1985) 3 vols. plus Index; G. Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, G. Bromiley, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans); Ernst Jenni, and K. Westermann, eds. *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Mark E. Biddle, trans. (1971; E.T., Peabody, MAS: Hendrickson, 1997) 3 vols.; W. Van Gameren, ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 5 vols.

⁸ Ladd, *Theology of the NT*, p. 25.

⁹ Guthrie, *NT Theology*, pp. 32-34.

and say, 'I'm finally understanding the difference between biblical and systematic theology.' Once, when I was trying to explain the difference to an engineer friend, he commented that biblical theology also has its systematic elements. He was, of course, correct. The line between the two is not sharply defined. The major differences, I believe, lie in their starting points, methodologies, and organizational models. The points addressed, and emphases placed upon them, may also be diverse.

3. The Traditional Gateway to Theology

The beginning point for formal theological training of those who will become pastors, teachers, missionaries, and informed laypersons is frequently through the study of 'Biblical Doctrines' or some other form of systematic theology. This has the advantage of quickly and neatly presenting the essential teachings of the Christian faith. It is a strategy I sometimes employ myself when working with new Christians or beginning students. Nevertheless, I have several questions and disagreements associated with this method.

One question is: which orientation and organization (or structural outline) will be used – Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed-Calvinistic, Anglican, Anabaptist, Wesleyan, Charismatic, or some other? Which philosophical, sociological, or other grid will determine the methodology, assumptions, and structure for the study? Into which cultural framework will

the presentation of Christian doctrines be placed?

One of my concerns is that biblical and theological study must always begin with the biblical text in its own context. If other settings and methodologies are permitted to drive the study, there is the danger, possibly an inevitable one, that it will be founded upon, and continue without, a real biblical base — external elements may become the controlling influences. To say it another way, failure to begin with and continue investigating the biblical text in its own world while studying the Christian faith leaves us without much needed 'control'. Consequently, the chosen contemporary cultural or intellectual scheme may become tyrannical and impose extra-biblical influences and criteria upon understanding the biblical message while it is simply meant to be a framework for making applications for the modern writer's audience.

This may lead to a major problem if potential leaders have met only one form of systematic theology in their training, especially if the learning has been in an 'indoctrination' environment. If these people then take up work in another culture, either in their homeland or abroad, they have no option but to teach or preach what has been taught to them. More than likely the two cultures will not 'fit' and the structure will be 'foreign'. No help has been given to understand the need for or means of cultural adaptation without compromising 'the faith revealed once and for all' in Jesus Christ.

4. Forgotten Factors Influencing the Biblical Student

4.1 *Internal-subjective factors which influence the student/theologian*

Less obvious than the type of theology with which to begin are differences stemming from subjective factors within the individual student/theologian. All of us come to our studies with personal preferences, commitments, experiences, and presuppositions. Complete objectivity in the theological enterprise is unobtainable.¹⁰ We must acknowledge our presuppositions and note their influence upon the way we work and the results which come from it. We must learn to deal with our presuppositions lest they become 'blindners'¹¹ which narrow our field of vision and force us to go straight ahead without even considering other options, methods, or needs.

Furthermore, individuals respond in various ways to intellectual/academic approaches to a subject. The same philosophical, historical, social-scientific, or aesthetic handlings will not appeal equally to all. Such matters are deeply involved in complex matrixes including psychological, intellectual, societal, cultural,

and many other factors.

Biblical theology is also influenced by the personality, cultural-economic situation, the intellectual environment of the student, and more. A survey of the history of the discipline is sufficient to demonstrate the strong influence of the dominant philosophy and methodologies of any given historical period upon biblical and theological studies.

4.2 *Societal-cultural Factors Influencing the 'doing' of Theology*

In addition to individual, personality, philosophical, and environmental differences, diverse cultural factors have a major influence on the way people think and learn. A missionary physician, a veteran of work in a number of locations, and I were discussing different educational styles. She observed, 'Half the world memorizes, the other half learns to think.'

Even more significant is the fact that although all humans share a store of commonalities, individuals and people groups have different thought patterns, ways of evaluating evidence, and means of problem solving. Bernie Harder, teacher of linguistics, medieval literature, and international literature at the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, offers a perceptive study of the effect of culture on thought processes, social customs, beliefs and rituals, language, and especially upon the learning of a language other than one's mother-tongue.¹² Even

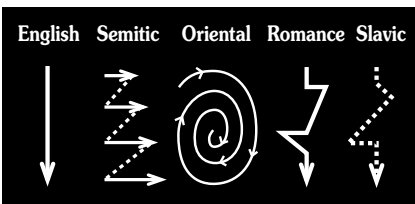
¹⁰ In a well-known essay Rudolf Bultmann asked, 'Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?', and then demonstrated how influential his own presuppositions were in his work.

¹¹ I fear many readers may be too urban and/or young to understand this allusion. Pieces of leather were sometimes sewn to the bridle of a horse or mule in such a position as to obscure vision to either side. These pieces of leather were called 'blindners.'

¹² 'Weaving Cultural Values on the Loom of Language,' *Media Development* 3 (1989), pp. 25-28.

sentence structure and syntax can be affected. In some cases a statement or question made to a speaker of English as a second language may be misunderstood and taken in a way exactly the opposite from that intended by the speaker.

Harder also cites observations, confirmed by others,¹³ of Robert B. Kaplan of the University of Southern California. Kaplan describes several patterns of logic employed in the English essays written by foreign students in his courses. He explains that the structure of English is like a straight line because of its linear development, Semitic structure is a series of parallel arrows connected with a broken line, the Oriental pattern is like a spiral moving inward, and the Romance pattern is a zig-zagged arrow. The Slavic, or Russian, structure is more difficult to explain.¹⁴ Kaplan diagrams five thought patterns as follows:¹⁵



He states, 'Logic (in the popular, rather than the logician's sense of the word), which is the basis of rhet-

¹³ E.g. George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹⁴ Bernie Harder 'Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education', *Language Learning* 16:1 (1966), pp. 4-14; Kaplan provides illustrations for each type of thought pattern.

¹⁵ Harder, 'Cultural Thought Patterns,' p. 15.

oric, is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal . . . but varies from culture to culture and even then from time to time within a given culture.'¹⁶

Many of these conclusions from the field of linguistics have their corollary in theology in a cross-cultural setting. They show that different people-groups think differently. Therefore we must not assume that the forms of theologies which appeal to and are relevant to one group will necessarily be so for another.

Even more to the point are some issues raised by Orlando Costas.¹⁷ Although he is not directly concerned with our topic, Costas makes a direct, positive contribution to our study by his insistence that western theology, even among evangelical Christians, is 'too obsessed with the Enlightenment' and that preoccupation with 'the reasonableness of faith' is not necessarily a primary concern in the Two Thirds World. Furthermore, he insists that western and other parts of the world have different primary agendas. The West seems predisposed to address 'the skeptic, atheist, rationalistic-heathen - the non-religious person'.¹⁸ In the Two Thirds World major concerns are more likely to be poverty, powerlessness, oppression, and religious pluralism.¹⁹

¹⁶ Harder, 'Cultural Thought Patterns,' p. 2.

¹⁷ 'Evangelical Theology in the Two Thirds World,' in Mark Lau Branson and C. René Padilla, *Conflict and Context: Hermeneutics in the Americas- A Report on the Context and Hermeneutics in Americas Conference, sponsored by Theological Students Fellowship and the Latin American Theological Fraternity, Tlayacapan, Mexico, November 24-29 1983* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 311-323.

¹⁸ Costas, 'Evangelical Theology', p. 320.

¹⁹ Costas, 'Evangelical Theology', p. 321.

5. Potential Problems of Western Systematic Theology in the Two Thirds World

Most systematic theologies are western constructions using western methodologies, systems, and logic. They produce answers for western peoples, and are often directed toward the academically oriented. What happens too often is that the methods, tools, conclusions and even the controversies of western systematic theology are simply transported into locations and cultures foreign to it. Issues raised in one environment frequently will be of little or no significance in the new setting. Concerns important in the target society may not even be recognized by the western import. Even if they are, they may not receive proper consideration because to 'outsiders' they seem of little significance. Proposed solutions from outside the culture, without full awareness of what is at stake, may be superficial, legalistic, or unworkable;²⁰ they are likely to be patchwork at

best and dangerous at worst.²¹

There are some theological statements, interpretations, or demands which are strictly western in their origin and implementation. Some of us have either read about or personally encountered some of these which are vigorously contested or made tests of orthodoxy in countries or cultures where combatants neither know nor understand the background, history, or what was really at stake. Need I go on? The problem to which I allude is well documented by most contemporary studies in missiology.

One fact already raised illustrates an important issue which runs deep. western theologians usually assume the validity of logic as an unassailable methodological tool. But Enlightenment-style logic, which considers sacrosanct such principles as non-contradiction, is not necessarily appropriate in all societies. Remember Kaplan's distinction of different thought patterns and Costas' complaint about the West's obsession with reason and reasonableness.²² Yet, we must stress that

²⁰ The question of what should be done about polygamy by Christians spurred a vigorous class discussion in one of my courses. American students proposed relatively simplistic answers. Eventually a Two Thirds World student arose to say he was the youngest child of his father's fourth and youngest wife. If his father had followed most of the advice given in the discussion, he said, either he and his mother would have starved to death or she would have been forced to become a prostitute.

²¹ In response to a plenary session paper, 'The Role of Evangelicals in American Society' by Martin E. Marty, read before the National Meeting of Evangelical Theological Society, Chicago, 1984, Irving Hexham demonstrated that Christians, either led to Christ or renewed by the revivals in South Africa in which Andrew Murray played a dominant role, divided into two distinct groups after Murray's death. One self-destructed into radical self-centred religious subjectivism, the other, with no native expression of Christian theology, imported Dutch Calvinism and tried to force it to fit their own culture. This latter group became the forefathers of the later apartheid society which reaped bitter and shameful fruits for decades.

²² Note also Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*.

although the logical process in each non-western society may be different from ours, it works for and makes sense to them.

Let me dare to go a step further. Familiarity with some of the literature from the same locales and time of biblical books suggests that we are probably making a major mistake in attempting to fit biblical thought into such schemes as those available in Aristotelian or other western forms of logic. Semitic thought forms did not, and often still do not, operate that way. Can the western mind really adequately describe and give the rationale for the chronological or logical scheme of the Book of Jeremiah?

Two Thirds World systematic theologies should reflect familiarity with and sensitivity to the religious customs and traditions and the cultural and social issues of the target areas. Writers should be those with first hand knowledge of the group, preferably nationals, not those with mainly a western point of view. They should reflect the ways of thinking and expression indigenous to the area being addressed. At best, western systematic theologies might be studied merely as examples, but even then with a careful effort to explain the kinds of societies, cultures, and issues of the environments within which they arose and the types of and reasons for the methods used.

6. Biblical Theology and the Two Thirds World

We have already sought to demonstrate that all biblical theologies are not of the same kind. Contemporary

biblical theological studies are influenced by the same types of prior commitments and agendas as are systematics. Nevertheless, we are concerned here with context and methods of approach, not with the final results of various practitioners of a method. Biblical theology, at least initially, is not concerned with western, or any other contemporary structures. Biblical theology starts with the Bible in its own historical-cultural environment and this is its distinct advantage. It begins and, at its best, stays very close to the setting from which Two Thirds World scholars, like those in the West, can work directly in seeking to state theology for their communities.

6.1 The Inherent Nature of Biblical Theology

Biblical theology begins by seeking to determine the message of the biblical writers in their culture. These cultures are not subject to change for they are now 'frozen' in time and place. Biblical cultures are 'foreign' to all modern peoples and cultures. Thus theological work, which begins by seeking biblical truth as it came in its original context, places all participants on a level playing field since it is foreign and neutral to all members of all contemporary societies.

Even an elementary awareness of the situations within which the Bible was written and the world-views of its characters challenges interpreters in subsequent ages to ask the question, 'What did it mean to its original writers and hearer/readers?' before asking, 'What does it mean in our very different time and setting?' It forces all Christians to come together in the

house of the interpreter, each from multi-cultural viewpoints, to seek the meaning of the message initially revealed in another time and place, before proclaiming its words of salvation, life, and hope in the diverse settings of our world.

Secondly, with a biblical theological approach, those from cultures of the Two Thirds world may actually be better equipped to see issues in the text in its original context. western approaches, especially systematic theology, may be heavily influenced by the outlook and interests of the educated, privileged classes, from which much academic theology comes. The western view of the text may be too easily glossed over by familiarity with traditional exegesis and theological formularies. Starting from the biblical context also makes it much easier for us to hear our non-First World sisters and brothers when they raise, as a part of the Bible's own agendas, such issues as truth and justice, slavery and oppression, poverty and wealth, religious pluralism and idolatry, nationalism and tribalism, sexism, classism, exploitation, governmental and business ethics, and many more. Scholars from the Two Thirds World are also able to help us see the blotches on our own societies, attitudes, and personal lives to which we have become blind or desensitized but which are exposed by the text.

6.2 Is Biblical Theology Normative Theology?

The essence of the Christian faith is not primarily assent to doctrine, shared religious experiences or feelings, or the quest for authentic exist-

tence. It is a personal relationship with God. This relationship is made available through Jesus Christ, and continued through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. The facts about this relationship and their implications are the major concern of the Bible.

With the possible exception of two or three books, the Bible does not resemble any particular type or system of theology. It reveals God by showing his person and his will, by recounting his words and works, his actions and reactions over a long period of time, in numerous places and cultures. It relates how many human persons and groups have acted and reacted as God so revealed himself.

The biblical accounts of the past can be immediately relevant to the present because they are not primarily concerned with presenting knowledge in and of itself, not laws nor liturgy, not human ideals, nor any other kind of 'programme.' Rather, the Bible presents a person, one who 'is the same yesterday, today, and forever' (Heb. 13:8).

How was the message applied by the original writer and reader? By revealing, not a theology nor concepts, but the person of whom they spoke and the nature and implications of the relationship with him. Problems arise when persons and groups living after the biblical period are unable or unwilling to see and hear the message in its original setting before seeking to move it into theirs. The abstract, technical language of philosophy or other modern disciplines is not sufficient for

presenting and bringing one into a relationship with another person, let alone the ultimate One.

The prophet Micah asserts that it is through remembering events of God at work in the past that one 'may know the saving acts of the Lord' (6:5). Throughout Scripture it is assumed that its narrative is normative revelation. True, there are also the messages of prophets and apostles, words of worship and wisdom, and more, but all these are within or cognate to the narrative. I maintain that biblical theology at its best focuses upon the person and will of God and upon the flow and lessons of that narrative within which he works. Interestingly enough, a narrative framework is one within which much of the Two Thirds World is most comfortable. The same is true of many, especially the less erudite, in the First World.

All forms of biblical interpretations, including theologies, are concerned with understanding and applying revelation in ways that are useful for faith and practice in our world. However, it seems to me that it is at least an open question how far the biblical message must be removed from its original form and setting to see its relevance. This becomes evident when we recognize that the biblical message has a subjective aspect which must affect the inner, the spiritual, emotional, and volitional components of persons as well as an objective, cognitive one aspect.

The biblical writers themselves considered their message to be more than merely descriptive. God

seemed to think that the type of presentation we find in the Bible was both understandable and normative. A form of theology which stays as close as possible to that method will not stray too far afield.

7. 'There and Back Again' – A Paradigm for Beginning Theology

7.1 *The Goal*

My Nigerian friends, probably sub-consciously, put their finger on a series of issues about preparing theological students and the way to 'do' theology in a variety of cultural settings. The sentiments they expressed beneath trees overlooking the African savannah echo the task of the biblical interpreter once described by Professor C. H. Dodd:

The ideal interpreter would be one who has entered into that strange first-century world, has felt its whole strangeness, has sojourned in it until he has lived himself into it, thinking and feeling as one of those to whom the Gospel first came, and who will then return into our world, and give to the truth he has discerned a body out of the stuff of our own thought.²³

Recent decades have witnessed a growing realization of the close connection between all forms of theological studies and hermeneutics – the study of theory and procedures of interpretation. A major part of hermeneutics, at least in the world of traditional biblical and theological

²³ *The Present Task in New Testament Studies: An Inaugural Lecture delivered in the Divinity School on Tuesday, 2 June 1936* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1936), pp. 40-41. Cf. the title of his book of children's stories, *There and Back Again* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932).

studies, is the attempt to bridge what is called the 'gap' separating our time and culture from the world of the Bible,²⁴ how to go 'there' and 'back again.'²⁵

The journey is essential because biblical theology must begin with the assumption that (with the possible exception of predictive prophecy) no interpretation is likely to be correct which could not have been intended by the original author nor understood by the original recipients. Thus, interpretation begins by seeking the intent of the authors.

This authorial intent is the revelation of the person, will and acts of the eternal, unchangeable God.²⁶ It also demonstrates that there are spiritual and moral principles which are rooted in, and gain authority from the fact that they reflect the nature and will of God himself; living in harmony with them pleases God. Sometimes these principles are presented abstractly and at other time they are in absolute form. More often they are revealed as they are applied specifically to culturally-controlled situations over many centuries. Both of these modes are valid and relevant, although they must be

interpreted and applied in different, appropriate ways.

The presentation of these basic moral and spiritual principles in the absolute form has a trans-historical, trans-cultural character. The other form of presentation is closely wedded to specific circumstances, those arising out of cultural, social, and historical situations. Both the books of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament epistles are 'problem centred'. The writers were frequently applying basic theological principles to specific problems faced by those to whom they were originally writing. In such cases, the biblical text must be carefully examined to recognize these problems and to identify the general principles which lie behind the application made by the prophet or apostle. The methods by which the principles for life and conduct were applied to the situations faced by the first readers are also important. The interpreter must be aware of these methods, for they will provide guidelines for applying the same principles in different times and places. Each piece of this biblical data in its own way is a part of the whole which is normative and relevant for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness which is designed to bring the people of God to maturity and equip them for every good work (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

We journey into the biblical world to learn of God, reflect on his nature through the principles of which we have spoken, and to see how they were applied in the biblical world. One of our main concerns in this

²⁴ Such differences as (1) time, (2) culture, (3) language, (4) geography, (5) literature, (6) institutions, including political, social, etc., (7) philosophy (8) world-and-life view, and the like.

²⁵ Note Karl Barth's description of John Calvin's interpretative method. It might be called 'going there and back again.' 'See how energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century [Calvin's day] from the first become transparent.' *Epistle to the Romans* (Eng. trans; London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 7.

²⁶ Cf. John 8:29; 1 Cor. 7:32; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:4; Heb. 11:4.

study is to insist that, regardless of which country or culture one begins the journey, the destination is the same – the biblical world. God, spiritual and moral principles, and the guidelines for employing them remain the same. Differences come when we apply them in our diverse situations after we have come ‘back again.’

7.2 *The Means*

Such is the purpose and goal of the interpreter’s journey. But is it really possible to go to, what Professor Dodd called, ‘there . . . that “strange world of the Bible?”’ The answer, first of all, is that of course it is impossible to completely enter some other time and place. Yet, through seeking evidences of situations, including events, personalities, social institutions, cultural phenomena, and the rest, historians do, with some success, enter past places and societies all the time. They focus upon the study of documents, both primary and secondary, and archaeological evidence. Historians work forward from the past and backwards from the present. Their primary objectives include offering reconstructions of ancient societies, determining what caused their distinctive characters, and seeking to identify the intermediate developmental steps between then and now.

The vehicles to bear us to the biblical world are, in one form or another, the elements of biblical studies. Textual work begins with the evaluation of manuscripts now available. Whenever possible it involves working in the original biblical languages and an understanding of the genre

and other literary and rhetorical features within the texts. It is learning about the biblical world that my African friends found so helpful. The study of the historical-cultural situation can begin by asking what seems to be the nature of the times – daily life, customs, attitudes, and aspirations assumed in the text. But then one may go to cognate literature contemporary with the biblical period and other remains for additional historical-cultural evidence (and let me note the growing recognition of the importance of archaeology, not only for apologetics, but also as a major contributor to rediscovering the ancient context²⁷).

The more often we enter that other world in order to become acquainted with the context of the Bible, the more we become familiar with the main ways of getting into it. In addition there are also secondary ‘roads’ and byways which go there. These less travelled ways pass through different terrain, hamlets, and scenery. By occasionally taking one of these, we see the biblical world from other angles. The distinctive view offered by alternative ‘approaches’ provides a fuller understanding of the nature of the goal of our trip once we are ‘there’.²⁸ Likewise, we sometimes gain insights into the biblical text in surprising ways and places when we

²⁷ Cf. John Gray, ‘Toward A Theology of the Old Testament: The Contribution of Archaeology’, *Expository Times* 74:11 (August 1963), pp. 847-351.

²⁸ A study of, and travelling along, the approaches to Jerusalem from various directions vastly helped my understanding of the city and its history.

look at its context from different vantage points.²⁹ (One misses a lot by travelling only by air or on the interstate highways!)

Of course it helps to have companions along on such a journey. Without the company of fellow students/travellers who have gone before, especially those who have left the records of their 'journeys' (i.e., their research), each generation of theologians would have to start from scratch. From contemporary travellers we can benefit from expertise they may possess; theologians travel in pilgrim bands, they must not be 'lone rangers'!

Now, all this is 'old hat' to most of us. It is relevant precisely because the various elements involved in biblical studies are at least one valid starting point for those who would found their theology upon the Bible, regardless of their ethnic or cultural

origin.³⁰ These are the time-tested elements of making an exegesis of specific parts or passages of the Bible which must be fitted into the over-arching whole of the biblical panorama.

To those who object that such a journey is too rigorous, I reply only that the theological discipline requires discipline. Too often I see students from this (USA) as well as other countries gravitate toward what appears to be more simple, more practical, the more immediately applicable courses of study. They then leave the formal phase of their education without a sound biblical and theological foundation upon which to build. They have little of that kind of maturity which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says is 'for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil' (Heb. 5:14).³¹

I have implied that there are foundational steps from a western a perspective. That is my cultural orientation. Those who can identify better equipment and way-stations for the

²⁹ My understanding of the content and setting of the Book of Jeremiah was enhanced by the novel, *Harken to the Voice*, by Franz Werfel. There is much to be gained with familiarity with the methods and interpretations of the Bible by the so-called 'Church Fathers', writers from the Reformation and earlier periods, e.g. the series, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998).

See also Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature and Get more Out of It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984). Reading the Bible just as literature (which is not what Ryken proposes) has its limitations. See Krister Stendahl, 'The Bible as a Classic and the Bible as Holy Scripture', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 103:1 (1984), pp. 3-10.

³⁰ For summaries of traditional interpretative procedures from a western point of view see Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982); Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); H. A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Process of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

³¹ I am haunted by a report given to me by a colleague who had been a long-time missionary. He told of a bright young student from another continent who earned a Master's degree in the U.S. in a 'practically oriented' area. He avoided taking all but the absolutely required minimum courses in Bible and theology. He then returned to his homeland and, because he did not know the difference, led a denomination of three million into liberalism.

trip into the biblical world in ways more appropriate to other cultures should do so.

Such is the equipment to bear the biblical student-theologian 'there.' The requirements for coming 'back again' are not so easily identified. They vary from culture to culture and from time to time. But we must realize that on this return leg of the journey the students are coming home to their own world, the place and culture they know best. Here, however, biblical students need to learn from the systematic theologian that there is more to our culture than meets the eye; careful analysis to see what is beyond the surface is a requirement if we are to be most helpful and relevant.

Sometimes the what we bring with us as we return to our own 'world' may take the form of systematic theology, while at other times it may be story. Personally I have found helpful the process of seeking to identify the broad questions, either stated or implied, which were in the minds of the writers. The form must be determined by the culture; the content must never be compromised.

8. Some Concluding Observations

The task of the biblical theologian in any culture is first to assert the existence and nature of the One sought in virtually every culture, through whom 'the world was created . . . [so that] . . . that what is seen was made of things which do not appear' (cf. Heb. 11:3). Then it is a matter of moving to identify both the questions implied in the text itself, the divine

principles, and their implications as they were worked out in the biblical world. This means that students of the Bible will seek to pierce to the very heart of its message to find its concepts and principles about God, the universe and their relationship and then apply that message in appropriate forms to their modern world.

The very nature of systems frequently makes the transportation of their methods and statements from one culture to another potentially inappropriate, dangerous, and tyrannical. On the other hand, biblical theology, when properly done, should be the foundational discipline to be used by various peoples and cultures as they seek statements of their own biblically based theologies. It will be an assurance that such formularies will be wedded to the message of Scripture in its own day and that applications in all modern settings will be relevant.

Perhaps it may appear that I have strayed from my stated topic, 'Some observations on the contribution of biblical theology for Christianity in the so-called *Two Thirds World*'. I think not. These observations assume that 'from all peoples, nations and languages' (cf. Dan. 7:14) Christians who stand within the traditional spectrum of the faith regard the Bible as God's authoritative word for faith and life. The fact that it was given at specific times and places must be taken seriously. Of equal import is its eternal, unchanging message.

These observations also come from a conviction on my part that,

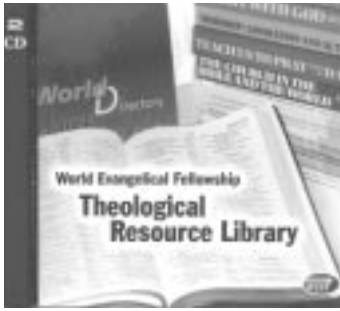
although I appreciate the value of systematic theology, all systems are created by human beings, are temporal, culturally bound, and become obsolete. They are always incomplete, for God is greater than any system. And, ultimately, all theology must not seek ideas about God, but God himself, his person and will. As

Alfred Lord Tennyson said,

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be.

They are but broken lights of Thee;
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

'In Memoriam'



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Christian-Jewish Relations after a Century of Great Change

Graham Keith

Keywords: Christian-Jewish dialogue, Israel, Zionism, Messianic Judaism, supersessionism, proselytism, Jewish mission, World Council of Church, Vatican II.

The twentieth century has seen such significant changes in the relationship of Christians to the Jewish community that we can ask if anything is likely to be the same again. The dark shadows of the Holocaust, perpetrated in the heart of Christian Europe, have left the churches with much heart searching. How far are Christian beliefs and attitudes to be blamed for the extent to which the Nazis were able to carry through

their murderous policies?

The Holocaust has also had an impact among Jews. It has profoundly affected their psychology and outlook on life among the other nations of the world. But Jewish writers suggest the Holocaust simply intensified changes among the Jews which had already been set in motion by emancipation.¹ As a result, Jews today are faced with sharp identity problems to an extent unthinkable in the days of the ghetto.

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The Emergence of the State of Israel

This identity question comes into sharp focus with the formation of the state of Israel. A century ago the emergence of a sovereign Jewish state could not have been foreseen.

¹ Geoffrey Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations since the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 48-9.

At that time Zionism was a minority element among the Jewish communities.² Many orthodox Jews believed that return to the land was possible only after, or along with, the appearance of the Messiah.³ Moreover, there was a widespread belief that the Jewish people had been deliberately scattered by God among the nations in order to bring blessing to them.⁴ These attitudes now largely belong to the pages of past history. Zionism has shaped Jewish identity even among those sections of the Jewish community who were originally most opposed to it. The reason is straightforward – the Holocaust seemed to mark out anti-Semitism as an inevitable part of the Jewish experience in the Diaspora.

The Zionist movement is inseparable from the vision of Theodor Herzl of securing a political safe haven for all sorts of Jews. He had diagnosed anti-Semitism as the key problem – a problem which was localized in Europe. His answer was to create a Jewish state outside of Europe which would secure diplomatic recognition and give Jews in the Diaspora greater respect in the eyes of their neighbours. Legal recognition was so important to Herzl that he was prepared to give it priority over the precise location of the new Jewish state.⁵ It imparted to Zionism a key element of its ideology – the security

of the Jewish people was to be gained by political means. Diplomatic recognition has remained important to the state of Israel. Now that it is largely secured and Israel has even been given status, however reluctantly, by the PLO, we can ask – has Israel's safety been guaranteed?

Evidently, diplomatic recognition has not eliminated anti-Semitism. On the contrary, it has given anti-Semites new territory to exploit (Zionist imperialism and oppression) either apart from, or alongside, more traditional anti-Semitic motifs. Besides, since the state of Israel was established in the heart of the Islamic world, it has given fuel for those who wish to ignite long dormant anti-Jewish elements in Islam. This is not to suggest that the Arab world which surrounds Israel is full of anti-Semitism.⁶ Arab attitudes are more varied and more nuanced. But there is more than enough evidence of anti-Semitism to affirm that Herzl's remedy was insufficient. Indeed, some would point out that the existence of a Jewish state has given anti-Semites the unique opportunity of a military target.

Understandably, the state of Israel has become heavily dependent both on the diplomatic skills of the USA and on its own military strength, which includes the development of nuclear weapons. This, at least in part, accords with the aspirations of the Zionists who insisted that if the Jews were to walk tall among the nations, they must forge their own

² Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in Modern Times* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 172.

³ David S. Ariel, *What do Jews Believe?* (London: Ebury Press, 1995), pp. 223-4.

⁴ Gösta Lindeskog in Göte Hedenquist (ed.), *The Church and the Jewish People* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1954), pp. 57-8.

⁵ Neusner, *Judaism*, p. 161.

⁶ Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (London: Phoenix, 1997), pp. 257-9.

destiny. That means being militarily self-sufficient, though ironically the Israelis are dependent on the diplomatic skills and financial support of other nations to help maintain security. Moreover, the reality of nuclear weapons must, if we view things in purely human terms, throw a question mark over the survival of Israel.

This is a far cry from the Jewish people taking refuge under the wings of the Lord, the God of Israel. Indeed, it is no accident of history that the state of Israel has looked to military strength to secure its future. This has been by deliberate choice.⁷ In effect, the early Zionists gave up the faith that God could be relied upon to protect the Jewish people in their Diaspora. It would not be going too far to say that the Jewish state has become a sort of substitute God,⁸ claiming to give relief to all Jews who are oppressed and persecuted. This is not because of reliance on the God of Israel or even on such religious emblems as the holy sites in Jerusalem or elsewhere. If a rationale is given for this, it would be in terms of an almost romantic idea of a true Jewish spirit which would begin to flower once the Jews found the right environment. Herzl put it this way – 'I believe that a wondrous breed of Jews will spring up from the earth. The Maccabees will rise again. Let me repeat once more my opening words: The Jews who will it shall achieve their state. We shall live at

last as free men on our own soil, and in our own homes peacefully die. The world will be liberated by our freedom, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness. And whatever we attempt there for our own benefit will rebound mightily and beneficially to the good of all mankind.'⁹ Clearly, this is the outline of a distinctly secular religion. We do not have the Jews enriching the world by grasping and entering into the fullness of their own God-given religious tradition. Instead, we have the Jews enriching the world simply by being a nation among the other nations of the world.

I need hardly say that Herzl's vision of a peaceful Israel enriching the other nations of the world has not materialised. But Herzl was right in one assumption – that the emergent Jewish state would be of great interest to other nations of the world and would affect the way in which Jews in the Diaspora were perceived. The state of Israel is subject to intense international media scrutiny. Its leaders have become household names in a way that few other national leaders have done. It is difficult to gauge the long-term effects of this. Certainly the predominant media image of Israel has changed over time. In the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War Israel was represented as the courageous David who took on and defeated mighty Goliath. In more recent years, especially after

⁷ Hans Kosmala in Hedenquist, *The Church and the Jewish People*, p. 93.

⁸ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Modern Judaism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 209.

⁹ From 'The Jewish State' as found in Arthur Hertzberg (ed.), *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Athenaeum, 1959), pp. 225-6.

the Intifada, Israel has appeared more as a repressor of a poor minority. In effect, the media seizes on the headlines of the day and creates a broader picture to fit the headline, with the result that more longstanding issues are ignored. The overriding impression is that Israel is a chronic trouble-spot – and that is not good news for Jews either in Israel or elsewhere.

Though Herzl's political concept of Zionism predominated among Zionists, it was not the only significant approach to these issues. We can also assess the impact of the alternative vision of Ahad Ha-am, who thought that Herzl was putting the cart before the horse in prioritising a political state.¹⁰ He believed the real problem was not anti-Semitism, but rather Judaism which was being fragmented and dissipated by the processes of assimilation which seemed to be inexorably taking their course with the disappearance of ghetto life. He felt the correct priority should be a renaissance in Jewish culture which could be promoted by a significant Jewish presence and corporate society in Palestine.

Ha-am was much more sensitive than many other Zionists about the Arabs in Palestine and correspondingly much more cautious about a Jewish political state.¹¹ He put his concept this way: Judaism 'needs not an independent state, but only the creation in its native land of con-

ditions favourable to its development: a good-sized settlement of Jews working without hindrance in every branch of culture, from agriculture and handicrafts to science and literature. This Jewish settlement, which will be a gradual growth, will become in course of time the centre of the nation, where-in its spirit will find pure expression and develop in all its aspects up to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable. Then from the centre the spirit of Judaism will go forth to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, and will breathe new life into them and preserve their unity.'¹² You will note that Ha-am was no traditionalist looking for a return of rabbinic Judaism. On the contrary he believed Jews needed to grapple with the challenges of modern thought. They needed a corporate sanctuary from which they could revitalize Judaism, not only for themselves, but for Jews living in the Diaspora.¹³

However, despite admirable insight in certain areas, not least in foreseeing the Arab problem, Ha-am's aspirations have proved to be illusory. Creating a united Jewish culture has proved impossible in Israel.

¹² A. Ha-Am, *Nationalism and the Jewish Ethic* (Schocken Books, 1962), pp. 78-79.

¹³ Ha-Am's ideas of the land of Israel as a centre for Jewish revival were taken up by the Reconstructionist Judaism associated with Mordecai Kaplan. This added a religious dimension to the cultural renaissance of Judaism, but the religion advocated by Kaplan was a humanitarian variety, where God represented the highest possible fulfilment of human beings – Cohn-Sherbok, *Modern Judaism*, pp.130-154.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *The Controversy of Zion* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996), pp. 131-2.

¹¹ Wheatcroft, *The Controversy*, pp. 132-3.

If anything, to have Jews of differing backgrounds and beliefs in such a small area, has accentuated the divisions between them, not least because it has added the possibility of political differences to existing cultural and religious differences. Recently, it has become clear that Diaspora Jews, especially those in the USA, have increasingly distanced themselves from Jews in Israel. Not only has the Zionist ideal lost something of its appeal, but American Jews have developed their own cultural patterns distinct from those in the state of Israel.¹⁴ Where a cultural rather than a religious basis for Judaism was selected, such a development was inevitable.¹⁵ Finding a basis for union among Jews today is no easy thing. Perhaps Herzl showed more realism than Ha-am in selecting a minimal criterion for Jewish identity – the suffering of anti-Semitism or at least the fear of such suffering. Sadly but ironically, a century or so after Herzl it is this, rather than a positive criterion, which most promotes a Jewish identity.

After half a century we might have expected the emergence of the state of Israel to have had an impact on the religious development of Judaism. So far, however, such impact has been negligible. Perhaps that may change in the new century, as Israel will have to reassess its purpose as a nation at some point. At

the same time the state of Israel has not yet proved the soil on which distinctively Messianic Judaism can flourish. Ironically, the most important work of that movement at the present time, as we shall see, may be outside of Israel.

I have emphasized Zionism because, as Jacob Neusner has pointed out, it has been the most successful of all the competing Judaisms within the twentieth century¹⁶; from a vague dream, a Jewish state has become a reality. But there is a deeper reason. The state of Israel now plays a vital part in Jewish identity, whether we are talking of religious or non-religious Jews, whether or not the Jews have any wish to reside in Israel. This is both remarkable and difficult to explain. In a very perceptive treatment of this phenomenon, Harold Kushner, a Reconstructionist Rabbi from the USA, describes the Jewish attachment to Israel as 'emotional, not nostalgic or theological'. Since it is emotional, he claims it is not entirely explicable in rational terms. But among the reasons he does present is this – 'Israel symbolizes for us that we are a people, not only a belief system.'¹⁷ If Israel was simply a theological system called Judaism, it would not need a home. But a people, he argues, have to belong somewhere in this world. I think Kushner has made a vital observation. If the term 'Jews' is to mean anything, there must be a

¹⁴ Wheatcroft, *The Controversy*, pp. 330-45.

¹⁵ Cf. the perceptive remarks of Abraham J. Heschel on the impossibility of a Jewish identity without religion in his *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), pp. 44-5.

¹⁶ Neusner, *Judaism*, p. 5.

¹⁷ As cited in Helen Fry (ed.), *Christian-Jewish Dialogue: A Reader* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), pp. 106-7.

Jewish community. At present that community derives its identity in large measure through an emotional attachment to Israel. At the same time, it seems to me proper to point out that this has not always been a leading mark of Jewish identity. It is also in place to ask whether this is the best mark of Jewish communal identity.

The Jewish attachment to Israel places various responsibilities on Christians. Jews want to know what Christians think of the state of Israel. Criticism of particular governments or Israeli policies are acceptable. After all, Jews do this all the time themselves! But let any church question the right of Israel to exist and they have lost credibility in Jewish eyes.¹⁸ They are dismissed as anti-Semites. An interesting illustration of this concerns recognition of the state of Israel by the Vatican. For a long time after the Second Vatican Council, despite the noticeably warmer climate among Catholics, Jews remained suspicious because the Vatican would not recognize the Jewish state. That, however, has changed since December 1993 when official recognition was eventually given. Relations between Catholics and Jews have since then reached an unprecedentedly good level.¹⁹

Ironically, as the state of Israel secures diplomatic recognition (and this process has come a long way in the last 10 years), the Jewish people will have to change their emphasis.

No longer will their attachment to Israel reflect their desire to have security among the nations of the earth and to express their Jewishness. They will have to address more seriously the question – what sort of a nation are they to be?

It is here that the churches have a duty to address the Jewish people. If the Jews are the elect of God as a people and that election has not been rescinded, they cannot therefore become like any other nation on earth. This is a point for the churches to make now. Indeed, up to this point Christian interest in Israel has been too narrowly focused. Some church statements, notably those associated with the World Council of Churches, have had a lot to say about balancing the rights of Jews and Palestinians. Others have concentrated on the land as part of God's covenant gift to the Jewish people. Still others have wondered what place a restored Israel has in God's plans for the church and the world in general. No doubt, these all have their place, but this vital question is often overlooked – what sort of Jewish state do we have in mind?

Messianic Jews

A very precise answer has recently been given to the question of Jewishness by Messianic Jews, who hold that it is possible to believe in Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah and at the same time maintain a Jewish identity. They see themselves as fulfilled Jews who have no need to identify with a Gentile church. In a recent study the Jewish Rabbi, Dan Cohn-

¹⁸ Fry, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, pp. 108-9.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Wigoder in Fry, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, pp. 126-8.

Sherbok, has estimated that worldwide there are as many as 250,000 Messianic Jews.²⁰

Messianic Judaism emerged as a distinct movement, mainly in the USA, in the aftermath of the counter-culture movements of the 1960s and the Six Day War of 1967.²¹ This war had a dramatic impact in aligning Jews of the Diaspora with the state of Israel, because it convinced many of them that the anti-Semitic forces which had unleashed the Nazi Holocaust were not confined to Europe. If Jewish life and culture were regularly under threat, then a determined effort had to be made to preserve them.

This American movement may not have been aware of antecedents toward the end of the nineteenth century, when political circumstances had also exposed the precarious situation of the Jewish people in the Diaspora. Joseph Rabinowitz, a rabbi from Kishinev, was the most influential of a number of Jewish Christians who pioneered a form of distinctly Jewish Christianity with few, if any, links to Gentile denominations.²² Rabinowitz called his group the Israelites of the New Covenant. They never became a formal church because legal restrictions prevented Rabinowitz from establishing such an association. Within these limits Rabinowitz worked so

effectively in eastern Europe that it could be said he had brought Jesus from the periphery into the centre of Jewish life.²³ Surely that was no mean achievement! More recently he has been termed the Herzl of Jewish Christianity.

Rabinowitz was convinced that the churches of his time did not give sufficient weight to distinctive Jewish identity or, more importantly, to the hope of Israel's salvation as set out in Romans 11. It was true that in his time Jews who converted to Christianity were expected to be baptized into a denomination and take up membership in that denomination. In the process they lost their Jewish identity – in both religious and political terms. Such a situation had been more or less in place from the end of the fourth century when the last Jewish churches died out. Thereafter, the retention by any part of the church of Jewish elements was considered as a lapse into the error of judaizing. It was, therefore, a bold move by Rabinowitz to try to re-establish a style of Jewish worship which honoured Jesus as Messiah. The move was made at a time when high nationalistic aspirations did encourage emphasis on the cultural setting in which religious belief and practice were observed. That is not to overlook inherent pitfalls. Nationalistic trends might take more prominence than was justified by a gospel which shows no partiality

²⁰ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 1. This figure represents only Messianic Jews; it is not a total for the number of Christians of Jewish origin.

²¹ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, pp. 57-

65.²² Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, pp. 15-26.

²³ By J.F.A. de le Roi as cited by Kai Kjaer-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1995), p. 231. There is an excellent contemporary study of Rabinowitz in this book.

among nations. Significantly, Rabinowitz developed his ideas at the time when the seeds of Zionism were being sown. The future of the Jewish people – tossed between the Scylla of anti-Semitism and the Charybdis of assimilation – was a matter of urgent concern. Rabinowitz gave his own solution to this problem which was very different from that proposed by Zionism, but it is not surprising that he faced criticism on the grounds of inappropriate nationalism as well as the more traditional one of re-asserting obsolete Jewish ceremonies.²⁴

Both the movement associated with Rabinowitz and more recent Messianic Judaism were creatures of their time and a response to deep-rooted problems of both individual and group identity which were answered in different ways by other sections of the Jewish community. We cannot, then, confine ourselves to theological categories in our assessment of them.

Messianic Jews have not found it easy to establish a Jewish identity. They are not recognized by leading Jewish authorities.²⁵ Currently they are the only Jews who do not have automatic right of citizenship in Israel because they are deemed to have espoused ‘another religion’ by their profession of Jesus as Messiah.²⁶ At the same time they are not always welcomed by the main-

stream of the Christian church. This is not primarily from traditional suspicions of judaising, but because, in a pluralistic climate, they are an embarrassment to those churches which wish friendly relations with Jewish religious leaders.²⁷

Many Messianic groups at least began life with a distinctly evangelistic agenda. They wanted to reach fellow-Jews with the same gospel as had changed their own lives. They thought they could do this by following the principles set out by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:20 – ‘To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.’ This would seem eminently appropriate. Looking back at Joseph Rabinowitz, we can say that even his critics within the Christian church recognized that he fulfilled an invaluable evangelistic role among fellow-Jews by preaching to them in their familiar Yiddish tongue and in a context very much akin to the worship of the synagogue.²⁸

But today ‘becoming a Jew’ is much less clear than it was in Paul’s day. Such is the variation in Jewish belief and practice that it is not straightforward for Messianic Jews to identify with the mainstream of Jewish culture, especially in a religious sense. After all, it was the religious implications of being a Jew –

²⁴ de le Roi as cited by Kjaer-Hansen, *Rabinowitz*, p. 114.

²⁵ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, pp. 79-81, 182-90.

²⁶ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, pp. 191-202.

²⁷ Walter Riggans in Kai Kjaer-Hansen (ed.), *Jewish Identity and Faith in Jesus* (Jerusalem: Caspari Center, 1996), pp. 153-4.

²⁸ Kjaer-Hansen, *Rabinowitz*, p. 142.

being under the law – that Paul intended. Yet, the more Messianic Jews in the state of Israel identify with Jewish tradition and religion, the more they are held in suspicion.²⁹ Besides, Israel contains many secular Jews of a tolerant disposition with whom Messianic Jews would wish cordial dealings. It is no surprise that distinctively Messianic Jews are not the predominant strain among Christian Jews within Israel today. Perhaps their ministry can be more fruitful in the Diaspora where they may help to counteract assimilationist pressures.

It is clear, however, that the theologians of Messianic Judaism have moved beyond a purely evangelistic orientation. This is due in part to the pragmatic recognition that their credibility will suffer if other Jews see their only interest in Jewish practices is to win others to their allegiance to Jesus. But a more important factor has been the recognition that the New Testament speaks of a future for Israel – ‘the gifts and call of God are irrevocable’.³⁰ Moreover, Messianic Jews have been strongly influenced by Dispensationalist readings of biblical prophecy which give a special place to the state of Israel, or to the Jewish people more generally, in God’s unfolding plan for the future.³¹ The clear implication from this is that aspects of Jewish life are worth preserving for their own sake or rather for the sake of this future

plan of God which needs a recognisably Jewish nation for its fulfilment. It may not be easy to identify which aspects of Jewish life are crucial, especially when the characteristics of Judaism are so confused today. It is certainly not a simple matter of recreating the situation of Acts 21:20, where we read in the days when the Temple still stood that genuine Jewish believers were zealous for the law. Judaism has since then become much more complex. Today no agreement has emerged among Messianic Jews as to what is meant by ‘living Jewishly’.³² On a wider canvas, this concern among Messianic Jews surely mirrors fears among Jews in Europe and the USA about the erosion of distinctive Jewish life under the insidious influence of a relativistic culture where corporate values have little importance and the individual is encouraged to pick and choose whatever he wants of traditional or not so traditional values.

In accordance with their Dispensationalist views, or simply as a consequence of believing that every aspect of God’s covenant with Abraham is still in force, Messianic Jews are inclined to see the state of Israel as a sign of God’s faithfulness to the Jewish people, even though the return to the promised land has occurred in unbelief and authorities in Israel remain hostile to the distinctive claims of Messianic Judaism.³³ In

²⁹ Menahem Benhayim in Kjaer-Hansen, *Rabinowitz*, p. 54.

³⁰ Rom. 11:29.

³¹ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, pp. 171-2.

³² Ruth Rosen in Kjaer-Hansen, *Jewish Identity*, p. 69.

³³ Bodil F. Skjott in Kjaer-Hansen, *Jewish Identity*, pp. 98-104.

this respect they come near to the position of many Christian Zionists, though they are less likely to adopt uncritical attitudes to Israel's policies.³⁴ Both groups would do well to show more agnosticism on the state of Israel as an outworking of biblical prophecy because of the secularist, Zionist ideology of modern Israel. Messianic Jews are certainly aware of the nature of the Jewish state, but tend to underplay it in their desire to identify as much as possible with Jewish aspirations. While God does have the power to overrule the intents of unbelievers – Jew or Gentile – for his own purposes, we cannot say whether that will happen with this assertion of Jewish national identity. The project of an Israeli state may still end in disaster. In short, at this point Messianic Judaism is in danger of identification with a political nationalism.³⁵ Simple acceptance of the state of Israel may frustrate a prophetic voice warning of the implications of building a state, even a Jewish state, without the blessing of God.

Nationalism is not confined to the realm of politics. It may appear in the very structures of religious life. In this connection, Messianic Jews must seriously consider a warning issued by Jakob Jocz some time before their movement emerged. Jocz observed that 'racial pride is a failing common to man' and where a national cause and a religious cause are so deeply

intertwined as in Judaism, the danger is exacerbated. He claimed that in the main, the Jewish people had not avoided that danger because the Rabbis, consciously or otherwise, framed the Jewish religion as a means of preserving Jewish identity. It is not that Jocz had a jaundiced view of the Rabbis. On the contrary, he pointed out that they laboured under abnormal political conditions. In a normal situation where the Jews enjoyed political sovereignty, then Jews would have lived for their religion; but in straightened political circumstances the Jewish religion had to subserve the Jewish national existence.³⁶

Messianic Jews must be realistic about the danger of compromising the gospel with nationalistic associations, not least as they seek to establish their own Jewish credentials. It is unfortunate, for example, that in their desire to be recognized as Jews under the state of Israel's Law of Return, they have revised the rabbinic criteria for Jewish identity and offered a model of their own which still emphasizes a racial connection.³⁷ At the same time this will not make it easy for them to maintain the testimony of the New Testament – that being a Jew in God's eyes is not a matter of race but of spiritual rebirth. At the very least, Messianic Jews might be found fighting the wrong battles.

Even at the very outset of the

³⁴ Kjaer-Hansen, *Jewish Identity*, pp. 100-1.

³⁵ For some interesting and nuanced comments on the competing claims of Christian and Zionist loyalties see Baruch Maoz, 'The Christian Embassy in Jerusalem', *Mishkan* 12 (1990), p. 4.

³⁶ Jakob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (London: SPCK, 1949), pp. 305-6.

³⁷ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, pp. 200-2 gives details. cf. Rom. 2:26-9 for a different approach to being a Jew.

Messianic movement, as it consciously took a different path from the Hebrew Christians, it affirmed Jewish separateness as part of its Jewish identity.³⁸ The Messianic pioneers pointed out that where Hebrew Christians played a full part in Gentile churches and retained only an informal association with other Jewish believers, inevitably their children and grandchildren were divorced from their Jewish roots. As they felt entirely at home in Gentile churches, they thus lost interest in any impact they might make on the Jewish community. Moreover, they were failing to redress the forces of assimilation.

The choice of a distinctively Jewish path may have been made by Messianic Jews for the best of reasons. But there are dangers if the criterion of Jewish separateness becomes too prominent. It may overshadow, for example, the unity that Jewish and Gentile believers have in Christ. There may even be a straight choice between being distinctly Jewish and following Christ, especially if being Jewish takes on nationalistic overtones. Some of these concerns even arise in the liturgies used by Messianic Jews. I worry, for example, when I read that some Messianic believers are happy to use the Havdalah prayer – ‘Blessed are you O Lord our God, king of the universe, who makes a distinction between the holy and the secular, light and darkness, Israel and the nations, the seventh day and the six days of labour. Blessed are you O

Lord, who makes a distinction between the holy and the secular.’³⁹ Can Christians now accept that the distinction between Israel and the nations is analogous to that between the holy and the secular?⁴⁰ Again, I worry that Messianic believers retain a separatist rationale for distinctive Jewish festivals like Sukkot, where part of the liturgy declares ‘Blessed are you O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has set us apart by thy commandments and commanded us to dwell in the sukkah’.⁴¹ We can ask – do Messianic Jews celebrate this festival to maintain Jewish distinctiveness or to honour Christ? Perhaps they may reply that this is a false dichotomy. Perhaps too these problems may be simply remedied through a more radical change to the traditional Jewish liturgies. After all, Messianic Judaism is comparatively young as a movement and is still seeking the best forms in which to fulfil its goals.⁴² But the further away any changes take them from Orthodox Judaism, the more difficult it will be to press their claims to be recognized as part of the Jewish community.

In fact, Messianic Jews may well find insuperable obstacles to recognition by the mainstream of the Jewish community. They may be

³⁹ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, p. 100. Havdalah is the service which takes place at the end of the Sabbath.

⁴⁰ For the importance of this idea in Judaism see Seth Kunin’s essay ‘Sacred Place’ in Seth Kunin (ed.), *Themes and Issues in Judaism* (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 22-55.

⁴¹ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, p. 110.

⁴² cf. the comments of the Messianic Jew, D. Juster, as quoted by Kjaer-Hansen, *Rabinowitz*, p. 234.

³⁸ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, p. 56.

marginalized like Jewish believers in the past. It does not follow, however, that there is no advantage to be gained from a wish to cling to a Jewish identity.⁴³ With his profession of Jesus as Lord, the apostle Paul was ostracised from those Jewish circles where he had previously been respected. We know too that at times he became suspect even among Christian Jews. But in his new position he did not forget his kinsmen after the flesh. He tells us that he has 'great sorrow and unceasing anguish' in his heart as he contemplates the majority of unbelieving Jews.⁴⁴ He prays regularly for their salvation.⁴⁵ He even gives an emphasis to his own ministry among the Gentiles which is designed to stir unbelieving Jews to envy.⁴⁶ He limits his own freedom under the gospel to get alongside his fellow-countrymen and so win some of them for Christ.⁴⁷ The apostle is surely a model that identity problems can be handled constructively.

God's Election of Israel

So far I have concentrated on discontinuities in the Jewish situation for which the churches have had comparatively little responsibility. We can only look stupid if we choose to ignore either the place of Israel in modern Jewish thought or the existence of Messianic Judaism.

I want now to turn to one change

for which the initiative has been on the Christian side. In the post-World War II period, public statements from the Christian church have consistently emphasized those parts of Romans 11 which speak of the continuity of God's dealings with ethnic Israel. If there is a key text for this approach, it is Romans 11:29: 'God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.' It has become fashionable to decry 'supersessionism' or 'replacement theology' as the bogey of the church in past centuries.⁴⁸ No doubt there are differences when it comes to defining exactly what is entailed in 'supersessionism', but Bruce Marshall provides a useful and precise definition when he says it entails 'the belief that the church has taken the place of the Jews as the elect people of God'.⁴⁹ Supersessionism will entail one of two different consequences – either the Jews have become no different from any other nation in the plans of God, or they have become subject to a special and lasting judgement because of their unbelief. Both consequences are denied, the latter rather more strongly than the former.

Renewed emphasis on Romans 11, however, tends to be selective. In fact, it highlights the positive elements in the picture of the Jews, stresses the future hope Paul holds out, ascribes this to all Jews of all generations and tends to place this at

⁴³ See the fascinating essay by Ruth Rosen in Kjaer-Hansen, *Jewish Identity*, pp. 63-70.

⁴⁴ Acts 21:20-4; 2 Pet. 3:16; Rom. 9:2.

⁴⁵ Rom. 10:1.

⁴⁶ Rom. 11:13-14.

⁴⁷ 1 Cor. 9:19-20.

⁴⁸ Gabriel Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 148-53 distinguishes five types of 'supersessionism'.

⁴⁹ Bruce Marshall in Colin Gunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 82.

the end of the age. It ignores Paul's insistence that the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, are found guilty and inexcusable before God. Also, the new emphasis fails to do justice to Paul's anguish about Jewish unbelief and the urgency of his prayers and activity for the salvation of Jews. Take Bruce Marshall's comments: 'Christians may engage in a non-proselytising conversation with Jews; since we do not have to assume that we are talking to the damned, we do not have to feel responsible for converting and thus saving them.'⁵⁰ What a contrast to Paul who wished himself to be damned for the sake of his kinsmen!

The reason for the different attitudes is a different evaluation of Jewish unbelief. As I understand Paul, Jewish unbelief in his own time (or at any other time) involved exclusion from covenant privileges. Hence the language of defeat or loss (*hthma* – v 12) and even more strongly of casting off (*apobolh* – v15.)⁵¹ This was accompanied by a hardening of their hearts, a further judicial act from God. This exclusion, Paul contends, does not mean that God has gone back on his word. In past times and in Paul's own day there was an elect remnant who believed God's message of righteousness and were saved. No doubt there is a sense in which the whole Jewish people are elect of God, but

that is election to privilege.⁵² It does not entail that every single Jew makes proper use of these privileges. For in the elect nation not everyone was chosen for spiritual favour – 'not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children.'⁵³ Some such distinction as that between election to privilege and election to favour is imperative. Otherwise, we will end up with a situation where God shows partiality to the Jewish people. No matter what unbelief they demonstrate, they will all ultimately be saved in the end. It is not clear, however, whether Gentile unbelief will be written off quite so generously. Indeed, a major purpose in Paul's excursus in Romans 9-11 is to guard against wrong conclusions and complacency among Gentile Christians. 'In unbelief there is no respect of persons.'⁵⁴ Paul foresaw this danger might be ignored in Gentile congregations. While this remains relevant today, modern theological trends have downplayed the effects of Jewish unbelief. But the dangers of unbelief remain the same, whether it is among Jews or Gentiles who have possession of the word of the living God. That surely is a major continuity for Christian relationships with the Jewish people.

Bruce Marshall's comments mentioned above are a clear indication

⁵⁰ Gunton, *The Cambridge Companion*, p. 89.

⁵¹ For *hthma* see Richard Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy* (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr, 1994), p. 114. The meaning of *apobolh* is secured by contrast with *proshqiv*.

⁵² The privileges are spelt out in Rom. 9:4-5. To this should be added the fact that they were entrusted with the Scriptures, the oracles of God – Rom. 3:2.

⁵³ Rom. 9:6-7.

⁵⁴ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1967), vol 2 p. 87.

that the new emphasis on the special position of the Jews from Romans 11 is a disincentive to evangelism or mission among the Jews. Even if it is agreed that the Jews need to be saved as Romans 11:26 suggests, the fact that this salvation will be applied to all Jews of every age at the end of time removes the urgency of any evangelistic approach at the present time.⁵⁵ Mission may be replaced by a new agenda – that of encouraging the preservation of the Jewish race, as this is God’s will and this should bring blessing to the whole world in the future. In practical terms this means not only combating anti-Semitism but encouraging Jews to carry out both the written and the oral Law, since these are assumed to be the vital badge of Jewish identity. This agenda will suit the fears of those religious Jews who worry about the process of assimilation or of relativism; but it will not commend itself to the large number of secular Jews in Israel, the USA or wherever. I doubt if this is the best contribution Christians can make to the debates on Jewish identity. Does it, for example, square with the biblical definition of a Jew as set out in Romans 2:28-29?

Recent trends in many churches, therefore, have found ideological ways to dismiss the concept of a Jewish mission. For most on the Jewish side this will come as good news. For a long time Jews have

objected to Christian missions among them, and this remains the main reason for Jewish suspicion of evangelicals.⁵⁶ However, the ground of objection may have shifted. Traditionally, Jews criticized Christian missions for being aggressive and coercive, as well as tainted with bribery especially when philanthropy toward poorer Jews was involved. In an interesting twist, Rabbi Leo Baeck, who clearly recognized in principle the duty of all religions, including Christianity, to engage in mission, affirmed that often in the past Christian mission had become the tool of secular power.⁵⁷ For Jews like Baeck, who are more tolerant than the norm, a situation where Christianity has lost political power in the West should make Christian mission more acceptable. Today, however, objections to Christian mission have a different focus. They centre on the attempt to obliterate Judaism itself, often combined with reproaches about the Christian contribution to the Holocaust. Susannah Heschel, for example, complains that Christian mission ‘is especially disturbing after the Holocaust, because it represents its continuation, a spiritual genocide. Can anyone believe it is to the greater glory of God that there should be no more Jews left in this world? After the Holocaust, to pursue a Jew to convert to Christianity is to murder a soul. What

⁵⁵ Most Jews are dissatisfied with any Christian scheme which suggests they will accept Jesus at the end of the age, because this implies the inadequacy of their Judaism and the superiority of Christianity, cf. Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, p. 67.

⁵⁶ Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 34-6.

⁵⁷ Leo Baeck in Hedenquist, *The Church and the Jewish People*, pp. 108-9.

an easy solution: let all the Jews become Christian – after all, there would be no more anti-Semitism if there would be no more Jews.’ But in case the rhetoric about the Holocaust should obscure the main point, Heschel also comments, ‘What a remarkable blindness is displayed by those churches that do not see the holiness of Judaism, the preciousness of being a Jew.’⁵⁸

Several observations may be made about these new criticisms. They assume that being a Jew is to take a religious stance. Yet, for many Jews today, not least in Heschel’s own USA, being Jewish is more of a cultural than a religious identity.⁵⁹ Moreover, the potential destruction of a distinctive Jewish way of life has also been ascribed in the west to a totally different cause – the processes of assimilation. It seems that Christian missions are being scapegoated to explain trends in the Jewish world which have very different causes. Ironically, these Jews would not be sympathetic to Messianic Jews despite the latter’s desire to retain a distinct Jewish identity and culture.

Most importantly, the new criticisms imply the intrusion of some religious relativism into thinking on the place of Judaism alongside the other large monotheistic religions, Christianity and Islam. Traditionally, Judaism regarded both these systems as errors, whatever links they

may have had with the Hebrew prophetic tradition. But a change occurred with the work of Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, who accepted that Christianity had brought great benefits to the Gentile world, but, at the same time, had little relevance for the Jewish world.⁶⁰ In effect, this foreshadowed the dual covenant, whereby God deals with the Jews in a different way from the rest of humanity. It is fine for the church to engage in missionary activity toward the other Gentiles, but as regards the Jews, their task is to recognize the unique status of the Jewish people and to encourage them in that calling. This idea has made a great impact among Christians.⁶¹ Even Billy Graham has made it a touchstone of his policy, and as a result he has been honoured by Jewish groups.⁶²

But there are problems both at a logical and at a biblical level. At a logical level it is difficult to argue both that no religious system can have a monopoly of the truth and at the same time that God has special dealings with the Jews. Yet, this is the position of Abraham Heschel who, for all his insistence on the distinctive Jewish tradition says, ‘Human faith is never final, never an arrival, but rather an endless pilgrimage, a being

⁶⁰ Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 52-3. For some earlier positions within the Jewish tradition along these lines see Heschel in Fry, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, pp. 248-9.

⁶¹ Some would, however, demur at the fact that this makes Jesus irrelevant – Marshall in Gunton, *The Cambridge Companion*, pp. 89-90. Marshall’s position is to suggest that Jesus applies his salvation to all Jews at the end of the age.

⁶² David Rausch in Fry, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, pp. 83-4.

⁵⁸ Susannah Heschel in Fry, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, p. 87. She is the daughter of Abraham Heschel and here reflects one of her father’s emphases.

⁵⁹ Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism*, pp. 1-5.

on the way. We have no answers to all problems. Even some of our sacred answers are both emphatic and qualified, final and tentative; final within our position in history, tentative because we can speak only in the tentative language of man.⁶³ On what authority, then, can Heschel claim value in the Hebrew Scriptures he cherishes or in the wider aspects of the Jewish tradition? It would be better to argue that God has for some reason treated the Jews differently from the rest of mankind. If Judaism is an acceptable way to God for Jews, while Jesus Christ is acceptable only for Gentiles, we have a God who shows partiality. The conditions on which a Jew obtains God's blessing are different from those of a Gentile. I labour this point because Christian writers who wish to discredit mission to the Jews are not always clear as to whether they accept a full-blown relativist position or would want to travel the more difficult road of advocating that somehow the Jews are different from the rest of mankind in God's dealings with them.

Jewish/Christian Dialogue

If Jewish mission has become taboo in some Christian circles, dialogue is definitely the order of the day. Serious Jewish-Christian dialogue is a relatively recent and exciting development. Here I can only present some edited highlights, concentrating on a few key players. First, I will mention the Roman Catholic

Church, where dialogue takes on particular significance for the Jews because relationships between Jews and Roman Catholics have in the past been particularly fraught and because the Roman Catholic Church with its hierarchical structures can make the sort of authoritative public declarations denied to other denominations.⁶⁴

Roman Catholic reappraisal of its relationship with the Jews proceeded slowly and tentatively at first, but has gathered increasing momentum in recent years. These developments have been all the more significant because they did not occur overnight. They have been the fruit of an ongoing dialogue which has every likelihood of continuing.

It was Vatican II which gave the first public signs of Catholic reappraisal. The changes were modest but significant. They occurred amid a Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*). The statement about the Jewish people formed the major part, but even then amounted to only 15 Latin sentences. The main emphasis was a frank recognition of the church's debt to God's covenant people of the Old Testament. There was no suggestion, however, that Judaism is on a par with Christianity. Indeed, there was no attempt to hide either the reality of early Jewish opposition to the gospel or the centrality of Christ's cross as the place from

⁶³ Heschel in Fry, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, p. 245.

⁶⁴ Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 75-101.

which 'every grace flows.'⁶⁵ In many respects, therefore, *Nostra Aetate* was a traditional document with an unusually positive glance at the church's Jewish legacy. At the same time this document looked forward both to dialogue and to joint biblical study with Jews – enterprises which had scarcely begun at that time. (Significantly, *Nostra Aetate* omitted any mention of a mission to Jews.)⁶⁶

Today, Vatican II would seem to protagonists of Jewish-Catholic dialogue as unduly representative of an older era and at best a starting point for better things. The most recent official statement from the Vatican indicates how the situation has changed over the last 35 years.⁶⁷ 'We wish,' it says, 'to turn awareness of past sins into a firm resolve to build a new future in which there will be no more anti-Judaism among Christians or anti-Christian sentiment among Jews, but rather a shared mutual respect, as befits those who adore the one Creator and Lord, and have a common father in faith, Abraham.' This statement surely gives value to Judaism. Ethnic Jews are automatically being included with the faithful Abraham – despite what Scripture teaches of the need of personal faith. This impression is corroborated in the final section of this document which declares that Christians are to see Jews as 'dearly beloved broth-

ers'. In a sense they are 'elder brothers' as far as Christians are concerned – though this expression is hardly unambiguous. Thus Vatican circles are increasingly favourable towards the idea that God has a different way of dealing with the Jews. This means there can be no question of the church seeking to win them to the allegiance of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is impossible, however, to overlook the Jewish 'No' to the claims of Jesus, but now Roman Catholics are keen to exculpate as many Jews as possible from this. The original denial may well have been based either on a Jewish misunderstanding or on a distortion by some of Jesus' early followers. This in turn presupposes a readiness by the Catholic Church, or at least those parties within it who have engaged in dialogue with the Jews, to accept the idea that the gospels have been coloured by internal Jewish squabbles over the legacy of Jesus. Such an approach first appeared in an official Vatican document in 1985.⁶⁸ This would enable the Roman Catholic Church to reject from the gospels those parts which threatened the progress of the present Jewish dialogue. Of course, this sort of procedure is familiar in liberal Protestant circles, but it is relatively new to the Catholic Church. It remains to be seen what effect this foray into critical scholarship will have on other areas of Catholic

⁶⁵ Wigoder usefully includes the relevant section – *Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 143-4.

⁶⁶ Abraham Heschel claimed credit for this – in Fry, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, p. 405.

⁶⁷ Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews – 'We Remember – a Reflection on the Shoah' (dated 16 April 1998).

⁶⁸ 'Notes on the Correct Way to present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church', June 1985 reproduced in Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 149-59. See especially section 21A.

piety. I cannot find any reference to such critical biblical scholarship in *The Catholic Catechism*. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church will surely find it impossible to allow critical scholarship in some areas and not in others. Perhaps it is significant that the recent 1998 document is more cautious and identifies Christian misinterpretations of gospel teaching about the Jews as the evil to be corrected.

On the Protestant side, perhaps the work of the World Council of Churches has roused the greatest interest in the Jewish community, though there is recognition of the limits of its authority among those churches represented by it.⁶⁹ Over the years its statements on the Jews have undergone a significant transformation parallel to those emanating from the Vatican. This is not surprising given that both the Vatican and the WCC seem to have embraced as a priority mutual respect and co-operation between the world's major religious traditions. Listen to these words from the Preamble of an official document from 1988: 'The search for community in a pluralistic world involves a positive acceptance of the existence and value of distinct historical communities of faith relating to one another on the basis of mutual trust and respect for the integrity of each other's identities. Given the diversity of living faiths, their adherents should be free to "define themselves", as well as to witness to their

own gifts, in respectful dialogue with others.'⁷⁰ You will notice the priority given to a political, humanitarian agenda. You will notice that the distinctly biblical word 'faith' is readily used of non-Christian religious traditions. Exactly the same can be paralleled in current statements from the Vatican.⁷¹

It may come as a surprise that at its first meeting in 1948 the World Council of Churches issued a 'Report on the Christian Approach to the Jews' which stressed the responsibility of Jewish mission. In its first section, this report cited the words of the Great Commission and stated 'the fulfilment of this commission requires that we include the Jewish people in our evangelistic task'.⁷² Later the Report blamed the churches for neglecting Jewish mission and leaving this to independent agencies. By contrast, it advocated ministry to the Jews as part of normal parish work; it seems to have seen this as the best way of fully integrating Jewish converts into Christian fellowship. At the same time the WCC was not insensitive to the legacy of anti-Semitism. It recognized failures to love Jewish neighbours, even to seek basic social justice for those neighbours. The churches were to denounce all forms of anti-Semitism 'as absolutely irreconcilable with the

⁷⁰ 'The Churches and the Jewish People: Towards a New Understanding' reproduced in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13 (1989), pp. 152-4.

⁷¹ cf. *The Catholic Catechism*, sections 839 and 841.

⁷² 'Report on the Christian Approach to the Jews' conveniently included in Hedenquist, *The Church and the Jewish People*, pp. 201-5.

⁶⁹ Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 31-33.

profession and practice of the Christian faith.’ Realistically the Report declared that only as the churches gave sincere evidence of their desire for human rights to be accorded to the Jews, would it be possible to share the gospel with them. This is a far cry from saying that the experience of the Shoah makes preaching to the Jews an impossibility. Nor is there so much as a thought of recognising the vitality and place of Judaism as an acceptable religion before God. In short, the immediate legacy of the Nazi holocaust, as far as the WCC was concerned, was redoubled zeal for Jewish mission, though they were careful not to advocate this as a special priority. Their repentance consisted in acknowledging that this aspect of Christian mission had been ignored in the churches.⁷³

What a change there has been since then! The WCC no longer speaks with a clear voice on the subject of Christian mission to the Jewish people, though (unlike the Vatican or certain of its own member churches) it has not entirely jettisoned the idea. Take this statement from the 1988 consultation – ‘the churches still struggle with the issue of the continuing role of Jesus and the mission of the church in relation to the Jewish people’. An earlier statement from 1982 outlined the diversity of approaches among its members to mission in general and

to Jewish mission in particular.⁷⁴ The statements from 1982 and 1988 even recognized the existence of Messianic Jews, though they did reflect some uncertainty as to how they fitted into the wider picture. But amid these uncertainties some fixed points do emerge. Most notably, ‘coercive proselytism’ is condemned, though this expression is not clearly defined.⁷⁵ The emphasis has turned to dialogue. The 1982 statement sets out reasons for Jewish-Christian dialogue (which are valuable in their own right), while the 1988 statement places this dialogue within the wider context of the goal of ‘breaking down of barriers between people and the promotion of one human family in justice and peace’. Anything, then, which will bring confrontation between two faith communities or even anything that will cause discomfort to either of them in their relationships is to be avoided. On the contrary, such relationships are to be marked by mutual trust and respect for each other’s identities. ‘Given the diversity of living faiths, their adherents should be free to “define themselves” as well as to witness to their own gifts, in dialogue with others.’ It is no surprise that in these WCC documents a very positive appraisal is made of Judaism. ‘We affirm,’ says the 1988 Statement, ‘that the Jewish people

⁷⁴ Reproduced in Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 159-67.

⁷⁵ The nearest to a definition occurs in section 4.2 of the 1982 document – ‘Proselytism embraces whatever violates the right of the human person, Christian or non-Christian, to be free from external coercion in religious matters.’

⁷³ Because of the insistence on mission, this document did not prove satisfactory to many Jewish people – Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, p. 5.

today are in continuity with biblical Israel and are thankful for the vitality of Jewish faith and thought. We see Jews and Christians, together with all people of living faiths, as God's partners, working in mutual respect and cooperation for justice, peace, and reconciliation.⁷⁶ At the same time, it comes as a surprise that this document wants to insist on the uniqueness of Christ and the truth of the Christian faith.⁷⁷

How can it do so? By a two-covenant theology? This is not quite the language it uses, but it comes near to such an idea when it says 'we see not one covenant displacing another, but two communities of faith, each called into existence by God, and holding to its respective gifts from God, and each accountable to God.'⁷⁸ No doubt, it is unwise to look for complete consistency in public statements from such a diverse body as the WCC. All we can do is to point to tendencies. The prevailing theme seems to be the promotion of peace and harmony between different religious groups in a world that is unalterably pluralistic. (It is virtually assumed that God approves of pluralism or more precisely that he wants different religious groups to maintain their own religious integrity.) Given the past history of bad relationships between Christians and Jews, WCC documents inevitably highlight these on the path to a better and more harmonious world. I doubt, therefore, if there is in the WCC any significant

trace of the view that Christian attitudes to the Jews fall into a special category to be differentiated from Christian attitudes to other religions. The WCC philosophy of establishing the one human family in justice and peace goes well beyond the bounds of the Christian and Jewish communities.

In some quarters the WCC is regarded as excessively cautious in its approach to the Jews. Elsewhere, notably in the USA in recent years, Jewish-Christian dialogue has been espoused with ever more grandiose ambitions. The idea of 'joint witness' has been canvassed. Dialogue has revealed significant areas of agreement and protagonists of dialogue, especially from the Christian side, have been keen to capitalize on these. 'Continued dialogue, grounded in prayer and shared scripture study, can serve to point out that for both faiths the moral imperatives of peace, justice and love are the heart of God's plan for creation. It is time to move beyond dialogue about our differences into discovery of our shared vision.'⁷⁹ And what is that shared vision? The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the USA in 1987 expressed this succinctly when they wrote 'We affirm that Jews and Christians are partners in waiting. Christians see in Christ the redemption not yet fully visible in the world, and Jews await the messianic redemption. Christians and Jews together await the final manifesta-

⁷⁶ Section C (Affirmations) No. 9.

⁷⁷ Section C No. 8.

⁷⁸ Section C No. 8.

⁷⁹ Philip A. Cunningham and Arthur F. Starr (eds.), *Sharing Shalom* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 76.

tion of God's promise of the peaceable kingdom.⁸⁰ In practical terms this is to involve 'a striving to realize the word of the prophets, an attempt to remain sensitive to the dimension of the holy, an effort to encourage the life of the mind, and a ceaseless activity in the cause of justice and peace.'⁸¹ Christians and Jews can engage in these together as well as in the context of their separate religious communities.

To put it mildly, it is a bold move when a Christian denomination can appeal to Jewish messianic hopes as the basis of a common programme, if not a common witness. A traditional and major point of division between the two religious communities has been transformed into a platform of union. How are we to understand this astonishing development? By appreciating some of the dynamics of religious dialogue.⁸² Undoubtedly, the emergence of a dialogue (or rather, a series of dialogues) between several of the churches and representatives of religious Jews is a most encouraging development. It is unprecedented since the first centuries of the Christian church. It is a world removed from the public disputations to which the Jews were subjected from time to time in the medi-

aeval period.

These new dialogues are to be welcomed as an opportunity for Christians and Jews to meet on equal terms as far as political and civil rights are concerned. It is encouraging that some of these dialogues have embraced study of the Scriptures. We should, however, be realistic and note that among all sections of the Jewish religious world there are those who have no time for religious dialogue.⁸³ And even among those who do, we might well ask how far they are motivated by a perfectly understandable concern for their political and social well-being rather than by a desire to understand Christianity better.⁸⁴

Moreover, dialogue does not have unlimited scope.⁸⁵ It is well to recognize difficulties, including the point where dialogue will cease to serve a useful purpose. Dialogue, after all, should not ignore genuine differences.⁸⁶ Indeed, a major purpose of dialogue is to distinguish the genuine differences from the spurious or the superficial. (Of course, considerable common ground may also emerge.) No group of Christians can hope to achieve anything worthwhile if they set aside key Christian beliefs like the messiahship of Jesus solely to gain further co-operation with members

⁸⁰ Affirmation 7 – the whole statement is recorded in Frank E. Eakin Jr, *What Price Prejudice?* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), pp. 134-50. Eakin does acknowledge on p. 119 the unusual boldness of this statement.

⁸¹ Eakin, *What Price Prejudice?* 149.

⁸² cf. the remarks of David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York: Oxford UP, 1989), pp. 20-3 about the religious syncretism which can take place in some types of dialogue.

⁸³ Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, pp. 3-9.

⁸⁴ Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 62-4.

⁸⁵ Behind this lies uncertainty as to how dialogue is to be defined. See the helpful analysis of Harold A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices* (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), pp. 283-301.

⁸⁶ For a constructive approach to theological difference see Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton, *Jewish-Christian Debates* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), pp. 4-11.

of the Jewish religious community. There will often come a point where further agreement will be impossible without hopeless compromise on one side or another.

From my observations of Jewish-Christian dialogue, such compromises have tended to come from the Christian rather than the Jewish side. For example, one writer from the Christian side, Monika Hellwig, has argued that what she calls a 'fundamentalist' approach to Scripture will not work in Christian-Jewish dialogue, because it leads to deadlock over doctrinal differences. Instead, she argues that it is vital to adopt a critical approach to Scripture, where it is seen as a collection of interpretations of what happened. With this outlook dialogue can proceed because 'it allows for a legitimate variety in the approaches to and interpretation of the same reality'.⁸⁷ But is it open to Christians to indulge in creative re-interpretations or excisions from their own Scriptures to suit Jewish sensibilities?

Most Jews, by contrast, are clear that they will accept nothing less than Christian recognition that Judaism is a valid religion in its own right, of equal weight with Christianity. In this case, Christian mission to Jews is inappropriate. Of course, there are exceptions to this trend – those Jews who recognize the right of Christian mission. Dialogue with such people is to be especially cultivated. But from the Christian side, I wish there was as

much consistency in its appraisal of Judaism. Though the majority of Jews today are not exceptionally religious, we should surely acknowledge the apostle Paul's distinction between a religious zeal or sincerity which is informed by truth and one which is not. His complaint against the practices of the majority of Jews of his own day, of which he had once been a supreme example, was their failure to submit to God's way of righteousness.⁸⁸ The Jewish-Christian dialogue will become a sideshow if challenges such as these are not addressed. This is not to assume a Christian triumphalist stance, because Paul's observations about religious Jews can equally be applied to many of the religious traditions which have grown up within the broad spectrum of the Christian church. We can all ask – is our form of piety shutting our ears to what God is actually saying? More traditional Jews and Christians are agreed on the reality and on much of the content of divine revelation. Such common ground is helpful in dialogue. We can also appraise the adequacy of our responses to that revelation.

I have deliberately mentioned some of the extremes in Christian-Jewish dialogue partly because developments of this nature have occurred comparatively recently and partly because they do illustrate the limitations of dialogue. Most dialogue, however, has not overlooked the serious theological differences but has seen a way forward in active

⁸⁷ Monika Hellwig in Fry, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, pp. 170-4.

⁸⁸ Rom. 10:2-3.

co-operation on ethical and social issues.⁸⁹

Dialogue is not the only arena where there has been a tendency, consciously or otherwise, for Christians to approximate to essentially Jewish positions. Writing in the 1940s, Jakob Jocz reminded the church that for all the growing fascination of Jewish writers with Jesus, they tended to treat the Synoptic text with recklessness.⁹⁰ Jewish attitudes to Jesus have undoubtedly changed in a positive way. The days when Jesus would hardly be mentioned except as a heretic or apostate are largely gone. But Jews draw the line at an acceptance of Jesus as Son of God or as their Messiah.⁹¹ Indeed, they have been happy to acknowledge him as a great Jewish teacher or leader who, for various reasons, made his profoundest impact on the Gentile world. In short, Jesus has been made into an important figure within Jewish history – a picture which accords with the Zionist tendency to recreate Jewish history in a secular mould.

We ought, therefore, to be cautious in assessing the impact on Jews of developments in the world of Christian scholarship which have accentuated the Jewishness of Jesus or have delved into the world of Second Temple Judaism. (I do not deny their value in elucidating the background to the New Testament.)

⁸⁹ There is a much more tentative approach to the question of joint witness in Helen Fry's collection – *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, pp. 257-83.

⁹⁰ Jocz, *The Jewish People*, p. 111. Jocz acutely adds that this recklessness has not been confined to Jewish scholars.

⁹¹ Jocz, *The Jewish People*, pp. 112-145.

These developments overlap extensively with the concerns of Jews. Yet, the fundamental difference between Christianity and Judaism is not historical, as though an unnecessary and protracted dispute arose in time past out of misunderstandings which can now be unravelled by critical, historical scholarship. The dispute between the Church and the Synagogue relates to the identity of Jesus of Nazareth and those claims which he made to back up that identity. Essentially these are theological claims not to be resolved by historical research alone.⁹²

Light From the Apostle Paul?

The apostle Paul was at the cutting edge of the rift between Christianity and Judaism. I have already mentioned that he can shed some light on the identity problems faced especially by Messianic Jews at the present time. He also addresses our situation by setting out in his letter to the Romans a strategy of mission for both Jews and Gentiles. It has relevance for our day, because Paul claims to be following God's own strategy. Paul gives the first indication of this at 1:16 where he affirms, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.' We might think this alluded to no more than a temporal priority in the opening up of the gospel. After all, Christ himself came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel and

⁹² Jocz, *The Jewish People*, pp. 320-2.

commissioned his disciples to preach first to Jews before opening the gospel to a Gentile audience. But it is clear that a more important principle is at stake as Paul repeats the order 'the Jew first and then the Gentile' when he comes to talk of God's final judgement at 2:9-10. Evidently with the privileges they possess and the responsibilities these entail, the Jews have a priority in the mind of God when it comes both to bliss and to damnation. In view of this we cannot dismiss Paul's remarks as applicable only to some past age of the church, since we in every age live under the prospect of the same righteous judgement of God.

Paul proceeds in chapters 9-11 to explain the place of the Jews in God's plan. Though disturbed by the belief prevalent among the majority of his fellow-countrymen, he does not allow his heart to rule his head, and is at pains to illustrate that God's word has not failed. He recognizes from a combination of Old Testament Scripture and from more recent revelation that God has been following a careful strategy. The first stage involved the hardening of the majority of Jews while preserving a remnant of true believers among them. This hardening led directly to the opening up of the gospel to the Gentiles. Moreover, the hardening was no arbitrary act on God's part, but a judicial act of retribution because the Jews had failed to acknowledge their own Messiah and had insisted in establishing a righteousness of their own. The hardening, however, was to be only temporary – 'until the fullness of the

Gentiles has come in'. Then the disobedient Jews would be roused to emulation by the evidence of God's mercy among the Gentiles.⁹³ They themselves would then become the recipients of God's mercy. He summed it up in these words, 'Just as you (i.e. Gentiles) who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you.'⁹⁴ Paul, then, regarded both the hardening of Jews and the success of the gospel among the Gentiles as vital prerequisites to the salvation of the Jewish people. The goal is for both Jew and Gentile together to praise God for his mercy.⁹⁵

What are the implications of this missionary strategy?

1. Paul was not complacent about the Jews. This is all the more surprising since Paul recognized God's wise providence in the hardening of the Jews and expected mercy to be shown to them in future. From a different perspective, Paul had argued in Romans 10 that the Jews could not claim ignorance of the gospel. In view of this we might have expected Paul to respond by saying 'They have had their chance. There is little more I can do.'

On the contrary Paul was distraught by their unbelief, partly

⁹³ This important motif was drawn by Paul from the Song of Moses in Deut. 32 – Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 200-85.

⁹⁴ Rom. 11:30-1.

⁹⁵ cf. Deut. 32:43 which is quoted at Rom. 15:10.

because he recognized its devastating consequences, and partly from a concern that it should not appear that God had failed in his covenant promises. Few within the church have come near to Paul's grief. Instead, Jewish unbelief rouses either contempt or apathy. I suggest the latter, the prevailing reaction today, is just as serious as the contempt which warped Christian attitudes until recently. Perhaps there would have been less need for movements such as Messianic Judaism if Gentile Christians had been more aware of their Jewish roots and of their responsibilities to the Jewish people.

2. Paul believed something could be done. Though himself designated an apostle to the Gentiles, he did not ignore his fellow-Jews. Rather, he used his own Gentile ministry, especially the evidences for its success, as a way of stirring unbelieving Jews to a healthy emulation. 'Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.'⁹⁶ By his use of the word 'some' Paul suggests that his efforts will have modest success.⁹⁷ He knows that the majority of Jews have become hardened and will remain so until the fullness of the Gentiles comes into the kingdom. I doubt if Paul knew when the fullness of the Gentiles would be reached, but he did not let that stop him from stirring the Jews of his own day to aspire to

the faith of the Gentiles.⁹⁸

This raises the question – do we see the advance of the gospel in the wider context of Jewish evangelism? Is it part and parcel of the teaching given to new congregations in lands newly open to the Christian gospel to point to the Jewish roots of the church and the responsibilities this entails toward the Jewish people? Are they given the right perspectives on Jewish unbelief? Remember that if they are given such perspectives, they are themselves being warned not to fall into the same sin of unbelief.

3. Paul was also concerned about Gentile attitudes. The whole section from verses 11 to 32 of chapter 11 is directed to Gentile believers. Observing the historical fact that the majority of Jews were divested of their privileges and Gentiles installed in their place, Gentile Christians might assume an arrogant complacency. They might think they have been brought into the church because they are better than the offending Jews. 'Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in', Paul represents them as saying.⁹⁹ That was to ignore the Jewish roots of the church, especially the promises to the patriarchs. It was also to gloss over the real possibility of the sort of unbelief among Gentiles who knew the gospel which could equally result in their losing their privileges.

⁹⁶ Rom. 11:14.

⁹⁷ Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 2:80.

⁹⁸ Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 129-131 suggests that Paul believed that once his Spanish mission was complete, the fullness of the Gentiles would have come in; but I doubt that Paul would have been as definite as this.

⁹⁹ Rom. 11:19.

As well as warning against errors, the apostle is keen to inculcate a positive outlook on Jewish evangelism. When he mentions his own policy of magnifying his ministry to the Gentiles before his fellow-Jews, he implies that this would be an appropriate policy for Gentile believers. After all, signs of spiritual life among them are meant to incite the Jews to a healthy envy. Moreover, they are to see it as perfectly natural for Jews to resume their allegiance to the true God.

Probably Paul's main point is to affirm that Gentile believers have nothing to fear and everything to gain from the salvation of Jews.¹⁰⁰ 'If their transgression means riches for the world and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!'¹⁰¹ Indeed, Paul goes on to declare in Romans 15 that one purpose of God is to bring Jew and Gentile together in praise of him for his mercy. This had immediate relevance to the congregation at Rome, composed as it was of both Gentiles and Jews. Paul pleads for mutual acceptance between those believers from very different backgrounds so that glory may come to God. Of course, there were dangers at this time that Jewish believers might despise Gentile believers; but the danger in Rome, where probably

Gentiles predominated, may have been the reverse. If so, then this situation would recur in subsequent centuries including today. Paul's teaching is designed to promote harmony between the two groups. Since both began life under the dominion of sin but had experienced God's mercy, their spiritual experience in essentials was the same. Such equality was an adequate basis for spiritual harmony. The only difference between Jew and Gentile concerned their temporal place in God's scheme of salvation.

There are other ways in which Paul's analysis retains its relevance. In fact, with the re-emergence of a significant Jewish church for the first time since the fourth century, his letter to the Romans has even more relevance. Paul was aware of possible strains in the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians, and wrote at length on the place of both in God's economy in order to minimise these. Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians (Messianic or otherwise) must ponder these points in the interests of healthy relationships. The main danger for Gentile believers remains a lack of concern both for the potential enrichment brought to the church by Jewish believers and for the precarious position they have between two distinct religious communities. Jewish believers, for their part, may pursue a separatist course, neither contributing to nor benefiting from Gentile churches.

One significant difference remains from Paul's day. We no longer confront an assured Jewish religious or national identity. While Paul testified

¹⁰⁰ I am assuming Paul does teach a much fuller conversion of Israel at a later point in history. Today this is a controversial position, though it was a commonplace among Puritan writers of the 17th century. For more discussion on this point, see my book *Hated without a Cause?* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), pp. 65-70.

¹⁰¹ Rom. 11:12.

to their zeal for God, today we can point only to a small number for whom that judgement would be appropriate. Judaism today is in crisis. Not only are there many divisions, but even those Jews who form one particular grouping are united more by cultural ties than by religious beliefs. This emerges when they pick and choose which aspects of their religious tradition they accept. A Jewish identity is maintained largely by the love of Israel and the fear of anti-Semitism – hardly religious criteria. Indeed, it is amazing that Jewish identity persists at all when religious belief among Jews has become so diverse. But surely it presents an opportunity for constructive witness to the Jewish people in terms of the questions – what does it mean to be a Jew? Why maintain a distinct Jewish people? This theme has not attained the prominence it deserves in Christian-Jewish dialogue. Since the Holocaust, Christians have understandably displayed a willingness to re-examine their religious traditions with regard to the Jews. That is welcome. But at the same time there has been a reluctance among Christians to challenge Jews to think of their own identity, understandably perhaps because any hint of anti-Judaism is dismissed as anti-Semitism. We can be sure, however, that this challenge will face the Jewish people as they continue to define the character of the state of Israel and as they consider the implications of their religious diversity.

Finally, the apostle Paul (or the New Testament generally) has little to tell us directly about a sovereign

Jewish state.¹⁰² Interestingly Paul leaves the land out of his list of Jewish privileges in Romans 9:4-5.¹⁰³ Perhaps even more significantly, when Paul speaks of the restoration of the Jewish people in Romans 11, it is restoration to their covenant privileges – to all the blessings brought by Christ. It seems not to matter whether the Jews in question are in Israel or in the Diaspora.

Conclusion

For these reasons I am agnostic about the future of a Jewish state in God's plans, especially as a Jewish Diaspora is unlikely to end. A more profitable approach, I believe, is to ask whether the Jewish people as a corporate entity are to play a major part in God's future plans. Often this is seen as a dispensationalist distinctive; but it is not only dispensationalists who believe from Romans 11:12 and 15 that the future conversion of the Jews will bring great blessings in its train. It would be unwise to be too specific about these blessings since Paul offers few details, but I will make one tentative suggestion. This conversion may have a corporate dimension, and so may tie in with the strong sense of Jewish community to which I have alluded.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the conversion of a large section of the

¹⁰² See the interesting comments of Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 266-9.

¹⁰³ cf. Rom. 4:13 where Abraham and his descendants are said to inherit the earth, not Israel.

¹⁰⁴ That is not to overlook the fact that the restoration of Israel is accompanied in certain Old Testament passages with the healing of traditional divisions in Jewish society – Ezek. 37:15-23 and Zech. 12:10-14.

Jewish community will bring to the fragmented Christian church a greater sense of community values.

This, however, is only a surmise. Even if it were correct, it would not justify making a theological priority out of preserving the distinctness of the Jewish people, as many want to do today. It is certainly a Christian responsibility to resist any manifestation of anti-Semitism; but it is quite a different thing for Christian churches directly to promote Jewish separateness, whether that be construed culturally, politically or religiously.

A careful balance must be preserved. Any approach from Christians to Jewish people must recognize and be sensitive to distinctive Jewish concerns. The Scriptures, after all, set forth a distinct role for the Jews in God's dealings with all peoples of the earth. Moreover, since the history of the churches in their dealings with the Jews is not readily paralleled from other fields, it demands separate study from other aspects of ecclesiastical history. It may also be appropriate for churches and missionary agencies today to follow the example

of Peter and Paul in affirming different priorities towards the Jews and the Gentiles (cf. Gal 2:7-10).

At the present time sensitivity to the Jewish people must include sensitivity to their feelings of insecurity – feelings which can only grow as it becomes increasingly clear that no real security is to be found within the modern state of Israel. This issue lies at the root of their problems of religious and political identity. Zionist influence has inclined Jews to look for a refuge in some ideal geographical location. The Hebrew Scriptures, however, point to God as the sole refuge of his own people. In the New Testament this idea finds poignant expression in Jesus' willingness to protect the people of Jerusalem as a mother bird would bring its chicks under the shelter of its wings, but sadly Jerusalem would not have anything of it (Mt. 23:37-9; Lk. 13:34-5). We can, therefore, understand (and lament) the lack of security Jews face in this world, but at the same time we can point to the One who alone can give them the security they desperately need.

Gardening

*Golgotha's tree once grew in Eden,
The vine that saw salvation-history has long roots.
The branch once broken did not wither, but brought forth
sacred foliage;
And we are grafted into that redemptive plant.*

From *Becoming . . .* (poetry reflecting theology) by Garry Harris, Adelaide, South Australia. (used with permission)

Books Reviewed

Reviewed by Garry Harris
 Donald English
An Evangelical Theology of
Preaching

Reviewed by John Jefferson
 Hans Schwartz
Eschatology

Book Reviews

ERT (2001) 25/3, 286-287

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An Evangelical Theology of Preaching

Donald English
 Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
 ISBN 0-687-12178-7
 144pp. pb.

Reviewed by Rev Dr Garry Harris,
Adelaide, South Australia.

The author differentiates his work from those focusing on methodology of preaching by insisting '... this is a book about why and what, with implications for how.'

A British Methodist, Donald English employed several of these chapters as part of the inaugural Beeson Lectureship at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. In the Foreword, George Hunter, a Dean at Asbury writes: '*An Evangelical Theology of Preaching* is written for the working pastor who may need a clarified vision of what the preaching vocation can be, and can achieve ...'

Supported by Michael Ramsey's notion of transcendence involving difference rather than distance, English embraces David Jenkin's

concept of 'transcendence in the midst', citing numerous biblical examples of the Divine being experienced in the mundane. Affirming that this phenomenon may be part of contemporary experience, the author refers to the sociologist Peter Berger's observation that, despite scientific and technological advances, humankind retains an unshakable capacity for the transcendent.

English sounds a disturbing note when he suggests that the work of religion phenomenologist David Hay is being ignored, if not suppressed, resulting in a distorted view of 'normal' human experience. If this darker conspiratorial scenario approximates reality, the preacher's task assumes a more significant dimension than merely recounting humankind's interface with the transcendent. English declares: 'The task of the pulpit becomes a witness to the reality of transcendence in the midst, which will broaden life and our perception of it.'

Highlighting the forced dichotomy between the church and the world, the author contends that biblical preaching will be increasingly mar-

ginalized unless preachers apply the scriptures to the 'big issues' facing society. Similarly, the historical nature of the credal statements invites doctrine's entombment in fossilized irrelevance. English perceives that the clear challenge of the preacher is to demonstrate the relationship of doctrine to life. Citing Paul's forthright exposition of the doctrine of Christ to quell the disharmony between Euodia and Syntyche at Philippi, the author insists: 'Paul's pastoral ministry to the Philippians is clear. For a solution to their problems of relating to one another, they should look to the heart of their faith.'

At times this reviewer felt that the work indulged in doctrinal discussions which had no patent relevance to a theology of preaching. Similarly, having at the outset made a point of concentrating on the 'why' and 'what' of preaching rather than the 'how', English strays from his own designated task. The latter chapters take on a distinctly practical tone dealing with audience analysis; audience identification and other rudimentary rhetorical considerations,

The chapter entitled 'Uniformity and Variety: God's Many-Sided Grace' is particularly helpful. In discussing the divergent ways of understanding the gospel, English demonstrates how various facets of grace are given ascendancy in different epistles. He examines the doctrine of sin and salvation extensively developed in Romans, and demonstrates a keen perception of the breadth of God's grace, noting the total absence of such conceptual issues in

Paul's mystical Damascus Road experience.

Many aspects of this contribution are praiseworthy. English has succeeded in presenting a theological work that has clear implications for the preaching task. Seeing preaching as a public expression of faith, he advocates its use in expounding the broader implications of the gospel rather than being confined to the specifics of individual policies and quasi-political platforms.

Without deprecating the productive thought represented in this undertaking, it is fair to observe that some readers may find the preponderance of anecdotal material tiresome. This reviewer believes that the flaw in this volume is its failure to make the transition from one medium to another. An effective oral communication event, such as a lecture, may have been edited to assume a concise written style without jeopardizing the integrity of the message.

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Eschatology

Hans Schwartz

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000

ISBN 0-8028-4733-1

Xv + 431 pp.; Paper

Reviewed by John Jefferson Davis, Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, S. Hamilton, MA (USA)

Hans Schwarz is professor of systematic theology and director of the

Institute of Protestant Theology at the University of Regensburg, Germany, and also the author of *Christology* (Eerdmans). From his broadly evangelical perspective the author surveys the entire gamut of modern eschatological thought: Roman Catholic, liberal Protestant, evangelical, and secular. Schwartz places his analysis within the context of an insightful analysis of modern culture, whose fascination with technology, denial of death, and secularized notions of progress make it difficult for the Christian and biblical view of the end and meaning of history to be understood.

The author demonstrates his mastery of a wide range of Old Testament and New Testament scholarship bearing on eschatological themes, as well as existentialist, process, and feminist philosophies, and secular 'eschatologies' based on modern physics and cosmology.

As the author himself notes (p.245), at times the 'bewildering array of views and issues in eschatology' being considered make it difficult for the reader to follow any central thread within the book. At times

Eschatology reads more like an encyclopedia or theological dictionary than a monograph with a more limited thesis.

For many readers the most interesting section of the book may be chapter six, 'Controversial Areas of Eschatological Hopes'. Here Schwartz ably analyses, from his evangelical perspective, the topics of date setting; views of Rev.20:4-6 and the millennium; universal salvation, and purgatory. His analysis of Karl Barth's incipient universalism, stemming from his doctrine of election, is notable for its clarity and conciseness.

Schwartz's own outlook could be characterized as a 'proleptic' eschatology, in which the church, poised between memory and hope, and avoiding both a resigned pessimism and an unrealistic utopianism, gives, in its life and ministry, '... witness to a future provided not by humanity but by God' (p.370). *Eschatology* is a fine contribution to the literature on this topic and is worthy of a place in the libraries of teachers, pastors, and seminarians.

The Christ Candle

*Burning too bright
To burn too long,
He lit our path
Forever.*

*Casting a shadow beyond his years,
He crossed our lives
With crucial intersections,
To challenge the comfortable
anonymity
Of our preferred darkness.*

From *Becoming . . . (poetry reflecting theology)* by Garry Harris, Adelaide, South Australia. (used with permission)

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1 CORINTHIANS

Anthony C Thiselton

NEW INTERNATIONAL GREEK TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

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