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Evangelical Review of Theology

Articles and book reviews reflecting global evangelical theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith



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Editorial: International Evangelical Theology

IN THIS ISSUE WE ARE pleased to present some papers from the Third International Conference on Evangelical Theology, held at Sungkyul University, Ayang City, Korea in 30 September-1 October 2005 at which the WEA Theological Commission was generously hosted by the University and the Korea Evangelical Theological Society. First, we have the keynote address by TC Chair, Dr Rolf Hille of Tuebingen, Germany—an outstanding statement of the role and nature of evangelical theology in relation to the church and its mission. Then follows a lucid declaration of one of the themes for which the TC vice-chair, Dr Ken Gnanakan of India, has become rightly well known—Christians and the environment. The editor's paper on recent evangelical approaches to Mary the Mother of Jesus is next.

The following three papers come from Korean theologians—the social responsibilities of Christians from the perspective of the OT prophets is the subject of Kim Chang Hoon's study. Looking at one aspect of contemporary culture, Kyu Myeong Whang provides an interesting analysis of the 'well being' phenomena from the view point of his speciality, biblical counselling. To provide a helpful background for the amazing phenomena of Korean Christianity, we have pleasure in re-publishing an article from the new *Asia-Pacific Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, in

which the author, Heung Soo Kim, examines the cultural influences on the development of Protestant churches over the last century.

We hope to publish more papers from the conference later, but this issue concludes with the detailed Bible study article by Dr Derek Tidball, Principal of the London School of Theology, which is appropriate to the Easter season. Dr Tidball shows how the resurrection accounts in the Gospel of John 'complete the circle' which is established in the opening chapter, giving 'a rich and varied exposition of the resurrection which leads us to see in him the glory which his first disciples saw while he lived among them, and, like them, to believe'. Such a view should help us reflect on and preach the resurrection without some of the 'monotonous voice of predictability' which is often the case for those who have passed through many Easter seasons. This study shows that 'There is so much more to the wonder of the resurrection than "dead man comes back to life" or "the classic apologetic"'. Instead, we can see that the 'The resurrection is God's "yes" to salvation, to new life, to sins forgiven, to the restoration of creation itself. It draws from us the same reaction as it did from Thomas. When we "see" it with our own eyes, we too want to fall down in worship and in wonder.'

David Parker, Editor

The Future of Evangelical Theology and its Missionary Challenges in the Church of the 21st Century

Rolf Hille

KEYWORDS: *Mission, Christology, Spirit, baptism, teaching, liberalism, Reformers, ecumenical*

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY has a very impressive *history* of nearly two thousand years. But we live in a secular world with a plurality of ideologies, philosophies and powerful religions; and so we need to ask: Does Christian theology also have an impressive *future*? Since the century of the Enlightenment, and especially the religious criticism of the influential philosophers of the Nineteenth century, the future of Christianity has been written off. The spectacular success of the modern sciences and the Industrial Revolution put the Christian faith and the old privileges of the Christian churches aside.

Therefore, it is no wonder that at the beginning of the twentieth century Christians were concerned to empha-

size their unity beyond all historical confessions and denominations. When John Mott sent out invitations for the first Conference on World Missions in 1910 in Edinburgh, his main argument was that the Christian churches could have a future only if they were united in confessing their faith. At that time, the mainline churches and the different denominations were willing to look forward to confirm the common ground of all Christian theology and to stand together in order to win the future for Christian theology and the Christian Church.

Therefore, we have to ask today if it makes sense to proclaim one specific, and relatively new, form of Christian theology at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with all its challenges to the Christian church and its thinking. If we claim a future for evangelical theology, we have to clarify the way in which evangelical theology is

Dr Rolf Hille is Executive Chair of the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission and Principal of Albrecht Bengel Haus, Tübingen, Germany. Rolf Hille received his Th.D. from the University of Munich (Germany) and his M.Ph. from the University of Tuebingen (Germany). As well taking an active part in his own church, he is also a leading figure in the Evangelical Alliance movement and theological associations in his own country and elsewhere in Europe. This paper was the keynote address at the Third International Conference on Evangelical Theology held at Sungkyul University, Anyang City, South Korea Sept 30-Oct 1, 2005 jointly sponsored by Korea Evangelical Theological Society and the WEA Theological Commission.

rooted in Christian theology, and ask where the differences are that make it necessary to distinguish evangelical theology from (for example) Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran or Methodist, theology. What is the specific shape of *evangelical* theology?

1. The Missiological Shape of Evangelical Theology

Evangelical theology is inextricably intertwined with the fortunes of the evangelical movement as a whole. Theology both influences the development of the evangelical movement and, at the same time, is also dependent on the development of evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism is primarily an *evangelistic* and *missionary movement* within the worldwide Christian church. It is a gathering of Christians who are committed to Christ and his mission throughout the world, transcending all the divisions of Protestant denominations. Evangelicalism unites Christians from different theological backgrounds and traditions and, to some degree, emphasizes by its missionary engagement new theological profiles within the diversity of historic Christian faiths. The fundamental factor of integration of those different Christian traditions which unite in the evangelical movement is their commitment to *world evangelization*, as expressed for example in the Lausanne Covenant of 1974.

Here, I would like to examine how this fundamental commitment to missions is shaping evangelical theology and why it is important that we should reaffirm the evangelical movement in its evangelistic task by developing a

biblical basis for a missionary theology. I believe evangelical theology has a future *only in as far as it serves its missionary task*. One can have a future only if one has a real presence. Evangelical theology has a presence because mission is in God's time. Within the framework of biblical salvation, mission is on God's agenda for this period of time. The Christian church is created by the Holy Spirit through the word of the risen Lord. He, in his authority, has put mission at the top of his agenda and the only thing that we as Christians have to do is to remain in step with the Spirit and God's own purpose. The future of evangelical theology is not guaranteed by any academic standard or by any human thinkers, but only by the promises of the Lord himself.

Therefore, I will propose an outline in what follows, at least in part, of what it really means to define theology as a function of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to accomplish this theological program, I will give a systematic commentary on the Great Commission from the perspective of our question: What should evangelical theology be in order to have a future guaranteed by Christ?

2. The Christological Authority of Evangelical Theology

Immediately before his ascension, Jesus proclaimed his lordship in the presence of his disciples: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.' By this, the Lord emphasized within the great commission itself the fact that all theological truth is *personal* truth.

This makes the truth of the Christian faith fundamentally different from that of the founders of religions or great philosophers of the past. Their personal mandate has unquestionably ended with their deaths. After their deaths, their words were collected as literature and have to be carefully preserved. The only influence that founders of religions and philosophers have in the history of philosophy and ideas is that the finalized traditions which they left behind have been preserved. Those who follow them have to deal with merely historical events and facts. This kind of a closed situation is something completely different from a living communication process between persons living today who interact with and react to one another.

Therefore, evangelical theology must be aware that it has to deal not only with a great historical past, but with the living God who is present in the Spirit of the risen Christ. Because Christ is given all power, theologians cannot confront his words only in terms of literature, but in interaction with the real Christ who reveals himself by his living Word. I think that is one of the deepest divides between evangelical theology and the so-called historical-critical theologians who deal with the Bible only on the level of historical interest. There is a great difference between trying to restore a former teaching of a prophet or philosopher who has already died and hearing the Word of the almighty powerful Lord who speaks and works his miracles throughout history. The words spoken two thousand years ago have the same relevance and dynamic power today because Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Christ is the one who builds the bridges between transcendence and immanence, heaven and earth. By his incarnation, he sustains the ongoing relationship between God and men among his disciples and within his church. Because of this, evangelical theologians can never follow the atheistic statement of modern science which claims that we should think *etsi deus non daretur*, as if God were not there; on the contrary, all real theology flows forth out of this powerful dynamic relationship between the teaching Christ and the learning disciple, between the revealing God and the reflecting theologian. This reality of interaction between Christ and the theologian in all theological thinking and writing demands, as one consequence, that the theologian respects the glorious presence of his Lord. Theological reflection can be done only in the attitude of a humble servant who hears his Lord's voice and bows before him.

Paradoxically, this attitude of servanthood is the foundation of all theological self-awareness and every authoritative statement. The authority of the Lord who sends out is given to the apostles and, on the basis of their written testimony, to all missionaries who follow in church history. Therefore theology has the supreme authority to defeat every ideology, religion, and philosophy that dares to direct opposition against Christ's word. Theology does not take place in the sense of a Platonic dialogue in which nobody knows the truth and where the partners want to find truth as they gather to answer one another and enlighten one another by their questions. Instead of this understanding of dialogue, Christian theology has a prophetic

mandate. The Christian teacher or theologian has to proclaim the truth in the prophetic sense of the Old Testament prophets who spoke *ko amar Jahwe*, that is, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says'. Furthermore, as long as theologians stay in this humble attitude before the Lord and proclaim his word, he reveals his power today through the words spoken in human weakness. The future of evangelical theology depends exclusively on the authority of the Christ who sends forth and proclaims his gospel through his disciples.

3. The Evangelistic Purposes of Evangelical Theology

The Great Commission commands us to disciple all people. This should be done by two instruments of grace: by *baptizing* and by *teaching*. Baptism emphasizes the objective dimension in the conversion process of an unbeliever becoming a Christian and teaching is a subjective application to this powerful sign of grace given in baptism. In the context of our topic today, I do not want to emphasize here the objective side in terms of sacraments and teaching about baptism, but, simply, to ask the question: 'What is meant by Christian *teaching*?'

Firstly, we have to recognize and reflect upon the fact that the foundation of all theology lies exclusively in the mandate to teach what the risen Lord has given to his apostles. Thus, Christian theology is implicated as one function of the overall missionary task of the church. By the teaching of the gospel, people will recognize who God is in his Trinity and learn that they are to become aware of their sin and lost-

ness. They hear the word of redemption and the Spirit moves their hearts to repent and he makes them into disciples of Christ. The Word of God proclaimed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is, in itself, the effective means of making a sinner into a child of God and an heir of the coming blessings. By the Word, the reality of heaven is brought to mankind, and vice versa: people are brought to Christ in order to become heirs of the heavenly kingdom.

Whoever denies that Christian theology is only a function within the process of discipling cannot be a theologian in the sense of the New Testament. Whenever theology becomes a *master* of Scripture and separates from the church and its evangelistic tasks, it perverts itself.

The liberal understanding of theology cannot, therefore, by definition, be called evangelical because the emphasis of liberal theology is to *liberate* human thinking from the authority of a given authentic revelation. Instead of leading people in the obedience of faith, it longs for liberation from any authority outside the rational dignity of the person. It is no wonder that the modern rationalism of the West tends to uproot churches from their biblical foundation and ends in alienation from the historic Christian faith. One of its consequences is declining churches. Liberalism, in the way it views itself, will not agree to use the intellectual potential of man simply as a tool in the possession of a servant who is concerned about ministering only his Lord's teaching. There is a fleshly fascination in leading people to the abandonment of heteronomic influences. Consequently, every theologian has to

decide whether he is willing to serve Christ in teaching others and, through his teaching, to bring them to Christian maturity, or whether he is to liberate them from God's revealed truth in the name of the human capability of rational thinking.

Last, but not least, evangelical theology has its source in the repentance (or transformation of and renewing) of the mind and intellectual behaviour (see Rom. 12:1-2). It comes *from* conversion and leads *to* conversion. The criteria for all theology that claims to be evangelical must be formed by biblical thinking and must be empowered by the Holy Spirit to make disciples and to build them up in maturity through the process of sanctification. It is not any particular academic standard that makes theology worthwhile and relevant, but only the biblical foundation of its content and the missionary purpose for which it is spoken. Evangelical theology cannot strive for the scientific ideal of *sine ira et studio* (without deep personal engagement and commitment). Theology is no science in the modern sense of a purposeless enterprise on the intellectual level.

Spiritual ambition is what makes not only the difference between evangelical and liberal theology, but also between evangelical and *Orthodox* theology. On the one hand, there is unity between Orthodox theologians and evangelical theologians in terms of the objective contents of Christian theology, which must be based on a biblical foundation. On the other hand, there is an important difference between them, as evangelical theology longs for and prays fervently to promote revival. In all its aspects of thinking and depths of

reflection, it longs for the repentance and conversion of non-Christians and the edification of Christians through the increasing sanctification of their lives. A good evangelical theologian looks forward to bearing eternal fruit through a humble ministry of the Word of God.

4. Biblical Teaching and the Practical Profile of Evangelical Theology

The Lord commands his disciples to teach all nations to obey everything he has told the apostles. The word 'everything' implies two principles for our understanding of the Scriptures. The reformers of the sixteenth century emphasized their theological position in two fundamental hermeneutical tags: *sola scriptura* and *tota scriptura*. They were convinced that Christ has bound himself to the written word of Scripture. In Scripture and only there, can his will be found. There is no other source of divine revelation where people can find true knowledge of God and his eternal will and the way of redemption. This completeness of godly truth is what is meant by the principle of *sola scriptura* (scripture alone) and *tota scriptura*. This principle has to be maintained in evangelical theology today, not only against the Roman Catholic doctrine of a combination between ecclesiastical tradition and Scripture, but also against the modern ecumenical approach to inter-religious dialogue with non-Christian faiths.

It is indeed very humbling for the human wisdom that likes to put its confidence in the so-called 'eternal truth of reason' rather than in the contingent

events of salvation history. But there is no true knowledge of redemption aside from biblical revelation. Jesus is the only way to truth and life for every man on earth throughout history.

On the other hand, evangelical theology also has to defend the hermeneutical principle of *tota scriptura* against every form of liberalism that searches to find a new canon within the biblical canon. Every attempt to select and distinguish within the Bible between an everlasting authentic word of God and mere words of human writers will be a failure. The history of Protestant theology throughout the last 250 years has demonstrated the chaos of theological opinions. Theologians who tried to build up theology on the basis of a selected or restricted Bible could not find a common basis for confessing Christ today. All attempts to develop theology by selecting between divine and human statements in the Bible end sooner or later in pure relativism. There is no convincing argument—even on the intellectual level—as to how a theologian could, after a period of more than two thousand years, possibly distinguish between those events of salvation history that really happened and those phrases in the Bible that were spoken by the ‘historical Jesus’.

Evangelical theology has to refer to the whole of the Scriptures without any amendment to the Bible. This is a basis for evangelical theologians to become good stewards who can be trusted to serve in God’s house and to make known all mysteries of God’s revealed truth. They are not allowed to leave any Christian untaught or ignorant concerning any aspect of the biblical revelation, beginning with predestina-

tion, creation, sin, redemption, and sanctification, and ending with the eternal consummation of God’s kingdom. Moreover, if theologians teach and provide God’s people with eternal truth, this teaching is, by no means, simply a theoretical affair. For ‘All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for all good work’ (2 Tim. 3:16f).

Therefore, it is not the strength, but, rather, the *weakness* of the academic tradition of western theology that it strives for the ideal of mere theoretical knowledge in terms of philosophy or even traditional theology. Biblical truth is very practical and all theological research must be validated by the spiritual relevance it has for the practice of godly living. The theoretical approach to theology leads to dangerous pitfalls. This is clear from the history of the early church with its Hellenistic background, throughout Scholastic theology in the Middle Ages and the period of the so-called ‘Protestant Orthodoxy’ of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries even to today’s scholars with their high academic standards.

Every intellectual decision insulated from the grassroots problems of the church, is, at best, ineffectual and, at worst, extremely dangerous for God’s people. A good theologian is one who struggles in a responsible position as teacher with all the temptations of his age and who searches for relevant, contemporary answers found in the Bible in close contact with his fellow disciples. Those scholars who hide themselves behind the walls of monas-

teries or modern universities are often incompetent in relation to the questions of everyday life in the church. The opposite, though, is evident in the lives of those theologians who have shared the needs and the problems of a congregation as vital members of the church. They have a fruitful public ministry in teaching and writing. Paul was an excellent theologian because he was such a dedicated missionary. Or, one could cite the bishop of Hippo, Augustine, or the enormous outreach of the Reformers, or the ministry of John Wesley or contemporary theologians, such as John Stott, who have a fruitful ministry today.

The future of evangelical theology lies in this indispensable combination of solid biblical thinking regarding and understanding the meaning of salvation history and the capacity to apply this biblical knowledge to different situations in the church in a practical manner. For it is the practice of biblical truth that convinces the non-Christian world and makes our teaching and preaching effective for the hearer. The message will be heard when love is seen. Evangelical theology looks forward not to winning academic debates, but to winning for Christ those who are lost in their sins.

5. The Ecumenical Outreach and Eschatological Drive of Evangelical Theology

The Greek word *oikumene* means the totality of mankind living worldwide in a colourful diversity of nations, tribes, and tongues within different societies, political systems, and cultures. This diversity is implied in our Lord's own

words when he compels us to invite nations to his kingdom, insisting that the apostles should 'make disciples of all nations' (see, for example, the Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:15-24). The different ministries of proclaiming, preaching, and teaching the gospel are spiritually one in their foundation in scriptural truth and its missionary purpose. But the ecumenical outreach of missions leads us to the point where we have to study sincerely the abundant variety of different gifts given by the Holy Spirit and the variety of ministries in the church. Because of the very different situations of the peoples to be reached with the gospel, there is a need for different missiological applications in teaching the gospel.

It is an ongoing process of Christian teaching, starting with the elementary truth of redemption, to develop every Christian into the full potential of knowledge that God has prepared for us. Therefore, the proclamation of the gospel leads to the necessity to distinguish between the specific input that has to be provided by evangelists, pastors, and teachers in different ways. Evangelists and pastors are also teachers and must teach what the gospel implies and what is the distinctive context of revealed truth that should be known and understood in order to be believed. In that sense, the Great Commission's injunction, '*teach them*', is an unlimited request.

But an evangelist or pastor can teach others only after he has been taught and disciplined himself. This is, therefore, one of the main tasks of teachers and, in the deeper sense, of theologians. Theologians first should aim their research and teaching towards providing a solid Christian

doctrine for the next generation of evangelists and pastors.

I stress this because there is an ongoing temptation in all theological education not to train and teach evangelists and pastors, but only to reproduce theologians for an academic career. Let me say clearly that I am not denying the importance of intellectual training for every Christian worker, to enable him to fulfil potentially the apologetic task of 1 Peter 3:15 ('Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have'). But this intellectual apologetic task is that of defending the faith and sustaining the proclamation of the gospel with solid argumentation in different changing situations. The need for contextualizing the gospel in very different cultural situation requires a solid intellectual education in theology.

Moreover, this apologetic outreach, which arises from an urgent search for those who are lost in sin and error, must be rooted in a basic and profound understanding of the Scriptures. Biblical thinking, therefore, must not only be planted in the consciousness of a theologian, it must become his second nature and it must shape his thinking and his attitudes very deeply, permeating his unconscious personality. This is a life-long process and implies a deep commitment from every disciple to learning from his Master.

Anyone who is sent to teach what Jesus taught must carefully study the Scripture in order to become able to handle spiritual questions properly. This includes the capacity to connect biblical lines between the Old and New Testaments and to recognize how the meaning of the revelation is to apply to

a particular situation today. Furthermore, it is a matter of wisdom to study diligently the history of the church and its mission to gain spiritual insight. It is one of the characteristics of evangelical theology that it is not bound to any particular systematized forms of Christianity or theology, but includes knowledge and experience from different Christian traditions and tests them out in the light of the Scriptures. In this sense, evangelical theology is ecumenical theology with a broad aspect of freedom to test everything and to retain the best.

With the wisdom that arises from the study of history, evangelical theologians will be sensitive to problems that come up in similar situations in the church today and they will become capable of avoiding the mistakes of recent generations. We should not repeat unvaryingly all the practices of former generations. Last, but not least, there is a necessity to use all the tools of the social sciences and humanities in terms of education, mass communication, theory of communication, sociology and so on.

But all these treasures of knowledge should be integrated into a clear perspective of discipling nations for Christ's sake. No theological knowledge and education should replace this eschatological awareness of the coming Christ and the sense of responsibility to save the lost and to lead Christ's flock to maturity and into the likeness of Christ through sanctification.

The missionary outreach of theology can be threatened by a tendency for our teaching to become pure specialization. It has been said, harshly, but with some truth, that 'a specialist in the area of theology is someone who

knows everything about nothing'. If a theologian reflects for many years on the same subjects and does research in only one area of a single theological discipline, the temptation arises to confuse one's own specific research subject with the mandate and needs of the whole church. To stand firm against this temptation, every scholar should challenge himself every day with this provoking question: 'Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard the gospel once?'

Theologians have a tendency to sit down and remain seated, as the rabbis did in Jesus' time. But it was while Jesus was walking throughout Palestine that he taught and disciplined the apostles. Evangelical theology has to be *mobile*. It is the eschatological restlessness and the challenge of the unfinished task of reaching and penetrating every culture for Jesus Christ that gives theology a dynamic power. The urgent need of going into depth in different areas and doing specific research programs and projects to supply evangelists and teachers with profound background knowledge must be balanced with the passion to reach everyone on earth for Christ.

It seems to me, then, that evangelical theology should be shaped by these two dynamic dimensions: first, to dig into the depths of the Scriptures in order to be able to 'demolish arguments and every present pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ' (2 Cor. 10:5); then, to be characterized by the restlessness of ambassadors with an urgent message to communicate. It is a spiritual fact that all real

Christian theology must lead to missions, for it is the Holy Spirit who continually guides and enlightens the theologian in his work of research and teaching; it is the very same Spirit who involves himself in missions to accomplish the unfinished task of world evangelization.

In this context, I want to add one remarkable fact which we as theologians should especially note. Since the period of Romanticism, with its emphasis on originality and individual development, everyone who works as a scholar feels compelled to pioneer and publish something *new*. In many cases, the drive for originality leads theologians to heretical statements and sometimes even to heretical concepts of theology. In the Great Commission, the Lord commands us to teach only what he has taught, not our own modern individual ideas. For this reason, evangelical theology has to remain conservative to be alert in protecting the original Christian faith. But, as fallen beings, we evangelical theologians also feel sometimes the fleshly impulse to oppose the historical Christian doctrine in order to find our own place in provoking the church with strange and controversial ideas. This should not be so.

What, then, is the answer to the temptation to become *stagnant* in a conservative and orthodox theology? Many theologians search for the answers in terms of liberal or syncretistic concepts. However, the right biblical answer to this problem is not liberalism or syncretism, but, rather, missions. If he keeps in step with the Spirit who goes forth to reach the unreached, the theologian is compelled to think new thoughts, contextualizing

the gospel to different nations in order to meet within the apologetic confrontations with new ideologies, religions, and philosophies the heights and depths of Scriptural truth.

Therefore, evangelists, pastors, and theologians should not be at loggerheads, but they should have a mutual exchange. Evangelists and pastors need from time to time some fresh input of deepening doctrine and renewed knowledge for their ministry. In addition, theologians should occasionally cooperate with evangelists and pastors in the grass roots experience of fulfilling the Great Commission. In this way, they ought to serve one another by performing a mutual service to build up the whole church. Permanent contact between theologians and evangelists and pastors will help the theologians in theological education to distinguish between specific projects of research and things that are necessary to teach to every student of theology. They will recognize what research projects are useful and will

have the promise of bearing fruit in the ministry of evangelists and pastors.

Evangelical theology has a future if it is moved by the Spirit to go forth and to recognize what we should say in this eschatological period of salvation history, that is, to proclaim Christ until he comes. The future of evangelical theology is the coming Lord himself, who will charge, test, and reward every theology, as Paul put it: 'If any man builds on this foundation [Jesus Christ] using gold, silver, costly stones, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward' (1 Cor. 3:12-14). Evangelical theologians may look forward with joy and comfort to this climax of history because the living Lord gives his promise also for their task of researching and teaching. 'And surely I am with you always', he says, 'to the very end of the age' (Matt. 28:20).

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Creation, Christians and Environmental Stewardship

Ken Gnanakan

KEYWORDS: *Dominion, image of God, anthropocentrism, biocentrism, theocentrism, interconnectedness, commonalty, steward, conservation.*

WITH SOME CHRISTIANS even today questioning the need for getting involved in environmental issues, we must continue to be reminded of some theological foundations that compel us to act. A strong attack on the biblical doctrine of creation was issued by Lynn White Jr. and this could be a good starting point.¹ White argued that the teaching that 'it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends', has largely contributed to our present crisis. The Genesis passages commanding Adam and Eve to 'rule' and have 'dominion' are shown to have led to an arrogance

and selfish exploitation of creation. These Old Testament texts have received much scholarly attention recently, and renewed attempts have been made to understand their meaning within their right context. But the burden rests heavily on us to correct any such impressions that the Bible has actually commanded us to misuse natural resources.

Lynn White Jr. added further:

Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature, but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper end.

Lynn White's small but seminal article raises two questions. The first question is—does the Bible authorize exploitation of the created order? And second, is Christianity an anthropocentric religion? There are various ways in which we can respond to these chal-

¹ Lynn White Jr. 'The Historical Roots of the Ecological Crisis'. The article, a lecture delivered in 1966 in UCLA, California, has appeared in many publications all over the world and has been very widely quoted since it was first published in *Science*, Vol 155 (1967), pp. 1203-1207.

Ken Gnanakan (PhD, King's College, University of London) is President of the International Council for Higher Education (ICHE) and continues to head up ACTS the ministry he founded 27 years ago. He is Vice Chair of the WEA Theological Commission. He has written Kingdom Concerns (TBT and IVP-UK), God's World (SPCK) and Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation (TBT-WEA-TC) among other books. Gnanakan resides in Bangalore, India

lenges and the scope of our treatment can be even wider. But we can make a start with some familiar material.

I What is the Basis of Our Involvement?

Let us begin on a positive note and consider one of the main reasons for our involvement in environmental action. These are our opening words as we often repeat the Apostles' Creed—'I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth.' In doing this we affirm our faith in a Creator God. This means that in our environmental action we cannot help but demonstrate that we are God's created beings and live within the wider created order. Such a positive start will help us negate the attitude that many Christians still hold—the world is evil and too much involvement in the world (or with creation) will make us 'worldly'.

The Word of God starts with the glorious account of God's creation. God promised the best of created things to the people he made to be his own. The prophets looked forward to a renewed creation. Jesus displayed a very positive attitude to all that was around him. There is not much direct reference to such concerns in the New Testament, but Paul's reference to creation's groaning must be underlined to grasp the wider implications of redemption.

Beginning with Creation

One of the first things to do is to recover a positive attitude towards creation and challenge the notion that the world and creation is evil. We must start with the powerful truth that there is an ongoing relationship between

God and his creation. In saying God is Creator, we are affirming that it is God who is Lord, and that it is God who is the initiator, the sustainer and therefore continues to graciously relate to a creation of which we are only a part. The Bible claims that it is through creation that even God may be known. 'The heavens proclaim his righteousness and all the peoples see his glory' (Psalm 97:6). Several other portions of the Scriptures, such as Psalm 19:1f., bear testimony to God's glorious manifestation through creation.

The Old Testament scholar Walter Bruggeman graphically depicts the systemic beauty of harmony and obedience between the Creator and creation as a process of communication. He calls it 'speaking and listening'. God creates by speaking and therefore the responsibility of creation is to listen and answer. Communication between partners is built on speaking and listening. Creation is an intimate and valuable partner with its creator, not just an object constructed or put together for our pleasure.²

In becoming a partner God does not lose his distance from creation. He is both transcendent and immanent. This bond between the Creator and the creation is aptly explained by Brueggemann in terms of 'closeness' and a 'distance'. While closeness signifies a constant care between creator and creation, distance underlines the individuality, identity and the respect that one shows to other. And this applies to

² W. Brueggeman, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (London: SPCK, 1977), p. 6.

both Creation and Creator. Each has its place of honour and purpose, and each is related to the other through this inextricable bond.

This kind of a relationship avoids any confusion caused by pantheism or dualism. Pantheism states that God is everywhere and in everything. Some environmentalists sound the praises of Hinduism, claiming that it evokes a sense of respect for creation, which is lacking in the Christian religion. But monistic Hinduism, pantheistic in essence, confuses the Creator with creation, making even humans to be identical with God. Added to this confusion is the teaching of *maya* or illusion. Creation is only illusion, even if it is seen to have an identity in God. Dualistic Hinduism, on the other hand, distances God from creation to the extent that there is no ongoing relationship. There is, in fact, an opposition between God and creation.

God alone, who is Lord and the source of everything, is responsible for all that is created and must not be confused with his creation. This teaching comes through the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*—out of nothing—which is a dominant note in the biblical account of God's creative work. This doctrine refutes any pantheism that confuses the creator with creation, or a dualism that claims a confrontation between God and evil. Further, God called everything 'good' and therefore there is no opposition between God and creation. Any implication of a conflict is because of Satan and sin and the constant battle of sinful human beings to independently assume charge.

We are Created in the Image of God

The biblical concepts of 'image of God' and 'dominion' have been topics of endless debate within discussions of environmental exploitation. Briefly, to be made in the image of God implies that humans have been created in order to responsibly represent God in creation, and in this sense exercise 'dominion' not 'domination' over creation. Humans are the climax of creation, we often assert, implying that we are most special to God and all else is secondary. Critics show that the concept of image of God is included in the idea of dominion and both stem from the anthropocentric approach to creation which has led to exploitation and abuse of nature.

The meaning of the term, 'image of God', has been variously interpreted. Whatever it means, there is one thing that will be clear—God and human beings have a link that is different from the link between God and the rest of creation. Humanity is entrusted with a special task. 'By virtue of being created, it bears a responsibility; human dignity and responsibility are inseparable', says Claus Westermann.³ Although 'humanity exercises sovereignty over the rest of creation', we are reminded that 'there is no suggestion of exploitation'. Just like the king, whose rule responsibly serves the well being of his subjects, so humans are to care responsibly for creation.

³ Claus Westermann, *Genesis: a Practical Commentary, Text and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 10f.

Possessing God's image and exercising dominion, rather than being seen in authoritative or hierarchical terms, should instead reflect godly attitudes and gracious action towards nature. Too much is made of the special status of humans over and above the rest of nature by Christians, and hence it is hardly surprising that ecological disaster has been seen to be linked with the biblical doctrine of creation. The image of God in humanity needs to be seen in terms of responsibility as well as privilege. Humans are given the privilege of possessing a rational, moral and spiritual dimension that enables them to act creatively and responsibly towards the whole of creation. Being made in God's image we are to protect the environment in accountability towards God, and responsibility towards our fellow creatures and the rest of creation.

Creation and the fall

We cannot bypass the biblical fact of the fall. Sin and the fall clearly brought about a partial reversion to the chaos from which creation came. Creation is continually being pulled back into chaos by human sinful actions. Environmental complications and ecological disasters are to be expected with human beings fallen from God's originally intended purposes. But the fall has not obliterated the image of God in us. Hence, when we recognize that God is the God of order and harmony, we, being God's image, endeavour to bring order into the present chaos. A proper assessment of the meaning of the image of God in us should help us move into this kind of involvement in our world today.

God's image must reflect something of God in us. God wants us 'to keep' and 'rule over'. We need to carefully accept this combination. God's love as well as God's authority must be demonstrated through human beings over all other creatures. On the one side there is caring love and responsibility, but on the other is creative power. This power is not an unquestioned autocratic rule over creation but a productive force that empowers other fellow creatures to live, create, recreate, regenerate and fulfil their purposes here on earth.

There are two insights that help tone down any overemphasis on the image of God and the special status given to us. First, there is a suggestion that this is a reminder that we are to rule in the same way as the sun and moon 'rule' over the day and night (Gen. 1:16). It is not harsh or destructive but purposeful. Human beings, made in the image of God, are called to represent God's righteous rule on earth. God is to be manifest in us not only in reverence for human life but in similar reverence for the non-human creation.

Second, the New Testament reference to the image portrays Jesus Christ as the perfection of the image (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; John 1:14-18). The model of Christ underlines our serving in love—and this must be underlined even more. If God's image was perfect in Jesus Christ, then this image is worthy of emulation. Jesus came to heal and not to harm. He came to carry out God's desires, not to satisfy his own cravings. When we consider such aspects of the image of God, the concept becomes a powerful tool in bringing environmental care through

the Christian in our world today.

But we should also consider that when the reality of the image of God is placed in the context of human sin, fall and destruction there are bound to be manifestations of human tendency to usurp and exploit authority. Sin is rebellion against God. It is a craving for autonomy rather than life in obedience to God. When God commands us 'to guard and keep' creation, sinful humans would rebel and want to do the opposite. Creation, therefore, which was originally to be the source of blessing, has become a curse because human beings chose to rebel against God.

Sin brings disharmony within God's intended relationships for creation. Far too many discussions on the environmental crisis make no reference whatsoever to the biblical account of sin and the fall of humanity. Without any reference to this fact, the crisis becomes inexplicable and therefore the attack on the doctrine of creation becomes justifiable. Creation's perfection is marred by human imperfection.

The fact that it is Eve who is first enticed should not be taken to imply any blame on women. That will miss the point. What started with Eve, spread to Adam and then to all creation. The universality of sin is the underlining factor in this account. The consequences are just as universal as the fall. The divine relationship between man and woman is now affected. Man will exploit woman. The exploitation is to extend to the entire world and creation itself suffers and groans.. The very fact that creation is also influenced by our fallen-ness shows the intricate interlinking. It is not only in our created-ness but also in

fallen-ness that we identify with nature.

Discord within relationships has now entered in because of sin. At the heart of sin is rebellion. And this is clearly at the heart of all broken relationships. And when relationships are broken there is an exploitation of the stronger over the weaker. The ecological crisis is characterised by this kind of exploitation, whether it be humans over creation, or within the wider created order itself.

Understanding Dominion in Context

It is now necessary for us to delve a little deeper into the wider context within which the word 'dominion' is used. Looking at the word by itself there is reason to accept the criticism mentioned above. Interestingly, while God gave the commands to 'be fruitful' and 'multiply' to other creatures, to man and woman was given an even greater responsibility; Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to 'subdue' and 'rule' and have dominion over all creation.

The problem, to critics like White, obviously, is with the words used. The Hebrew word *kabas* and *radah* are said to be much harsher than the English translations. *Kabas* means 'to tread down', to bring into bondage' or even 'to rape' while *radah* means 'to trample' or 'to press' and therefore to rule or dominate. The Hebrew words, like most of our Asian languages, have a rich array of meanings and need not necessarily be taken literally. As we look closer at the implications, we will get nearer to the fuller understanding of what was intended in the command.

Let us consider some of the wider context of the concept of dominion in the Bible:

i. *God sanctioned Dominion in love:*

Very often Israel is reminded of God's love. Ezekiel 34 depicts the prophet reminding the kings of Israel that God is shepherd. In contrast they 'ruled harshly and brutally'. The word *radah*—'rule'—is here placed alongside the concept of a caring shepherd, not the harsh and brutal leaders they are familiar with. We can confidently conclude that 'dominion' or 'rule' did not imply a cruel, heartless domination, but the loving and caring relationship of the shepherd to his sheep.

ii. *God sanctioned dominion within a commonality:*

The Hebrew '*adam*' taken from the word '*adamah*' meaning ground must speak for itself. There is a commonalty that exists from the start and continues right through to the end. Adam is made from the 'dust of the ground' (Gen. 2:7). There is an integral link with the earth as well as with the environment around us. This is the reason why human sin had its toll even on the environment. Ecology implies total interconnectedness of creation, and this connectedness is not strange to the biblical teaching. There is no blue blood that divides royalty from the common folk. Rightly, in the English language, we are referred to as 'earthlings'. Dominion, seen within this context of commonalty, takes on a healthy perspective. It is a responsibility for others with common rights.

iii. *God commanded dominion with responsibility:*

Dominion did not permit an irresponsible exploitation. Though God gives great authority to men and women, there is the constant reminder that 'this sovereign authority does not include the killing or slaughtering of animals'. Similarly, when God gave dominion to man over nature (Gen. 1:26) it was not a mandate for total annihilation. There are many other such commands. Proper and responsible care over creation was expected.

Responsibility alongside God's creativity transforms authority into positive and productive expressions. Rather than destruction, there is the desire to bring something good even from the worst. God entrusts his property to men and women, resources that have limits but are blessed with the potential to multiply phenomenally. The earth contained everything human beings needed but we were to be careful in managing these resources.

iv. *A Dominion in the interest of others:*

'*Mashal*' is another word that means 'ruling over', and it is used to denote the authority of the sun to govern over the day, and the moon to govern over the night (Gen. 1:16). This, interestingly, is equivalent to the authority of man to govern or to rule over his wife (Gen. 3:16). Taken in its right perspective, it did not mean harsh and domineering rule with only selfish interests. The sun and the moon had purposes for which they were created, the purpose of service to the rest of creation, and it is for the fulfilling of these purposes that any power was vested in them.

Similarly, man's rule or dominion

over woman is not to destroy her or consume her totally for his benefit. Woman has her individuality. In the same way, men and women are not to destroy or to totally annihilate living creatures on earth just for their selfish satisfaction. Ultimate dominion belongs to Yahweh alone. One reminder that comes forcefully to our present world is that any rule or authority, be it political, religious or even domestic, carries privileges as well as responsibilities. When privileges are separated from responsibility exploitation is inevitable.

v. *A dominion in servanthood:*

Where we look at the commands given to Adam and Eve at creation, it is necessary to consider also the commands subsequently given. Man and woman in the garden are instructed to 'till' and 'keep' it. These are words that beautifully temper the harshness of the other words. The command in Genesis 2:15, rendered 'to dress it and keep it' (KJV) or 'till it and keep it' (NIV) demands the service of a 'servant' or 'slave', and so servanthood is definitely implied. Humankind is to be available to serve creation, and in so doing serve the Lord God.

vi. *A dominion with stewardship:*

An even more powerful the word is the Hebrew *shamar*, which means 'to keep'. The noun form is 'steward' or 'trustee' which implies watchful care and protection of the earth. These aspects are being heavily underlined today as the ecological cause is assuming alarming proportions. It is a shift in emphasis from users to keepers, from consumers to conservers. This concept of stewardship must be developed much further,

but here we remind ourselves that we are called to serve, keep and preserve creation which God has entrusted to us as trustees, or stewards.

vii. *Dominion with Respect:*

Any call to respect creation is immediately confused with calls to worship creation as in pantheistic practices. This is the plea of some environmentalists today. Criticizing biblical doctrines, they eulogize the teachings of Hinduism or Buddhism, pointing to the deep respect these religions evoke towards creation. The biblical doctrine of creation, they claim, has ignored this attitude. Although this could be disputed, a corrective is needed by the Christian.

Does not the Bible teach respect for creation? If God described creation as 'good' there must be some inherent worth that makes it warrant much more than we have shown to it. Creation has a purpose for which it exists and it is in the fulfilling of these purposes that its existence can be fulfilled. Respect for creation will need to be seen as respect for the purposes of each aspect of God's world. Dominion does not call for domination but for all that we see in the wider context we have just considered.

II Is Christianity Anthropocentric?

We now move to the second question raised. White accuses the 'western' Christian doctrine of being anthropocentric, i.e. centred around human beings. He also claims that it is the command to have dominion over creation that has led to human exploitation of nature. Science and technology

have emerged from a need to have even greater control and this has not helped. Better relationships will need to be fostered, ones that will show respect for creation as in other religions. Our task for a biblical theology is clear: we will need to get back to the Genesis texts to explore the meaning and significance of these issues.

Anthropocentrism places humanity at the centre. Everything in the universe is seen in terms of human values and human interests. The view was developed strongly in the post-Enlightenment period with confidence that humans can totally conquer nature for their survival and the betterment of their own kind. Anthropocentrism, we will have to admit, has become a predominant part of the modern materialistic way of life. The affluent lifestyles we are all gradually adopting within our growing economy, industrialization, and technological progress have led us subtly to accept such views. What is achievable by humans seems to be limitless, and all this with no miraculous interventions from God.

Our attention has been drawn to the deep-rooted anthropocentrism in the western perspective even by western writers themselves. Here is an extensive quote from R. A. Young:

The anthropocentric predicament is somewhat paradoxical on two accounts. First, concern for personal well being and survival has raised ecological awareness to the level that many now question the anthropocentric basis for modern society. The motivating factor for change (self-preservation) and the source of the problem (self-preservation) therefore only accentuates

self-centredness and the root of the problem does not go away. Second, humanistic society still approaches environmental problems from an anthropocentric perspective despite knowing that this attitude is ultimately self-destructive. To preserve wilderness areas for recreational purposes, to convert to compact fluorescents for economical purposes, or to save the rain forest because of the pharmaceutical products it can yield is to act out of anthropocentric interests. There has been much environmental activity recently, but most of it is, in one way or another, still anthropocentric. Anthropocentrism seems to be so entrenched in society that there is an ingrained resistance against accepting the observation that humanity's priority on self is self-destructive.⁴

If anthropocentrism is problematic, the alternative that is recommended by various environmental movements is *biocentrism*. Biocentrism teaches that everything in life, nature or creation has equal value and must be respected for what it is. Traditional societies tend to be biocentric people, who relate in very practical everyday terms to the environment around them. The earth's ecosystem is to be valued for its own sake and not for human benefit. Biocentrism calls us to respect everything in our biosphere without any

⁴ R. A. Young, *Healing the Earth—A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and their Solutions* (Nashville: Tenn., Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), p. 117.

accent on human commercial calculations.

Biocentrism is the emerging ecological worldview and advocated as the only hope to save humanity. This is the product of the rising ecological awareness in society, the influence of eastern religions and philosophies, quantum physics, and a resurgence of primitive paganism and native cultural insights. All this seems to be fashionable to follow within a pop culture that has emerged.

Young comments:

Environmentalists tend to embrace this new paradigm, for it coincides not only with what the science of ecology is teaching but also with the pop philosophy of eastern mysticism. Biocentrism's focus on the web of life precludes human ascendancy. No one organism can claim supremacy over anything else, for all are needed to support the ecosystem. As a result, humans are simply part of the complex whole, no higher or lower than any other part of nature. And people are listening with open ears. This sounds like the ideal corrective for harsh anthropocentrism.⁵

While biocentrism provides the needed alternative to anthropocentrism, it conflicts with the biblically justifiable solution for the Christian. It is certainly a valid corrective for the arrogance that we have been accused of, but these insights need to be placed alongside our commitment to God as Creator and one who continues to sustain this creation. Therefore, if we are

to stay biblically anchored, *theocentrism* is the viewpoint we must consider.

We could turn to Paul for a definition of theocentricity as submission to the Creator God: '...in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). Transposing this to the entirety of God's creation, we affirm that everything finds existence, meaning and purpose in its relationship to our Creator and Redeemer God. Our being stands or falls in relationship to this God. But with the ecological crisis and the reminders that have come, we need to clarify the focus on our theocentricity.

We can identify two varying approaches to theocentrism. One form would teach that everything exists for the sake of God and to serve his purposes. The Bible would justify this; except that some would take it to the extent of saying therefore God will rectify the damage in the new Creation. We do not need to do anything. But there is another kind of theocentrism that fits more appropriately into our eco-conscious world today. While accepting that God ought to be the centre of all that we are and do, we must not ignore the fact that God wants us to do something by ourselves too. God created everything, but made each one to fulfil distinct purposes. These purposes refer back to the one overarching purpose that keeps it theocentric, but maintains the distinctive place for each for its own sake. These roles should take into account even the biocentric accent that is needed in some measure. Everything in God's created order has a distinctive place, keeping the ecological balance so essential to environmental harmony. There are chains and

⁵ Young, *Healing the Earth*, p. 125.

cycles that function within creation and these take into account the role each individual part has to play.

Theocentrism in any form must underline that our relationships within creation revolve around a transcendent centre. Pure biocentrism tends to deify nature, while pure anthropocentrism will divinize humans. A relationship by itself with nature will either idolize or romanticize our dealings and not fulfil the ultimate God ordained purposes that are intended. It is when we relate to a Creator God that all else will take its rightful place. Paul Santmire suggests:

... to avoid setting the human creature over against nature on the one hand (the tendency of anthropocentrism),...to avoid submerging the human creature and humanity's cries for justice on the other hand (the tendency for cosmocentrism). I am suggesting that we see both humanity and nature as being grounded, unified, and authenticated in the Transcendent, in God. This is the theocentric framework.⁶

The Bible gives a distinct place to God as Creator. Claiming ours to be a biblical theology, our starting point must be the Bible and the forceful teaching that the transcendent God is Creator. It is this God who continues to motivate and energise us to become involved in restoring creation, towards becoming all that God has intended it to be. We have the role of being stew-

ards in this magnificent created order, recognizing that God is above all and in all that we experience.

Being Stewards

Stewardship is an acceptable way to describe our position or place in relation to our role and responsibilities towards creation. John Hall stresses the 'stewardship' metaphor 'because it encapsulates the two sides of human relatedness, the relation to God on the one hand and to nonhuman creatures of God on the other'. If this is accepted, the steward metaphor would provide the corrective for the flawed relationships that have caused devastation. 'The human being is, as God's steward, accountable to God and responsible for his fellow creatures.'⁷

In the Old Testament a steward is a man who is 'over a house' (Gen. 43:19; 44:4; Is. 22:15, etc.). In the New Testament there are two words translated steward: *epitropos* (Mt. 20:8; Gal. 4:2), i.e. one to whose care or honour one has been entrusted, a curator or a guardian and this could appropriately describe our role in the world. Another word is *oikonomos* (Lk. 16:2-3; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10), i.e. a manager, a superintendent. Taken from the word *oikos* ('house') and *nemo* to 'disperse' or 'to manage' there is reference to the relationship within the home, an ownership with which this responsibility must be performed. However, the words are used to describe the function of delegated

⁶ H. P. Santmire, *Travail of Nature—the Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 49.

⁷ Douglas John Hall, *The Steward—a Biblical Symbol Come of Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). p. 26.

responsibility, as in the powerful parables of the labourers, and the unjust steward. 'More profoundly, it is used of the Christian's responsibility, delegated to him under "Christ's kingly government of his own house". All things are Christ's and Christians are his executors or stewards' (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25).⁸

Responsible Stewardship for Today

Responsible stewardship acting in God's love will result in practical outworking that will help develop right attitudes for living today. First, we Christians who are called to care for creation will see the need for recognition of the harmony, unity, purity, and integrity in creation. A respect for creation will elicit a respect for the rights of creation. Our care for creation will show in our love to protect, conserve and bring healing to a wounded world. Ecology implies an interrelatedness, and this will show in our own feeling of anguish for a creation that has been ill treated.

Second, we are called to conserve and preserve creation's resources. Conserving calls for responsible use. Conserving calls for protecting in the present for future use. But we may need to preserve some endangered species by protecting them, and conserve a forest by not only using it carefully for our present needs but protecting it for responsible use for generations in the future.

Third, responsible stewardship calls for demonstration in responsible lifestyles. Greed and materialism have caused havoc and disparity, which continue unabated with human exploitation. We are called to a life of sharing in the world's community rather than accumulating for ourselves. While this must start personally and then locally, it must be realized internationally. In fact, when nations start living integrally, their people automatically develop more responsible attitudes. Some of the major ethical violations are those that have emerged through large scale international illegal operations.

Fourth, responsible stewardship calls for an acceptance of the rights and privileges of all of God's community and creation. We must see the importance of according rights to nature as well as to other humans. One other aspect that has emerged in recent times is the need for us to demonstrate a responsibility towards future generations. The ecological crisis has brought people to recognize the need to protect the rights of future generations. The rate at which resources are depleting in our world at present is alarming. The question is asked: How much longer will these resources last? Whatever we do must therefore ensure the fundamental rights of those in the future to have sufficient resources.

Finally, we have a responsibility towards God to honour him for the way in which he has honoured us with responsibility over all of creation. All that we have said above will fall into its right perspective when we see God as the one who invests humans with integrity, dignity, and responsibility.

⁸ 'Steward', *New Bible Dictionary* (2nd ed.) (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1982), p. 1145

Evangelicals and Mary: Recent Theological Evaluations

David Parker

KEYWORDS: *Authority, grace, symbolism, discipleship, Christology, narrative exegesis, example, typology, piety*

MARY IS WELL RESPECTED and honoured by evangelical and other Protestant Christians as the mother of Jesus and a faithful woman of God. However, apart from strong recognition of the Virgin Birth, evangelical Christians do not usually single her out for any special attention. On the surface, this would seem to be in accordance with Scripture. Jerry Sandidge's comment about Pentecostals is also generally true of evangelicals: 'So, it could almost be said that [they]... have no "view" or "theology" of Mary, unless it would be in negative terms, i.e., those things which are *not* believed about her.'¹

However, other branches of the Church take a different view. Perhaps the best known and most influential example would be the late Pope who

venerated Mary highly, as can be seen in his writings², pilgrimages and above all in his funeral service. The report of a joint Anglican-Roman Catholic task force, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (known also as The Seattle Statement) published in 2005 also highlights the continuing high-level interest in Mary. At the popular level, catholic Christianity (that is, some sections of the Anglican Church, the Orthodox churches and Roman Catholicism), often seems to go to extremes of devotion, although this is not necessarily approved by the leaders. However, even at the level of official doctrine, Mary is given an important role which spills over into inter-church ecumenical relationships, placing pressure on all to recognize Mary as 'the mother of all Christians'.³

² He decreed 1987-88 as a Marian year to commemorate her birthday and issued the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, 25 March 1987 in support.

³ For a recent survey of the Catholic position, see Lawrence S. Cunningham, 'Mary in Catholic Doctrine and Practice', *Theology Today*, 56/3 (October 1999), pp. 307-318.

¹ Jerry L. Sandidge, 'A Pentecostal Response to Roman Catholic Teaching on Mary', *Pneuma* (Fall, 1982), p. 34.

Protestant reaction to such trends is often highly polemic, rejecting such attitudes as completely unbiblical and unhelpful to the gospel. However, even among those who take a more moderate line, it is agreed that there are serious differences on the matter. Accordingly, Marian teaching and devotion continues as a prominent part of Catholic practice. Yet on the other hand, as Mackenzie observes, 'the very naming of Mary arouses powerful feelings of antipathy still amongst many Protestants', which, together with the use of exalted titles for her, leaves 'many Protestants shaking their heads and wondering if the gulf between Catholic and Protestant can ever be bridged'.⁴

This difference is no merely superficial matter, for as Jürgen Moltmann has stated, 'The discrepancy between Church teaching and the New Testament is nowhere as great as in Mariology'.⁵ Oberman has identified Mariology as 'the focus and locus where all the heresies of Roman Catholicism are welded together'.⁶ Kantzer concludes, 'The difference between Protestants

and Roman Catholics over Mary is actually a microcosm of what ultimately separates the two faiths.' He refers especially to the means of salvation and biblical authority.⁷ The WEA Theological Commission report therefore stated: 'As evangelicals we consider the Roman Catholic doctrines concerning Mary a formidable barrier between ourselves and Roman Catholics.... We join the author of old in saying: "The mother of Jesus is not the papal Mary"'.⁸

Evangelicals and renewed interest in Mary

In recent times, some evangelicals are showing more interest in Mary on the grounds that there has been an unnecessary, and even anti-biblical, overreaction to the catholic position. They argue that Mary should not be ignored or worse still, discussion of her person and role should not be prohibited simply because others may have taken up untenable positions. Evangelicals are being urged to adopt a position which is more in accord with the biblical text and the attitude of Christ himself, and

4 J.A. Ross MacKenzie, 'Mary as an Ecumenical Problem' in Alberic Stacpoole (editor), *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue* (Middlegreen, Slough: St Paul Publications, 1982), p. 36.

5 Jürgen Moltmann, in Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann (editors), *Mary in the Churches, Concilium* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983), xii. cf George Carey, *A Tale of Two Churches: Can Protestants and Catholics Get Together?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), p. 25.

6 Heiko A. Oberman, *The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, (Philadelphia: Facet Books, 1971), p. 13, quoting Roger Mehl; see also Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2.143.

7 Kenneth S. Kantzer, 'A Most Misunderstood Woman', *Christianity Today*, Dec 12, 1986, 20. cf also Barth: 'Marian dogma is neither more nor less than the critical, central dogma of the Roman Catholic Church... In the doctrine and worship of Mary there is disclosed the one heresy of the Roman Catholic Church which explains all the rest' (*Church Dogmatics*, I.2.143).

8 Paul G. Schrotenboer, *Roman Catholicism: a Contemporary Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 41; for the whole section on Mary, see chapter 3, pp. 31-41.

thus restore Mary to her rightful place in our doctrine and spirituality. Timothy George⁹ refers to the story of the Scottish reformer, John Knox, who once hurled an image of Mary out of a ship when he was being forced to respect it; George says it is time for evangelicals to reverse this rejection of Mary.

This raises the question of whether evangelical theology and practice can give any greater place to Mary than has been traditionally accorded her. For many evangelicals, the answer would be a strong negative. With the various Catholic Marian doctrines in mind, such as the Immaculate Conception and Bodily Assumption, they would doubt that biblical authority permits any advances at all. Certainly, there is opposition to anything like the Catholic position, for as Oberman points out, ‘an independent Mariology cannot do justice to the biblical presentation of the figure of Mary, the mother of Jesus’.¹⁰ According to Gottfried Maron, ‘In the strict sense *there cannot be a Protestant “Mariology”* as an independent topic, because Mary has no value in herself, and can only be rightly seen in relation to her Son.’¹¹

Yet, in Scripture, Mary as the mother of Jesus has a pivotal role in the story of salvation; she is singled out for

special attention by Jesus on the cross, and she is described as ‘full of grace’ (Luke 1:28), ‘favoured by God’ and ‘blessed’ (Luke 1:42). The argument is that if evangelicals are to be faithful to their principles of biblical authority, they should not give Mary any less attention than Scripture does.

In this paper I propose to examine some examples of recent evangelical thinking on Mary. But I will not pay much attention to the Virgin Birth. This is a doctrine which has been a hallmark of evangelicals especially since the era of Fundamentalism and there is much in common among evangelicals on this topic. However, it is not so much about Mary herself as it is part of our Christology.

Mary does, of course, sometimes figure strongly in the Christmas preaching and celebrations of Protestants, but simply as part of history or narrative and without any special independent theological importance. Another context in which evangelicals are likely to focus on Mary is in association with family matters, especially the virtues of motherhood and celebrations of Mothers’ Day. While a focus on the family is praiseworthy, there is no particular biblical basis for Mother’s Day and, as Daniel Migliore¹² points out, associating Mary with this rather sentimental emphasis is probably the product of a romantic 19th century liberalism rather than anything else.

9 In Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (editors), *Mary, Mother of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 100f.

10 Oberman, *The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, p. 29f.

11 Gottfried Maron, ‘Mary in Protestant Theology’ in Küing and Moltmann (editors), *Mary in the Churches*, p. 46.

12 Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby (editors), *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), p. 119f.

Biblical exegesis

There is plenty of scope for evangelicals to give more attention to Mary if typical commentaries and theological books are any guide. Evangelical thinking about Mary, as for any other topic, needs a biblical basis and is confined by biblical authority. This, of course, contrasts strongly with the Catholic tradition where church tradition and official teaching are so evident.

This biblical orientation is one powerful factor limiting the extent of evangelical interest in Mary because there is so little data available. The biblical material is limited mainly to the birth narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and a few references to Mary and the family in the other sections. The Gospel of John has only two references—the miracle at Cana in chapter 2 and the scene at the foot of the cross with the beloved disciple in chapter 19—but does not identify her by name (only as ‘the mother of Jesus’)! Not only are there relatively few references to Mary in the New Testament compared with other great heroes listed in the ‘hall of faith’, but what is said in these references is either limited or open to interpretation. Evangelical biblical scholarship as seen in commentaries reflects this situation.

Luke 1:28ff

Leaving aside the first Gospel with its main focus on Joseph rather than Mary, David Wells points out that the key doctrinal text used by Roman Catholics to support views on Mary (excluding those relating specifically to the virgin birth) is Luke 1:28ff; ‘Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!’¹³ Most evan-

gelical commentators take this text in its straightforward historical and literal sense, without seeing in it any justification for an exalted view of Mary. Thus, in his popular exposition of Luke’s Gospel, David Gooding¹⁴ expounds it as part of a simple historical narrative with no special interest for Marian issues. Similarly, Leon Morris, in the student oriented Tyndale New Testament Commentary,¹⁵ comments, ‘It is, of course, complete misunderstanding which translates the words, “Hail Mary, full of grace”, [derived from the Vulgate translation which has influenced Catholic thinking] and understands them to mean that Mary was to be a source of grace to other people. Gabriel is saying simply that God’s favour rests on her.’

13 David F. Wells *Revolution in Rome* (London: Tyndale, 1973): ‘Mary—an unresolved problem’, pp. 111-119. See also Elliott Miller and Kenneth R. Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 32-34; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2.139f. warned concerning the Christological context of Marian teaching in the NT, ‘In this category is to be put the well-known *kecharitomene* of Lk. 1:28, which, translated *gratia plena*, has given rise to so many mariological speculations, against which it ought to have contributed a serious warning.’ The NIV rendering is, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favoured.’ The Roman Catholic RSV translates as ‘Hail, full of grace’, while both RSV and RC-RSV relegate the poorly attested ‘blessed are you among women’ to the margin, although of course it is found in Luke 1:42.

14 David Gooding, *According to Luke* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

15 Leon L. Morris, *Luke* (TNTC) (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974).

At a more technical level, John Nolland¹⁶ documents two alternate meanings for the 'quite rare Hellenistic verb' in use, viz., either it means the 'intrinsic qualities for which a person is to be commended' or it means 'the receipt of special graces or privilege by a benefactor'; he concludes that the second meaning is 'undoubtedly to be preferred' in this case, where Mary's privileged role has already been set forth,¹⁷ thus supporting the evangelical position. I.H. Marshall¹⁸ reinforces this conclusion by noting that 'There is no suggestion of any particular worthiness on the part of Mary herself'. But he also points out how Catholic views have been influenced by the Vulgate reading, *gratia plena*. This, he says, is open to misinterpretation by suggesting that grace is a substance with which one may be filled, and hence that Mary is a bestower of grace. He goes further and dissociates the initial word *chaire* from the messianic links often given to it by Catholic commentators (e.g., Zeph. 3:13, 9:9), preferring instead to regard it as 'the normal form

of address in the NT and in Greek usage'.¹⁹

Revelation 12:1-6

Likewise evangelical commentators do not give any credence to a Marian reference to the vision of the woman, the dragon and the male child in Revelation 12:1-6. Morris, for example, does not even mention the idea, instead indicating that the 'woman clothed with the sun' is Israel, an image which appears several times in the OT; in Revelation 12 it is possibly set in contrast to the goddesses of the pagan culture familiar to the first readers of the book.²⁰ Robert H. Mounce²¹ takes the same approach, but states explicitly, 'The woman is not Mary the mother of Jesus but the messianic community, the ideal Israel,' while W. Hendrick-

19 See also Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983) 58, who rejects this link also. Note that the Catholic *Jerome Bible Commentary* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968) focuses merely upon 'the source of goodness rather than upon its effects', noting that Mary is 'the object of God's grace and favor' with the participle indicating that she 'has been chosen for a long time past'. It also points out Mary's unique position because 'in her, more than in anyone else, God's messianic fulfillment is achieved' and that accordingly 'she has received more... than anyone else in the OT or NT'. Overall, the greeting signifies 'a particular office or special prerogative' (p. 122).

20 Leon L. Morris, *Revelation* (TNTC) (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1969), pp. 155ff.

21 Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NICNT) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 236.

16 John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 1-9:20* (Dallas: Word, 1989), p. 50.

17 BAGD, 879 offers only one meaning: 'to bestow favour upon, favour highly, bless' (i.e., endorsing Nolland).

18 I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1978), p. 65.

sen²² speaks specifically of the woman as the church, emphasizing, as Mounce does, that 'the Church in both dispensations is one'. Similar positions are adopted by other commentators such as Michael Wilcock²³, Philip Edgcumbe Hughes²⁴, and G.E. Ladd²⁵

John 19: 26, 27

However, the passage in John 19 dealing with Jesus' words from the cross to and about Mary is the most difficult Marian text. This is because it is part of a book which is recognized to be replete with deliberately intended double meanings, and so it may have symbolic meaning itself. But evangelical commentators are generally agreed that such a possibility does not exist in this case. In the words of Mary J. Evans, 'there is no particular indication in the text that the incident is meant to be seen as symbolic and no hint of such a concept can be found elsewhere in the New Testament'.²⁶

Donald A. Carson offers a detailed explanation of the reasons for rejecting

the kind of symbolic meaning that is proposed by Raymond E. Brown.²⁷ Not only does Carson consider such a view 'anachronistic', but he argues that it is contrary to the plain historical meaning and 'without adequate contextual control;' if it were to be symbolic, he argues, the interpretation could not be arbitrary but should be 'in line with the historical reading' (emphasis original) and thus controlled by Johannine (and possibly Synoptic) themes; but there are none that are relevant. G. Beasley Murray does consider the possibility of symbolism in this passage but limits it to the idea of Mary receiving what she had sought earlier at the wedding in Cana through the agency of the beloved disciple.²⁸

The Witness of the Gospels

Overall, therefore, the literal hermeneutic prevails. Together with the Synoptic texts that relate to Mary and her family (Matt. 2:23; Luke 2:41-52; Mark 6:3 pars), the evangelical tradition is left with an adequate foundation for the commonly held views about Mary. She fulfilled a unique function in salvation history through the miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit, but having given birth to Jesus in a non-miraculous manner, lived a normal

22 William Hendricksen, *More Than Conquerors* (London: Tyndale Press, 1940), p. 135.

23 Michael Wilcock, *I Saw Heaven Opened* BST (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), p. 118.

24 Philip E. Hughes, *The Book of Revelation—a Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), p. 135.

25 G.E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 166f.

26 Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible*, 60; but contrast *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) p. 585 which is sympathetic to the symbolic view.

27 D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), pp. 616-8; for Brown's comments, see *The Gospel according to John* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966).

28 G Beasley Murray, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), pp. 349f.

human and family life.²⁹

So, as Mary J. Evans has it, neither 'by implication or by definite assertion' does the NT build on the narratives about Mary in a doctrinal sense, which 'means we must be very wary of asserting that Mary has any further significance, other than as a witness and an example'.³⁰ It should also be noted that any tendency to exalt Mary for her role in the incarnation on the basis of Lukan texts is emphatically qualified by the account in Matthew, where Mary plays no part at all in the Annunciation.

Furthermore, the other element in these theological conclusions, Mary's exemplary role, is reinforced by two other New Testament passages (Luke 8:19-21; 11:27-28) which emphasize the virtue of obedient faith on the part of disciples. Mary is included in this group of disciples, which rules out the possibility of any special status in consequence of Mary's physical relationship with Jesus. Even so, as Wright points out,³¹ Mary's insight into the

role and ministry of her son was not always so exemplary as Catholic piety might wish because it is evident from some gospel texts (Luke 2:50; Mark 3:21; Mark 6:4) that there was a degree of tension between Jesus and his family. Wright can even suggest that 'Mary was herself "the hated mother," perhaps for most of Jesus' three-year ministry'. The scene at the cross (John 19:25-27) represents a definite turning point in this respect, which is confirmed by the fact that Mary joined with the other disciples in the Upper Room awaiting the blessing of Pentecost. (Acts 1:14).

Therefore, although Marian devotion did arise early in the history of the church, from an evangelical perspective, there is no exegetical or theological basis for it to have grown so strongly. What Donald G. Dawe points out for classical Reformed theology is also true for evangelicalism in general, 'Mary's function was historically complete in the virginal conception and bearing of the Saviour. She had no ongoing function in the *ordo salutis* which is the work of the Holy Spirit alone.'³² Thus, as already noted, there can be no independent Protestant Mar-

29 See Joel B. Green (editor), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove/Leicester: InterVarsity, 1992) pp. 70-72, 884f., and ISBE 3:269f for typical critical treatments along these lines. Note that there is nothing in the NT data to suggest Mary remained a virgin, so evangelicals generally reject the Catholic belief in the perpetual virginity.

30 Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible*, p. 58.

31 David F. Wright (editor), *Chosen by God: Mary in Evangelical Perspective* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1989), p. 26; see also G.W. Bromiley in ISBE 3:270, W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Principles of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979), p. 226, and Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (Cam-

bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 99, who notes that 'all four Gospels to one degree or another indicate both that Jesus' mother failed at some point to completely understand or honour her Son... and that Jesus distanced Himself from her in the process of distinguishing His physical family from His spiritual one'.

32 Donald G. Dawe, 'From Dysfunction to Disbelief' in Stacpoole (editor), *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, p. 146.

iology, or Marian cult, but at most 'petitionless praise of the Virgin'.³³

Insights from the Narrative approach to Scripture

Against this traditional approach, it is interesting to examine a sample of the new narrative approach to Scripture, as presented by Joel B. Green.³⁴ The value of the narrative technique for the readers is that it is potentially more engaging than the traditional grammatical-historical approach which typically yields only factual and doctrinal data. That is, 'As narrative, Luke-Acts invites its readers into its discourse as participants, ready to be prodded, and encouraged, challenged and formed.' Thus instead of the interpreter trying to 'make sense' of the text, Green suggests the value of the text lies in the way it presents Mary as an 'accessible exemplar'. The text opens to us 'a new way of seeing the world' and it 'invites us to join Mary in that work to which [Luke] repeatedly draws attention—namely the sort of pondering that allows for previously unimaginable interpretations of the events and world around us' (Luke 2:19, 51).³⁵

Green commences with Luke 11:27-28 where an unnamed woman from the crowd addressed Jesus, and praised his

mother Mary by saying, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you'. Jesus' reply, however, deflects attention away from Mary and any virtue she might possess, and also from her physical and family links to him. He says, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!' (v 28). Here Jesus asserts that blessedness is found in obedient faith, not in religious or social status or family connection.

This radical reinterpretation of traditional virtues is what Green argues is at the heart of Luke's portrayal of Mary: 'Mary's appearance in the Lukan narrative assaults the theological imagination of its readers, subverting conventional wisdom....' as is illustrated by her lowly social status and the theme of Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), which reflect a radical 'inversion of social realities'. Mary, who 'seems to measure low on any status scale... turns out to be the one favored by God, the one who finds her status and identity ultimately in her embrace of God's blessing to her'.³⁶ Thus 'the character of the people of God is reevaluated in the light of the newly found understanding of God's purposes in the good news'.³⁷ Thus, it is evident that instead of providing any information that might lead to an exalted view of Mary along the lines of Catholic piety, Green's exegesis shows Mary as an 'exemplar of one who life is in sync with God's saving plan'.

This approach is therefore a more engaging version of the common evangelical approach to Mary as an ideal disciple, rather than anything more.

33 George H. Tavard, *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary* (Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 127.

34 Joel B. Green, 'Blessed is she who Believed' in Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby (editors), *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), pp. 9-20.

35 Green, 'Blessed is she', pp. 10-11.

36 Green, 'Blessed is she', p. 14.

37 Green, 'Blessed is she', p. 10.

Undoubtedly, she had a special role to play in salvation history as the mother of Jesus, for which the terms 'favoured' and 'blessed' are entirely appropriate. But they carry no further doctrinal significance. Mary must be seen as a woman of humble faith, enabled by the grace of God to fulfil her calling, like so many others in the story of salvation history.

Theology

In line with the biblical witness as revealed by our inspection of evangelical exegesis, standard evangelical theology text books give very little attention to Mary apart from discussions of the Virgin Birth itself. For example, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* has articles on the Virgin Birth and the main Catholic teachings such as the Bodily Assumption, Immaculate Conception and Mother of God. Its article on Mary is limited to a terse listing of biblical data and the observation that Roman Catholics:

have venerated Mary as entirely sinless and as the most glorious of God's creatures. Feeling that this detracts from the centrality of Christ Protestants have often neglected her unduly. Radical biblical criticism in doubting the infancy narratives' historicity often further this neglect. However, the increasing importance of women's issues has spurred new interests in Mary among both Protestants and Catholics alike.³⁸

*New Dictionary of Theology*³⁹ is similar, containing two articles on the topic by the same author—the first, 'Mary', is, as its introduction suggests, only a discussion of the 'Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary', while the second is devoted to an evangelical understanding of the virgin birth (i.e., virginal conception). Neither article attempts to offer any positive theology of Mary. The authoritative *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*⁴⁰ has no entry at all on Mary but includes a brief factual statement of the NT data about her in a general article on 'Women'.

Introductory textbooks in systematic theology represent only a modest advance over the reference material. For example, the popular *Know the Truth*⁴¹ by the Baptist theologian, Bruce Milne, treats Mary in Christological context only, which contrasts with a comparable Roman Catholic volume which devotes more than a chapter to her.⁴² From an Anglican perspective, *Christian Theology: an Introduction*⁴³ from the prolific contemporary evangelical, Alister E. McGrath, offers only a descriptive historical treatment of Mary, with no reference to the virgin birth.

39 Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright (editors), *New Dictionary of Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988).

40 *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, pp. 70-2, 884f.

41 Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), p. 138f..

42 Jesus Maria Cavanna, *Basic Christian Doctrines* (Manila: Carmelo and Bauermann, 1986), pp. 38-44.

43 Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: an Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 45, 51, 53.

38 Walter A. Elwell, (editor), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (EDTh) (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), pp. 696-670.

In the case of Reformed theology, Donald G. Dawe points out that there was a decline of interest in Mary following the first generation of Reformers, resulting in only 'the most scattered and peripheral mention of Mary in formal theology' until the end of the 19th century and later; at this time, the critical issue became the defence of the virgin birth over against liberal denials.⁴⁴ This trend can be seen in works by Charles Hodge⁴⁵, L. Berkhof⁴⁶ and J.O. Buswell⁴⁷. Arminian theologians are in general agreement with their Reformed counterparts on Mary and the Virgin Birth.⁴⁸

As might be expected, the views of

Pentecostals are similar to those of evangelicals as a whole. Jerry Sandidge's conclusion has been noted above.⁴⁹ As a participant in the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic dialogue, he found little positive material on Mary from a Pentecostal perspective, concluding that there was only a 'negative' (ie, a polemical) theology, focusing on the rejection of perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, bodily assumption and veneration. In the ensuing dialogue, agreement emerged on the belief in the virgin birth (at least as understood as virginal conception), the validity of the term *theotokos*, and Mary's holiness and her role as an example of piety. But in terms of dialogue, this was as far as the Pentecostals could go in the direction of a positive theology of Mary.

A similar situation exists in the case of the systematic theology of the charismatic Presbyterian, J. Rodman Williams. He strongly rejects the Roman Catholic dogmas in a series of comprehensive footnotes. At the same time he emphasizes in the main text of his work the personal piety of Mary as seen in her 'humble and receptive faith',⁵⁰ and her unique historical role in the incarnation as the mother of Jesus.

Amongst the recent Baptist theo-

44 Dawe, 'From Dysfunction to Disbelief' in Stacpoole, *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, 146. In this connection, see the classic works on the subject by James Orr and J. Gresham Machen.

45 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 3 vols (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1981 reprint).

46 L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), pp. 334-6.

47 James O. Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (2 vols in 1) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962, 1963) Vol 2, pp. 40, 44f.

48 Charles W. Carter, Ed., *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology* (2 vols) (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press/Zondervan Publishing House, 1983); Benjamin Field, *The Student's Handbook of Christian Theology* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1883); John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (2 vols) (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989 reprint from 1893 edition); W.T. Purkiser, R.S. Taylor and W.H. Taylor, *God Man and Salvation* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1977), *ibid*, *Christian Theology*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1952) vol 2, pp. 177, 148;

49 Jerry L. Sandidge, 'A Pentecostal Response to Roman Catholic Teaching on Mary', *Pneuma* (Fall, 1982), pp. 33-42.

50 J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House 3 vols in one, 1996), pp. 344-350, p. 347.

gians, James Leo Garrett⁵¹ stresses the Virginal Conception, but has little to say on Mary herself. The late Stanley Grenz is similar.⁵² Millard J. Erickson's popular text book follows the same line, but in the process of explaining the doctrine of the virgin birth, it does refer to the role and significance of Mary herself, even if this is somewhat negative.⁵³ He says, although 'Mary manifested qualities which God could use, such as faith and dedication', she had no unique qualities of her own that would mark her out from other young women of her day as the one who would give birth to the Saviour; furthermore, she was unable to conceive without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

In other parts of his work, Erickson also makes brief reference to Christological heresies and their implications for the role of Mary, and the relationship between the virgin birth and the general acceptance of the miraculous and the supernatural.⁵⁴ Surprisingly however, in his full scale Christology, *The World Become Flesh*, he places less emphasis on the Virgin Birth and Mary

than in his earlier book, despite the fact that he had pointed out how some theologies have seriously neglected the topic.

Wayne Grudem approaches the Virgin Birth from a biblical rather than a theological point of view, asserting that it is the mechanism of Jesus' sinlessness; this means that for him, belief in the Virgin Birth is a test of faith 'in the God of the Bible'.⁵⁵ It is only in a footnote expressing his strong rejection of the immaculate conception that Grudem alludes to any possibility of a positive appreciation of Mary herself. In a defensive mode, he concedes that 'the New Testament does highly honor Mary' (by calling her 'blessed' and 'favored' by God), but points out that such honour is not in terms of special grace or sinlessness; however, he offers no discussion of what might be an appropriate form of honour in strict NT terms.

It is left to Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest amongst the Baptists (and indeed most other evangelicals) to propose a positive theology of Mary. In their innovative 'Integrative Theology',⁵⁶ they devote a whole section within a lengthy treatment of the incarnation to the topic because of concern about over-reaction by evangelicals to

51 James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) (vol 1), pp. 584-597.

52 *Theology for the Community of God*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), pp. 409-423; see also his *Revisiting Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993) and *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* (Wheaton: Bridgepoint, 1996).

53 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Barker, 1998 2nd edition), p. 757f..

54 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 694, 713f, 727, 304.

55 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 532.

56 Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie Zondervan Publishing House, vol 2, 1990), 275-8. They also include a 'Josephology', being a summary of the biblical narrative and the presentation of Joseph as a model of a spiritual and devout foster father- 2/277f..

Roman Catholic abuses. They argue that 'An effective Protestant corrective to an unbiblical Roman theology of Mary is not lack of thought about her. The antidote is a biblically founded theology of Mary!' They propose that the virgin birth is 'optional evangelistically' (i.e., not necessary for salvation) and agree that 'Mary may be honored as the most favored woman in history'. However, they firmly reject any further development on biblical grounds: 'The biblical teaching indicates that the moral miracle at his conception by the Holy Spirit freed Jesus, not Mary, from a sinful nature. The child, not Mary, is "the holy one"' (Luke 1:35). Thus Mary was 'not the bestower of divine grace but the recipient' and therefore cannot be 'worshiped as sinless or divine'.

Again on biblical grounds, they reject the popular or literalistic use of the title, 'Mother of God' since 'God, being eternal and self-existent, can have no mother'. However, in line with the qualified, technical use of the term *theotokos*, they do concede, 'Mary was the mother of Jesus' humanness, begotten supernaturally from the Holy Spirit', which accounts for the 'honorific' use of the ascription, 'Mother of my Lord' in Luke 1:43.

But, in contrast to many other evangelical theologians, they make an attempt at articulating a theology of Mary. They itemise this theology under a series of points, including the classical evangelical emphasis on the 'God-given dignity of women', the virtue of her devout piety and faith and the importance of marriage and family values. In addition to noting the unique role of Mary in the history of salvation, they point out that in her faithful obedience to the divine will 'she exempli-

fies God's strategy of using human agents and women in particular in the accomplishment of his holy and loving purposes'. In short, they focus on a feature of interest to feminist theologians: 'a Protestant theology of Mary emphasizes God's great esteem for a devout woman in bringing to pass the greatest event in history—the incarnation of God's eternal Word'.

While several features of this approach are purely traditional and conventional, the final synthesis does represent a positive recognition of the unique role of Mary without conceding any of the points with which polemic evangelical theology is concerned. Yet it still remains as a factual statement which does not imply any further consequences of a theological or practical nature about Mary. That is, there is an acceptance of the unique historical role of Mary and a recognition of her piety and example, but no potential beyond this for the growth of a developed Protestant Marianism.

Historical Development

Evangelicals are not influenced by two key points in history which have provided impetus for the development of Catholic devotion to Mary. The first was the patristic idea of a symbolic connection between Mary and Eve. Thus Justin Martyr in his work, *Dialogue with Trypho*, states, 'Christ became a man by a virgin to overcome the disobedience caused by the serpent... in the same way it had originated.' Playing on the meaning of Eve derived from the Hebrew verb 'to live' and the idea that Eve was presumably a virgin at the time of the temptation, the parallel is made between the virgin

who brought disobedience and death and the virgin who conceived the one who is Life. Mary therefore becomes a New or Second Eve. Thus Irenaeus wrote, 'The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosened by Mary's obedience. The bonds fastened by the virgin Eve through disbelief were untied by the virgin Mary through faith' (*Adv. haereses*, 3:22).

Despite firm adherence to the Adam/Christ typology (expounded in Romans 5 and 1 Cor. 15:21-22), evangelicals reject this Eve/Mary symbolism as an invalid transference of the typology away from Jesus and Adam, contradicting and going beyond Scripture. Thus, whatever virtues Mary may have possessed as a woman of faith and whatever position she may have held by God's grace in salvation history, there is no justification for elevating her in the way the Eve/Mary symbolism does.

The second instance is more complex—the use of the title 'Theotokos' to refer to Mary. In the historical context of the 5th century when the title was affirmed by the 3rd council of Ephesus, it was entirely reasonable. From a Christological point of view, it was necessary to affirm that Mary was the bearer of the one who was not only fully human, but also fully divine, thus countering the Nestorian heresy. But in popular use, the translation of *Theotokos* as 'Mother of God' carried with it the implication that Mary was coeternal with God (or even more) and existed before Jesus and even God himself. Thus Calvin warned, 'To call the virgin Mary the mother of God can only serve to confirm the ignorant in their

superstitions.'⁵⁷

Evangelicals therefore typically acknowledge the truth of the title as a precise, highly nuanced Christological statement (she bore the one who is divine), but reject its popular usage, 'mother of God', wishing that some other simple translation could be used. They regard it as a summary Christological confession, 'an auxiliary Christological proposition',⁵⁸ if one is needed, from the perspective of Mary. They certainly reject the Catholic view that this is the beginning point for an independent Marian theology and piety, as stated for example in a popular Catholic book of belief in this fashion:

Protestants do indeed regard her as the Mother of God [i.e., the Mother of Jesus who is divine], but that is as far as they go, and that is the point at which the Catholic Church commences. Her dignity as Mother of God is the starting point for a very special devotion, and for all the prerogatives with which the Church endows her.⁵⁹

The 'cascading piety' of Marian theology and devotion

The steady development of Marian

⁵⁷ Quoted in 'The Blessed Evangelical Mary in Evangelical Perspective', in Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (editors), *Mary, Mother of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 110.

⁵⁸ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.2.138.

⁵⁹ John Greenwood (editor), *A Handbook of the Catholic Faith* (New York: Image Books, 1956), pp. 238

devotion referred to here shows how much 'Mariology belongs to tradition, not to scripture'.⁶⁰ It developed first in the East as a matter of living piety, but then in the West as a matter of dogma. A great number of factors have been identified as contributing to this phenomenon which contrasts so strongly with the evangelical approach, controlled as it is by the authority of Scripture. One important factor contributing to this 'cascading piety'⁶¹ is the use of Scripture not as 'source, but resource, not authoritative evidence but elucidating example'⁶² and the corresponding ideas of development of doctrine and the teaching authority of the Church. Closely related to this is the way popular practice becomes 'an authority for faith instead of its activation'⁶³ which is well illustrated by the fact that popular Marian devotion ulti-

mately led to the papal definitions of the immaculate conception and the bodily assumption, contrary to any explicit biblical teaching. It is important also to note that a significant impetus for the development of Marian devotion derived from heretical groups in the early centuries, while its documentary sources were mostly non-canonical. In the modern period, one of the major factors has been the content of apparitions of Mary.⁶⁴

This strong tendency to elevate Mary beyond the historical role ascribed to her in the New Testament indicates that in the absence of the restraints imposed by biblical authority, there were other powerful factors that drove the development of Marian devotion. There was, for example, the growing attraction of asceticism, especially the virtues of virginity, and the attraction of the maternal characteristics of the feminine deities of other religions⁶⁵ which involved 'a pre-disposed yearning for a mother-queen goddess figure'.⁶⁶ Another important factor was

60 G.W. Bromiley, 'Mary the mother of Jesus', *ISBE*, 3:272; see also 3:271 where he notes Mariology involves a 'refusal plainly to face up to the biblical data'.

61 John Reumann, 'Mary', in M. Eliade (editor) *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 9:251.

62 Oberman, *The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, pp. 5-8; contrast the historical exegesis of Reformed theology in which *communio sanctorum* is the *context*, and tradition is the resource (6).

63 Oberman, *The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, p. 2; cf also E. Ann Matter, 'Marian Devotion' in Gordon S. Wakefield (editor), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (London: SCM, 1983), p. 259: 'The history of devotion to the Virgin shows the consistent pressure of popular belief on hierarchical definitions.' Bromiley in *ISBE*, 3:272: '... in the later period at least the theological definition seems to be a product of popular demand rather than the contrary.'

64 See Miller and Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin*, pp. 79-135.

65 D.G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Saviour and Lord* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997), p. 110 quotes S. Benko to show a link between the worship of the goddess Artemis at Ephesus and the later decision of the 3rd Ecumenical Council in the same city to affirm the title *Theotokos*.

66 Miller and Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin*, p. 65; 'The phenomenon of modern marian devotion shows that the need for a female, specifically maternal, figure in Christian spirituality is an enduring part of the tradition', *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, p. 258f; Frederick W. Norris, *The Apostolic Faith* (Collegeville, Minn., The Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 63.

a growing emphasis upon divine transcendence which led to a need to provide a softer, more approachable image of the godhead and additional ways of mediation.

According to G.W. Bromiley, a more important and decisive factor is the issue of anthropocentricity, that is, the 'constant urge and need to fashion our own religion, to achieve our own salvation, to be our own god'.⁶⁷ This, he argues, explains why Marian devotion could absorb the non-Christian and heretical features mentioned above and why it developed so strongly at a time when evangelical doctrines were neglected. Other commentators discuss this issue in terms of the doctrine of grace. As T.N. Finger puts it, 'most Mariological excesses... spring from overestimating the human role in redemption. This ancient theological issue may be *the most fundamental one surrounding Mariology*'.⁶⁸

As already noted, Mary is seen in evangelical theology as strictly the obedient recipient of grace. But it is regularly observed that Catholic teaching adopts a semi-Pelagian position, in which Mary's virtue or merit is that she cooperates with God in an act of congruous merit on behalf of all people as the new Eve in giving consent to the incarnation.⁶⁹ According to this view,

her cooperation can also be seen throughout her life as mother of Jesus, especially at the cross when 'she united herself with a maternal heart to His sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth'.⁷⁰ As Weston observes, 'Mary cooperates in the work of redemption, and so epitomises the view that human ability enables man to have some part in his own salvation'.⁷¹

It should be noted further that Mary's cooperation in redemption necessarily involves, as Barth points out, 'a relative rivalry with Christ'⁷²—not only in devotion but also in the status reflected in the titles which seem to parallel the attributes of Christ himself. Accordingly, evangelical theology, with its Christocentricism and adherence to the principle of *sola gratia*, rejects any role Mary may be given as source (co-redemptrix) or channel (mediatrix) of grace.

More generally there has been what Oberman, refers to as the 'Anselmian rule', according to which one should ascribe to the Virgin Mary 'so much purity that more than that one cannot

⁶⁷ Bromiley, *ISBE*, 3:272f; *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 9:251.

⁶⁸ *EDTh*, p. 686.

⁶⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* # 494 quoting Irenaeus, 'Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race' *Lumen Gentium* #56, 'cooperating in the work of human salvation through free faith and obedience'; #57 'This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation'.

⁷⁰ *Lumen Gentium* # 58.

⁷¹ Keith Weston, 'Mary: an evangelical viewpoint' in Stacpoole (editor), *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, p. 164.

⁷² Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.2.145 'For it is to the creature creatively co-operating in the work of God that there really applies the irresistible ascription to Mary of that dignity, of those privileges, of those assertions about her *co-operatio* in our salvation, which involve a relative rivalry with Christ.'

possibly imagine except for God'.⁷³ Closely related to this is the principle that 'one can never say too much about Mary' (*de Maria nunquam satis*) which as Maron states, 'was a stimulus to ingenious intellectual speculations'.⁷⁴ Another powerful factor in the development of Marian teaching, especially regarding such extra-biblical notions as the immaculate conception and the bodily assumption, is the principle expressed in the words: *potuit, decuit, fecit*: God could do a thing, it was fitting that God should, therefore God did it.⁷⁵

The operation of these principles in the historical development of Mariology helps to explain why there has been a 'predisposed ambition' to add to the biblical record concerning Mary, a process which has puzzled evangelicals.⁷⁶ These principles also offer some explanation for the pervasive feeling expressed in the sayings attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Let him who fears the Son seek refuge in Mary' and 'Everything through Mary', which are so much at odds with evangelical

Christology and spirituality.⁷⁷

Thus at the Reformation, it was not surprising that biblical authority was brought to bear, severely curtailing Marian devotion and calling in question the underlying theology, although the Reformers themselves were uneven in their individual attitudes.

In the period since, the polemic situation has been aggravated, leading to the point now where Evangelicalism has sometimes been defined by what it rejects about Mary in particular (as well as other matters) rather than what it believes in an affirmative sense. However, there is some justification for a negative position, given the developments in Catholicism since the Reformation at both popular and official levels (especially with the official papal definitions of the doctrines of Immaculate Conception in 1854, the Bodily Assumption 1950, and Mary as 'Mother of the Church' 1964). The overall influence of prominent Catholics, especially the previous and present popes, has made it harder for Protestants to take an even-handed view despite the efforts of those who want to overcome this significant ecumenical barrier. But even so, some evangelicals have tried to do so. Over time, there have been several attempts

73 Oberman, *The Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, p. 7.

74 Gottfried Maron, 'Mary in Protestant Theology', *Concilium, Mary in the Churches* pp. 40, 46; illustrations of this principle at work may be seen in John de Satgé, 'The evangelical Mary', in Stacpoole (editor), *Mary's Place in Christian Dialogue*, p. 28, and also in P. Toon, 'Appreciating Mary today' in Wright (editor), *Chosen by God*, p. 224f., who both express a need to say more about Mary than the biblical text indicates.

75 *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 9:251; Miller and Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin*, p. 38f..

76 Miller and Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin*, p. 44.

77 *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, 9:251; Jesus Maria Cavanna, *Basic Christian Doctrines*, 41; this idea is described by Pope Paul VI in his letter *Signum Magnum* of May 13, 1967 as 'the general norm.'

to revisit Mary⁷⁸, but let us examine some quite recent examples.⁷⁹

Recent Contributions

Timothy George

One of the most articulate is the prolific Timothy George of Beeson Divinity School, a Reformation theologian, who has written on the 'Blessed Evangelical Mary'.⁸⁰ Apart from acceptance of the Virgin Birth and of the title *Theotokos*, which is typical of evangelicals generally, George refers first to Mary in her place in the line of pious women and mothers in the Old Testament. She appears at the intersection of the old and the new covenants as a 'culminating' figure (p. 104). He also goes further and sees her as 'the kairoic representative of the eschatological and redeemed people of God: Israel itself' (p. 105). He thinks evan-

gelicals 'have much to learn from reading Mary against the background of Old Testament foreshadowings' especially due to a Marcionite over-emphasis on the New Testament.

But as we have seen, there is little exegetical justification for such a view, and, as he concedes, this kind of reasoning has been used by Catholicism to develop the Eve/Mary typology. Yet he also concedes a 'note of dissonance' exists (p. 106), because there is also in the Old Testament the idea of the unfaithful bride. This is welcome, because, as we have noted above, the NT shows that Mary herself and her family do not always accept what Jesus stood for in his ministry.

This picture of Mary in relation to the Old Testament, therefore, does not take evangelicals much farther, but George's attempt to reinstate Mary further by referring to her as 'the mother of the Church' is even less successful. Using the scene of Mary at the foot of the cross (John 19) as a lonely but faithful believer, he focuses on Mary as the 'archetype of the remnant church' (p. 119). The figure of the persecuted mother of Revelation 12 allows him to speak of Mary's witness to 'the pilgrim church' (p. 120). He also calls again upon Mary as a 'bridging figure' between the old and new covenants, and between the ministry of Jesus and new age of the church, since she was portrayed as among the last at the cross and the first in the upper room at Pentecost (p. 119).

However, George's references in support of this idea are all to Roman Catholic usage and lack any exegetical or theological basis. In truth, it is Jesus himself who is the faithful believer, the one goes to the cross in humble obedi-

78 See, for example, David F. Wright, *Chosen by God: Mary in Evangelical Perspective* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1989), and A.T. Robertson, *The Mother of Jesus: Her Problems and Her Glory* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925).

79 Another fruitful example could have been D.G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Saviour and Lord* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997), pp. 107-120, who devotes an special appendix to his chapter on the Virgin Birth to "The role of Mary".

80 'The Blessed Evangelical Mary in Evangelical Perspective', in Carl E Braaten and Robert W Jenson (editors), *Mary, Mother of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 100-122, and a simplified version in *Christianity Today* (December 2003), Vol. 47, No. 12, 34; on-line <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/012/1.34.html>

ence to the will of the Father and who, as the risen Lord, bestows the Spirit on his disciples. The New Testament assigns no role to Mary in salvation history or the church apart from her call to be the mother of Jesus. There is no justification to link her with the church, apart from being one of the disciples. George draws support for his perspective from the decision of the Second Vatican Council not to produce a separate treatise on Mary but to treat her in the context of the church. However, this is of dubious value in itself, since if Vatican 2 was to effect proper reform in this area, it would have been necessary to restore discussion to Mary fully and exclusively to the Christological context, as was done in the 5th century adoption of the title, *Theotokos*.

George has more success from an evangelical perspective in interpreting Mary as the 'handmaiden of the Lord' (Luke 1:38) in terms of the Reformation principles of *sola gratia and sola fide*. He explains that she is the object of divine *grace* in her call to be the mother of Jesus, and she responds to this call in exemplary humble *faith*. George concludes that she should therefore be 'highly extolled in evangelical theology and worship'. He blames the fact that she is not on 'the pruning effect of the Scripture principle' (p. 116)—that is, that there is no explicit exhortation to extol her and to do so would likely detract from the place of Christ. Secondly, he claims that the polemic situation in the post-Reformation period required evangelicals to downplay Mary to avoid any hint of compromise. But, as mentioned above, there is nothing specially unique about Mary's call and response,

so there is no necessity to give her more attention than any of the other heroes of faith listed in Scripture.

This contribution to the thinking about 'the blessed evangelical Mary' appears to be strained. Part of the problem is that it is not a spontaneous expression of evangelical piety, such as the drive for evangelism, the pursuit of holiness or exalting the lordship of Christ. Instead, it is mainly an attempt to find something positive to say in response to an invitation to address a conference on the theme.

Daniel Migliore

In the second example, Daniel Migliore of Princeton Theological Seminary, is also responding to a theme, but does so from a more positive and principled basis.⁸¹ He has the conviction that 'Reformed theology should make its own distinctive contribution to contemporary rethinking of the significance of Mary for Christian faith and theology' (p. 118). By this he means the principles of grace, biblical authority, the gospel and its transforming power (p. 122).

In developing this approach, Migliore joins with Timothy George and other evangelicals in referring to the Annunciation as a demonstration of 'Mary's pilgrimage of faith', showing her as an 'exemplary witness' (p. 123). The focus is not on Mary herself who is

⁸¹ 'Woman of Faith: Toward a Reformed Understanding of Mary', in Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby (editors), *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), pp. 117-130.

simply 'favored and chosen by God'. Instead, we praise the 'surprising, unmerited, electing grace of God.' Thus, he argues, we should pay more attention than we have to the mode of election in regard to Mary's role in salvation history. Here again, Mary is seen as an example of faith and discipleship—she is not a unique case, and certainly not one who by some special divine action can dispense grace in any way.

Migliore also sees significance in Mary's song, the *Magnificat*, of Luke 2, as an indication of solidarity with the poor and the 'passionate cry for justice and a transformed world' (p. 125), which is so typical of the biblical witness. Similarly, there is the note of fallibility in Mary's story, a reminder that discipleship includes the necessity of continual reformation, *semper reformanda*. Thus Mary is good example of biblical piety and faith.

In his final points, Migliore makes much better use of two other themes than the traditional Catholic view, so often toyed with by Protestants who are sympathetic to increasing the honour given to Mary. First, the scene at the cross where the beloved disciple and Mary are given into each other's care (John 19:26-27), portrays for Migliore a call to ministry 'with and for others' (p. 128) within the family of God: 'Mary's vocation is not exhausted in her giving birth to the Son of God. She is given the further dignity of ministry in the name of the Son that she bore' (p. 127).

Likewise, he does not link the brief reference to Mary as one of those in the upper room at Pentecost (Acts 1:14) with the genesis of the church as many scholars do and thus accord it far

greater significance than the exegesis can possibly justify. Instead, he sees it simply as an expression of her devout spirituality, especially notable in the context of this passage with the events of Pentecost.

Yet even these two passages provide only minimal foundation for any elaboration of a position on Mary. They contribute little to our understanding of Christian ministry and spirituality in comparison with the great amount of material on these topics found in other parts of the Scripture, such as, for example, the gospels and epistles on the nature of Christian ministry, or the much more detailed biographies of heroes of faith such as Abraham, Moses, Paul or even Peter. More importantly, for a theology and practice of spirituality, the material on Mary is minimal indeed compared with the Psalms or the prayers and teaching of Paul and other passages. Furthermore, from a general perspective, Mary plays no great part in the apostolic exposition of the Christian life and salvation history as recorded for example in the narrative of Acts or in key epistles such as Romans, Galatians or Corinthians. This is not to deny, of course, that the narratives of Mary do provide valuable 'testimonies to the grace of God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit' (p. 129), as Migliore and others so helpfully point out.

Conclusion

Thus our view of Mary must be determined by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, as for any other matter of faith and practice. Evangelicals have plenty of spiritual dynamics that drive

them, such as the imperative for evangelism and mission, holiness, even the second coming and biblical authority. However, unlike the Catholic position, there is no driving force within their theological and spiritual system to require them to say anything special about Mary in isolation. She is to be seen and interpreted within the larger context other doctrines of grace, ecclesiology and prayer, but especially in terms of Christ himself whom we must continue to magnify in his unique position as the incarnate Son, and our Saviour and Lord.

However, by the same principle of Scripture we need to rectify the relative neglect and distortions in our view of Mary which have resulted from polemic reaction and readily acknowledge her as one 'favoured' by God and as a 'handmaiden of the Lord'. We can see in her a sign of grace and faith, perhaps in some special measure but not uniquely or exclusively compared with others in the hall of faith. In fact, to avoid tendencies towards the kind of invalid doctrinal and devotional embellishment that have taken place in the Catholic tradition, she is best seen,

as Donald G. Bloesch⁸² urges, in the context of the whole company of faith. Thus we see her as a fellow believer with undoubted personal qualities which perhaps set her apart from others; yet we may warmly acknowledge her privileged role as the mother of Jesus and marvel at God's surprising grace in choosing a lowly, humble person for such a role. This must surely be a highly important lesson for Christian's in today's world!

Truly, we can affirm the words of Mary in her song:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.... he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away

⁸² Bloesch, *Jesus Christ*, p. 118. He pushes the boundaries of this concept to include discussion of Mary's role with the saints in heaven, thus addressing firmly the con-

tentious issue of Mary and prayer. For similar ideas from another evangelical sources, see also Rodney A. Whitacre, *John* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999) (IVP New Testament Commentary Series), p. 461.

Prophetic Preaching as Social Preaching

Chang-Hoon Kim

KEYWORDS: *Law, cult, morality, community, social responsibility, corruption, the poor, homiletics, mission, culture*

THIS STUDY HAS ITS origin in the recognition of a deep misunderstanding of 'prophetic preaching as social preaching' in the contemporary homiletics.¹ Generally the prophets in the Old Testament have been viewed in a false light as social reformers who merely or mainly proclaimed repentance, judgment and doom in the corrupt world and were directly involved in social action to accomplish social justice.² Those who regard the prophets as social reformers mistakenly see

prophetic preaching to be just sermons which rebuke or judge the congregation or society with regard to social injustices; or they consider prophetic preaching only as a means to participate directly in social or political affairs, or as the homiletical aspect of the so-called liberation movement.

As a result of this misconception, two mistakes have been made in terms of the use of prophetic preaching in the church.³ On the one hand, prophetic preaching is considered undesirable in local churches, because ministers regard sermons that merely challenge and criticize people and situations to be harmful to a successful ministry. On the other hand, prophetic preaching is often used merely as a tool to perform a mission of the church in terms of its involvement in social action. The former mistake is mainly found in conservatively-inclined churches, the latter in liberally-inclined churches.⁴ In this study, first of all I am going to examine the nature of the judgment message

¹ Prophetic preaching can be discussed in diverse directions. But in this paper, I will argue just about its social aspect.

² W Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), pp. 14-15; S. E. Balentine, 'The Prophetic Message: Its Origin, Setting and Significance', *Faith and Mission* (1989), 16: 3-17, p. 10.; J. K. Wiles, 'The Prophetic Critique of the Social and Economic Order', *Faith and Mission* (1989), 16:18-40, pp. 18-19; M. Siler 'Reflections on Prophetic Preaching', *Faith and Mission* (1989), 16:76-78.

³ See the contributions in E. E. Shelp and R. H. Sunderland (eds.), *The Pastor as Prophet* (New York: Pilgrim, 1985).

⁴ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, pp. 14-15.

concerning social injustice and corruption in Israel, because the misunderstanding of prophetic preaching today, in my judgment, is closely connected to a wrong or faulty evaluation of the role and message of the Old Testament prophets. And then, I will suggest what the designation 'prophetic preaching as social preaching' means, and how prophetic preaching as social preaching can be practically performed.

I The prophets against social injustice

In attempts to explore the nature of the judgment message concerning social injustice and corruption in Israel, in my view, two types of approach are necessary: by examining some passages in prophetic books and by investigating the commandments regarding justice and the protection of the weak in the Law as the source which is later (re)interpreted and applied in the prophetic message.

A. Prophetic books

Isaiah 1:16-17 (1:10-17)

This passage demands just social and moral behaviour in society through a series of nine imperatives. The prescriptions occur in the context of the critique of one-sided cultic practices, which the prophet directed at the leaders and people (v. 10). In other words, the uselessness of their cultic practices is connected with the proclamation that the worshippers' hands were full of blood, a term which is generally understood as involvement in violence and injustice in society. The prophet

declared that their cultic activities were meaningless to God because they were isolated from their daily social lives. God abhors a dichotomy between cultic life and unjust social life.

The situation sketched in vv. 4-9 provides the background for the socio-ethical demands on society.⁵ Their present chaotic predicament is depicted as the result of God's punishment—a punishment of social injustice in spite of a cultic 'boom'.⁶ Israel faultily thought that they could be forgiven and be free from God's punishment by the cultic acts of worship or that they fulfilled their duty in their relationship with God by it.⁷ The prophet, however, emphasized that their ethical behaviour or social practices stood between forgiveness and punishment (vv. 16-20).

However, it should be noted that the prophet did not condemn cultic activities in themselves but proclaimed that worship without a corresponding daily

⁵ There is a general agreement that Is. 1:10-17 is an inseparable literary unit. Also, many suggest that this passage should be read in the light of Is. 1:2-20. This means that Is. 1:16-17 should be understood in the context of both 1:10-17 as the narrower context and of 1:2-20 as the broader one.

⁶ Even though the Assyrian invasion of 701 BC (cf. Isaiah chapters 36, 37) is generally suggested as the historical background to this passage, we cannot confirm this. The context might also be the Syro-Ephraimite war of 734/5 BC (cf. Is. 7:1ff).

⁷ R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 32; Y. Gitay, *Isaiah and His Audience: The Structure and Meaning of Isaiah 1-12* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1991), pp. 14ff.; H. Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique of Eighth-Century Prophets*. New York: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 255-7.

life and social concern was worthless.⁸ In other words, in this passage the prophet gave the instruction that true worship must be connected to the right way of living.⁹

In summary, in Isaiah 1:10-17 the prophet proclaimed judgment against the people and their rulers with regard to their improper social and moral behaviour. They brought sacrifices and offerings without a corresponding and appropriate life as God's people. It therefore may be said that in vv. 16-17 Israel was challenged to an appropriate social life and responsibility as God's people in the contemporary society.¹⁰

Isaiah 1:23 (1:21-26)

This passage is again a prophetic verdict on the contemporary social corruption.¹¹ The social critique was

directed mainly against the political leaders who were responsible for Zion's wholeness in its relationship with God.¹² The passage is in the middle of descriptions of the past, present and future status of Zion, which symbolically refers to the whole of Israel as God's people. The prophet employed several metaphors such as 'harlot', 'alloy of silver', and 'weakness of wine' to describe the present perversion of Zion (vv. 21-22). This suggests that the main problems of Zion were its unfaithfulness in its relationship to God and its impurity. But this unfaithfulness was expressed in horrible social injustices. These horrible social injustices and corruption, of which the upper class was guilty, were presented as the main content of Zion's sinful situation. The prophet proclaimed that God would punish Zion on account of her sins in order to restore her as she was before. In other words, the passage says that God will purify Zion as God's people so that it may be faithful in its relationship with God by being cleansed of social corruption.¹³ This suggests that the prophetic critique against the social corruption of the

8 Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique*, pp. 265-271.

9 Clements *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 32; J. H. Hays and S. A. Irvine, *Isaiah: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), p. 70; H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), p. 51; M. A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp 78-79.

10 O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* (London: SCM, 1972), pp. 13ff; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 33; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 78-79.

11 There has been considerable discussion regarding the immediate and broader context of this passage. Although attempts have been made to include Is. 2:1-5 in the unit which starts at 1:21 (or 1:2), I agree with many interpreters that it is natural to regard the heading at 2:1 as a mark of the beginning of a new unit. Also, even though it is agreed that 1:21-31 should be interpreted as a unit in the same context, there are different options in dividing this unit into subunits. In my view, it seems to

be better to divide 1:21-31 into 1:21-26 and 27-31 mainly because v. 29 begins with the particle 'ki (because)' which indicates a syntactically dependent and subordinate connection with the preceding verse.

12 Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 35; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, pp. 65-66. The fact that rulers and people appear in parallel in Is. 1:10 suggests that the two can be understood as synonyms.

13 Sweeney (*Isaiah 1-39*, p. 85) observes that 'the basic concern of this passage is not with the city's leaders and their punishment but with the city itself and its restoration'.

rulers of the people in verse 23 must be understood in the context of the prophetic message against Zion (or God's people) for not fulfilling the social duties required by the covenant relationship with God.

That the passage is concerned with the just life of God's people in society as a duty imposed by their relationship to God can be also shown from Isaiah 1:27-31. Verses 27-31, as a conclusion of chapter 1,¹⁴ mention the salvation of Zion (v. 27) together with the warning of the coming judgment (vv. 28-31). Moreover, it can be said that according to this passage those who serve idols were guilty of being the harlot of verse 21, for the idolatry of the people was clearly an indication of a breach of the covenant relationship with God. In other words, 1:21-31 constitutes 'inclusio' formed by the same motif. This implies that 1:21-31 concerns Israel's inappropriate life in its relationship with God—an inappropriate life as expressed in their unjust social lives or their idolatrous practices. Therefore, the social corruption and injustice in Israel (v. 23) and the idolatry of people (vv. 28-30) must be understood in the same way. Both are tied to the judgment of Zion, which aims at her restoration or purification. The only difference between them is that one focuses on social-moral aspects and the other on spiritual aspects.

In conclusion, Isaiah 1:21-26 shows God's special interest in Zion. The prophet criticized Zion's unfaithful-

ness and adulteration. The social corruption of the leading class or the social injustice in Israel was a representative example of Zion's (or Israel's) sinful life. Therefore it is fair to say that Isaiah 1:23 should be regarded as the prophetic judgment against Israel's disobedience to specific social commandments required within the covenant relationship.

Isaiah 5:8-23

This passage contains the prophetic critique of the corrupt society expressed in a series of six woe oracles (i.e. 'Woe to those who...').¹⁵ In this passage, the prophet criticized the unjust acquisition of land, addiction to sensual pleasures, pride, the unreasonableness of the people, and the sin of taking bribes. Therefore the prophet proclaimed the divine punishment of their sins. This passage occurs in the midst of the so-called vineyard song (vv. 1-7) and the judgment of God's people (vv. 25-30).¹⁶ This means that the judgment against social corruption in Israel is best understood in the context of the rest of chapter 5.

Through the parable of the vineyard the prophet criticized Israel for not living up to God's will and expectations, yielding only bad fruit. This implies

¹⁵ It is generally recognized that this passage is composed according to the indictment/punishment or woe/therefore pattern.

¹⁶ Some commentators interpret Is. 5:1-7, 8-24 and 25-30 as separate units because these passages seem to refer to different themes. However, chap 5, as we have it now, should be understood as a unit because the themes of these passages often appear together in the same context in the book of Isaiah.

¹⁴ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 108-9; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 65ff.

that the sins enumerated in vv. 8-24 were due to Israel's life being contrary to God's expectations. These sins are the bad fruit in terms of the parable. After criticizing the social corruption of Israel, he also proclaimed God's judgment of war against God's people as a whole (vv. 25-30). Israel's corrupt social situation caused God's judgment of her.

From the context, we can say that in Isaiah 5:8-24 the prophet criticized Israel's inappropriate life as God's covenant people as it was demonstrated in allowing social injustice and corruption. The connection between social injustice in Israel and Israel's life as God's people is also confirmed in the passage. Verse 12 says that 'they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands!'. The passage concludes therefore that 'they have rejected the instruction of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel'. In summary, the passage is related to their social life as the responsibility of God's specially chosen people.

In the foregoing discussion of these passages, I have argued that the concern of the prophet with the social injustice and corruption in Israel should be understood in terms of the proper social life of Israel as God's people and her social responsibility. God commanded Israel to live properly in society and to fulfil her social responsibility as God's specially chosen people. In other words, God is concerned not only with an inward obedience to the Law as ritual ceremony, keeping the Sabbath, fasting, etc., but also with the appropriate life of justice relating to neighbours and society as outward obedience. Therefore the social corrup-

tion in Israel can be defined as the violation of the Torah (or the Law) as the way of life given in the covenant relationship between God and Israel (cf. Is. 1:10; 5:24).¹⁷ This conclusion will be confirmed by examination of the references to the weak in the Law.

B. The 'weak' in the Law

The references to the weak—the poor, the widows, fatherless or the alien (the sojourner)—are found in several contexts in the Law. These can be classified as follows:

1. In connection with the judicial process (trial): Ex. 23:6; Dt. 24:17; 27:19 (e.g. Dt. 27:19 says, 'Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice.')
2. In connection with their protection
 - a) Regarding pledges: 'Do not take anything as a pledge from the poor and the widow' (Dt. 24:12-13; 24:17)
 - b) Regarding wages: 'Pay the poor and the needy the wages each day before the sunset' (Dt. 24:14-15; cf. Lev. 19:13)
 - c) Regarding charity (kindness): 'At the harvest time, leave what remains such as some fruit and a sheaf for the poor, the widow, the fatherless and the alien' (Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Dt. 24:19-21)
 - d) Regarding their feasts: 'At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes for the weak to come, eat and

¹⁷ Importantly, we have to remember that in the judgment message against the neighboring nations the prophet did not mention the injustice and corruption in their society.

be satisfied' (Dt. 14:28, 29; 26:12, 13). 'At the Feast of Passover or Tabernacles, be joyful with the weak' (Dt. 16:11, 14)

e) Regarding help: 'Lend freely to the poor whatever he needs' (Dt. 15:7), 'Help the people who become poor' (Lev. 25:35-38)

f) In general: 'Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him' (Ex. 22:21; 23:9), 'Do not abuse the alien' (Ex. 22:22).

To conclude, the above shows that the corruption of the juridical process or system and the unjust accumulation of the wealth and property by depriving from the weak and the poor mentioned in the prophetic books were already forbidden by the Law. Therefore it can be said that the commandments regarding justice towards and protection of the weak in the Law formed the basis of the prophetic judgment against social corruption and injustices in the prophetic books, even though there was no direct quotation from the Law. In other words, the Law (or the legal tradition) was (re)interpreted and applied in terms of a new historical, religious and social context.

II Practice

As we have argued above, the demonstration of the social concerns of the prophetic message does not mean that the prophet was interested only in society itself or in social justice itself in a general humanistic sense. Rather, in this concern with society and social justice, the prophet commanded Israel to live a social life befitting God's covenant people and to fulfil her social responsibility as God's specially chosen people.

Likewise, prophetic preaching as

social preaching in the contemporary homiletics should be understood in terms of the social life and responsibility of God's people. This suggests that prophetic preaching as social preaching should always recognize that:

- 1) the hearers, as well as the preachers themselves, not only belong to the church, but are also members of society. This means that God's people have a responsibility for the society to which they belong;
- 2) the church is not a closed community; that is, the church can influence and is influenced by the society of which it is part;
- 3) all social and political events that happen on the earth are finally related to God who rules over the world;
- 4) it is not appropriate to draw a sharp line between the sacred and the secular. Prophetic preaching believes that there is no realm over which the kingdom of God does not extend; as the apostle Paul states, 'there is no authority except that which God has established' (Rom. 13:1).¹⁸

Now, it is order to explore how prophetic preaching as social preaching can be practically performed.

A. Involvement in social concerns

The first practical means whereby prophetic preaching as social preaching can perform its task is to be homiletically involved in social con-

¹⁸ Thus, P. S. Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) pp. 160ff states that social analysis is not something we add to the gospel, but a part of the gospel.

cerns. This can be expressed in two ways: the consideration of the social context of the hearers in a sermon and the preaching on current social issues.

On the one hand, the task of prophetic preaching as social preaching can be fulfilled by reflecting on the social context of the hearers in sermon formation and delivery.¹⁹ For example, prophetic preaching should bring social situations such as starvation, wars, civil revolt, social disorder, economic depression, political chaos and the like into the kerygmatic scope of the text.²⁰ These events should be discussed in an appropriate way in a sermon. In addition, preachers should consider both national and international social contexts in their messages. Those that are considered to be national are also international and vice versa because the world is getting smaller on account of the remarkable progress of communication and transportation networks.

On the other hand, prophetic preaching can be done by preaching on current social issues. For instance, C. M. Smith²¹ suggests that preachers should proclaim God's Word in terms of social issues such as handicappism, ageism, sexism, racism, and classism.

J. A. Smith²² gives a longer list of social issues to be addressed in preaching, including the following: AIDS, abortion, human sexuality, euthanasia, bioethics, economics, nuclear waste, ecology, affirmative action, race and racism, science and scientism, third world and minority group concerns, apartheid, divestments of church bodies in financial institutions for religious/social/political reasons, the failure of the criminal justice system, non-violence, war, and the religious baptizing of partisan politics.

Prophetic preaching on social issues should not remain in the realm of the church. Prophetic preaching should often proclaim God's will on current issues in the public marketplace for the purpose of 'awakening the consciousness of the nation'.²³ For this, preachers can visit local or national governments or utilize the mass media.

However, we have to note that it is not easy to preach on social issues. On the one hand, when we preach on topics such as nuclear weapons, AIDS, and abortion it is not as easy to find a biblical text on the topics as it is to select a biblical passage addressing the love of God for the world. Moreover, diverse opinions exist even within Christianity on these issues. On the other hand, we should not handle social issues in a broad and general way, but from a specific and insightful perspective. Therefore, authentic, rele-

19 A. Van Seters (ed.), *Preaching as a Social Act* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), p. 264.

20 K. M. Smith, *Social Crisis Preaching* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), p. 34.

21 C. M. Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession and Resistance: Radical Responses to Radical Evil* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

22 J. A. Smith, 'Preaching and Social Concerns' in M. Dudoit, (ed.), *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992) p. 509.

23 Shelp and Sunderland, *The Pastor as Prophet*, p. 13.

vant and authoritative prophetic preaching on social issues requires special preparation. As J. A. Smith²⁴ states, ill-prepared preaching on social issues can be more deadly and destructive than sermons that do not consider the social context and current issues. For preaching on social issues, two things are necessary: a disciplined looking at texts from a social view point (or a clear theological view on current social issues derived from a biblical text) and full awareness of the social issues themselves.²⁵ For the well prepared sermon on social issues, K. M. Smith²⁶ suggests the following: tap available human resources, i.e. specialists; utilize published materials that address current social issues, and become directly involved in the issues, i.e. identification.

To conclude, prophetic preaching as social preaching does more than merely reflect the social context of hearers in its message. It should actually address such concrete social issues as AIDS, abortion and racism.

B. Nurturing the prophetic community

The second, but more important, practical means by which prophetic preaching as social preaching can accomplish its task is to build up a prophetic com-

munity. In other words, prophetic preaching is to nurture the church, either as individuals or as a whole, as a prophetic community in order to carry out its task in relation to society.²⁷ I would suggest two strategies in this connection: reinforcement of the identity of the church, and emphasis on its responsibility to or mission within society.

Reinforcement of church's identity

I have argued that the Old Testament prophets reflected the social, political and economical context and contemporary issues in their message. In these messages, the prophets accentuated the identity of Israel as a community of social concern. First of all, prophets emphasized that God had specially elected and protected Israel, and that God would continually take care of and/or restore her. In other words, they highlighted the idea that Israel was a special community in the world

²⁴ J. A. Smith, 'Preaching and Social Concerns', p. 509.

²⁵ R.J. Sider and M.A. King, *Preaching about Life in a Threatening World* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) give examples of preaching on some social issues—abortion, economic justice, human rights, the earth, and war and violence.

²⁶ Smith, *Social Crisis Preaching*, pp. 37-40.

²⁷ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*; S. M. Hauerwas, 'The Pastor as Prophet' in E. E. Shelp and R. H. Sunderland (eds.), *The Pastor as Prophet* (New York: Pilgrim, 1985); Van Seters, *Preaching as a Social Act*; W. H. Willimon, 'Would that All the Lord's People Were A Prophet', *Journal for Preachers* 16/4 (1993), pp. 16-21; C. L. Campbell, guided by Hans Frei's work, argues that the preacher's task must be seen not as that of creating experiential events for individual hearers, but rather as that of building up the church: that is, the up-building of the church is the central function of preaching (*Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997]. p. 221ff).

because God had separated Israel from other nations. Secondly, the prophets stressed God's otherness. We often find phrases indicating God's uniqueness such as, 'To whom will you compare God?' 'Who is like YHWH?' or 'There is none like YHWH'. Thirdly, prophets declared that God wanted Israel to be a specific community unlike the neighbouring nations; in other words, that Israel should live in faith and have a life distinct from that of the neighbouring nations. In summary, the prophet asserted that Israel was elected to be a holy and dedicated community in the world, i.e. both separate from the other nations and dedicated to God, and that this separation is grounded in Israel's God as separated.

In a like manner, prophetic preaching as social preaching should reinforce the identity of the church, as individuals and as a whole, for the purpose of nurturing the identity of the prophetic community as a community with a God-given social responsibility. In other words, prophetic preaching should intensify the conviction that the church is a special community, having a distinctive identity, especially in the way it exists in the world.

In this regard, Brueggemann's argument is persuasive. He states that 'the contemporary American church is so largely enculturated to the American ethos of consumerism' and that 'the internal cause of such enculturation is our loss of identity through the abandonment of the faith tradition'.²⁸ According to him, the emergence of

Israel through the Exodus was not just in the interest in a new religion or a new religious idea, but marked the appearance of a new social community in history—a community governed by new laws and a new order. The participants in the Exodus had to be involved in the intentional formation of a new social reality to match the vision of God's freedom. Thus, the church should recover its distinctive tradition of faith if it wants to accomplish its prophetic ministry—to dismantle dominant culture and consciousness in society. In conclusion, he claims that the main task of prophetic ministry is to struggle to evoke, form, and reform an *alternative* or *counter-community* with a counter-consciousness.²⁹

Emphasis on church's responsibility or mission

In connection with the identity of Israel as a specially separated people, the prophets also emphasized Israel's

²⁹ W.H. Willimon, 'Would that All the Lord's People Were A Prophet', takes a similar line regarding the task of prophetic ministry. He states that prophetic ministry is to urge the church towards the formation of a counter-community. Interestingly, in *Resident Aliens*, S. Hauerwas and W.H. Willimon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989) designate the church as a 'colony' and Christians as 'resident aliens' in order to stress that the church should regain its identity. They state that 'The church is a colony, an island of one culture in the middle of another. In baptism our citizenship is transferred from one dominion to another, and we become, in whatever culture we find ourselves, resident aliens' (p. 12). They argue that the church should be concerned about how it is to be in the world, in what form, for what purpose (p. 43).

²⁸ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, p. 11.

responsibility or mission to society. Israel's responsibility was expressed in terms of her being a 'light for the Gentiles' (Is. 49:6). Furthermore, the prophet proclaimed that when God chose Israel he looked for something from her which may include social responsibility (Is. 5).

Likewise, prophetic preaching as social preaching should urge the church, as individuals or as a whole, to perform its responsibility in society. Prophetic preachers should emphasize that the church does not exist simply for itself.³⁰ As D. J. Bosch argues, the church lives in a double relationship: to God and to the world.³¹ The social responsibility of the church is an essential part of the gospel, not an extra duty. In other words, prophetic preaching should challenge the church as to why God chooses it as separated people and should help it to discover its social responsibility. In a sense, from this perspective, prophetic preaching is 'struggling with' the church not 'over against it' for its social role.³² In this regard, W.H. Willimon states the main task of prophetic preaching well: 'The purpose of prophetic preaching is the production and equipment of a

community of prophets. Therefore, our summertime preaching has as its goal the evocation of prophetic schoolteachers, shopkeepers, nursing home residents and sixteen year olds who can speak the truth to power.'³³

Regarding the social responsibility of church as prophetic community, prophetic preaching should remember that there are social and political needs which can be fulfilled by the church. Social needs means needs that people have economically and physically in terms of their social life. Political needs means needs which the political victims have under unjust political systems or in unjust situations. The church should not overlook these needs. The church is charged with the responsibility of fulfilling the needs practically by taking action. Prophetic preaching should proclaim that the church, as individuals or as a whole, is under the obligation to respond to the social and political needs in proper ways.

In conclusion, in order to nurture a prophetic community (the church's relation to society and its role in it), I would stress that the church should neither be totally isolated from society nor be totally included in it. In this regard, Müller and Smit³⁴ point out that 'the church tells its own story in ways between the extremes of becoming merely a repetition of the public stories already at hand, or of being so radically different from the public stories that no meaningful connection is possible'.

30 B. A. Müller and D. J. Smit, 'Public Worship: A Tale of Two Stories' in J. Mouton and B. C. Lategan (eds.), *The Relevance of Theology for the 1990s* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1994), p. 405.

31 D. J. Bosch, *Witness to the World* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980), p. 222. He also states that 'Without a faithful and sustained contact with God the church loses her transcendence. Without a true solidarity with the world she loses her relevance.'

32 Van Seters, *Preaching as a Social Act*, p. 252.

33 Willimon, 'Would that All the Lord's People Were A Prophet', p. 20.

34 Müller and Smit, 'Public Worship', p. 389.

We can also say that the nurturing of the prophetic community, by reinforcing its identity and stressing its responsibility to or mission within society, can be an effective means of prophetic involvement in social affairs and a valid instrument to accomplish the social responsibility of the church. Furthermore, the idea of nurturing the prophetic community provides us with a clear understanding of prophetic preaching as social preaching. First of all, this suggests that prophetic preaching as social preaching is more than a reflection of the social context of the hearers or a discourse on such social issues as AIDS, abortion and racism.³⁵ It requires the church to be involved practically in society to fulfil its responsibility. Secondly, however, prophetic preaching as social preaching does not mean that preachers should 'participate in marches, serve as leaders of movements, address protesters, and serve as negotiators'.³⁶

Conclusion

In this study, we have defined prophetic preaching as social preaching. Through the examination of some

passages in the book of Isaiah and references to the protection of the weak in the Law, I have suggested that:

- 1) The prophetic message against the social injustice and corruption in Israel was proclaimed on the basis of the Law; that is, it was a (re)interpretation and application of the legal tradition.
- 2) It was mainly concerned with Israel's proper social life as God's special people and her social responsibility as God's chosen people.

As the result of the examination of some passages in the book of Isaiah, I have also suggested how prophetic preaching as social preaching in the contemporary homiletics should be understood. I have suggested as follows:

- 1) prophetic preaching should reflect the social context of the hearers in the sermon,
- 2) it should actually preach on current social issues,
- 3) more importantly, it should nurture the church, as individuals or as a whole, as a prophetic community or an alternative community.

Especially, in nurturing the prophetic community, prophetic preachers should emphasize the identity of church as a specially elected people both separated from society and dedicated to God. Moreover, prophetic preaching challenges the church to discover its social responsibility practically and to fulfill its responsibility in society by responding actively to the social and political needs.

35 Siler, 'Reflections on Prophetic Preaching', p. 77; Willimon, 'Would that All the Lord's People Were A Prophet'.

36 Smith, *Social Crisis Preaching*, p. 11; W. K. McElvancy, *Preaching from Camelot to Covenant. Announcing God's Action in the World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), p. 57.

Well-being Syndrome in Korea: a View from the Perspective of Biblical Counselling

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KEYWORDS: *Consumerism, health, hedonism, desire, morality, industrialism, cosmetic industry, food industry, class, cheomyun culture, counselling, self-love*

I. Introduction

Alvin Tofler wrote in his book, *The Third Wave*, about the end of industrialism and the beginning of a new civilization. According to Tofler, the first wave was the agricultural revolution which took place ten thousand years ago and the second wave was the industrial revolution which began in 1750. The third wave, which began in 1955, has been described in many ways, including the space age, information age, electronic era, global village, and super-industrial society.¹

What then is the next wave that will impact our society? Paul Zane Pilger predicts a 'well-being revolution' as the next wave. According to Pilger, the well-being phenomenon will change the current social structure as well as individuals. It will bring a global change of consumer culture and new industries and products with a big market. In 2001, he claimed, the volume of products and markets related to well-being in the U.S.A. was 230 billion dollars.²

The well-being revolution is happening in Korea too, in a massive way. In 2002, Korean mass media began to use the word 'well-being' and before long this concept drew a great deal of attention from the general population. The term began to be used widely, such

1 Alvin Tofler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Morrow, 1980), translated by Je Chun Yu (Seoul: Joo Woo, 1981), pp. 26-7.

2 Young Han Kim & Hee Jung Im, *Well-being Marketing* (Seoul: Dasan Book, 2004), pp. 16-17,

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as 'well-being food', 'well-being clothes', 'well-being house', 'well-being travel', 'well-being resort', 'well-being cosmetics', etc. and collectively, a 'well-being lifestyle'. This concept includes the notions that 'health is the number one priority' and one should 'pursue quality of living'. This is a new social phenomenon.³

It seems that well-being has become almost everyone's goal in life. The current available studies about well-being mainly relate to consumer marketing, or management, and fail to delve deeply into the underlying nature of this well-being movement. Therefore, it is necessary to study the meaning of well-being which is implied in the cultural aspect of social interaction. As Christians, what should we do about this well-being syndrome? Christianity has existed in relationship with culture. The gospel was delivered in the context of a particular culture and continues to be delivered in the context of many different cultures. It has changed old cultures and created new cultures. As such, Christians ought to understand the culture in which they are engaged. In this article, concepts and theories of well-being will be examined and also a view through biblical counselling will be discussed.

II. The Concept of 'Well-being'

In 1948, WHO defined 'health' as follows: 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.'⁴ Then, what is 'well-being'? According to Webster's dictionary, the definition of 'well-being' is 'the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous'.⁵

From a philosophical point of view, the concept of well-being can be seen as what is ultimately good for a person. Often, the term 'well-being' is associated with good health. That being said, health, while very important for my well-being, may not be all that matters for my well-being. We use the term, 'happiness' to refer to a short-lived state of a person, such as a feeling of contentment. For example, we say, 'You look happy today.' When we discuss, however, what makes life good for the individual living that life, it is better to use the term, 'well-being' instead of 'happiness'.

Well-being is generally about what is good for one's person. Thus, it is often related to 'self-interest', which is the interest of myself, and not others. Sometimes, however, this principle breaks down in light of certain ethical theories which challenge this notion that one's self-interest is all that matters. In Aristotle's view, for example, if a friend's well-being is closely bound

3 Mee Sook Lee, 'Looking at Well-being in terms of Lifestyle: Healthy or Trendy?', Department of Sociology, PaiChai University, Summer Symposium of Korean Life Science Society, 2004, p. 477.

4 Hoon Chul Kim, *Well-being Marketing* (Seoul: Come On Books, 2004), p. 12.

5 *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 2004), 'well-being'.

up with mine, it is possible for the distinction between what is good for me and what is good for other person to break down. In this situation, my friend could be regarded as 'another self', so that what is good for my friend is also good for me. But this notion should be taken 'either as a metaphorical expression of the dependence claim, or as an identity claim which does not threaten the notion of well-being'.⁶

III. Theories of Well-being

Hedonism

According to 'evaluative hedonism', well-being consists in the greatest balance of pleasure over pain. Well-being means what is good for me, and pleasure seems good to me. If a person has more pleasantness in his life, it will be better. If he encounters more painfulness, it will be worse. How can we measure these two? According to Jeremy Bentham, the central measurements are their duration and their intensity.⁷

One argument against hedonism is the 'experience machine' objection. Suppose there is a machine which gives you any experience that you desire. You can plug into the machine for life, and have pre-programmed experiences of happiness. But the problem is that after you plug into the machine, you do not know you are attached to the machine. You think it is actually happening but it is not real.

The argument is that if happiness were the ultimate good, you would want to plug into the machine. But if you think you should not, then happiness is not the ultimate good.⁸ In response to this argument, hedonists might insist that their theory rests on 'common sense' intuition. They will also point out the 'paradox of hedonism', that pleasure is most effectively pursued indirectly. If a person consciously tries to maximize his own pleasure, he cannot immerse himself in those activities, such as reading or playing games, which actually give him pleasure.

Desire Theories

On the experience machine, many of your desires are likely to remain unfulfilled in reality. For example, if you desire to write a great novel, you may believe that you are writing a great novel if you are hooked up to the experience machine, but in fact it is only a hallucination. Your desire is to write a great novel in fact, not necessarily to have the experience of writing a great novel. The experience machine objection is one of the reasons for the emergence of desire theories. But the main reason for the current dominance of desire theories is the emergence of welfare economics. Economists see people's well-being as consisting in the satisfaction of preferences or desires. This made possible the ranking of preferences, and methods for assessing the value of preference-satisfaction. One of the popular standards is money.

⁶ Roger Crisp, 'Well-being' in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/well-being/>

⁷ Crisp, 'Well-being'.

⁸ Brad Thompson, 'PHIL 1318: Contemporary Moral Problems'; available from <http://faculty.smu.edu/bthomps/lecture6.pdf>

Objective List Theories

These theories list items constituting well-being that consist neither merely in pleasurable experience nor in desire-satisfaction, such as knowledge or friendship. The list should include everything good. According to the theory of perfectionism, which has influenced objective list theories, what makes things constituents of well-being is their ability to 'perfect' human nature. But how can we decide what goes on the list? The best we can do is to deliver a reflective judgement, or rely on intuition. Because of this, objective theories can be regarded as less satisfactory than the other two theories. But those theories also can be based on reflective judgement. Objective list theories are the strongest defence available to hedonists who attempt to undermine the evidential weight of our natural beliefs about what is good for people.⁹

Well-being and Morality

There are views that take the position that well-being is all that matters morally. One such view is 'welfarism'. To explain welfarism, Roger Crisp quotes Joseph Raz's 'humanistic principle': 'the explanation and justification of the goodness or badness of anything derives ultimately from its contribution, actual or possible, to human life and its quality'.¹⁰ If we expand this principle, it becomes welfarism, according to which the justificatory

force of any moral reason rests on well-being. This view poses a problem for those who believe that morality can require actions which benefit no one, and harm some, such as punishments. The ancient moral philosopher's central question was, 'Which life is best for one?' The rationality of egoism was assumed. But morality is thought to concern the interests of others. One way to defend morality is to claim that a person's well-being is in some sense constituted by his virtue or the exercise of virtue.¹¹

IV. Well-being and Korean Society

The majority of Koreans who pursue this ideal of well-being are relatively younger than those in the United States and Japan—they are usually in their 20s and 30s. What they seek is more than just a healthy body. They emphasize even more a 'leisurely mind'. They are concerned not only about food and exercise to be healthier. They are even more concerned about housing and environment so they can have a leisurely mind. Well-being culture affects not only one's choice in eating but also what to do in one's whole life.¹²

Industrial Changes Due to Well-being Syndrome

Young Ho Han categorized a number of 'well-being' trends or industries in

⁹ Crisp, 'Well-being'.

¹⁰ Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 194; quoted in Crisp, 'Well-being'.

¹¹ Crisp, 'Well-being'.

¹² Jae Ho Choi, *Public Culture and Biblical World View* (Seoul: Ye Young Communication, 2003), pp. 13-19.

Korea. They are the 'health care industry', 'cosmetic and beauty industry', 'food processing industry', 'food distribution and dining industry', 'electronics and electric appliance industry', 'building and housing industry', and 'clothing industry'.

Health Care Industry: Health has been a great concern of people for a long time. But it has become an even greater concern as a result of this well-being syndrome. One trend in the well-being health industry is the increasing service industry which takes care of health itself rather than just selling health products. Fitness centres and hospitals have surpassed their traditional roles. California Fitness Center, for example, which was introduced in 2000, provides expensive machines and expert trainers so clientele can seek to build the perfect body. Well Park Hospital in Yang Pyung applies the concepts of rest and leisure as a part of its health examination process.

Cosmetic and Beauty Industry: One of the trends in this area is the merger of food and beauty. Beauty industries present 'beauty food' which has progressed from general health-supporting food to special food specifically addressed to beauty care.

Food Processing Industry: This industry, along with the food distribution and dining industry, is perhaps one of the most sensitive industries to the well-being trend. This is more directly related to health than any other area. It is no longer true that inexpensive and tasty food is the best. Some cheap food, while tasty, can be toxic. In this era, people are paying more attention to what they are eating than any other time.

Food Distribution and Dining Indus-

try: Larger industries represent the old industrial era and smaller unions represent the new well-being era. In this era, success is not dependent on the size of industry but on the quality it provides. Because of mad cow disease, fast food industries have greatly suffered. Thus they tried to overcome this crisis with the 'well-being fast food'. Recently, well-being hamburgers (fat free) appeared at fast food stores.

Electronics and electric appliance industry: As people's concern about well-being increases, companies are promoting 'well-being electronics and electric appliances', using high technology.

Building and Housing Industry: As the well-being culture is expanding, the demand for pro-environmental building materials is increasing. It has become popular to build in apartment complexes not only a fitness centre but also rock or wall-climbing courses on the outside wall of an apartment building, making sports and recreation available within a stone's throw of one's place of residence.

Clothing and Textile Industry: Well-being consumers are interested in clothing not only for their appearance but also as good for their health. Responding to the wishes of mothers wanting to raise well-being babies, companies are even making infants' clothing using materials from organic farms where chemicals are not used in cultivating plants.¹³

¹³ Young Ho Han, 'The Concept of Well-being Trend and the Analysis of Consumer Trend, in the Current Society' (M A Thesis: Chung Ang University, 2004), pp. 12-27.

Social Influence of Well-being Syndrome

The popularization of the concept of well-being through mass media has helped to cause a fast expansion of the social recognition about health and quality of life. Mass media actively functions as a research tool because it offers various items of information, and thus it has a positive function. However, on the negative side, mass media has produced a term, the 'well-being tribe', which means 'rich people' and the commercialism behind 'well-being' causes people to spend money extravagantly. The hot wind of well-being positively brought improvement of health and quality of life, but negatively brought a danger to individuals and the society.

In a sense, well-being is not anything new. Even in the past, rich people pursued a lifestyle that the well-being followers aspire to nowadays, but lower class and lower middle class people could not do the same. As industrial development took place, the incomes of people increased and the well-being kind of lifestyle became available to lower class and lower middle class. Therefore, well-being is not a totally new lifestyle but a basic human desire, to 'eat well and live well' which is popularized and commercialized.¹⁴

The current concept of well-being raises a thought in people's minds: 'What if you don't have money and you cannot enjoy a healthy life?' It makes people who cannot afford it anxious. Some people work day and night,

harming their health to buy well-being health products. Well-being now creates social disharmony between classes and commercialism, thereby distorting the good intention of the original meaning.

Che Myun Culture and Well-being

Korean people are accustomed to *chemyun* culture. 'Che' means body and 'myun' means face. *Chemyun* means honour, dignity or reputation. If you lose face, you can say you lose your *chemyun*. You must show people some dignity to save face. This is important because you don't want to be ashamed; you want to have self-respect. The emphasis is more on other people's opinions about you rather than virtue or value in yourself.¹⁵

Talking about approval of others, Kyu Tae Lee explained, 'Because of *chemyun*, sometimes you have to refrain from eating when you are starving, and you have to eat even when your stomach is full. Sometimes, you cannot put on more clothes even when you are freezing, and you cannot take off your clothes when you are sweating. Besides, you cannot cry or laugh in response to those things happening.'¹⁶

In *chemyun* culture, it is a virtue to refrain from boasting about oneself, but people, deep inside, want to be admired and envied. So they try to have what others recognize and to do what others approve. Such behaviours rep-

14 Hoon Chul Kim, 'The Concept of Well-being Trend', pp. 20-21.

15 Sang Jin Choi, *Korean Psychology* (Seoul: Chung Ang University, 2000), p. 174.

16 Kyu Tae Lee, *Korean's Way of Thinking* (Vol. 3), (Seoul: Shin Won, 1983), p. 291.

resent their desire for psychological satisfaction through their superiority being recognized by others.¹⁷ Many well-being people seem to buy things over their budget to show off and not to feel cheap. From *chemyun* culture, the tendency to conceal one's desire decreased and the tendency to show off increased.

V. Well-being and Biblical Counselling

The Principles of Biblical Counselling

It is a worthwhile exercise to survey some biblical counselling principles so that we can understand the biblical approach to the well-being syndrome.

The Human being is created in God's image

The existence and life of human beings is supposed to depend upon God. In the second chapter of Genesis, the Lord spoke to the first man and guided him on how to live. Without God's counsel, human beings cannot live a life in the way proper to the purpose of creation.

The Human being fell and is corrupted

Human beings used to live according to God's counsel only. But another counsellor came to them and they followed the counsel other than the Creator's (Genesis 3). Disobedience to the Lord is the beginning of tragedy. Human beings are totally corrupted, and with-

out the Redeemer's grace cannot be saved or restored to the way intended by God in his creation.

The Human problem is the problem of the human heart

In the Gospel of Mark, the Pharisees criticized Jesus: 'Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with unclean hands?' (Mk. 7: 5). Jesus replied, 'You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own tradition' (7: 9). Later, he said to his disciples, 'Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach and then out of his body' (7:18-19). The human heart is the centre of human behaviour. The purpose of counselling is change. Without change of heart, there is no real change of a person and his life.

Usually people blame their problems on the situations around them. But the main reason for the problems is their heart responding to those situations. What occupies your heart will control your behaviour, and who or what you worship will dominate your heart. In Numbers chapter 11, we can see an example. When the rabble with the people of Israel began to crave other food, the Israelites started wailing and said, 'If only we had meat to eat!' (Num. 11: 4). This was the beginning of a long period of trouble for the Israelites.

Principles and Methods of counselling come from the Bible

Without the Word of God, we can neither understand nor change the heart

17 Sang Jin Choi, *Korean Psychology*, p. 268.

of a human being. It is said in Hebrews 4:12, 'For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.' The Bible is the main tool for both diagnosis and treatment.¹⁸

Biblical Issues about Well-being Syndrome

Well-being as a Culture around Christians

Like other people, Christians also live in a culture. What should we do about the culture around us? In this world things are hardly neutral. Christ said, 'He who is not with me is against me' (Mt. 12:30). For example, language as individual words and the sounds that they make are neutral, but when it is employed, language always conveys some kind of meaning and is no longer neutral. Paul Tripp suggests that there are certain things we must acknowledge as we think about the institutions, relationships, media, and products of the culture around us:

- All things that God created are good.
- All things that we encounter have been put together, or are used, in a way that carries meaning.
- Everything can be used for good or evil.
- Everything in culture expresses the perspectives of the creator and/or user

- We never find things in the culture around us in a neutral context or setting.¹⁹

The well-being syndrome, as a culture, has to be seen in relation to God. Well-being people can be either glorifying God or worshipping an idol.

Self-love in the Pursuit of Well-being

Taking care of one's health is not necessarily a sin. In Ephesians 5:29, it is said, 'After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.' You should take good care of your body to glorify God. However, if you do that for your own glory, not his, you are worshipping an idol.

If you are pursuing your own well-being at the cost of others' well-being, you are doing it for selfish reason. Some might say, 'What is wrong with loving my self?' Some people even teach self-love from the Lord's commandment, 'Love your neighbor as yourself!' (Mt. 19:19). They say, 'Right, to love your neighbour is good, but to love him as yourself, you must love yourself first.'

It seems very logical, but the problem is that we love ourselves too much already. I asked people whenever I lecture on this subject if there is anyone who loves his neighbour to more than half of the level to which he loves himself. So far, no one has answered that he does! To love yourself is good, but to love yourself so much that you do not love others is a problem. It is said in the

¹⁸ Kyu Myeong Whang, 'Counseling and Pastoral Practice', *The Bible and Counseling*, Journal of Biblical Counseling, (Vol. 2, 2002):55-62.

¹⁹ Paul Tripp, *Age of Opportunity* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1997), pp. 144-5.

first two verses of 2 Timothy: 'But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy.' And a long list of evil things follows in the next four verses. The beginning of that list is 'lovers of themselves'.

I heard about a Christian lady who keeps bottles of supplementary health food on the table in her house, making it look like a pharmacy. Whenever she takes out something from the refrigerator for her guests, she explains that it is an organic food, or a well-being so and so. When she eats out with a group, the group has to take a long drive to eat what she wants. After they eat, they have to go to a place where herb tea can be served. If anyone takes coffee, she puts some bamboo salt in it, without asking the person, to get rid of caffeine. You can say she is obsessed by well-being. It may be true, but what is really dominating her heart is 'self-love' behind the well-being.

Fear of Man in Relation with Well-being Syndrome

Some well-being people spend so much money that they get into financial difficulties. They do this not only for their good health but also for what other people would think of them. That is fear of man.

Modern people are very much concerned about self-esteem. Most of the self-esteem books say that the two best ways to raise your self-esteem are: first, achieve some successes which are then compared to what others do. Second, surround yourself with people who affirm you. As a result, you will be

dependent upon others' opinion.²⁰ In Korea, *chemyun* culture intensifies this problem. Nevertheless, no matter whether it is an eastern or western context, the human problem is the same, that is, the sinful heart.

Fear of man has to do with fear of God. We live in a pluralistic culture which says, 'You do your thing and I do mine.' Even in regard to God, people say, 'You have your version of God, and I have my version of God.' Thus, to say that your version of God is superior to anyone else's is an immoral act in this culture. When they talk about God, many people use the expression, 'God as we understand him'. Certainly, this is not the God in the Scriptures, where we read, 'For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3-4). As fear of God is eroded, the fear of man is intensified in the heart of human being.²¹ A question has to be raised for well-being people, 'Which is your biggest concern—what people think about you, or what God thinks about you?'

IV. Conclusion

In 20th century, capitalistic society has changed from a labour-production oriented life style to the leisure-consumption oriented life style. As a

²⁰ Edward Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997), p. 74.

²¹ Welch, *When People Are Big*, pp. 78-9.

result, the well-being syndrome appeared in the beginning of 21st century. The meaning of well-being is to pursue better life and enjoy it.

As we face the culture around us, we must be equipped with a Christian world view which includes a Christian perspective on the world, and the content of what Christians understand about the world. Therefore, a fundamental issue here is how a Christian exists and what he thinks.²²

What then is well-being for Christians? Health is important and peace of mind is more important. But the most important thing of all is 'spiritual well-being' in relation with God, because the human being is a spiritual being created by God. That is why the apos-

tle Paul said to Timothy, 'Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come' (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

Well-being people seek not only physical health but also quality of life and peace of mind. But how can you get them? To plug into the machine to get pre-programmed experiences of happiness will not work. Welfarism tries to make sense of life in dependence on human virtue, but it is not dependable because the human being is totally corrupted. What then is the solution? The Bible answers, 'Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things' (Col. 3:1-2).

²² Seung Goo Lee, *What is Christian World View?* (Seoul: SFC, 2003), p. 16.

NEW FROM PATERNOSTER

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Kiwoong Son completed his doctorate at London School of Theology and served as a chaplain to Korean and Asian students at Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK, before returning to South Korea.

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Is Christianity a Korean Religion? One Hundred Years of Protestant Churches in Korea

Heung Soo Kim

KEYWORDS: *Buddhism, Confucianism, Shamanism, Minjung, Missions, Self-movement, colonialization, Independence movement, indigenization, church growth*

THREE RELIGIONS have played major roles in moulding Korean culture. Buddhism and Confucianism have powerfully worked to produce Buddhist or Confucian states for more than one thousand five hundred years. Shamanism failed to produce a certain form of state although it has dominated Korean people's lives for more than two thousand years. Korean Protestantism has existed in the midst of such a religious situation for more than 100 years. Apparently the historical process of incarnating the gospel in Korean society has been a rough road.

Nevertheless, Christianity has enjoyed unique success in Korea. Since the introduction of Roman Catholicism in 1784 and Protestantism in 1884,

Christianity has become Korea's second largest religion after Buddhism. Recent statistics show that membership in Protestant churches is nearly ten million out of 47 million South Koreans. Certainly, Christianity in Korea is not only highly visible, but also dynamic in mission activities as well as in the political life of the Korean people. Even if the influence of Christianity is apparent everywhere in Korea today, it does not necessarily mean that Christianity is a religion which is characteristic of Korea. This paper traces Korean Protestant church history in order to answer whether Christianity in Korea is a Koreanized religion.

Protestant Beginnings

With the opening of the nation to foreign interests, foreign missionaries have poured into Korea since 1884. The first Protestant missionaries to begin evangelizing efforts in Korea

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came from Presbyterian and Methodist churches in the United States. Later the Church of England (1890), Australian Presbyterians (1889), Canadian Presbyterians (1898), and the Russian Orthodox (1898) arrived in Korea before the turn of the century. It is due to the early mission activities of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches that the majority of churches existing in Korea today are Presbyterian and Methodist.

By the time the first western missionaries came to Korea, it had become axiomatic that a church that was 'self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating' was, by definition, an 'indigenous church'. Such an indigenous church was the goal of Christian missions. This missionary thinking was made clear in the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 in which the leading purpose of the missionary enterprise was to bring into being self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches in every region.¹

The model of indigenous church was also the goal of early missionaries who worked in Korea. As early as the 1890s, missionaries, especially Presbyterians, established a set of mission principles called the Nevius Method. The method was named after John L. Nevius, a missionary to China who visited Korea in 1890. Nevius established

the following principles for missionary work: (1) emphasis on spreading the faith by individual Christians, not professional evangelists; (2) emphasis on self-government; and (3) emphasis on self-support. Added to these principles of promoting indigenous evangelistic work on the part of the Korean church was the focus on women and the working class.

Although American missionaries in Korea stressed these 'self' elements in missionary work, they were not necessarily taken as diagnostic of an indigenous movement. In the earlier stages of evangelistic work, American missionaries launched a spiritual crusade against Korean traditional religions which continued for several decades.² Arthur Judson Brown, the executive secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. from 1895 to 1929, reported that American missionaries also imposed on Korean churches an American brand of religious fundamentalism. The typical missionary of the first quarter century after the opening of Korea 'was strongly conservative in theology and biblical criticism, and he held as a vital truth the pre-millenarian view of the second coming of Christ. Higher criticism and liberal theology

1 William A. Smalley, 'Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church,' in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), p. 494; *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), p. 325.

2 Sung-Deuk Oak, 'The Indigenization of Christianity in Korea: North American Missionaries' Attitudes Towards Korean Religions, 1884-1910' (Th.D. diss., Boston University School of Theology, 2002), p. 472. Of course, the crusade against Korean religions is not the whole story. Some of the missionaries viewed Korean religious history as a part of the divine salvation history.

were deemed dangerous heresies.³

At the early stage of Protestant history in Korea, theology stressed heavily the exclusiveness rather than the inclusiveness of the gospel, especially among Presbyterian churches. This type of theology, however, appeared to be comparatively indifferent to the social and cultural applications of the gospel. Accordingly, the breach between the traditional religious culture and the Christian gospel was more emphasized than the possibility of finding some point of contact between them. Although there were exceptional missionaries and institutions, broadly speaking, the general type of Korean Christianity during the early period was individualistic rather than social. This shows that American Protestantism in its first Korean incarnation was apolitical, individual, and exclusive. From the earliest days to the present this type of American Protestantism has formed the main currents of Korean theology.

Historical Background of Korean Theology

Around the time that Christianity was being introduced into Korea, the country was in danger of being invaded by Japan. Japanese colonizers were distrustful of the church from the outset because nationalist sentiments were strong in Christian circles. Missionaries counselled moderation and sought to avoid involvement in the anti-Japan-

ese movements. Finally they were successful in de-politicizing the Korean churches through the emotion-laden revival meetings of the early 1900s. The revival meetings were designed to be a search for purely religious experiences, an attempt to spiritualize the Christian message and, thus to denationalize Korean Christianity.

Many Korean Christians, however, participated in anti-Japanese struggles, and were arrested and tortured. On March 1, 1919, a nationwide independence movement was formed against the Japanese colonial government. The movement was organized by Korean laypersons and pastors, together with *Chondogyo* followers, a new religion growing across the Korean peninsula in the late nineteenth century. Sixteen of the thirty-three signatories of the 'Declaration of Independence' were Christian leaders. Christian groups organized 25-38% of the rallies and demonstrations across the country.⁴ At that time Christians composed only 1.5% of the population of Korea. The Independence Movement of 1919 was the culmination of the political application of the Christian message. In this regard, Protestantism in Korea can be explained in some measure by the association of Christianity with a sense of Korean nationalism.

Following the Independence Movement of 1919 and its subsequent failure, Christians lost their leading roles in anti-Japanese struggles, so

3 Arthur Judson Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), p. 540.

4 Lee Man Yol, *Hankuk Kidokkyowa Minzokuyiesik* (Korean Christianity and National Consciousness) (Seoul: Zisiksanupsa, 1991), pp. 349-350.

churches had to face a series of internal and external crises. Internally, young people and other politically aspiring groups left the church, as church leaders were becoming more and more apolitical and religiously conservative, although there were minority followers of Christian socialism and social gospel within the church. The unusual phenomenon of mysticism swept Christian circles during the late 1920s and 1930s. Externally, after 1935, the church faced a serious problem with the demand by Japan for it to embrace Shintoism.

Since gaining independence from Japan in 1945, churches have again suffered, this time because of the Korean War in 1950-1953. The Korean War was one of the most disastrous events in Korea during the twentieth century. Koreans went through what social psychologists describe as a 'disaster syndrome' as a result of the war and widespread destruction and loss of life. Having suffered as much as they did, many Koreans came to count on the Christian faith to save them from any disaster, and churches gave them messages of comfort and material blessing. Many hundreds of thousands took refuge in the churches that gave the message of comfort. These groups continued the utilitarian tradition of Korean shamanism, a religious phenomenon that developed in the cultural and psychological milieu of post-war Korea. The Full Gospel Church in Seoul, the largest congregation in the world, represents this type of Christianity. Its founding pastor, Paul Yonggi Cho, imparts a message that stresses God's material blessing and health in the present life. The church is aggressive in its mission and empha-

sizes the pastoral theology of church growth.

While the majority of Christians have remained in the fold of churches with little concern for society, Christianity in Korea has been identified with nationalism and democratic development. A new page of political resistance and engagement began when the Rhee Syngman regime was overthrown in 1960, following a corrupt election. Park Chung Hee took control of South Korea through military rule, which began in 1961. Park, however, did not alienate Korean Christians. Opposition developed when the oppressive military dictatorship silenced nearly all of its political opposition, using national security as a pretext to limit the freedom of Park's critics, many of whom were in the church.

Much of the opposition of the church to Park turned on human rights issues and development ideology, which created a wide gap between the rich and the poor. The church, particularly its dissident wing, maintained its active opposition to Park and his successors. Park was assassinated in 1979. The Korean Christian Declaration of 1973 and the Theological Statement of Korean Christians of 1974 were representatives of the church's dissenting movement. The dissident community in the 1980s was linked with the church leadership and often used church facilities. Thus, this minority community of Christians believed in a Christian duty to struggle for economic and social justice, and was involved in politics. The struggle produced a new Korean-style theology called *Minjung* theology.

Liberation, the taste of independence, and the Korean War provided

Korean theologians with the opportunity to reflect in a new way on Korean society. Some theologians debated Korea's distinctive cultural characteristics, and this became even more evident in the early 1960s.⁵ In particular, they have been wrestling with the question of how to approach the study of theology in the predominantly non-Christian culture of Korea. This question developed into an indigenization of theology, which encouraged theologians to study their own traditional religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shamanism.

Theological Trends in Contemporary Korea

Current theological endeavour in Korea may be divided into two streams, namely, one following the traditions of western theology, and the other attempting to develop a Korean theology. The latter is subdivided into indigenization theology, *Minjung* theology, and pastoral theology of church growth.

Indigenization Theology

As noted, there was no indigenus development of Korean theology in the pre-war period. Even in the post-war period, theological liberals of Methodist and Presbyterian seminaries were busy introducing western theologies and translating the writings of

western theological authors into the Korean language. In the 1960s a movement to seek an understanding of the gospel more in terms of the Korean situation and less in terms of the western tradition was born. Methodist theologians were pioneers in the formation of indigenization theology, especially in the studies of Korean Confucianism and Korean Shamanism. They were concerned about how the seed of the gospel can become implanted and grow in the cultural soil of Korea. Professor Pyun Sun Whan, for instance, is well-known for his insistence on a Christian-Buddhist dialogue and religious pluralism. This led to accusations of heresy by a number of leading Methodist evangelists in 1982, and resulted in the Whan's expulsion from the Methodist church in 1993.

Indigenization theology is an attempt to Koreanize Christianity, thereby making it relevant to the cultural environment of the country. The development, however, of indigenized theology appears dangerous to conservative theologians. They warn against the introduction of liberal theology, which, according to their logic, requires Christianity to adjust to situations, histories and local cultures. They contend that dialogue with other religions and learning about other religions is important only in so far as proselytizing and conversion may follow.

Minjung Theology

While the indigenization of theology mainly concerns Korean culture, *Minjung* theology grew out of the socio-political situation of Korean society in the middle of 1970s. *Minjung* is a

⁵ Ryu Tong Shik, 'Rough Road to Theological Maturity,' in *Asian Voices in Christian Theology*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 171.

Korean word for 'people' or 'mass,' but it refers specifically to the oppressed, to the poor, or to the marginalized. It is a theological response to the oppressors, and a response of the *minjung* to the Korean church and its mission. While *minjung* theology as a Korea-made theology is a minority movement even among contemporary intellectuals, it has exercised a far-reaching effect upon Korean Christianity.

Minjung theology holds that the history of the Korean people is a history of oppression and frustration, which has given rise to a unique mind-set called *han*, a pent-up anger mixed with the suffering and hopelessness of the oppressed *minjung*. *Minjung* theologians read and interpret the Bible, church history, and Korean history out of the experiences of suffering and *han*, and with the eyes of the poor and the oppressed, thereby finding *minjung* as the subjects of history. Of central importance to *Minjung* theology is the concept of the *minjung* as the subjects of history and as messiah. In addition to history, *minjung* theologians also consider Korean culture such as music, drama and masked dances as a source of power for people's liberation. *Minjung* theologians, however, are less concerned about the religious culture of Korea when compared to the theologians of indigenization.

Pastoral Theology of Church Growth

While *minjung* theologians are advocating the church's involvement in social change, *minjung* of the Korean churches would rather choose a comforting and reassuring message of Christian religion in this troubled soci-

ety. This tendency on the part of Christians to expect comfort rather than justice is encouraged by the shamanistic orientation of Korean Christianity as well as Robert Schuller's notion of 'positive thinking'. Missiologically speaking, the expansion of the Christian population in the country is rooted in Donald A. McGavran's pragmatism of the church-growth school associated with Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, USA.

It should be noted that in the early 1970s the number of Protestants across the nation was about two million, but by the early 1980s the number had risen to nearly ten million. The stress on positive thinking and 'this-worldly blessing' is an important addition to the previous character of conservatism. Thus, the new groups promise not only victory in the world to come, but also material success in the here and now. Unlike *Minjung* theology, no connection is made with the root causes of poverty and alienation in the church-growth strategy. The church-growth school of the Fuller Theological Seminary takes on somewhat different meaning in Korea when this shamanistic orientation is understood.

Conclusion

Christianity experienced remarkable growth in Korea and has produced even a Korean-style theology, namely, *Minjung* theology. In the eyes of foreign observers, Christianity seems to be now a Korean people's religion and no longer a foreign import. Writing in 1986, Donald Clark noted, 'Today's church is a Koreanized church with theological and organizational under-

tones that echo Korean traditions.⁶ These traditions, of course, are Shamanism and Confucianism. Min Kyung Bae, a well-known Korean church historian, in *Hankuk Kidokoe-hoesa* (Korean Church History) describes the Korean church as an example of a national church in a sense that it was dynamic in the political struggle of the independence movement from Japanese colonial rule.

This essay pointed out that the history of the Korean church is the history of living together with the oppressed Korean people. Thus *Min* emphasizes the national identity of the church as a Korean religion. Yong-Bock Kim argues that the Korean church is a *minjung* church and can be rightly understood from the perspective of *minjung*. He stressed that the Christian 'message as received by the people was historicized and became the religio-political language of an oppressed people' from the beginning of Christianity in Korea.⁷ It cannot be denied that Christianity is now a Korean religion, based on the fact that it has served the

Korean people both as a national church and as a *minjung* church, and that it has been reshaped in the image of Korean Shamanism. Christianity in Korea has produced a theology, i.e., *Minjung* theology, on its own terms.

Although Christianity is now a Korean religion in a number of ways, the question remains as to what degree it has formed and developed the personality of the Korean people. Ryu Tong Shik, for instance, claims that the religions that formed the personality of the present-day Koreans are Shamanism and Confucianism. Ryu's view represents the theologians of indigenization. This writer argues that Christianity is a Korean religion, but it remains foreign to the Korean people because of its alien creed and its exclusive attitude towards Korean culture. Thus, the majority of the Korean churches are concerned mainly with the task of fishing out souls from a non-Christian society. In this case, it does not matter whether Christianity is culturally and theologically a Korean religion. This calls for a continuing debate on the issue.

6 Donald N. Clark, *Christianity in Modern Korea* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), p. 51. See also David Martin, *Tongues of Fire* (Oxford, UK/ Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).

7 Kim, Yong Bock. 'Messiah and *Minjung*: Discerning Messianic Politics over against Political Messiahism', in *Minjung Theology*, ed. Kim Yong Bock (Singapore: CCA Publications), 1981.

Completing the circle

The Resurrection according to John

Derek Tidball

KEYWORDS: *Creation, life, light, mission, rejection, fathers, Word, flesh, Spirit, belief, sight, reunite, baptism, seeking, finding, turning*

THE 'CLOSE FIT'¹ between the Prologue of John's Gospel and his account of the resurrection of Jesus in chapter 20 has often been observed in recent years. The reverberations between the two sound so clearly that at least one scholar takes it as proof that the chapters were composed with each other in mind, obviating the need to argue that the Prologue was a late addition to the Gospel from another source.² With John 20, the Gospel comes full circle, and necessarily so.

Without John 20, the magnificent claims of John 1 would be just that — claims: but they may in fact be nothing

more than unsubstantiated assertion, wishful thinking of cosmic proportions on the part of John. The resurrection provides the vital proof that the claims were not empty. 'Until', as George Beasley-Murray wrote some years ago, a person 'is reasonably sure of the veracity of these events it is useless to build a theology on them, let alone stake one's life on them.'³ That is why, as Wright has written much more recently, 'it matters for John that Easter actually happened'.⁴ Without chapter 20, John's Gospel would be like an unfinished symphony whose music was left suspended mid-score, waiting for the final closing chords.⁵ With John 20 the Gospel is brought to completion. The hope of the earliest chapter is fulfilled, the cosmic claims

1 N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 417.

2 Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, p. 417.

3 G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Christ is Alive!* (London and Redhill: Lutterworth, 1947), p. 24.

4 N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), p. 668.

5 Wright, *Resurrection*, p.668, uses the metaphor to make a somewhat different point.

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of the Word are found to be rooted in human reality, resurrected human reality. God provides convincing evidence that he is able to deliver on the claims. This is not simply superb literary artistry but historical and theological necessity.

The context of the discussion

C. K. Barrett commented that chapter 20 'is permeated with theological themes of a Johannine kind: seeing and believing, and the ascent of Jesus to the Father'.⁶ But he did not explore the suggestion further, except to conclude that this undermined our ability to assess the historical value of the chapter. His concern was to reconcile John's account of the resurrection with that of the Synoptics.

It is only with the advent of literary criticism, particularly narrative criticism, in more recent times that the issue has been more fully explored. In this respect the work of R. Alan Culpepper in his *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* is seminal.⁷ Culpepper's initial publication did not pick up the fit between the beginning and ending of John's Gospel but a subsequent work did, pointing out the importance of Thomas' confession of faith and the recognition scenes as the complement

to issues that John has introduced in the Prologue.⁸

Beverley Gaventa assumes the relationship, rather than proving it, as she explores the ending of John's Gospel. In a scintillating article on 'the archive of excess', she asks why John appears 'to reach a conclusion twice'. Since John 20, especially verses 30-31, makes a perfectly good ending, why was John 21 necessary? Dissenting from those who think that John 21 was a later addition, she concludes that it is best to understand them as 'two separate endings, relatively independent of one another, each of which brings the Gospel to a kind of closure'.⁹ They parallel each other in a number of ways, even though chapter 20 focuses on the resurrected Jesus and chapter 21 on the disciples.¹⁰

But the real difference between them lies in their approach. The former chapter brings the Gospel to an end by using the circular technique that is commonly employed in novels. It picks up from the opening and ties up the loose ends. 'The first ending takes readers back to the Gospel's Prologue, completing the circle begun there by

⁶ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John* (London: SPCK, 1955), p. 466.

⁷ R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). For a critique of his position see, D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (London & Grand Rapids: IVP & Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 63-68.

⁸ R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), p. 85 and p. 243.

⁹ Beverley Roberts Gaventa, 'The Archive of Excess: John 21 and the Problem of Narrative Closure', *Exploring the Gospel of John: in honour of D Moody Smith*, R. A. Culpepper & C. Clifton Black (eds.) (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1996), p. 246. In arguing for the independent validity of both endings, Gaventa differs from many (e.g., Wright, NTPG, p. 417) who argue that chapter 20 was the original ending of the Gospel.

¹⁰ Gaventa, 'The Archive of Excess', p. 248.

the appearance of the Logos. Here the ascent of Jesus to the Father (20:17) completes the action begun in 1:10 as the Logos comes into the world, and especially in 1:14 as the Logos becomes flesh.¹¹ She helpfully points out a number of other connections between the Prologue and John 20 but not in an exhaustive ways since her real interest lies elsewhere and her centre of attention is chapter 21.

Mark Stibbe, in his application of narrative criticism to John, is one of those who argues that John 20 is 'the original conclusion because it forms such an obvious inclusio with John 1'.¹² He supports his contention by reference to five thematic and linguistic parallels, which takes him beyond the connection between John 20 and the Prologue proper, into the rest of John 1. They vary, it seems to me, in the weight that should be given to them. Passing over some of the more major echoes of John 1, he points to Jesus standing among his disciples (1:26; 20:19, 26); the passing of days (1:29, 35 and 43; 20:1, 19, 26); 'turning around' (1:38; 20:14, 16) and the question, 'Who are you seeking?' (1:38; 20:15). While the repetition of single words might be important in John's Gospel, since it is so carefully crafted, it is the highlighting of major themes which might be more interesting and in that regard he picks up only one matter of first rank Johannine significance, namely the theme of the Holy Spirit (1:29-34; 20:22).¹³

Tom Wright also asserts, 'The original ending of the book (chapter 20) picks up the Prologue at point after point...'¹⁴ but then, only cursorily lists a few examples by way of illustration, even though they are of more major import than those referred to by Stibbe.

In spite of these evocative suggestions, it seems that no thorough, systematic treatment of the way in which the chapters resonate with each other has been attempted. The issue has all but been ignored by the standard commentaries whose concerns usually lie elsewhere, probably because most of them pre-date current literary approaches. They are usually more concerned to debate the historical validity of John's resurrection narratives, or to discuss their literary authenticity, or to attempt to reconcile them with the synoptic accounts of the resurrection. But little or no attention is given to examining in depth the internal textual relationship between the Prologue in particular or the complete first chapter in general and John 20. The absence of this is surprising, in view of the way in which the John 1 can illuminate the meaning of the resurrection, buttress its historical necessity and bring John's theological portrait of Christ to a fitting climax.

In seeking to set out the reflections of John 1 in John 20 two cautions must be born in mind. First, as Gaventa comments, 'some elements of chapter 20 do not fit neatly within the circular movement...' and they must not be forced into doing so. John 20 has validity in its own right, not just in relation

11 Gaventa, 'The Archive of Excess', p. 246.

12 Mark Stibbe, *John, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 198-9.

13 Stibbe, *John*, p. 199.

14 Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, p. 417.

to John 1. Secondly, we should not think that the connection between the beginning and the end of John's Gospel means that the middle is unimportant. The themes, as we shall see, that are highlighted there are themes that are found scattered throughout the Gospel. Yet, there is a particular and tight complementarity in the way in which these chapters are composed and it is true to say that the themes, traceable throughout the Gospel, 'find their eventual destination' in John 20.¹⁵

Twelve echoes may be readily identified between John 1 and John 20. The order in which we shall explore them will be determined by the order in which they are raised in the first chapter.

Creation and re-creation 1:3; 20:1

John 1 is self-consciously written to imitate Genesis 1. Both speak of the beginning, and of the coming of creation into being. In Genesis 1, God is himself the agent of creation. In John 1, the Word who was with God and who, in reality, was God, is the agent of creation. 'Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made' (1:3). The first act in the sequence of God's creative activities was to dispel the darkness and let light shine (Gen. 1:3). In like manner, with the coming of the Word into the world, the light shone again in the darkness (1:5).

How is that echoed in John 20? As with all the Gospel writers, John begins

his resurrection narrative with Mary going to the tomb of Jesus 'early on the first day of the week' (20:1, cp. Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2 and Lk. 24:1). They refrain from using the phrase that might have been expected to denote the time. 'On the third day' is the expression that had been frequently used in the predictions of Jesus' suffering (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Lk. 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 24:21 and 46) and was subsequently to be used again by the apostles (Acts 10:40; 27:19; 1 Cor. 15:4). But when it comes to the resurrection the Gospel writers speak of 'the first day of the week'. In John, its use is emphasized by its repetition in verse 19.

Why did John (and the other Gospel writers) choose this particular terminology? D. A. Carson tentatively suggests that 'it may have to do with the desire to present the resurrection of Jesus as the beginning of something new'.¹⁶ N. T. Wright is less inhibited. Jesus, he argues, was condemned on the sixth day of the week, rested in the tomb on the seventh and rises early on the eighth — the first day of the new week.¹⁷ This day of the week is the marker of a new beginning. Just as the first creation began on the first day of the week, so Jesus initiates the new creation through his conquering death and coming back to life again on the first day of another week.

This interpretation, Wright justifiably maintains, is consistent with John's interest in creation for he is 'at

¹⁵ Wright, *Resurrection*, p. 666.

¹⁶ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, p. 635.

¹⁷ Wright, *Resurrection*, p.667.

his very heart, a theologian of creation'.¹⁸ The world is a matter of concern because God is its creator who works through the Word to bring life into being and who then sustains it by his ongoing activity (5:17). In John, the physical constantly points to the spiritual, though the material world is not rendered insignificant as a result. It still matters! Jesus demonstrated a concern for physical health, as in the case of the man born blind or the raising of Lazarus, as well as spiritual. It is in the arena of time and space that he reveals his glory. God works in the realm of creation to secure salvation.¹⁹

So, now the same Word brings resurrection life into being and opens up a way for others to follow. (This, of course, is a theme developed in different ways both by Rom. 6:12-17 and 1 Cor. 15:35-57). Here is the dawning of the new age. The final stage of creation's story that will climax in the recreation of all things is begun. The old creation, marred by sin and hence on its way to corruption, is being replaced by a new creation, made possible as the Lord of Life conquers the physical destruction involved in death and burial and rises, himself, with a different, yet undeniably physical, incorruptible body.

It is also all of a piece with the themes of life and light to which further reference will be made.

Life and death 1:4; 20:31

The Word is both life and life-giver. 'In him', says the Prologue, 'was life' (1:4). He is the very essence of life, the very origin of life and the very generation of life. He communicates that life to all humanity. Unlike any other human being, the Word is not a creature and does not derive his life from any human parent. The Father has granted him the privilege of being self-sufficient as far as life is concerned (5:26). He longs to impart his life to others. He does so in the sense of providing physical existence to all humanity but even more in the sense of imparting 'eternal life' to those who believe in him (5:24). This 'eternal life' is not to be defined from the viewpoint of time as a life of unending and everlasting existence. It is rather a reference to a quality of life that goes far deeper than mere existence and is lived to the full (10:10) in close harmony, even intimacy, with God the Father (15:1-11).

Yet, this life is to be experienced everlastingly. Eternal life includes resurrection life, the life that follows the physical death of those who have faith. Resurrection life entails a new dimension of physical life,²⁰ which Wright,

¹⁸ Wright, *Resurrection*, p.667.

¹⁹ See further, Stephen Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), p. 237.

²⁰ Beasley-Murray, says in *Christ is Alive*, p. 160, 'We are therefore to avoid two errors in thinking of the resurrection: that of regarding the new body as mere spirit, in which case the term "body" is purely metaphorical; and that of looking on it as composed of resuscitated particles of flesh. The risen body of the Lord was neither, and his resurrection was the pattern of ours. Resurrection is not so much a re-forming of matter that once made our body but a new embodiment of the principle of existence that formerly held in unity the body.'

aptly capturing the incorruptible aspect of its nature, has recently termed 'transphysical'.²¹ The miracle of the raising of Lazarus (11:1-46) is a pointer in the right direction, though not to be identified with the resurrection of those who follow in the train of Jesus after his resurrection. It illustrates the claim of Jesus to be 'the resurrection and the life' (11:25). He is the one who conquers death, the antithesis of life, which seems regularly to lurk in the background of John's Gospel.

The theme of death being overcome by the resurrection of Jesus is implicit throughout John 20. The 'transphysical' nature of the resurrected body of Jesus is demonstrated in the paradoxical way locked doors proved no barrier to his appearing among them (20:19 and 26)—the 'trans' element—, yet he invites Thomas to examine his physical wounds (20:27)—the 'physical' element. The resurrection hope, as seen in Christ, is decidedly not about the survival of the soul but about the resurrection of the body to life.

The obvious, but largely unstated, theme of death and life receives just one explicit mention in the chapter, in its final verse, verse 31. John comments that 'Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples...' The phrase 'other signs' may primarily refer to the signs recorded in chapters 2-12 (These chapters are often referred to as the 'Book of Signs' because they contain the seven miracles recorded by John). But

the phrase reads rather oddly at this point if, as many suppose, the signs referred to were done and dusted by the end of chapter 12. If that were so, the readers would be required to skip back over eight momentous chapters (13-20) as if they were unimportant.

The 'signs' referred to must surely at least include a reference to the specific 'sign' of Jesus' appearance to Thomas, and probably entail a reference to the greatest sign of all, that of the resurrection.²² The purpose of recording these signs, he says, is 'that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing *you may have life in his name.*' The resurrection, then, means not only life for Jesus himself but also a life, of an eternal, incorruptible and everlasting quality, for all who trust in him.

Light and darkness 1:4-5; 20:1

The claim of the Prologue was that 'the light shines in the darkness...' (1:5). Throughout his ministry, Jesus, 'the light of the world' (8:12, 9:4), constantly fought back the darkness, which is presented as the natural habitat for people whose lives are riddled with evil (3:19), and set people free to walk in the light (8:12; 12: 46). But the means by which he defeated the darkness is the crucial issue. He did not do so by the forceful imposition of light but by his embracing of the darkness in his own person on the cross.

²¹ Wright, *Resurrection*, pp. 477, 606f.

²² G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John, Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), p. 387.

Jesus spoke of his own crucifixion in terms of coming darkness (9:4; 12:35). And John plays powerfully on the metaphor in his passion scene. When Judas left the upper room to betray Jesus, he notes with dramatic simplicity, 'and it was night' (13:30). In this regard it is surprising that John does not report the blackening of the sun and the darkness that covered the earth as Christ was crucified. Perhaps to do so would have sat somewhat in tension with his portrayal of Christ as in control, going on his road to suffering as if on a royal progress tour.²³ Perhaps, too, the point has been sufficiently made in other ways through the Gospel.

Little is made of darkness and light in the resurrection narrative, but brevity of reference must not be thought to indicate it is not significant. In fact, brevity sometimes makes for greater impact. John's point is clear and unmistakable. 'Early on the first day of the week, *while it was still dark*, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance' (20:1). Her going led her to discover the secret of the darkness being dispelled. The tomb was empty. The Lord was risen. Evil was defeated. The light, which people had constantly tried to snuff out, was irrepressible. It had triumphed once and for all.

Sending and sent 1:6; 20:21

The merest echo may be caught between the two chapters in the idea of messengers being sent on a mission. In 1:6 John the Baptist is referred to as 'a man who was sent from God' to bear witness to the light that had come into the world. When, after his resurrection, Jesus breathes on his disciples with the Holy Spirit his action was prefaced by the remark, 'As the father has sent me, so I am sending you' (20:21). The resurrection led to their commissioning as his agents in the world. They, now, like John before them, were to bear witness to the light that had come into the world and was still at work illuminating its darkness. Not for nothing does N. T. Wright entitle the chapter on John's Gospel 'New Day, New Tasks', in his recent *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

The interpretation of the resurrection that is common in many churches emphasizes that in rising from the dead Christ opened a door into heaven for believers to enter into personal eternal salvation. But a more honest reading of the resurrection accounts, not least in John, suggests that the resurrection has not only more to do with a restored creation but also with the new task given to his disciples on earth than with their securing places in heaven. They are now the sent ones.

Rejection and recognition 1:10-11; 20:8,16 and 28

One of the great mysteries highlighted in John's Prologue is that when the Creator came to make his home among his people they did not recognize him. Their inability to recognize him is

²³ See Morna D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), p.109 and Derek Tidball, *The Message of the Cross* (Leicester: IVP, 2001), pp. 168-75.

unexplained, although 1:11-13 hints at the reason. He was not recognized because he was not received and he was not received because people rejected his teaching, doubted his claims and rubbished his person. The refusal to believe in him was what lay behind the failure to recognize him.

One must have some sympathy, however, for those who found it hard to work out who Jesus was, since John presents him as a puzzling, enigmatic figure, who conducts himself in mysterious ways and speaks conundrums that cause even his followers, let alone his opponents, to repeatedly misunderstand him. The theme of rejection and recognition weaves its way through the Gospel. Some thought they could dismiss him because they knew where he came from (7:27). Others were baffled by him but concluded he was blasphemous and so sought to get rid of him (8:48-58). Still others repeatedly interrogated what they were seeing and tried to piece together a more positive appreciation of who Jesus was and even gained some measure of illumination in doing so (5:37-43; 9:1-41). Not even his disciples made too much sense of him during the period of his earthly ministry (14:5-13).

The failure to recognize who he is dominates the Gospel until the resurrection occurs. Then things change. John 20 is a sequence of recognition scenes.²⁴ The empty tomb provokes the 'other disciple' to see (perceive) and believe (20:8). Mary Magdalene does not at first recognize Jesus, mistaking

him for the gardener (20:14-15). But when he spoke her name, recognition occurs. His appearance to Thomas is, in this respect, the climax of the Gospel, for when that takes place it calls forth from Thomas the unqualified confession that Jesus is, 'My Lord and my God'. At last they recognize his true *persona*. He is both sovereign and divine, none other than God himself among them. The enigma has been resolved. The perplexities, at least to those who have faith, are past. Here is the true and full identity of the one they have lived with and puzzled over.

Perhaps, as D. Moody Smith, has pointed out, it was not possible for who Jesus was (and is) to be known purely on the basis of his incarnate life, in spite of the numerous signs which were present. For that, it was necessary that the resurrection should occur and Jesus should be encountered in his transformed body. Only then would his full glory be revealed and only then could believers have a true perception of his real nature.²⁵ Resurrection was essential for recognition.

Fathers and children, 1:12-13; 20:17, 28

Family imagery permeates the Prologue. First, it is said that those who exercise faith in Jesus are given 'the right to become children of God' (1:12), not in the sense that they are procreated in the natural way but in the spe-

²⁴ John 21:1-14 contains a further recognition episode.

²⁵ D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, New Testament Theology, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 167.

cial sense of being granted the privilege of membership of the special family of grace. Jesus expands on the image both in John 3:6 and 8:41-42. Here again it is made clear that it is not natural parenthood or human (racial) lineage that is significant, but the rebirth brought about by the operation of the Spirit, which manifests itself in a love for Jesus. The second use of family imagery in the Prologue draws attention to Jesus' own unique relationship with God as his Father and the intimate relationship that he and the Father share.

Both these aspects find an echo in John 20:17 when Jesus explains to Mary that he has yet to return to 'my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'. The words neatly balance identity and difference. On the one hand, at last, the fulfilment has arrived and those who believe may enter into their status as sons and daughters of God, thus sharing in the status of Jesus himself.²⁶ The resurrection has made it possible. Yet the careful distinction Jesus makes between 'my' and 'your' Father means that his unmatched relation as a unique son (1:18) is preserved. The resurrection finally establishes the family of God in its true colours.

Word and flesh, 1:14; 20:24-28

John 1:14 makes the magisterial statement that 'The word became flesh...' John 20:24-28 affirms that the flesh of

Jesus they saw standing before their very eyes was, in truth, the Word.

The one who was with God and, indeed, was God had lived an embodied existence among his people for the past thirty or so years. His disciples had observed him closely in the flesh for two or three years. They had observed his miraculous signs, listened to his penetrating, if puzzling, teaching, wondered at his claims and witnessed his real humanity as they learned of his tiredness (4:6) and observed his emotions (2:12-17; 11:33-35) being expressed. They had seen his tortured flesh crucified. There was no doubt that the Word had genuinely been flesh and died in the flesh.

But what would happen post-resurrection? Would it all unravel and prove to have been a fantasy after all? Would the Word cease to be flesh? Would the Word become some ethereal spirit, removed from true humanity? No. He remains human flesh and carries that humanity with him into his exalted state at the right hand of the throne of God where he advocates the cause of his disciples to his Father (1 Jn. 2:1; Heb. 1:3; 4:14-15; 7:23-25). It is Thomas' confession that gives voice to this in the account of the resurrection. Invited by Jesus to touch his wounds, Thomas apparently remains satisfied with what he sees rather than touches. He is convinced this is the real embodied Jesus that stands before him, albeit in a body which has some significantly different characteristics from his pre-crucifixion body. And he affirms that the embodied person he sees before him is 'My Lord and my God' — the Word indeed.

N. T. Wright explains the significance of this. 'The disciples, with

²⁶ Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, p. 417.

Thomas (of all people!) as their spokesman, have confessed that the “flesh” they had known, and now know again in a new way, was also in truth “the Word” who was one with the father.²⁷ And since John was a theologian of the incarnation it was imperative that it should happen this way: that as Thomas looked at Jesus’ battered body ‘he should be looking at the living god in human form, not simply with the eye of faith... but with ordinary human sight, which could be backed up by ordinary human touch...’²⁸ Anything less would not do. It would leave a doubt as to whether the human Jesus really was the eternal Word.

John, then, begins by saying, ‘the Word became flesh’ and ends by saying, ‘this flesh is the Word’.

Seeing and believing, 1:14,18; 20:29²⁹

John stakes his opening claims about Jesus on the basis of what he had observed with his eyes. It was because he and his fellow disciples had ‘seen his glory’ (1:14) that they believed the invisible God had become visible in the life of Jesus (1:18). The eyewitness nature of his testimony to Jesus is repeated and expanded further in the opening words of his First Letter (1:1-3). Seeing, in John’s theology, does not devalue believing. One does not believe

in spite of what one sees, but because of it. For him, seeing is a legitimate step on the way to believing. A faith that is rooted in experience is an established faith.

Seeing in and of itself however is not enough since it may remain on the level of a purely sensory experience.³⁰ It does not necessarily result in faith. So Jesus expresses some impatience with those who were merely sensation seekers (4:48, 6:26) and John admits freely that merely seeing miracles performed does not automatically lead to belief (12:37). Nonetheless, sensory perception may lead to a deeper, faith perception, one in which the observer looks beyond the act to its significance, especially in terms of the significance of the one who performs it. Seeing miracles in this way — so that it calls forth a belief in Jesus as the Son of God — is commendable (14:9-11).

Given John’s approach, it should not be thought that Jesus was rebuking Thomas when he said to him, ‘Because you have seen me you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe’ (20:29).³¹ When Thomas confesses faith because he sees the evidence of the wounded, yet raised, body of Christ standing before his very eyes he is treading a path that has been consistently opened up ear-

²⁷ Wright, *Resurrection*, p. 668.

²⁸ Wright, *Resurrection*, p. 668.

²⁹ On this section see Robert Kysar, *John, the Maverick Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 78-96.

³⁰ John uses a variety of words for ‘seeing’ that, in a general but not altogether consistent way, indicate different levels of perception. See, R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XIII*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 501-3.

³¹ Contra R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 1045-6.

lier in the Gospel. He is using his physical eyes to provide him with a reason to believe that Jesus is Lord and God. He does not use his physical eyes to titillate his curiosity, nor wallow in sensationalism, but to lead him to a mature faith perception, the outcome of which is the worship of the risen Christ.

Of course, Jesus points out that those who have not had the opportunity of encountering the evidence firsthand, as Thomas had, but who come to the same position of mature faith on the basis of what they have heard preached to them are blessed. The beatitude Jesus pronounces confers on them a special status of happiness in relation to God.³² The primary objective of the Gospel was to persuade people who had not been eyewitnesses to 'believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God' (20:31). But that is not to deny the validity of Thomas' quest, nor his faith.

Once more, the Gospel has come full circle. The 'seeing' of which the opening chapter spoke has come to a climax in the seeing which Thomas experiences in his encounter with the resurrected person of Jesus. The claim made at the beginning of the Gospel as to what the novice disciples saw, is corroborated by what sceptical Thomas saw that night behind the locked doors, a week after the resurrection. It is a seeing which, if there is any integrity, leads one down the road to believing.

With this we finish our examination of what is strictly the Prologue. But

further similarities have been noted between John 20 and the later verses of John 1.

Reuniting and standing, 1:26; 20:19, 26

Mark Stibbe points out the remarkable similarity of wording that occurs concerning Jesus 'standing among them'. It would have been sufficient for John to have used a word for 'appeared' or something similar, whereas he seems deliberately to combine 'standing' (*histeimi*) with 'in the midst' (*mesos*).³³ In 1:26, John the Baptist, referring to the eminence of Jesus, says to his listeners that 'among you one stands you do not know'. In the account of his resurrection appearances to his disciples the phrase 'Jesus came and stood among them' is used not once but twice (20:19, 26). Unlike on the occasion of his baptism, however, he is not now unrecognized. As we have seen, the recognition process reaches its climax with the resurrection and his disciples, both with their natural eyes and the eyes of faith, perceive the figure among them to be Jesus the Lord.

The phrasing is not incidental. The disciples were afraid, with good reason, that they would also find the hostility that Jesus had experienced directed at them. So they huddled together for protection behind locked doors. It has often been suggested by redaction critics that John's Gospel was written to encourage members of the supposed Johannine community who were experiencing antagonism,

³² 20:29 is one of only two 'beatitudes' in John's Gospel. The other is in 13:17.

³³ Stibbe, *John*, p. 199.

even to the extent of expulsion, from the local synagogues because they were followers of Jesus.

Jesus himself had prophesied (15:18-25) that his disciples would indeed experience conflict constantly in this world. By following him they were unavoidably drawn into the controversy he had provoked. If that were so, it was vital that they should equally experience his presence among them. (The closing words of Matthew's Gospel makes the same point in a different way [28:20].) His presence would strengthen, sustain and preserve them in their hours of trial. His physical absence was to make no difference to his ability to keep his promise. For the comforter he would send (14:15-3) would stand in his place. But his bodily presence among them in those fearful days immediately following the crucifixion and resurrection was an enacted reassurance that he would continue to be among them after the ascension. It signalled that he was to be the ever-contemporary one.

Spirit and baptism 1:26-34; 20:21-23

At his baptism, which marked the public start of Jesus' ministry, the Holy Spirit descended on him to empower him for his work (1:33). At the beginning of the post-resurrection ministry of his disciples, the Spirit again descended, this time to empower them for service. The first was the gift of his Father to the Son. The second was the gift of the Son to his followers.

John the Baptist claimed that the water baptism he practised would one day be eclipsed by the greater baptism

in the Holy Spirit that the Messiah would administer (1:33). The precise meaning of the phrase, 'baptism with (or in) the Holy Spirit',³⁴ is much disputed, but none would dissent from Leon Morris' exposition of it as, at least, a starting point.

Jesus came that men might be brought into contact with the divine Spirit. But baptism is a figure, which stresses abundant supply. So John will mean that the Spirit leads men into the infinite divine spiritual resources. This has not been possible previously, for there is quality of life that Christ and none other makes available to men. This life is a positive gift coming from the Spirit of God. Baptism with water had essentially a negative significance. It is a cleansing from—. But baptism with the Spirit is positive. It is a bestowal of new life in God.³⁵

If the phrase, 'baptise with the Holy Spirit', has proved debateable, the meaning of the action of the risen Christ in breathing on his disciples and imparting the Holy Spirit to them has proved even more controversial, especially in its relation to the Day of Pentecost. Was there one coming of the Spirit or two? Was this a prelude to

³⁴ The Greek word is *en* usually, but not inflexibly, translated as 'in'. Although both NRSV and NIV use 'with', 'in' seems the more appropriate preposition to use since the Spirit is the medium in which Christ's disciples were immersed, just as water had been the medium in which John's disciples had been immersed.

³⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 152f.

Pentecost, is this John's version of Pentecost or is it something different altogether?³⁶

To explore this issue is not our concern here. We may simply note that the Holy Spirit is now being imparted to the disciples so that he may fulfil the ministry predicted of him by Jesus (14:15-31; 16:5-16). Again, the circle is completed by the resurrection. The Holy Spirit is in on the action at the beginning and end of the Gospel. He is first received by Jesus and finally received by the disciples of Jesus. The resurrection is going to give way to the exaltation of Christ, making it imperative that the Spirit of Truth be sent in the Father's name to act as their Counsellor.

Seeking and finding 1:38; 20:15

The identical phrase, 'who are you looking for?' occurs in John 1:38 and 20:15, although the NIV translates them differently with the result that many readers will miss the allusion. In both cases it is Jesus who asks the question, first of prospective, enquiring disciples and then of a distraught, grief-stricken Mary. In both cases they find more than they might have expected when they reply to the question. The disciples are invited to check out where Jesus was staying and spend time with him. Mary discovers not the corpse she had expected but the risen Lord.

Throughout the Gospel people are portrayed as searching — searching for answers like Nicodemus, searching for love and satisfaction in life like the Samaritan woman, searching for healing like the royal official and the lame man at Bethesda, searching for the bread of life, searching for spirit-quenching water, searching for light in their darkness, searching for sight in their blindness, searching for a shepherd in their lostness. Those who believed in him found the answers to the deep needs of their lives through him. He alone could supply those answers, as his disciples confessed (6:68).

John's wonderfully crafted Gospel plays ironically on the theme. The Jewish authorities are among those who search for Jesus (7:11), not so that he might answer their spiritual quest but so that they might dispose of him. Their actions led to his crucifixion and consequently afterwards to his resurrection and exaltation — the means by which the eternal life for which people sought would be made available to them. It was then, when he could no longer be found on the earth, because he had ascended to his Father (7:33-36), that his ministry of answering the need of the spiritual seekers would become worldwide in its effect. Those who seek, find. Mary is the first after the crucifixion to discover it is so.

Turning and being turned 1:38; 20:14 and 16

A further linguistic resonance between John 1 and John 20 is found in the use of the Greek verb *strephein* for 'to turn'. In 1:38, Jesus turns round to see the

³⁶ For a consideration of the various views see, Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts, Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), pp. 90-102.

two disciples who were following him because they wanted to see where he was staying. In 20:14 and 16 we read of Mary twice turning, to see Jesus standing in front of her. Only when she turned again (presumably having turned away from him)³⁷ did she recognize him.

The primary issue here for John is undoubtedly that of recognition. But, is it too much to read into John's use of *strephein* more than a mere reference to the direction in which people were looking? Could the double turning of Christ towards his fledgling disciples and of Mary towards her risen Lord be spiritually significant? In Jesus, God turns to face us in our searching for him. He does not turn away from us but towards us in grace. Even so, a full and steady turning on our part, away from the false mindset and spiritual experiences offered by the world, is needed if we are to recognize him as the risen Son of God and offer him the devotion of our lives.

Conclusion

In resonance with John 1, then, the resurrection narrative of John 20, presents the resurrection as the beginning of a new creation, the channel of eternal life, the dawning of irrepressible light, the ultimate pointer to recognizing God's messiah, the confirmation of the bestowal of sonship, the affirmation that the word was indeed made flesh, the ultimate basis for a perception that leads to belief, the pledge of

Christ's continuing presence, the key to the imparting of the Spirit, the testimony that seekers find and an invitation to turn to Christ, who has first turned to us. Here is a rich and varied exposition of the resurrection which leads us to see in him the glory which his first disciples saw while he lived among them, and, like them, to believe.

Some preachers approach yet another Easter with dread; not because they do not believe the message but because they do not know how to express it in new ways, having preached it so often. However much we believe the resurrection to be a revolutionary event we all too easily speak of it with the monotonous voice of predictability. Quite apart from capturing the resurrection on the wider canvas of the New Testament, John 20 alone gives us a clue as to how our preaching need not be a repetition of superficial claims each year. Each of the themes in the paragraph above calls out for development in its own right. There is so much more to the wonder of the resurrection than 'dead man comes back to life'. There is so much more to unpack than the classic apologetic approach of providing persuasive evidence for the empty tomb, and hence the resurrection, important though that is. Firmly based in historical reality, the (trans)physical resurrection of Christ leads us into a deep and rich understanding of the way God is at work, restoring his fallen creatures and his fallen world.

The resurrection is God's 'yes' to the claims made about Jesus in John 1. It is God's 'yes' to salvation, to new life, to sins forgiven, to the restoration of creation itself. It draws from us the same reaction as it did from Thomas.

³⁷ Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 469.

When we 'see' it with our own eyes, we too want to fall down in worship and in wonder, we too affirm that Christ is indeed the divine Lord over all powers and we too are compelled to bow in loyal submission to his mastery over us.

In John's carefully woven Gospel it may well be true to say, as D. Moody Smith, claims, that 'the entire Gospel is written, and could only have been

written from the standpoint of a distinctly Christian and *postresurrection* perspective'.³⁸ Certainly all the threads find their resolution in the report of the resurrection appearances. And all the initial claims made in the Gospel's majestic opening words find their confirmation there too.

³⁸ Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, p. 102.

Christ the Mediator of the Law

Calvin's Christological Understanding of the Law as the Rule of Living and Life-Giving

Byung-Ho Moon

Christ the Mediator of the Law explores the coherence between Christology and soteriology in Calvin's theology of the law, examining its intellectual origins and his position on the concept and extent of Christ's mediation of the law. A comparative study between Calvin and contemporary Reformers – Luther, Bucer, Melancthon and Bullinger – and his opponent Michael Servetus points out the unique feature of Calvin's Christological understanding of the law.

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Gary B. McGee
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ogy: Imagining Progressive Religion
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Book Reviews

ERT (2006) 30:2, 184-185

Introducing World Missions: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey

A. Scott Moreau, Gary R.
Corwin, and Gary B. McGee
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic,
2004.

ISBN 0-8010-2648-2.

Hb pp 349 bibliog., index.

*Reviewed by Robert J. Vajko, The
Evangelical Alliance Mission.*

The preface to this book reads:
'*Introducing World Missions* is the first in
a projected series of eight books focusing
on mission from an evangelical perspec-
tive.' Although written to be used as a
textbook it could also be used as a basic
text for teaching missions in the local
church.

The book is in five major sections:
encountering missions in the Bible, in his-
tory, as a candidate, as one sent and one
sending, with the final section explaining
the interface between missions and the
modern world.

In this reviewer's opinion *Introducing
World Missions* is the most comprehensive
introduction to world missions in print. It
covers the Old and New Testament teach-
ing on missions thoroughly for an intro-
duction. In their discussion of missions in
the Old Testament the authors' view that
Israel should have played a crucial role in
missions is presented—a view neverthe-
less questioned by some Old Testament
scholars and missiologists. The treatment
of Paul's missionary journeys and lessons
drawn from them are succinctly presented
in such a way as to give a student a
good historical and missiological
overview.

In part two, their treatment of the history of missions covers three major periods of expansion in three chapters and, although necessarily brief, is nevertheless sufficient for an introductory text. The fifth chapter dealing with mission theology will be helpful as an introductory approach to issues that are debated in missiological circles. The third and fourth sections dealing with the call, preparation, and steps, and issues that need to be addressed as a missionary candidate are presented in an engaging manner.

The fifth section covers cross-cultural communication, mission trends, Christianity's relation to other religions, and the future of missions. Chapter 14 which is entitled 'Relating to People of Other Cultures' has an excellent discussion of cross-cultural friendships, something often omitted from discussions of cross-cultural communication. Chapter 17 dealing with mission trends has a very balanced approach to the pros and cons of short-term missions. Also in this chapter there is a presentation of the two views as to whether a Christian can be demon-possessed or not.

I taught an introductory course to missions in a Bible College for seven years. If I were to teach the subject again, this is the text I would use for my students. The sidebars with additional helps as well as the case studies dealing with issues faced in missionary ministry are particularly helpful. As a part of the purchase price this volume includes a CD of *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* edited by A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000). Additional material (including power point presentations) is also available to teachers who adopt this tome as their text, thus increasing the value of this text.

Finally there are perhaps two concerns that could be noted—one minor and the

other more important. First of all, although not intending to be exhaustive, it is surprising to see a classic work like *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions*. (Second Edition; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000) by David Hesselgrave as well as Harry R. Boer's seminal study *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) omitted from the fairly extensive bibliography. Secondly, in the domain of Christology, there is an unfortunate use of words in the phrase found on page 81: 'The one who *relinquished deity* to be born as a baby in a feeding trough...has established forever his priorities for the church that he birthed through his life, ministry and death' (emphasis mine). The word *relinquish* if understood as meaning 'to give up' or 'leave behind' would lead to the teaching that Christ was not God during his earthly existence.

However, overall this book can be highly recommended to all who want a thorough and biblical approach to missions from a number of perspectives. This book being so good bodes well for the whole series.

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Bioethics: a primer for Christians Gilbert Meilander

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005 (2nd edition)
ISBN 0-8028-2909-0
Pb pp 126 Index

Reviewed by Brian Edgar, Director of Public Theology, Australian Evangelical Alliance

The rapid growth in biotechnology and the ever increasing complexity of the issues make it easy to forget just how new the field of bioethics really is. In 1996 Gilbert Meilander wrote *Bioethics: a*

primer for Christians and there is no surprise that a new and revised edition is now needed. Yet despite the changing times the book stands up well. The fundamental principles remain but Meilander has taken the opportunity to make the data more current and in some places—though not many—he has chosen to change his views. For example, the notion that an embryo's individual humanity might begin only at fourteen days—after the possibility of twinning has been eliminated—has been discarded in favour of a stronger recognition of the status of the earlier embryo. This is on the basis that it can now be shown that it is not a featureless mass of cells but an integrated self-developing organism with, for example, an axis determining the formation of head and feet.

Meilander's book is for Christians and it operates on a distinctly theological foundation. It thus challenges a number of principles commonly assumed to be valid and introduces others which may appear strange to some. Even when they are not completely persuasive, they are stimulating and helpful. The first chapter sets out his understanding of the Christian vision. He discusses the nature of being individuals in community; freedom and finitude; person and body; suffering and disease and healing. Those absorbed in the technological possibilities inherent in contemporary biotechnology may find the development of the idea of the body difficult. His stress on the moral meaning of biological bonds stands in contrast to the notion that persons and families can be constructed at will. He interprets many innovations as unhelpful forms of social engineering. Those Christians deeply involved in developing this technology may find his conservatism challenging.

There are chapters on assisted reproduction, abortion, genetic technology, prena-

tal screening, suicide and euthanasia, the refusal of treatment, decision-making processes, organ donation, human experimentation, embryo research and sickness and health. Some of his major concerns relate to the commodification of health care; the shift in the motive for using medical technology from treating disease to treating desires; the moral meaning of biological bonds (interesting but not fully convincing for me as a parent of an adopted child); the problem of self-deception in the use of technology; the level at which technological activism becomes idolatry and the problems of utilitarianism. He advocates developing the courage to decline to use medical technologies if they become substitutes for trust in God or if they commodify persons or relationships.

His views challenge technocratic and consumerist points of view. Some might view it as unrealistic for the world of today but it must be remembered that he is not putting forward a legislative program for society as a whole but is issuing a call to Christians to consider how they can best live before God. The call to a moral life will involve more sacrifices and challenges than can be established by law.

Medically speaking, death, sickness and infertility are usually seen as problems to be overcome. For Meilander the more important issue is to find God through them and to live a life that is honouring to the Lord. His suggestions are, therefore, not always orientated towards the most pragmatic solutions. It can be asked whether it is always necessary to choose between medical technology and obedience, but one is nonetheless definitely challenged by his commitment. He sees technology as having its own momentum which must be resisted.

ERT (2006) 30:2, 187-188

Who Are the Christians in the Middle East?

Betty Jane Bailey and J. Martin Bailey

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003
ISBN 0-8028-1020-9
Pb, pp 215

Reviewed by Ziya Meral

If you often find yourself confused about the situation of Christianity in the Middle East today and feel more confident of your grasp of the inter-testamental period and the early church, then this humble but ambitious book is just for you. The writers, Betty and Martin Bailey, write as two westerners who fell in love with the Middle East on a Biblical Lands tour in 1969 and moved to Israel upon their retirement. It is written for fellow westerners 'who are surprised to learn that Christians still live in the Middle East' or who 'assume that Islam has completely replaced Christianity' and are unaware 'that the church was born in the East'. Thus from the beginning of the book the writers affirm that their intent is to introduce 'non-seminarians and non-academics (and perhaps some seminarians and academics as well)' to the Christians of the Middle East and their situation today.

Since the book is intended to be used as a reference work as well as an introduction, its format is a compilation of essays on various topics. These essays are grouped under three parts. The two introductory essays in the Part I—'The Churches of the Middle East', by David A. Kerr of the University of Edinburgh, and Riad Jarjour of the Middle East Council of Churches are helpful and full of mature insights. In particular, the essay by Rev. Jarjour titled 'The Future of Christians in the Arab World' is a great analysis of the present

situation and future possibilities and well worth being pursued further as an independent book itself. The section also includes a short history and present ministry of the Middle Eastern Council of Churches.

Part II—'Profiles of the Churches', focuses on different church bodies, like the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. A brief history of the development of those denominations sets the stage for short introductions to each group. The greatest strength of this section is that after each introduction contact details are provided for the reader who may be interested in getting in touch with those denominations. Western mission agencies, church groups, schools or individuals who want to work in the Middle East would truly benefit from the practical dimension the writers bring to the book.

Finally Part III—'Church and State in the Middle East', after a breath-long survey of the Middle East history from the Roman Empire to the aftermath of World War I, paints a wide picture of the situation in particular countries. Each country profile (or countries the writers group together generously under titles like the Persian Gulf, Holy Land: Israel and Palestine) is presented under five different categories; Christian communities, Christian population, historical background, contemporary circumstances and interfaith activities.

There are a few issues of which the reader should be aware. First of all the book uses a very loose definition of the word 'Middle East', thus facing a serious problem of categories. The writer's list of the Middle Eastern countries include North African countries like Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, the African country Sudan, and also Turkey for which there seems to be no universal category as it is often classified as Europe, or Asia Minor.

'The Middle East' is used both as a cultural category (i.e. the Arabic culture which North African countries share with the Arabs of the peninsula) and in the same time as a geo-political category, which includes Iran, Turkey, Israel, Cyprus—all non Arabic countries.

Secondly, as the writers acknowledge, the numbers given in relation to the population of Christians in the Middle East are rough guides rather than statistics that can be quoted for serious academic research. Given the political and cultural complications, the exact numbers or even close estimates of the Christians living in the region can never be known.

Thirdly, with the desire to present a simple survey of a very complicated subject comes the risk of over generalization and limited emphasis on issues which the writers deem to be important. The same challenge and the outcome applies to this book as well, but that is something which can easily be understood and overlooked considering the intent and the target audience of the book. The book graciously achieves what it originally sets out to do and it is a helpful, easy to read introduction and practical resource for anyone who is seeking some overall clarity and grasp of the situation of the Christians living in the North Africa, Middle East and Asia Minor today.

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The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805-1900

Gary Dorrien

Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001

ISBN 0-664-22354-0
xxvi + 494 pp., Index, Pb

Reviewed by Richard V. Pierard, Gordon College, Wenham, MA U.S.A

This is the first volume of a projected trilogy tracing the development of American liberal theology by Dorrien, an Episcopal priest and the Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. When completed, his comprehensive history will replace the standard works by Lloyd J. Averill, *American Theology in the Liberal Tradition* (1967), and William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (1976), and establish him as possibly the foremost expositor of modern theology in the United States today. The thesis of the book is that liberal theology arose from indigenous roots and took shape prior to the appearance of Darwinism. Motivating it was a desire to find a progressive, Christian, 'mediationist' third way between the authority-based orthodoxies and the spiritless materialism of rationalistic deism or rationalism-regnant orthodoxy and ascending 'infidelism'. The liberals saw true religion as a civilizing—thus a personally and socially saving—power of spirit over the bestial forces of nature.

In Dorrien's opinion, liberal theology has been and remains the most creative and influential tradition of theological reflection since the Reformation, because unlike 'premodern' Christian theologies, it did not make claims to an authority-

based orthodoxy. Whether it eventually became an orthodoxy in its own right is an issue he will have to deal with in the subsequent volumes. This first one focuses on the 'hegemonic period' of theological liberalism. It derived from late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth efforts to reconceptualize the meaning of traditional Christian teaching in the light of modern knowledge and ethical values. It was not revolutionary but reformist in spirit and endeavoured to recover the idea of a genuine Christianity not based on external authority. It reinterpreted the symbols of the traditional faith in such a way as to create a progressive religious alternative between authority and rationalism. Only by the later nineteenth century had it come to emphasize the convergence between Christianity and evolution, the constructive value of modern historical criticism, the spiritual union between God and humanity, and the kingdom-building social mission of the church. Its hallmarks, accordingly, were an evolutionist orientation, the social gospel ethos, and cultural optimism.

Dorrien utilizes a narrative and biographical approach in his examination of the most influential personalities of nineteenth-century theological liberalism. He begins with the Congregational and Unitarian preachers—William Ellery Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, and Horace Bushnell who is the central figure of the story. Then he deals with the Victorians—Henry Ward Beecher, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the feminist reformers. He follows with the Progressives and advocates of the 'New Theology' and the early 'Social Gospel'—Theodore Munger, Washington Gladden, and Newman Smyth. Also treated are the academics who emerged in the latter years of the century—Charles A. Briggs and Borden

Parker Bowne—and the doctrines of biblical criticism and personalism. In the last chapter he touches upon Catholic modernism, Protestant ecumenism, ideas of the German school of Schleiermacher, the issue of spirit over nature, liberal progressivism, and Anglo-Saxon racial ideology. Dorrien concludes by raising the question whether the liberals' hope of modernizing, democratizing, and civilizing the world gave too much authority to modern culture, even as they liberated American Christianity from its scriptural and ecclesiastical bases of authority.

This is an informative book that gives us a clearer of understanding of what the liberal project was. We as evangelicals will, of course, reject much of what the liberals did, but we need to know the reasoning that lay behind their beliefs and actions. Dorrien does much to assist us in this task.

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Biblical Faith and Other Religions: An Evangelical Assessment

David W. Baker (Editor)

Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2004

ISBN 0-8254-2026-1

Pb, pp176

Reviewed by Amos Yong, Associate Research Professor of Theology, Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia

The six essays in this volume were all originally plenary session presentations at the 2002 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), which was devoted to the theme, 'Evangelical Christianity and Other Religions'. Those familiar with the theological conservatism of the ETS might

expect fairly traditional apologetic approaches from these plenary speakers. But while the apologetic edge was not entirely absent—each of the published essays remained resolutely evangelical in affirming the centrality of Christ and the importance of kerygmatic proclamation—yet the usual defensiveness is significantly blunted throughout most of the volume and replaced with much more nuanced argumentation and sensitive rhetorical style.

So, for example, Harold Netland's lead essay on 'Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth' takes off from his fine study, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (InterVarsity Press, 2001), which is honest in delineating our contemporary situation. Those who appreciate the book will find Netland similarly appealing in this essay. To be sure, his advocating the combination of a 'soft natural theology' and a 'cumulative case argument' as the most viable evangelical theological response to the challenges of religious pluralism today will please neither those who might wish for a more robust natural theology nor those who might denounce the natural theological enterprise altogether. But Netland's is a sophisticated approach rather than a triumphalist one. Still, readers who were unconvinced by the arguments in the book will probably think that Netland's strategy in the last half of this essay is not up to the task of answering to the challenges he so acutely discerns in the first half regarding the question of truth in our religiously plural situation.

Richard J. Plantinga's essay, 'God So Loved the World: Theological Reflections on Religious Plurality in the History of Christianity', is similarly nuanced. Plantinga brings his historian's expertise to bear on complicating the comfortable

exclusivist-inclusivist-pluralist typology standard in most evangelical discussions of religious pluralism. His concluding suggestion—that an evangelical theologian 'ought to be a qualified apocalyptic inclusivist, a qualified epistemic inclusivist, a qualified alethic inclusivist, a soteriological exclusivist, and an empathetic phenomenologist in the study of religion' (p. 137)—may be too ambiguous for traditionalists in the ETS, but speaks more accurately to the theological situation many of us find ourselves negotiating today.

Missiological theologian Tite Tiénou, in his 'Biblical Faith and Traditional Folk Religion', does conclude by calling attention to the revelation of God the Son and his word, but along the way admits that 'I am still on the journey', and that 'I raise more questions than I provide answers' (p. 139). Here is an evangelical whose exposure to other faiths (I will return to this point momentarily) leads him to see that there can be no simplistic theological answers in our time. The same is true of J. Dudley Woodberry's essay, 'Biblical Faith and Islam'. To the question, 'Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?' Woodberry answers yes and no: 'Since there is only one Supreme Being and Muslims mean that One described in the Bible, this is the yes. Anything we say differently about him is the *no*' (p. 153).

As expected in the ETS context, two plenary papers were devoted to Old Testament (by Daniel I. Block), and New Testament (by Gregory K. Beale) perspectives respectively. To be sure, Block's paper focused on the predominant motifs in the Hebrew Bible concerning Yahweh's repudiation of pagan religious ideas and practices, but he also identified both parallels between the Yahwistic and pagan traditions, and occasions when Israelite religion exploited pagan religious tradi-

tions. Beale's significant contribution may be twofold: in his attempt to tease out an evangelical theology of religions from the book of Revelation, and in his raising the question about the possibility of deriving an evangelical theology of religions not only from the content of the New Testament but also from the exegetical methods of New Testament writers as seen in their interpretations of the Old Testament.

This volume does show that evangelical theology continues to mature in its engaging the questions related to religious pluralism, theology of religions, and interreligious encounter. The volume's title, however, does perpetuate the more traditional evangelical contrast between christocentric and salvific 'faith' (e.g., 'Christianity is not about being religious, it is about having a relationship') and other paganistic 'religions'. This not only begs the question about *how* (not whether) ancient Israel, the earliest Christian communities, and historical Christianity have also been religious in every sense of the term, but also does not fully confront the fact that many in other traditions have more vibrant religious lives than those of Christian faith.

Finally, for our purposes, while international perspectives are represented in this volume (Netland is familiar with Japan, Tiénon's home is Africa, and Woodberry served as a missionary in Islamic contexts), they were neither engaged as intentionally as they could have been nor in a sufficiently sustained manner. While this may be expected, given the North American provenance of the ETS, is that because international members in the society remain unpublished or because of ETS politics? Whatever the reason, the result is that most of the readers of the *Evangelical Review of Theology* will continue to look for an evangelical theology of

religions which speaks to the many different religious, social, economic, and political issues that feature in the contemporary evangelical encounter with religious plurality around the world.

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Fire and Wind: the Holy Spirit in the Church Today

Joseph D. Small (editor)

ISBN 0664-50172-9

Louisville KY: Geneva Press, 2002

Pb pp 158

Reviewed by David Parker, Editor of Evangelical Review of Theology

This book consists of a series of twelve papers delivered at a Presbyterian consultation on the article in the Nicene Creed devoted to the Holy Spirit. It includes expositions, reflections on contemporary issues and sermons preached at the consultation, all focusing on 'contemporary exploration' rather than historical review. The contributors include the well known figures, Miroslav Volf, Colin Gunton, and Ellen T. Charry.

The editor's introduction provides a good background to the Nicene Creed and the issues which paved the way for the significant expansion in it of the article on the Spirit. Joseph Small points out the importance and relevance of the issues involved, affirming, for example, that the question of the identity of God is of basic importance and one that continually needs definition, which of course involves both positive affirmation and as well of denial of certain ideas. The introduction points to the importance of the Spirit in relation to Trinity, Scripture, personal experience and creation.

Gunton's exposition of the clause on the worship of Spirit, Father and Son, shows

the richness of the role of the Spirit in 'making holy', by focusing on the 'perfecting' work of the Spirit through creation, re-creation and the mission of the church. Usually, this is an idea which is drawn especially from references to the Spirit in the book of Revelation. Gunton's treatment is boosted by material from the Fathers as they dealt with the problems of unity and diversity which they faced, which are not unlike those of the modern world. Gunton is especially interested in the two-fold emphasis of Basil on the worship of God, ie, giving glory to God 'through the Son and in the Holy Spirit', and also 'with the Son together with the Spirit'.

Scripture is a topic of interest for readers of this journal, but Cynthia Campbell's chapter dealing with the article on the Spirit speaking through the prophets does not explore inspiration so much as noting the amazing truth of a 'talking God'—'God is a talking God because we are talking creatures.' Referring to the Reformation insight that Christianity is 'word-based or even word-intoxicated', Campbell affirms that this is no simplistic biblicism, because the Spirit 'makes the words dance', in that God speaks (present tense) in Scripture. Following Calvin, it is clear that without the inner illumination of the Spirit, Scripture is nothing, so that the Helvetic Confession can say, 'the

preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God'.

In addressing the clause on belief in the church, Volf points out that in contemporary theology, the church is not often related to the Spirit, even though the Gospels and the early Fathers did make this connection strongly. So he argues that it is time to 'retrieve the central importance of the Holy Spirit for our ecclesiology and our practice of church life'. Volf observes that Christ is the one who is both anointed by the Spirit and also the one who bestows the Spirit. He therefore explores the relationships between Christ, church and Spirit. Recognizing that it is complex, he asserts, however, that it determines the church's identity and mission, which is focused on personal rebirth, reconciliation and 'the care of bodies'. While there may be social reasons for the church to act, there are also 'important theological reasons' and 'The social mission of the church ought to be pursued out of the heart of its own identity'. Thus, 'All Christian work is done in the power of the Spirit', whatever its category.

While the chapters in this collection on 'contemporary issues' and the examples of 'proclamation' vary considerably in their value, the theological reflection in the chapters on the doctrine of the Creed will certainly repay careful study.

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

Editor: Colin Brown

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