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# REFORMED THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

*Edited for the Faculty of the*

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

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# CHURCH AND COLLEGE

One striking evidence of God's blessing in the past thirty years has been the growth in number and influence of theological colleges. These colleges and seminaries vary in doctrinal consistency, academic depth and practical usefulness. But a basic dividing-line between them is the nature of their relationship with the church.

Some institutions have a life of their own. Though considering themselves servants of the church universal, they are not under the authority of any branch of that church. Others however are distinctly church-based. This is not because of denominational prejudice, but from the conviction that the training of ministers, having been entrusted to the church by God, should therefore be under its direct oversight and control. The Reformed Theological College, since its foundation in 1854, has been an enthusiastic member of the second camp.

Among the many advantages of a church-controlled theological education is a basic orientation towards the actual work of the ministry. Such a college will be a vocational one, with everything directed towards the end of producing men to labour in existing congregations or in the developing of new ones. It is our persuasion that faculty members should themselves be actively engaged in that work for which they are preparing their students. This will keep their teaching grounded in reality, and should pre-empt an abstract, theoretical approach to theology, such as is increasingly manifest in some evangelical institutions.

We believe that this commitment to usefulness is reflected in the pages of the current issue of the *Journal*. The articles, while scholarly, are intended to be helpful to pastors, elders and a wide segment of the church. Stimulus to gospel outreach is provided in accounts of two sixth-century Irish missionaries and of John Livingstone, who preached in Scotland and Ulster over a thousand years later. The vexed issue of the status of women is examined in a detailed study of some significant Old Testament words. The book of Deuteronomy, often neglected, is shown to be a treasure-house for the modern preacher and Jeremiah's struggles with despair provide insight for all who minister in a secular and doubting age.

"All... must be done for the strengthening of the church" wrote Paul, regarding the worship of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:26). Our continuing desire is that the *Journal* may be devoted to the same goal.

E.D.

# THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by E. Clark Copeland

*E. Clark Copeland was Professor of Old Testament in the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, U.S.A., for twenty-six years.*

In approaching the subject of the place of women as set forth in the Bible, we suggest the study of some significant O.T. words. Of course, words have their meaning in a context. We shall have, therefore, to examine passages in which the words stand which we choose for study. Hence we shall be dealing with passages of Scripture, as well as with specific words.

## Helper

The first word that we shall examine is the first word used to describe woman in the Bible, and its modifying phrase: “helper suited to him”. This expression occurs twice in Genesis 2, and is the only place in the Bible where the expression translated “suited” appears. Gen. 2: 18 reads, (NIV) *The Lord said, “It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him.* Gen. 2; 20; reads, *But for Adam no suitable helper was found.*

We shall first examine the word that appears here as “helper”. In Hebrew it is *ezer*, an abstract noun meaning *help, support*. Not infrequently the abstract stands for the concrete, as in Gen. 2: 18,20; and so is translated *helper*. This noun is used 21 times in the O.T. Besides our texts it is used 15 times of God as man’s help; and 4 times of military aid given by armies. *Ezer* belongs to an important word group: the verb is used 61 times, the participle is used as a substantive 19 times and another abstract noun form is used 26 times; altogether *ezer* as *help, helper* occurs more than 125 times. It is used chiefly of God’s help to man the poor and oppressed, His people, Israel, and of military assistance. It is also used of man as helper. Some noted examples: Psalm 46: 5 *God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.* Psalm 121:2, *My help comes from the Lord the maker of heaven and earth.* In prayer, Ps. 109:26, *Help me, O Lord my God save me in accordance with your*

love. God says to Israel, Isa. 41: 10, *do not fear ... I will help you.*

The presence of a *helper* indicates a deficiency in the *helped*. God saw the need of a companion for man to make his life complete. So He made a *helper suitable for him*. When man cries, "Help me, God," he is confessing his weakness. When God is the helper, He is obviously the stronger party. But that may not always be the case. The men who defected from Saul to help David (I Chron. 12: 18-29) did not do it because they were stronger than he, but because they wanted to be identified with David's cause. The help that man seeks from God may be to enable him to do his task, such as defeat his enemies, as Asa (2 Chron.14:11) sought God's help against the Cushites who had invaded Judah. Or he may seek what he has no power to do for himself, as in Ps.79:9, *Help us, O God our Saviour, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.*

It may surprise us, but God seeks help from man. This is noted in the song of Deborah: "Curse Meroz," said the angel of the Lord. "Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the Lord, to help the Lord against the mighty." Jud. 5:23. In a very different situation God said, *I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support: so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me.* Isa: 63: 5; cf 59:16.

The use of the word *help* implies subordination of the helper to the one helped; someone else has the initiative in doing a task. The helper only assists. Even God in helping man does not take over the responsibility for doing what he has called man to do. Note the language of Isaiah 41:8-16: *But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen,...I will strengthen you and help you: I will uphold you with my righteous right hand....I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand,... I will help you....You will thresh the mountains....you will winnow them ... you will rejoice in the Lord and glory in the Holy One of Israel.* God called Israel to be His instrument for bringing salvation to the nations and He tells them He will help them do it: but in helping them, as He says, He only holds their hand in doing it. When it is done, Israel rejoices and glories in the accomplishment.

This has something to say about the relationship that God established at creation between man and woman. God states His purpose: *I will make a helper suitable for him because it is not good for him to be alone* (Gen.2: 18). The need for a companion is repeated in verse 20: *But for Adam no suitable helper was found.* God intends to provide a companion for the man who will be a helper to him but not take the initiative from him.

Before pursuing the word *helper* further, we need to examine the word translated *suitable*. It is a prepositional phrase that means literally *as in front of him/as opposite him*. It is used only in these two places. It contrasts the woman to the creatures that Adam has been naming. They would be helpers to him, but not his equal, not his counterpart. Leupold says the phrase means *agreeing to him/his counterpart* and translates it *a helper like him*. Gordon Wenham translates *matching him* and says it means *complementary*, referring to Delitzsch for support. Calvin says that she is described as opposite to him *because she responds to him*. Speiser, in Anchor Bible, says it means *along side him, i.e., corresponding to him*, and translates *an aid fit for him*. Calvin sums up his discussion, *The woman is given as a companion and an associate to man, to assist him to live well*. Wenham correctly comments that she is *not just for assistance in daily work or procreation, though these are involved, but for the mutual support companionship provides*. As Calvin says, man's life, which had before been imperfect, was made complete in his wife.

All agree that, as his counterpart, woman was created equal and adequate to man in every respect. There is no suggestion in the text that man is superior to woman. Leupold rightly says of her, *She is the kind of helper he needs, agreeing with him mentally, physically, spiritually. She is not an inferior being*.

As pointed out above, God expressed His intention that there be a fixed relation between the man and the woman when He created her as *a helper suited to him*. The authority of the man also appears in the immediate context. He is naming the animals, i.e., exercising authority over them. When the Lord God presents her to the man, he names her *woman, for she was taken out of man*, (v.23). Also in 3:20 we read, *Adam named his wife eve, Eve*. Thus in the presence of God Adam exercises authority over the woman God has given him.

The question may be raised as to the relation of this action of man and the command given in 1:28 to them both (male and female) to rule over the earth. Indeed, the command to rule the earth is to both the man and the woman. However, Genesis 2:18-23 gives in detail what is given in general in 1:27-28. In Genesis 1 the whole human race, male and female, is present in Adam. The details of the creation given in chapter 2 must be received as the explanation of the relationship inherent in the former, but left unmentioned. In what both were commanded to do he was to take the lead and she was to be his helper. God has designed an order for his image bearers.

In summary we see that *help/helper* describes both function (aid, assistance) and relationship. The woman responds to the man as an equal in the call of God.



## Man

There are six different words translated *man* in the Old Testament. Each has a distinct meaning, but may also be used in a general sense in parallel with the others.

*Adam* is the first one used in Genesis 1&2. It is used some 500 times. It means *man, mankind*. It probably indicates his origin from the earth (*adamah*) as stated in 2:7. Either with or without the article it may indicate an individual human being. *There (in Eden) he put the man he had formed (Gen.2:8). When any of you (a man) brings an offering...Lev.1:2.* Or it may designate the human race, *I will wipe mankind (man), whom I have created, from the face of the earth (Gen.6:8). Man does not live on bread alone...(Deut.8:3).*

*Enosh* means *man, mortal man, person*. It is used over 500 times. It is frequently used in contexts emphasizing insignificance, as in Ps.8:4, *What is man that you are mindful of him?* It, too, may have the general sense of *mankind*, and so be used in parallel with *Adam*, as in Ps.73:5. *They are free from the burdens common to man (enosh) they are not plagued by human (adam) ills.*

*Gever* is used 66 times. Its special reference is to man at the height of his power, depicting humanity at its most competent and capable level. However it is also used in parallel with *adam* in Ps.94:11,12: *The Lord knows the thoughts of a man(adam) that they are futile. Blessed is the man (geber) you discipline, O Lord, and teach from your law.*

*Ish* is the most used word for man..2160 times. Its principal meanings are *man, husband, mankind*. It connotes the concept of man as an individual, and so differs from the more general, or collective concept inherent in *adam* and *enosh* (*O.T. Wordbook, Harris, Archer, Waltke*). But it is used in parallel as synonymous with *adam, enosh, and geber*. Its most common use is to denote the individual male in distinction from the female. But it is also used to signify the individual human being, whether man or woman, Psalm 1: 1 being a significant case. *Ish* first appears in Genesis 2:23, in the account of the creation of the woman. To this point *adam* has been used.

Genesis 2:22-25 reads, *Then the Lord God made a woman (ishah) from the rib he had taken out of the man (adam), and he brought her to the man (adam). And the man (adam) said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she (this) shall be called woman (ishah) because she was taken out of the man(ish). For this reason a man (ish) will leave his father and mother and be*

*united to his wife (ishah), and they will become one flesh. The man (adam) and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.* We may note that Adam's use of *Ishah* (woman) indicates that she shared his own station, nature and life, that she was his true counterpart. Here, too, the difference between the individual man/husband and man, the human being, appears. *Ish* is often used in an individualizing sense of *each*, as in Gen.10:5, *each(ish.) with his own language*: and Gen.13:16, *...if anyone (ish.) could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.* It is the individual person, regardless of sex, who is in view in Psalm 1:1, *Blessed is the man (ish.)*.

We may summarize: The English word *man*, representing several Hebrew words, may mean in different Scripture contexts *mankind, a male, a person, i.e. an individual human being whether male or female.*

In our society oriented to sex distinctions this fact creates a difficulty. How should we translate Ps.1:1, *Blessed is the man (ish.)*? *Ish* here signifies the individual, a person, whether man or woman. It is used to bring forward the fact that blessedness is personal in the life of one who delights in living by the law of God, and whom God *knows* (v.6). Why not translate *Blessed is the person/one*? That might be satisfactory. But we are immediately confronted with the question of the pronoun to be used in V.2: *his delight....he meditates*:V3. *He is like a tree....whatever he does prospers.* There does not seem to be a suitable genderless pronoun. We might suggest *one/one's*; but that is too impersonal. There is no a-sexual personal pronoun. It is either *he*, masculine, or *she*, feminine. Divine language has chosen to speak of people in general and individually using the word *man* and the pronoun *he* and in doing so has expressed a warm, personal relation in the context.

There is a related biblical concept that must be considered here. God deals with all people, individually and collectively, under the headship of the first man, Adam, and the "last Adam" Christ. Every one of the people of God came before God in the sacrifices, ceremonies and festivals in the person of the high priest. When the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, every Israelite was recognized to be there with him in the presence of God. In keeping with this, in the Old Testament in particular, an individual man was the head of the family, the tribe; he was responsible for the life and welfare of all the members of the family, both immediate and extended. Hence also, the woman had her identity and integrity in her father, oldest brother in the family, or her husband, as the case might be. She was protected by one of these, and her actions had validity in his confirmation. We may be unable to explain all the details of this satisfactorily to our twentieth century minds, but

it is inescapable that it is a fundamental biblical principle not traceable to the results of sin or to cultural development, but is specifically spelled out in the law. (Headship of Adam & Christ: Rom.5:12-19. Headship of the man in the family & tribe Josh.7:13-18, Lev.25:25.26.48.49, Num.30:10-14, Ruth 4:4-6, Gen.17:18-19, Deut.19, Num.1:4,20, Ps.78:1-8, etc) What we have here is a fundamental way of considering people that is not culturally oriented but, rather, is basic to the language of revelation. The question is whether we can modify it without insurmountable problems in receiving and applying what God says with justice and equity to our lives today. We may and should struggle with it, but beware lest we cloud the original sense.

## Woman

The word *woman* (*ishah*) appears 775 times in the Old Testament. It has the meaning a) *woman* without regard to age or marital status: b) *wife, bride*: and c) *female animal*. It may be made specific by the addition of a noun in apposition: *harlot* (Josh.2:1, Judg.11:1), *widow* (2 Sam.14:5, 1 Kgs. 11:9 ), *concubine* (Judg.19:1), *prophetess* (Judg.4:4, 2 Kgs.22:14), or by the addition of a qualifying adjective: *adulteress* (Prov.30,20), *strange (loose) woman* (Prov.2:16). There are also specific words for *virgin, young woman of marriagable age, mother, queen, female slave, daughter, sister*. The study of the word *woman* reveals her position, privileges and responsibilities.

Women and men were created equal and both in the image of God as indicated by the use of *adam* (mankind) and the pronoun *them* with the explanation *male* and *female* (Gen.1:27). That man was created first, and woman was created as his *helper* does not denote inferiority, rather, *helper* indicates his incompleteness without woman. Priority in creation and *helper* indicate leadership, as shown above, but not inferiority, since both bear the image of God. Dependence denotes difference in function, not inferiority. They are mutually interdependent. Far from being his mere assistant, woman is man's complement, essential to the perfection of his being.

As pointed out above, God created the woman to follow the initiative of the man, his leadership. Thus the principle of male headship is established at creation. The subjection after the fall may be recognized as describing her role rather than proscribing it. Male headship is neither a penal establishment after the fall, nor a cultural phenomenon arising in the sinful world. The character of the exercise of headship is, however, a cultural development in the sinful world. As will be pointed out below, the verb *to rule* does not mean *tyrannical*

*exercise of authority*, although it may sometimes be that. Sinful man will be tyrannical, but as he is redeemed and sanctified his leadership of women will be restored to its creation order and character.

In the Old Testament woman is under the authority of man, first her father, then her husband. If a family became impoverished, a father could sell his daughter as a servant (Ex.21:7-11), which would probably mean that she would become the wife of the man or his son. He must then treat her as his wife or his daughter. As such, she would not go free at the end of six years. If her husband decided to take another wife, he could not deprive her of her marriage rights. If he was not willing to do this, he must let her go free without a redemption price being paid for her. If she were not married, but remained a servant in his household, she would go free at the end of six years as a man in the same position would do: then she must be provided with goods to begin an independent life (Deut.15:12-15). The rule for the treatment of servants was that they were to be treated kindly and with liberality as God had blessed the master, recognizing that servants were brothers and sisters in God's covenant people. *Do not take advantage of one another. I am the Lord your God. The Israelites belong to me. They are my servants whom I brought out of Egypt (Lev.25)*. A mistreated woman servant could appeal to the Lord against a harsh, illiberal master (Deut.15:9-10).

A father gave his daughter in marriage (Jer.29:6), but he also sought a wife for his son. A woman left her father's house and became a part of her husband's family. If her husband died leaving her childless, levirate marriage (to the husband's brother living at home) provided for her a firm place in the family, and the possibility of being the mother of the family heir (Deut.25:5-6). If a man took a second wife, he could not deprive the first of her marriage rights or her children of their proper inheritance. (Deut.21:15-17). A man might divorce his wife *if he finds something indecent in her*, but he had to give her a certificate of divorce (Deut.24:1-4). This would exonerate her from wrong doing, and put the onus for breaking the marriage covenant on him. Marriage was a covenant between a man and his wife made before God (Prov.2:17; Mal.2:14). This means that God held both parties responsible for fidelity to the covenant.

A woman might dedicate herself to the Lord by a vow, but the value of her service was considered less than the value of a man's service (Lev.27:1-8). A woman's vow might be disallowed by her father or her husband, but the vow of a widow or divorced person would stand (Num.30:1-15). Women were valued as wives and mothers as a gift from God and blessing to the family (Prov.18:22;19:14;31:10-31;Ps.127,128). Mothers were to be obeyed and

“honoured” as were fathers: *Honour your father and your mother* (Ex.2.12). The instruction of a mother had authority, as did the father’s (Prov.1:8;6:20). Contempt for a mother merited the curse of God (Prov.19:26;20:20). The significance of a mother’s influence in the development of her children is shown by the fact that when the kings of Judah are introduced, the name of the king’s mother is given (1 Kgs.14:21) and she continued to exercise influence as *queen mother* (1 Kgs.15:13). Women are recognized for able support to their husbands, for their contribution to the family’s income as well as to the preparation of food and clothing; and praised for their initiative (Prov.31:1-10). The Shunemite woman *persuaded Elisha to eat bread* as he was passing by, and then persuaded her husband to build a room for the prophet whenever he came that way (2 Kgs.4:8-10).

Religiously, women were part of the congregation and participated in covenant making ceremonies (Josh.8:35; Neh.10:28), and when the law was read (Neh.8:3). They were responsible to participate in the annual covenant festivals and sacrificial meals (Deut.12:18). The women in the families of the priests participated in eating the parts of the sacrifices that were given to the priests and had to be eaten ceremonially (Lev.10:14;Num.18:11,16; 1 Sam.1:4,5). Note Hannah praying where Eli could observe her from his seat at the doorpost of the tabernacle (1 Sam.1:9). Provision was made for women to serve at the door of the tabernacle (Ex.38:8).

Women participated in temple choirs (Ps.68:25; Ezra 2:65;Neh.7:67). The Psalmist, in considering the future of the Kingdom of God, sees its promise lying in her daughters as well as in her sons: *Then our sons in their youth will be like nurtured plants; and our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace*, Psalm 144:12. Men did not hold a monopoly on receiving theophanies. God appeared to Hagar (Gen.16:7- 12;21:13-19), and to Samson’s mother (Judg.13:3-5,9). Although God made no provision for women to hold office, he called Deborah to be a judge (Jud.4,5), and Hulda to be a prophetess whom Hezekiah consulted (2 Chron.34:22). Nor did men become judges except as *God raised them up* (Jud.2:16) or prophets except as God called them (Isa.6:Jer.1,etc).

Thus we see that the position of women in Israel was set by the word and will of God. The law frequently protected women from the sinful abuse of men and society. If it seems to us that the law at times discriminated against women, we must remember that it is the law of God, not of man; and that the will of God is not subject to our scrutiny or judgement. We must also remember the statement of Jesus that God’s permission of divorce, for instance, was because of the hardness of man’s heart (Mark 10:5). Even so, it is the good and gracious

will of a loving heavenly Father. We are called to love and believe God, not to understand His inscrutable being and actions (Job 11:7)

## Head

*Head(rosh)* is used some 400 times in the Old Testament. It means the head of the physical body of man (Gen. 40:16), of animals (Ex. 29:10), of an axe (2 Kings 6:5), of a spear (Gen. 47:31), the summit of a mountain (Ex. 17:9), the capstone of a building (Ps. 118:22), the total number of people in Israel (Num. 1:2), the best spices for the anointing oil (Ex. 30:23), the chief of a family (Ex. 6:4), the leader of the musicians (Neh. 11:17), David, as the ruler over the nations (2 Sam. 22:44), Joshua, crossing the Jordan as leader of Israel (Deut. 3:29). The captives would return from Babylon with the *Lord at their head* (Micah 2:13). Moses said to Israel, *The Lord will make you the head, not the tail, ... you will always be at the top, never at the bottom* (Deut. 28:13).

There are 7 derivatives of *rosh*, all with the same meaning: *primary, first in time, in position, at the beginning of a series, the place of leadership*. These words establish the headship/authority of man in his immediate and extended family, the tribe and the nation. None of the words hints at the meaning *source*.

*Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, edited by W.A. Elwell, says that Paul drew from the metaphorical understanding of *rosh* to express the authority of God over Christ, of Christ over man, and of man over the woman in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, *Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of every woman is man, and the head of Christ is God*. Both editions of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* agree. The *Baker Ency. of the Bible* adds that, in addition to the O.T. sense of headship, medical science of Paul's day may provide insight into this image, for Christ is not only dominant ruler over the church, but He is also the dynamic force that directs its direction and unity and, I would add, its very life. F.W. Groscheide, *NICNT Comm. on 1 Cor.* says, *Head is used figuratively: it means a governing, ruling organ... That the husband is head of the wife... is taught already in the Old Testament*.

The point to be made, then, is that Paul was thoroughly steeped in the Hebrew and Greek of the Old Testament. It is impossible to think of him as ignoring all of that completely for the sociological-anthropological meaning, headship = source, of first century A.D. Latin and Greek literature. This is an utter impossibility from a biblical-theological perspective necessary to correct

understanding of the New Testament. When Paul says of Christ, *God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything to the church*, it must be clear that *head=leader* since His appointment was based on His death and resurrection, and relates to His government of all things to bring about His purpose for the Church.

We may summarize that *head* in the Old Testament is used figuratively of *leadership and authority, not of source*, and that Paul could not have ignored this O.T. background in his use of *head* in the New Testament.

## Rule

The verb *to rule, mashal*, is used 36 times in the OT. It is first used in Gen.1:18, of the heavenly bodies *to govern (mashal) the day and the night*, then in a text important to us, Gen.3:16, *he will rule over you*. It is used 8 times of God's rule and the rule of Messiah. God rules over man, over Israel, over the nations and over all things. Man was made ruler over all the works of God (Ps.8:7), not autonomously, but in perfect obedience to the command of God (Gen.2: 16-17). The divine ideal is that the man who rules over men must be just and rule in the fear of God (2Sam.23:3). The exercise of authority by righteous men brings rejoicing, *but when the wicked rule...men groan* (Prov.29:2). Thus the character of rule (*mashal*) is determined by the context. Rule may be either good or bad, tyrannical or benevolent.

We noted above that at creation God established the order of the woman as helper of the man. The intention was that both rule on his part and subordination on hers would have their roots in mutual love and esteem. But sin changed all that. Man rules out of his sinful heart, and woman responds in like manner.

The text of Gen.3 does not regard female subordination as the judgment on sin. (It should be noted here that the word *curse* is not used either of the woman or the man, only of the serpent and the earth.) The sentence on the man and the woman takes the form of describing the disruption of their roles. She was created to be his companion and the mother of his children. To be the joyful mother of children was the sign of much blessing from God upon the whole family (Psalms 113:9;127,128). Because of her sin she will have pain in childbirth, so bitter that it was made the prototype of the pain of captivity (Micah 4:9, Isa.13:9), but her desire for her husband will not let her escape the exploitation and abuse he may heap upon her. Man has the right to rule in obedience to God's command. His rule is subject to the redeeming grace of

God, and she will be delivered in his redemption. Paul gives us a picture in Eph. 5:22-23 of the husband as head loving his wife, and of the wife submitting to her husband as Christ loves the church and she submits to Him. This shows us what God intended from the beginning that the proper relation between men and women should be. There surely could not be a more blissful relation between them. As God provides the model for man as ruler in the Old Testament, Christ is that model for the redeemed husband. Also it is in Christ that man may be restored to that model.

## Master, lord

*Adon, adoni* is variously used in the Old Testament. Its most common use is of God to indicate His kingly authority, as in Ex.15:17 where it is also in parallel with the divine name: *You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord (YHWH), you made for your dwelling place, in the sanctuary, O Lord (Adoni), your hands established.* Abraham's servant prayed, *O Lord God of my master Abraham (Gen.24:12)* acknowledging the authority of Abraham over him. Joseph used it in speaking to his brothers of his authority in Egypt, *(God) made me a father to Pharaoh, Lord (adon) of his entire household, and ruler of all Egypt (Gen.45:9-10).* Rachel addresses her father respectfully, *my lord (Gen.31:35).* Ruth recognizes the station in life of Boaz in comparison to her position as a foreigner from an unfriendly people, when she says, *May I continue to find favour in your eyes, my lord. You have given me comfort and spoken kindly to me (Ruth 2:13).*

Using the language of courtesy, Abraham addressed the leader of the three strangers passing by his tent, *If I have found favor in your sight, my Lord, do not pass your servant (Gen.18:3).* So also Lot to the two angels (whom he and the men of Sodom recognized as men (strangers) in town), *"my lords, please turn aside to your servant's house (Gen.19:2).* Jacob, sending messengers ahead to Esau, tells them to address him, *My master, Esau (Gen 32:4),* in his desire to win his favour.

What are we to think of Sarah's "thinking out loud" when she heard the promise made to Abraham that she would bear him a son, *When I am worn out and my master is old also, shall I have this pleasure? (Gen 18:12)?* Peter uses Sarah as an example of the piety of *holy women of the past who put their hope in God.* He says of them, *They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master (1 Peter 3:5,6).* Peter commends this kind of conduct to New Testament women. Abraham and Sarah



illustrate the Old Testament principle of male headship implicit in God's statement of purpose to create woman as a helper for man.

## Summary

The words that we have studied set forth Divine principles of the relation between men and women. They were created equal, both bearing the image of God. The creation mandate to multiply and fill the earth with people, and to rule over it was given to them together. As helper, woman was under man's initiative: leadership and submission were both to be exercised in loving respect. The grace of redemption would effect in man loving self-giving and in woman affectionate obedience, thus restoring the creation order. In the home she commanded equal honour and obedience from the children with her husband. Her influence on her children was acknowledged. According to her ability, having gained her husband's trust, she exercised initiative in providing for her family. She was responsible to be present in the covenant community and to participate in public worship. She was given a ministry at the door of the tabernacle, and participated in temple choirs. Although no provision was made for her to hold office in the O.T. "church", God raised up a woman judge, and called a woman to be prophet. When she sought her place under the leadership of her father, husband or kinsman-redeemer, a woman had a broad scope for the use of her gifts in public service, as well as within the family. In Christ inequities in the law and its concessions to the nature of sinful man are done away.

# JOHN LIVINGSTONE

by Adam Loughridge

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John Livingstone was singularly blessed in having a distinguished and godly Scottish ancestry. On his father's side he belonged to the noble house that bore the name 'Earl of Linlithgow'. His mother Agnes had an equally honoured name, being a Livingstone of the house of Dunipace. They had a family of three sons and four daughters. John, the subject of this study, was born at Monybrock, later known as Kilsyth, on the 21st June, 1603.

John was raised in an atmosphere of godliness and prayer. His father William Livingstone was minister at Kilsyth. John says of him: "He was all his days straight and zealous in his work of reformation against Episcopacy and ceremonies and was once deposed and wanted not seals of his ministry both at Monybrock and Lanark"<sup>1</sup>.

His mother was "a rare pattern of godliness and virtue". She died in 1617 at the age of 32. Through their influence he came in early life to a saving knowledge of Christ. John proved himself an able and gifted scholar who mastered four classical languages and spoke fluently in at least four others. He graduated from Glasgow University Master of Arts at the age of 18.

## **A Probationer.**

It is quite remarkable that such an outstanding preacher of the Word should have remained a licentiate for nine years. One reason for the delay was that in several places where he might have served as minister, he was obstructed by the bishops. But it was largely his own modesty and sense of unfitness for the work that led him to seasons of constant heart-searching and withdrawal. When, after much prayer and fasting, he felt assured of his calling, he gave himself to the work with all the zeal and diligence at his command.

He was not idle in this probationary period. He took full advantage of every opportunity to hear and enjoy fellowship with some of the most outstanding

gospel preachers of his day. He writes in his Diary: "By reason of going from place to place, in summer time, I got acquaintance with many of the godly and able ministers and professors of Scotland; which proved to me a great advantage." He then gives a lengthy list of these men, most of whom apart from Robert Bruce, are comparatively unknown. He adds, "the memory of them is very refreshing"<sup>2</sup>

In the unsettled nature of his life he had little opportunity for regular and systematic study. On this he comments:

I got not much read, nor any settled study allowed all that time, only some touches here and there of sundry, both ancient and modern divines. Those whereby I profited most were the sermons of Mr. Robert Rollock, Mr. Robert Bruce, Mr. Josias Welsh, and Mr. David Dickson, whom I thought, of all that I had read, breathed most of the Spirit of God, were best affected, and most clear, plain and powerful. I got in loan from John Stuart in Ayr a large book of sermons of Mr. Welsh's, in which are almost nothing but the unfolding of the inward exercise of a Christian. Mr. Robert Bruce I several times heard, and in my opinion, never man spake with greater power since the apostles' days.<sup>3</sup>

## **An Instrument in Revival.**

During his itinerant ministry in Scotland he got invitations to preach in many different places and especially at Communion at Lanark, Culross, Larbert and Shotts. He was particularly fond of preaching at Shotts, a parish some 20 miles East of Glasgow. He had more liberty in preaching there than elsewhere. And Shotts will always be associated with Livingstone's name because of the exceptional blessing received there on the 21st June, 1630. Let us hear the story in his own words:

The only day in my life wherein I found most of the presence of God in preaching, was on a Monday after Communion, preaching in the church-yard of Shotts, June 21, 1630. The night before I had been with some Christians, who spent the night in prayer and conference. When I was alone in the fields before we were to go to sermon, there came such a misgiving of spirit upon me, considering my unworthiness and weakness, and the multitude and expectation of the people, that I was consulting with myself to have stolen away somewhere, and declined that day's preaching, but I thought I ought not so far distrust God, and so went to sermon and got good assistance about an hour and a half upon the points which I had meditated on, Ezekiel 36:25,26: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthi-

ness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh'. And in the end, offering to close with some words of exhortation, I was led on about an hour's time, in a strain of exhortation and warning, with such liberty and melting of heart as I never had the like in public in all my lifetime.<sup>4</sup>

With characteristic modesty he makes no reference to the effect of his preaching on the people, but reliable historians have put on record that about 500 people were truly converted to God. Later in that week at Kilmarnock and on the following Monday at Irvine, he felt so deserted and ineffective that he had serious thoughts of not preaching for some time, but David Dickson encouraged him and insisted that he preach at Irvine on the next Sabbath and he adds: "So I stayed and preached with some tolerable freedom".

### A Minister in Ireland.

Shortly after this remarkable experience at Shotts, Livingstone settled for about five years at Killinchy in County Down. While he was at Irvine with David Dickson he met Robert Cunningham, minister at Holywood, County Down and George Dunbar, minister at Larne, County Antrim, who proposed to him that, since he was so much opposed by the bishops in Scotland and there seemed little likelihood of his being able to enter the ministry there, he should consider going to Ireland. In August 1630 he got letters from Viscount Clancloye asking him to go to Killinchy. Soon afterwards he got a unanimous call from the parish.<sup>5</sup>

Ordination presented a problem. Though the Presbyterians of Killinchy worshipped in the episcopal church, the Bishop of Down would not ordain him unless he accepted episcopal principles. The deadlock was resolved by the intervention of Lord Clancloye who wrote to Andrew Knox, Bishop of Raphoe in County Donegal, a good friend of the Presbyterians. Livingstone describes his ordination in the following terms:

Bishop Knox told me that he knew my errand, that I came to him because I had scruples against Episcopacy and ceremonies, according as Mr. Josias Welsh and others had done before; and that he thought his old age was prolonged for little other purpose but to do such offices. That if I scrupled to call him my Lord, he cared not much for it; all he would desire of me, because they got few sermons there, that I would preach at Ramelton the first Sabbath, and that I would send for Mr. Cunning-

ham, and two or three other neighbouring ministers to be present, who after sermon, would give me imposition of hands; but although they performed the work, he behoved to be present - otherwise he durst not answer it to the State. He gave me the book of ordination, and desired that anything I scrupled at I should draw a line over it on the margin, and that Mr. Cunningham should not read it; but I found that it had been so marked by others before that I needed not mark anything. So the Lord was pleased to carry that business far beyond anything I had thought or almost ever desired.<sup>6</sup>

He began his ministry in Killinchy on the 29th August, 1630 and immediately was opposed by Enchlin, Bishop of Down, who summoned him to a 'visitation' and questioned him in presence of others about his attitude to the Service Book. His forthright answers greatly displeased the bishop and it is certain that he would have been censured or even deposed but for the intervention of Lord Clandeboye.

In spite of this tension he enjoyed much freedom in preaching the Word and conducting public worship 'free from any inventions of men'. His Session met every week to exercise discipline over any who were guilty of scandalous conduct. The penitent were admitted to the Lord's Table; the impenitent debarred from Communion. This form of discipline had a salutary effect on the people and the great majority accepted it. The tide of blessing began to flow in a remarkable way through the conversion of a notoriously sinful young man from Ballymorran, and within a short space of time there was hardly a home in the district that did not show clear evidences of the grace of God.<sup>7</sup>

The Revival that began at Oldstone, County Antrim in 1625, known as the Sixmilewater Revival, lasted for about seven years and Livingstone was instrumental in bringing its blessings to Killinchy. This religious awakening commenced through the ministry of Rev. James Glendinning and was supported by the leading ministers in Ulster. Among these were John Ridge of Antrim, Robert Blair of Bangor, formerly Regent of Glasgow University, Andrew Stewart of Donegore and not least, Josias Welsh of Templepatrick, grandson of John Knox. Welsh describes this work of grace as follows:

The Lord's work prospered graciously notwithstanding great opposition. Last Sabbath in Antrim the superstitious form of kneeling at the Sacrament was put away. The Lord worketh more in one day than in ten before; in this little church last week we had above 1400 or 1500 at the sacrament; and never such a day had we from morning to night without fainting or weariness.<sup>8</sup>

One of the notable features of this revival was the organising of a meeting at Antrim on the first Friday of every month. In the days before Presbyterianism was formally organised in Ireland, this meeting was of great value and served the dual purpose of a conference and a Presbytery. Livingstone was a regular attendee at these monthly meetings and took an active part in them. He describes these meetings in the following terms:

There was a great and good congregation and the day was spent in fasting and prayer and public preaching. Commonly two preached every forenoon and two in the afternoon. We used to come together the Thursday night before and stayed the Friday night after, and consulted about such things as concerned the carrying on the work of God; and these meetings amongst ourselves were sometimes as profitable as either presbyteries or synods.<sup>9</sup>

### **An Attempt at Emigration.**

His peaceful progress in the ministry of the Word was soon disturbed. Within a short space of three years he was deposed, reinstated and deposed again by the Bishop of Down of whom he says "He had an ill eye upon me because I went elsewhere to receive ordination". He returned for a time to Scotland and preached regularly at Kilmarnock, Lanark, Cumbernauld and Edinburgh. He preached most frequently at Lanark where his father was the minister. He was anxious not to be a financial burden on his father at this time. His stipend at Killinchy had been only £4 sterling, but he received generous support from a number of people, notably Lady Boyd, the Countess of Eglinton.

In February 1634 his friends in Ireland, seeing little prospect of relief from episcopal opposition, considered the possibility of emigration to New England in America. In order to investigate the matter Livingstone and William Wallace were appointed to go to America with the first available sailing. But Providence intervened. They missed a favourable sailing from Groomsport, County Down, by two days and, proceeding to London two weeks later, found that a number of ships had just left. They might have sailed later with a Mr. Bellingham who had a larger ship with better accommodation, but having spoken to a Mr. Humphray first they felt they ought to go with him. After a number of delays they finally left Weymouth but were forced by bad weather to shelter at Plymouth. William Wallace took ill and was advised by doctors not to go to sea. Since Livingstone had given an understanding to his friends in Ireland that he would not go alone, both men returned to Ireland and were encouraged to

learn that four ministers who had been deposed had been restored to office in May 1634.

His opportunity for service at Killinchy was short lived. In November 1635 he was again deposed and excommunicated by the order of a new Bishop of Down, Henry Leslie. The sentence was carried out by John Melvine, a minister at Downpatrick, who, seven years later when Livingstone was on a visit to Ireland, expressed great regret that he had a hand in such a wicked act. As there seemed so little possibility of the sentence being revoked, he and his friends again considered the possibility of emigrating to America. He had received letters of invitation from the Governor of New England and promises of good accommodation. He describes the preparations made for the journey:

We built a ship near Belfast, called The 'Eagle Wing' of about one hundred and fifteen tons burden, and were minded to set out in the spring, 1636. But through the difficulties that arise in such undertakings in preparing the ship and our accommodations, it was the following September before we set sail. We were in all about 140 persons.<sup>10</sup>

In the company were his wife and son John. He had been married in June 1635 in the West Kirk, Edinburgh to the eldest daughter of Bartholomew Fleeming, an Edinburgh merchant, his father officiating. Their first-born son was baptised by Robert Blair on the 30th June, 1636.

They set out finally on the 9th September and after some delays with contrary winds in Loch Ryan they began their journey. For a time all went well and steady progress was made until they reached a point about midway between Ireland and Newfoundland. Then disaster overtook them.

If ever the Lord spake by His winds and other dispensations, it was made evident to us that it was not His will that we should go to New England. For we forgathered with a mighty hurricane out of the North-East that did break our rudder, which we got mended by the skill and courage of our Captain Andrew Agnew."<sup>11</sup>

The ship was badly damaged. They hove to for a time to ride out the storm, but they were totally unprepared for other storms that were prevalent at that season of the year. After a time of prayer and consultation, Livingstone made a proposition that was accepted by all on board, though on reflection he was not altogether happy about the decision.

That seeing we thought we had the Lord's warrant for our intended

voyage; howbeit it be presumption to propone a sign to him, yet we, being in such a state, and having stood out some days already, we might yet for 24 hours stand to it, and if in that time He were pleased to calm the storm, we might take it for His approbation of our advancing; otherwise, that He called us to return.<sup>12</sup>

The following night the most severe storm yet threatened their destruction, so they turned as soon as it was day and made good speed until on the 3rd November they reached a safe anchorage at Lochfergus (Belfast Lough). The venture had proved a costly one as the emigrants had sold their possessions to help to pay for their journey. They were, however, both surprised and comforted that instead of being mocked for their fruitless adventure they received generous sympathy even from the prelates and their followers. Livingstone spent the following winter in Ireland preaching as often as possible in the company and with the encouragement of Robert Blair.

### **Minister at Stranraer and Ancrum.**

The year 1638 was a momentous one both for Livingstone and for Scotland. The increasing opposition to the use of the Service Book and to all episcopal practices reached a climax in February of that year with the signing of the National Covenant at Greyfriars, Edinburgh. Livingstone was actively involved in the exercise of covenanting. The Scottish Church appointed him as their representative to travel to London with copies of the Covenant and to present them to their friends at Court. He suffered injury when his horse fell and was in danger of arrest by the King's officials, but he had travelled in disguise and returned to Scotland by a more difficult and less public route. He visited several parishes where the Covenant was read and sworn. He tells us of an impressive service at Lanark:

On the Sabbath after the forenoon sermon the Covenant was read and sworn; and I may truly say, that in all my lifetime, except one day at the Kirk of Shotts, I never saw such motions of the Spirit of God- all the people generally and most willingly concurring- where I have seen more than a thousand persons all at once lifting up their hands and tears falling down from their eyes, so that through the whole land, except the professed Papists and some few, who for base ends adhered to the prelates, the people entered universally into the Covenant of God, for reformation of religion, against prelates and ceremonies.<sup>13</sup>

Livingstone's settlement in Stranraer is worthy of comment, if only to underline the procedure adopted by him in the acceptance of its call. Towards



the end of May 1638 he received letters from the Earl of Cassilis inviting him to visit him with a view to receiving a call from a parish in which the Earl had some interest. On his arrival he found that commissioners had come from both Stranraer and Straiton, with calls from both congregations. The claims of each were strong so he decided to refer the matter to a group of six ministers and to accept their advice. They were the most notable ministers of the day: Robert Blair, David Dickson, Andrew Cant, Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford and his father. His own preference was for Straiton, "because it was a more obscure place, and the people being landward simple people, were the more likely to be wrought upon by the Gospel". But when the six ministers had heard the statements from both congregations they advised him to accept Stranraer. The reason given was that it was nearer to Ireland and would be of greater advantage to the people there. He was installed there by the Presbytery on the 5th July, 1638 and exercised a profitable ministry for ten years. He travelled with his family from Irvine to Stranraer by boat and had a miserable journey. The boat's company ate most of their food and owing to unfavourable weather the journey took three days. There were two notable features in his ministry at Stranraer. The opinion of the six ministers who had advised him to go there was fully vindicated by the number of people who travelled from Ireland to profit from his preaching. He writes:

Some of our friends came out of Ireland and dwelt in Stranraer; and at the communions, twice in the year, great numbers used to come - at one time five hundred persons. At one time I baptised twenty-eight children brought out of Ireland.<sup>14</sup>

The second important factor in his work at Stranraer was connected with Family Worship. He describes the development of this exercise in the following terms:

When I came first to Stranraer, some of the folks of the town desired to come to our house to be present at our family exercise; therefore I propounded that I would rather choose every morning to go to the Church, and so each morning at nine o'clock the bell was rung and we convened; and after two or three verses of a Psalm sung, and a short prayer, some portion of Scripture was read and explained, only so long as an half-hour glass ran, and then closed with prayer.<sup>15</sup>

This daily exercise was productive of much fruit and he speaks of the satisfaction and refreshment he enjoyed as he later visited some of these people on their death-bed.

In the summer of 1648 he received a Call to Ancrum in Teviotdale. He was

not left to his own devices in reaching a decision, but rather directed to go there by the General Assembly. The phrase he uses in his records to describe his move to Ancrum is striking: "By the sentence of the General Assembly I was transported to Ancrum". He describes the people of Ancrum as very tractable but ignorant and loose in their carriage; so much so that it was quite some time before he felt it appropriate to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. During his ministry at Ancrum he received several calls to go to Ireland. He would have liked to return to Killinchy, but the Presbytery refused to release him.

### **His Banishment to Holland.**

On December 11, 1662, Livingstone was summoned to appear before the Council in Edinburgh to answer charges of turbulence and sedition. The Lord Chancellor outlined the case against him and Livingstone made his defence in modest and gracious terms. His autobiography gives us a lengthy account of the procedure. Livingstone admitted that he did not observe the day set apart for celebration of the restoration of Charles II to the throne but that he had conducted his usual preaching service on that date. He denied that he was guilty of rebellion:

I was never before called before such a judiciary. I am a poor servant of Jesus Christ, and have been labouring to serve Him and His people in the ministry of his word, and it is grief to me to be so charged by your Lordship; for I am not conscious to myself of any turbulency or sedition.<sup>16</sup>

He was sentenced to be banished to Holland and was refused permission to return to Ancrum to say farewell to his people. During the closing years of his life in exile he was busily engaged in preaching to a congregation of Scottish refugees in Rotterdam and in editing Samuel Rutherford's refutation of Arminianism. He was constantly grieved by the news of the terrible persecutions and bloodshed in his native Scotland and saddened by the enforced limitations to his usefulness. He died at Rotterdam on the 9th August, 1672.

### **His Public Service.**

His fine standing as a minister of the Gospel led him to involvement in a number of important matters in the service of the State. In 1640 he was sent by his Presbytery to accompany the regiment led by the Earl of Cassilis in support of the Parliamentary forces in England. He was deeply concerned about the

sufferings of the soldiers and the poor equipment and food that had been issued to them, but he was greatly impressed by the evidence of godliness among the men.

In 1649 he was chosen as a member of a seven man deputation to interview Charles II at Breda and to offer him the crown of Scotland. He had strong reservations about this appointment. He had a natural antipathy against ministers being involved in public employments and State matters and felt that 'some ministers meddled too much therein'. He felt that at least two members of the deputation were unreliable and he suspected that Charles would promise them anything in order to secure the throne. His suspicions were valid and fully vindicated by later developments.

### **Pastor and Preacher.**

His pastoral concern for his people is clearly seen in his letters from Holland. They are couched in terms similar to those used by Samuel Rutherford in his famous letters and reflect the spirit of the Apostle Paul. His first letter is entitled "To the Flock of Jesus Christ at Ancrum, light, life and love, and the consolation of the Holy Ghost be multiplied". He sorrows over their separation and longs for the day of reunion. In a subsequent letter he expresses regret that he had not been as diligent in his pastoral duties as he should have been. He lists the members of the congregation in three categories: those who had made a general profession of faith but had not laid true religion to heart; those who had some evidences of grace, but who sided with the corruptions of the time, and those who, in an evil time, had laboured to keep their garments clean and who were willing to suffer for Christ's sake. He addresses them all with words of warning, rebuke and encouragement and makes a strong plea for loyalty to Christ and to the truths of the covenanted reformation. He concludes with a long list of directions as to how they should walk before God, worship Him regularly in public and in private, read the best available books and train their children in the fear of God. He crowns his counsel with these words:

In all things, and above all things, let the Word of God be your only rule,  
Christ Jesus your only hope, His Spirit your only guide and His glory  
your only end.<sup>17</sup>

John Livingstone was always modest about his gifts as a preacher. A study of such sermons as are available shows that he spoke directly and in simple practical terms. He quoted frequently from Scripture and made application of the truth to his hearers throughout the sermon. He exalted Christ, exposed error,

warned the ungodly, comforted and encouraged all who were in trouble and, with pointed questions, spoke to the conscience. In his Autobiography he gives a number of “Directions, Miscarriages, and Extremities in Preaching”. He urged:

That there be not too much matter in one sermon, which but overburdeneth the memory of the hearers and would seem to smell of ostentation; and on the other hand, that there be not too little, which hungers the auditory and argues an empty gift.<sup>18</sup>

We thank God for the life and work of this devoted servant of Christ and pray for the grace to show the same stedfastness and faithfulness today.

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# PREACHING FROM DEUTERONOMY

by Hugh.J. Blair

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Is it too much to say that Deuteronomy was one of Christ's favourite books? When He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, the words that came immediately to His mind in answer to Satan's suggestions were from Deuteronomy. The book is quoted more than eighty times in the New Testament, standing with Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah among the most quoted books. Obviously it was a favourite with the Early Church. We cannot be surprised at that. Where else can we find ready to our hand for preaching such themes as the following: the unmerited love of God, with no motivation other than Himself; the call to show a responsive love to Him by a life of faith and obedience; the promise of restoration from the farthest country of sin and forgetfulness; detailed instruction for daily godly living; a call not only to love God but our neighbour as ourselves; warnings of judgment that have a message of grace at the heart of them; encouragement from past history and future promise to trust in the Lord; a call to covenant renewal as the secret of continuing blessing? In a word, where better can the gospel in the Old Testament be found than in Deuteronomy?

More than that, Deuteronomy not only gives abundant material for preaching the gospel: it preaches it. Gerhard von Rad summed up Deuteronomy memorably when he wrote, "It is preached law."<sup>1</sup> It is not cold legalism, as it has sometimes been misrepresented to be: it is passionate preaching, a model for the preacher in every age.

How, then, are we to preach from Deuteronomy? To be really helpful, the abundance of preaching material in the book needs to be fitted into a framework which will reflect the basic Biblical theology of Deuteronomy. Fortunately there is a possible framework ready to hand. One of the most significant contributions to the study of 'covenant' in the Old Testament was the publication in 1954 of George Mendenhall's *'Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East'*.<sup>2</sup> Mendenhall pointed out striking parallels in form between the covenant at Sinai and the formal treaties drawn up between the great king and his vassal states within the Hittite Empire in the period c. 1450 - 1200 B.C.

These suzerainty covenants followed a regular pattern: a preamble, in which the author of the covenant is identified, followed by an historical prologue, describing past benevolent acts performed by the great king for the benefit of his vassal; stipulations, general and particular, indicating the obligations imposed upon and accepted by the vassal; provision for the recording and renewal of the covenant; and blessings and cursings as sanctions of the covenant.<sup>3</sup> This treaty pattern has been applied by many scholars to the structure of Deuteronomy, quite rightly, since Deuteronomy is concerned with the renewal of the covenant made at Sinai. Consequently it provides a useful framework for the study of the book, generally corresponding to the covenant form;

The God of the Covenant  
 The People of the Covenant  
 The Stipulations of the Covenant  
 The Sanctions of the Covenant  
 The Renewal of the Covenant

## 1. The God of the Covenant

God and the covenant are central in Deuteronomy, as they are indeed in the whole Bible. What kind of God is He?

### (a) He is the LORD

Deuteronomy 6.4 summarises the faith of Israel. The verse is best translated: "The LORD is our God: the LORD is one." 'LORD' in capitals in many translations is the translation of the covenant name of God, the great I AM. The significance of the name is found not simply in its link with the Hebrew verb 'to be' - the One Who was and is and will be, the One Who causes all things to be - but in its constant use to refer to God's relationship to and His activity on behalf of His people. The name is always used in a covenant setting: it is the covenant name for God. Deuteronomy 4.7 expresses the covenant relationship: "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" There is a special relationship: God is near to his people. Deuteronomy 4.34,35 sums up His activity on behalf of His people: "Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other"(NIV). All that is involved in saying, "The

LORD is our God.” And it makes an inescapable demand on His people, the demand for absolute commitment. “The LORD is one.” There is no other. Constantly in Deuteronomy God’s people are warned against giving to anything else what belongs to God alone. Quite simply, a covenant relationship demands a fully committed life. In three places in Deuteronomy - 3.24, 9.26, 10.17 - LORD in capitals is linked with Lord with only the first letter capitalised, translating the word for ‘Master’, stressing the fact that the covenant LORD is the Sovereign LORD (NIV’s happy translation of the double name). He has the right to command. God is our covenant God and He is our sovereign God.

(b) He is the God of history

Again and again in Deuteronomy the command rings out, “Remember!” The setting of the book is the people of Israel standing at the threshold of the Promised Land, about to enter into a life of fulfilment and possession. An uncertain future, humanly speaking, lay before them; the enemies whom they had to face were menacing; the cities that barred their way were walled and fortified. But they would find their encouragement for the way ahead in remembering what God had done for them in the past. God’s promises to them were set in the context of history, and so were His demands upon them. Therefore God says, “Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee” (8.2).

The main focus of memory was of course what God had done for them in delivering them from Egypt. That was to be the motive for their obedience to God’s law.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day (5.15).

In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?” tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...” (6.20,21. NIV).

Further, memory of past deliverance would give the assurance of future victory.

You may say to yourselves, “These nations are stronger than we are; how can we drive them out?” But do not be afraid of them; remember

well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the miraculous signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear.(7.17- 19, NIV).

Their memory was to focus, too, both further back and nearer at hand.

There is a surprising account in chapter 1 of the way in which Moses had chosen officers to help him in his task of leading the people. But the significant thing is the reason for that arrangement, given almost as a parenthesis: "The LORD your God has multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude." Their history went back beyond Egypt to a promise that God made to Abraham and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob. Part of that promise, declares Moses, has been fulfilled: "Ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude". God could be trusted to fulfil the rest of it and give them the land of Canaan for their possession: "Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged." (v.21).

Equally significant is the nearer focus of memory. Moses' renewed declaration of God's law for His people in their new situation - the theme of Deuteronomy - is set historically in the context of a victory that had been already gained. It was "after the LORD had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan..." (1.4). The lesson for the preacher is clear. It is good to focus attention on the great historical facts of redemption: it is important, too, to link with that God's more recent acts of grace and deliverance. Thirty-five years ago a member of Billy Graham's team spoke at some meetings in Ballymoney, Co. Antrim. He said that he was a member of a Presbyterian church in Holywood, where they had a weekly testimony meeting. One of the rules was, "If your testimony is more than a week old, we don't want to hear it." That may seem to be exaggeration, but we do need to be reminded that there must always be remembrance of the recent past as well as of the past that is more distant. But always, whatever the time factor, the basic remembrance for Israel was remembrance of redemption. Thus, preeminently, -

### (c) He is the God of redemption

Let one illustration of that from Deuteronomy suffice. In chapter 26, verses 1 - 10, instructions are given for the offering of the first-fruits of the earth, a



kind of harvest thanksgiving. But the thanksgiving is not primarily for the fruits of the earth, it is for redemption. The ritual for the worshipper was clearly laid down.

Take some of the first-fruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land that the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD your God. Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians ill-treated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labour. Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me." (Deut 26. 2 - 10).

Israel's neighbours had harvest festivals, but the only thing they commemorated was the fruitfulness of the earth, for which they praised their Baals. God gave Israel's harvest thanksgiving a different slant, making it basically thanksgiving for redemption. Many harvest thanksgiving services today do not seem to get beyond the kind of worship that the Canaanites brought to their Baals. Harvest thanksgiving is not complete until it sees our God as the God of redemption.

This, then, is the God set forth in Deuteronomy - the covenant God, the God of history, the God of redemption. It is no wonder that Moses' blessing of the tribes in chapter 33 comes to this triumphant climax: "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to help you and on the clouds in His majesty. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

## II. The People of the Covenant

The people of the covenant were God's people who had been redeemed from the bondage of Egypt, and now those who were about to enter into the possession that God had promised to them. This book of Deuteronomy is for those who have been redeemed from the bondage of sin and who need to be instructed about how to enter into the life of fullness of possession that God has

for them. What does that identification of the people of God mean in detail?

(a) They are defined in 33.29 as a saved people

“Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD?” They were a unique people in that their salvation was supernatural. Very frequently in Deuteronomy reference is made to the fact that God brought His people out of Egypt by a mighty hand. “Thou shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; the great trials which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out.” (7. 18, 19). God’s wonder-working power was directed towards delivering His people: their salvation was supernatural.

But salvation meant more than deliverance. The basic meaning of the Hebrew verb translated ‘to save’ is ‘to give breadth and space, to bring into a wide and spacious place.’ How wonderfully the rich meaning of salvation is illustrated in the history of the people of Israel. They had been delivered from bitter bondage, and now they were to be brought into the spacious wealth of the Promised Land. “Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?”

(b) They were a people in covenant with God

In chapter 5 Moses called all Israel together and declared, “The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” God had made a covenant with them in Horeb (Deuteronomy’s alternative name for Sinai), and they had responded to that with a faith that accepted the truth that God was their God and that they were His people. They were a covenanted people. Now they were being called to a renewal of that covenant and to a new realisation of the implications of their covenant relationship. This was a unique relationship: “The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession” (7.6, NIV).

Why did God do this? For one reason. They were -

(c) A beloved people

Deuteronomy 7: 7,8 sets it out very simply: “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of the people; but because the LORD loved you...” “The LORD loved you .... because the LORD loved you.” You cannot get any further

than that. God loves His people with a completely unmerited love, with no other motivation than the fact that God is love. That love is unmerited, but it does require a response. This saved people, this people brought into covenant with God, this beloved people are called to be -

(d) A holy people

Deuteronomy 7. 6 spells it out: "You are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession" (NIV). God's holy people were to be a separate people, His treasured possession, distinct from all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth.

The separateness of a holy people is dramatically underlined in the laws that meet us immediately in chapter 12 -

Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places. You must not worship the LORD your God in their way.

Stern measures! But stern measures were needed if Israel was not to be corrupted. The fact was that Israel was not simply choosing between competing religions - the God of Israel against the gods of Canaan. They were fighting a life-or-death battle. The issue at stake was whether Israel could continue to exist if its religion was the same as that of the nations who were being driven out. There had to be complete separation if Israel was going to survive.

Another mark of separation was diet: there were unclean animals that the Israelites were not to eat. Possibly some of these were forbidden on hygienic or health grounds; for example, pigs, and birds that lived on decaying flesh; others because they were pagan objects of worship. But the basic reason is given in Deuteronomy 14. 2: "Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people (a special treasure) unto himself, above (distinctive from) all the nations that are upon the earth. Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing." They were to be a separated people, willing to be distinctive. That requirement still stands for God's people, not, as the New Testament makes clear, in a separation marked by outward observances, but by lives that manifestly belong to the LORD, marked by the

separateness of a holy people.

One way in which the holiness of God's people would be safeguarded was by the religious education of their children. We find that stressed not only in the familiar verses in chapter 6, but also in 4.9, which reminds us where the religious education of our children must begin: "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them to thy sons and to thy sons' sons..." First, take heed to yourself. Then, take heed to God. When we turn to the passage, in 6. 4ff, we find that it begins with God: "Hear, O Israel; the LORD is our God; the LORD is one." Then, take heed to your children. There follows very practical instruction about the training of our children. First, God's Word must be in our hearts, part of the very fibre of our being - "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" (v.6). It is to be impressed on our children- "Thou shalt teach them diligently (the Hebrew word is a very vivid one, meaning 'to whet, to sharpen') unto thy children" (v.7). God's word is to be talked about in our homes - "Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house" (v. 7). God's Word is to be constantly before our eyes and the eyes of our children. The picture used to describe that in vs.8, 9 was taken literally by the Jews: "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." They literally bound little boxes containing texts of Scripture on their arms and on their foreheads, and they had a little box outside their door with texts from God's Word in it. God meant much more than that literal observance. And yet the literal placing of Bibles in our homes will have a significance for our children: certainly the Bible should have as prominent and regular place on our tables as the newspaper and magazines that come into our homes.

In Deuteronomy 11:18 -20 we have these instructions for the nurture of children repeated. Then verse 21 tells what the result will be: "that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth." What more could any parent ask? What greater reward could there be for the people of the covenant?

### III. The Stipulations of the Covenant

The writer of notes on Deuteronomy in Scripture Union's Daily Bread in January, 1989 has recorded the fact that in his school Bible "the law section of Deuteronomy was written in small print."<sup>4</sup> The suggestion obviously was that

these chapters were less important, and could be omitted as having little relevance for today. It is true that many of the laws in chapters 12 - 26 deal with the special situation of Israel at that time, living not only in a different time, but in a very different culture. The laws in their details often reflect the needs of the time in which they were given. But behind the details of those laws are certain basic principles which God has laid down, and those principles are still there, unchanging. What the stipulations of the covenant do is to apply those unchanging principles to the everyday life and activities and relationships of people who are God's covenant people.

It is important to remember that the laws in Deuteronomy are more than legal requirements: they are directions given for the guidance of God's people. The Hebrew noun 'torah' almost always translated 'law'<sup>5</sup> comes from a verb which means 'to point,' 'to direct', 'to instruct'. The law consists of directions given by God, given for the good of His people. More than that, they are directions which are preached: reasons why God's guidance should be followed are constantly suggested. The laws are God's instructions for His covenant people.

The whole Torah was summed up by Christ: "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." (Luke 10. 27). That can be taken as a summary of the covenant stipulations in Deuteronomy.

The laws concerned with man's relationship to God stress that He can have no rival. "The LORD is One." Therefore, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," with undeviating commitment. The sternest measures were to be taken against anyone who tried to seduce God's people into following other gods. (c.13).

The laws concerned with man's relationship to his neighbour are all very practical. One commentator says -

One of the most attractive features of the Book of Deuteronomy is the loving, faithful and helpful spirit it fosters between neighbours. Members of the community stand in a covenant relationship with both God and men....Although the statement 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' is to be found only in Leviticus (19.18), the spirit of these words permeates the Book of Deuteronomy.<sup>6</sup>

Some basic principles about neighbourliness from these chapters in Deuteronomy can help us to relate these laws to ourselves.

1. Neighbourliness is a homely thing. It is concerned with the practical details of everyday life. It is in the daily happenings of life that a man's religion is to be seen. Take the opening verses of chap. 22 for an example: "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his ass go astray, and hide thyself from them." "It's none of my business" is not a Christian attitude.

2. Neighbourliness is a helpful thing. For example, "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him" (15.7,8). Help for the poor was to be available, but it was not to be abused! Put together 24. 19-21 and 23. 24,25 -

When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

3. Neighbourliness is an honest thing. Lost property is to be returned to its owner (22.3). A servant's wages are to be paid promptly: "At his day shalt thou give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee" (24.14,15). There must be absolute honesty in all business dealings: "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small" (25. 13-16). The incentive which is given for such honesty should be noted: "that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" - exactly the same as in the fifth commandment. An honest man may not necessarily live longer than a dishonest man, but a society with dishonesty at the heart of it will not long survive. More than that, dishonesty is not only destructive of society; it is "an abomination unto the LORD thy God" (23.26).

4. Neighbourliness is a humanitarian thing. There was a kindness in the

laws in Deuteronomy that was in contrast to the harsh laws of many of the nations around Israel. For example, when security had to be given as a guarantee of repayment of a loan, the creditor is not to take what he thinks would be adequate security for the house of the borrower. He is to wait outside - to save embarrassment to the debtor's family? - and accept what the borrower offers (24. 10,11). If the cloak of a poor man is offered as security, it has to be returned to him before sunset so that he can sleep in it. Perhaps most remarkable of all was the law that a runaway slave, instead of being punished or sent back to his master, was to be given freedom of residence in the village of his choice (23. 15,16). That was in complete contrast to the way in which runaway slaves were treated elsewhere. The one society in the Ancient Near East that had a law protecting runaway slaves was a society that traced its origin to a group of runaway slaves from Egypt.

The ultimate motive for neighbourliness especially to the weak and helpless was what God had done for His people: "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing" (24.18). In the words of the New Testament, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4.32).

#### IV. The Sanctions of the Covenant

In Deuteronomy 27 - 30 Moses in a very solemn way sets alternatives before the people of Israel. As he comes to the end of his solemn appeal to them, he sums it up in 30.19: "I call heaven and earth to record against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live." The chapters that go before spell out in detail the blessings and the cursings which will follow the people's obedience or disobedience to God's law.

##### The Way of Blessings

The blessings are indicated in the first part of chap. 28, with special emphasis on certain basic things from v.7 on: victory over enemies, prosperity, holiness of life, obvious recognition as the people of God. The last two - "The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself...And all people shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD" - make it clear that the material blessings which are promised are symbols of something deeper.

The way of blessing is the way of obedience: "All these blessings shall

come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God." It will be seen later that the way of obedience is the way of faith.

## The Way of Cursings

The cursings for disobedience are revealed even more surely than the blessings for obedience. 28.15 uses the same words to describe the outcome of disobedience as were used in 28.2 to describe the outcome of obedience; "All these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee"; and 28.45 makes it stronger still: "All these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee." And far more verses are given to the details of the cursings than to the details of the blessings. Does that suggest that in our preaching we should emphasise the warnings of Scripture more than perhaps we are accustomed to do? Certainly Moses realised the need for emphasis, for he foresaw the possibility that a man, hearing and knowing full well the curse that had been pronounced on turning away from the LORD to other gods, would still think that he was immune, and "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart." In other words, "This will not apply to me." Such a man needs to have the cursings brought home to him again and again. Was it not the proclamation of the curses in Deuteronomy that led Josiah, as recorded in II Kings 22, to tear his clothes and say, "Great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book" - the book that had been found in the house of the LORD? Huldah the prophetess confirmed that the wrath which would be poured out upon Judah was the fulfilment of "all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah." The message of the wrath of God must still be part of the gospel.

But there is more in these chapters of Deuteronomy than the way of blessings and the way of cursings. There is -

## The Way Back

We never get to the heart of the gospel until we come to a promise. And the promise of restoration is written large in Deuteronomy 30 in the opening verses:

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath



driven thee, and shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee..... (Deuteronomy 30. 1 - 4)

That is the good news: there is a way back. It is no wonder that Nehemiah, seeing the desperate situation of Jerusalem's broken-down walls, claimed God's covenant mercy, for he had nothing else to plead, and quoted Deuteronomy 30.4 to God's face (Nehemiah 1. 8,9). And it is no wonder that Paul in Romans 10.8 quotes Deuteronomy 30. 11-14

For the commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it-

and applies it to "the word of faith, which we preach." The key to understanding the passage in Deuteronomy 30, as Paul understood it, is in verse 10 of that chapter: "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul..." There is no 'and' connecting the two parts of the verse - inserted though it is in A.V. and other translations, but rightly omitted in RSV - as if Moses was talking about two different things. 'Harkening to the law' and 'turning to the LORD' are two ways of saying the same thing. The word that Moses speaks of and the gospel that Paul preaches are both 'the word of faith' for faith is the way by which we turn to the Lord. Paul preaches the gospel from Deuteronomy, and so must we, for it is there in Deuteronomy - not merely law and legalism, but the revelation of God's grace; not promises and threats depending on our obedience or disobedience, but the good news of the way back to God.

## V. The Renewal of the Covenant

Deuteronomy looks back constantly to the covenant made at Horeb. But it insists that that covenant was not simply something in the past: "The Lord made

not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deuteronomy 5.3). Here was something that is as real in the present as it was in the past. How can that continuing reality be maintained? Deuteronomy 29 recounts how Moses called the people to renew their covenant now as they stand on the threshold of the Promised Land:

Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God... that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day; that He may establish thee today for a people unto Himself, and that He may be unto thee a God (29. 10,12).

They are to be a people for God and God promises to be a God for them.

There were certain clearly marked steps in Moses’ organisation of covenant renewal in Deuteronomy 29, 30, and what in effect he said to the people of Israel may be taken as a pattern for covenant renewal still.

### 1. Remember what the LORD has done for you

That call to remembrance rings out again and again in Deuteronomy. “Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee.” In chap. 29 Moses gives an historical review of all that God had done for His people - their wonderful deliverance from bondage in Egypt, His miraculous provision for them in the wilderness, and the more recent victory that He had given them over Sihon, king of Heshbon and Og, king of Bashan. But they needed not only to remember all this: they needed to understand it. They needed “a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear” (v.4). They needed to understand that all this was supernatural, the work of their covenant God. For covenant renewal we need to understand the meaning of God’s supernatural redemption and God’s supernatural provision and God’s supernatural victory for us. Covenant making and covenant renewal must always begin with what the Lord has done.

### 2. Remember what you have done to the LORD

Again and again in Deuteronomy Moses has reminded the people that their past history had been full of disobedience. “From the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came to this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD” (9.7). When Moses had been on the mount to receive the law, the people were making a golden calf to worship. Chapter 28 expects

nothing better in the future: the people will turn away after other gods, until judgment comes upon them and they are carried away into exile. The story of what they have done, and will do, is one long catalogue of failure. But the amazing thing is that even disobedience and failure are a reason for covenant renewal and a fresh start. Part of that covenant renewal must be repentance and turning back to God.

### 3. Remember what God will do for you

The opening verses of chapter 30 speak of turning back to the LORD. But verse three puts it in the right perspective: literally, “The LORD thy God will turn thy turning.” God must turn His people back to Himself. The 80th Psalm gives a picture of the history of Israel very like the picture that we find in the closing chapters of Deuteronomy. God had done great things for them, leading them like a flock. But they had turned away from Him, and judgment had come upon them. They were like a vineyard which the LORD had planted and cared for, but now the hedges have been broken down, and the wild beasts ravage and devour it; the vineyard is cut down and burned. Is there any hope at all? There is. The prayer, repeated three times in the Psalm, tells us what it is: “Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.” The verb is a causative form: “Cause us to turn.” God can and will do that as the first step to covenant renewal.

### 4. Remember what you must do to the LORD

Verse 20 of chapter 30 tells very simply what must be done: “to love the LORD thy God, to listen to His voice, and to cling to Him.” Perhaps the order is not important, but possibly the first thing is, in weakness and helplessness, to cling to Him, to cling to Him as Jacob clung, when, his own strength all gone, he said, “I will not let Thee go, unless Thou bless me.” The next step is to listen to what He says, and then to love Him for what He has done in saving His people. The climax of covenant renewal is to say, “I love the LORD,” and all because His love came first - a love that is one of the great central themes of Deuteronomy

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# THE CONFESSIONS OF JEREMIAH

## Exploring the 'dark midnight' of a preacher's soul

by W. Norris Wilson

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The Jesuit poet-priest Gerard Manley Hopkins begins one of his famous "Dark Sonnets", written in Dublin at a time when he was under great strain and was struggling with gnawing doubts, as follows :-

No worse, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,  
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.  
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?

Later on in the poem he says this :-

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall  
Frightful, sheer, no-man fathomed. Hold them cheap  
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small  
Durance deal with that steep or deep!<sup>1</sup>

It is the heart-cry of a man desperately near the end of his tether. However, such spiritual agony is only an echo of what we occasionally find in the Old Testament. We come across the like in some of the Psalms, in Job, but perhaps most poignantly and startlingly in that remarkable group of utterances in the book of Jeremiah usually referred to as his "Confessions" (10:19-20,23-24; 11:18-12:6; 14:7-9,19-22; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18). In these personal dialogues where he disputes with the Almighty, much is revealed of Jeremiah's inner struggles. The book of Jeremiah is unique in that not only do we know more about the prophet's life than we know about any other prophet, but we know far more of his personal feelings and inner torment.

While such passages may not be ones to which we readily turn, nevertheless we know they have been written for a purpose (2Tim.3:16f). Mercifully it may not be the experience of many believers to hang upon or teeter over those "cliffs" of Hopkins, or plunge into Bunyan's "slough". Nevertheless in our secular age as we feel the constant pressure of its radical doubt and wrestle with

its persistent hostility or else apathy it is good for us to take note of Jeremiah's painful experience. We do well to remember the words of Martin Luther, "The art of doubting is easy, for it is an ability that is born with us."<sup>2</sup> Luther's famous 'doubter's prayer' strikes a chord in us :

Dear Lord,  
Although I am sure of my position,  
I am unable to sustain it without Thee.  
Help me, or I am lost.<sup>3</sup>

As David Day says,

On any reckoning these passages are some of the most terrible in the Bible... yet... there are lessons to be learned from them, though they are not easy ones. We ought not to suppose that Jeremiah's experience is totally alien to our own. His may be the ultimate case but most of us can look back to times when all meaning and pattern in our lives was thrown into question and God seemed more like tempter and demon than lover and friend.<sup>4</sup>

So what then was Jeremiah's experience? How does he react? What answers does God give? What are we to learn from all of this?

Because of the way the material is arranged in the book of Jeremiah it is difficult to set the "Confessions" in a definite chronological, historical context. However, we shall follow a rough chronology, commenting on the historical clues the context of our passages gives us. On occasions the unresolved tensions in Jeremiah rise suddenly to the surface in cries of agony and questioning.

### **Symbolical Loneliness.**

Jeremiah's call at the beginning was itself traumatic. He knew he was being called to proclaim a message of imminent judgment upon a covenant-breaking people, a message that they themselves would "fight against" (1:19). God promised to give his servant the strength to stand up to this. However, while Jeremiah never shirked his unpopular task, behind his exterior of iron and bronze (1:18) his sensitive heart grieved deeply, not just over his loneliness and unpopularity, but especially over the coming sufferings of those to whom he preached.

Perhaps a good place to begin is the section 11:18-12:6. It seems that this

may come from the prophet's early experiences in preaching. Manasseh's evil influence was still being felt and Josiah's reforms had hardly begun. Jeremiah vividly and bitterly condemned the people's apostasy, inveighed against their sheer ingratitude to God and pleaded passionately for repentance. However, instead of the hoped-for turning he found only bitter hostility. His friends shunned and hated him. Shatteringly the people of his own village of Anathoth plotted his very death. He tells us he was "like a gentle lamb being led to the slaughter" had not the Lord made known to him their evil designs. The shock of this must have been enormous. His fellow villagers obviously felt his preaching brought much disgrace upon the village and that he was worthy of death. For an Israelite, rejection by his village society, which gave him his basic social and psychological support and security, was a fate almost as terrible as death. We must add to this the fact that Jeremiah had no wife or family of his own to turn to. Symbolically Jehovah had uniquely denied him the joys of marriage (16:1-4). Not only that, but he was forbidden to participate in the normal joys and sorrows of village life. Symbolically he was to enter neither a house of mourning nor a house of feasting (16:5-13). In other words Jeremiah was symbolically denied a normal life, his abnormal existence in itself a parable mirroring the coming judgment. However, being a normal person, Jeremiah felt very deeply the pain of loneliness and isolation. As he says in 15:17, "I did not sit in the company of merrymakers, Nor did I rejoice; Because your hand was upon me I sat alone, because you have filled me with indignation". What a world of feeling is bound up in the three simple words "I sat alone". One calls to mind the "Ancient Mariner":-

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide, wide sea!  
And never a soul took pity on  
My soul in agony.<sup>5</sup>

### Agonizing Questions.

In his pain Jeremiah turns to God. With painful honesty he lays bare the tensions in his heart. On the one hand he has committed his cause to the Lord of Hosts who judges righteously and receives an assurance that God will deal with the treacherous men of Anathoth (11:20-23). However, that is not enough for Jeremiah. He accepts God's sovereignty in his head, but his heart finds God's ways hard to understand. His particular present crisis has stirred the deeper general age-old question of why the wicked should be allowed to flourish. In court-room language, reminiscent of the Book of Job (see Job 9:15-16;19-22) he daringly declares, "O Lord, you are in the right when I dispute

(or file a complaint) with you. Yet there are cases I would argue with you: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all treacherous men at ease?" (12:1). Arrogantly wicked men (such as those of his own village) are ruining the country (v.4) and yet they are permitted to flourish. Their just and hoped-for punishment is delayed while the promise of Psalm 1:3-4 seems to have been stood on its head (12:2). It is the same dilemma a starving believer in Ethiopia faces as he reads Psalm 37:25. Why is it that Jeremiah, whom God knows to be faithful, has to suffer so (12:3)? The poet Hopkins made Jeremiah's complaint his own in another of the "dark" sonnets:

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend  
With thee; but, Sir, so what I plead is just.  
Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must  
Disappointment all my endeavour end?<sup>6</sup>

Such a question may find an echo in the heart of any young minister who started with passion and bright hopes but who later found himself entangled in a seemingly intractable web of congregational difficulties that blunt and stifle zeal and enthusiasm. Jeremiah, however, receives an unexpected and surprising answer to his query: "If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how will you compete with horses? And if you fall down in a land of peace, then how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?" (12:5-6). The meaning is clear. What God says in effect is, 'If you think the going is hard at present then you had better prepare for it getting harder'. The dense thickets around the Jordan river were the home of marauding lions that struck at the flocks in the open hill country around. It's possible to see in the mention of horses and the dangers of the thicket a veiled reference to the impending threat of Babylonian occupation. However, the particular threat God actually mentions here is a threat from an unexpected quarter indeed - Jeremiah's own family circle have actually turned against him as well, in spite of nice things they may say to his face (12:6)! Such news must have stabbed Jeremiah's heart.

### **The Crucible of Trial.**

Some may accuse God of offering cold comfort here. However, is it not actually a kindness when a surgeon tells a complaining patient that the pain he feels is actually more serious than he suspected? At least the patient knows where he stands. At least Jeremiah can prepare for worse things. He now knows that God intends him to swim through more troubled waters and if God expects him to come through them then he will surely receive the strength for those shallower albeit painful waters. Implicit in the reply is the assumption that in



spite of appearances God can still be trusted. It is the same kind of exhortation that the writer to the Hebrews gives in Hebrews.12:3-6 (N.B.v4).

In the event things certainly went downhill in Judah. With the advent of the wilful, selfish and arrogant Jehoiakim, the programme of reform under Josiah collapsed. A mood of political self-confidence and spiritual complacency reigned. Once more Jeremiah began to preach such sermons as are recorded in 19:1-15. His solemn words, however, were met only with mockery. Such mockery was hard to bear as 17:14-18 shows us. His complacent hearers felt they had heard the same message from this prophet of doom and gloom years before and nothing had happened. Was it not clear then that he had miserably failed the prophetic test of Deuteronomy 18:22? So Jeremiah complains to God. "Look, they keep saying to me, 'Where is the word of the Lord? Let it now be fulfilled!'" (17:15). Deeply wounded Jeremiah asks God for healing and as he begins to flounder he cries out, "Do not be a terror to me, You ...my refuge"(17:14,17). His time of trial was only beginning however. Pashur, the priest-overseer of the temple, had him whipped and put in stocks overnight. When released Jeremiah gave Pashur a new name, 'Magor-missabib' (Terror on every side). Now his enemies were just watching for a slip. They took their opportunity after the delivery of his famous 'Temple Sermon'(7:1-15:26:2-6). He was arrested and brought to trial for the 'disloyal' way he had spoken of his sovereign and his temple. Only the support of Ahikam ben Shaphan prevented his death. He was however forbidden to preach any more in the temple area.

### **Protest and Complaint.**

It was probably during these times of suffering that Jeremiah uttered the confessions contained in 20:7-18. He protests violently about the unacceptable reward he has received for proclaiming the Lord's word, "I have become a laughing stock all the day long; Everyone mocks me. For each time I speak I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long"(20:7-8). He spells it out, "I have heard the whispering of many, 'Magor-missabib (Terror on every side)! Denounce him, yes, let us denounce him'. All my trusted friends watching for my fall, say 'Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him'" (20:10). His hearers had taken the symbolic name he had given to Pashur and applied it to him sarcastically as a derisive nickname. "There goes old Magor-Missabib". It is the equivalent of a preacher warning of the miseries of life, death and eternity without Christ and being called 'Old Misery Guts' for his pains!

However, this is just the tip of the iceberg of the bitterness that pours forth from the prophet's tormented soul. He is so overcome by such a sense of failure and by such despondency and despair that he is obviously on the brink of spiritual collapse. In this condition he makes two statements that are startling and shocking.

First of all consider the curse he calls down on the day of his birth (20:14-18). Here he plumbs depths of bitter misery and agony that surpass any other cry of anguish recorded among his lamentations. Here there is no ray of light. We wonder was the poet Dylan Thomas thinking of such an experience when he wrote

Do not go gentle into that Goodnight;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light?

Unlike the Psalmist of Psalm 22, who, in the dark night of his soul, drew strength from remembering how God had safely brought him into the world, Jeremiah wishes that his mother had been the tomb for her unborn child. He even goes so far as to wish a judgment on the man who brought the news of his birth to his father, a judgment like that which fell on Sodom and Gomorrah without pity. Some commentators try to blunt the shocking impact of this by arguing that Jeremiah was using a conventional form of self-curse. This may be so, but the episode reminds us that statements made in the sharp pain of grief or in the depths of depression are not always meant. C.S. Lewis, speaking of his own experience of grief that he says "Knocked him silly" and shook him "out of his merely verbal thinking and his merely notional beliefs", was himself shocked by some of the things he wrote in his journal the night his wife died: "I wrote that last night. It was a yell rather than a thought".<sup>7</sup> However the seriousness of Jeremiah's statement here was that in cursing the day of his birth he was cursing his call from God, who had called him before he was born (1:5).

Secondly, consider the statement that Jeremiah made in 20:7 "O Lord, you have deceived (or seduced) me and I have been deceived (or seduced); You have overpowered (overcome) me and prevailed". The verb 'pata' (deceive, seduce) has a sexual connotation. In other words Jeremiah dares to accuse the Lord of having been like a man who enticed a woman, used her and tossed her aside. This is surely the bitterest cry of disillusionment in all prophetic literature. It may have been that when he uttered it the prophet was bruised and battered in the stocks, the butt of cruel mockery, yet we have to say that he is verging on blasphemy. And yet it has been recorded for us to show us how far down a man may go.

## Faith versus Despair.

However, Jeremiah did not go over the edge. When he came to the point of saying 'I quit' he found he could not: "But if I say, 'I will not remember Him or speak any more in His name', then his word in my heart becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in; indeed I cannot". (20:9). He could not forget God. He could not stop preaching. He thought he had reached the point where it was impossible to go on, instead he discovered it was impossible not to go on. As he thought more of the One from Whom he could not escape he suddenly resorted to a rock-bottom affirmation of faith. "The Lord is on my side, like a dread(or mighty) warrior". In the hour of crisis and conflict he fell back on the promise he had been given at his call (1:18-19). His enemies are ruthless ("dread"), but they are also God's enemies and God is ruthless with His enemies. Now his plea is "Lord of hosts, you who test the righteous....Let me see your vengeance on them" (20:12). Suddenly and amazingly in the midst of the passage we hear a welcome note, "Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord! For he has delivered the soul of the needy one from the hand of evil doers"(20:13). It is the song of a man who has come through. God in his mercy has reduced the temperature of the fire that burned below the crucible of trial. Now he can look back on the experience, realize it was a 'test' and that in the end he was not tested beyond his ability to bear. In this way Jeremiah flushes out for us the precious promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it". However dark the darkness is, it can never extinguish the light of faith. Its wings carry us back to God. Writing of his experience under Nazi occupation during the second World War a church leader in Oslo said, "....during such periods as that of 1942, half of your soul was in a hell of anxieties, doubt and fear; the other half of your soul was in heaven, carried on the wings of the faith which God bestows on you".<sup>8</sup>

However, Jeremiah's problems and his crisis of faith were far from over. We remember that for quite a period during Jehoiakim's reign he, in whom God's Word burned like a fire, was forbidden to speak by the authorities, who actually wished him dead and, but for the sovereign overruling of God, would have succeeded in their designs. It may have been during this period of enforced painful silence that the "Confessions" of 15:10-11,15-21 were uttered. Jeremiah's mood has again plummeted to the depths. As we have already said, in such a case the imaginings of our deceitful hearts (as Jeremiah himself knew only too well) can produce wild thoughts in us (Jer.17:9). Dietrich

Bonhoeffer, another sufferer at the hands of the Nazis, wrote from his prison cell, "Quite suddenly....the peace and placidity which had been a mainstay hitherto begins to waver, and the heart, in Jeremiah's expressive phrase, becomes that defiant and despondent thing we cannot fathom. It is like an invasion from outside, as though evil powers were trying to deprive one of life's dearest treasures".<sup>9</sup>

### Abandoned by God?

In his dialogue with God in 15:15-21, Jeremiah begins well, pleading on the basis of what he knows to be true of God - "You understand, O Lord; remember me and care for me ...You are long-suffering - do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake". He goes on "I have not sat in the company of roisterers making merry." No, instead, "When your words came I ate them, and they became my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name". So far so good, but then suddenly comes the bitter word that betrays the true raw mood of his heart, "Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, whose waters cannot be trusted?". There is a bitter irony here. The earlier Jeremiah in his preaching had used the striking metaphor of God as the "Spring of living water" which the blind and ungrateful Israelites had forsaken for their man-made cracked cisterns which were unable to hold the dank, stagnant rainwater, substitutes for God, which they sought instead. Now the preacher himself wonders if God is really going to turn out like a dried up wadi. Having preached to others is he going to be a castaway? Or as R. Davidson puts it, "What happens if you reach the point where what you have most confidently been preaching to others about the reality of God, no longer makes sense in your own experience?"<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah's cry is the cry of one who feels abandoned by God. Nevertheless crucially and very instructively God gives him an answer. If Jeremiah's cry was startling, Jehovah's reply is equally so, "If you return (repent), then I will restore you (take you back), before me you will stand (i.e., to serve me). If you remove the precious from the worthless you will be my spokesman (i.e. if you utter what is noble or worthy instead of what is worthless or cheap)". What a rebuke for a preacher whose message to the people was so often a call to repentance (see 3: 12-22)! He is to apply that message to himself. He needs to repent of such bitter talk as we find in v.18 which God calls "base" (i.e., worthless, cheap). This reminds us of the biblical warning about the danger of hasty words, that "in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin", even in the words that come from the depths of despair. Perhaps the prophet had become too concerned about what people thought and said about him, too concerned for his own vindication and their punishment, when his overriding concern should always

have been God's honour and God's word. At all events his experience is like that of Christian and Hopeful seeking for the way back to the path after the events of Doubting Castle- "for their encouragement, they heard the voice of one saying, 'Set thine heart towards the highway, even the way which thou wentest, turn again'".<sup>11</sup> Mercifully also, the call to repentance is backed up by a promise that reiterates the original promise made at his call (1:18-19). If he indeed repents, "Then I make you before this people a fortified wall of bronze; Though they fight against you, they will not prevail over you; for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the Lord" (15:20).

However, God goes even further. In the other "Confession" that is linked to the one above, where again we find Jeremiah wishing he had never been born, so hard is it to stomach the curses of his contemporaries (15:10), God says this, "Surely I will deliver you for purposes of good. Surely I will cause your enemies to make supplication to you in a time of disaster and distress" (15:11). He is not only reminded of the abiding general principle that the plans of a Sovereign God are ultimately for good (a comforting message that Jeremiah was one day going to send to the exiles when it seemed like that plan for good had been crushed, 29:11), but also God reveals to him that those who are his enemies now will be glad one day to turn to him for help. And so it in the end proved to be.

### **Prophetic Imprecations.**

But while such precious promises may have made Jeremiah's pain easier to bear, its intensity remained with him. Zealous rage and grieving pity contended and tore within him. One of the aspects of many of his "Confessions" is the way he would call down curses on his enemies. The most vehement case is probably the "Confession" of 18:18-23, which came after another attempt on his life. He prays, "Give their children over to famine, hand them over to the power of the sword. Let their wives be made childless and widows. Let their men be put to death, their young men struck down by the sword in battle. Let a cry be heard from their houses when you suddenly bring invaders against them... Do not forgive their iniquity, or blot out their sin from your sight. Let them be overthrown in the time of your anger"(18:21-23). Such bitter imprecation has troubled commentators. Some deny the words to the prophet, preferring to take them as a later insertion by a scribe of a conventional, stereotyped curse formula. Others regard them as Jeremiah's words, but unworthy of him and to be excused on account of his psychological state at the time (i.e., being in the bitterness of alienation and vindictiveness). However, it is God's vengeance that Jeremiah wants (11:20), not his own. Jeremiah is steeped in covenant

thinking. He is so allied to the offence caused to Israel's Covenant Lord by Israel's breach of covenant that he knows the just and righteous covenant curses must come into operation to chasten his people (2 Samuel 7:14), action which will also vindicate and demonstrate God's honour. God has already told him that such covenant vengeance will fall on previous plotters against Jeremiah (11:20-23), though in this instance God remains silent.

The covenant curses certainly fell and Jeremiah certainly felt no pleasure in them. Instead he so felt the pain of them that he expressed in himself the nation's agony. When drought came the agony of his doubts returned only to be tempered by the knowledge that the covenant-keeping God was still among his people (14:8-9, 19-22).

Finally, the hammer blows of siege, destruction and exile fell upon Judah; Jeremiah lived through it all and cried out constantly to God in his pain (4:19-21; 8:18-9:1). At the end of the day, however, we hear him saying, "Woe is me, because of my injury! My wound is incurable! Yet I said to myself, 'This is an affliction (sickness) and I must bear (endure) it... I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself (in his own control.) It is not in a man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O Lord, but with justice (Moffatt has "but not too hard"), not in your anger, lest you reduce me to nothing. Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you, the peoples who do not call on your name, for they have devoured Jacob" (10:19-25). It is a pattern for prayer for all God's people in their day of crisis.

Modern day 'prophets' (like Allen Ginsberg), caught in the *angst* of crippling doubt, can only 'howl'. At the end of his day, Jeremiah's experience was like that of Tennyson's hero:-

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,  
He would not make his judgment blind.  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them: thus he came at length  
To find a stronger faith his own.<sup>12</sup>

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# THE CELTIC CHURCH AND ITS MISSIONARY VISION

by C. Knox Hyndman

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The Great commission, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, has laid on the Christian Church a perpetual obligation. In the history of the Church we can identify periods of great missionary zeal and other times when missionary enterprise has been almost totally absent. We consider one period in the history of the Celtic Church when the missionary vision was renewed and strengthened by the work of two notable figures - Columba and Columbanus.

## **The Condition of the Celtic Church**

It has been rightly observed that Christianity came to Ireland at a time, not unlike our own, when European civilization was undergoing change and decay. The great Roman Empire was breaking up and society was on the verge of collapse. The forces of law and order seemed powerless, and there was the ever present threat of the gathering barbarian hordes. Yet this period became known as the Golden Age of the Celtic Church, and Ireland itself as the land of saints and scholars.

Two aspects of the Celtic Church during this sixth century must be considered.

### **(a) Its Separation**

It is probable that Christianity was carried to Britain by ordinary people such as traders from Gaul and other areas of the Empire. South eastern Gaul in particular was evangelized quite early - apparently from Asia Minor. It may also have been that Britons who visited other parts of the Empire came under the influence of the Gospel and made that Gospel known when they returned to their own land. At this period, travel in the Roman Empire was unrestricted. A man could journey from Carlisle to Babylon without crossing an international boundary. By the early fifth century however, the Roman Empire was



under attack and as a consequence Roman forces were withdrawn from Britain (in 407 AD).

Britain was invaded by Angles and Saxons, and consequently a completely new pattern of civilization imposed itself over almost the whole of the land. Nothing but the merest fragments of Romano-British civilization could be discerned. Christianity was subsequently confined to the territory in the north and west of the land and was cut off from the continent by a wall of paganism.

Ireland remained outside the Roman empire and the Church in Ireland developed independently of that on the continent. In the providence of God this proved to be of great significance and the Celtic Church was protected from many of the errors and much of the declension which affected the continental Church.

As a result "When darkness fell over a great part of western Europe, as it began to do even before the death of Patrick, the true light continued to burn brightly in the island of saints and scholars and was carried forth from there to rekindle the lamp which had been extinguished."<sup>1</sup>

## (b) Its Organization

After Patrick's death the Irish Church was organised on a thoroughgoing monastic basis. Now we can rightly identify much about the monastic system which is erroneous. Yet we need to understand the nature of those early monastic settlements which were at the centre of the life of the Church.

Edmund Curtis in 'A History of Ireland' describes them like this - "In the abbeys and their many daughter houses not only was the peaceful life possible but religion, learning and education flourished, and the Irish monasteries were at once the schools, the libraries, and the universities of the land. Because of their sanctity and security they became also the capitals, the markets, the art and craft centres of Ireland, and such monastic 'cities' as Glendalough were, till the Norse period, the nearest thing to towns that Ireland had."<sup>2</sup>

Monasteries were ruled by abbots who were presbyters. It seems that within the bounds of the monastery at least they had no less authority than a bishop. The organization of the monasteries then could not strictly be described as episcopal. N.K.Chadwick comments on "The absence of central authority and organization in the Celtic Church".<sup>3</sup> We can agree with him when he says that "Irish Christianity in the sixth century was monastic in organization and to all

intents and purposes independent and self governing, though perfectly orthodox in belief".<sup>4</sup>

J.S.Reid is more enthusiastic in his description of the Church in this period. "It is now generally admitted that the primitive church in Ireland, though not free from error, differed most materially and for a length of time, from that of Rome. The free and commanded use of Scripture; the inculcation of the doctrine of grace and the efficacy of the sacrifice and intercession of Christ; the diversity in the forms of celebrating Divine worship; the rejection of papal supremacy; the marriage of the clergy; the Scriptural character of the early bishops; the Presbyterian order of the Culdees; all these important points of doctrine and discipline which were maintained and practised in the ancient Irish church clearly indicate its opposition to the papal system".<sup>5</sup>

## Columba

Columba or Columcille 'the dove of the Church' was born in Gartan, Co. Donegal in 521. He belonged to a noble family, the O'Donnells, and was great great grandson of one of the High Kings of Tara 'Niall of the Nine Hostages'. Columba was educated at the monastery of Clonard on the banks of the River Boyne, which had been founded by Finnian at the beginning of the sixth century. Archbishop Ussher gives a glowing description of this particular school "From the school of Clonard, scholars of old came out in as great numbers as Greeks from the side of the horse of Troy". Finnian taught his pupils to love God with their minds and to see consecrated scholarship as service to God. One of his other pupils was Brendan who became the hero of a medieval best seller 'The Voyage of St. Brendan'.

One of the areas in which Columba excelled was in the art of copying and illuminating manuscripts. When he left Clonard Columba made a round of the other leading Colleges in Ireland. He came to Movilla outside Newtownards where there was another teacher with the name Finnian. He had founded his school on his return from a visit to Rome, where he had acquired a copy of Gospels in Jerome's translation. This particular manuscript became the centre of a damaging dispute between teacher and pupil. Columba made a copy which he kept for himself. This however was at the time regarded as an act of literary piracy - a breach of copyright! Finnian appealed to Diarmid the high king of Ireland, who ruled in his favour and summarized his judgement in a colourful phrase 'to every cow her calf, to every book its copy'.

This decision against Columba's claim of ownership of the manuscript

became the occasion of a great conflict between northern and southern branches of the O'Neills. The battle took place at Culdrevny, north of Sligo and much of the blame for the bloodshed was placed at the door of Columba. Whether he was excommunicated and banished, or voluntarily went into exile is unsure. Whatever the precise reason, Columba did set sail with twelve companions and landed at the first place from which he could no longer see Ireland. It was the small island of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland.

It seems clear that following the battle of Culdrevny Columba had a deep rooted change of heart. So much so that G.T.Stokes is able to comment "The period of missionary activity began with Columba, whom we may designate the first Irish missionary, the apostle of pagan Scotland."<sup>6</sup> Columba indeed has been given the designation of "the apostle of the Picts". It was in 563 that Columba, "the saint with twelve disciples, his fellow soldiers, sailed across to Britain."<sup>7</sup>

At this time the Kingdom of Dalriada stretched across the Irish Sea - from Down and Antrim into Argyle. Columba saw the Irish colony which inhabited the Scottish Dalriada and the Christian Britons of Strathclyde as being in imminent danger of utter extinction at the hands of the pagan Picts. From his small island base Columba began to take the Gospel to these heathen Picts.<sup>8</sup> His plan of approach was similar to that of Patrick - he went first to the king. Columba first established himself in his base, studied the language of the Picts and then followed the long line of loughs and lakes (which now form the Caledonian canal) to king Brude.

Brude made a profession of faith and consequently Columba had greater liberty for his evangelistic efforts within Brude's kingdom. The missionary activity of Columba was given recognition in the writing of the Venerable Bede, "there came into Britain a famous presbyter and abbot - a monk by habit and life whose name was Columba - to preach the Word of God to the provinces of the northern Picts. Columba came into Britain in the ninth year of the reign of Bridius (Brude) the powerful king of the Pictish nation, and he converted that nation to the faith of Christ by his preaching and example."<sup>9</sup>

Following Columba's death in 597 Iona continued to play a vital part in the evangelization of Britain, most notably of the north eastern kingdom of Northumbria. Yet strangely the very year that Columba died another missionary landed on the Isle of Thanet in Kent. It was Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory to bring Roman Christianity to the land of the Angles and Saxons. It was not long till the two churches came into contact but that contact in effect

led eventually to the eclipse of the distinctive character of the Celtic Church.

Columba was undoubtedly a complex character. He was imperious and passionate and had many weaknesses of temperament. "It is easier to sleep on a stone than to lay aside the pride of lineage; and many have practised the discipline of the cloister who have failed to mortify the lusts which war in their members."<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless we must acknowledge and give thanks for Columba's zeal for the Gospel and his fearless evangelism. He was, says F.F. Bruce, "a man of great kindness, shrewd commonsense, and ready accessibility to poor people."

## Columbanus

There is a North Down connection, too, in the second missionary whom we consider. Columbanus studied in Bangor where his teacher was Comgall, founder of the Abbey there. Columbanus himself was a native of Leinster. He was an excellent Latin scholar but, what was more unusual at the time, he also had a fair knowledge of Greek and a basic grasp of Hebrew.

Columbanus had a delight in the study of Scripture and a great burden to preach the Gospel to those who had never heard it, or had never responded to it. In 589 he travelled with twelve companions to the south of Britain. His stay there was brief and he moved on to France and settled in Burgundy where he established a monastery. He was well respected in the community there because of the practical ministry to the poor of the district and because of his scholarship.

Several notable aspects of his character can be seen during his time in Burgundy.

He recognised the supreme place of Scripture in the life of the Church. Columbanus addressed the French Synod and urged them to direct the affairs of the Church according to the Word of God. "Let those observances be respected which are more in accordance with the Old and New Testaments".

He refused to acknowledge that the Bishop of Rome had any position of supremacy in the Church. About 613 he wrote to Boniface and warned him that he was under suspicion of heresy regarding the Person of Christ. He urged him to believe and confess the truth. "It is your fault if you have deviated from the true trust and have made void the first faith."

He showed courage in confronting scandalous sin in the lives of the nobility. The monarch of Burgundy, Thierry, was a member of a notoriously ungodly family. Columbanus visited him, denounced him for his wicked ways, refused to bless his children and declined to eat at a royal banquet.

For Columbanus the Scriptures were the only standard to which he was ready to yield submission. "All we Irish are disciples of Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the Divine canon under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; we receive nothing beyond the evangelical and apostolic doctrine; not one of us has been a heretic, or a Jew or schismatic."

From Burgundy Columbanus made his way to Switzerland where he saw many conversions. From there he moved to Italy where he founded a monastery at Bobbio and he died there in 615. Columbanus was ready to endure any difficulty or hardship so that he could bring the Gospel to the pagans of Burgundy, Switzerland and Italy. He taught his pupils to do the same without complaining and without fear.

Here were men in whose practice there were undoubted errors, and hindrances to spiritual maturity caused by the monastic life. Yet here were men whose hearts were filled with zeal for the Gospel. What can we learn from them?

Firstly, they went out with confidence in the message of the Gospel and with an expectancy that the heathen would be converted. That confidence and expectancy must be in the heart of every missionary, and minister of the Gospel. Where it is missing, preaching will be greatly hindered. J.I.Packer's comment is particularly apt - "low expectations are self-fulfilling. We look for little to happen through sermons, and we should not wonder that God deals with us according to our unbelief."<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, they instilled a missionary vision in those men who laboured with them. Gallus, one of the original twelve companions of Columbanus, remained in Switzerland. He had a fruitful ministry there and became known as the 'Apostle of Switzerland'. And Iona of course continued to be a centre of missionary activity for some time after the death of Columba.

Thirdly, they recognised that the Church is the missionary agent in the world. Columba intended his community on Iona to be a model Christian colony. He also made it the centre of an active evangelistic effort. "From the centre, well planned attacks could be made on the surrounding districts and to

this centre the wearied evangelists could retreat for rest, sympathy and meditation.”<sup>12</sup> Surely a good pattern for any modern congregation for as J.I.Packer comments “each congregation is to be a spearhead of Divine counter-attack for the recapture of a rebel world.”<sup>13</sup>

## References

1. F.F.Bruce, *The Spreading Flame*, Paternoster Church History Vol.1, p. 383.
2. Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland*, University Pbooks p. 12.
3. N.K.Chadwick, *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church*, Oxford University Press p. 77.
4. Op.cit., p. 119.
5. J.S.Reid, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, Whittaker & Co. Vol. 1.
6. G.T.Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, Hodder & Stoughton p. 111.
7. Op. cit., p. 114.
8. Some writers suggest that the journeys of the Irish monks were not missionary in purpose, but rather personal pilgrimages or peregrinatic. This view is adopted by N.K.Chadwick and is based on the Old Irish *Life of St. Columba*. While having some merit it surely does not do justice to the preaching, training and contending for the faith which were so prominent in the ministry of both Columba and Columbanus.
9. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, iii, 4 Quoted by G.T.Stokes.
10. W.D.Killen, *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, Vol 1, p. 39.
11. S.T.Logan Ed., *Preaching*, Evangelical Press, Introductory article by J.I.Packer.
12. G.T.Stokes, p. 119.
13. J.I.Packer, *I want to be a Christian*, Kingsway p. 67.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Man of Lawlessness*, Tom Davies, Hodder and Stoughton, 1989 266pp. £7.99

Any book that claims to be able to explain the reasons for the rising tide of violence in Western society is bound to have a ready and perhaps credulous readership! The sub-title of Tom Davies' book is "The effect of the media on violence" and, with his background in journalism, he seems to be a man who has "the pedigree" to discuss such a relevant subject.

The journalistic style is evident throughout and some of the chapter headings read more like "Tabloid" headlines than one is accustomed to seeing in serious works from a philosophical/theological perspective. Nevertheless, this attempts to be a serious work and addresses a problem that has been identified with regularity following various outbreaks of violence, ranging from terrorist bombings to football hooliganism and prison riots. Do the news media simply report the violence or do they foment and encourage it in order to report it?

In seeking to answer this question, Davies first highlights the fear that seems present everywhere in modern society because of increasing crime and suggests that the answer lies not in more draconian measures of law enforcement and punishment but rather in an examination of the ideas that lie behind criminal activity. In developing this theme he seeks to identify the "... one mind and one philosophy which is generating our current plague of lawless ideas and, in the process, making our lives so full of fear and the very future of our children so bleak". This "one mind" is given the name, "The Man of Lawlessness" and the underlying philosophy identified as Romanticism. There then follows a chapter giving very brief thumbnail sketches of the lives and philosophies of leading Romantic figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Marquis de Sade, William Wordsworth and Lord Byron. His linking of the ideas of the eighteenth century Romantics with the modern novel, cinema and media is cleverly done; "...The Noble Savage (Rambo); freewheeling anarchism (the work of Henry Miller); the alienated violent man (The works of Colin Wilson and Norman Mailer); the emphasis on the macabre (Stephen King and James Herbert); the dreams of perfecting the world by committing crimes (Bonnie and Clyde and James Bond films); the pictorial celebration of perversion (Francis Bacon); a virtual rewrite of de Sade's 130 Days of Sodom (every book of pornography and many news stories in Rupert Murdoch's The

Sun and the News of the World); the constant streams of blood (most adult videos and almost every American film made for television); and the fascination with violence and war (nearly every edition of television news)".

In what is undoubtedly the most fascinating section of the book, Davies looks at some well publicised acts of violence and links them very directly to specific books or films in what he thinks of as the "Romantic" tradition. Thus the murderer of John Lennon was fatally influenced by J.D. Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye", and the would-be assassin of President Reagan by the Martin Scorsese film, "Taxi Driver". Of particular interest is the link that is made between the first of the "Rambo" films, "First Blood", and mass killings such as that at Hungerford in August 1987.

The role of the media in the Northern Ireland conflict is subjected to close examination in the chapter somewhat chillingly called, "A Theatre for Terrorism". In it he mounts a savage attack on the media who have provided a stage on which the terrorist acts out his violence. His view of the use and manipulation of the media by the terrorist organisations in Ulster is illustrated from his experience as a journalist covering Northern Ireland stories and raises the question of whether the "troubles" could have continued for the past twenty years without the constant attention of the media; because, for the terrorist, all publicity is good publicity!

The effect of the television coverage of riots and civil disobedience, the revelling of the tabloid press in the "abiding Romantic themes of sexual perversion, morbidity and violence" and the relationship between video violence and actual violence are further evidences, he says, of the work of the man of lawlessness in the "global village". This influence extends into the modern "electronic" church and the packaging and selling of political leaders and parties.

Up to this point, the book is fascinating and persuasive and asks many questions that those responsible for publishing and broadcasting would need to address. It confirms many of the worst fears of those who have seen the steady decline in broadcasting, journalism and entertainment over the past thirty years. His analysis is somewhat "folksy" and anecdotal at times, but it would seem to be accurate, nonetheless. His rooting of the philosophical basis of the modern media in Romanticism is interesting and would merit a more profound study. It is, however, in the theological application of his thesis that he is most seriously in error. His own experience of dreams and visions sounds warning bells and his identification of the biblical man of lawlessness with the media



is superficial and extremely dubious. The final two chapters of the book contain some rather fanciful biblical and theological interpretations concerning the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fulfilment of biblical prophecy, but these do not materially affect the usefulness of a book which so clearly alerts the reader to the destructive influence that can be exerted by the media in its various forms.

**T.C.Donachie**

*The Bible and the Flag*, Brian Stanley, Apollos, 1990. Pb. 212pp. £10.95

One of the most frequent criticisms made of missionary work, particularly of missions originating in the West, is that it was done for imperialist reasons. The Christian missionary, viewed from the perspective of the anti-colonialist reaction of this century, has been seen as little more than an agent of colonial and imperialist powers, and concerned merely with the military, political, economic and cultural domination of other nations and peoples by the West.

This issue, which has dominated missiological thinking in the latter half of the 20th century, has not been an easy one to address. With the growing influence of Marxist ideology in Third World countries and the emergence in the last 25 years of indigenous African, Asian and Latin-American theologies, discussion of this question has taken place in an increasingly polarized and highly charged ideological context. More heat than light has been generated, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that, because of this, much of the debate has centred on myth rather than on historical fact.

In this book, which focusses primarily on the relationship between Protestant missions and British imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Brian Stanley, a tutor in Church History at Spurgeon's College, London, makes a genuine attempt to address this emotive issue objectively, and present a measured and dispassionate assessment of the missions and imperialism issue. Assessments, he writes, "should be based as far as possible on truth and not mythology, on evidence rather than propaganda" (p.13).

The opening chapter demonstrates the present need for this study. Under the influence of the anti-colonial reaction to Western missionary activity, as espoused and propagated by the new indigenous theologies, many people have blindly accepted a simplistic interpretation of the relationship of the missionary movement to Western colonialism. This is not confined to those with radical or liberal theological tendencies; even professed evangelicals are now saying that "the missionary movement was a product of Western capitalism

and hence functioned as an instrument of “domestication” instead of the liberation which Christian mission ought to represent” (p.30). To many sincere Christians who have read the biographies of some of the great missionaries, such accusations might seem ridiculous and grossly unfair, and the natural reaction would be to dismiss them as mere propaganda. But this ignores rather than addresses the problem. It cannot be denied that a relationship did exist between the colonial and imperialist powers and the missionary movement. But was it as serious as implied by the anti-colonialist reaction? Only an honest study of the subject founded on the evidence of history and not the assertions of propaganda can provide the answers. This is what we find in this book.

Opening the discussion, Stanley highlights what is perhaps the most fundamental issue in this whole debate, namely, what is imperialism? Convinced that too many people have assumed, without questioning “that the term ‘imperialism’ has a readily identifiable meaning” (p.33), he challenges certain historical assumptions that are made regarding it, and then proceeds to demonstrate from the historical evidence that these, of necessity, require a broader definition. For example, he shows from the British empire model that it is necessary to qualify substantially the view that imperialism was and is inherently exploitative both in intention and effect. While some were motivated by either national or self interest, many people viewed the empire as a sacred trust and showed great humanitarian concern. This was particularly true of Christian missionaries.

In an excellent chapter entitled, “The Gospel for the Globe”, Stanley deals with the origin and growth of the Protestant missionary movement in Britain and its specific relationship to British colonial expansion. Reviewing the history of this movement, he shows that its origin was an exclusively evangelical phenomenon and had nothing to do with colonialism. The predominant concern of those who went out as missionaries and those who sent them was not the expansion of the British empire, but that the “heathen” might hear the gospel and find salvation through faith in Christ and His atoning death. The empire, however, was not unimportant. When nineteenth century Christians reflected on the sheer immensity and territorial expansion given to Britain, they were convinced that this was an act of God’s providence and that Britain had been uniquely commissioned by God to bring the Gospel to the world. This belief in providence explains in large measure why missionaries and their supporters accepted imperialism, regarding it even as a sacred trust, although their support for it was never unqualified.

In a series of case-studies of the missionary-imperial relationship in three

different periods of British imperial rule, it is ably demonstrated that missionaries were often quite critical of imperialist policies. It is true that they rarely questioned the fact of British imperial rule or saw any fundamental contradiction between Christianity and colonialism, yet they consistently challenged and criticized the morality with which it operated, with particular regard to its treatment of subject peoples. The general attitude could be summed up in the words, "The missionary calling was to keep the flag in check, not to haul it down" (p.153).

While the evidence presented in this excellent book absolves the missionary from the charge that his motivation was secular rather than spiritual, and that he sought to build an empire rather than to promote the Christian faith, it doesn't ignore or dismiss lightly the problems created by the missionary-imperial relationship. Many missionaries, convinced that Western values were synonymous with Christian values, found it hard to shake off attitudes of racial and cultural superiority. Such "imperialist" attitudes affected their mission work, especially in relation to establishing self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating churches. In many instances missionaries "displayed arrogance, insensitivity and lack of trust in non-European capacity to discharge responsibility in the Church" (p.182). This aspect of the book serves as a warning to all "foreign" missionaries regarding the imposition of their cultural norms on those to whom they would present the Gospel.

This book, while containing much information on the history of the British missionary movement, is not designed for the average reader. Published by Apollos, the new academic imprint of Inter-Varsity Press, it is designed for the specialist, and this no doubt explains why it is so expensive. It is, however, warmly commended to those engaged in overseas mission work. Not only does it offer a necessary corrective to the propaganda and myths that have clouded the missionary enterprise of the past, it teaches vital lessons for this generation of Christian witnesses. The section which deals with the relationship between the Gospel and culture is particularly relevant for contemporary missionary work.

While commending this book, not every statement in it is endorsed. It would seem to this reviewer that the author, while presenting an excellent historical and theological analysis of this particular subject, has a Charismatic/pentecostal predilection. For instance, he makes the statement (without any explanation), "the gift of prophecy remains available to the church" (p.180). This, however, does not detract from the overall worth of this book which is a timely contribution on a most important subject.

**J.D. Trevor McCauley**

*Doubt, handling it honestly*, Alister McGrath, IVP, 1990. Pb. 144pp. £2.50

There is not very much available in print on the subject of doubt. This may reflect the fact that there is very little open discussion or understanding of the subject. It may also be the result of the tendency among Christians to feel ashamed of the doubts they experience. Alister McGrath is therefore seeking to meet a real need when, in this book addressed primarily to students and young Christians, he gives some practical advice on handling our doubts honestly.

At the outset, the main theme of the book is stated in the following terms: "Doubt is an invitation to grow in faith and understanding rather than something we need to panic about or get preoccupied with!" (p.7). The unfolding of this theme falls into three parts. In the first section (chapter 1), McGrath seeks to define the term doubt and to explain how the problem arises. He carefully distinguishes doubt from unbelief and scepticism. In contrast to unbelief and scepticism, doubt, we are told, "often means voicing uncertainties or asking questions from the standpoint of faith" (p.10). Doubt is seen as probably a permanent feature of the Christian life. The causes of doubt are seen as rising from human sinfulness and frailty. It can also be fuelled by man's vain search for certainty. The author gives us a helpful insight when he relates the prevalence of doubt today to the superficial emotional faith that is so common in our generation. He insists that experience needs to be reinforced with understanding if doubts are to be overcome. The first section of the book draws to a conclusion with a brief but helpful analysis of the biblical terms and images for doubt.

The second section (chapters 2 to 5) deals with a series of very specific doubts that Christians commonly experience. These relate to the Gospel, ourselves, Jesus and God. The fear that the Gospel will go out of fashion and the fact that it seems to have little effect on our friends are discussed. Our lack of assurance, our lack of a sense of the presence of God, and our feelings of inadequacy and failure are then addressed. The doubts that can exist about the identity of Jesus, the historicity of His resurrection and the relevance of His life are answered. Next, the author grapples with the anxieties that can arise concerning God's existence, His faithfulness to His promises and the steadfastness of His love for us.

The final section of the book (chapter 6) puts forward some general strategies for handling doubt. Having made the observation that many Christians find the new aggressiveness of secular culture very disturbing, the author

gives some sound advice on how we should respond. He points out that the popular reaction to an idea has no bearing on whether it is true or not. He urges us to take comfort from the experiences of the early Christians and to appreciate the value of Christian fellowship. The author then moves on to warn us not to get preoccupied with our doubts. Instead, we are advised to concentrate on developing the personal foundations of our faith; detailed practical advice is given on how to go about setting the problem of doubt in the theological perspective of the Exodus and the Crucifixion. The main emphasis is on the necessity of trusting in the faithfulness and promises of God. The book concludes with suggestions for further reading on the subject of doubt.

Two features of the book are worthy of commendation; the use of illustrations and the provision of questions for discussion. There are numerous illustrations throughout the book, and although they are not all equally helpful, some of them are truly brilliant. For example, in speaking of our inability to see the full picture of reality during this life, he writes, "Its like being inside a car on a dark night, with the windows misted up. You can't see properly" (p.36). The questions provided at the end of each chapter are carefully chosen and are generally thought-provoking.

In comparison to the analysis of doubt given by Os Guinness (*Doubt*, Lion, 1976), this book is much simpler in terms of its theological language and general style. While, therefore, the theologian will find the former work the more enlightening, McGrath's book is more likely to be of value in the average pastoral situation. There are one or two questionable applications of biblical passages (e.g. , on the Parable of the Sower, pp. 112 -114) and a fuller treatment of the doctrine of assurance might have added to the usefulness of the book. Nevertheless, the theology is generally sound and this reviewer has no hesitation in recommending the book as a useful resource for helping those who are troubled by doubt.

**Raymond A. Blair**

*Satan cast out: A study in Biblical demonology*, Frederick S Leahy, Banner of Truth Trust, 199pp. pbk. £2.95

This book, written by the professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics in the Reformed Theological College, Belfast, is a welcome reprint of a work first published in 1975. Apart from the addition of useful indices of general and Scriptural references, no substantial changes have been made and this second edition is as timely as the first, because of both the intrinsic importance of the subject and the excellence of its treatment.

The second half of the twentieth century has seen an upsurge of interest in the demonic which might seem incredible in an age which boasts of its enlightened rationality. But when men turn away from the living God, the source of truth, the resulting vacuum in mind and heart must be filled by that which is false and evil. Thus we have today a fascination with Satan and the occult which expresses itself on a public and popular level in films, books and music, while finding private outlet in more sinister and destructive forms. A society too intelligent to believe in God has become obsessed with ghosts.

The response of the Church has been lamentably weak. Such books as have been published, even by evangelicals, have all too often been sensational, superficial and inaccurate. There has been a crying need for a more satisfactory treatment of the subject and Professor Leahy's book provides such a treatment and fills a yawning gap. His work has four main virtues.

It is biblical in its method. The author's concern throughout is to base his study upon Scripture, both by examining the biblical evidence and by assessing and interpreting current and past phenomena in the light of the Word. This methodology grounds the whole structure upon a solid foundation.

It is comprehensive in its scope. Topics considered include: Angels, good and evil; the present position, strategy and character of Satan; demonic activity in Old Testament, New Testament and Church history; demon-possession and the authority of Scripture; and the challenge of the demons to the Church of Christ. Much of the imbalance in Christian writing on the demonic is due to an over-emphasis on one or two aspects of the subject at the expense of the whole. Here we have a satisfying completeness.

It is positive in its thesis. No-one could accuse the author of taking Satan too lightly or of minimising in any way the havoc wrought in human lives by demonic influence. But the essential thrust of the book, as evidenced by the title, is intensely encouraging. Professor Leahy shows that the devil is defeated and doomed, that the mighty Saviour has come and plundered him. This is the message which Christians need to hear. "Those who are members of the family of God need not fear the Evil One. They are to be alert and watchful and clad in the armour which God supplies; but in Christ, their victorious Redeemer, they face the Devil and his dark angels fearlessly. As they abide in Christ and as Christ abides in them, and as in prayer they claim the promises of God, they stand invincible" (p. 176).

It is pastoral in its approach. Originally written in answer to practical needs

arising on the foreign mission field, the whole work demonstrates pastoral concern. It is meant not only to instruct and enlighten, but to strengthen and to help. Here is a book to be used. It might form the basis for a profitable series of sermons or lectures. It can be used either as preventive medicine or as crisis treatment for the people of God. It should certainly be placed in the hands of every young person. We welcome its republication, commend it highly and pray for its continued usefulness.

**Edward Donnelly**