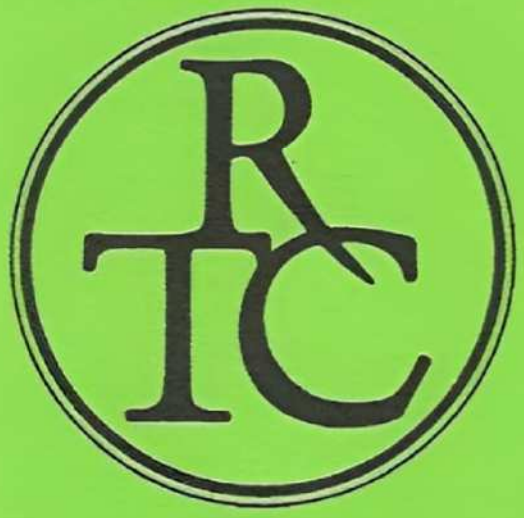

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PHILEMON: A CASE STUDY IN RECONCILING BELIEVERS

Edward Donnelly

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Philemon is the shortest of all Paul's letters, amounting to a mere 335 words in Greek. He must have written many such in the course of his ministry and we can be grateful that this one was included in the Scriptures, providing as it does a unique picture of a personal relationship. Although often overlooked, it is, comments Lenski, "the loveliest epistle written by Paul."[1] Rabbi Duncan agrees, describing it as "the most gentlemanly letter ever written".[2]

He wrote from prison, probably in Rome, to Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and the church in their house in Colossae. Philemon is Paul's spiritual son, almost certainly converted during the apostle's three-year ministry in Ephesus, a hundred miles away on the coast. Apphia appears to be his wife, and Archippus their son and they may well have been leading the church at Colossae during the absence of Epaphras.

A slave of Philemon, called Onesimus, had run away with money or property which he had stolen from his master. Having come into contact with Paul, he had been converted and has been helping his spiritual father. Paul is now sending him back to Philemon, together with Tychicus, the bearer of the epistle to the Colossians. This personal note is to pave the way for the ex-runaway slave to be received back into his master's household.

Paul is facing a complex pastoral problem – two believers at odds with each other and needing to be reconciled. Philemon has been wronged and has a legitimate grievance against Onesimus. Onesimus had been in the wrong, but is now a new creation in Christ, which must make a difference to his past offence and guilt. Yet Philemon is probably now hearing of his conversion for the first time. What is to be the basis for their new relationship, with the master/slave complication, within the fellowship of the church?

We want to examine the letter from a pastoral perspective – to discover what we can learn about shepherding people from the way in which Paul handles this particular case. We note six characteristics of Paul's pastoral method.

Paul's approach is positive

He does something. The very existence of the letter bears witness to the importance Paul gave to the issue. The great apostle had the burdens of many churches on his shoulders. The Colossian congregation itself was facing serious problems, yet he devoted considerable time and effort to resolving a difference between two individual believers.

He could so easily have avoided the whole issue, because the two men were geographically separated. Or he might simply have informed Philemon of Onesimus' conversion. It cannot have been easy for Paul to give up a useful companion and yet he considers it vital that this relationship be repaired. He is not willing to let things drift or simply leave it up to them. There is a responsibility to act and it is his.

In pastoral work we rarely go looking for pastoral problems to solve, for we are fully occupied with those which force themselves upon us so demandingly that, much as we might like to, we cannot ignore them. And, in pastoral priorities, unresolved differences between believers rarely come near the top of our to-do list. We tend to accept them as an unfortunate fact of life, part of human nature. Unless they blow up into a crisis, we are tempted to leave well enough alone.

Paul teaches us to apply different standards. It is monstrous that two followers of Jesus Christ should be at variance, estranged in any way. We need to feel the pain of this, realize the damage it can do to the integrity and witness of the church and see it as our responsibility to become involved.

Paul's approach is credible

A sub-theme of the letter is his imprisonment. He is "a prisoner for Christ Jesus" (v.1), "now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus" (v.9). He writes of "Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment" (v.10), of "my imprisonment for the gospel" (v.13) and of "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner" (v.23). Why so many references in a short letter?

It has been suggested that he is aiming at pathos in order to strengthen the force of the request he is about to make. "How could Philemon resist an appeal which was penned within prison walls and by a manacled hand?"[1] What is more likely however is that these are reminders that he himself knows what it is to suffer for Christ, for he will be asking hard things of these men. Philemon will be urged, in effect, to sacrifice his pride, possibly even surrender his legal rights. Onesimus will be giving up his freedom and returning home at significant personal risk. Yet the one who asks this of them cannot be accused of glibness, for he knows about the cost of obeying Christ.

H M Carson comments that,

> This is a principle involved in any true pastoral work. The pastor can only appeal to his people for self-sacrifice and discipline if he himself knows the meaning of discipline in his own life. Otherwise his call is empty and lifeless.[4]

Lenski concurs:

> Here he calls out all that is noblest and highest in Philemon`s heart...Paul could do that so perfectly because he himself lived altogether on that high level...This is why we fail, for often we try to move people to act on this high level when so much in our own lives shows that we ourselves do not move on it. That makes our urging insincere and...people detect it intuitively.[5]

They need to know that we too are men under the Lord's authority.

Paul's approach is tactful

The letter is composed with considerable skill to make up a subtle, persuasive piece of writing. This appears not only in the argument and the way in which it is built, to be looked at in a moment, but even in Paul's style, choice and positioning of words. He relieves a rather fraught situation with gentle punning humour, playing with the name "Onesimus" (v.10), which means "useful" and was a common slave name, commenting "Formerly he was useless (*achrestos*) to you, but now he is indeed useful (*euchrestos*) to you and to me." (v.11).[6] He makes subtle changes in word order to reinforce the impact of his message.[7] It is even possible, though unlikely, that he employs a word form which is stronger than usual for the same purpose.[8]

Other examples could be given, but this is enough to show "a carefully crafted and sensitively worded piece.[9]" Which should make us stop and reflect! Could our pastoral conversations be so described? Is it not often the case that we give attention to what we need to say, but comparatively little to how we are to say it? We may even suspect care over terminology as manipulative. We are after all plain, blunt men, unafraid to call a spade a spade and with no time for playing with words!

Yet Paul took pains to express himself as persuasively as possible. It is precisely because he is concerned with content that he does all he can to communicate it in the most effective way. As we engage in complex pastoral issues, it is valuable to put ourselves in the other person's position and to prepare to speak in the light of that sympathetic understanding. Our pastoral problems are sometimes exacerbated not because we are faithful, but because we are inept and clumsy.

Paul's approach is Christological

What is to be the basis for pastoral work? Psychological insights? Common sense? No – valuable as these may be, pastoral theology is simply that – theological. More specifically, Christian pastoring is to be built around the person, work and present activity of Christ in his Body. Paul exercised a ministry which was essentially Christ-shaped.

Verse 6 is a key statement: "and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ." The Greek here is difficult, as can be seen by the awkward translation, and this is not the place for detailed exegesis, but the most important word is *koinonia*, which means more than "fellowship" the common translation. It has the idea of "sharing, mutual participation, interchange".[10] We might paraphrase the sentence as, "Making mention of you in my prayers...that the mutual participation which is appropriate to your faith may become effective in the intelligent grasp of all that is good in us (or you[11]) in Christ Jesus." What is he saying?

In Christ we are one body – joined to him and thus to each other. At the heart of our salvation therefore is this "identification, interchange, commonality" or *koinonia*. We have received righteousness from him and he has received sin from us. And the dynamic of this "wondrous exchange", as Luther called it, must penetrate every relationship in the body, not only with the head but with every member. Let us see how Paul works this out in a concrete pastoral situation.

i) *He identifies himself closely with Philemon* (v.1-7)

He is Paul's "beloved fellow worker" (v.1). The apostle prays and thanks God for him (v.4). He has heard of "your love and of the faith that you have towards the Lord Jesus and all the saints" (v.5). A recent act of love in refreshing the hearts of the saints has brought Paul "much joy and comfort" (v.7).

ii) *He identifies himself closely with Onesimus* (v.10-16)

"My child...whose father I became in my imprisonment" (v.10) – "he is indeed useful...to me" (v.11) – "my very heart" (v.12) – "I would have been glad to keep him with me" (v.13) – "a beloved brother - especially to me" (v.16).

It may be useful to step aside from Paul's argument for a moment to note a key principle in his pastoral work: influence depends on relationship. He has developed close, strong friendships with these men. The terms he uses are

those of intimacy and they can hear them without laughing. This closeness gives him their hearts and opens a door for his influence to enter their lives.

Do we depend purely on official pastoral status for our influence? This may be theoretically correct, but is practically ineffective. Our ecclesiastical culture makes it easy to hide shyness and social ineptitude under a cloak of professionalism, which is certainly a more comfortable way to live than Paul's vulnerable openness. But what do we lose in real access to the hearts of our people?

But let us return to the argument, and we can see, as Philemon was beginning to, where Paul was going.

iii) *Philemon and Onesimus are reconciled in Paul*

The welcome Philemon would have given Paul should be given to Onesimus. Philemon loves Paul, but Onesimus is now a part of Paul, so Philemon must love and accept Onesimus also, for he cannot have Paul without him. (The converse, of course, would apply to Onesimus, as Paul had doubtless made clear before his return). "If you consider me your partner (*koinonos*), receive him as you would receive me" (v.17). The basis is mutual participation in the body of Christ, with no exemptions allowed. Paul has appealed to the strength of the relationship with Philemon and has then enlisted all of that strength in favour of Onesimus, whom Philemon could have meant to reject.

This comes out in Paul's triple use of "heart": "The hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you...I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart...Refresh my heart in Christ" (v.7,12,20). Paul is going down deep to the nature of the church. To reject Onesimus would mean that Philemon was denying the essence of the body to which he belongs by grace. This is probably why the letter, as well as being a piece of private correspondence, was for public reading, addressed to "the church in your house" (v.2) – not primarily to embarrass Philemon into obedience, but to show that his private and personal decision is set in a corporate context, with implications for the whole body.

iv) *The person & work of Christ*

Here is an even more profound structure in Paul's thinking. Why is the church as she is? Why this *koinonia*? Because she is the Body of Christ, shaped by him in her very essence. The soteriological echoes are pronounced, especially in v.18: "If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account."

Paul is reconciling these two men, estranged from one another. He identifies closely with both the offended and the guilty party, lays his hand upon both, mediates between them. He has a certain righteousness in

Philemon's eyes and he makes it over to Onesimus and asks Philemon to put it to Onesimus' account and treat him as if he were Paul. He admits that Onesimus has an indebtedness towards Philemon, which Paul takes upon self, asking Philemon to deal with him in the light of it. In so doing, he makes peace. Luther comments:

> Here we see how St. Paul layeth out himself for poor Onesimus, and with all his means pleadeth his cause with his master: and so setteth himself as if he were Onesimus, and had himself done wrong to Philemon. Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, thus also doth St. Paul for Onesimus with Philemon. We are all his Onesimi to my thinking.[12]

While we cannot apply this approach to our pastoral work in any rigid or mechanical way, it does provide us with some important guiding principles.

Christ reminds us of the *importance of reconciliation.* The gospel is the good news, breaking into a world of sin, suspicion, division, fear and anger, that Jesus Christ has revealed God's purposes of salvation, of human wholeness, of loving and forgiving fellowship. The church is to be a living demonstration of that reconciliation, for otherwise it has little to say. In Francis Schaeffer's phrase, loving unity "is the final apologetic".[13]

Christ provides us with the *dynamic of reconciliation.* It is nothing other than the experience of salvation, wrought into the very being of the new creature who has been forgiven and received into a new relationship. We are urging a person to act in human relationships in conformity with that which has happened to him on this most profound level and thus appealing to something very deep and powerful, the instinct to forgive as we have been forgiven. As N. T. Wright explains,

> [It] is nothing less than the radical application of the doctrine of justification to everyday living. No Christian has a right to refuse a welcome to one whom God has welcomed. Faith in Christ, the basis of justification, is the basis also of *koinonia*. Justification by faith must result in fellowship by faith. This latter means the settled determination to share fully in mutual fellowship with all those who share the faith, however awkward or angular or muddled or misguided, or simply different, they may be or appear to be'.[14]

It would be, says Calvin, "a sign of haughty pride if he (Paul) should be ashamed to count as his brother those whom God numbers among His sons."[15]

Christ provides us with the *pattern of reconciliation* – in himself. He does this in his identifying with both parties; using his own credit; and putting himself into the equation. To reconcile people exacts a cost. But what a blessing! This is Christ-like ministry.

Paul's approach is liberating

The fact that Paul never spells out to Philemon exactly what he wants him to do has caused comical and dogmatic differences among commentators. Is he to set Onesimus free? Or take him back as a slave on a permanent basis? Perhaps he should allow him to return to Rome to work with Paul as either a slave or a free man? The apostle doesn't say.

Perhaps that is the point. Whatever may have been in Paul's mind, he obviously wants Philemon to treat Onesimus as a human being: "no longer as a slave, but...as a beloved brother" (v.16). So he in turn treats Philemon as a responsible human being. He could certainly have used apostolic authority, yet chooses not to: "though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you" (v.8). Why?

Because he has a pastoral concern for Philemon as well as for Onesimus. He wants this to be a process of growth for him and merely obeying an order would not elicit in Philemon that increase in understanding and love for which Paul has prayed (v.6). His method is to set out the facts of the case, theologically, practically and pastorally – and then to encourage Philemon creatively to work out proper conclusions, to reach what must be his own decision.

Paul is not adopting the timid neutrality of much modern non-directive counselling. The fact is that there is in this case no single, obvious, correct answer. So the apostle wants the mind of Christ to be developed in Philemon by conscious reflection on what the Lord wants of him in the situation: "I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion, but of your own free will." (v.14). Whatever conclusion he eventually reaches is perhaps not so important as the process of heart-searching and self-examination which precedes it.

We may react against this in an age of moral relativism, when too few people are willing to give direct, biblical answers. But is this not our real pastoral purpose – to develop maturity in our people, to encourage dependence on Christ alone, free from our apron-strings? The church is suffering from a surfeit of counseling. Many evangelicals want a little pope and many pastors are happy to apply for the post. But "if a pastoral leader must use authority to coerce rather than facilitate transformation, he...may win a minor victory at the expense of the larger campaign for Christlikeness."[16] It keeps our people as children, liable to all the diseases and disabilities of spiritual infancy. It is surely far better, though initially more time-consuming and nerve-wracking, to teach a child how to cross the road safely than indefinitely to keep taking her across by the hand.

The fact that the letter was preserved suggests that Philemon reached a good decision. Ignatius, writing at the start of the second century, mentions a

bishop of Ephesus named Onesimus. The same man? We would like to think so. We need to trust our people, remembering that they are kings and priests! Usually they will pleasantly surprise us.

Paul's approach is realistic

A vexed question in the interpretation of the epistle is why Paul did not take this opportunity to launch a wholesale attack on slavery. Why not simply order Philemon to set Onesimus free? It may seem to us an obvious solution. Various answers have been suggested – mainly pragmatic and centering around the impossibility of emancipation in the society of the first century and the minimal influence of Christians at this stage.[17]

The explanation, however, is to be found in Paul's pastoral realism, his awareness of the stage of redemptive history in which he and we are called to minister. We live and suffer in an evil world-system. People will continue to exploit and oppress their fellow-men and Christians cannot escape from social structures which are unjust and unequal. We are called to change that situation by being salt and light. But how is this to be done?

Not by grandiose schemes of public reform or rhetorical denunciations of evil, but by living the life of the new age in our homes, families and churches. Paul's immediate aim was a narrow one – to begin to change the world by an appeal to an unknown house-church in Phrygia. Dick Lucas comments on

> the patterns and priorities of apostolic involvement in society's problems. What was being achieved was the establishment of little oases where an alternative way of life was being practised and could be observed. This powerful leaven must do its work.[18]

In this he was following Christ. The Lord's disciples, including John the Baptist, were constantly disappointed by his failure to be seen to be as impressive as they knew he was, to act on as wide and public a stage as they would have liked. But Jesus taught them that this is how the kingdom is now present in the world – as the seed in the soil, the leaven in the dough.

Often, little seems to be happening. But, for those with eyes to see, the powers of the age to come have been let loose in the world and the kingdom of God is among us. Paul is here operating in conformity with "the modality of the coming of the kingdom".[19] He knows what he can hope to accomplish and how significant it really is.

We too need this biblical realism – to keep us from heart-break, as unattainable ideals are not reached, and from the superficiality of empty rhetoric which impresses supporters but accomplishes little else. We need to be willing to work in imperfect situations, to set limited goals and to accept limited results.

It is an enormously encouraging perspective, for most of us will spend our lives in back-waters, where we may be overwhelmed on occasion by a sense of futility at the limited scale of what we are doing. But that is to listen to Satan. Here is one of the most gifted humans who ever lived and to what is he giving himself? To a small piece of God's work.

A mended relationship between two believers – how big an accomplishment is that? Quite big, in the realm where the gift of a cup of cold water is remembered to all eternity and where there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Notes

1. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), p.974.
2. Cited in A. M. Hunter, *Introducing the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1984), p.149.
3. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan and Son, 1879), p.333.
4. H. M. Carson, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1966), p.104.
5. Lenski, op. cit., p.961.
6. See also his use of *onaimen* –"I want some benefit" (v.20) – again, a verbal echo of the name.
7. Holding back the word "brother" until the very end of verse 7 and thus dramatically increasing its impact. Similarly, "Onesimus" is left until the end of verse 10, so that Philemon's sympathy is engaged before he hears the irritating name!
8. The possessive adjective *emos*, used in v.10, had been the more emphatic possessive in classical Greek, but had probably lost this nuance by the New Testament period.
9. N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), p.164.
10. "Close association involving mutual interests and sharing", F. W. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.552.
11. For the textual evidence see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), p.657.
12. Cited in Lightfoot, op. cit., p.318.
13. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian* in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1985), vol.4, p.189.
14. Wright, op. cit., p.186.
15. John Calvin, *The Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1964), p.399.
16. David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004), p.683.
17. H. M. Carson rightly criticizes this view: "It is not enough to say...that slavery was so much a part of the social fabric that to attack it would have been revolutionary doctrine, which would have called forth the opposition of the authorities. The apostles were not governed by expediency, but by truth", op. cit., p.22.
18. R. C. Lucas, *Fullness and Freedom* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), p.188.
19. Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), p.106.

THE TESTIMONY OF A TRANSFORMED MAN: NEBUCHADREZZAR IN DANIEL 4[1].

W. N. S. Wilson

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While some modern scholars downplay the outcome of the events of this amazing chapter (D.E. Gowan says, "Nebuchadrezzar is not 'converted' however..."[2].) others play up its significance (E.Lucas asserts, "In ch. 4 we see the completion of his conversion..."[3].), while S. Olyott asserts that indeed the king here, having had *notitia* and *assensus*, now, "...comes to *fiducia*, and commits himself to the truth of which he has been persuaded...his heart is changed...he goes into eternity in fellowship with the King of heaven"[4].). We shall look now in some detail at the chapter to ascertain which view is right.

It has long been recognised that the chapter division of the Hebrew Bible between chapters 3 and 4, where the Hebrew Bible begins at 4:4, is out of place. E.Tov[5]. has shown that the division, which originated in the medieval chapter divisions of the Latin Vulgate, was adopted into manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible in the fourteenth century. Accepting this, we have first of all to assess the importance of vv.1-4 as an introductory framework to an amazing chapter.

The chapter is presented as a royal letter or encyclical with identification of the writer and the addressees, followed by a greeting. This gives a special authority to what follows. It is also striking to see that this word is going out to "the peoples, nations and men of every language who live in all the world." With the obvious overtones of the Babel project (Gen.11) that resulted in these divisions (Gen.10), a project the king had attempted to resurrect in Dan.3, what he is saying is that, at last, he has come to learn where the true form of unity for peoples and nations of every language lies. What follows is amazing, for the encyclical suddenly becomes a testimony, indeed the kind of testimony we find in the Psalms, the testimony of one who has experienced the power of the LORD to rescue from calamity, to transform situations and to work out his will for good.

The greeting, "Peace to you!" would come to Jewish leaders with special irony in light of the fact that it was the king's destruction of Jerusalem that led them to seek the "peace" of Babylon (Jer. 29:7). He speaks of the "signs and

wonders" that the "Most High God" has performed for him. There is a significant echoing of Exod.7:3 here. The Pharaoh of Egypt had to experience breaking "signs and wonders" in order to submit reluctantly to the Most High. Nebuchadrezzar, in contrast, expresses the joy of his submission. He then breaks into song in praise of the signs and wonders he has experienced, ending with an Aramaic couplet which W.S. Towner points out is an almost exact equivalent of the Hebrew couplet found in Ps.145:13.[6] This is obviously the testimony of a transformed man!

The first three verses of the chapter are concerned with kingship: the kingship of Nebuchadrezzar and the kingship of the Most High God. Nebuchadrezzar's words show that he epitomizes human kingship that would claim universal rule. However he has been brought to realize who really is king and, as an earthly king whose reign will be temporary, he acknowledges the power of God whose rule is unconstrained by time. He has also advanced, in that while in 3:29 he had used threats to influence his peoples' worship of the Most High God, now he simply bears witness to what he has experienced and come to understand of God. He is no longer relying on the power of physical force, but on the power of his personal testimony with regard to the sovereignty of God. In describing such an astonishing turnaround the writer is offering hope and encouragement. As J. E. Goldingay says,

> Whereas often it does not look as if God rules in history, occasional yet momentous events, whose memory Scripture preserves, give the grounds and the periodic reinforcement for the conviction that he does in fact rule. That is the conviction of faith which the author of Daniel affirms for himself and his readers, as he puts it on the lips of the great Nebuchadrezzar.[7]

The king begins (v.4) by setting the events at a time when all was going well for him. He is secure and untroubled by enemies. In fact the Old Greek version[8] dates this episode to the king's eighteenth year, the date given for the destruction of Jerusalem in Jer.52:29. Thus the implication is that the king is "at ease and thriving" after his destruction of Jerusalem. However, P.W. Coxon points out that the Aramaic adjective for "thriving" is ironic, because it corresponds to a Hebrew word that speaks of the luxuriant growth of a tree, thus pointing us forward to the dream later in the chapter. As Coxon says,

> It does seem to me that the term is purposefully deployed in the king's opening speech to signal a subtle connection with the subject of his dream and that in the literary structure of the chapter he does achieve an effective "double-entendre"[9]

It was just at this point of self-confident ease that he had his terrifying dream (v.5). As in the previous chapters, a "court contest" ensues in which the superiority of Daniel and his God over the wise men and gods of Babylon is

emphasised (vv.6-8). There is irony in that, on the one hand, the king plays on etymology to link Daniel with Marduk, his and Babylon's god ("Daniel who was named Belteshazzar"), while on the other hand he asserts that in Daniel is "a spirit of the holy gods." While the latter expression is most naturally taken in a polytheistic sense, a Jewish audience could take it in a singular sense, for it is the direct parallel to the Hebrew phrase used to describe the LORD in Joshua 24:19.[10] A Jewish audience could in effect hear Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon confess the holiness of God's Spirit. In chapter 2 the king had been told by his wise men that conundrums that are beyond their ability to interpret cannot be solved because the gods' home is not among mortal men. Daniel has proved that Israel's God can solve them and the king draws the proper inference - God's Spirit dwells in mortal men like Daniel. Again there is a clear point of contrast with the parallel Joseph story, for there Pharaoh describes Joseph as a man "in whom is the spirit of God" (Gen.41:38).

We come now to consider the symbolic importance of the central metaphor of the king's dream, the great tree. The importance of this motif in the Old Testament,[11] in Ancient Near Eastern religion,[12] and in world religions generally,[13] is well documented. Goldingay sums up its significance:

> A lofty, pre-eminent, verdant, protective, fruitful, long-lived tree is a common symbol for the living, transcendent, life-giving, sustaining Reality or Deity itself. A sacred tree at the centre of the earth also symbolically links earth and heaven. In Ancient Near Eastern religion the tree symbol speaks of the king who mediates the Deity's life, provision and protection to his people.[14]

However, while this symbolism has relevance for the imagery of the dream here, it is our contention that the immediate background to this passage is material from Ezekiel and Isaiah. In particular we would concur with Gowan who argues that the background is Ezekiel 31, where the world tree image

> is put to a new use by the prophet...he has the cosmic tree cut down, something that has no parallel in Near Eastern mythology...he even has it descend into Sheol...he is willing to use the imagery very freely, as is done in Daniel 4...the relationship between Dan.4 and Ezek.31 is so close that it seems evident that the author of Daniel knew Ezekiel's use of the mythological theme and used it again in a singular way, with direct echoes of some of the language.[15]

The use of Ezek.31 in Daniel 4 then seems obvious. As in Daniel 4, the tree of Ezek. 31 was, "beautiful of branch, lofty of stature and lifted its crest above the clouds" (v.3); "in its boughs all the birds of the air nested, under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth and in its shade all great nations lived"(v.6); but "because it became proud of heart at its height" the LORD let it be cut down (vv.10f.) so that no other trees should ever tower so proudly on high again. In Ezekiel this tree is explicitly linked with the Garden of Eden

(vv.8-9,16,18). It is our contention that Eden imagery is carried into Daniel 4:12. The tree with its beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, which could provide food for every creature, parallels Eden's tree of life which speaks of God's giving of life. So when Daniel boldly proclaims to the king, "You are that tree" (v.22), the implication is that the king in his pride has usurped the place of God. We are not only taken back to the Garden of Eden, but there are also parallels with Babel in Gen.11. The description of the tree's top "reaching to the heavens" (vv.11,22) reminds us of that futile attempt to scale heaven, a recurring metaphor for hubris, one taken up again when the taunt of the Morning Star is applied to the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14.

The writer of Daniel 4 also borrows from Ezek. 17:22-24. However here a replanted shoot (i.e. Judah's exiles restored from the Babylonian exile) will grow into a great tree as in Daniel 4:12, with the result that, "All the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD. I bring low the high tree and make high the low tree (cf. Dan. 4:17, "The Most High has dominion over man's kingdoms and gives them to whom he wishes."). A similar metaphor is used of Jerusalem in Ezek. 19:10-14. The theme is of splendour leading to pride, which is then punished by the tree being cut down.

However, whereas in Ezek. 31 the tree is cut down and goes into "the pit", to "Sheol", to be among mortal men" (v.14), to lie with "the uncircumcised" (v.18), and no hope for any future is held out (as with the fall of the Morning Star in Isaiah 14), here, by an amazing and daring twist in the story, hope *is* held out - "Let the stump and its roots...remain in the ground." As Coxon[16] points out, in the Old Testament the survival of a root or stump is the symbol for the hope of a new beginning for Israel (e.g. Isaiah 6:13; 11:1). What the writer does here is that he dares to take an image for Israel's hope past exile and gives it to Babylon, and does so at a time when she is at her proud zenith (v.30), basking in her apparent victory over the LORD and his people (v.4). As Daniel explains in v.26, "The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots, means that your kingdom will be restored to you..."

At this point there is a "problem" of interpretation. The "stump of (the tree's) roots," reduced to the level of the grass on the ground, has a "band of iron and bronze." This has puzzled commentators. After reviewing the history of interpretation, Collins notes that much of it has been misguided as it pictures the band around the *stump*, whereas Daniel here is speaking of a *root* rather than a stump. He concludes, "The application of a band to the root of a tree that has been cut down is unintelligible."[17] Gowan[18] suggests a link with sacred trees that have been excavated complete with embossed bronze bands. It is not clear how this helps, because it deals with trees, not stumps or roots. The usual line[19] is that it represents a metal fetter to restrain the demented king, as the imagery, rather too abruptly, shifts. However this is surely unlikely in that nothing is said of binding the king in Daniel's explanation to him. In fact quite

the reverse is stated – "You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals." Our suggestion for solving this riddle would be to see a link here with the previous dream in chapter two, where these two metals represent kingdoms that will come to power after Nebuchadrezzar's demise. The implied threat is that he (or his dynasty) will be in such a reduced state that these powers will see to it that the root will never be allowed to branch again. So the image is double-edged: either his ruling dynasty will be cut down and its very root prevented from sprouting by the threatening powers that will take over, or, if he responds in the right way, the threat will be removed and the root will grow and the tree become what it once was.

The only response that will bring this about is that he acknowledge the absolute sovereignty of the one whom he already acknowledges as the "Most High." However, if he refuses to do this, judgment will be pronounced by a representative of the Most High and as a result his mind will be "changed from that of a man to an animal." This change has provoked much debate. It has been variously described as psychological, mental illness,[20] as based on similar themes from folklore,[21] as based on parallels from sacred myth,[22] or as based on the experience of Nabonidus.[23] However, while these suggestions are intriguing and provide fascinating resonances that give added depth to the story, we would contend here that there are additional and important roots in Old Testament theology. In Psalm 8 the writer speaks of man as being created "a little lower than the angels" with dominion over the animals. As Lucas comments in this regard,

> What we see asserted in Daniel 4 is that a pride that is not satisfied with being "a little lower than God" and reaches for the heavens, so blurring the human-divine distinction, results in a humbling to earth and a blurring of the human-animal distinction...when we reject our creaturely status and seek to become God we are in danger of becoming sub-human.[24]

Then, as we have argued that there are echoes of Eden's tree of life in v.12, so we may see an echo of the judgment on Adam in v.15 who, after asserting autonomy, experiences a judgment of banishment and loss of dominion, and is told he will "eat the plants of the field" (Gen 3:18). G. Wenham[25] has argued that this latter detail implies a contrast with the previous free access to the fruit trees of the garden which God had supplied. P.Coxon[26] has shown that this was how things were interpreted in the Palestinian Targums. These allusions to the story of the Garden of Eden remind us of the fundamental nature of the sin of pride, especially the hubris of the rulers who think they can "play god". Such an attitude invites the chastening and disciplining hand of God.

However there is one way that such chastening and discipline can be avoided and Daniel pleads with the king to take that route (v.27), the route of

repentance and a life of righteousness. Daniel calls on the king to "Break with his sin". The verb in the Peal Imperative has been translated in the past as "redeem" or "atone".[27] However as Goldingay[28] points out, this verb can only mean "redeem" when the object is the thing redeemed. Since the object ("Your sins") is that which binds the king, the meaning "break with" is required. Thus we have a call to repent. Not only so, but Daniel calls the king to a new life, to ruling in a way that befits one who acts as God's vicegerent, reflecting God's righteousness. Indeed Daniel's words reflect the rule of the ideal king in Ps. 72:2.4 (cf. Isa. 11:4: Jer. 22:15-16). In the dream we have a picture of an ideal ruler (v.12), dispensing goodness and protection. However Daniel omits any critical comment when he expounds the dream and speaks of what Nebuchadrezzar has actually achieved (v.19). The implication of v.27 is that, in fact, his sin is that he has ruled with injustice and lack of concern.

However the call to repentance was unheeded at that point. Instead we have a classical expression of hubris in v.30. Building in accord with his power for the glory of his majesty has been more important than concern for the needy or for justice.

In a survey of the history of interpretation of this chapter, Collins[29] notes that it has been read mainly as a paradigm of hubris and humiliation. He notes that in Rabbinic exegesis the passage was often linked with Isa. 14, where the Babylonian king there is taunted as Lucifer, Son of the Dawn. This linkage is often made in modern commentaries[30] H. H. Rowley took things further when he claimed,

> The fourth chapter is the story of a king whose overweening pride is punished by madness. It is known that Antiochus, who fancied himself a god incarnate, was called by his people "Epimanes" (madman) This chapter then, might well be understood in that day as a reference to Antiochus, and brings its promise of humiliation at the hands of God.[31]

We would contend however that, whilst chapters 8 and 11 do appear to be referring to Antiochus, this conclusion of Rowley's fails to do justice to the repentance and indeed conversion of the king in chapter 4. Four things should be noted in this regard:

(1) Nebuchadrezzar's confession that, having suffered for 7 years, he at last "raised his eyes towards heaven"(v.34). The one who had looked over Babylon with self-satisfied pride (v.29) now "looks to God in recognition and need."[32]

(2) His acknowledgment that his pride has been humbled (v.37, "Those who walk in pride, he (i.e. God) is able to abase."). Thus his assessment of his whole life before his chastening at the hand of God is that he has "walked in pride." Now he is abased before the acknowledged sovereignty of the king of heaven.

(3) His ascribing glory to the Most High (vv.34-35,37). Having been disciplined and having formally turned to God for mercy and then experienced restoration (not just to sanity, but to earthly dominion), he now opens his mouth in fervent praise and worship. In fact he goes so far as to make the confession that Isaiah invites the exiles to make (Isa. 40:12-26)! The inference for readers is clear. If even Nebuchadrezzar can make such a confession, why should those who also confess the same not be encouraged to go on trusting in troubled times? After all, the one whose sin has been characterised as pride and injustice acknowledges the one who embodies faithfulness and justice and the demolishing of pride.

(4) He is held up as a model of piety to Belshazzar in the following chapter (5:18-24). He who had set himself against the Lord of heaven came to humble himself and honour the God who holds all life in his hands. This Belshazzar failed to do and so is judged.

In the light of all of this then, it seems strange that some modern scholars wish to downplay the outcome of the startling events portrayed in this chapter. Gowan, for example, states,

> Nebuchadrezzar is not "converted" however. He does not learn the name of Daniel's God, let alone any Israelite theology. Daniel does not teach him anything...Nebuchadrezzar does not become a true Yahwist. Perhaps the real Nebuchadrezzar was not convinced the Jewish God was LORD of all...The story...contains the rather modest hopes of a group of monotheists whose daily lives seem to be completely under the control of the government of a great empire.[33]

We cannot agree with such a conclusion, based as it is more on silence than on the detail of the text. On the contrary we would contend on the basis of the evidence presented that this chapter shows a fundamental optimism in its attitude towards the ruling Gentile powers. We see here demonstrated the audacious and stubborn hope that even the epitome of the arrogant tyrant can be reclaimed and the Most High universally acknowledged. As S. Olyott puts it,

> We should never despair of the conversion of anybody. Who would have thought that the powerful king, taking God's people captive and pressuring God's remnant to join him in idolatry, would one day himself be in fellowship with that God? It was to a total pagan that the exiles bowed in 605 B.C. Surely it was impossible that he should ever become one of the people of God himself! But with God nothing shall be called impossible.[34]

As the accounts in chapters 1 to 4 of Daniel progress, we see that it took the king a long time finally to come to submission to God. In chapter one he is the unwitting agent used by God. In chapter two he fails to learn the lesson

of the dream, indeed his response is the opposite of what it should have been. Having learned that he is the head of gold, he sets up the golden image to symbolize his power as a unifying centre of nations. However his ego is going to be deflated by the devastating chastisement from the hand of God in chapter four. Goldingay has summarised it well,

> Nebuchadrezzar is an example - a warning of how not to be led astray by power and achievement, a model of how to respond to chastisement and humiliation. He is even more a promise, that earthly authorities are in the hand of God, not merely for their judgment, but for his glory.[35]

Notes

1. This article is based on a section of the writer's Ph.D. thesis of May 2006, "The theological and symbolic significance of Babylon in the Pentateuch and the Prophets."
2. D.E. Gowan, *Daniel*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), p.83.
3. E.C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 20, ed. D.W. Baker and G.J. Wenham (Leicester: I.V.P., 2002), p.104.
4. S. Olyott, *Dare to Stand Alone*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1989), pp.53,59.
5. E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), p.52.
6. W.S. Towner, "The Poetic Passages in Daniel 1-6, *C.B.Q.* 31, 1969, p.321.
7. J.E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Bible Commentary 30 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), p.91.
8. J.J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermenia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), p.222.
9. P.W. Coxon, "The Great Tree of Daniel 4," *J.S.O.T.* 42, 1986, p.97.
10. As Collins says, "The singular 'god' of Theodotian is therefore defensible," op cit., p. 222.
11. P.W. Coxon, op. cit., pp.94-96.
12. G. Widengren, *The King and the Tree of life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (Uppsala : Lindequist, 1951), pp.42-58.
13. M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), pp.265-330, cf. E.O. James, *The Tree of Life; An Archaeological Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).
14. J.E. Goldingay, op. cit., p.87.
15. D.E.Gowan, op. cit., p.76.
16. P.W. Coxon, op. cit., p. 105.
17. J.J. Collins, op. cit., p226.
18. D.E. Gowan, op. cit., p.78.
19. See e.g. E.C. Lucas, op. cit., p.112; J.E. Goldingay, op. cit., p.89; L.F. Hartman and A.A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1978), pp.16-18.
20. e.g. J. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Leicester: I.V.P., 19780), pp.108-109.
21. e.g. P. Grelot, "Nebuchadrezzar Change en Bete", *V.T.* 44, 1994, pp.10-17.
22. e.g. P. Coxon, "Another Look at Nebuchadrezzar's madness," *The Book of Daniel*, ed. A.S. van der Woude (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), pp. 211-222. Here Coxon draws our attention to interesting parallels, for example with Enkidu in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, who was a wild, animal-like creature before he became "civilized" as a human being.
23. e.g. P.-A. Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon, 556-539 B.C.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

24. E.C. Lucas, op. cit., p.116.
25. G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word,1987), p.82.
26. P.Coxon, op. cit., p.211.
27. This had led in the past to disputes over the issue of "salvation by works" as reflected in the commentaries of Calvin (see J. Calvin, *Daniel* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1561, reprinted 1966), pp. 276-283 and Keil and Delitzsch (see Keil and F.Delitzsch, *Ezekiel, Daniel: Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1991), pp.156-157).
28. Goldingay, op. cit., p.81.
29. J.J. Collins, op. cit., pp.233-234.
30. e.g. W.S. Towner, *Daniel*, Interpretation (Richmond, VA: Westminster John Knox, 1984), p.66.
31. H.H. Rowley, "The Unity of the Book of Daniel," *The Servant of the Lord and other Essays on the old Testament* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), p.277.
32. This is Goldingay's expression, op. cit., p.96. Compare Lucas, op. cit., p.113, "Looking to heaven suggests seeking God's aid, and so implicitly acknowledging his kingship."
33. D.E. Gowan, op. cit., pp.83-84.
34. S. Olyott, op. cit., p.59.
35. J.E. Goldingay, op. cit., p.97.

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE AND THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY – FRUIT OF THE GREAT AWAKENING

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In December 1748 a young Englishman wrote a letter to the trustees of the North American Colony of Georgia in which he stated, "the Colony has been declining for these many years last past." He compared it unfavourably to South Carolina which was thriving economically. What was the reason for Georgia's ills? South Carolina made extensive use of African slaves, whereas, under Governor Oglethorpe, this was not permitted in Georgia, though many in the Colony supported the pro-slavery view.

Eventually the trustees acceded to such requests and in time Georgia imported more slaves than most of the other American states. As a result, in the next century Georgia was embroiled (in part over the issue of abolition) in one of history's bloodiest civil wars. Of course the young Englishman could not have foreseen this. Although he made use of over fifty slaves, he treated them kindly and was utterly opposed to the widespread abuse and cruel treatment of the Africans. The name of the letter-writer was George Whitefield.[1]

Ambiguity

Why did this great preacher of the gospel abhor the horrors of slavery and yet promote the owning of slaves? His use of them in Bethesda, his Georgia orphanage, was an attempt to offset the debt which was crippling the work there. To us this seems like the perpetration of one tragedy to help overcome another, but at that time his solution to the difficulties would not have seemed out of the ordinary. Most early 18th century British and British/Americans did not see slavery as wrong *per se*, but viewed it as a necessary component of the economic advance of British interests in the New World. This attitude seems to have prevailed generally among Christians as well as the general public. It should also be remembered that unlike most people of that age Whitefield very publicly and courageously campaigned against the wicked cruelties of many slave owners, enduring much hatred and opposition for his pains.

Whitefield was also among the first to be deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of the slaves and frequently proclaimed the gospel to them with great success, as well as seeking to do what he could to alleviate their suffering. After preaching to 10,000 people in Philadelphia he wrote in his Journal,

> When I came to take my farewell, being about to depart for New York on the morrow, a great number wept sorely. Many of the negroes were also much affected. This day I bought five thousand acres of land on the forks of the Delaware, and ordered a large house to be built thereon, for the instruction of these poor creatures...I have called it Nazareth.[2]

The Great Awakening which was largely (though not exclusively) the fruit of Whitefield's preaching would pave the way for the eventual abolition of the slave trade and ultimately the emancipation of the slaves throughout the British Empire. Had Whitefield lived longer (he died in 1770 at the age of 56) it is not unlikely that he would have supported abolition, as did his friend John Wesley who lived well into the era of the popular abolition movement.

While all of this helps set Whitefield's views in a contemporary context, nevertheless Arnold Dallimore is right when he states,

> in this action Whitefield was making himself a partner in the practice of slavery, with all the inhumanity inherent therein, and while his motive was commendable the means adopted was deplorable.[3]

Whitefield and many Christians in effect condoned the practice of slavery, but a few others did not. It is sometimes thought that the Quakers were the only denomination to oppose slavery, and while that is broadly correct, there were those of a very different theological persuasion who agreed with them in this. Influenced by radical Irish Presbyterianism, the 18th century port authorities of Belfast refused entry to any slave ships. Ireland as a country was never involved in the African slave trade – a fact which Wilberforce himself was later to acknowledge when he said that Ireland was a great example to other nations. By 1792 the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland could pass a strongly worded resolution against the slave trade in which they said, "[W]e should think ourselves shamefully defective in our duty to God, to the world and our own consciences did we not come forward to bear our public testimony against the unnatural traffic in human flesh." There had also been dissenting voices in former ages. The Scottish historian Rev. William Robertson pointed out that Christians had been forbidden to enslave fellow Christians by early bishops so that slavery had almost disappeared from "Christian" Europe by the 12th century.

English slave trading commenced in a small way in the late 15th century, and started to grow during the 16th and 17th centuries, advancing rapidly by the 18th. It is thought that over three million slaves had been transported in British ships to the Americas by 1807 when the trade was abolished. In the 17th century some of the Puritans had spoken out. The famous missionary to the North American Indians, John Eliot, was against slavery, as was the New England leader John Cotton of Boston, while at Kidderminster in England Richard Baxter stated that slave-traders were "fitter to be called devils than Christians". Another Puritan, William Sewall, published America's first tract against slavery - *The Selling of Joseph* - as early as 1700. Yet it would take almost eighty years after the publication of this seminal work before the ambiguous views of Christians on both sides of the Atlantic would change.

Clarity

At Northampton in Massachusetts, Jonathan Edwards, friend of George Whitefield and one of the ablest theologians and revival preachers in North America, kept slaves, but his son, also called Jonathan, could write in later days,

> thirty years ago scarcely a man in this country thought either the slave trade or the slavery of Negroes to be wrong...our pious fathers lived in a time of ignorance which God winked at; but now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent of this wickedness.[4]

By the time the younger Edwards wrote a great sea-change had taken place among the public, and particularly among the British public. What brought this about? Historians have sought an explanation in the progress of industrial capitalism, cultural change, the spirit of revolution which was in the air, or the rise to prominence of the new bourgeoisie. Added to this, scholars note that the British people were gradually made aware of the dreadful conditions the slaves were exposed to and some appalling atrocities were reported. For example the captain of the slave ship *Zong* threw 130 slaves; men, women and children overboard so that the company could claim insurance for their deaths.

No doubt social changes and accurate reporting played their part, but it would be a serious error to fail to acknowledge the crucial role of the Quakers and evangelicals in the abolitionist movement. What gave them such an influence over the prevailing views of the industrialists, business people and politicians of their time? The answer can be found in the great Revival of the 18th century, in which, ironically, the slave-holders Whitefield and Edwards played such a large part.

The Revival was influential in connection with abolition in the following ways:

(1) The conversion of thousands of ordinary members of the public.

The revival wrought such a great change in the moral fabric of the nation that England at the end of the 18th century was a very different place, both spiritually and morally, from what it had been at the beginning of that century. In 1868 Bishop J.C. Ryle wrote,

> The state of this country in a religious and moral point of view in the middle of last century was so painfully unsatisfactory that it is difficult to convey any adequate idea of it ...evidence about this painful subject is, unhappily, only too abundant. My difficulty is not so much to discover witnesses, as to select them.[5]

He went on to ask his readers to remember that "Wilberforce had not yet attacked the slave trade" and to show, however, the transformation which did take place through the powerful preaching of the gospel by the Revival leaders. When the reports of the abuse of the slaves reached the ears of thousands of such converts, they were determined to support their pastors and others who wanted to bring about change. In one of many similar cases, hundreds of Manchester Methodists signed a petition in opposition to the trade at the Communion on the Lord's Day.

(2) The later leaders of the revival were utterly opposed to the slave trade.

Some of the older leaders of the Revival, such as John Wesley, had expressed opposition to slavery. He had written one of the earliest pamphlets, *Thoughts on Slavery*, in 1774, four years after Whitefield's death. Indeed what was probably his last letter, written in "straggling syllables", appears to have been addressed to Wilberforce, urging him on, but the burden of the struggle fell largely on the next generation of those who had come under the sway of the Revival. Hood writes, "From many points of view William Wilberforce may be regarded as the central man of the Revival in its new and crowning aspect."[6]

(3) The formation of "The Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade"

On 22nd May, 1787, twelve Christian men met above a printing shop in London to discuss the issue. Most were Quakers, but some, including the anti-slavery campaigner Granville Sharp, were Anglicans. They asked the young Yorkshire MP, William Wilberforce, a decided Anglican evangelical, to take the battle to the House of Commons. This he readily agreed to.

As Paxton Hood put it in the 19th century,

> The effects of that great awakening [indicate] that the immense regeneration effected in English manners and society during the later years of the last century and the first of the present, was the result of a secret, silent, most subtle spiritual force, awakening the minds and hearts of men in most opposite parts of the nation, and in widely different social circumstances.[7]

Action

As we have seen, other Christians had protested eloquently, but ineffectively, against the powerful forces of the African slave trade, but the time was now ripe for action. Wilberforce was young, energetic, popular, able and well-connected, including among his friends the great William Pitt (the Younger). What influenced him to take up the cause of the slaves? To that question we now turn.

Wilberforce was born on 24th August, 1759, in Hull, the son of Robert, a wealthy merchant. He attended Hull Grammar School but when his father died in 1768 he was sent to live with an uncle and aunt, William and Hannah Wilberforce, in London, going to a school in Putney. Paxton Hood states that Wilberforce "owed his first religious impressions to the preaching of Whitefield" in London[8] However John Pollock does not think this was likely given that "Whitefield, who in the early autumn of 1769, at about the time of William's coming south, left for his sixth and last visit to America, where he died."[9] Nevertheless there is no question that the great evangelist had an indirect influence on Wilberforce through Hannah, who had come to a living faith in Christ as a result of Whitefield's preaching and was one of his staunchest supporters in the city. So concerned did Williams mother become at his "Methodist" leanings, she brought him back to Hull in 1771. His early impressions seem to have worn off, but embers of the influence of another preacher he had heard in London remained, later to be fanned into flames. This was the parson of Olney in Buckinghamshire, a product of the Revival who often preached in the Capital, and would later become rector of a church there. John Newton had, as a godless sailor, been involved in the horrors of the slave trade, until his conversion. Wilberforce loved his sermons and stories, "reverencing him as a parent when I was a child". He became one of Wilberforce's closest allies.

In 1776 William went up to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he met William Pitt, the future Prime Minister. He soon suppressed his evangelical impressions and engaged in the hedonistic lifestyle which seems to have been almost *de rigueur* for students there at that time. At University he decided to seek election to Parliament, and so in 1780 at the age of twenty-one he became independent Tory MP for Hull. In 1784 he was returned to the House as

Member for the more prestigious constituency of Yorkshire. One year later Wilberforce underwent a profound spiritual experience which he regarded as his real conversion. This came about partly as the result of reading a well-known Christian book. Here we must pause to notice an astonishing chain of providence with regard to this book.

In 1630 the English Puritan Richard Sibbes published his *Bruised Reed*, which became soul-food for many generations of Christians. Some years later a poor pedlar came to the door of a farm-house in Eaton-Constantine. "The farmer bought a copy of the book from the pedlar, but his son, Richard Baxter who was fifteen at the time, began to read it 'and found it suited my state and seasonably sent me, which opened more the love of God to me, and gave me a livelier apprehension of the mystery of redemption, and how much I was beholden to Jesus Christ.'"[10] This ultimately led Baxter to write and publish the equally influential *Saint's Everlasting Rest* in 1650. Baxter's book was the inspiration behind Philip Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* and it was that work which was one of the means to bring Wilberforce to faith. In turn Wilberforce wrote his *Practical View of Christianity* which was highly successful in its day – for example a young Church of England clergyman, Legh Richmond was converted through reading Wilberforce, and went on to write his own widely-read volumes, such as *The Dairyman's Daughter.*

Apart from Doddridge's book the other great spiritual influences on Wilberforce came from his friends Isaac Milner, with whom he studied the Greek New Testament, and John Newton. He turned to Newton, sixty years old and rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in the City of London, and by now a leading evangelical Churchman, for guidance. Initially Wilberforce thought it his duty as a Christian to retreat from the world and leave politics. Although this was the common pietistic position of evangelicals at that time, Newton dissuaded him –"It is hoped and believed that the Lord has raised you up for the good of His church and for the good of the nation," he later wrote. Pitt also counselled him not to give up politics.

There is no doubt that Newton is to be credited with keeping Wilberforce in public office, a great enough achievement in itself, but he went further. He supplied the abolitionist movement with much information about the slave trade, having written a very moving account of his experience as a slaver entitled *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, a document which is still worth reading. In it Newton begins by explaining the consequences the trade had on British seamen, leading to their utter corruption, making them worse than beasts and often causing their early deaths – one in five did not return. He goes on to detail the appalling suffering of the slaves countering the argument that they are only like animals anyway by referring to the many instances of their humanity and honesty with which he had met. Newton then refers to the cruelty they experienced in the West Indies where they rarely lived more than

nine years and concludes,

> The condition of the unhappy slaves is in a continual progress from bad to worse. Their case is truly pitiable, from the moment they are in a state of slavery, in their own country; but it may be deemed a state of ease and liberty, compared with their situation on board our ships. Yet, perhaps, they would wish to spend the remainder of their days on ship-board, could they know beforehand the nature of the servitude which awaits them on shore; and that the dreadful hardships and sufferings they have already endured, would, to the most of them, only terminate in excessive toil, hunger, and the excruciating tortures of the cart-whip, inflicted at the caprice of an unfeeling overseer, proud of the power allowed him of punishing whom, and when, and how he pleases.[11]

Wilberforce became interested in the plight of the slaves through clergymen such as Newton and James Ramsey, vicar of Teston who had talked to Wilberforce about slavery at a dinner in Curzon Street in 1783. The next year Ramsey wrote against slavery, having witnessed at first hand its horrors while serving in the Navy. His two essays on the subject brought a storm of abuse on his head. A politician also caused Wilberforce to reflect on what he might do for the slaves. This was the eccentric David Hartley, the other member for Hull along with Wilberforce. Hartley sought to invent a fire-proof house; he wore strange clothes and somewhat shockingly declined to powder his hair! He also opposed the war against America and supported a limited Act for Catholic Relief, neither of which added to his popularity. Thus when he came to speak in Parliament against slavery there where few who wished to tolerate him. However Wilberforce asked a friend who was going to the West Indies to bring back details. This was, according to Pollock, "the first authenticated expression of his interest."[12]

In 1787 he was introduced to Thomas Clarkson and the group organising protest against the slave trade, and as we have noted was invited to act on their behalf in the Commons. On 12th May, 1789, he made a major speech on the subject in the House. Having detailed the iniquities of the slave trade, he said, "It will appear from everything which I have said, that it is not regulation, it is not mere palliatives that can cure this enormous evil. Total abolition is the only possible cure for it." Consequently in April 1791, April 1792 and again in February 1793 he moved Bills for abolition which were defeated on each occasion. Friends rallied to his support, encouraging him to continue the fight. Leaders of the Revival in its later stages gave him their support, including Wesley, the famous William Jay of Bath and Thomas Scott the commentator whom Wilberforce and a friend described as "the best minister we ever heard."[13], yet "one of the most determined Calvinists in England."[14]

Though Wilberforce was not himself a Calvinist, many of his friends were. The former actress and fellow-abolitionist Hannah More was such a close friend that he could jokingly say to her, "vile Calvinist you, my very

blood rises at the sight of you", without any offence being taken! Hannah, "a slender, graceful and altogether pretty young lady"[15] was a remarkable member of the Abolition Society. As early as 1775 her play, *The Inflexible Captive* was staged in the city of Bath, near Bristol an important slave-trading port where she had been born and educated. Her stage career made Hannah one of the great celebrities of that age and brought her into contact with important figures such as Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and David Garrick. After her conversion, which came about through reading John Newton's *Cardiphonia* and corresponding with him, she gave up the theatre and became well-acquainted with Newton, Bishop Porteus, Thomas Clarkson, the Teston vicar James Ramsey and Wilberforce.

In February 1788 she published *Slavery, a Poem* which became one of the most important anti-slavery writings of the period. Her religious pamphlets *Cheap Repository Tracts* eventually led to the foundation of the very successful Religious Tract Society. Unlike Wilberforce she held to Reformed theology and included among her favourite books some of the works of the Puritans, especially Baxter's *Saints Rest* and the writings of Doddridge. More was also a great counsellor to Wilberforce. Being naturally cheerful, even jovial and thus a desirable dinner guest of the rich and famous, Wilberforce would, nevertheless struggle with feelings that this was not consistent with Christian gravity and piety. Hannah gave him the eminently sensible advice,

> I declare, I think you are serving God by making yourself agreeable...to worldly but well disposed people, who would never be attracted to religion by grave and severe divines, even if such fell in their way.'[16]

To their credit some of those worldly and well disposed people supported the (largely) Christian struggle for abolition, but still Wilberforce needed uncommon stamina and courage after so many parliamentary defeats for again in 1804 and 1805, he introduced a bill to the House and on both occasions it was defeated. A lesser politician would have given up.

Opposition

Politicians, captains of industry, plantation owners, owners of slaving ships and even the Royal Family expressed their dismay and/or outright hostility. They would not take the loss of a lucrative trade meekly, no matter how many cruelties were coming to the attention of the British public. Vast sums of money were involved as acknowledged by John Wesley when he wrote in 1787, as noted by Pollock, to encourage the veteran campaigner Granville Sharp:

> Ever since I heard of it first, I felt a perfect detestation of the horrid trade...Indeed you cannot go on without more than common Resolution

> considering the opposition you have to encounter. All the opposition which can be made by men who are not encumbered by Honour, Conscience or Humanity will rush on...through every possible means, to secure their great Goddess Interest.[17]

Wilberforce would also be on the receiving end from the world and even the Church, as the Church of England was not without its pro-slavery element. Various Anglican clergy kept slaves. In fact after abolition the Government had to compensate the Bishop of Exeter to the tune of £12,700 (a massive sum in those days) for the loss of his 655 slaves. In addition, some Churchmen despised Wilberforce because they considered him too friendly towards Dissenters, given that much support came from the Dissenting Churches, though in fact he was a loyal Anglican. Despite the difficulties inherent in opposing the *status quo* Wilberforce and the others kept on campaigning, using surprisingly modern techniques – pamphleteering, badges, logos, petitions, rallies and letters to MPs. Throughout they experienced great opposition from anti-abolitionists whose pockets were affected, especially when an estimated 400,000 British people boycotted the sugar and rum coming from the slave plantations in the Caribbean. Yet they had their encouragements, for as historians have noted, grass-roots support came overwhelmingly from thousands in the Dissenting Churches.

Difficulties also arose from another quarter. "Does not the Bible itself support slavery?" anti-abolitionists asked. Abolitionist Christians answered that under the Old Testament slavery was strictly controlled and one former African slave pointed out that Exodus 21:16 and Deuteronomy 24:7 made slave trading a capital offence ("He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.") As for the New Testament, it taught that all men were now to be treated as we would wish to be treated, and if the Apostle Paul had demanded the abolition of slavery, he would have caused riots rather than reformation, given that slavery was integral to the structure of Roman society at that time. Besides, Paul in his letter to Philemon had begun a process which later Christians should complete. Theology also played its part as abolitionists not only used passages of Scripture to answer their opponents, but turned to the doctrines of Creation and the Fall to remind people that all men bore the image of God, however marred. The Calvinistic Baptist Abraham Booth taught that Africans and pagans as well as Europeans and Christians are all on a level. All had fallen in Adam and Christ had died to redeem all kinds of men. Newton's friend, the poet William Cowper, was referring to slavery when he wrote in his poem *Charity* in 1782:

> That souls have no discriminating hue,
> Alike important in their Maker's view;
> That none are free from blemish since the fall,
> And love divine has paid one price for all.

With these and similar biblical and theological arguments the abolitionists answered their critics.

Success

In 1807 Wilberforce tried the Parliamentary route again. On 23rd February speech after speech was made supporting the Grenville-Howick Bill for Abolition. Excitement in the House mounted until almost everyone rose "and turned towards Wilberforce in a burst of Parliamentary cheers. Suddenly, above the roar of 'hear, hear,' and quite out of order, three hurrahs echoed and echoed while he sat, head bowed, tears streaming down his face."[18] A long defence of the trade and of slavery followed, Wilberforce replying briefly, but when the house divided, the *Ayes* had 283, the *Noes* 16, a staggering majority of 267! Congratulations poured in and the elderly John Newton, soon to go to a better world, rejoiced at the news. The slave trade was abolished throughout the British Empire, but it was not until 1833 that slaves were emancipated by law, after the greatest petitionary campaign in British parliamentary history. In 1824 Wilberforce had suffered a serious illness and although no longer able to be active in Parliament, in retirement he maintained a passionate interest in the cause of the slaves. By 1833 his health had declined to an alarming degree. However on 26th July he was delighted to hear that the Emancipation Bill had passed its third reading in the Commons. It was clear the Bill would become law, which it did one month later. The next day, the 27th, he grew weaker and finally passed to his reward on the morning of 29th July.

The astonishing change which took place in British society happened without a drop of blood being shed. Sadly it took America until 1880 to emancipate all her slaves, but at the cost of the lives of half a million men in a bloody and vicious civil war. Why was there such a difference? Perhaps the answer lies in the Great Revival. The British abolition movement, while obviously and of necessity involving politics, was a much more Christian and spiritual matter. The American scene was rather different. Although there were many godly men on both sides, men affected by the on-going fruit of the Great Awakening in America, the issue between the North and the South was not only a dispute over slavery, but very much involved the political question of "States Rights". Could this, at least partly, explain why godly men such as Thornwell and Dabney argued against abolition? It may be their judgement was clouded because of what they perceived as injustices inflicted by a tyrannical North against the rights of the Southern States. If this is correct, then we can be grateful that the Revival not only played its part in the abolition of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic, but also resulted in what might be termed a bloodless "revolution" in British life and society.

People in the 21st century Western world may agree that Wilberforce did

a marvellous thing in achieving abolition against the odds, but they may imagine that his Christianity was merely an eccentricity clothing the body of his achievement – a sort of decorative frill. To assume this is to do a grave injustice to the memory of the man and those associated with him. It can be confidently stated that as a result of the Great Awakening, Christianity undoubtedly formed the living heart of the British abolitionist movement. It was not simply an outward and unimportant adornment.

Notes

1. Dallimore, Arnold *George Whitefield* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), Vol.2, p.367ff.
2. Whitefield, George *Journals* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), p.411.
3. Op.cit., p.219.
4. *The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade*, 1791. Quoted by John Coffey in *The Abolition of the Slave Trade*, Cambridge Papers, 2006, Vol 15, number 2, p.2.
5. Ryle, J. C. *The Christian Leaders of the Last Century* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1899), p.13.
6. Hood, Paxton *Portraits of the Great Revival* (Belfast: Ambassador, 19970, p.213.
7. Ibid., p.208.
8. Ibid., p.206.
9. Pollock, John *Wilberforce* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 2007), p.23.
10. Cf. Memoir of Richard Sibbes (p.xxi) by Alexander B. Grosart in *Works of Richard Sibbes* Vol. 1, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973).
11. Newton, John *Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade*, 1788, p.10.
12. Op. cit., p.31.
13. Ibid., p.95.
14. Ibid., p.200.
15. Edwards, Brian H. *Through Many Dangers* (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 1975), p.234.
16. Quoted by Pollock, op. cit., p. 160.
17. Ibid., p.107.
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EARLY CHRISTIANITY: CONTROVERSY OVER CHRIST[1]

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I. What is Christianity?

What is Christianity? That's a crucial question. People have answered that crucial question in a variety of ways. Here are three of them:

1) Christianity is the religion that Jesus taught.
2) Christianity is the religion that Jesus' redemptive deeds achieved.
3) Christianity is the religion centered on the worship of Jesus.

All three answers are valid in their way: we Christians are to follow the way of life Jesus taught; we Christians have received the redemption Jesus achieved in his life, death, and resurrection; and we Christians center on Jesus as the object of our worship.

Some of the earliest Christian controversies arose over the first issue: (1) *what religion* did Jesus teach? Here we think of the controversies over circumcision, the law of Moses, and Jewish ritual that we find attested in the Book of Acts and the letters of Paul. Some debates arose over the second: (2) what is it that Jesus did to *achieve redemption*? But the church also understood its faith more deeply as (3) the religion *centered* on Jesus as *worshipped*. With this third focus, the question, "What is Christianity?" morphs into another question, "Who is Jesus?" Great controversies sprang up over the competing answers various ancient teachers gave to this most crucial question of all.

These controversies about Jesus were in one sense wise: the various parties were fighting over the right issue, for all the parties understood that the identity of Jesus was absolutely determinative for Christianity. A religion, any religion, is determined by the character of its god. Why? - because the character of its god is what any religion values best, most, highest.

So...who is Jesus? That question raises the issue of *Christology*, doctrine about Christ. What were some of the Christological answers that early church teachers gave the question, "Who is Jesus?" For this survey we could turn to a "Check-yourself Quiz" about the identity of Jesus. Which of these sample statements about Jesus is true?

- Jesus was God; he only seemed to be a man.
- At his baptism, God the Father adopted Jesus to be his Son; this adoption explains the relationship between the Father and the Son.
- Jesus is simply the Father in incarnate form; and the Holy Spirit is simply Jesus in ascended form.
- Jesus the Son of God was the first and greatest creation, made by the Father before time began.
- The Trinity can be best explained as three persons with three different essences.
- The person of Jesus is composed of a human body inhabited by a divine soul, the Logos.
- When the eternal Christ became the man Jesus, his human nature became so entwined with his divine nature, that it, too, became divine.

None of these are orthodox answers to the question, "Who is Jesus?" Instead they represent the ancient heresies of (in this order) Docetism, Adoptionism and Ebionitism, Monarchical Modalism, Arianism, Tritheism, Apollinarianism, and Eutychianism. So...who is Jesus? We turn now to trace the main course of controversy from the second century up to the year 381 AD, the year of the Second Ecumenical Council. First, we visit some second and third century debates.

II. Who is Jesus?—Second and Third Century Errors

Adoptionism and Ebionitism

By the second Christian century some teachers had begun to teach that Jesus was an extraordinary man who, because of his extraordinary devotion to God, was adopted by the Father, thus to become "the Son of God." This view, dubbed readily enough as *Adoptionism*, became the official view of various early groups, including the *Ebionites*. The Ebionites were a party of Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, who claimed to be the *'evyonîm* (Hebrew, "the poor"), blessed as the true possessors of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:3). There is some merit to their Adoptionism: it absolutely protects the traditional monotheism of Israel's Old Testament faith:

> "Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is One" (Deut 6:4)

For the Ebionites, Judaism's doctrine of God was perfectly adequate. Jesus' coming did not impact the doctrine of God at all. Ebionite Adoptionism attempted to understand the scene of Jesus' baptism in the gospel story, where, as soon as Jesus comes out of the water, the Father speaks from heaven: "This

is my beloved son; with him I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17). This scene, wrongly interpreted, seems to have become determinative for the scantily preserved *Gospel of the Ebionites*. In its report of Jesus' baptism, the Ebionite author conflated Matthew 3:17 (above) with its near-parallel in Psalm 2:7, where God addresses the Messiah, "You are my son; today I have become your father" (Ps 2:7). The Ebionites focused on the "today" of that text, taking it in an adoptionist manner; the orthodox writers of antiquity focused instead upon the Hebrew "fathering" verb translated as *gegenneka* in the Septuagint, "I have begotten you,"[2] a rendering made determinative by its A-list use in the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews (1:5, the very first Old Testament quotation in this quotation-laden epistle) as warrant for describing the Son as "the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being" (Heb 1:3).[3]

Moreover, the Ebionite answer to the question "Who is Jesus?" failed to satisfy most ordinary Christians. Why? Because most Christians were not merely obeying Jesus as Lord and Master; they *worshipped* Jesus as divine. One does not worship an *adopted* Son of God. This may be a case of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. "The law of prayer is the law of (rightful) belief."[4] In other words, "If it doesn't serve the rightful worship of God, it can't be true." True theology always has doxological import.

Gnosticism and Docetism

Other professing Christian leaders took a very different path than the Ebionites did. The *Gnostics* were a group of sects, some professing to be Christian and some not. Gnostics were characterized by certain common emphases in their teachings, especially the view that matter was evil and spirit was good, and that the path to salvation came by this sort of superior knowledge, called *gnosis*. They were antiquity's version of New-Age.[5]

These teachers therefore denied that the ultimate God could have anything much to do with the material world. Instead, they understood redemption to mean *escape* from materiality. Since Gnostics believed that spirit was the ultimate reality, they had little trouble believing in a divine Christ; he was certainly some kind of divinity or other, located somewhere high up in the ranks of heavenlies, closely related to the ultimate God, whom some of them called "the Unnamed Father." But they had great difficulty believing in a human Jesus. Hence, most of them opted for some kind of *Docetism*. Docetism is the idea that Jesus was divine; he only *seemed* to be a man. The name comes from the Greek verb *dokein*, which here means "to seem," or "to appear"; and so for them Jesus had "the appearance of a man," but not a true human nature, and certainly not a true human body.

That kind of Jesus, a non-material Jesus, could not, of course, be incarnate, or die on a Roman cross, or rise from the dead. And so this answer

failed to satisfy the early church, for the early church knew that Jesus' earthly life, death, and resurrection were absolutely crucial to their faith.[6] And, the church cherished the hope of its own resurrection, that Christian salvation included *the salvation of the body*, the very thing that Gnostics were hoping to be rid of.

Credo

So, by the mid second century the real Christians were professing words much like those found in the "Old Roman Creed," early forebear to the well-known but later Apostles' Creed:

1. I believe [*credo*] in God Almighty
2. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord
3. Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
4. Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried
5. And the third day rose from the dead
6. Who ascended into heaven
7. And sits on the right hand of the Father
8. Whence he comes to judge the living and the dead[7]

Credo - "I believe." From the Latin *credo* comes our word "creed." With this kind of declaration of the identity of Jesus - an approved, authoritative creed - the church taught the faithful, and defended the faith against deadly error, the kind of error called *heresy*. Heresy refers not only to schismatic error, error that splits the church; but also to doctrinal error of such seriousness that it threatens to damn the soul of the one who believes it. The early creeds thus helped promote and defend the faith that alone saves.

Our next set of issues takes us to the early fourth century, when the next major Christological controversy broke out, and led to yet another creed. It began in Alexandria, Egypt, which had become one of the great intellectual capitals of the Christian faith.

III. The Arian Controversy, 318-381 AD

There was an aged presbyter and popular preacher of the Alexandrian church named Arius (256–336 AD), a man of austere habits and sometimes fiery oratory. Arius had a logical mind, and his logical mind reasoned this way about the question, "Who is Jesus?":

> If the Father begat the Son,
> he that was begotten had a beginning of existence;
> hence it is clear that there was when the Son was not.
> It follows then of necessity that he had his existence from the non-existent.[8]

We now call this reasoning "the Arian Syllogism," and this elegant syllogism, put forth in 318 AD, had great effect upon the minds of many churchmen, especially in the eastern Mediterranean world. The Arian syllogism also seemed to guard against a dangerous error that had grown up in the church, the error of *Modalism*, also called *Monarchianism*. Modalism was the error that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were actually one and the same, a one-personned God, the one and only monarch in the kingdom of heaven. The Modalists taught that the Father, by incarnation, *became* the Son and *died* on the cross; and that the risen Son, having ascended into heavenly glory, *became* the Holy Spirit who now, ever since Pentecost, lives and abides in the church. In the Latin West this error was also called *Patripassionism*, for it was really the Father who suffered (*passio*) and died on the cross. The Arians rightly viewed Modalism as a great mistake, for it overthrew the ever-blessed eternity of God. They understood themselves to be the church's best defense against it, since, for them, the uncreated Father is quite distinct from the divinely-created Son.

But the Arians perhaps had a more positive motive, not just opposition to Modalism. According to one somewhat controversial proposal, the Arian Logos, the highest creature, had perfected himself during his incarnation and thus came into a spiritual union with the uncreated Father. Because the Arian creaturely Christ had succeeded in this work of self-perfecting, the path for perfecting others - namely, repentant humans - now lay open. In this view the Arian Christ was like a hero who single-handedly broke through a formidable barrier, making way for a multitude to follow. He was the "representative creature and model" for redeemed humanity. Thus it was necessary for the Christ to be a creature, so that other creatures could be saved.[9] This view of Arianism, however, has not been well accepted.

A more widely accepted alternative interpretation of Arianism's inner logic, and to my mind, a superior one, focuses instead on divine impassibility and the sufferings of Christ. Since God the Father's essence is unchangeable, and thus immune from pain and suffering, how is it that Christ, the Son of God, can suffer and die for the redemption of the world? Arianism thus begins with two facts: (1) the Father's impassibility, and (2) the Son's passibility. Arianism then attempts to construct a rational doctrine of God that accounts for both. Hence, the Son must be a lesser god, derivative not in the orthodox understanding of Origen's "eternal generation of the Son," but in a *creaturely* sense. The Son is thus the first and highest creature, godlike, by whose sufferings repentant humans are redeemed. Hence there are, in the late R. P. C. Hanson's phrase, "two unequal gods."[10] *But is it true? Is it true that Christ, however great, is still a creature?*

Arius's Alexandrian bishop, conveniently named Alexander, didn't see things that way, so he moved first to examine this wayward presbyter, and then,

through the unusual step of summoning a council of bishops, to depose him and suppress his teachings. Arius appealed to powerful friends for help. A string of contrary church councils ruled for Arius, or against him. All was in confusion. Starting in that year of 318 AD, Arius's doctrine of the created Christ possibly did more to disturb and disrupt the church than any other force in the first 400 years of Christianity. The Arian issue, whether pro or con, provoked emperors, theologians, clergy, monks, and ordinary believers, sometimes to the point of murderous violence. And no wonder, for nothing is so important to a religion than the identity of its god. Arius, by declaring Christ a creature, had attacked the Christian God.

Soon the Roman emperor Constantine stepped in. Constantine, we know, was the first Roman emperor to profess faith in Jesus Christ. Some of the earlier emperors had tried to unify their ethnically diverse empire by enforcing a uniform religion, the worship of emperors living and dead, and to do so had persecuted Christians who refused such worship. Like those earlier emperors, Constantine too knew the empire needed to unite or perish, pressed as it was militarily by Germanic barbarians in the North and Persians in the East. He came to believe that Christianity, the religion whose evangelism had proved so successful among so many ethnic groups, could supply the missing international force for imperial unity. So, the unity of Christianity became vitally important for Constantine's politics. The Arian controversy posed a direct threat, even a dire threat, to his political hopes. A divided Christianity was of no use to Constantine.

At first Constantine tried to dismiss the controversy. In a rambling, hortatory letter of 324 AD addressed to both Alexander and Arius, he wrote:

> Wherefore let each one of you, showing consideration for the other, listen to the impartial exhortation of your fellow-servant. And what counsel does he offer? It was neither prudent at first to agitate such a question, nor to reply to such a question when proposed: for the claim of no law demands the investigation of such subjects, but the idle useless talk of leisure occasions them. And even if they should exist for the sake of exercising our natural faculties, yet we ought to confine them to our own consideration, and not incautiously bring them forth in public assemblies, nor thoughtlessly confide them to the ears of everybody.[11]

When these feeble exhortations failed to stem the controversy, he tried a second approach, an unprecedented one: to convene a great assembly of churchmen from all over the empire, and even from beyond its borders, to debate the issue, "Who is Jesus," and thus to settle the Arian question once and for all, for all Christians everywhere, by the combined power of church and state

The Council of Nicea, 325 AD

This council, the Council of Nicea, met in 325 AD, and is now known as the first of the seven *Ecumenical Councils*, ecumenical meaning *worldwide.*[12] It drew nearly 300 bishops from far and wide, even from as far as Persia, though few from the West attended. They convened at the lake-side resort town of Nicea (on modern maps, *Iznik*), not far from the emperor's new capital city of Constantinople, though on the Asian side of the straits. It was the first such meeting of Christian leaders since the days of the apostles. Some of the bishops had to be carried to the council in litters, having suffered torture in the empire's persecutions that had only ended a little more than a decade before. Now these same men, once hunted down by the Roman Empire, were being wined and dined by the Roman emperor himself, Constantine, a Christian believer. The emperor made much of one suffering bishop from Egypt, Paphnutius, even kissing the man's sunken eye-socket, where, not many years before, an eye had been plucked out by Roman torturers.[13]

No good record of the debates at Nicea has come down to us, and the process of the meetings remains murky. We do know that there were three main parties in the debates at Nicea. First were the Arians, represented by the aged Arius himself, at 69, at least two bishops, and perhaps up to twenty others. Then there was the similarly sized Alexandrian party that had done so much already to oppose Arius.[14] These were led in part by Bishop Alexander of Alexandria, who had enlisted as his secretary a diminutive Egyptian, a 29-year old deacon named *Athanasius* (ca. 296-373), whose superb Greek education and high connections would launch him into becoming the greatest theologian of his generation, and who would be known to posterity as "the Father of Orthodoxy."[15] Then there was a conservative and cautious middle party, the majority, represented mainly by *Eusebius of Caesarea* (ca. 260- ca. 340 AD), the well-established author, ecclesiastical historian, and bishop of Caesarea, the city on the coast of Palestine where Paul had once languished in a Roman prison.[16] Before the deliberations, this middle party tended to sympathize with the Arians in their fears about Modalism. In the decisions of this middle party, humanly speaking, lay the fate of orthodoxy.[17]

To help persuade the council, Arius sang to the emperor and to the seated dignitaries this hymn he had written about his created Christ:

Arius's Hymn on Christ the Son

The uncreated God has made the Son
A beginning of things created,
And by adoption has God made the Son
Into an advancement of himself.

Yet the Son's substance is
Removed from the substance of the Father:
The Son is not equal to the Father,
Nor does he share the same substance.
God is the all-wise Father,
And the Son is the teacher of his mysteries.
The members of the Holy Trinity
Share unequal glories.[18]

So who is Jesus Christ? All three parties agreed that Christ existed before time, and that Christ had a unique relationship to God the Father.[19] One hot theological term got much discussion: *homoousios*. *Homo* means "the same" in Greek; and *ousios* means "substance," or "essence," "the essential nature of something." The Alexandrians, probably at the prompting of the emperor, who in turn may have been prompted by Bishop Hosius of Cordoba, an able Western theologian, urged the statement that Christ was *homoousios* with the Father.[20] The term had been used in the past to denote "the generic equality or sameness of substance," and had currency in Origen's theology, in Greek philosophy, and even in Gnosticism.[21] For the Alexandrians this term ensured the full deity of Christ, a deity shared with the Father, against the Arian denial of the same. For others, the non-biblical term raised suspicion.

However, moved by the eloquence and scriptural reasoning of the Alexandrians, the large middle party of Eusebius switched allegiance to the *homoousios* view: Christ is of the *same substance* as the Father. Then taking as a base the somewhat ambiguous creed used by Eusebius's own church in Caesarea, the council revised and clarified it to confess the following:

> We believe in one God the Father All-sovereign, maker of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance [*homoousion*] with the Father, through whom all things were made, things in heaven and things on the earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man, suffered, and rose on the third day, ascended into the heavens, [and] is coming to judge the living and dead. And in the Holy Spirit.
>
> And those that say, "There was when he was not,"
> and "Before he was begotten he was not,"
> and that, "He came into being from what-is-not,"
> or those that allege that the son of God is "of another substance or essence,"[22]
> or "created," or "changeable," or "alterable,"
> These the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.[23]

We call this statement the *Creed of Nicea*. Creed: an authoritative declaration of the faith of the church. Note that this creed, unlike the Apostles'

Creed, begins not with "I believe," but with the words "We believe" (*pisteuomen*). It is not the individual believer so much as it is the whole church, the whole body of Christianity, rising up to disavow heresy, and to promote the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Who is Jesus Christ?* The Creed of Nicea rightly proclaims him as *God incarnate.*

As Jesus himself said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30); as John the Evangelist testifies about him, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1,14); as the Apostle Paul likewise testifies, "In Christ dwells all the fullness of deity in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9); as the same apostle testifies to Titus, we await "the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2:13).[24]

In Dan Brown's best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code*, the character Lionel Teabing intones with great authority that at Nicea the emperor Constantine forced the church to make Jesus God.[25] Hogwash. At Nicea the church recognized what the great majority of professing Christians had always believed about Jesus.[26] *Lex orandi, lex credendi.*

Problem: the ecclesiastical decision made at Nicea was perceived by many outside the council to be a political decision, imposed by the emperor. He, of course, had been involved. Did his involvement taint the proceedings? Second, the strong feelings of the church's Eastern multitudes were not easily swayed by a single decision. True, Arius and his two bishop-allies had been banished by the emperor, but their exiles would not last long. Finally, not all the theologians were sure that the language of *homoousios* could be adequately guarded against the feared heresy of Modalism. Within a few years first Arius's bishop-allies would be back, and then Arius himself, having made a new confession that the deceived emperor approved. Thus Arianism and its unresolved issues would divide the church for another fifty-some years.[27]

After the council, the Eastern "middle party" distanced itself from the Alexandrian insistence on *homoousios*, since a *homoousios* Christ could also be the Modalist Christ, indistinguishable from the Father. Instead, a new term was proposed, a term that was intended to serve as a statement simultaneously of Christ's unique glory as well as Christ's distinction from the Father. The term was *homoiousios*, "of similar substance." Christ was highly exalted, "like" (*homoi*) the Father, but not in every respect. This middle position has often been called "Semi-Arian" (though that term was also used in regard to the *Pneumatomachi*, who denied the deity of the Holy Spirit).[28] The Semi-Arian epithet was coined by Epiphanius, that over-zealous, second-tier theologian. The term may poison the well by (to mix metaphors) blinding us moderns to the very real dangers on all sides in this controversy. We see matters with the blessedness of hindsight, and knowledge of the eventual victory of the pro-

Nicene party; but those in the midst of this struggle had no such perspective. Perhaps such a term as *homoiousios*, sufficiently explained, could be used to account for the essential Sonship of Christ in the developing doctrine of the Trinity. The *homoousious* term too had its dangers. *Homoiousios* was clearly far superior to *anomoios*, "unlike," the term now favored by Arianism's most ardent supporters: that the Son was "unlike" the Father. One had to choose which sort of danger he could live with.

For the majority, there could be no question. *Anomoios,* "unlike," must be rejected. Christ must be *like* the Father in some extremely powerful way. But in what way? Was Christ *homoiousios* with the Father, "of similar substance"? That was the middle position on the matter through much of the fourth century. Or was Christ *homoousios* with the Father, "of the same substance"? That was the Alexandrian position, now championed by Athanasius, who in 328 had succeeded his late employer as Bishop of Alexandria, the most powerful see in the East.[29]

Richard A. Muller states matters with due caution:

> *Homoiousios*: a term used to describe the relation of the Father to the Son by the non-Athanasian, non-Arian party in the church following the Council of Nicaea. The term represents the attempt of the conservative majority of bishops of the mid-fourth century to avoid the radical distinction, typical of Arianism, between the Father as fully God and the Son as creature without adopting the much-debated Athanasian term *homoousios* and the Nicene formula. *Homoousios* seemed to imply a Sabellian, or modalistic monarchian, view of the Trinity...The middle position represented by the term *homoiousios* is frequently called semi-Arian because of Athanasius's opposition, but it clearly represents an alternative to both the Athanasian *homoousios* and the Arian *anomoios*.[30]

In Athanasius's judgment, in spelling there might be merely one iota of difference: *homoi* or *homo*; but in essence there was a great chasm of difference, the chasm between eternal deity and a mere subordinate, a creation, a creature. *That one iota of difference made all the difference in the world.* To be merely "similar" to the Father was not enough; though the majoritarian middle may not have intended it, the word *homoi* left the door open to a creaturely Christ.

New emperors arose after Constantine's death in 337 AD. Some of them favored the Arian party, and actively opposed, even persecuted those who were faithful to the Creed of Nicea - including especially that short-statured Egyptian genius, Athanasius. Athanasius would prove to be an especially thorny problem for Constantius II, Constantine's most ruthless surviving son.[31] Repeatedly deposed and restored over the course of some thirty years, five times would Athanasius be exiled - once, by Constantine(!) to Gaul (335–337);

twice by the Arianizing Constantius II, taking refuge in Rome (339-346), and later, outlawed, in hiding among his beloved desert monks in Egypt (356–361); once by the paganizing Julian the Apostate, again hiding in Egypt (363); once by the Arianizing Valens, hiding again in the deserts of Egypt (365–366).[32] Other orthodox bishops would be persecuted by Arian emperors, even to the death. On the other hand, pro-Nicene mob violence was responsible for other prominent deaths, including Athanasius's own unscrupulous Arianizing competitor for the See of Alexandria, George of Cappadocia. Pro-Nicene emperors could also enforce their will upon Arians and alleged Arians by the strong arm of the state. But through these seas of troubles Athanasius clung to his faith in Christ, the incarnate God. He was consistent, persistent, and insistent.[33] He felt sometimes so alone in his opposition to Arianism that he exclaimed himself to be *Athanasius contra mundum*, "Athanasius against the world."

Why was this faith in an incarnate God so crucial to Athanasius? That issue takes us back to our main question, "Who is Jesus?" If Christ were not God, how could he reunite fallen man back to God? As Athanasius saw so clearly, the very *salvation* of the human race was at stake. Only a Christ who was *homoousios* with the Father - in the union of God and man in Christ - only such a Jesus could reunite man back to God. "Our salvation can only be worked by God."[34] *If Christ were less than God, he would have failed to be our Redeemer.* As he himself once put it:

> What - or rather Who - was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing? His part it was, and His alone, both to bring again the corruptible to incorruption and to maintain for the Father His consistency of character with all. For He alone, being Word of the Father and above all, was in consequence both able to recreate all, and worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to be an ambassador for all with the Father.[35]

If it was essential to the Arians that the Christ be a creature, lest God's impassibility be lost, it was essential to the Alexandrians that Christ be God, lest human salvation be lost. The Alexandrians had the better side of the argument, for they saw the ontology of the mediator as the key: the Redeemer must be the God-Man.[36] "So give over, then, you despisers of God," Athanasius ardently exhorted his opponents, "and do not humiliate the Logos. Nor, on the grounds of needfulness or ignorance, deprive him of his deity, which is the Father's own."[37]

When St. Athanasius died in the faith in 373, aged 77, the Arian controversy remained unsettled; however, the heritage of his form of teaching, the memory of his godliness, his many books marked by scriptural reasoning, the indomitable persistence with which he had treated both friend and foe, his

courage in the teeth of opposition, and the many disciples he had loved and trained, all served to assure the victory of the pro-Nicene party.[39]

Other architects of the pro-Nicene victory include three great theologians who stood on Athanasius's small but strong shoulders: the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil the Great (ca. 329–379 AD), his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa (330–ca. 395 AD), and their dear friend Gregory of Nazianzus (330–389 AD). Whereas Athanasius had tried to reason from the unity of God to the diversity of the triune persons, the Cappadocians generally moved the other way, from the trinity of persons to the unity of God. Moreover, following the lead of Gregory of Nyssa, they clearly distinguished the three distinct *hypostases* (Greek for what the Latin West called "persons") from the one undivided *ousia* (essence) of God.[40] These moves clarified for the conservative middle party the distinction between the Father and the Son, thus clearing away their fears of Modalism with its Patripassionist error, and preparing the ground for the great Council of Constantinople, where Arianism received its death-blow.

IV. The Nicene Creed, 381 AD

In 381 AD, eight years after Athanasius's death, the second of what came to be called the great Ecumenical Councils met, in Constantinople. Supported by two pro-Nicene emperors in the divided empire, and by the clarifications offered by the Cappadocians (two of whom still lived), this council indeed settled the Arian controversy.

In the years after Athanasius's death, a modest revision of the Creed of Nicea came into use, probably composed at the Council of Constantinople in 381, a council which also endorsed the 325 Creed of Nicea. This revised form of Nicea was approved again at the Fourth Ecumenical Council, the Council of Chalcedon, in 451. This creed is what we now call the *Nicene Creed*, or the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.*[41] It retains that wondrous language, that Jesus Christ is "Begotten of the Father, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father [*homoousion to patri*], through whom all things were made." The words of the Nicene Creed also adore the Holy Spirit, whom it calls "the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and Son is worshipped together and glorified together."[42]

The Arians truly lost at Constantinople, and the Arian movement would survive only among an ever smaller minority, mostly in Germany among the northern barbarian tribes, before it was at last evangelized away by zealous orthodox missionaries, so that even the Germans despised Arianism.

Arianism today enjoys a minor revival among heretical sects, especially the Jehovah's Witnesses. These groups today are not always well recognized

as sub-Christian, as not truly or fully Christian. Instead, the Christian church worldwide worships Jesus, the divine Son of God, the incarnate God, who alone can be our Savior.

What then is Christianity? Is it the religion that Jesus taught? It is that. And more. It is the religion that Jesus' redemptive deeds achieved, a religion of transforming grace. But it is also the religion centered on the worship of Jesus, the God-Man, *homoousios* with the Father, as Athanasius had so insistently taught.

Notes

1. This article is an adaptation of a lecture given at Geneva College in the course Humanities 203, September 17, 2007.
2. The masculine forms of the original Hebrew verb *yalâd* ordinarily mean "beget," "procreate," or "become the father of." So William Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p.134.
3. Bishop Epiphanius (ca. 315-403 AD) says about the Ebionites, "On this account they say that Jesus was begotten of the seed of a man, and was chosen; and so by the choice of God he was called the Son of God from the Christ that came into him from above in the likeness of a dove. And they deny that he was begotten of God the Father." See his *Panarion*, 30.13.1-8, 30.14.5, 30.16.4-5, and 30.22.4. Epiphanius's comments on the Ebionites, along with the surviving fragments of *The Gospel of the Ebionites*, can be found in M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1924), pp.8-10; or at http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/gospelebionites.html. The *Panarion* (="all-medicine box") is a large assortment of excerpts from heretical books (and therefore of great historical value), with the good bishop's sometimes confused assessments of, and antidotes to, the poisons of heresy. For a fair-minded assessment of Epiphanius, see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Baker Academic, 2005 [original London: T&T Clark, 1988]), pp.658–66. Hanson calls Epiphanius "another second-rate theologian" (p.658).
4. A saying attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine (ca. 390-ca. 463 AD), the first of the medieval Augustinians.
5. For a brief, clear description of ancient sub-Christian Gnosticism, see Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Second edition; Dallas: Word, 1995), pp.50–55. The scholarly literature on ancient Gnosticism is now enormous, and the once-arcane topic has recently spilled over into the popular press through the baleful influence of such sources as Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003). For scholarly discussion of Gnosticism, see, among others, Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (Translated by R. McL. Wilson; New York: Harper & Row, 1987); Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); and most recently, idem, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007). For current debates involving popularized scholarship, see the evangelical scholar Nicholas Perrin's clash with the recently emerged skeptic Bart Ehrman: for Ehrman see *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and perhaps more egregiously, idem, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005); for Perrin see *Lost in Translation: What Can We Know About the Words of Jesus?* (Nashville:

Thomas Nelson, 2007), and on related issues, idem, *Thomas, The Other Gospel* (Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2007). For modern Gnostic-like movements in the USA, see Peter Jones, *Spirit Wars: Pagan Revival in Christian America* (Mukilteo, WA: Winepress Publishing, 1997).

6. The ancient church's most searching critique of Gnosticism is found in Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*. For the text in print form, see Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Volume 1 in Phillip Schaff, editor, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*; London: T & T Clark, 1980), or online at the Christian Classic Ethereal Library at http://www.ccel.org/index/title-A.html.
7. See the similar phrasing and Trinitarian order of topics in such second and third century Christian documents as Justin Martyr's *First Apology* §13 and §31; Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* §I.10.1, and his *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* §6; Tertullian's *Prescriptions Against the Heretics* §13; and Origen's *First Principles* §I.4. Some of these documents are helpfully excerpted by Hugh T. Kerr in *Readings in Christian Thought* (Second edition; Nashville: Abingdon, 1991); Irenaeus is excerpted in Alister E. McGrath's *Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), p.93. For online access to the texts of Justin and Irenaeus, go to http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.html. For Tertullian see http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.html. Both Irenaeus (ca. 130–202 AD) and Tertullian (ca. 160–220 AD) refer to such summaries as "The Rule of Faith," demonstrating a perception of their normative character. It is widely thought that the Old Roman Creed dates to sometime before ca. 250 AD - so John Tiller, "Apostles' Creed," in J. D. Douglas, editor, *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Second edition; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p.58. See also J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (Third edition; London: Longmans, 1972). The earliest directly attested creedal forms are interrogative and composed for baptismal events: "Do you believe in God the Father All-governing? Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was begotten by the Holy Spirit..." - so attests the *Apostolic Traditions* of Hippolytus, ca. 215 AD. For discussion see John H. Leith, "Creeds," in D. N. Freedman, editor, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 volumes; New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1992), I:1203–06. For the text of Hippolytus, see Gregory Nix and Henry Chadwick, editors, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of Saint Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr* (Third edition; Richmond, Surrey, GB: Curzon Press, 1991), or online at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.html.
8. Quoted in Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1. In Phillip Schaff, editor, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Series 2, Volume 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 [New York, 1886]), p.3. Hereafter volumes in this series shall be cited as *NPNF*. Other primary sources for the Arian controversy include Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, likewise in *NPNF* 2/2; the decrees of the seven ecumenical councils, in *NPNF* 2/14; and the several works of Athanasius available in *NPNF* 2/4 such as the polemical *Orationes contra Arianos*, *Apologia contra Arianos*, and *Historia Arianorum*. The *NPNF* series can be found online at http://www.ccel.org/index/title-N.html. On the Arian side, see especially Arius's *Thalia* ("Banquet"), which, unfortunately, survives only in extracts quoted by opponents such as Athanasius. See the reconstruction in Ford Lewis Battles, *Arius, Thalia: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Text* (Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1972). For brief, clear treatment of the Arian controversy, see also Mark Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997), pp.47-64; and Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Second edition; Dallas: Word, 1995), pp.99-107.
9. This is the view proposed by Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh in *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981). For a briefer account, see Dennis E. Groh, "Arius, Arianism" in D. N. Freedman, editor, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:384-86. But see the

penetrating criticisms of Khaled Anatolios in *Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.167-77, 183, 191, and 242-43; and R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381 AD*, pp.89-91;96-98.

10. This second account is the one defended by R. P. C. Hanson in *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy. 318-381*. The quotation is from p.122.
11. Constantine, *Letter to Alexander and Arius*. The letter can be found in the Christian Classics Ethereal Library at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf202.ii.iv.vii.html, or in print form in *Socrates and Sozomenus, Ecclesiastical Histories*, in *NPNF* 2/2.
12. The surviving documents of the seven councils are found in *NPNF* 2/14, edited and extensively annotated by Henry R. Percival, under the title, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church* (1900). Reformation Protestants under the rule of *Sola Scriptura* will regard some of the decrees of even these seven with critical scrutiny. For a more recent Roman Catholic account of the councils, see Christopher M. Bellito, *The General Councils: A History of the Twenty-one General Councils from Nicaea to Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002).
13. Told in Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 11.1 (*NPNF* 2/2, p.18).
14. For the relative size of the parties I am dependent upon the construction given in W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982 [1965]), p.140, which seems to be based mainly on Sozemen's *Ecclesiastical History*.
15. Contrary to popular opinion, Christian orthodoxy was not established by dead white European males. It was established by a range of people from all over the Mediterranean seaboard-Spaniards, Gauls, Italians, Greeks, West Asians, Syrians, Palestinians, Jews, Egyptians, Berbers, and various other North Africans.
16. Not to be confused with Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arianism's most prominent defender among the bishops of the East.
17. In his later polemical writings, Athanasius lumps all his opponents together under the label "Arians"; many church historians of the past simply followed suit, trusting the esteemed bishop, but the textual evidence from other witnesses shows that a more discriminating approach is necessary. Not all non-Athanasians were Arians. When in a lengthy letter of ca. 340 AD Bishop Julius of Rome charged the Eastern bishops with Arianism, they reacted with shock and dismay (so Joseph T. Lienhard, "The 'Arian' Controversy: Some Categories Reconsidered," *Theological Studies* 48 [1987], p. 417). Julius's letter is preserved in Athanasius, *Apologia contra Arianos* 21–35, found in NPNF 2/4, pp.111–19.
18. Quoted in Mark Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, p.53.
19. Note that the Arian Syllogism does *not* say "There was *a time* when the Son was not." The correct rendition of Arius's Greek, *'en pote hote 'ouk 'en [ho hious]*, is "There was when the Son was not." It seems that in Arius's thought, the Son exists on the boundary of time and eternity, the mediating figure between the unique eternity of the Father and the timefulness of all creatures, and the unique means by which all other creatures are made. Hence, time begins with the Son, and there was no time before the Son. See Ford Lewis Battles, *Arius, Thalia: A Hypothetical Reconstruction of the Text* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1972). The order of this textual arrangement remains in doubt, and the inclusion of a few fragments may be contestable. The quoted Greek text comes from page 3, line 17. The translation I have given, which differs from Battles's, is the one recommended by Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, editors, *Documents of the Christian Church* (Third edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.44, n. 1.
20. So David John Williams, "Hosius," in J. D. Douglas, editor, *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 484.
1. So Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids:

Baker Academic, 1985), p.139.

22. *ex heteras hupostaseos e ousios.* The meaning of *hypostasis* would be remarkably transformed by 381 AD, and become an orthodox description of the persons of the Trinity: three personal *hypostases* in one divine *ousia.*
23. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, editors, *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp.27–28. The anathemas seem to cite phrases and terms favored by the Arians.
24. The final phrase of the Greek text for Titus 2:13 reads, *tou megalou theou kai soteros hemon Xristou Iesou.* The genitive form of the definite article *tou*, with the delayed *hemon* ("of us"), controls the whole phase, thus claiming "Christ Jesus" as "the great God and Savior of us."
25. *The Da Vinci Code*, pp.233-34.
26. Ironically, at about the same time as *The Da Vinci Code* became popular, an excavation at Megiddo in Israel uncovered what is perhaps the oldest Christian church building in that country, with a mosaic floor featuring three Greek inscriptions and dated by the excavator to the early or mid third century AD. One inscription features this doxological reference: "The God-loving Aketous has offered this table to the God Jesus Christ, as a memorial." See the brief coverage in K. E. M. (Kathleen E. Miller), "Megiddo Church Reburied," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 33.2 (2007), p.42; and online at http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/07/international/middleeast/07mideast.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin; and at http://www.archaeology.org.il/newsticker.asp?id=24. But we need not look to anything so late as the third century for the worship of Jesus as God. Larry Hurtado's provocatively titled book, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) recounts the substantial early evidence for the unprecedented Jesus-as-God worship: "The origins of the worship of Jesus are so early that practically any evolutionary approach is rendered invalid as historical explanation" (p.25). It is already present in the first century documents of the New Testament, and clearly in second and third century Christian writings. Even the pagans got the idea: Pliny the Younger, reporting to the Emperor Trajan in ca. 112 AD, says that the Christians he has put to trial confess to no crime, but rather "that on an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god." For the full text, see Henry Bettensen and Chris Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp.3-4. Similarly, Ignatius's *Epistle to the Ephesians* (ca 110 AD) begins with a salutation and beatitude "according to the will of the Father, and Jesus Christ our God" (1:1), and reminds the Ephesian Christians that among them "Jesus Christ is sung" (1:15). For the full text of the Ignatian epistles, see Michael W. Holmes, translator and editor, *The Apostolic Fathers in English* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); or electronically in the Christian Classics Ethereal Library at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.ii.html.
27. Jerome quipped about one particularly low point in the unfolding controversy that "the whole world groaned in astonishment to find itself Arian." *Dialogue Against the Luciferians*, §19. Quoted in W. H. C. Frend, *The Early Church*, p.157.
28. R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p.807.
29. For the names of the warring parties, rather than "Alexandrian" or "Eusebian," "Arian," or "Athanasian," Joseph T. Lienhard suggests two purely theological designations, based on how the parties answered the question of how the Logos is related to God the Father, and the parties' use of the word *hypostasis.* He suggests Dyohypostatic theology, to describe the theology of Eusebius of Caesarea and others of the middle and Arian groups. Dyohypostatic theology refers to the teaching that there were in the Godhead two hypostases, one who is the Father, "eternal and underived," and another who is the Son, holding a rank "somewhere beneath God but above all creatures, or all other creatures." The other side of this debate can then be called Miahypostatic theology, holding that there is one God, one *hypostasis*, one *ousia*, and thus the Son is God by virtue of being *homoousios* with the Father. Only late in his

career did Athanasius admit that a plurality of *hypostases* in the divine *ousia* could be an orthodox definition of the faith. This was precisely the distinction that would be developed by the Cappadocian Fathers, and that would convince the new generation of the "middle party" to assent to the Nicene formula, now clarified. See Joseph T. Lienhard, "The Arian Controversy" in *Theological Studies* 48 (1987), pp.415-37.

30. Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Greek and Latin Theological Terms*, p.139.
31. Or was it the other way around? For discussion of the thorny historical problems see the somewhat speculative monograph by Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). Barnes treats Athanasius as a very mixed figure, acute in his judgment, indomitable in his determination, but also skillful in prevarication, and able to countenance violence in defense of the faith. See the full and balanced discussion in R. P. C. Hanson, "The Behavior of Athanasius," in *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp.239-73.
32. Everett Ferguson, *From Christ to Pre-Reformation* (volume 1 of *Church History*; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), p.204.
33. Athanasius was not above using insults such as "ariomaniacs" to describe his "mad" opponents. *Life of Antony* §68; in *Athanasius* (edited by Robert C. Gregg; *Classics of Western Spirituality*; New York: Paulist Press, 1980), p.82. For the older English edition see *NPNF* 2/4.
34. So Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, p.204.
35. *Athanasius on the Incarnation of the Word of God: De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* (Translated by Sister Penelope Lawson; with an introduction by C. S. Lewis; New York: Macmillan, 1946), §2.7, or in electronic form at http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm#ch_2. Or see the older English edition in *NPNF* 2/4.
36. For those with the eyes to see, Athanasius's God-Man Christology is foundational to the later doctrine of the atonement as developed by Anselm of Canterbury in the classic volume *Cur Deus Homo?* ("Why did God Became Man?"). Anselm, in turn is foundational to the doctrine of the atonement found in Luther and Calvin.
37. Athanasius, *Orations Against the Arians*, Book III.41, in Richard A. Norris, editor, *The Christological Controversy* (Series: Sources of Early Christian Thought; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), p.100, or in *NPNF* 2/4.
38. At one low point in 335 AD he even dared to accost Constantine in the streets of the capital, to the emperor's astonishment.
39. For a profound and thorough assessment of his theology, and its unifying idea in the relation between God and the world, see Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought*.
40. Athanasius had habitually used *hypostasis* as a synonym for *ousios*.
41. Epiphanius's *Ancoratus* §118, ca. 374 AD, contains this creed, but the likely case is that this attestation is a later substitution for an original inclusion of the 325 Creed of Nicea. So R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p.817, n.106.
42. However, the clear-sighted Gregory of Nazianzus remained frustrated by the Nicene Creed, calling it a "halfway" doctrine (*en meso*), orthodox in so far as it went, but falling short of declaring the Holy Spirit fully consubstantial (*homoousios*) with the Father and the Son. See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p.819.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS IN AUSTRALIA 1857-1957

Rowland S. Ward[1]

Rowland Ward is minister of Knox Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, located in Melbourne.

This article looks only at ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church who served in Australia[2]. There were many other persons of R.P. background, most of whom found a home in other Presbyterian denominations after they arrived in Australia, if only because there was only one organized R.P. work from 1857, and that was outside the major cities at Geelong, Victoria.

I. THE IRISH MISSION TO AUSTRALIA

We take first those committed to distinctive RP work in Australia. These were eight in number.

Mr. A. M. Moore was ordained as the first missionary to Australia of the R.P. family of churches on 18 August, 1857. Moore was described in *The Covenanter* for August 1857 as "an able preacher, a superior scholar, a man of manly independent mind, and one who has given evidence of extensive acquaintance with, and cordial attachment to, the principles of the Covenanted Reformation." This assessment was born out in his 39 years service in Geelong. He held a prayer meeting at in John Wright's lounge room at Geelong on Sabbath, 27 December, 1857, and preached in the Free Church in Little Malop Street on 3 January, 1858. The Free Church School room on Latrobe Terrace was granted for services and he soon had a congregation of 50 or 60, and the congregation relocated to larger premises. It was formally organized on 22 June, 1858. Moore constantly appealed for more workers, but the church at home was not able to supply them.

1. MOORE, Alexander McIlwaine (13.11.1820 - 18.2.1897)
Born County Down; ed. U. Glasgow; ord Eastern Presb RPCI 18.08.1857 for Australia; left Belfast 17.09.1857 arr. Melbourne 23.12.1857 per *Lillies*, and settled at Geelong where first R.P. Congregation in Australia formed. Church in Fenwick Street (still used) erected 1862. Conducted an Academy for a time up to 1886; Mr. Moore continued as the sole representative of the R.P.C.I. in Australia until his death. m. (1) Anna Brigham (d. Geelong 1.11.1859,

no children survived); (2) Ann Davidson Bain in 1861, 6 chn. surv. incl Agnes Margaret (Maggie) who marr. Rev. J. J..Spalding of the P.C.V. Rev A. H. Moore, PCV minister, a son.

Publns: *'Shakespearian Readings,' and their apologists: with reply to the Rev T. McKenzie Fraser's attack on the Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Geelong 1868, 44pp); *The Bible in the Schools of the Nation* (Geelong 1872, 18pp); *The Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement, with special reference to the views of Dr Moorhouse* (lecture, Geelong 1885, 28pp); *The Inspiration of the Scriptures. Review of the Inaugural Address of the Rev George MacInnes* (Geelong 1894, 24pp).

Moore was an able man, very committed to his church's distinctive position, and came to the defence of the minority of the Scottish church which did not join the Free Church of Scotland in 1876. Interestingly, at the very time his earthly sojourn was coming to a close, a son, Alexander Henderson Moore (1865-1919) was training for the ministry at the Presbyterian Church of Victoria Theological Hall, and served West Perth in 1898-1902, and Scots' Ballarat 1904-19. The son did not see service in the R.P. Church as something appropriate, not because he was unorthodox in fundamentals, but because he was unconvinced of the distinctive covenanting principles maintained at that time.

There was some early hope of an extra labourer. John Bates was an able man but of weak constitution at the time he was ordained for Australia by the Scottish R.P. church. His brief history is summarized as follows.

2. BATES, John, MA (c1832 - 5.8.1858)

Born in Strabane, Tyrone, Ireland, eldest s. of William Bates, merchant and elder of Bready R.P.C.I.; educ. U. Glasgow 1848-53 (M.A. 1853) and divinity 1853-56; also R.P. Hall, Paisley 1849-50, 1854-55; lic. R.P. Presb. Glasgow 16.10.1855; poor health; abandoned call to New Cumnock and desired to serve overseas given state of health. Ord. 8.12.1857 at Ayr by Presb. Glasgow as missionary to N.S.W. (initially Bargo where the Kirkpatrick family were of Covenanting stock). Arr. Melbourne 9.04.1858 briefly at Geelong then to Sydney (stayed at Dr. Moon's) then Bargo; died at Sydney railway station having just arrived in the city to consult Dr. Moon. A nephew of Rev. Dr. Bates, Glasgow.

Mr Moore's death meant a vacancy in Geelong. There were three short ministries. Archibald Holmes gave supply for a year, while Walter McCarroll came from America via Belfast to serve the congregation for some four years. He was followed by Albert Thompson who was appointed for three but

remained for five years.

3. HOLMES, Archibald
Born Kilraughts; ord. Bready R.P.C.I. ca.1888-93; ind. Creevagh and Fairview 2.4.1893-1900, including as stated supply Geelong R.P.C.I. April 1897-98. When at Geelong he also conducted a mid-week meeting in a rented room in Collins Street, Melbourne, 50 miles distant. Subsequently inducted to Paisley R.P.C.S. 1900-02, and to Kellswater R.P.C.I. 17.12.1902 – 1921.

4. McCARROLL, Walter, B.D., D.D. (9.03.1873 - 30.11.1961)
Born West Broomfield, Oakland County, Michigan, s. of George McCarroll and Janet nee Law, farmers. Graduate of Geneva College, Beaver Falls in 1895, and R.P. Theol. Seminary, Allegheny, Pa. in 1898; final session R.P. Theol Hall, Belfast 1898; lic. R.P.C.N.A. Lakes Presbytery 1898; supply Spring Gardens R.P.C.N.A; ord. Eastern Presb. R.P.C.I. for Geelong 24.1.1899; m. Mary Jane George in Belfast 7.02.1899, 3s, 1d. Arr. Geelong April 1899 and served to 22.07.1903; to Cyprus Mission of R.P.C.N.A. 1903-19, established American Academy there; then to New York, U.S.A., Second R.P. Congregation 4.09.1920-44; retired Santa Ana, Calif. B.D. Princeton 1920; D.D. Geneva College. Rev. William McCarroll, Belfast an uncle; Rev. Hugh McCarroll (b.1867) a brother.

5. THOMPSON, Albert Melville, M.A. (4.12.1874 - 18.1.1948)
Born Londonderry, Ohio, son of Rev. J.A.Thompson and Sarah nee McBride; educ. Amity College, Iowa (A.B. 1894, M.A. 1898) and R.P.T.S. 9/1894 - 12/1897; lic. Presb. Kansas April 1897; to Ireland. R.P.C.I.: ord. Ballylagan 16 Aug 1898-Feb 1901; to U.S.A. Geelong (stated supply) March 1904 - March 1909; to Ireland. R.P.C.I.: Stranorlar Nov. 1909 - Feb 1912; to U.S.A. R.P.C.N.A.: Utica, Ohio 3 Apr 1914-13 Sep 1916; H.M. Kansas Presbytery 1917,1918; lived in Santa Fe, Calif. 1919-23; ind. Bovina, N.Y. 15 Nov 1923 - 1 Sep 1930; Helmut, Calif. 3 Oct 1930 - 31 Mar 1938. Married (1) Mary Luella Eliott (1874 - 1919) 29 Sep 1898; (2) Margaret Jane Carswell 16 Sep 1926.

The next ministry was a notable one both for its length and its quality.

6. MACK, Hugh Kennedy, B.A. (ca.1869 - 1.11.1951)
Ord minister of Drimbolg/Magherafelt 24 May 1895; released to serve in Geelong. Arrived 8 October 1909 and continued until he resigned charge 3.09.1946; age 82 at death.

Publns: Why Ulster fears (Geelong c.1912 37pp); *Bible Story of Creation: True?* (Geelong c.1912, 16pp); *The Sabbath: which day of the seven?* (Geelong 1917, 28pp); *A Plea for the Gospel: Prof. Angus Reviewed* (Geelong 1934, 59pp); *Israel in the Purpose of God* (Melbourne c.1941, 35pp).

Mack was a capable scholar. His booklet on creation shows familiarity with leading thinkers on different sides of the question. He affirms the intention of the Genesis narrative was to provide a brief introduction to God's purpose with humanity, and (somewhat like W.G.T.Shedd and Herman Bavinck) that the days are God's heavenly days, noting particularly the unclosed seventh day. While leaving the date of creation open he insists on the recent creation of humanity. His review of the Presbyterian modernist, Samuel Angus, is a capable piece and it, as well as the booklet on the Sabbath, had earlier appeared in serial form in successive issues of *The Covenanter*. The booklet on Israel affirms the Church as the Israel of God over against dispensational views. He interprets Romans 11 to mean that there will be a large-scale conversion of Israel in the latter days, but offers no explanation of much-debated "Israel" in Romans 11:26.

Mack had positive relationships with the ministers of the Free Church/Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (P.C.E.A.), and with the few Calvinists in the mainstream Presbyterian Church of Victoria. Mack, along with Alex Barkley, who succeeded him at Geelong, trained Stewart Ramsay for the P.C.E.A. ministry 1948-50. Mack was nevertheless a faithful R.P. of the older school.

7. McEWEN, William Reid, BA (23.05.1906-7.04.1989)

Born Ireland, son of R.P. minister; educ Londonderry and Trinity College, Dublin; R.P.C.I.: ord. 5.09.1928 for Australia; after a year at R.P.T.S., Pittsburgh, he arrived at Geelong September 1929 to provide assistance while Mr. Mack and his daughter were visiting U.K. In 1933 commenced work in the Melbourne suburb of McKinnon with services and a Sunday School in his home. A church building was opened in 1940, and the congregation was organized 11 April 1946. "WR" as he was widely known, served this congregation until his retirement 5.09.1978. He and his wife had only one child, Rev. Alastair, who has taught full-time in the Reformed Theological College in Geelong since 1982.

W.R. was a little man who belonged, as he said, to "one of the smallest tribes of the Reformed Israel" but he was not narrow minded or bellicose. He became the secretary of the Bible Union of Victoria 1942, and edited its

magazine *Evangelical Action* 1944-85. He lectured for a time in Church History at Melbourne Bible Institute, and at the John Knox Theological College of the P.C.E.A. in the 1960s. He was closely involved with the International Conference of Christian Churches in the 1950s, and worked with other evangelicals who believed in separation from modernism. He was loyal to the older R.P. tradition, and neither he nor Alex Barkley was in sympathy with the revised Terms of Communion approved by the Irish Synod in 1957. Their dissents were recorded in the Synod minutes of that year. [On 9 October 1959 the Australian Presbytery of the R.P.C.I. was constituted, and on 12 June 1974, independence from Ireland having been sought and obtained, the Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia was inaugurated, with its interim constitution finalized in 1994.]

8. BARKLEY, Alexander, M.A., D.D. (1912 - 28.08.2000)
Ord. Cregagh Road R.P.C.I. 1939; offered for Geelong and appointed 12 March 1946 to succeed Mr. Mack, resignation of Cregagh Road effective 3.09.1946. Arrived 31.12.1946; Geelong R.P. 1947 - 11.12.1964; Reformed Theological College 1954-80 (Principal 1958-78); D.D. Central School of Religion, London.; died at Geelong aged 88.

The influx of Dutch migrants to Australia from 1950 resulted in those of more Reformed convictions coming into contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The P.C.E.A sponsored one of the first Reformed ministers, and facilities in Melbourne were provided for the first Synod of the Reformed Churches of Australia (1952). In 1954 it was decided to start a Theological College at Geelong and early classes were held in the R.P. premises. Barkley served as Professor of Church History and Hebrew and his duties ultimately became full-time. Barkley did not write a great deal, but he made a special contribution in guiding the early years of the College. He was also an effective preacher.

II. SCOTTISH MISSION TO NEW HEBRIDES (VANUATU)

The following list includes only R.P. ministers who also served in Australia. Thus John Inglis, who served in the New Hebrides 1852-79, and James McNair (1866-70), are not included.

1. COPELAND, Joseph (ca.1834 - 1908)
From the R.P.C.S. Congregation of Dumfries; educ. U. Glasgow; R.P. Divinity Hall 1854, 1855, 1857, and also acted as Glasgow City Missionary. Volunteered for New Hebrides; with John G. Paton was

lic. 1.12.1857 and ordained 23.3.1858 by Presb Glasgow. New Hebrides: Tanna, Aneityum 1858-66; Futuna 1866-73, 1874-77, 79-81, resd. m. Elizabeth Johnston, widow of Rev. Samuel Johnston, in 1863; 5 chn., 4 surv.; she died 20.1.1876, buried on Futuna. N.S.W.: on sick leave 1877-79; edited *The Presbyterian.* Translated part and revised the whole of the Aneityumese Bible, published 1881; works in Futanese include a catechism, a hymnal and a book of Scripture verses as well as the Gospel of Mark (1874). d. Strathfield, Sydney.

2. PATON, John Gibson, D.D. (24.5.1824 - 28.1.1907)
Born Kirkmahoe, Dumfriesshire, eldest s. of James Paton, stocking weaver, and Janet nee Rogerson; from age 23 to 32 a missionary in Glasgow slums with Glasgow City Mission, while studying at U. Glasgow, R.P. Divinity Hall and Andersonian College (in Medicine); with Joseph Copeland was lic. 1.12.1857 and ord 23.3.1858 by Presb Glasgow for New Hebrides, served until 1881. m. Mary Ann Robson (1840-1859) 1858; (2) Margaret Whitecross (1841-1905) 1864, chn. included. 3 ministers. PCV: seat in Presb. Melbourne 28.1.1880; General Mission Agent 1881-1907; Moderator R.P.C.S. Synod 1864. Moderator G.A. of P.C.V. 1886.

Publns: *New Hebrides. Is France or Britain to annex them?* (Glasgow 1885, 20pp); *The Kanaka Labour Traffic to Queensland. Protest...* (Melbourne 1892, 8pp); *Slavery Under the British Flag...* (Essex 1892, 16pp); *The Kanaka Labour Traffic Queensland's Defence, Dr John G. Paton's Reply, Correspondence with Colonial Office, Rejoinder to Premier of Queensland* (Essex n.d. [1894] 58pp); *John G. Paton, DD Missionary to the New Hebrides. An Autobiography* (London 1889 &c.)

Life: Peter Barnes in R.S.Ward (ed), *Presbyterian Leaders in Nineteenth Century Australia* (Melbourne 1993) 121-136. Jim Cromarty, *King Of The Cannibals: The Story Of John G. Paton* (Evangelical Press, 2002).

3. NIVEN, James
Born Jamaica, his father being a missionary there; student U.P. Theol. Hall 1858-?; a licentiate of the U.P.C.S., he wrote to the R.P.C.S. Mission Committee on 12.7.1864 offering for missionary service and was accepted; ord. Edinburgh for the New Hebrides 4.10.1864, and sailed March 1865; res. 9.8.1865, soon after landing, as he considered he lacked qualifications for successful work; the

Committee considered the action precipitate. ? to F.C.S. To P.C.N.S.W.: Grafton - Ulmarra 5.2.1867-68; Grafton 1869 - Nov. 1870; Murrurundi 1871-74; Penrith 1874-76.

4. COSH, James, M.A., D.D. (27.6.1838 - 20.9.1900)
Born Whitleys near Stranraer, Wigtownshire; 2nd s. James C. (supt. buildings for Duke of Montrose) and Agnes nee Hunter; ed. U. Glasgow (scholarship from Duke) M.A. 1861, R.P. Div. Hall; lic. Presb. Paisley 4.10.1865; ord. 28.11.1865 for work in New Hebrides; sailed 1.3.1866 and recd. by P.C.V. then to N.H.; m. Janet Frame, 3 s. incl. Rev James Cosh (1867-1933), 1 dau. P.C.V.: Missionary, Efate, New Hebrides 1866-71; to N.Z.: furlough and in charge St. Andrews, Auckland N.Z. 1870-71; recd. Otago Synod 18.1.1872. Arr. N.S.W. 1872: ind. Balmain 20.05.1872 - Sept. 1899; Tutor in Exegetical Theology 1878-1900; Hunter-Baillie Professor Oriental & Polynesian Languages St. Andrew's College 1899-1900. Council of St Andrew's College 1883-1900; Moderator 1881. Hon. DD Glasgow 1892.

Life: Janet Denne, *James Cosh 1838-1900 Minister, Missionary and Academic* (Sydney 1991) 128pp.

5. NEILSON, Thomas (1836 - 8.7.1913)
Born Rothesay, Isle of Bute, s. Rev Thomas Neilson, R.P. minister; edu. U Glasgow and R.P. Theol. Hall 1862-65; lic. R.P. Presb Paisley 4.10.1865; ord. R.P. Presb. Paisley 28.11.1865; sailed 1.3.1866; established on Tanna 1867-1883. m. Lucy dau. of John Geddie; joined F.C.S. in union of 1876. P.C.V.: recd. 20.2.1883; ind. Rochester 23.10.1885-1910.

6. McDOUGALL, Allan MA (3.4.1841-16.7.1925)
Born Bonhill, Alexandria, Dumbarton, s. of John McDougal and Helen McNab; ed. U. Glasgow M.A. (1864); R.P. Theol. Hall 1865-69; lic. Presb. Paisley 11.8.1869; ord. Rothesay 9.6.1870-1875; called by F.M. Comm. as successor to Dr. Inglis in New Hebrides, but soon after reaching there in Oct. 1875 differed with Inglis over methods to be employed and withdrew to Australia. To P.C.N.S.W. 1876: Grafton - Ulmarra 1877 - April 1885; H.M. work and chaplaincy 1885 - 1912 including Bombala, Penrith, Orange, Carcoar, Rylstone 1901, Wilcannia 1903-4, Hillston - Gunbar Feb. 1905 - c. 1912.

III. OTHER

1. STEVENSON, William (1800 - 1879)

A Rev. Mr. Stevenson was ministering to the people at Learmonth Brothers' *Ercildoun* station from at least 1861, or perhaps earlier, till 1863, and he ministered to "The Springs" P.C.V. congregation (from 4.2.1863 Learmonth-Springs charge). The Presb. of Ballarat records show him to have been "an ordained minister of a Presbyterian Church" and he was regarded as "voluntarily under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery" since he did not seek admission to the PCV as such. The Presbytery held him in high estimation. This person is doubtless William Stevenson; edu. U. Glasgow and RPCS Theol. Hall 1822-25; lic. Western Presb. 27.4.1826; ord. Stirling R.P. 12.9.1827-1848, m. dau. Rev William Goold 1831; suspended *sine die* for intemperance; ind. Dundee R.P. 10.6.1852-2.3.1858, deposed (intemperance); to Australia; preached and taught with much acceptance in Presbytery of Ballarat; d. South Yarra, Vic.

2. PATRICK, Thomas Wylie (1839 - 1904)

From Glasgow, s. of James Patrick and Jean nee Goldie; edu. U. Glasgow and R.P. Theol. Hall (1868-72); lic. 31.10.1871; ord. Rutherglen R.P. [became F.C.S. on union 1876] 21.12.1871-16.5.1877 (suspended *sine die* by G.A. of F.C.S.). P.C.V.: application not entertained 17.3.1885; died Footscray, Vic.

Notes

1. Dr. Ward has written extensively on Australian Presbyterian history and co-authored a biographical register of some 1100 Presbyterian Ministers who began their Australian careers prior to July 1901.

2. Abbreviations in the career summaries are largely self-explanatory, e.g.: P.C.V. = Presbyterian Church of Victoria; P.C.N.S.W. = Presbyterian Church of New South Wales; ind. = inducted.

ESCHATOLOGY

Paul Wells
(Translated from the French by Margaret McMullan)

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Eschatology is defined as the science of the last things (*ta eschata*), often associated with eschatological events, with the notion of the end of history, its *telos*. This limited understanding has contributed to emphasising the impersonal aspect of eschatology, to which one links the chronologies or "signs" of the end. Another understanding exists, focusing on the one is *eschatos*, Jesus Christ in person, the one who is awaited, whose presence as the "last", marks the peak of the historic designs of God.

Eschatology presents a comprehension of the *acts* of God which brings about, from its beginning to the end, the history of man's salvation, whose principal actor is Christ – he who is the *alpha* and the *omega*, the Creator, the incarnate Servant, the risen Saviour and the King of the new creation. Centred on the person of Christ, eschatology can be defined as the direction and objective of the active faithfulness of God to his covenant with regard to his created order.

From this angle, eschatology is not limited to the presentation of "the last things" of systematic theology, but seeks to show how, in Christ, the ultimate reality of God's plan directs the progress of the history of man and how, at each stage, the will of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, intervenes.

Presuppositions of Christian eschatology

Three presuppositions direct biblical eschatological science: *the goodness* of God whose plan will be accomplished throughout history until its end; as the people of God confess in the Creed, this accomplishment is ongoing in every era of the history of salvation, being centred in the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection, which already manifest *the power* and *the wisdom* of the divine work until its final realisation.

Eschatology gets its full meaning within the body of Christian doctrine and, especially, the doctrine of God. Determinism and indeterminism are born

destructive for eschatology.

Determinism causes the dynamic character and the contingency which characterises its unfolding to disappear from history. The development of the temporal process is less meaningful than the forces which govern it. History loses its characteristic of novelty, of the unexpected, its freedom, even its tragedy. It is clear that biblical prophecy announces future events, but the accomplishment always goes beyond what is foreseen. It is the opposite of the eternal return.

Indeterminism, on the other hand, removes all rationality from the process. Chance eliminates the possibility of a future, the outcome of which could have been foreseen as being the end of current events. In other words, God has no plan and there is *nothing to be accomplished.* Radical contingency makes history look like a sort of puzzle, made up of events of which reason can decipher neither the ins nor the outs.

Contrary to these ideas and their correlations – pure rationalism or irrationalism – Christian eschatology, together with divine sovereignty and human liberty, recognises the complementary nature of the divine and the human. God accomplishes his plan while respecting, at the same time, human liberty with the actions to which it gives rise, as well as the conditions and laws which govern impersonal nature. The counsel of God concerns "all things" (Ephesians 1:11): aspects of the development of spatiotemporal history, human responsibility, responses to divine revelation taking their meaning from the interplay in which human liberty is exercised in a particular environment and at a particular time.

Such is the framework of an eschatology which finds its development by means of the covenant of which divine action and human response are both constituent elements. The eschatological development of the history of salvation depends upon complementary factors which are the divine presence, the vertical axis, and the human response, along horizontal lines, with its religious and cultural aspects. It is in this complex framework that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are linked, the divine mandates and human functions, the offices of prophet, priest and king which fit just as well in creation as in redemption.

Methodological perspectives

According to tradition, discussions on biblical eschatology begin with the account of beginnings and end with heaven, the paradise of the new creation. This approach is understandable: on the one hand, the Bible is a narrative with a movement which goes from one beginning to a new beginning; on the other hand, the structure of the biblical account justifies the idea that God does not abandon his creation, but institutes, in its place, the process of restoration and

renewal. Biblical history develops like a *story*; it is also normal to take seriously its unique development.

However, on the methodological level, there exist other possible approaches to structure a Christian eschatology. One can begin with "the fullness of time" revealed by the coming of Christ from two viewpoints: looking ahead, the promise of the coming and, looking back, its accomplishment.

> The triumph of the Son of man prepares the way for the future triumph of his 'brethren', mankind as a whole. But this eschatological triumph of mankind is not an innovative order that has nothing to do with the primal ordering of man as creature to his Creator. It fulfils and vindicates the primal order in a way that was always implied, but which could not be realized in the fallen state of man and the universe. (O. O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, p.54).

Another interesting possibility is suggested by the works of W. Pannenberg and J. Moltmann, for whom the eschatological events of history constitute a "proleptic" anticipation of the great final accomplishment. Truth is found in finality. To consider ongoing events in their complexities and developments in the light of their end allows, in effect, the granting of meaning to their unfolding. Such an approach is satisfactory on the phenomenological level, since we know from experience that the end is more impregnated with sense than the stages of development, or than the process itself. It is the oak which interests before the acorn, the tulip before the bulb, even if, in the historic perspective, the second precedes the other.

For this reason, it does not seem illegitimate, on the methodological level, to consider the eschatology of the biblical history of salvation from the perspective of the final revelation. We already know many elements of the future from this revelation. It could of course be objected that there is a danger of reading the "not yet" into the "already" and of imposing realities still to come. However, it is possible to recognise historical developments for what they are in so far as their outlines are already pointed to as future realities by prophetic biblical revelation. A reflection on the link between the resurrection of Christ and its New Testament function as beginnings confirms that such an approach is legitimate. As Pannenberg says,

> With the eschatological future God's eternity comes into time and it is thus creatively present to all the temporal things that precede this future. (*Systematic Theology* III, p.531).

The eschatological *telos*

Just as the kingdom of God manifests the future reign of God in the present world, heaven manifests this *presence* throughout the history o'

salvation. Heaven is not a place distant from the present world, but an aspect, normally kept secret, of present reality. It is the divine dimension of reality and appears when a veil, which is normally present, is suddenly lifted and what is ordinarily invisible becomes visible. (cf. N.T. Wright, *Nouveaux cieux, nouvelle terre*, pp.16-17).

The eschatological future of the new creation is determined by the fact that the covenant between God, creation and men will arrive at its terminus and that at the same time, as a completed reality, it is the foundation of a new eternal stage.

The covenant is realised in a perfect, eternal and permanent communion between God and his creatures. Communion with God throughout the history of salvation, even under the new covenant with the effusion of the Spirit, is always only a forerunner of this eternal glory. The promise "I will be their God, they will be my people," repeated historically, knows its final realisation. (Revelation 21:3; Leviticus 26:12, etc.).

When God "makes all things new" (Revelation 21:5) he becomes the "all in all" of the new creation. (Romans 11:38; I Corinthians 8:6, 15:28, and Revelation 21:6). If the ancient world is an allusion to this perfection, the new world reaches a fulness of joy, of life, of knowledge, of holiness and of justice in the new Jerusalem. Sion is the dwelling of God; all that characterises a lack of conformity with regard to this perfection has no right to the city (Psalm 24, Revelation 21:27).

It is Jesus Christ, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), who is, at the same time, the craftsman and substance of this consummation. In Revelation, his visiting card, presented in the first person singular, is: I am *alpha and omega.* This title indicates his sovereignty over all history (1:8, 11, 21:6, 22:13), but it also points to the summit and the beginning of a new economy of created things. Redemption encompasses, under the sovereignty of Christ, the created order in its final revival. Already, in the Old Testament, the future accomplishment sends us back to the beginning:

> "I am he; I am the first,
> and I am the last...
> from the beginning I have not spoken in secret,
> from the time it came to be I have been there.
> And now the Lord God has sent me,
> And his Spirit." (Isaiah 48:12, 16, *cf.* 3, 7)

God is the one who declares "the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done." (Isaiah 46: 10 *cf.* Proverbs 8:22). The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the author (*arch*) of the creation of God, he who is "pre-eminent" (Colossians 1:18), Christ reigns over the universe, over everything.

If he is the mediator of salvation, Christ remains eternally as mediator of the communion between God and his people in the new creation. The kingdom of God will be characterised by life, knowledge and justice; the ontological, epistemological and ethical attributes of God will have their reflection there in the eternal Jubilee.

(i) *Life.* Jesus is not only the first in creation but is also he who "grants to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:7). What is the mysterious tree of life? "(Wisdom) is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;" (Proverbs 3:18). It symbolises nothing less than "communion with God, source of inexhaustible life." (H. Blocher, *Révélation des origins*, p.121). Who is this wisdom, if it is not Jesus Christ himself? It is from the throne of the Lamb that the river of the water of life flows, the river which feeds the tree of life, the leaves of which serve "for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1-5 *cf.* Ezekiel 47:12).

Thus, it is legitimate to consider that the covenant between God and man, which will be realised at the end in the New Jerusalem, is nothing other than the conclusion of the covenant of life presented in the paradisiacal garden of creation. If history which takes place between the two paradises is tragic, "the knowledge of *good and evil*", it is the person of Christ who is the wisdom and the substance of the life of man and who links the two moments full of the divine presence. Heaven, with its principle of life, is present from the beginning of creation and accompanies the whole life of man to the heavenly home. For this reason it is permissible to think that creation is a *primal parousia* of God:

> The Glory-Spirit was present at the beginning of creation as a sign of the *telos* of creation, as the Alpha-archetype of the Omega-Sabbath that was the goal of creation history. (M. J. Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, p.20).

The *telos* is God's kingdom of life which, like all divine creation, depends on his ontological presence and eternity. From the spiritual point of view, heaven is a supernatural world which comprises the renewed totality of invisible realities and the whole created reality. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, heaven is a sanctuary where the high priest dwells in the spiritual tabernacle (Hebrews 8:1-2). Heaven is also the place where the martyrs, having achieved perfection, are alive and wait for the end (Revelation 20:1, 4), where Christ dwells to prepare for his own (John 14:1-2), an image of the holy land.

The new creation follows the old. II Peter 3:10, 12 and Revelation 20:11 announce the dissolution of the elements which happens at the moment of the new creation. God's reign is established by God alone, by his will and not in

natural way. The old world will pass with a crisis. The present reality will be dissolved at the moment of the second coming of Christ and transformed, by the Spirit, into another reality. This metamorphosis is neither natural, nor the result of an evolution, but the cataclysmic work of the Spirit. It calls for a certain violence: that of the death of the old, the disappearance of present reality and the general resurrection.

Heaven is never presented in the Scriptures as other than a place. Biblical symbols are often used to show that heaven is a place and not a state. For example, the biblical images of the city, the promise of Jesus in John 14, where he announces that he is preparing a "dwelling", the ascension described in Ephesians 4 as the passage from one place to another, the welcome of the brigand to paradise. Paul, in I Corinthians 15 presents the resurrection as that of a glorified body; it precedes the resurrection of everyone, it is the first fruits. Heaven is therefore the final place where Jesus is now, the *omega* in person, and in bodily form. The renewal of heaven and earth has already taken place in Jesus, who demonstrates the new physical form as a prototype and pioneer of the new life.

(ii) *Knowledge.* The present state of the knowledge of God, in our world, is partial, like that of a child. The apostle indicates that, in the "adult" stage to come, "I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." At present, our knowledge of God is like seeing "in a mirror dimly, but then face to face." (I Corinthians 13:11, 12). In spite of the mysterious nature of the knowledge of the kingdom that we now have, our future knowledge will be direct, nearness having alleviated ignorance. If the ontological difference between God and the creature will not be diminished, freed from sin, resurrected to new life, faith will depend on the new vision of God. That is why Revelation says, in a symbolic way, that the heavenly lights will no longer have their function "for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb." (21:23). The eternal city itself is "transparent as glass."

The knowledge of God will be a recognition in a transformed faith, as the prophet anticipated: "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14). The new covenant in which "they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest" (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:11) already anticipates this glorious reality. Here, too, is found the foundation of heavenly praise: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns..." (Revelation 19:6), praise which includes a reference to the past, for the head of new mankind is also the Lamb that was slain. (Revelation 5:6-14).

(iii) *The justice* revealed in paradise in blessing and judgement is the application of God's law. The final condition of the new creation will be in

perfect ethical conformity with divine holiness. So that the kingdom of justice comes, the infidel Babylon, the great prostitute, must be judged and annihilated. (Revelation 18:21; 19:2). God shows that "his judgments are true and just." The devil, the antichrist, the false prophet are condemned to be thrown into the lake of fire (20:10) and, with them, those whose names do not appear in the book of life, the "dead", the "idolaters" who suffer "the second death". (19:12; 21:7-8). This judgment is the work of purification of creation which accomplishes divine justice. Without it God's reign would not be achieved. The terrible reality of hell is the demonstration of the justice and the holiness of God.

Divine justice expresses itself in the *parousia* of the Word of God, the Faithful and True, the Lord of lords. Seated on a white horse, he has a sword coming from his mouth and he judges the nations with a rod of iron (19:2) – symbols of retribution, of God's anger against sin. Even judgment is a reason for rejoicing – "Hallelujah, for his judgments are true and just" (19:2), even if outside, in the shadows, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 22:13).

Entering the new creation is like taking part in a wedding. (Matthew 22:1-14). The wedding of the Lamb is consummated with his bride, the new Jerusalem which comes down from heaven (Revelation 21:2,10), clothed in fine linen, "the righteous deeds of the saints" (19:7-8), with its inhabitants "only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." (21:27).

Thus begins the history of the new creation where "his servants will worship him. They will see his face" (22:3-4). In God's presence, the cultural mandate entrusted to Adam will be realised eternally, in justice and holiness, by the people of the last Adam.

The person of Jesus and eschatology

Since the beginning of Christian tradition, Jesus is presented as *ho eschatos, the last.* The person of Jesus *himself* is the goal towards which all creation and the covenant is progressing, to find in him their accomplishment. (Colossians 1:15f) Indeed, *the incarnation causes the end of history to enter* time, for in Jesus the divine intention of salvation and judgment is seen, both being crystallised at the cross.

(i) *Jesus Christ is the* telos *in person, for he accomplishes historically God's eschatological aim.* In the New Testament, there exists a juxtaposition between "the last days" and "the last day" (*cf.* Matthew 24). The first expression concerns the present period, while the second never refers to present time, but to the day of judgment which is still future. According to Hebrews 1:2, God has spoken "in these last days" (*ep' eschatou t n h mer n*

tout n) by his Son. Hebrews 9:26 equally indicates the absolute and radical character of the incarnation of Christ: "he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages, (*epi synteileia t n ai n n*) to put away sin". The incarnation of Christ is an event where Jesus, Immanuel, by his appearance, marks the arrival of the eschatological day and inaugurates a different time. The sense of these passages is not only that the coming of Christ marks the last period of time, but that it inaugurates the time of the end. In I Peter 1:20 we read that Christ "was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times (*ep' eschatou t n chron n*) for your sake." This text presents a contrast between two events opposed but complementary: the foundation of the world and the end of time. The link between the two is established by the presence of Christ. In other words, in the person and because of the coming of Jesus, the end of time is apparent.

The ministry of Jesus is an act that marks the beginning of the end. In him (Luke 4:18-21) God's year "of grace" is announced and begun. The liberation of the captives is realised by the fact that Satan is bound and dethroned. Satan falls from heaven; he no longer has the same power on earth as before, for the kingdom has come (Matthew 12:28, Luke 11:20). Note the manner in which the demons react face to face with Jesus: "if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."; the person of Jesus signals the reorganisation of the cosmic forces and his power over the demons merely shows itself. The kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God, dynamically active to establish his kingship among men. His kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of this age, has already come in human history in the person and mission of Jesus who conquers evil, delivers men from its power and gives them access to the blessings of God's reign. The kingdom of God synthesizes two great moments: its accomplishment in history and its consummation at the end of history.

The crucifixion of Jesus equally constitutes a final event. The evangelists recorded, in their writings, the eschatological discourse of Jesus, pronounced before his passion, and subsequently present the events occurring round the crucifixion as an accomplishment. The loss of the love of many, anomie and injustice (Matthew 24:10,12, *cf.* 26:14-16, 56, 69ff.), as well as the supernatural phenomena which mark the day of the Lord in the Old Testament, are realised at the moment of Christ's death. The "it is accomplished" of John 19:30 can be translated "it is finished" (*tetelestai*) and indicates that the end has begun at Calvary. The crucifixion is the judgment of the world, (John 12:31).

> The cross...cut through the bond which for a definite period of time had tied [Christ] to the kosmos; it threw Him out of the world, and He departed from it to enter another world, which was His real home...It made Him not so much a 'new creature', as the veritable beginner of a 'new creation'. (G. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, pp.48-49).

The *eschaton* is therefore what has already happened in Christ and what reveals the secret of a new world.

Jesus and eschatological judgment.

> Since Jesus in his incarnate life is the truth of God made manifest in human history, the judgment of the last day is in a sense already taking place in people's response to him. (R. Bauckham and T.Hart, *Hope Against Hope*, p.141).

In John's presentation, if Jesus himself condemns no one, his message – of which salvation is the goal – is a witness against those who reject him and, in the same way, their judge. (John 3:17-21, 12:46-48). "The last things" which, strictly speaking, extend beyond historical development and understanding, are already presented in history by salvation and judgment. Between the incarnation and the return of Jesus in glory, God's policy does not change. The conditions of salvation and perdition, which will be evoked at the last day, are already present within history. It is thus that the end has already come in Christ. As Bauckam and Hart say:

> The astonishing coincidence of God's utter condemnation of sinners and his radical grace for sinners occurs definitively in the cross and will recur at the last judgment. The last judgment will implement what has been decided once and for all at the cross. (*op. cit.*, pp.143-144).

Summary: These elements are enough to show that Jesus, in his incarnation, is the culmination of the *magnalia Dei*. All that is going to happen at the end has *already* happened in Jesus and continues to determine the relationship between God and man:

The appearance of the Messiah, "the last," inaugurates the "last days", when the power of God is shown by his presence. The coming of God in Christ is the long-awaited climax of history;

All history concerning Jesus, past and present, as well as his return in glory, is eschatological. The coherence of history is found in the unity of the person of Christ;

Jesus himself marks the end. In one sense, the end is nearer with his coming but, in another sense, the end is already there. Every person united to Christ is united, in principle, to the end and to the presence of the kingdom to come.

The eschatology of the interim period

Neo-testamentary eschatology deals with the coming of God into th world in Christ as a fact without precedent. Thus,

> we pass from the climate of prediction to that of fulfilment. The things which God had foreshadowed by the lips of His holy prophets He has now, in part at least, brought to accomplishment. The *Eschaton*, described from afar..., has in Jesus registered its advent...The supreme sign of the *Eschaton* is the Resurrection of Jesus...[which] is not simply a sign which God has granted in favour of His Son, but is the inauguration, the entrance into history, of *the times of the end.* (T.W. Manson, quoted in A.A.Hoekema, T*he Bible and the Future*, p.14).

Each stage of the ministry of Jesus – the incarnation and the crucifixion; the resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit; his return and final state – is characterised by the presence of the Lord and therefore by his action: an eschatological triptych with three facets, each of which has its particular character, but which is a part of the same picture. In him, creation finds its accomplishment and the covenant achieves its goal. (cf. A. König, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology*, pp.64-68).

Unveiled eschatology indicates that a new reality has taken place and that a determining process has begun. Expectation has ended and a new historical process begins. Its new and unified quality comes from the reality of the presence of Christ and his work.

For new wine, new wineskins. The incarnation modifies the structure even of eschatological, biblical expectation. The Jewish expectation of a simple movement from this age to the age to come at the end of time, an expectation illustrated by the disciples' question in Matthew 24:3, gives way to a complex structure. The future has already entered history and is present in the appearance of the incarnate and in his work of salvation. Between the present and the future the messianic epoch is inserted with its own character.

> The *new element* in the New Testament is not eschatology, but what I call the *tension* between the decisive 'already fulfilled' and the 'not yet completed', between present and future. (O. Cullman, *Salvation in history*, p.172).

The analogy of Cullman is rightly extolled: the cross and the resurrection constitute D-day, which announces the final victory of V-day. The landing of 1944 is not yet the end of the war, but the "already" of the final victory which, if not yet accomplished, is very widely anticipated.

> Precisely this is the situation of which the New Testament is conscious, as a result of the recognition of the new division of time; the revelation consists precisely in the fact of the proclamation of *that event on the cross, together with the resurrection which followed, was the already concluded decisive battle*. (O. Cullman, *Christ and Time*, p.84).

Four innovative aspects describe the situation characterised by the interim period, the "time between" the resurrection and the future parousia.

(i) *The presence of salvation.* The cross calls for the resurrection which is its consequence, as justification and sanctification of Jesus. It is not a question of a simple succession in time, but a manifestation linked to the inherent logic of what has been accomplished at the cross. Because of the perfect obedience of Jesus, the mediator between God and man – in his life and death, in his divinity and his humanity – salvation is realised according to the covenant's principle of justice; the resurrection *must* follow the cross as confirmation.

The New Testament weaves a complex relationship where the past, the present and the future appear interdependent in the perspective of the covenant of grace. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses the words *hapax* and *ephapax* (Hebrews 7:27; 9:11-12, 26-28; 10:10; 12:26-27; Romans 6:10) to show that the work of Christ, once for all, brings about the eschatological situation where Christ intercedes and procures salvation for his people in his heavenly ministry. Similarly, I Peter 3:18: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God". The past, present and future are conditioned by one another. True eschatology is always preoccupied by the expectation of Christ who has already been revealed and will appear a second time for those who wait for him with a view to their salvation (Hebrews 9:28).

> Its witness to God's victory in the future is based on a victory already achieved in history. It proclaims not merely hope, but a hope based on events in history and its own experience. (G.E.Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, p.337).

(ii) *Reconciliation* breaks the hostile barrier which exists between God and man and between men. (Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 2:15-16). It is not a question, in this case, of two enemies who make peace, for God has never been the enemy of man. If the covenant between God and men assumes an agreement of two parties, only one of them has broken the covenant. The message of the gospel is that of suppressing our enmity towards God. God reconciles the world to himself in Christ (II Corinthians 5:19). If man has broken the covenant and brought about his own loss, this breach is abolished on his side by the obedience of Christ in his place. Christ destroys the enmity at the cross and by his death, while men were always his enemies (Romans 5:10).

It is as well not to minimise the cosmic impact of the texts which evoke the situation of reconciliation created by the cross of Christ. Reconciliation is global, for the sacrifice of Christ has no limits as an act. It is the world which is reconciled with God and this is already a reality in the work of Christ. This

implies the spread of the Gospel to every creature and salvation by faith to those who believe. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself...believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." (John 12:32, 36).

Reconciliation does not imply a change in God. God remains constant in his disposition towards justice and sin. This disposition implies that man changes, since he is reconciled, and that he can recognise the significance of a new covenant relationship with God. The enmity abolished by the act of reconciliation calls for adherence, in repentance and faith, to this new state of things. This act of reconciliation becomes effective, being given the function of expiation and propitiation of the cross. Sin is expiated by Christ according to the means established in the Old Testament (Hebrews 9:11-14; 13:10-13).

If reconciliation has a universal aspect – for the good pleasure and the mercy of God are vouched for by the cross towards the entire creation – it becomes a true reality when the sinner is reconciled with God by his trust in Christ. God's disposition towards his creation becomes a reality in the act of faith, which introduces the believer into the kingdom of the Son and into a new relationship of peace according to the conditions of the covenant of grace.

(iii) *Victory over death is already accomplished by the resurrection.* Christ is the conqueror of death and, as such, delivers from its inevitability as a result of sin and from its power (Romans 6:9-10). Christ put the power of death under him in the new life he attains as the resurrected one. Thus he has destroyed death and brought immortality to light (II Timothy 1:10). This victory permits the conjugation of death in the past: death died in the death of Christ. That is how the believer now experiences the victory of the kingdom in his life, for he knows, by faith, that nothing can separate him from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:39). Christ presents himself to the suffering Christians in Revelation 1:18 in giving himself not only the title first and last (*pr tos, eschatos*), but also that he is the living one (*ho z n*): "I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades." He is their master because he was their conqueror.

(iv) *The age of the Spirit.* The Spirit, promised to bless the Messianic work (Isaiah 61:1-2; 42:1), the Spirit of final communion between God and his people (John 17:24-26), was received by Jesus and given to his apostles on the day of Pentecost to accomplish their mission under Christ's authority (Acts 2:16-17; Matthew 28:16-20). The Spirit is imparted to believers as a seal and guarantee (II Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:14) since they already possess the future blessings, if not their fulness. This Spirit who lives "forever" (John 14:16) with the people of God is the Spirit of adoption who permits them to recognise the Father (Galatians 4:4-6; Romans

8:14-16) and to receive the title of sons. Believers who are born from on high receive the seal of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13, 4:30). The Spirit is the Spirit of the new creation who transforms the children of God into the image of Christ (II Corinthians 4:6, 5:17; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 3:10). The new people of God is formed by the Spirit to live as a holy nation (I Peter 1:15, 3:9) which waits for the resurrection of the body (I Corinthians 15:55) even in the midst of tribulation (John 16:33).

Summary: In the neo-testamentary perspective, "the last days" do not refer to a period still to come but to the "already". Eschatological time begins with the coming of Christ. The present is situated in the last times, with signs that are constant throughout its duration, like attestations of accomplishment in which "the day" is expressed.

Eschatology of the promise

The Old Testament, in spite of its historical and cultural diversities, is marked by a unified expectation of the future. The unique expectation of the day of Yahweh with its blessings and judgments, its idea of eternity present in time, and that of the new creation, reveals a series of steps associated to the covenants between God and man and to the saving acts, of which the character is eschatological.

It is impossible, from the Old Testament, to draw a photofit picture of the person of Christ. The coming of Christ – God in person – into history greatly exceeds what one could envisage from prophecy. It is preferable to proceed in reverse and to read the texts beginning with Christ and the fulfilment of the new covenant in him. Thus one discovers unity in the diversity of the promises of the old covenant. Certain themes can be pointed out.

(i) *Creation and eschatology.* Atomistic exegesis will link eschatology, at the very most, to the covenant with Abraham and will hesitate to discern eschatology in creation, doubtless because there is no covenant found there (see J. Barr, *Adam and Eve and the Hope of Immortality*). Nevertheless, within the scope of a canonical interpretation, the limitations of Adam in relation to the new Adam serve to signify the incomplete, eschatological situation of creation. In the new creation, the imperishable takes the place of the perishable because of the incorruptible nature of the resurrection body. (I Corinthians 15:50); the need of nourishment no longer exists in the heavenly state (I Corinthians 6:13), though it was part of the earthly nature of Adam; the regularity of the weekly structure will be replaced by an eternal Sabbath in Christ (Hebrews 4); the possibility of disobeying, of sinning, of doing evil, destructive of life, will disappear in the holy Sion (Isaiah 2:2, 11:9); marriage and procreation will be abrogated. (Matthew 22:30) Adam

is found at the beginning of history, the natural preceding the spiritual and the state of creation, if it displays the glory of the Creator, does not compare with the glory of the New Jerusalem.

In Genesis 2 and 3, the expression "Lord God" is used twenty times (out of 36 in the entire Old Testament) and indicates that God the Creator is also the Lord of his people in the covenant of which the basic elements are found in Genesis 2:16-17. If the promise of life is not explicit in these verses, the threat of death for disobedience suggests it. The blessing called to mind is that of humanity, of its earthly activities, of life and finally it announces the Sabbath-rest with God for all that was created "very good" (1:28-2:2). The covenant was a manner of earthly administration of the kingdom of God. In creation, the finality of culture in all its aspects is to establish a communion between the human being,God and created reality. Once the covenant was broken by sin, the grace promised from Genesis 3:16 proposed no other covenant, but the redemption of creation, realised ultimately "in Christ". Thus, the covenants of the Old Testament can have a particular goal, like that entered into with Noah, or "redemptive", like the Abrahamic covenant, but all exist in view of the special grace of salvation.

The Adamic calling. The fact that Christ is "the last Adam" (I Corinthians 15:45) indicates that, on the way of the promise, there have been many Adams – Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah or David – who have all failed in the mission to lead the people of God towards rest. Living in a theocratic type of situation, a situation *sui generis*, placed under the direct kingship of God and created in the image of God, Adam was called to exercise a triple vocation : prophetic, priestly and kingly, which will serve as an archetype for the theocracy of Israel. Accomplished in Christ, who epitomizes the calling of the people of the old covenant (Matthew 12), the heavenly theocracy will establish Christ as prophet, priest and king of his people who will partake in the holy calling of beautifying the glory of God. In the Old Testament expectation, the Adamic calling will be realised by a prophet who will be like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15), by a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110), by a king who will come to Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9) as the descendant of David (II Samuel 7:12-13), in brief, by the nation of Israel called to be a true son of God on the new Eden of the promised land (Exodus 19:3-6).

However, all these institutional representatives are "false Adams" with the weaknesses of their strengths; they are the "déjà vu" by their repeated disobedience and, still worse, by the persecutions which they inflicted on the "true" (Luke 11:51). Finally God judges his people and dispenses upon them the curses of the covenant, in exile. In spite of the prophesied restoration which

follows (Isaiah 40-46), only a remnant will be saved (Jeremiah 23:3; Isaiah 11:11). Repentance and spiritual renewal are necessary, for blessing is not without conditions (Ezekiel 36:24-28, Isaiah cpts.24-27). With the return from exile, hope of a new covenant opens a new development with a transcendent eschatology centred on divine intervention. The Judaism of the "second temple" records the development of apocalyptic tendencies drawing on catastrophistic accents and cosmic hopes which form the background of the "calamities" and the judgments pronounced, against Israel and the temple by Christ (Matthew 23-24).

(iii) *The living Redeemer.* It is in this context that Matthew proclaims that Jesus is the true Son of God "called out of Egypt" and, at the same time, "son of David, son of Abraham" (Matthew 2:15, 1:1), while Luke presents him as a descendant of David, "son of Adam, son of God" (3:38). Jesus comes as the promised Redeemer, announced from Genesis 3:15, sometimes in enigmatic terms, as in the latter case. Redemption implies a battle against the serpent, identified as a representative of Satan in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2. The Redeemer will be a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), of the tribe of Judah (49:10), and a descendant of David (I Samuel 7:12-13). The battle against evil implies that the promised Redeemer, if he is Immanuel (Isaiah 9:7), is also the suffering servant of Yahweh, who will bear sin and who will be put to death for his people (Isaiah 53). The Redeemer is equally the Son of Man who comes with the power of his eternal reign, identified as Messiah in the New Testament (John 3:14, 6:62).

Jesus comes as conqueror of Satan, contrary to Adam, in resisting temptation and lies, by his perfect obedience, including on the cross where the mockeries of the crowd, "if you are the Christ...", have the same tonalities as the temptations in the desert. It is by his resurrection that Jesus responds to Job's expectation - "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the *last* he will stand upon the earth." (Job 19:25).

The great conclusion awaited by the Old Testament saints is *the day of Yahweh*, a day of judgment and redemption. If this day can describe the penultimate acts of God, it expresses more and more the sense of judgment of Israel and also that of the world: "...all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth." (Zephaniah 1:14-18; Amos 5:18-20). At the same time, this day "great and awesome" is a day of salvation, of healing and of deliverance for those who wait for the Lord (Malachi 4:2-3; Joel 2:32). Elijah must first come to bring hearts back to the law of Moses, a mission which is identified as that of John the Baptist, the forerunner (Malachi 5:5; Matthew 11:14).

Summary: The Old Testament saints looked towards the future and the promised salvation which the following themes express: the coming of a Redeemer, the establishment of a kingdom in a definitive way, a new covenant, the restoration of the glory of Israel, the outpouring of the Spirit, the great day of Yahweh, heralding the new heavens and the new earth. This expectation is accompanied by the coming of God – the incarnation, the resurrection and the ascension – by the power of him who is the last Adam, the *alpha* and the *omega* (Isaiah 41:4).

Eschatology and Christian life

Christian hope, founded on eschatology inaugurated by the incarnate one, is on the opposite side of worldly hope, which consists of an expectation of what one does not have. It leans on what one already has in the accomplishment of the covenant by Christ and on its application in the matter of salvation. This hope is, at the same time, the fruit of possession and expectation. Salvation entails an ultimate realisation in the glorification that is presented, in prophetic fashion, in Romans 8:29, as a reality already present.

To hope is to live by the grace present in regeneration and to be holy by obedience in having a clear conscience from the past: Christ has accomplished reconciliation with God by his sacrifice on the cross, in which believers died with him. Raised with him, as new creatures, they await the future and the renewal of creation.

The benefits of the covenant, obtained by Christ, are progressively applied by the Spirit as a present aspect of the work of Christ. Thus the believer's situation is eschatological, in tension between the past with the accomplishment of salvation by Christ and the future with the parousia of Christ which will introduce the final state. Realisation in the new creation will constitute a last stage where glorification will be manifest by liberation – from sin and from death – of the body of the flesh and by the reign of Christ and those who are in him.

Conclusion

Jesus and the apostles never spoke of eschatology in an abstract way. Their teaching on the future brings out the unity of eschatological events; this unity is centred on the reality of the person of Jesus and results in a concrete exhortation to lead a life of hope and obedience. That implies a manner of being in the world: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him...the world is *passing away*...but whoever does the will of God abides *forever*." (1 John 2:15-17).

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BOOK REVIEWS

English Hypothetical Universalism. John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology, Jonathan D. Moore, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007, pbk., 324 pages, £19.99.

This new study of a significant figure in seventeenth century Reformed thought sheds much light on the theological issues debated in that period, especially the controversies with Arminians and Socinians regarding the person and work of Christ. That there was a measure of diversity tolerated within the Reformed camp also becomes clear as the study unfolds.

Born in 1587 in Northamptonshire, Preston graduated from Queen's College, Cambridge, and became a Fellow there in 1609. He was converted in 1611 after hearing a sermon by John Cotton in Cambridge and embraced the outlook of those known as 'Puritans.' At Queen's he tutored many who later became influential in the political and spiritual life of the nation. In 1622 Preston became Master of Emmanuel College, an institution which nurtured a significant number of the leading Puritan preachers and theologians. Preston also occupied other positions of influence such as preacher at Lincoln's Inn in London, lecturer at Trinity Church in Cambridge and chaplain to the future King Charles I. In part due to his onerous responsibilities, Preston died in 1628 at the relatively early age of 40.

After a biographical introduction, Jonathan Moore helpfully sketches the theological background against which Preston's writings must be viewed, with attention necessarily focused on what he terms 'Elizabethan particularism'. This is the understanding of the atoning work of Christ associated in the Elizabethan church with William Perkins, which views the atonement as being by design and application confined to the elect. This chapter serves to raise issues such as the nature of Christ's atoning work and the basis for the gospel offer which will receive thorough consideration specifically in relation to Preston.

The core of the book comprises chapters 3 to 6 which analyse Preston's theology in detail. In turn Moore examines the divine decree, the death of Christ and the gospel call. It quickly becomes clear that Preston espoused the modified view of the traditional Reformed position on the atonement ('limited'/definite atonement) known as 'hypothetical universalism.' This view asserts that the atonement was offered for all men (hence 'universalism') but applied effectively only to the elect (hence 'hypothetical'). This, Moore argues, is to be distinguished from the 'Amyraldianism' of theologians such as Moyse Amyraut. Chapter 6 considers Preston's involvement in the York House onference of 1626, where, according to Moore, the strictly Reformed

participants were disappointed by Preston's modified position which did not really turn the attacks of the growing 'Arminian' party in the Church of England.

The final chapter considers whether Preston was alone among Reformed theologians of the day in holding this hypothetical universalist position. The answer is that he was not alone, but that several influential figures shared his outlook and that this view was tolerated within the Reformed camp, even if not widely shared. Two bishops are considered – James Ussher and John Davenant. Ussher is often regarded as a quintessentially orthodox Calvinist theologian, author of the *Irish Articles* which strongly influenced the Westminster Divines. Moore makes a convincing case for Ussher's espousal of hypothetical universalism, and raises some interesting questions about the received view of his theology. Issues of mutual influence among Preston, Ussher and Davenant are also considered.

In his conclusion Moore highlights several areas in which helpful conclusions may be drawn from a study of Preston, not least in relation to the deeply unsatisfactory 'Calvin against the Calvinists' thesis. The diversity existing within the Jacobean Church of England which this study has indicated is also of great significance in the ongoing debates about Arminianism and Calvinism in seventeenth century England. Comprehensive bibliographies are of course supplied.

This is a fascinating study of a profoundly influential figure and raises many interesting questions regarding the development of Reformed theology in the seventeenth century. No doubt its conclusions will at points be challenged and revisions offered – such is the nature of academia. As a doctoral study it is thorough and demanding, yet is also written in an accessible style and merits a wide readership.

David McKay

The Historical Reliability of the Gospels, Craig L. Blomberg, Apollos (IVP), 2nd. edition, 2007, pbk., 416 pages, £17.99

Few people today believe that the gospels of the New Testament contain much material of historical value. Generations of academics in theological faculties have taught their students that these documents were written by people who lived long after Jesus of Nazareth, who were dependent on contradictory and unreliable oral traditions and whose theological concerns took precedence over any serious endeavour after historical accuracy. The well-publicised outpourings of the absurdly unrepresentative "Jesus Seminar" have added to the confusion, together with such phenomena of popular culture as the largely fictitious best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code*. Craig Blomberg, in this second

edition of a book first published in 1987, aims to set the record straight by explaining how the last twenty-five years have seen a radical reassessment in biblical studies, with an increasing number of scholars, by no means all of them conservative, coming to a position of growing confidence in the historical reliability of these charter documents of the Christian faith. In seven closely-argued and informative chapters, he makes a compelling case.

The first two chapters examine how various methods of historical criticism have been applied to the gospels, from traditional attempts at harmonizing or magnifying apparent discrepancies to modern approaches such as form, redaction and midrash criticism. Blomberg argues that these methods can "offer valuable exegetical insights when stripped of their negative biases against the historical reliability of the gospel tradition" (p.97). In chapter three he discusses the possibility of miracles, concluding that the evidence points to their historicity. The next chapter considers apparent contradictions among the synoptic gospels and offers a number of proposals aimed at resolving many of them. Chapter five shows how alleged discrepancies between John and the synoptics begin to disappear upon closer scrutiny and chapter six outlines the "Jesus-tradition" outside the gospels, both canonical and non-canonical, showing how it reinforces confidence in their authenticity. A final chapter offers concluding reflections on a methodology for assessing the reliability of particular details in the gospel narratives, claiming that "the standard procedures of historical research may be applied" (p.298).

Dr. Blomberg has assembled and deployed an impressive range of material aimed at buttressing confidence in the historicity of the gospels and one could wish that this book might be read widely in the scholarly community. It might, by God's blessing, lead them to reconsider their facile scepticism and to look afresh at the considerable amount of evidence for a position which they have been all too ready to deride without serious examination.

Whether, however, this is the best way to defend Scripture is doubtful. The author is admirably clear in stating his perspective: "I neither presuppose nor argue for the complete inerrancy, infallibility or inspiration of Scripture, even just with the Gospels. These are the logical and/ or theological corollaries of other prior commitments. I believe there are good reasons for holding them, but a defence of that conviction would require a very different kind of book. I wear my historian's hat, not my Christian believer's hat in this project" (p.23). All well and good, but should a Christian, even working as a historian, *ever* remove his believing headgear? Has this willingness to accommodate the canons of modern scholarship not been responsible for the muting of a distinctive evangelical voice? Does not such "neutrality" of approach make unwarrantable concessions, as when, for example, he writes "even if some of the apparent contradictions proved to be genuine, this would not necessarily discredit the rest of the narrative" (p.298)? When the view that inspiration

requires absolute historical reliability in historical writings is described as an "extreme position" (p.323), one begins to wonder how high the price of meeting academia on its own ground is proving to be.

While supporting evidence for the historicity of Scripture is useful in certain contexts and undoubtedly has its place in the apologetic armoury, that place must remain a minor one. Obscurantist as it may seem to a critical intellectual establishment, we continue to maintain that "The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth...wholly upon God (who is truth itself,) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God" (WCF:1:IV).

Edward Donnelly

Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's unfolding purpose, Paul R. Williamson, New Studies In Biblical Theology 23, Apollos (IVP), 2007, pbk., 242 pages, £12.99

This is the latest publication of an Ulsterman (and former fellow Ph.D. student with the reviewer at Queen's University Belfast) who now lectures in Old Testament and Hebrew at Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia. It is the latest in a line of scholarly works that are "biblical-theological" and that are structured around the concept of covenant. The writer speaks as one of those "who through union with Christ participates in the new covenant" (p.33). Any work that exegetes the key covenantal passages in an attempt to trace the unfolding of God's covenantal purposes as the biblical-theological core of the Scriptures is to be welcomed. This is a stimulating and scholarly work that engages with the full spectrum of scholarship as well as the scriptural text. The serious student will find that the work has much to commend it - take for example his penetrating study of the New Covenant in Pauline theology in light of recent controversy (pp.187-201).

The first chapter looks at some of the important issues that have to be addressed in a biblical-theological investigation of covenant, not least the meaning of the term "covenant". This he defines as "a solemn commitment, guaranteeing promises or obligations undertaken by one or both parties, sealed with an oath." The reviewer would proffer some caveats here. Firstly, Williamson is reluctant, in light of sceptical critical scholarship, to allow parallels with the suzerain-vassal treaties which have important implications both for dating and shaping the covenantal material. Secondly, he is reluctant to emphasise the importance of the covenant concept as *the* organising centre of Scripture - rather he sees it as "a trajectory that illustrates...one way" in which Scripture finds unity, "one of the most important motifs", "a crucial

hermeneutical bridge". Thirdly, he speaks somewhat dismissively of what he calls a "traditional Reformed understanding" as a system of belief by which, for example, Presbyterians defend the rite of infant baptism, commenting, "The present investigation has little, if any, bearing on covenant theology in that sense." Surely it is scriptural belief that shapes ecclesiastical practice and where there are such implications these should be part of the "investigation." Fourthly, he rejects Reformed covenant theology's traditional prelapsarian covenant of works and postlapsarian covenant of grace as the out-working of a pre-temporal, inter-trinitarian covenant of redemption (as taught, he admits, in the Westminster Confession). Admittedly there may be a need to tighten up the terminology here, but it a shock to Reformed people to have the structural baby thrown out with the bath water in this way!

The next two chapters put the covenant into what is for Williamson its biblical-theological context, namely God's universal purpose to bring blessing to the world through the foundational covenant with Noah. This is where we take serious issue with the writer, because , again against Reformed theology, he rejects any idea of a covenant with Adam. As he says, "For Reformed theologians...any relationship involving God must be covenantal in nature - whether his relationship with creation in general or his relationship with human beings in particular...The biblical order is relationship, then covenant..." Moreover, he states that "given that the Noahic covenant provides the biblical-theological framework within which all subsequent divine-human covenants operate, its universal scope is undoubtedly significant." While it is true that we need to focus on the universal aspect of redemptive history (Rom. 8:21), does the primary focus not fall on the redemption of fallen sinners?

It is when we come to the next chapter that we find our most serious objection to Williamson's thesis and this is the way that he proceeds to drive a wedge into the whole subsequent unfolding schema of covenant, namely a national versus universal distinction. His most radical departure is to drive this wedge into the Abrahamic covenant. Thus he sees two distinct covenants between God and Abraham. There is a national one, fulfilled in the growth of the nation, exodus and conquest. In this the Sinai covenant sets out the covenant obligations for those in whom God's national promise to Abraham is realized. In trying to model the kingdom of God on earth by living according to the Law, Israel failed. It is in viewing the Mosaic covenant as a national covenant to be kept without divine help that the most serious ramifications of this novel thesis are clear. We can take as one example Williamson's discussion of the Mosaic sabbath. He states that "the sabbath prohibition was not intended to be an absolute requirement..." Is this not evidence of an antinomian trend? Where does this leave us with regard to the rest of the moral law, established at creation and kept by Abraham?

It is clear then that those who hold to traditional Reformed theology will

have serious questions over these aspects of the work. That said, it is of course good for us to have our views challenged. Moreover, as we said, there is much in the book that is helpful, not least the seventh and eighth chapters on the new covenant.

Norris Wilson

God The Real Superpower – Rethinking Our Role in Missions, J. Nelson Jennings, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing (distributed in the UK by Evangelical Press), 2007, pbk., 261 pages, £8.95

The modern missionary movement has gone through many changes since William Carey and his friend John Thomas sailed for Bengal, India, in 1793. In this volume Prof. Nelson Jennings is calling for further change. I hasten to add that it is not change for the sake of change, but a call for reformation in the work of mission to reflect to a greater extent the Lordship of Christ.

The book is primarily aimed at an American audience, Prof. Jennings writing as an American to Americans. That is the significance of the book's title. America is regarded as the only superpower in the 21st century world. This is a fact Jennings believes has influenced American missionary practice and policy. By drawing attention to the fact that God is the real superpower, Jennings exposes the weaknesses of the typical American missionary approach. Then, throughout the book, he presents a well balanced biblical approach to mission, consistent with a Christian world and life view.

At this point in the review you may well be concluding that if you are not a citizen of the U.S.A. then this book is not for you. That would be a wrong deduction to make. Many of us, living in other western nations, have been as guilty of making the same kind of unbiblical assumptions as Americans and therefore I believe every Christian minister and elder who is concerned about world mission will derive much profit from this thought-provoking work.

The book considers five themes, each theme corresponding to a quotation from 1 Peter.

Theme 1: "Your Faith and Hope are in God" (1 Pet. 1:21)

Under this heading Jennings, in two chapters, exhorts American Christians and all of us to recognise that the God who made the world is the God who acted in Jesus Christ to reclaim this fallen world *'to make all things new'*. God is the mission superpower. God is at work in his entire world and deploys missionaries according to his Sovereign purpose to save his elect people from the *'four corners of the earth'*. The success of his sovereign purpose does not depend on the wealth or political prestige of the nation from which missionaries come, but upon God's grace and power.

Theme 2: "Your Brotherhood throughout the World" (1 Pet. 5:9)

Jennings recognises the international nature of the church and challenges the first world church and its missionaries to consider what they can learn from Christians living in poverty and enduring under persecution. He calls for much greater interaction between Christians serving Christ in many diverse settings throughout the world and gives examples of how profitable such exchanges have been.

Theme 3: - "Keep Your Conduct among the Gentiles Honorable" (1 Pet.2:12)

Living as an inter-dependent worldwide church is a natural follow up. In this section he challenges his readers to think, not simply of organised missions, but how each Christian lives in a missionary context, whether in the U.S.A., U.K., or Uganda, and will have opportunity to share the gospel. He describes this as *"God's unorganised mission"*.

Theme 4: "Serve One Another" (1 Pet. 4:10)

His fourth theme is a call to recognise Christian missions as multi-directional. For nearly two centuries after William Carey's pioneer missionary service in India, the mentality, Jennings points out, has often been *"west-to-the-rest missions"*. That stereotype no longer fits. The church in Korea, for example, is sending thousands of missionaries to various destinations in the world. As well as that there is unprecedented movement of people groups throughout the world. The arrival in the British Isles of 1,000s of Eastern Europeans illustrates this point. People are also on the move in pursuit of business interests, in relation to education or merely in the ongoing process of urbanization. Some of these will be Christians and Jennings challenges his readers to *"recognise and tap in to how God has brought Christians from other parts of the world as part of his missionary force to strengthen us, challenge us, and help us follow our Leader Jesus more appropriately and effectively."*

Theme 5: "Throughout the Time of Your Exile" (1 Pet. 1:17)

Christian missions are ongoing within the world's various contexts. In this concluding section Jennings points out the reality of America's and Europe's spiritual poverty and how every Christian has a mission field outside his own front door. Jennings recognises that the church's mission is not only to see lives renewed by the grace of Christ, but to see cultures transformed by the power of Christ.

Jennings has made a valuable contribution to rethinking our role in missions. He maintains a healthy optimism throughout because his hope is based not on an earthly superpower but on God - the real Superpower.

Robert McCollum

BOOK NOTICES

Calvin and the Biblical Languages, John D. Currid, Christian Focus (Mentor), 2006, pbk., 106 pp., £9.99.

This little book is one of several produced by the Mentor imprint of Christian Focus presumably in preparation for the quincentenary of Calvin's birth in 2009. It is both a fitting memorial to Calvin and also a timely stimulus to the ongoing work of Reformation in which Calvin played such a pivotal role, dealing as it does with the place of the study of the biblical languages in the exegesis, hermeneutics, and preaching of John Calvin.

Currid does a good job of debunking the myth that Calvin knew little or no Hebrew, tracing the course of his acquisition of the language under some of the masters of the day, and concluding that he became competent in Hebrew, but was better at Greek. In support of this he gathers evidence from Calvin's sermons and commentaries. "The fact that Calvin entered the pulpit carrying only his Hebrew Old Testament and his Greek New Testament...demonstrates his considerable ability to work with the original texts." (p.28f). "In his Old Testament commentaries, Calvin used the Hebrew language prodigiously and capably...Even by modern standards, Calvin's work in Hebrew in his Old Testament commentaries demonstrated great care and accuracy." (pp.33,38).

Currid is not writing hagiography however. His assessment of Calvin's ability is even-handed. "Calvin may not have been an expert Hebraist and Greek scholar...but he had a thorough working knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages." (p.29). "His linguistic work did not, however, have great depth and breadth to it. But certainly for his time he was an able and competent philologist...for the most part his work is solid." (pp.38f).

Currid sets Calvin's study of the biblical languages in historical context, showing how their rediscovery played a fundamental role in the work of the Reformation. Serious study of Hebrew and Greek, he argues, was a hallmark of the Reformation, since it was a means to the great end of the proper exposition of Scripture.

The book is essentially a plea (and in fact there is a postscript of five pages for this express purpose) to pastors, churches, and seminaries in the Reformed tradition not to neglect the Reformation legacy of maintaining the foundation of the biblical languages in all our exposition of God's truth. As such it is good set reading for students about to embark on the study of Hebrew and Greek, and also for pastors who may not have been as assiduous as they ought in keeping up their facility in the original languages of Scripture.

Warren Peel

John Owen. Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man, Carl R. Trueman, Ashgate Publishing, 2007, pbk., 132 pages, £16.99.

Having often been overlooked or else written off as a proponent of a rigid and rationalist 'scholastic' theology at odds with the freedom of Calvin's thinking, John Owen (1616-83) deserves the renewed scholarly (and sympathetic) treatment which he is currently receiving. Carl Trueman's latest work provides a compact, yet remarkably comprehensive, treatment of the main elements of Owen's thought. He begins with a brief outline of Owen's life, then sets him in the context of seventeenth century European theology, arguing that 'Reformed' is a preferable designation to the more usual 'Puritan' for a man of Owen's wide sympathies. Owen's relationship to Renaissance thought and the main targets of his polemical writings – Roman Catholicism, Arminianism and Socinianism – are considered. Like a number of other Reformed scholars, Trueman is at pains to show that caricatures of seventeenth century Reformed theology as rationalist, unimaginative, captive to 'Aristotelian' philosophy and sterile are demonstrably ridiculous, and Owen himself provides ample proof for this contention. Trueman considers in turn 'The knowledge of the Trinitarian God', 'Divine Covenants and Catholic Christology' and 'The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls' (i.e. justification). The foundations of Owen's theology in careful exegesis of the Scriptures, using the latest scholarship available to him, are carefully demonstrated, as is his indebtedness to the wider Christian tradition, drawing as he does on theologians such as Aquinas when he judges them to be reliable guides to the truth. Although this is not a long book, it is tightly written, with no wasted space. It serves to introduce one of the giants of Reformed theology and at the same time debunks some of the misrepresentations of Owen which owe more to prejudice than scholarship. Trueman knows his subject thoroughly and communicates his knowledge very clearly.

The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World, John Piper and Justin Taylor, Crossway Books, 2007, pbk., 191 pages, $15.99

Although it may sometimes seem that the theme of postmodernism has been examined *ad nauseam*, there is considerable value in the present volume. It brings together six papers delivered by eminent evangelical theologians and pastors at a conference held in 2006 in Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, the church pastored by John Piper. In Part 1 (Culture and Truth) David Wells considers 'The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World' and Voddie Baucham Jr. deals with 'Truth and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World.' In Part 2 (Joy and Love) John Piper (unsurprisingly)

examines 'Joy and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World' and D. A. Carson expounds 'Love and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World.' Part 3 (Gospel Theologizing and Contextualizing) seeks to earth the theme of the conference in practical ministry and mission with papers by Tim Keller on 'The Gospel and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World' and by Mark Driscoll on 'The Church and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World.' The authors do a good job of analysing the situation currently confronting the Church and provide some challenging insights into a biblical, missional response. The piece by Driscoll, formerly associated with the Emergent Church movement and now distancing himself from it, is particularly interesting. Not all the suggestions would transplant across the Atlantic, but there is much here to stimulate hard thinking.

Christianity's Dangerous Idea. The Protestant Revolution - a history from the sixteenth century to the twenty-first, Alister McGrath, SPCK, 2007, pbk., 552 pages, £14.99

According to Oxford professor and prolific author Alister McGrath, 'Christianity's dangerous idea' is the idea which he sees at the heart of Protestantism, namely the right of every individual to interpret the Bible for himself (or herself). The exercise of this right has led to the dynamic and endlessly diverse movement which is modern-day Protestantism.

McGrath's history of Protestantism begins with a concise chronological record of the growth of the movement from the Reformation up to its global expansion of the nineteenth century. The next section of the book looks at distinctive features of Protestantism and its outworking in several aspects of life. Here McGrath considers Protestantism's view of the Bible, some of its particular beliefs, its organisation, worship and preaching, the ways in which it has shaped western culture, and its relationship to the arts and natural sciences. The final section brings the story up to date, looking in turn at the changing shape of American Protestantism, the rise of Pentecostalism, the shift in the centre of Protestantism to 'the global south' and some thoughts on 'the next generation.'

There is much to appreciate about this volume, providing as it does a sweeping overview of the development on a worldwide scale of contemporary Protestantism. There is a wealth of information here which should serve to broaden the horizons of most readers. The moving away of the centre of Protestantism from Northern Europe and even North America to the regions of the world formerly regarded as 'mission fields' is profoundly significant, and needs to be taken into account in our theologising and missionary planning.

There is, however, much with which to disagree. Scotland, especially Scottish Presbyterianism is almost entirely absent, and unjustifiably so. The

perspective is ecumenical – McGrath endorses C. S. Lewis' view of Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy as simply different rooms in the Christian house. This leads to such demonstrably false assertions as that Calvin regarded the Papacy as Christian but in need of reform rather than evangelism. The historical Calvin, however, could state in a sermon on Acts 2:41-42, preached on 26 January, 1550, that the church is as much to be found in the Papacy as in hell.

The current academic historiographical conventions are observed – all explanations of, for example, the Reformation, are cast entirely in terms of sociological, political, psychological and other 'this-worldly' causes. Fashionable revisionist views are endorsed, for example playing down the general failings of pre-Reformation Roman Catholicism and suggesting that, had Martin Luther lived somewhere other than Germany, he would have found less to concern him. No reference is made to the effects of divine grace or the working of the Holy Spirit, without which the rise of Protestantism is ultimately incomprehensible. A mixed bag, therefore, and one to be used with caution.

A Body of Divinity: or The Sum and Substance of Christian Religion, Archbishop James Ussher, edited by Michael Nevarr, introduction by Crawford Gribben, Solid Ground Christian Books, 2007, hbk., 467 pages, $50.00

Archbishop James Ussher of Armagh (1581-1656) was a crucial figure in the history of Irish Protestantism, an outstanding scholar and theologian who wielded significant influence far beyond Ireland. His input to the *Irish Articles* and his consequent influence on the work of the Westminster Assembly has long been known. At last one of his major theological works, *A Body of Divinity*, is available to modern readers, along with his shorter treatises *The Principles of Christian Religion, A Brief Method of the Doctrine of Christian Religion, Immanuel: or The Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God* and *Advices to Young Ministers at their Ordination*. The *Body* consists of fifty-two 'heads' in which, by a question and answer method, Ussher covers the whole span of theological topics, together with an exposition of the Ten Commandments. Copious Scripture references are provided to support each answer. The treatise serves as a most useful compendium of Reformed theology in its early formulations. In a very helpful introduction, Dr. Crawford Gribben, of Trinity College, Dublin, provides biographical context for Ussher's writings and indicates that Ussher did not claim authorship of the *Body*, which first appeared in an unauthorised edition, perhaps because he wished to play down his Puritan links in the context of the Civil War (in which Ussher's sympathies were royalist). Ussher's Amyraldian view of the atonement (noted by Jonathan Moore in *English Hypothetical Universalism*) is not evident here,

and he refers to the death of Christ making satisfaction 'for the Sins of the whole World of his Elect.' SGCB have done the church a great service in reprinting this important volume.

Select Works of Robert Rollock, Robert Rollock, Reformation Heritage Books, 2008, 2 volumes, hbk., 566 and 705 pages, $95.00

In the development of covenant theology, Robert Rollock (1555-98), first Principal of Edinburgh University, holds an honoured place. His 1597 Latin treatise, published in English in 1603 as *A Treatise of God's Effectual Calling*, played a significant role in demonstrating the centrality of the theme of 'covenant' in any biblically-oriented theological system. That treatise formed the first part of Volume 1 of Rollock's *Select Works* published by the Wodrow Society in 1844-9, and not subsequently reprinted. It is therefore a matter for great thanksgiving that Reformation Heritage Books have now reprinted that edition of the two volumes of Rollock's writings in an attractive format. The first volume also contains eleven of Rollock's sermons 'in the Scottish dialect' (which Ulster readers should supposedly find easy to read!) and seven 'in the English dialect'. The second volume consists of fifty-six lectures on the passion, resurrection and ascension of Christ, in the English dialect. The thorough biographical essay in Volume 1 by Dr. Andrew Woolsey of Crumlin Evangelical Presbyterian Church is especially helpful with regard to a theologian who is too little known even in Reformed circles. These two volumes will be a valued addition to any theological library.

The Great Mystery of the Covenant of Grace, Samuel Petto, Tentmaker Publications, 2007, hbk., 251 pages, £13.95

Few readers will have heard of Samuel Petto (c.1624-1711). He was one of the ministers who were ejected from their congregations when the Act of Uniformity was passed in 1662 after the Restoration of Charles II. Petto ministered in several places as an independent, finally serving from 1674 in Sudbury, Suffolk, where he remained until his death in 1711. Now that so many works by well-known Puritan writers have been reprinted, publishers are turning to lesser-known figures such as Petto. Not all these works may merit reprinting, but this volume is of value. The full title of the treatise indicates its particular focus: 'the difference between the Old and New Covenant stated and explained.' After chapters considering the nature of covenants in general and the relationship of Christ to his covenant people, Petto considers at length the nature of the Sinai covenant and the ways in which it differs from the New

Covenant. Among covenant theologians these have been controversial issues, generating different opinions. Unlike Calvin and Bullinger, but in harmony with Boston and Owen, Petto regards the Sinai covenant as a covenant of works, entirely separate from the covenant of grace. Whether the reader agrees with Petto's position or not, careful consideration of his arguments will help to clarify one's own thinking on the subject. Petto's style is not the clearest, but he repays the effort to assimilate his arguments. The introduction by Mark Jones is most useful for placing Petto in the wider context of covenant theology. The issues are very important, including as they do the relationship of law and grace, and so the reprinting of this work is worthwhile.

Cults and New Religions. A Brief History, Douglas Cowan and David G. Bromley, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pbk., 260 pages, £16.99

In recent years a number of relatively unknown religious groups have hit the news headlines and have stirred considerable controversy. The Branch Davidians and the Waco siege would be one striking example. Many are curious about the beliefs and practices of such groups, yet accurate information can be hard to come by, leaving the field to sensationalising media reports. A book such as this by Cowan and Bromley, teachers of religious studies in Canada and the USA respectively, is therefore especially welcome. They consider in turn the Church of Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, the Unification Church ('Moonies'), The Family International (David Berg's 'Children of God'), the Ramtha School of Enlightenment, the Branch Davidians, Heaven's Gate and Wicca. All of them are, in different ways, significant elements in the contemporary religious scene, some being old players who have re-invented themselves. The authors describe the origins of each movement, its doctrines and rituals, its leadership and its organisation, as well as discussing one of the major sources of controversy which each has stirred. A final chapter considers general issues relating to cults and new religions. There is a wealth of accurate and up to date information in a compact and user-friendly format. The approach is that of neutral academic analysis, and for theological critique of the various movements, readers will have to look elsewhere, but as a source of clear factual description of these groups, this is an outstanding book.

Biotechnology and the Human Good, C. Ben Mitchell, Edmund D. Pellegrino, Jean Bethke Elshtain, John F. Kilner and Scott B. Rae, Georgetown University Press, 2007, pbk., 210 pages, $24.99

The field of biotechnology is developing at an amazing rate. What was thought to be impossible a few years ago is almost commonplace today.

Advances, especially in the area of genetics, have thrown up all kinds of ethical dilemmas which never had to be considered before, and some fundamental questions about human identity are being posed. Ethicists, theologians and, indeed, 'ordinary' Christians cannot avoid wrestling with them and, from a Christian perspective, trying to come to some biblical solutions. The complexities of the biotechnology field mean that guidance is needed from those who have expertise in the various disciples involved. *Biotechnology and the Human Good* brings together a range of experts in theology, philosophy, medicine and bioethics, whose names will be well known to any who have sought to follow developments in biotechnology. From a conservative, 'Judeo-Christian' position they evaluate the new challenges posed by, for example, cybernetics, nanotechnology and genetics. The current developments in biotechnology are described, then issues such as the nature of technology, human dignity, the quest for control, human enhancement, the ends towards which medicine strives, and the Christian principles which can shape our responses, are considered. The nature of the subjects under discussion means that this is demanding reading in places, but the writers are good communicators and make the material as accessible as possible. This is important reading in an area where even more hard ethical questions will arise in the coming years.

The Genius of Luther's Theology, Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, Baker Academic, 2008, pbk., 240 pages, $21.99

Although he was one of the initiators of the Reformation movement, Martin Luther tends to be regarded in Reformed circles as one who, theologically, was soon superseded by John Calvin and his successors. As a result Luther's rich and sometimes complex thought receives scant attention from those who look to Calvin as their mentor. Such neglect is undeserved. There is much to learn from Luther's theology, both at the points of agreement and those of disagreement. A useful introduction is provided by this new volume by Lutheran theologians Robert Kolb and Charles Arand. Rather than approaching Luther's theology via the traditional series of topics (*loci*), the authors consider two fundamental motifs, namely the 'two kinds of righteousness' and Luther's view of the Word of God. The former deals with the righteousness which is God's gift to sinners and the righteousness of life which is the sinner's response. The latter examines the three forms of the Word as Luther conceives them – oral, written and sacramental. – the Word which delivers new life on the basis of the Word made flesh, Christ crucified and risen. The authors are concerned especially to draw principles of continuing value for Luther to produce, in the words of the book's subtitle, a 'Wittenberg

way of thinking for the contemporary church'. This is stimulating reading for those who may well assume that Luther has little to teach us today.

David McKay