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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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# Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

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David Parker

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17 Disraeli St, Indooroopilly, 4068, Qld, Australia

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## Editorial: Transformations

WE INTRODUCE THIS issue with Derek Tidball's seasoned article reviewing the way the Bible is used by evangelicals in the important ministry of pastoral care. This leading English theologian says, 'The goal of using the Bible in pastoral practice must be to bring people to experience eternal life through Jesus and then to lead them to maturity in him. Used rightly, it is a wonderful channel of life, and life in all its fullness.' But he warns, 'If our use of the Bible does not accomplish this, then we should re-examine whether we are using it aright.'

Then, to coincide with a consultation the WEA Theological Commission is sponsoring soon on the uniqueness of Christ in relation to the presentation of the gospel to Jewish people, we have a review by Oskar Skarsaune (Norway) of the way early Christological thinking developed in relationship to the Jewish concept of Messiah. He challenges the popular idea of the 'hell-enization' of Christianity, arguing that the developed Christologies have 'a solid biblical and Jewish basis'. So with credible evidence, he supports the view that 'it is unjewish to say that this [the incarnation] is something the God of the Bible cannot do'.

Evangelical attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Church and relationships between the two traditions continue to occupy the attention of many, especially as significant changes are continuously taking place within both these communities. The WEA Theolog-

ical Commission is keeping abreast of these and so we present an overview of the situation by Pietro Bolognesi (Italy) which was prepared for a recent consultation of the European Evangelical Alliance.

Our concluding articles embody new approaches which will spark interest. Christopher Fung, a scientist from Hong Kong, presents a comprehensive vision of the work of Christ in relation to the Sabbath and its deepest meaning in the history of salvation. This will doubtless not appeal to all our readers, but its fascinating images will surely evoke new appreciation for the wonder of God's plan for us and the world.

Then Jim Harries puts forward the view that the 'implementation of "holistic mission" strategies across Africa (and presumably elsewhere) has inadvertently resulted in serious problems', especially unhealthy dependency and serious impeding of local initiatives and development due to fundamental misunderstandings and miscommunication of ideas and intentions. This results not only in 'serious theological distortions' but also the disempowering of the recipients, the very opposite of the purpose of the aid in the first place. At very least, this raises a serious challenge about presuppositions and methods which needs careful attention. But then we expect all of our articles to present us with truths that challenge and therefore contribute to our aim of 'discerning the obedience of faith'!

**David Parker, Editor.**

# Use and Abuse of the Bible in Pastoral Practice: An Evangelical Perspective

Derek J. Tidball

**KEYWORDS:** *Evangelical, Bible, pastoral care, hermeneutics, exegesis, psychology, wholeness*

In 1988 Stephen Pattison commented on the curious absence of discussion about the way to use the Bible among pastoral theologians. There was, he suggested, no doubt about the Bible's importance, or even its authoritative status, since it was consulted and appealed to frequently but, he lamented, 'The fact is that pastoral theologians seem to have almost completely avoided considering the Bible....There is an almost absolute and embarrassing silence about the Bible in pastoral care theory.'<sup>1</sup>

Recent years, however, have seen a

revival of interest in the role of the pastoral use of the Bible, not least because of initiatives that Stephen Pattison has taken with his colleagues at Cardiff University, in conjunction with the (British) Bible Society. Research projects have been undertaken and conferences held which have led to the publication of several significant volumes.<sup>2</sup> These encouraging initiatives have sought to be genuinely inclusive and brought evangelicals into real engagement with those who would have a very different understanding of the Bible from them.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SCM, 1988), p. 106.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Ballard and Stephen Holmes (eds.), *The Bible in Pastoral Practice* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005); Gordon Oliver, *Holy Bible, Human Bible* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006); and, Stephen Pattison, Margaret Cooling and Trevor Cooling, *Using the Bible in Christian Ministry: A Workbook* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007).

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**Rev. Dr. Derek J. Tidball** (PhD Keele) is a Baptist pastor who has served as the Head of the Mission Department of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and most recently for twelve years as Principal of London School of Theology. He is chair of the Council of the Evangelical Alliance in the UK. He has written numerous books including *Skilful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology*, *The Message of the Cross and The Message of Leviticus in IVP's 'Bible Speaks Today' series*. This is a revised and updated version of a paper originally given to an MA Seminar for the Cambridge Theological Federation in 2004. (Email: derekjtiddball@googlemail.com)

This paper does not set out to review the Cardiff/Bible Society project but to reflect independently on the use and abuse of the Bible in pastoral practice from an evangelical perspective.<sup>3</sup>

## I Definitions

I begin with definitions. 'Pastoral practice' I interpret as an inclusive term to include not just the one-to-one dimension of pastoral care or counselling, or that pastoral practice which might involve a pastor with a family or small group, but the total range of pastoral activity which includes the activity of preaching and the leading of worship and the shaping of the liturgy as well. This broad definition consciously embraces 'the whole gamut of Christian ministry related to the comprehensive needs of other human beings'<sup>4</sup> so as to broaden our understanding of care away from a narrow focus on individual counselling. Much pastoral care

takes place in the context of preaching and worship in formal services, while other pastoral care takes place in personal, often casual, conversation.

By 'a pastor' I do not intend to imply someone who is necessarily 'ordained' since Evangelicalism has always recognized leaders who have emerged outside the formal structures of the church and, indeed, some of its branches, such as the Christian Brethren, reject the clergy/laity distinction altogether. Certainly in many local churches pastoral care is exercised by lay folk and, sometimes less happily, often by untrained lay folk. That makes an examination of how they might use the Bible even more crucial.

'Evangelical' might be more difficult to define. I use it not in the European sense of the evangelical church which emerged in contrast to Catholicism following the Reformation, but in the sense of that stream within the church which became a self-conscious movement following the Evangelical Revivals in the 1700s. It has gone through many forms and today is a diverse movement. The label is frequently used as if synonymous with Fundamentalism but such an equation is indefensible.<sup>5</sup> Evangelicalism embraces a spectrum of positions which at one end finds more fundamentalist expressions but at the other appears to have a fuzzy boundary with classic liberal theology. What then holds it together?

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3 This paper is a revised and updated paper, originally given to an MA Seminar for the Cambridge Theological Federation in 2004. Those who issued the invitation had not expected me to comment as an evangelical on how others used the Bible but to confine myself to an exploration of how evangelicals used it. The title given, however, seemed to invite wider reflection, even if the major part of the paper was devoted to exploring evangelical practice.

4 This is part of the definition used in Pattison, Cooling and Cooling, *Using the Bible in Christian Ministry*, p. 10. Pattison's own definition was, 'pastoral care is that activity, undertaken especially by representative Christian persons, directed towards the elimination of sin and sorrow and the presentation of all people perfect in Christ to God' (*Critique*, p. 13).

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5 See, Derek Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals?* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), pp. 17-18.

For all the criticism there has been of it, David Bebbington's<sup>6</sup> suggestion that Evangelicalism is that section of the church marked by a combination of four characteristics, namely, conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism, remains an excellent framework to distinguish it from others in the church. To these perhaps the willingness to act interdenominationally should be added.

It is the third of these characteristics which particularly concerns us in this paper. Taking their cue from the Reformers and Wesley, who desired to be a 'man of one book',<sup>7</sup> Evangelicals show a supreme interest in the Bible and a devotion to it. Their doctrinal statements will usually refer in a shorthand way to 'the authority' of the Bible<sup>8</sup> as 'supreme' or 'sole' and their critics, somewhat understandably, might refer to them as having a trinity of Father, Son and Holy Bible—at least until recently when the advent of the closely related charismatic movement somewhat changed the emphasis. When challenged, evangelicals, of course, believe the supreme authority belongs

to God, to Christ, the living Word, and to the Spirit, the one who transmits the word today. But they see no reason to downgrade the importance of the Bible in their theological framework and they will not accept any disjunction between the living word and the written word. The Bible is central in shaping their view of God—it is a revelation of God and his ways—and their interpretation of the Christian faith.

We could develop the theme of an evangelical view of the Bible, paying particular attention to the way evangelicals have formulated their views over the centuries, being at first very much affected by the Enlightenment, then by the Romantic movement and recently by postmodernism. This, of course, has an impact on the way the Bible is used pastorally, as we shall see, but this is not the primary subject of this paper. Suffice it to say that the Bible is central.

Its centrality stems from its inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and this gives rise, in turn, to its sufficiency and its dynamic nature. Paul tells Timothy that the God-breathed scripture 'is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that God's servant may be thoroughly equipped for every good work'. There is nothing we should need that we do not find within it: it is sufficient; but that does not mean every question will receive a direct and immediate answer or that it is right to come to the Bible as if it is some form of supreme reference book where we can find obvious solutions to all the problems we face in life. This was the mistake of some during the initial stages of Enlightenment enthusiasm and is still reflected in the way some evangelicals use the Bible.

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<sup>6</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 5-17. Criticisms may be found in D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), pp. 449-451 and Kenneth Stewart, 'Did evangelicalism predate the eighteenth century?', *EQ*, 77.2 (2005), 135-153.

<sup>7</sup> Wesley used the phrase more than once but it can be found in the Preface to his *Sermons*, vol 1.

<sup>8</sup> For a review see, J. I. Packer and Thomas C. Oden, *One Faith: The Evangelical Consensus* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 39-57.

The evangelical position also gives rise to the view that the Bible has a dynamic power which generates change in people's lives. It is not regarded as magic: take a text a day, as you may take an aspirin, and the cure will automatically follow. The reading and study of the Bible needs to be combined with faith, as Hebrews 4:2 argues. Nonetheless, James 1:21, which uses the dynamic image of 'the implanted word, which can save you' and 1 Peter 2:2 which uses the image of craving for 'pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation' suggest a basis for the evangelical view of the Bible as a spiritual growth hormone.<sup>9</sup> It is as Justin Martyr said:

I would wish that all, making a resolution similar to my own, do not keep themselves away from the words of the saviour. For they possess a terrible power in themselves and are sufficient to inspire those who turn aside from the path of rectitude with awe; while the sweetest rest is afforded those who make a diligent practice of them.<sup>10</sup>

Exactly how that translates into the practical handling of the Bible in Evangelicalism varies and leads some, at the fundamentalist end of the spectrum, to a proof-text, sound-bite type of approach and to others at the more open end to a more reflective imaginative approach.

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<sup>9</sup> See further, Derek Tidball, 'The Bible in evangelical spirituality' in Ballard and Holmes (eds.) *The Bible in Pastoral Practice*, pp. 258-274.

<sup>10</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch.8.

## II The Greatest Abuse...

Before, however, turning in more detail to how evangelicals use the Bible in pastoral care, let me mention three general abuses which evangelicals discern in the way the wider church uses the Bible in pastoral care.

### 1. Neglect

One form of abuse is neglect. Child carers do not have to physically assault a child to be guilty of abuse—they just have to ignore the child. Evangelicals, of all shades, would want to argue that the greatest abuse of the Bible is its neglect. The failure to use it is one of the greatest scandals of the church in recent times. As Herbert Anderson notes, while evangelicals have asserted more and more strongly the authority of the Bible, others have found it less and less relevant or seen it merely as one resource among many others but not especially normative.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Oden, in a number of places,<sup>12</sup> has championed the cause (and it is a cause) that pastoral care should not be held in psychological captivity. He has researched the textbooks used in the training of clergy in pastoral care and found that the discipline which informs clergy training is

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<sup>11</sup> Herbert Anderson, 'The Bible and Pastoral Care', in Ballard and Holmes (eds.) *The Bible in Pastoral Practice*, p. 196.

<sup>12</sup> *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); 'Recovering Pastoral Care's Lost Identity' in *The Church and Pastoral Care* Leroy Aden and J. Harold Ellens, eds., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), pp. 17-40 and *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983).



psychology, with its amoral commitments, rather than theology. Whilst there are many references to contemporary psychological theories and scholars, there is almost the total absence of reference to the Bible or even to the great tradition of pastoral care to be found in the Apostolic Fathers.

The situation has changed in some respects since Oden began his campaign on this issue. There has been a greater recognition that pastoral care cannot be detached from a moral framework and it has broken out somewhat from a psychological captivity to embrace wider sociological and psychological perspectives. But still too often pastoral caregivers in the church neglect the Bible altogether.

## 2. Demotion

So, although from their viewpoint there are gains, evangelicals remain uneasy with an approach to pastoral practice which uses the Bible but merely as one of a number of resources to which one might turn without giving it any sense of priority. The approach, common, according to Donald Capps of Princeton,<sup>13</sup> in the middle of the last century in Europe, recognizes the Bible has a place, but it is only one voice around the table and has no privileged status. Its use is *ad hoc* and it only indirectly informs the discussion. It neither establishes the goals to be reached in the pastoral process, nor is it allowed to critique the other voices that contribute to the conversation.

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<sup>13</sup> 'The Bible's Role in Pastoral Care and Counselling' in Aden and Ellens (eds.) *The Church and Pastoral Care*, pp. 43f.

Michael Taylor, is a later English representative of this position. In his book *Learning to Care*, he dismisses the possibility of absolutes guiding our pastoral practice and pleads for it to be based on living doctrine, informed by contemporary knowledge. He concludes,

On occasions older literature including the Bible will deal with the same issues that we are dealing with and will be worth consulting, though we shall need to remember that changes in culture and circumstances often make the similarities more apparent than real.<sup>14</sup>

For an evangelical this is to marginalise Scripture in an unwarranted fashion and an abuse of the Bible in pastoral practice. The Bible is not only to be used, but to have a sense of priority, not only an ancient document but a contemporary and living word.

## 3. Revisionism

This raises huge issues of hermeneutics and here is not the place to address them. But evangelicals become very unhappy when what they regard as the plain teaching of the Bible on an issue is reinterpreted in such a way that the Bible is made to sound as if it is saying the exact opposite of what it appears to be saying. A particular current example is that of homosexual practice. Complex as it is, many evangelicals are handling the issue with great personal and pastoral sensitivity, and they are grappling with the theological, moral and exegetical complexities of it but

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Taylor, *Learning to Care* (London: SPCK, 1983), pp. 101f.

most still cannot agree that homosexual practice is one which can be commended for disciples of Jesus. A good illustration of how they are handling it pastorally and theologically might be found in Ray Anderson's recent book, *The Shape of Pastoral Theology: Empowering Ministry with theological Praxis*, chapter 16.<sup>15</sup>

### III The Evangelical Use and Abuse of the Bible

How then do evangelicals use the Bible? Evangelicalism is essentially a popular movement and a protest movement. Its scholars, however, have increasingly adopted the tools of modern scholarship in their approach to the Bible, wishing to defend the Bible against its critics on their own terms. Hence, many have engaged in historical criticism and there is a wealth of Bible commentaries to demonstrate the point. They have been less involved until recently in systematic reflection.

Many rejoice in the more recent developments in hermeneutics and have grappled with the philosophical and epistemological foundations involved, even if some remain very cautious about the more subjective and postmodern underpinning of the enterprise. Canonical approaches have been welcomed with some enthusiasm. But the more the scholars have engaged with the academy, the more suspicious many evangelicals at pew level have

become of them and there can be a fairly wide gulf between scholarly writing and popular practice.

To evangelicals, the Bible is the book of the people, not the book of the scholars, or even of the pastors.<sup>16</sup> It is a book for all, not just the intelligentsia. To them, as Gregory the Great put it, 'The Bible is water where lambs may safely walk (as well as) great elephants swim.' Many evangelicals, therefore, have been brought up to love it, read it, learn it and imbibe it. They believe Psalm 119:105 at face value: 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path'. They also take seriously the active role of the Holy Spirit as its interpreter today.

This has both strengths and weaknesses. Its strengths are that it provides a particular reader-response type approach to Scripture, albeit one which predates recent postmodern theories and albeit one where readers are not usually aware of their own presuppositions. That is lauded in some circles as a rediscovery of what the Bible originally was: the book of the community of ordinary people. It gives the Bible back to the people.

An example was presented in the Cardiff Conference as a positive example by one speaker. The reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan in one household in Sheffield led to the children demanding they should share their food with their poor neighbours. In this case the outcome was positive

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15 (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001). Among a vast literature see also, Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming: An evangelical response to homosexuality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

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16 This differs from Wesley Carr, *Handbook of Pastoral Studies* (London, SPCK, 1997), p. 27, who says, 'Scripture chiefly addresses the pastor and not the client'. Nonetheless, he refers to scripture as a vital resource.

but no one asked the question as to what would have happened if they had read some parts of the Deuteronomic Law and decided as a result to stone their neighbours who were having affairs? Undisciplined reader-response, whether by evangelicals or others, can prove disastrous. Good hermeneutical principles cannot be avoided.

Here we turn to particular evangelical approaches in the use of the Bible in pastoral care.

### 1. A 'promise box'—snippets of insight.

My grandmother had a box containing little scrolls of paper on each of which was a verse, or even part of a verse, of scripture. It was her practice to extract one at random each day using a pair of tweezers and read what it said, taking it as the motto for the day. The choice of texts often reflected an evangelical canon within the canon. The text was, of course, completely out of context and made to apply to one's life regardless of its particular relevance. It was assumed that whatever problem we faced—and here we see the Enlightenment legacy—there will be an answer, usually a very clear and direct answer, to it in the Bible. Whether this exact custom is practised or not it is symbolic of the way many evangelicals use their Bibles in relation to themselves and pastorally in relation to others.

A popular but more refined example of this is seen in the approach of the Gideons Bible. It is not as hit-and-miss as the promise box, since the reader is directed to an appropriate text by consulting a menu of problems or circumstances. Nonetheless, Chris Wig-

glesworth has provided us with a robust critique of it in the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care*.<sup>17</sup>

The hotel bedroom, 'Gideons' Bible contains a list of verses deemed suitable for various problems in life. Whatever emergency value this may have, it is a poor model for pastoral use.... The pastoral problems created by this approach should also be listed: absence of relationship, blocked expression of feelings, coerced responses, failure to listen, hasty diagnosis, premature advice, selective emphasis, superficial solutions, etc. More serious still is the attraction this approach has for the insecure pastor whose authority is shored up by the symbolic significance the Bible has for many people. Linked to this is the dependence (q.v.) encouraged by the pastor who is expected to know the 'correct' verse for each succeeding need. It is hardly surprising that such abuse has led many counsellors into leaving out use of the Bible from their work.

His objections may be expressed like this:

- It ignores hermeneutical issues, whilst practising poor hermeneutics. 'The Bible says it, we believe it, that settles it.' Anyone can justify all sorts of behaviour and belief without decent hermeneutics. A creation, fall, redemption and consummation framework is needed.
- It can be insensitive, saying the

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17 (London, SPCK, 1987), p. 25.

right thing at the wrong moment or in the wrong way. Job's comforters often come to mind.

- It can degenerate into the use of proof texts. Learn the words and quote them as if it is a magic chant or as if that automatically deals with the problem.
- It shows no awareness of how people respond to the Bible. Is it seen by readers as a constructive authority or an authoritarian task master which may, indeed, be part of their problem?
- It can deal with superficial symptoms while failing to deal with deeper issues.
- It can be very hit and miss in its use of scripture.
- It can be wooden, literalistic and legalistic in its use of the Bible.
- It can provide the pastor with a false, even dangerous, authority.

Although evangelicals must plead guilty to some of Wigglesworth's strictures, both in relation to something like the Gideons Bible and even more widely in relation to their use of the Bible in preaching, many of the above criticisms fall because they fail to take into account the presence of the Holy Spirit in the transaction between the person reading the Bible and the Bible itself. God's normal method may well be to use people to interpret and apply Scripture to needy individuals, as illustrated by Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian Official in Acts 8:26-40, but he is not restricted thereby. The Holy Spirit is the chief interpreter (Jn. 14:26-31; 16:12-15) who is present and at work even when others are absent. He is the indispensable partner in any pastoral transaction, however gifted

the counsellor or skilled in hermeneutics he or she might be, if the conversation is to bear good fruit.

Furthermore, who is to say that while radical surgery may be necessary, first aid may not prove the first step on the road to healing before surgery is possible? And in some situations it may be sufficient on its own. Deeper solutions may well be required than the Gideons Bible provides but it may well provide (and in countless cases it has provided) a crucial preliminary step towards a more mature faith.

It would be wrong for evangelicals to derive false encouragement from this and think themselves exempt from the need for good hermeneutics and the serious work involved in handling scripture aright. But the God who is capable of speaking through Balaam's ass, and who provides a multitude of illustrations in the Bible of speaking through imperfect messengers, is capable of owning the less than perfect efforts of such an approach.

## 2. A textbook—detailed prescriptions

This is illustrated most clearly by the writings of Jay Adams who has had a major influence on a segment of the Evangelical church. He rejects the value of contemporary disciplines such as psychology or psychiatry and regards the church's adoption of them as a betrayal of our message. He argues that the Bible alone is all we need. He advocates using the Bible as a textbook both in diagnosing problems and prescribing answers, both when handling general and when handling specific problems.

He does not consider this a debatable option.<sup>18</sup> 'The Bible's position is that all counsel that is not revelational or based upon God's revelation, is Satanic.'<sup>19</sup> He asserts his belief that the Bible is able to answer every problem comprehensively.<sup>20</sup> Hand in hand with this conviction goes a particular method. The Bible is to be used confrontationally as a tool of rebuke, in order to correct wrong behaviour, not as encouragement or *paraklesis*. Basing his approach on Colossians 1:28-29 where Paul writes of 'warning' or 'admonishing' (*nouthetountes*) everyone, so that he may 'present everyone fully mature in Christ' (TNIV), Adams calls his approach 'nouthetic counselling'.

There are attractions to this position. Busy pastors have no time, let alone expertise, to negotiate their way through contemporary counselling theories. So to be told that their expertise which lies in their knowledge of the Bible, is not only all they need but all that it is legitimate for them to use, boosts their confidence. It is not difficult to see the connection between this counselling approach and the Evangelical doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture.

In spite of this, the approach has

been severely criticised by other evangelicals for a number of reasons.<sup>21</sup> The *noutheteo* word group is small in comparison with other words that relate to pastoral care in Scripture, such as *parakaleo*, and Adams over-emphasizes it.<sup>22</sup> He lacks a deep understanding of creation and personhood. People are essentially actors and what people do is what they are. He does not take into account the deeper structures of personhood or that they may, for example, be complex unities who are shaped and moulded by their genes or their upbringings. So, never mind what the problem is, change their doing and the rest will follow.<sup>23</sup> Emotions have a secondary and contingent place at best.

The same lack of depth is evident in handling of sin. He has little place for the fallenness of creation. Although he does not believe that the difficulties we experience are in direct proportion to the sin we commit, he very quickly builds a connection between the symptoms of our suffering and our individual sin as the cause of them, or a major contributor to them. Sin is about the actions we do rather than a result of being the people we are.

Confrontation about our behaviour, therefore, is the answer without indulging in the complexities of a solution. And, as with Wigglesworth's

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**18** Jay Adams, *The Use of the Scriptures in Counselling* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1975), p. 5.

**19** Jay Adams, *More Than Redemption* (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), p. 4.

**20** Among his many other writings see, *Competent to Counsel* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970) and *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973).

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**21** See, *inter alia*, William Challis, *The Word of Life: Using the Bible in Pastoral Care* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1997), pp. 126-145 and Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: Explorations in Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Apollos, 1986, 2007), pp. 236-241.

**22** Challis, *The Word of Life*, p. 139f.

**23** This applies to Christians only. Adams regards regeneration as an essential prerequisite to helping people.

criticism of the approach of the Gideons Bible, the practitioners of this approach can use the Bible very atomistically (hence, Adams' love of Proverbs) and credit pastors with a dangerous authority that leads them to give superficial answers to any and every problem when sometimes more in depth treatment is required.

There are other, more nuanced, less clumsy and more sympathetic examples of this position, which is often associated with Reformed Evangelicals although not exclusively so. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, for example, a medical physician who became one of London's best known preachers, often argued that the need was to believe the right doctrine and to understand correctly with one's mind and then the right actions and emotions would follow. A classic statement of it can be found in his book, *Spiritual Depression: Its causes and cure*.<sup>24</sup> He succinctly sums up his approach in the opening chapter.

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself... And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and defy the whole world...<sup>25</sup>

Although one can see the value of

such an approach for some who have been seduced by over-self-indulgent western cultures, or who face trivial depressions that are more due to selfishness than to reality, it requires a fairly strong 'self' or 'ego' to benefit from such advice when depressed and it would be a despairing and damaging approach for those who were clinically depressed. The nouthetic approach is not a responsible pastoral approach if it is used exclusively or even if it is the default position which is adopted. A much broader and more sensitive range of tools is essential for effective pastoral care as the Bible itself recommends.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. A framework—significant perspective

The Bible is seen by other evangelicals not, on the one hand, as a detailed reference book but certainly, on the other hand, as much more than a vague resource. Examples may be found in Selwyn Hughes or Larry Crabb.<sup>27</sup> Selwyn Hughes recently wrote that we need a clear grasp of our problems 'and we must understand them from a *biblical* point of view'.<sup>28</sup> But he does not mean the same by this as Jay Adams does. He is not anti-psychiatry and gives serious attention to the emotional dimension of our lives and to the power of imagination within them.

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, 1 Thess. 5:14.

<sup>27</sup> Larry Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counselling: How to become a Capable Counsellor* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) and *Understanding People: Reaching Deeper through Biblical Counselling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> Selwyn Hughes, *Christ Empowered Living* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), p. 91.

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<sup>24</sup> M. Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (London & Glasgow: Pickering and Inglis, 1965).

<sup>25</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, p. 21.

Even so, he insists, 'I simply believe that Scripture can give us more complete and reliable answers to human problems than the best secular textbooks on the subject of the human psyche.'<sup>29</sup>

It does this by addressing the framework through which we view life and our worldviews rather than dealing on a surface level just with the presenting problem itself. Consequently, much has to do with unearthing the deep longings and thirsts which drive our lives and how they express themselves in the goals we choose (many of which may be inappropriate) and of the escape strategies (which may well be neurotic) that we devise to retreat from frustration when our goals are not met. These factors have an effect on our sense of security, self-worth and significance.

It is a long way from the Bible as a quick tonic. It is a more open explorative approach, as well as a deeper one. It demonstrates a much greater understanding of human personhood, of the need for intimacy and community and of the varied impact of the fall on people's lives. Yet it stays within the reach of popular counsellors, thousands of whom have been trained through CWR seminars and courses around the world.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4. The Bible informs a system: shaping a psychological approach

Roger Hurding is our representative

here. A professional psychotherapist, Hurding believes strongly that pastoral care should be community-based and exercised both within the fellowship and outside in the local community. He argues that there are four main psychological perspectives and each one uses the Bible in a different way. No one system is superior to another, although one might be more appropriate than another, and each relates to a particular style of scripture.<sup>31</sup>

- Cognitive-behavioural approaches are *prophetic* in style and prescriptive in their use of the Bible. Hebrews 4:12 epitomises the approach.
- Analytic approaches look for healing (inner healing) and emphasize the *wisdom* approach and reflection. Psalm 139 and meditation would epitomize this approach.
- Relationship counselling emphasizes issues of formation and is *pastoral* in style. It tends to *paraklesis*, with John 14:16-18 and passages like 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, epitomizing the approach.
- Inner journey, which Hurding calls Christian transpersonalism. It is *priestly* in style and uses the Bible imaginatively. The counsellor is a fellow traveller on pilgrimage with the person seeking help.

Hurding himself adopts an eclectic

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<sup>29</sup> Hughes, *Christ Empowered Living*, p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> CWR is the Crusade for World Revival, the organisation founded by Selwyn Hughes as an umbrella for his ministries.

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<sup>31</sup> Roger Hurding, *The Bible and Counselling* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), pp. 147-178. His fuller position is to be found in *Roots and Shoots: A Guide to Counselling and Psychotherapy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986).

approach but within some very clear boundaries.<sup>32</sup> He writes of the way in which ‘much counselling is blighted on the one hand by a hard-edged emphasis on the written word that tends towards aridity and judgmentalism and, on the other hand, by a type of experience-centred stress on the Holy Spirit that leads to emotional instability and doctrinal looseness’.<sup>33</sup> He believes we need to negotiate between the twin perils of Biblicism and subjectivism by a right and careful balance between the word and the Spirit.

### 5. Living communication and understanding genre

This approach has much in common with what Stephen Pattison terms the ‘informative approach’.<sup>34</sup> He illustrates it chiefly in reference to Donald Capps’ book, *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counselling*.<sup>35</sup> It works with the genre of scripture and uses scripture to give intentional shape to our experiences. Capps has done much in terms of the use of lament in the grief process. He relates it to Kubler-Ross’s work on grief and shows how by expressing complaints, trust, petition, finding assurance and renewing vows, our values are addressed and comfort is found.

But he has also written of the place of proverbs and parables. The former is particularly relevant in premarital

counselling and represents a treasury of human experience which ‘has the claim of divine sanction’. It provides ‘arrows’ into life and understanding. Parables often relate to broken relationship with resolutions coming when people gain new perceptions about themselves, others and their world.

Eugene Peterson is an example that Evangelical pastors would be familiar with, especially his book, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Care*.<sup>36</sup> Peterson takes the Wisdom books as models of the pastoral work of prayer-directing (Song of Songs); story-making (Ruth); pain-sharing (Lamentations); nay-saying (Ecclesiastes) and community building (Esther). He provides us with rich insights—for example, that the Song of Songs was read at the Passover so that the meal did not degenerate into a mere ritual and empty formula and in order to rekindle warmth in the heart for God. Ecclesiastes, which he takes as a book of true piety, refuses to let pastors come up with the easy answer or promise miracles that never happen.

Each generation of pastors, he argues, needs to build its own superstructure and, for that ‘there is not much pastoral work in scripture that can be taken over, as it is, into a pastor’s routines’.<sup>37</sup> But the Bible does provide us with a foundation on which we must build and it is on this, not our own, we must build. To do so we have to dig down deep into scripture, like

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32 For a critique of Hurding see Challis, *The Word of Life*, pp. 156-161.

33 Hurding, *The Bible and Counselling*, p. 158.

34 Stephen Pattison, *Critique*, pp. 123-126.

35 Donald Capps, *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counselling* (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1981).

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36 Eugene Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

37 Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Care*, p. 11.



archaeologists, to unearth the stones we need to use.

### 6. A workbook—helping us to learn to solve problems

Brian McLaren, one of the leaders of the Emerging Church, has recently put forward the view of the Bible as a pastoral workbook. He points out that the Bible in 2 Timothy 3:16 does not claim to be *authoritative* but *useful*. He compares it to a maths book where you work through exercises, using the textbook to give you practice and teach you methods and formulae which will help you solve the problems for yourself.<sup>38</sup> This he says is what much of Scripture is doing, especially in the narrative and proverbial sections, which are extensive.

It is an approach which resonates much more with a postmodern evangelical generation and engages with the ambiguities of ethics and paradoxes of life more than traditional approaches. It makes more sense of the narrative parts of the Bible which are often open-ended or ambiguous in terms of the right or wrong handling of situations. Our mistake, he would argue, is to see narratives as prescriptive rather than illustrative, as enshrining propositional truth, instead of inviting us to enter a story and mesh it with our own. To such people, the use of narrative and tentativeness in pastoral care is likely to grow.

Many evangelicals, however, would want to point out that at the end of the maths book there are answers which

are either right or wrong and that no teachers worthy of their profession would be satisfied with pupils endlessly working through the exercises unless they were learning to come to the correct answers, by the correct methods, as a result. To some evangelicals this approach seems to give away too much

## IV Conclusion

Evangelicals, then, do not adopt a single but rather a variety of approaches when using the Bible in pastoral care. Some of the approaches are better at avoiding the pitfalls of wooden interpretations or of texts out of context than others. Though each has strengths and weakness, none is exempted from the need to engage in careful exegesis, take note of questions of genre and interact seriously with hermeneutical issues. The more imaginative approaches as much as the more proof text approaches are all in need of solid foundations lest they prove to be nothing more than flights of unsanctified fancy. But evangelicals, by definition, should have no fear of serious biblical study and of a mature handling of scripture for pastoral purposes.

The goal of using the Bible in pastoral practice must be to bring people to experience eternal life through Jesus and then to lead them to maturity in him.<sup>39</sup> Used rightly, it is a wonderful channel of life, and life in all its full-

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<sup>38</sup> Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), p. 53.

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<sup>39</sup> This differs from the objective many in the mainstream would adopt which speaks more of psychological than spiritual wholeness, or even of freedom defined as human autonomy.

ness. If our use of the Bible does not accomplish this, then we should re-examine whether we are using it aright.

As evangelicals, because we love the Bible so much, we need to remind ourselves frequently of the words of Jesus to the Jewish leaders of his day: 'You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet

you refuse to come to me to have life' (John 5:39-40). I do not believe there are any tensions between the written word of God and the living word of God, yet, we do well to remind ourselves that our objective must be to assist people in their growth in Christ and not primarily to be able to quote chapter and verse of the Bible. The Bible is a wonderful means that God has given, but the end is Christ himself.

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# A History of the Relationship of the Evangelical Alliance with the Roman Catholic Church

Pietro Bognesi

Note: This paper was presented at a consultation sponsored by the European Evangelical Alliance in Padua (29-31 May 2007) on relations with Roman Catholic Church. Other papers dealt with 'Perspectives on relationships with the Roman Catholic Church: Southern Perspectives' (Leonardo De Chirico, IFED Padova) and 'Perspectives on relationships with the RC Church: Northern Perspectives' (Tony Lane, London School of Theology). One outcome of the consultation was a protocol (still being processed within the EEA) that indicates some guidelines for the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. For more information, contact [info@europeanea.org](mailto:info@europeanea.org)

**KEYWORDS:** *Vatican Council, aggiornamento, dialogue, magisterium, ecumenism, biblical authority, evangelism, persecution, confession.*

ONE OF THE MAIN strengths of God's people is their memory. The importance of memory for Christians depends on the basic fact that Christian faith is, above all, a historical faith. History, of course, is not the ultimate norm for Evangelicals; nevertheless it remains central in the definition of their beliefs and identity, though this is sometimes forgotten. Therefore, in order to define the contemporary evangelical profile, it is necessary to consider how Evangelicals have considered their faith

throughout history and in relation to other beliefs.

Undoubtedly, the relationship with Roman Catholicism [from now on RC] represents a major issue for Evangelicals and, particularly, for the Evangelical Alliance [from now on EA] which represents them. Moreover, the understanding of a complex issue, such as the relationship between the EA and the RC church, demands a historical perspective and the following report represents such content.

Of course, we will not be concerned with considering particular situations, but rather we will oversee the general trend and the great changes that occurred in the last decades of the last century, in the relationships between

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*Dr Pietro Bognesi (ThM) is President of Istituto di Formazione Evangelica e Documentazione (IFED), a library, research and teaching centre in Padua, Italy. He has studied at Bologna and at the Faculté Libre de Théologie, Vaux-sur-Seine, France. Amongst his publications are Il popolo dei discepoli. Contributi per un'ecclesiologia evangelica, 2001; Il movimento evangelicale, with Leonardo De Chirico, 2002; Dizionario di teologia evangelica, with Leonardo De Chirico, 2007. (Email: [pietro.bognesi@ifeditalia.org](mailto:pietro.bognesi@ifeditalia.org))*

EA and RC. While the general history of the EA has already been written, so far no study on this particular topic has appeared.<sup>1</sup>

The different approaches towards RC within the worldwide evangelical movement have often not been appropriate. Due to the global profile of the evangelical movement it is not correct to approach this topic from either a national or a personal theological perspective. It is also naïve to try to explain the past Protestant/Roman Catholic debate in terms of personal or geographical animosities. This issue is deeper than that. If as evangelicals we want to understand the Roman Catholic theology we need to have a more general or systemic approach. Any analysis of RC that fails to adopt a systemic approach, will risk misunderstanding the real nature of the issue.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was an 'aggiornamento', a revision, to the Catholic church. However, the word 'aggiornamento' does not

denote a reformation in the evangelical sense, but neither is it a merely political and linguistic device adopted to conceal an unchanging reality. It is, instead, the Catholic way of responding to the need of some kind of renewal, without altering the fundamental structure inherited from the past. It is a kind of moving without changing.

Some of the most insightful evangelical observers of the Catholic scene after the Council (i.e. Gerrit Berkouwer and David Wells) expressed perplexity in their understanding of what was going on within RC. The old critical apparatus adopted by most evangelical theologians, until that moment, appeared inadequate or obsolete to explain this evolving scenario. After more than forty years, today's question is whether that 'suspension of judgement', which was thought to be necessary, has contributed to much of the present-day evangelical disarray and has even become the typical evangelical impasse in coming to terms with Catholicism.

Both resentful resistance based on clichés from the past and undiscerning openness, mainly nurtured by 'culture war' concerns, lead to a stand-still. Yet, the 'wait-and-see' approach cannot be sustained indefinitely. Evangelicals need a pertinent framework to interpret Roman Catholicism. This needs to reflect their theological identity as well as being able to account for the multifaceted, yet unitary, reality of RC. In the absence of a solidly evangelical theological interpretative model, evangelicals will continue to be astonished by some of the inner developments within Catholicism which do not change its fundamental structure.

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1 J.W. Massie, *The Evangelical Alliance: Its Origin and Development* (London: 1846); J.W. Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship: A Centenary tribute to the Life and Work of the World Evangelical Alliance 1846-1946* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1946); J.B.A. Kessler, *A Study of the Evangelical Alliance in Great Britain* (Goes: Netherland, Oosterbaan & LeCointre N.V., 1968); Philip Jordan, *The Evangelical Alliance for The United States of America, 1847-1900 Ecumenism, Identity, and the Religion of the Republic* (Mellen Press, 1983); David M. Howard, *The Dream that Would Not Die*, (Exeter: WEF/Paternoster, 1986); W. Harold Fuller, *People of the Mandate* (Carlisle: WEF/Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996); Ian Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001).

## I Some historical mileposts

We will proceed from the present to the past to gain a better understanding of the evangelical identity set forth. At present Evangelicals are open to some kind of relationship with Catholics. Although not widely recognized, this reflects a very new atmosphere. The controversies of the past seem to have become a very far memory. Evangelicals have gained social stability in many countries. In some they continue to grow and to arouse attention. At the same time they have more and more academic respectability.

After centuries of controversy, it seems that Evangelicals and Catholics are learning the art of dialogue based on mutual respect. When someone points out harshness or dogmatic severity, it seems possible to explain it in terms of internal plurality within Catholicism. In spite of unresolved issues on doctrine, proselytism and religious freedom, this atmosphere prevents us from regarding each other as strangers. Discussions, dinners, and time together seem to open up a new season in EA and RC relations.

It seems possible even to explore some kind of co-belligerency between the two, which is developing a sense of comradeship. Secularisation appears to many Evangelicals and Catholics to be the real danger. Catholics can be heard adopting a conservative stance on many ethical issues. In this atmosphere, it becomes more and more difficult to make distinctions. On many issues Catholics and conservative Evangelicals seem to have the same opinion. The Evangelicals have great difficulty in distancing themselves from the RC *magisterium* on ethical

issues. On some occasions, on doctrinal issues it becomes even more difficult to disassociate themselves. At worst, there is a feeling of a kind of neutralism. The only uncertainty is the attitude of the new pope Benedict XVI. He seems more concerned with unity with the Orthodox Church than with Evangelicals.

This staunch separation between Protestants and Catholics reflects part of the EA's history as well. Before the Evangelical Alliance was born, evangelicals made clear that the possibility of living out our unity in Christ depended strongly on the will of all believers belonging to different denominations to overcome past doctrinal controversies and seek unity. They made clear that Protestants should learn to protest a little less and to love a little more. The unity of the people of God was perceived as a leading force and the divergences in doctrine of the past were not considered central and no longer a reason for separation between Christians.

Although the desire to open greater dialogue within the evangelical movement was very strong among the fore-runners of the Alliance, this corresponded with a definitive closing of the dialogue with Catholicism and infidelity. This great opening towards internal unity and a closing toward Catholicism and infidelity meant that both systems of belief were seen as wrong, and thus Catholicism was not treated differently from infidelity.<sup>2</sup>

If creativity is a kingdom calling,

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<sup>2</sup> The preparatory conference was held in Liverpool from 1-3 October, 1845, with 216 leaders from 20 denominations participating. 'The

this presents a problem not only for doctrinal issues, but also for ethical issues. Paradoxically, there is an impression that Evangelicals are not able to engage in creative thinking any more. They seem to have difficulty getting a perspective that can distinguish them from the RC Church. The Roman Church presents itself as a universal ethical agency in which all conservatives can find a place. Sadly, rather than reflect upon the issues at hand, many Evangelicals assume the stance provided by the RC church of not distinguishing the nature of the discussion or the outcome of such ideals.

We must now consider what roads have led to this point. Most recently, the document, *Church, Evangelisation, and the Bonds of Koinonia. A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993–2002)*,<sup>3</sup> represents the last important step in the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the EA. The *Report* is the work of an International Consultation between some representatives of the Catholic Church and some of the World Evangelical Alliance.<sup>4</sup>

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emphasis in this conference was on unity and love rather than on controversy. [...] However, there was a definite position of strong opposition both to Roman Catholicism and also to infidelity' (Howard, *Dream*, pp. 8-9).

<sup>3</sup> Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* 113 (2003/II-III) pp. 85-101; [www.ecumenism.net/archive/2002\\_wea\\_ppcu\\_church.htm](http://www.ecumenism.net/archive/2002_wea_ppcu_church.htm)

<sup>4</sup> The *Report* is the result of some meetings sponsored by international bodies on both sides: the *World Evangelical Alliance* and the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*. This initiative eventually resulted in formal

The Document consists of two parts: 1. The Church as *koinonia* (Fellowship, Communion); 2. Our Respective Views on Evangelization/Evangelism. After some consideration as to the meaning of 'Fellowship' in the NT, the document tries to describe the significance that the idea has for Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. 'Catholics tend to interpret *koinonia* in this passage to mean a participation in the divine life and "nature" while Evangelicals tend to interpret *koinonia* as covenant companionship, as it entails escaping moral corruption and the way of the world.'

The report takes into account the 'Respective Understandings of the Church and of Other Christians', according to both the Catholic and the Evangelical Views. The document is also concerned with 'Some Dimensions of the Church': its origins, the Local and Universal Church, with Convergences and Differences Between Catholics and Evangelicals on this topic. Another section concentrates on 'Preparing for a Different Future' for further dialogue. The second part, 'Our Respective Views on Evangelization/Evangelism', gives space to the Catholic view, the evangelical view and the challenge of common witness.

The *Document* recognizes that it is not an authoritative declaration and affirms that it is a study document produced by participants in the Consultation with the aim of being widely dis-

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consultations beginning in Venice in 1993, and continuing at Tantur, Jerusalem in 1997, Williams Bay, Wisconsin in 1999, Mundelein, Illinois in 2001, and Swanwick, England in 2002.

cussed. To our knowledge, only one document has tried to offer a contribution to this Report: *A Response by the IFED Faculty*.<sup>5</sup>

This fact is interesting in itself. It is evident that a large number of Evangelicals do not seem very concerned by the question. In the face of a turning point such as this, there seems to be a great deal of passivity. Two things, however, have significantly changed the perception of these events for many people. The world is moving into a culture of uncertainty and the Roman Catholic Church seems to be taking the responsibility to give guide lines. We are said to be living in a sceptical age. Actually, we live in an age of outrageous credulity.

The only *Response* known, underlines the 'inadequacy of the format; of the language and of the methodology'.<sup>6</sup> Moreover it focuses on the 'Standing theological issues which need to be faced' and the 'Long-term missiological implications' of the issues raised. It

concludes with a very concrete 'two-fold proposal'.

The document exists in a context where contact between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics is a widespread practice. *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* has produced its fourth document as a result of a series of conversations which took place between some Evangelicals and some Catholics in the USA over the ten-year period 1994-2003.<sup>7</sup> This process was challenged by some theologians,<sup>8</sup> but the ecclesiastical trend seems stronger.

It is also interesting to note that in 1999, the World Lutheran Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed a joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. At the time of the Reformation, it was the doctrine on which the church stood or fell; in the Joint Declaration it is affirmed that 'the doctrine of justification is the measure or

5 Padova, 27th May 2005; www.ifeditalia.org

6 In Roman Catholicism it is possible to speak of the written Word of God as the 'final authority', but this does not exclude the fact that the Scripture is always inextricably joined to ecclesial tradition and magisterial teaching (*Dei verbum* II,9-10). By this conception the Word of God includes sacred tradition. 'Roman Catholic theology can reconcile the affirmation of both, whereas Evangelical theology cannot. Evangelicals can affirm something and, while affirming it, deny its contrary, whereas Roman Catholics can affirm something without necessarily denying what is not explicitly denied. Their theological epistemology is a programmatic 'both-and' one and a meaningful dialogue with Roman Catholics should take it into consideration.' (IFED Faculty 2002, *Your word is truth*).

7 While the first statement 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together' (1994) introduced the conversation, 'The Gift of Salvation' (1997) focused on justification by faith, and 'Your Word is Truth' (2002) touched on Scripture and tradition. The on-going dialogue produced 'The Communion of Saints' (First Things, March 2003, pp. 26-33; hereafter COS) which develops the theme of Christian fellowship among believers.

8 For a clear discussion see De Chirico, 'Christian Unity vis-à-vis to Roman Catholicism. A Critique of the Evangelicals and Catholics Together dialogue' *ERT Oct 2003* (27:4), pp. 337-352; Chirico, *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism* (Oxford/Bern: Peter Lang, 2003). This doctoral thesis provides critical analyses of evangelical writings on present-day Roman Catholicism (including the dialogue in which WEF-WEA is involved) as well as a systemic theological approach to the Roman worldview.

touchstone for the Christian faith'.<sup>9</sup> The document seems to suggest that the condemnations of the Reformation were based on misconceptions and the separation was a mistake.

In 1999 the Italian Evangelical Alliance endorsed the document, *An Evangelical Approach Toward Understanding Roman Catholicism*. The document draws attention to a global understanding of the phenomenon, helping to give a theological and cultural perspective on the issue. However, it does not seem that this *Evangelical Approach* received the necessary consideration even though it was published in four different languages (Italian, French, German and English).<sup>10</sup> In fact, the EA at the European level did not take it into consideration. Such lack of interest over a pertinent issue is contrary to the historical identity of the Evangelical Alliance.

From the beginning of its story, the Alliance felt itself to be a guarantor of a fully catholic belief—that is a universal belief, capable of uniting in truth every fully declared evangelical

denomination. Unity in truth constituted the goal that the evangelical world was called to achieve and the Alliance was the means by which to reach such a goal. As a consequence, the theological debates between Christian denominations which were of secondary importance were rejected in order to confess unity. Therefore, although the Alliance supported an attitude of listening to and understanding between Christians, a firm opposition towards Catholicism and infidelity continued to characterize its attitude towards other beliefs.<sup>11</sup> The founding fathers considered the conflict with Rome as an inevitable principle and a specific element of the identity of the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>12</sup>

In 1995, the General Director of WEA, Jun Vencer, was asked about the document 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together' (ECT), signed by some Evangelicals, that caused so many reactions in parts of the world. His response was that 'Catholic relationships with Evangelicals vary from country to country. It can range from cordiality to persecu-

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**9** *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans 2000); see also Anthony N.S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 2002).

**10** The text can be found in *Ideitalia* III:5 (1999) pp. 7-8. Translations are available in French: 'Le catholicisme romain: une approche évangélique', *Vivre* 8-9 (2000) pp. 10-14 and *Fac-Réflexion* 51-52 (2000/2-3) pp. 44-49; in German: 'Ein Evangelikaler Ansatz zum Verständnis des Römischen Katholizismus', *Bibel Info* 59/3 (2001) pp. 10-13; in English: 'An Evangelical Approach Towards Understanding Roman Catholicism', *Evangelicals Now*, Dec 2000, pp. 12-13 and *European Journal of Theology* X (2001/1), pp. 32-35.

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**11** In the first issue of *Evangelical Christendom* (the Evangelical Alliance publication from January 1847 to 1954) it was written: 'Evangelical Christendom will advocate and exalt these common and uniting truths. Rejecting what is sectarian and partial, its pages will exhibit only the Catholic faith of God's elect. [...] Its only controversy will be with Romanism and Infidelity.' (18 cited from Kessler, *A Study of the Evangelical Alliance*, p. 42)

**12** 'The conflict...with Rome was a major factor in the thinking of those early founders, and repeated references to this are found in the pages of the journal' (Fuller, *People of the Mandate*, p. 19).



tion.<sup>13</sup> At the same time he affirmed that 'The critical issue really is the doctrinal differences between the two that remain unresolved and must not be denied or underplayed. The use of a common religious language does not mean that the meanings are the same. There are reasons to believe that they are not and have not changed since the Reformation.'<sup>14</sup> This was a very clear statement from an official leader to be considered by all who shun discussions about our relations with the Roman Catholic Church.

Taking this into consideration, it is also possible to consider some of the most important worldwide declarations from Evangelicals. When they have spoken about Roman Catholicism, they have agreed about the danger of Romanism and its vast differences from the Evangelical faith—in fact, this was an unquestioned part of evangelical conviction. The *Evangelical Affirmations* (1989), the result of a consultation co-sponsored by NAE and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, have a very clear position on Roman Catholicism.<sup>15</sup> Reformed faith was not conceived as a compatible component within the RC system, but notably, as an alternative to it.

It is entirely possible to affirm that some recent contacts between Evangelicals and Catholics have influenced

some within the EA toward a more open approach to ecumenism. An international dialogue on missions between some Evangelicals and Roman Catholics took place between 1978 and 1984. On the Catholic side it was sponsored by the Vatican's Secretariat (after 1988, Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity.<sup>16</sup> From the evangelical side there was no precise strategy stated. In dealing with the Roman Catholic Church, nobody asked whether evangelical identity could be either powerfully strengthened or dangerously weakened. There is the impression that people were involved thoughtlessly and without reflection on evangelical identity.

The contacts were always made on the basis of the authority of the individual participants, without officially representing any evangelical body. Evangelical participants included some prominent leaders such as John Stott, not in the name of WEF/WEA. These Evangelicals felt that it could be helpful to have a more irenic dialogue and the contacts show some degree of respectability vis-à-vis Evangelicalism. But the issue became more and more confusing to the point that some were asking if in the evangelical context something was changing in the doctrinal content and if they shared a common future with those with whom they engaged.<sup>17</sup>

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13 Fuller, *People of the Mandate*, p. 192.

14 Fuller, *People of the Mandate*, p. 192.

15 On *Evangelical Affirmations* (1989), a consultation co-sponsored by NAE and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; see *Evangelical Affirmations*, S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (eds.) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990). In particular see Donald A. Carson (p. 379).

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16 For the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (ERCDOM) see Basil Meeting and John Stott, (eds.), *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977-1984* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1986).

17 Thomas P. Rausch, (ed.), *Catholics and Evangelicals. Do They Share a Common Future?* (Leicester: IVP, 2000).

Moreover, in the context of WEF, the starting point of the process from Venice (1993) to Swanwick (2002) was Jerusalem (1988). Evangelicals met some Catholic leaders at the annual meetings of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWC).<sup>18</sup> The CWC meeting provided an occasion for a private conversation between Rev. David Howard, International Director of WEF, and Dr. Paul Schrottenboer, General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and Chairman of the WEF Task Force, as well as Rev. Pierre Duprey, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Msgr. John Radano of the same Pontifical Council. The issue was a Document approved by the delegates at the WEF Eighth General Assembly in Singapore (1986) about Roman Catholicism, *A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism*.<sup>19</sup>

These church leaders meeting in Jerusalem decided to hold a short meeting to discuss issues raised in the book, which took place on the occasion of the CWC meeting in October 1990 in Budapest, Hungary. Two persons from each side attended: Dr. Paul Schrottenboer and Dr. George Vandervelde for

WEF, and Msgr. Kevin McDonald and Msgr. John Radano for the PCPCU. This discussion helped to increase interest in these pertinent matters and it was proposed that a well prepared and longer consultation should be arranged for a later date. Bishop Pierre Duprey invited the consultation to meet in Venice.

What was amazing was that the document, *A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism*, was not intended for ecumenical discussion or dialogue, nor for external confrontation, but for internal clarification. It was the final step in a three-year process after a dubious action by the WEF General Secretary, Waldron Scott, at the Seventh General Assembly of the World Evangelical Fellowship, 24-28 March, 1980, in Hertfordshire, England. Scott had invited two representatives from the Roman Catholic Church to bring greetings. Ralph Martin of the Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, and Monsignor Basil Meeking of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity were given a platform from which to speak within the realm of the evangelical assembly.

It was a totally new approach to the Roman Catholic Church and was difficult for many at the Assembly to accept. In fact, the appearance of these two Catholic theologians at a Protestant gathering provoked a reaction. Delegates from Spain, France and Italy protested. After a heated debate, the Italian Evangelical Alliance withdrew its membership<sup>20</sup> and the Spanish Evangelical Alliance placed its partici-

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<sup>18</sup> This Conference, existing for more than forty years, was an informal annual meeting including the general secretaries or their equivalent, from a broad range of Christians. The International Director of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have been among the participants in this Conference.

<sup>19</sup> Published as Paul G. Schrottenboer (ed.), *Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

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<sup>20</sup> General Assembly AEI, 29/03/1980.

pation in abeyance.

As a result of the deep feelings and misunderstandings generated by this issue WEF appointed a carefully selected Task Force to study relationships with the Roman Catholic Church. It was emphasized that WEF was concerned that 'as Protestants we do not lose our evangelistic ministry to Roman Catholics and that we do not compromise our theological convictions in our contact with them'.<sup>21</sup>

The Task Force was commissioned to draw up a statement on the evangelical stance toward Roman Catholicism that all member bodies and fellowships could endorse. This Task Force was composed of leading theologians from every major region of the world, with special attention given to those areas such as southern Europe and Latin America where the Roman Catholic Church has exercised special influence in the life of the nations and peoples. At the Eighth General Assembly in Singapore in 1986 this Task Force produced the report, *A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism*. As the title indicates, the report was very irenic but also very clear about the impossibility of cooperating with the Roman Church, perhaps the result of a clearer theological perspective even if not too systemic. Gordon J. Spykman,<sup>22</sup> one of the members of the TF WEF TC, said:

This story does not yet have an ending. In view of the shortcomings in the *Perspective*, a further chapter has yet to be written. At the recent

General Assembly of the WEF, it was concluded that the report 'deals with only a limited range of issues of Roman Catholicism'. Moreover 'the Theological Commission did not have an opportunity to discuss the statement before it was sent to the Assembly'. It was therefore decided that the Theological Commission should continue this study of contemporary Roman Catholicism.

The spirit of *A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism* can be found also in other evangelical documents of the time, for example in the *Recife Conclamation* (1980)<sup>23</sup> and in the *Wheaton Declaration* (1966) on missions.<sup>24</sup> In these documents, reformed faith was not conceived of as a compatible component within the RC system but, once again, as an alternative to it.

At the Lausanne Consultation at Pattaya, Thailand (1980), the commitment to evangelize pressured Evangelicals to produce reports dedicated to 'Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among Roman Catholics'. If some Evangelicals were not happy about the expression, 'Nominal Christians Among Roman Catholics', there was still a concern for bringing the gospel to RC.

In May 1976, the participants at the annual Evangelical Alliance Confer-

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<sup>23</sup> The Italian text is published in P. Bolognesi (ed.), *Dichiarazioni evangeliche. Il movimento evangelicale 1966-1996* (Bologna: EDB 1997), §186-193.

<sup>24</sup> H. Lindsell, (ed.), *The Church's Worldwide Mission* (Waco: Word Books, 1966), pp. 215-237, DE §12.

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<sup>21</sup> Bruce J. Nicholls' letter to E. Milazzo 27/08/1980.

<sup>22</sup> *Christian Beacon*, March 12, 1987.

ence at Papua New Guinea, were led by Gottfried Osei-Mensah, as guest speaker, to study Stott's commentary on the Lausanne Document. Protestants and Catholics met on this occasion side by side, thinking about and discussing evangelism. In the end it was stated that 'right through the seminar it became very clear that we should be united in proclaiming the Gospel'.<sup>25</sup>

In the meantime, contacts between Catholics and Evangelicals took place within the activities of United Bible Societies and in the context of the Billy Graham evangelistic crusades.<sup>26</sup> These were very good occasions to unite the RC and Evangelicals together for cooperation on the field. In some countries this kind of cooperation caused disagreements among Evangelicals because it gave the impression of a doctrinal agreement with Roman Catholics.

In a few countries some Evangelicals also started open dialogues with Catholics. This was a great change from the historical past of the EA. This change could give the impression of

going from a ghetto to a network<sup>27</sup> in a very new way. However, historically speaking, these dialogues are contrary to EA identity. The Alliance has historically affirmed that the controversy with Catholicism and infidelity have been integral elements of the EA since its inception.

Furthermore, the commitment to Christian unity, the missionary effort, the defence of religious freedom, the international organization of conferences and the worldwide week of prayer provided a precise definition of the evangelical belief and identity. Every form, more or less, of declared ecumenicalism, aside from the representation of the Alliance, constitutes not only a betrayal of the historical identity of the Alliance, but also a threat to the continuity of these activities, which have established our identity. Each of these dialogues, meetings or invitations to representatives of Catholicism embodies a negation of everything which the Alliance has represented for millions of evangelicals worldwide. Those who think to promote such dialogue may seek to do so, but this will clearly not be a promotion of the interests of the Alliance, but in fact, a negation of those interests.

## II Some Systemic Approaches

It is impossible to follow all the situations in past years, but it is possible to

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**25** 'To Members of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation' LCWE, Nairobi, (June 23, 1976), pp. 1,2. But at Lausanne Congress, Ramez L. Atallah feels that in view of the complex and ambiguous situation of Roman Catholicism 'it becomes impossible to adequately study trends in modern Catholicism'. See his 'Some trends in the Roman Catholic Church Today' in J. D. Douglas (ed.), *Let the earth hear his voice*, (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), pp. 872-884.

**26** For some elements, see Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided. A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000), pp. 68-78.

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**27** It is the case in France. See Louis Schweitzer (ed.), *Le dialogue catholique-évangélique. Débats et documents* (Cléon d'Andran: Edifac, Excelsis, 2002); Sébastien Fath, *Du ghetto au réseau. Le protestantisme évangélique en France 1800-2005* (Genève : Labor et Fides, 2005).

derive some main points from these occurrences.

An important step in the history of differences between Evangelicals and Catholics was the National Assembly of Evangelicals in Great Britain in 1966. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Stott focused on what was a Christian and what was a church.<sup>28</sup> The question of dialogue and relationship put at stake the question of identity.

The Evangelicals charged that 'the Church of Rome continually denounces the public-school system of the United States and that to Roman policy makers, state support of their schools is only one step toward RC control of all government functions and of the Government itself'.<sup>29</sup> The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) also opposed the establishing of diplomatic ties with the Vatican that sounded like a preference of one religion over others, and unwarranted entanglement of church and state. Also, in the 1960s, the Evangelicals in the United States were not happy about the religious affiliation of President Kennedy. NAE leaders were not optimistic about the matter: 'We doubt that the RC president could or would resist fully the pressures of the ecclesiastical hierarchy'.<sup>30</sup>

After the Second World War, Evangelicals in the United States were aware of the policy of the Roman Catholic Church in seeking a dominant role in public life. It was seen as one of the contenders with Protestant modernism and secularism in a 'struggle for power' for the dominant role in shaping 'America's cultural patterns'. The NAE represented a ray of hope for winning America. Its doctrinal position and its spirit of cooperation were seen as a good bulwark.<sup>31</sup> Catholicism was enjoying unprecedented vitality and respectability in America and American Catholic leaders felt more confident than ever that they could promote their dream of applying the 'culture of Catholicism'<sup>32</sup> to every sphere of life, as they had done in so many other nations before.

This kind of approach was not new in the context of the EA. From the very beginning, the EA was involved in protesting at the persecution of Protestants in Roman Catholic countries. Having become General Secretary of the British organisation in 1904, H. Martyn Gooch took on an 'ambassadorial role' in the 1920s and 1930s in support of European Evangelicals oppressed by Roman Catholicism. After the fall of the Berlin wall, when

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28 Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, pp. 68-78; D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Fight of faith 1939-1981* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1990).

29 'Learning from the past: A History of the Public Policy Resolutions of the Nation Association of Evangelicals' in Ronald J. Sider and Diane Knippers (eds.), *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), p. 40.

30 Sider and Diane Knippers, *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy*, p. 45.

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31 Harold J. Ockenga, 'Can Fundamentalism Win America?', *Christian Life and Times* (June 1947), pp. 13-15. At Fuller, Harold Lindsell wrote *A Christian Philosophy of Mission* (Wheaton: Van Kampen, 1949), where Roman Catholicism was considered among the 'arch enemies of America and our way of life and of the true faith' (p. 223).

32 Harold Fey, 'Can Catholicism Win America?' (*Christian Century* eight-part series in 1944 and 1945).

the EA was founded in Romania (1989), believers in that country proclaimed that repression of Evangelicals did not start with the Communist regime, but that the RC Church had always been hostile to Evangelicals. They hoped that the EA would help to oppose the discrimination and oppression in their nation and enable them to live out their evangelical faith.

For Evangelicals it seemed clear that Roman Catholicism was a 'system'.<sup>33</sup> For this reason there was no sense in considering only one particular topic or doctrine in Catholicism. This was a unanimous conviction on the part of all evangelicals.

Another occasion on which the EA gave due attention to Catholicism was the Ninth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance, held in Florence in 1891.<sup>34</sup> Even though some other Conferences were important as well [London (1851), Paris (1855), Berlin (1857), Geneva (1861), Amsterdam (1867), New York (1873), Basel (1879), Copenhagen (1884)], the Ninth General Conference was considered as 'one of the most delightful and successful gatherings of Christian brethren ever held'.<sup>35</sup>

The Conference showed a remarkable awareness of the *context* by giving attention to the 'new aspect of the Roman Catholic religion since the loss

of temporal power and the establishment of religious liberty opened the opportunity for such a Conference to be held'.<sup>36</sup> Many testimonies reported discrimination, but the perspective wasn't merely geographical.

We know, also, how great, powerful, astute, and implacable is our enemy, the Papacy... Catholicism cannot succeed in this work of awaking the conscience... Romanism destroys the power of the Gospel by its subtle distinctions between different kinds of sin.<sup>37</sup>

For centuries Antichrist was a code word among Protestants for Roman Catholicism, but for Evangelicals the more important question was the conversion of people from darkness to light.

The Conference underlined also a *historical* perspective. Philip Schaff was very clear about the effect of the Reformation.

It emancipated half of Europe from the spiritual tyranny of the papacy, and cleared away the rubbish of medieval traditions, which obscured and 'made void the Word of God' like the rabbinical traditions of old (Matthew 15:6) and which obstructed the access to Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.<sup>38</sup>

The Evangelicals spoke without fear of the reasons for the suppression of the Reformation in Italy and their great consequences for the national culture. They said that 'Italy has fallen asleep religiously in the Roman

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33 Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962), pp. 455,459.

34 R.A. Redford(ed.), *Christendom from the standpoint of Italy*. The Proceedings of the Ninth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance, held in Florence in 1891 (London: Office of Evangelical Alliance, 1891).

35 Redford, *Christendom*, p. 1.

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36 Redford, *Christendom*, p. 2.

37 Redford, *Christendom*, pp. 115, 195.

38 Redford, *Christendom*, p. 29.

Catholic doctrine' and that 'Romanism has inoculated into the Christian religion the form of a magical and idolatrous naturalism'... and it is 'the very opposite of that duty which distinguishes the human soul'.<sup>39</sup> There was no illusion about the possibility of a renewal with such a doctrine because 'its ultimate result can only be ignorant credulity in the midst of ignorant incredulity'. 'Here, indeed, Romanism has worked the greatest destruction' (p. 54). 'It will be easy to understand now that the Evangelicals are the only ones who have rightly understood the religious problem of Italy.'<sup>40</sup>

Evangelical thought is the opposite of Catholic thought. A historian said that the obstacles to Reformation in the fifteenth century as well as in the nineteenth were 'centred in the Papacy. Everyone knows that the political obstacles were impersonated there'.... 'Rome is an amalgam of truth and error.'<sup>41</sup>

It is well-known that one of the reasons why the Reformation could not take root in Italy was the concern of Roman Catholicism to keep the country divided:<sup>42</sup> on one side the formal Latin and Romanic unity, on the other side individualism. In a certain way it seems possible to think in a *systemic* manner. It was perhaps for this reason that Evangelicals were conscious that Florence would be 'the first attempt to influence a Catholic population'.<sup>43</sup> They

felt that to be near to Roman Catholicism could be a fatal seduction for the gospel that they would preach. The Evangelicals were convinced they were an alternative to Roman Catholicism because Catholicism was a factor of cultural pollution in the life of the country.

From the beginning the EA was concerned with a 'definite posture of a strong opposition both to Roman Catholicism and also to infidelity'.<sup>44</sup> The spiritual unity of the pioneers had a doctrinal basis and the conflict with Rome was a major factor in their thinking. 'The references to "Romanism" and "Infidelity" are elaborated with pejorative language.'<sup>45</sup> They realized 'the paralysing influences of the Romish Antichrist'. Evangelicals were not terrorized by such controversial issues. They were confident in the power of the gospel for salvation and spoke as such.

Prior to the 1891 conference, the Evangelical Alliance of Geneva received an invitation extended to Protestants by Pius IX in 1868, on the eve of the First Vatican Council, to come back to the fold of Rome. The Alliance answered that for Christians who submit to the authority of Scripture it was impossible to fall back under the power of Rome. The freedom of God's children was and is endangered by the tyranny of the Roman yoke. There was no way of accepting the invitation of the Pope, given the fundamental clash between Rome and the Protestant faith.

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39 Redford, *Christendom*, p. 52.

40 Redford, *Christendom*, pp. 53, 55.

41 Redford, *Christendom*, pp. 61, 113.

42 N. Macchiavelli, *Discorsi I*, 1, cap. 12, AE, p. 79.

43 Macchiavelli, *Discorsi I*, p. 39.

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44 Howard, *Dream*, p. 9; also Kessler, *A Study of the Evangelical Alliance*, p. 42.

45 Howard, *Dream*, p. 19.

### III Some Provisional Conclusions

Based on these matters and historical facts, how can we come to a conclusion? It would be wrong to attach too much significance to these labels, but it is obvious that the future belongs to those Evangelicals who can learn from their past.

It seems that the Roman communion does not appear to be a strictly confessional body inasmuch as, since Vatican II, it is quite latitudinarian in doctrine and practice. It is not necessary to adhere strictly to the magisterial doctrine as embodied in the conciliar pronouncements or the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to be regarded as a faithful Roman Catholic. What is essential is to remain in submission to the Roman see. But from the very beginning the EA was born with the conviction that the church was one; this was the reason why its task is not 'to create this unity, but to confess it'.<sup>46</sup> If we take for granted that 'that seminal concept not only characterized the Alliance formed in 1846, but also its subsequent history in every land and every era',<sup>47</sup> it seems possible to search for a more coherent approach.

It seems that until *A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective on Roman Catholicism* (1986), the EA was aware that it held a different perspective from that of Catholicism. It was clear that the EA and the RC Church had two different theological structures. It clearly

affirmed that it was impossible to cooperate with RC. This kind of clear polarisation was based on a different doctrinal perception. Twenty years ago, evangelical leaders were not afraid of possible disagreements with the RC Church because they knew that such contrasts were unavoidable.

But since then important changes have taken place. Great changes frequently go unnoticed when they happen under the guise of cultural change. The true nature of such changes often becomes evident only after the fact. Dialogues have a function in gaining a better perspective. The approach has been less and less global. The EA has refused in this day to fully develop its attitude toward Catholicism. There have been some episodic approaches, but nothing concrete to provide a strong identity. It is clear that a coherent vision is being lost. This is the reason why it seems urgent to develop a theological approach that will enable the EA to have a common methodological approach to the RC church. It also needs to develop secure identity as to who we once were, based on our common history as Evangelicals.

If the EA is to be the most representative international institution or agency for Evangelicals, it must have a common theological understanding of Catholicism and a confessional approach to it. The search for identity in ecumenicity needs to take into account a clear view of Roman Catholicism and the theological implications of such a union with RC. Based on our search for an enduring identity, the relationship with the Roman Catholic Church is not a secondary matter, and therefore there is a need for a common attitude toward it.

<sup>46</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of the Conference held at Freemasons' Hall in London, August 19 September 2, 1846, cit. in Fuller, *People of the Mandate*, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> Fuller, *People of the Mandate*, p. 19.



# From the Jewish Messiah to the Creeds of the Church

Oskar Skarsaune

**KEYWORDS:** *Divinity of Jesus, Enthronement of the Messiah, Hellenization of Christianity, Jewish Messianism, Wisdom Christology*

## I Introduction

The title of my paper suggests a kind of movement or change: from the Jewish Messiah, which is one thing, to the divine Saviour of the creeds of the church, which is something quite different. If you take this change for granted, another conclusion immediately follows: since the point of departure, the Messiah, is characterized as Jewish, the end product, the Saviour of the creeds, has every chance of being non-Jewish. That is a point of view shared by many Jews, whether they believe Jesus to be the Messiah or not.

The traditional Jewish position is this: Jesus never was the Messiah because he did not accomplish the messianic task, which was to liberate Israel from oppression, redeem the

world and reestablish the full observance of the Torah. Jesus did not live up to what was legitimately expected of the Messiah;<sup>1</sup> accordingly it was a hopeless task, right from the beginning, to proclaim him as the Messiah to a Jewish audience. Therefore this project was soon discarded, and instead Jesus was launched as something other than the Jewish Messiah, and before a non-Jewish audience, and with much greater success. Instead of being the Redeemer of the nation of Israel, he

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<sup>1</sup> In Antiquity this objection was stated by Trypho in Justin's *Dialogue*, 32.1. In the Middle Ages it was stated with much force by Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, a.k.a. Nachmanides) at the disputation at Barcelona, 1263; see his *Vikvach* in Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (London/Washington: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993, pp. 120-122.) In modern times the argument is repeated, for example, in David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod, *Jews and 'Jewish Christianity'* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1978), pp. 18-22.

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*Oskar Skarsaune* (Dr. theol.), is professor of church history at the MF Norwegian School of Theology (Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet), Oslo, and a member of The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. His English publications include *The Proof from Prophecy. A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition* (*Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 56; Brill, 1987); *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?* (*Concordia*, 1991); and with Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The First Centuries* (*Hendrickson*, 2007). He is an active participant in the Norwegian Church Ministry to Israel. This article is a revised version of a paper published in Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism: Seventh International Conference Helsinki 2003 (ed. Kai Kjær-Hansen; Århus: LCJE 2003), pp. 71-80, with permission from the editor.

was turned into something quite different: the divine Saviour of the individual souls of Gentile Christians.

This development is often called 'the hellenization' of early Christianity,<sup>2</sup> and it is more or less taken for granted in many quarters that this is the right way to describe it historically. Not only do many Jews think this way; many Gentile Christians also share the basic historical presuppositions of this model. They may evaluate it differently, however. Some think it was a healthy and also necessary development, Christianity breaking away from Jewish nationalism and particularism.

This, more or less, was the position of classical liberalism within the Protestant camp. It was a good thing that Jesus did not remain the Jewish Messiah he probably never was. Liberal Protestantism was, however, not entirely happy about the Saviour of the creeds either. They found him too Greek, too embedded in Greek philosophy and metaphysics. So they sought a third alternative, which they believed they had found in the real Jesus, the so-called historical Jesus, who was neither Jewish Messiah nor the divine Saviour of the creeds, but rather a good liberal theologian himself, with a message that modern liberals found congenial.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The classic statement of this concept is Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte I-III* (several *Auflagen*, the final from Harnack's hand being the fourth, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1909); English translation: *History of Dogma (in Seven Volumes Bound as Four)* (transl. from the third German ed. by Neil Buchanan; New York: Dover, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> Again, the classic statement is due to von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig:

In recent times, this idea has been widely abandoned, except by the scholars belonging to the Jesus Seminar in the USA, who have tried to modernize it. Much more in vogue, however, and especially in circles engaged in Jewish/Christian dialogue, is another twist to the basic concept. This is the view that Jesus in fact never was and never claimed to be the Jewish Messiah. Instead, his divine mission was to redeem the Gentiles, to become precisely what he became: the Saviour of the Gentiles. In this way, there can be a peaceful and harmonious co-existence between Judaism and Christianity. God gave the Torah and the Covenant to Israel, and he has never revoked either of them. But he gave Jesus to the Gentiles to be their Covenant and their Saviour.<sup>4</sup> This position is not as new and original as some of its defenders may think. In the debate with Justin, Trypho the Jew said the following:

Let him [Jesus] be recognized of you who are of the Gentiles, as Lord and Christ and God, as the

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Hinrich, 1900); English translation: *What is Christianity?* (transl. by Thomas Bailey Saunders) (New York: Harper, 1957). Cf. the devastating criticism of this concept in Albert Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1906—later editions under the title *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung I-II*); English translation: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (3rd. ed.; London: Black, 1954).

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most prominent spokesman for this position is Allan Brockway, director of the WCC's Committee on the Church and the Jewish People 1979-1988. See, for example, his article in *Current Dialogue* 1986, issue 10, pp. 9-12.

Scriptures signify, seeing also that you have acquired the name of Christians from him. But as for us [Jews], who are [already, by the Torah] worshippers of God...—we do not need to confess him or worship him.<sup>5</sup>

If I am not completely mistaken, many Jewish believers share the view that a significant development took place between the Jewish Messiah Jesus they find in the Gospels, and the rather un-Jewish Saviour of the Gentiles they find in the creeds. But they are unhappy about this change. They think Jesus, or rather the picture of him, was transformed in the process to such an extent that he has become alienated from his own people. He became what he was not, and what he was, was lost. That—they would add—is why the Saviour of the creeds is not a Messiah we can present to our Jewish friends. They would never recognize him as the Messiah of Israel, and rightly so.

This view is supported not only by modern groups of Jewish believers who emphatically identify themselves as new Ebionites.<sup>6</sup> It finds echo among many rather mainstream Jewish believers who cannot suppress a persistent uneasiness about the Greek terminology and the philosophically sounding terms of the creeds.

With this, I have more or less out-

lined the context in which I want to set the discourse contained in the rest of this paper. I shall first of all briefly summarise my argument: I want to challenge the common presupposition in all the points of view referred to above, namely that there is a radical difference between the Gospel portrait of Jesus and that contained in the creeds. In my view, the Apostolic Creed embodies a Messianic portrait of Jesus that is strikingly Jewish, and in line with that contained in the Synoptic Gospels. Next, I want to argue that the Nicene Creed has no other Christology than the one contained in the Prologue to the Gospel of John, and in some important passages in the Pauline letters, and that this Christology has a solid biblical and Jewish basis.

I thus want to contend that both Christologies, the 'Synoptic' of the Apostolic Creed, and the 'Johannine' of the Nicene Creed, though different, are Jewish. This also means that I will argue that our picture of Judaism and Jewishness at the time of the New Testament needs to be broadened.<sup>7</sup> Judaism at that time could comprise a wider plethora of Messianic models than became the case later.

## II The Christology of the Apostles' Creed

The exact date and provenance of this creed is not known, but there is general

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<sup>5</sup> Translation according to Arthur Lukyn Williams, *Justin Martyr: The Dialogue with Trypho* 64:1 (London: S.P.C.K., 1930), p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> On the web one can find several homepages of Ebionite groups, like Bet Emet Ministries, The Ebionite Jewish Community, Sons Aumen Israel, and others.

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<sup>7</sup> In general, see my two books *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?* (Concordia Scholarship; St. Louis: Concordia, 1991); and *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), esp. pp. 35-39 and 301-338.

agreement among scholars that we should not be very far off the mark if we say that in its present form it was fixed in writing around AD 600 in the southwest of France, and that it was a daughter creed of the much older creed used in the Christian community at Rome, probably already in the third century A.D.<sup>8</sup> This famous Old Roman Creed reads like this in the second article:

And [I believe] in *Christos Iesous* His only Son, our Lord,  
 (1) Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
 (2a) Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried,  
 (2b) on the third day rose again from the dead,  
 ascended to heaven,  
 sits at the right hand of the Father,  
 whence He will come to judge the living and the dead.<sup>9</sup>

The original language of this creed is Greek, and I have left the words for Christ Jesus untranslated as they stand in the Greek text. This is because I am not certain the best way to render them in English is by saying 'Christ Jesus'. In Greek, *Christos* means 'Anointed,' and is a wooden translation

into Greek of Hebrew *mashiach* and Aramaic *meshicha*. In this creed, therefore, *Christos* could well be understood to be a title rather than a second name for Jesus. (When translating, you normally translate a title, but not a name. A name is only transliterated. Rendering *maschiach/meshicha* as *christos* in Greek thus means you treat the word as a title, not a name. But when the Greek word was rendered in Latin texts, it was no longer translated into its Latin equivalent, *unctus*, but was only transliterated: *Christus*. This means: the word was now perceived to be a name, not a title. From Latin this name passed into the vernacular European languages as *Christus*, *Christ*, *Kristus*, *Krist*, etc.)

Accordingly, the best way to translate the words *Christos Iesous* in the Old Roman creed is very likely 'Messiah Jesus' or 'The Anointed Jesus'. From the very beginning, *christos* was understood to be the *title* of the end-time king of Israel, the Anointed One. And the general rule is that when *Christos* is put *before* the name Jesus, it often still retains its meaning as a title, even in later texts.

So far, this has to remain an attractive hypothesis, but let us see if there are more messianic characteristics of this old creed. Many have observed the striking fact that this article of the creed leaves many interesting things out. There is no explicit statement about the pre-existence of Jesus before he was born by Mary; there is in fact no explicit statement about his divinity at all. Concerning his human life, the creed is silent about his preaching and teaching, and also, more surprisingly, has nothing to say about his healings and his fight against the evil powers.

<sup>8</sup> The classic monograph on the Apostles' Creed and on the Nicene Creed, and on early creeds in general, is John N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd or later editions; 3rd ed. London: Longman, 1972). On the Apostles' Creed, the most recent extensive study is Liuwe H. Westra, *The Apostles' Creed: Origin, History, and Some Early Commentaries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> This and the following translations of early Christian creeds are taken from Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*.

Born by Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, on the third day risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father, coming to judge the living and the dead: whatever this summary might be, it is clearly no ordinary biography, no summation of an ordinary, not even an extraordinary, human life. Even an extraordinary human life is characterized by what happens between birth and death, but in Jesus' case it seems to be exactly the opposite: only his birth and death receive any attention!

But let us assume, for a moment, that the intention of the creed was not to tell the story of the life of Jesus, but to proclaim him as the Messiah. What would be most important about the Messiah? Basically two facts: *firstly* his birth as a member of the house of David, and *second* his enthronement as the Messiah, the King of Israel, the Son of God. And precisely these two points are the dominating centres of the creed! We have to understand the creed's statements about the resurrection of Jesus, his ascension and heavenly enthronement at the right hand of the Father as the story of his enthronement as King—as the creed's way of telling how Jesus was enthroned as the Messiah.

If we do so, we recognize in the creed exactly the same structure as in one of the oldest summaries of the gospel ever written, Romans 1:3f:

- ... the gospel concerning God's Son,  
 (1) who was of David's seed according to the flesh,  
 (2) but *was made Son of God* in power according to the Spirit of holiness, *by his resurrection from the dead*: Jesus Messiah, our Lord.<sup>10</sup>

What Paul is saying here, in essence, is that the Davidic descendant, Jesus, was made Son of God, that is: *was enthroned as the Messiah by his resurrection from the dead* (and in this, the ascension and enthronement at God's right hand are implied).

Once we have recognized this twofold structure of the creed, in agreement with Romans 1:3f., we also observe that the judgement of the living and the dead is the last and crowning expression of the reign of the Messiah, and that his suffering and death are, so to speak, the necessary point of departure for his resurrection and ascension. Before he could ascend, he had to descend. Before he could rise, he had to die.

This structure in the understanding of the Messianic career of Jesus is very clearly spelled out in some other texts which also have good chances of representing some of the oldest samples of Christian preaching that we have: the first speeches of Peter in Acts. In his speech on the day of Pentecost, Peter refers to David in the following words: 'He was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne' (Acts 2:30). And how did God fulfil this promise? By raising Jesus from the dead!

By the raising of Jesus from the dead and exalting him to heaven, enthroning him at the Father's right hand, Jesus was enthroned as the Davidic Messiah promised to David by the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 7:12 'I will *raise up* your offspring... and I will

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<sup>10</sup> My own translation.

establish his kingdom.’<sup>11</sup>). In this prophecy, says Peter, ‘he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah’ (Acts 2:31). In Peter’s understanding, Jesus has now been enthroned, and in his imminent appearance he will establish his Messianic reign, fulfilling all promises given to God’s people:

Repent, and turn to God... that he may send the Messiah who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.... Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days (Acts 3:19-24 NIV, slightly modified).

It is clear from this that the traditional Jewish objection against Jesus being the Messiah—that he did not fulfil the Messiah’s task before he died—is widely off the mark, in Peter’s perspective. Peter would agree that Jesus’ mission during his life on earth, before the last Passover, should not be seen as fulfilling the Messianic task; it was rather a preparation for it.<sup>12</sup> Jesus entered his Messianic office by dying

and rising again and ascending to his heavenly throne. In Peter’s speeches in Acts, and also in Jesus’ teaching after his resurrection (according to Luke), the death of Jesus is seen as almost only a necessary transition that made it possible for him to rise from the dead, Acts 2:23-24; 3:18.

Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and *then* enter his glory? (Luke 24:26, cf. also 24:46-47).

It was, I suppose, only after some time that the disciples of Jesus were able to understand that the death of Jesus was an integral part of the total event of the enthronement of their Messiah, and that his death on the cross was a saving event in itself, with its own significance. They found the clue to this, as Jesus had done before them, in Isaiah 53.

We have seen how Peter in these speeches, and Paul in Romans 1:3f, both emphasize the Davidic descent of the Messiah, and we know that the early Church was convinced that not only was Jesus’ adoptive father Joseph a son of David, but his mother in the flesh, Mary, was also of David’s seed.<sup>13</sup> So now we are in a position to see how entirely biblical the second article of

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11 On verbs for ‘raising up’ in messianic texts being understood to imply the Messiah’s rising from the dead, see D.C. Duling, ‘The Promises to David and their Entrance into Christianity: Nailing Down a Likely Hypothesis’, *New Testament Studies* 20 (1973/74), pp. 55-77.

12 In this Peter would probably be in line with Jesus’ own understanding. His baptism by John was not his enthronement as the Messiah, but rather his *designation* as the Messiah-to-be. Cf. the extensive argument for this view in Ragnar Leivestad, *Jesus in His Own Perspec-*

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*tive: An Examination of His Sayings, Actions, and Eschatological Titles* (transl. by David E. Aune; Minneapolis: Augsburg 1987).

13 This is emphatically affirmed already in Ignatius’ creed-like formulas around A.D. 110: ‘... conceived by Mary according to God’s plan, of the seed of David...’, *Ephes.* 18.2; ‘... who was of the stock of David, who was from Mary...’, *Trall.* 9; ‘... he was truly of David’s stock after the flesh... begotten truly of the Virgin...’, *Smyrn.* 1.1-2.

the Apostolic Creed is. Jesus was born of Mary; he was a son of David as well through her as through his adoptive father Joseph. He entered his Messianic reign by dying and rising on the third day and ascending to heaven and being enthroned at God's right hand, where he now reigns as Messiah and will complete the Messianic task at his return when he comes to judge the living and the dead.

### III The Christology of the Nicene Creed.

Perhaps I succeeded in convincing some of you that the Christology of the Apostles' Creed is much more Jewish than would appear at first sight. My task now is probably more difficult: I shall try to convince you that the Christology of the Nicene Creed is also Jewish.

Let me begin by saying a few words about its age and provenance. I said earlier that the Apostles' Creed derives from a local creed in Rome which can be dated to around the middle of the third century AD. The Nicene Creed likewise derives from a much older creed that may have been used in the land of Israel during the third century. We know one example of such a creed; it was the one on which Eusebius of Caesarea was baptized in his childhood or youth, probably in the 260s or 270s. Its second article runs like this:

And [we believe] in one Lord, Jesus  
Christ,  
the Logos of God,  
God from God,  
light from light,  
life from life,  
Son only begotten,

first-begotten before all creation,  
begotten before all ages from the  
Father,  
through whom [i.e. the Son] all  
things came into being,  
who because of our salvation was  
incarnate,  
and dwelt among men,  
and suffered,  
and rose again on the third day,  
and ascended to the Father,  
and will come again in glory to judge  
the living and the dead.

At the famous council at Nicaea in AD 325, another local creed, very similar to this, and possibly the creed of Jerusalem, was adopted by the council as its creed, with only some few precisions being made in the text of the creed itself.<sup>14</sup> The metaphorical expressions, 'God from God, light from light' and 'begotten from the Father, only-begotten' were made clear by adding that they mean the Son is 'of the same stuff' (or of the same substance—Greek: *homousios*) as the Father (as a ray of light from the sun is 'of the same light-stuff' as the sun itself: light from light, or as a brook from a source is of the same stuff as the source from which it flows: water from water; or a tree is of the same stuff as the root from which it grows: wood from wood.)<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> On the council and its creed-making there is an overwhelming amount of scholarly literature. See, for an authoritative overview, Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, chs. VI-VIII. As an introduction to more recent discussions, see Skarsaune, 'A Neglected Detail in the Creed of Nicaea (325),' in *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987), pp. 34-54.

<sup>15</sup> These three metaphors (light from light, river from source, tree from root) were to

This 'of the same stuff' concept also applies when a human father begets a son, but not when he makes a statue: the son, *because begotten*, is of the same stuff as the father: man from man. But the statue, *because made*, is of a different stuff from its maker. It was therefore also added in the creed that begotten means begotten, not created, not made. The resultant creed of AD 325, second article, runs like this:

And [we believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
 the Son of God,  
 begotten from the Father as only-begotten,  
*that is, from the substance of the Father,*  
 God from God,  
 light from light,  
*true God from true God,*  
*begotten not made,*  
*of one substance with the Father,*  
 through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth,  
 who because of us men and because of our salvation  
 came down and became incarnate, becoming man,  
 suffered  
 and rose again on the third day,  
 ascended to the heavens,  
 will come to judge the living and the dead.

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become commonplaces in the works of the Fathers from Justin onwards. Tertullian says these metaphors are taught us by the Holy Spirit—obviously in Scripture. As I am going to point out below, all three metaphors are indeed biblical. The introduction of the term 'substance' (essence, stuff) is meant only to clarify the import of these metaphors.

As you will understand, I have printed the additions made at Nicaea in italics. The Fathers at the council would have argued strongly that these additions did nothing else than make explicit the more metaphorical language of the older creed, and I shall here only state that I think they were absolutely right. Some argument for this view will come as we proceed. In AD 381 in Constantinople, this creed of AD 325 was reaffirmed, with only minor polishing of style in the second article, and some interpolations from the Old Roman Creed (printed below in bold characters), possibly to make it truly ecumenical. It is this creed from AD 381 we know as the Nicene Creed. Again I quote only the second article:

And [we believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
 the only-begotten Son of God,  
 begotten from the Father before all ages,  
 light from light,  
 true God from true God,  
*begotten not made,*  
*of one substance with the Father*  
 through whom all things came into existence,  
 who because of us men and because of our salvation  
 came down from heaven,  
 and was incarnate **from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary**  
 and became man,  
 and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,  
 and suffered  
**and was buried,**  
 and rose again on the third day  
 according to the Scriptures  
 and ascended to heaven,  
**and sits at the right hand of the**



**Father,**

and will come again with glory to judge living and dead, of whose kingdom there will be no end.

There can hardly be any doubt: the question of whether this creed is biblical, depends on the question of whether the shorter creed behind it is biblical, e.g. the one quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea. I therefore suggest we turn to this somewhat simpler creed in the following. I here repeat its text, but insert the primary biblical references for each of the clauses which this creed has extra, compared with the Apostles' Creed:

And [we believe] in one Lord, Jesus Christ, (1 Cor. 8:6)

the Logos of God, (John 1:1f.)

God from God, (John 1:1)

light from light, (Wis. 7:26)

life from life, (John 5:21, 26)

Son only begotten, (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18)

first-begotten before all creation, (Col. 1:15; Prov. 8:22)

begotten before all ages from the Father, (Prov. 8:23 Septuagint)

through whom [i.e. the Son] all things came into being,

(1 Cor. 8:6; John 1:3; Col. 1:16;

Heb. 1:2; Gen. 1:1; Prov. 8:22.30; Wis. 7:22)

who because of our salvation was incarnate, (John 1:14, Sir. 24:8)

and dwelt among men, (Baruch 3:38)

and suffered,

and rose again on the third day,

and ascended to the Father,

and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

It is easy to see that this creed is

based on some New Testament passages and some Old Testament passages (including some from the Jewish Apocrypha). The New Testament passages are the following:

For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things [were made], and for whom we [live],

and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through whom all things [were made]*, and through whom we [live] (1 Cor. 8:6 NIV, modified).

He is the image of the invisible God, the *firstborn before all creation*. For *by him all things were created*; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.... *all things were created by him and for him*. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col. 1:15-17 NIV, modified).

In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God and *the Logos was God*. He was with God in the beginning. *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*. In him was *life* and that life was the *light of men*.... The Logos *became flesh and pitched his tent* among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the *Only begotten*, who *came from the Father*, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-4,14 NIV, modified).

In these last days God has spoken to us through his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and *through whom he made the universe*. The Son is *the radiance of God's glory* and the *exact image of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word*. After he had provid-

ed purification for sins [through his death], he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (Heb. 1:2-3 NIV, modified).

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, *the origin of God's creation* (Rev. 3:14 NIV, modified).

Not only can most terms in the creed be recognized in these passages, but some of them exhibit the same total structure, having the same story-line as the creed. So there is no doubt that the second article of the creed is biblical in the sense that each and every one of its sayings can be seen to have support in New Testament texts. But then—some would argue—our initial question whether any of this can be called Jewish, is not answered. We have to pose it anew, this time with reference to New Testament texts and New Testament Christology. Is this Christology Jewish?

Let me say it at once and quite bluntly. When looking for the Old Testament and Jewish background of this Christology, one should not begin by looking at the Messianic prophecies of the Bible. Instead, one should look in the biblical and apocryphal texts with the following question in mind: Where in these texts do I find sayings about an 'X' of which it is said: God *created the world by/through/with the help of X*? One needs only pose this question, and every Bible reader will know the answer: sayings of this kind are not made about the Messiah, the king of David's seed, but about God's Wisdom personified. Let us review some of the most important passages. I italicise the words and phrases most relevant to the New Testament passages and the creed:

*By Wisdom* the Lord laid the earth's foundation... (Prov. 3:19 NIV).

The Lord *begat* me as the *Beginning* of his ways, before his deeds of old. I was formed at the first, *before the earth*.<sup>16</sup> When there were no depths I was born,... before the mountains... before the hills *I was begotten*.... When he set for the sea its limit... then was I beside him as his *craftsman*... (Prov. 8:22-30, my own translation).

Wisdom... is a pure *emanation of the glory* of the Almighty... for she is *the radiance of the eternal light*, the spotless mirror of the power of God, *the image of his goodness*. And she, who is one, can do all things, and renews everything... (Wis 7:25-27 NAB, modified).

Now *with you is Wisdom*, who knows your works and *was present when you made the world* (Wis 9:9 NAB).

[Wisdom says:] From the mouth of the Most High I came forth, and mistlike covered the earth... I sought a resting place,... then the Creator of all gave me his command... saying: *Pitch your tent* in Jacob... *In the holy tent* I ministered before him, and in Zion I fixed my abode (Sir. 24:3-10 NAB, modified).

Here we meet God's Wisdom spoken of as if it were a person outside God, yet at the same time clearly being

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<sup>16</sup> The Septuagint here reads *pro tou aiononos*, an expression which the creed takes over and intensifies by saying the Son was begotten of the Father *pro pantoon toon aionoon*, 'before all the worlds/ages', or, a little more freely translated: 'before any world was created'.

conceived of as God's own wisdom. Wisdom is part of God, and therefore divine, and assists him in creating the world. We also hear, in Sirach 24, of a kind of incarnation of this preexistent Wisdom, and the verb used for Wisdom's dwelling on earth is the same as the one used in John 1:14: Wisdom *pitched its tent* on Zion—clearly a reference to the tent of meeting and the functionally equivalent temple on Zion.

There is every reason to believe that within second Temple Judaism a strong need was felt to clearly identify this divine Wisdom, so as not to make it a threat to God's unity. The solution was to identify it with God's Word (so Philo), or the Torah (so Sirach and the Rabbis). The result was a transformation of the concept of the Torah: from now on, the Torah was thought to be preexistent before creation, and to be the tool with which, or the plan according to which, the world was created.<sup>17</sup>

Proverbs 8:22-31 became an important text concerning the Torah, resulting in the concept that the word *Beginning* in Genesis 1:1 was identified as being the Torah. This is based on a simple *gezera shawa* combination of Genesis 1:1 and Proverbs 8:22: the *reshit* of Genesis 1:1 is the same as the *reshit* of

Proverbs 8:22, and the latter is obviously Wisdom. Wisdom being Torah, this results in two possible readings of Genesis 1:1: either 'By Wisdom God created....,' this is the reading of two Targums; or 'By the Torah God created....,' this is the reading of the main rabbinical commentary on Genesis 1:1, *Genesis Rabba*.<sup>18</sup> This midrash also combines this with Wisdom/Torah, calling itself God's *craftsman* or *master builder* in Proverbs 8:30, and weaves all of this together in the following well-known midrash:

The Torah declares: 'I was the working tool of the Holy One, blessed be He' [cf. Prov. 8:30: 'I was with him as a master worker' (Hebrew: *'amon*)]. In human practice, when a mortal king builds a palace, he builds it not with his own skill but with the skill of an architect. The architect moreover does not build it out of his head, but employs plans and diagrams to know how to arrange the chambers and the wicket doors. Thus God consulted the Torah and created the world, while the Torah declares, 'By 'The Beginning' God created' [Gen. 1:1], 'The Beginning' referring to the Torah, as in the verse, 'The Lord made me The Beginning of His way' [Prov. 8:22].<sup>19</sup>

This specific midrash is anonymous, and could be too late to be of interest to us. Basically the same midrash is preserved in Philo, how-

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<sup>17</sup> For this and the following, see W. Schencke, *Die Chokma (Sophia) in der jüdischen Hypostasenspekulation* (Skrifter utg. av Det Norske Videnskapsakademii II, 1912; Nr. 6; Christiania 1913); K. Schubert, 'Einige Beobachtungen zum Verständnis des Logosbegriffes im früh-rabbinischen Schrifttum', *Judaica* 9 (1953), pp. 65-80; Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästinensischen Judentums* (Texte und Untersuchungen 97; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), pp. 181-330.

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<sup>18</sup> See Gary Anderson, 'The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990), pp. 21-29.

ever, and Rabbi Akiva seems to hint at it when he says: 'Beloved are Israel, for to them was given the precious instrument... *by which the world was created*' (*Mishnah Aboth* 3:14).<sup>20</sup> The position accorded to the Wisdom-Torah in such texts as these prompted the Rabbis to call the Torah 'God's daughter' (*Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 101a; *Leviticus Rabba* 20:10 etc.).

Jews who believed in Jesus, however, identified this Wisdom with Jesus, God's Son. This explains why Jesus, in texts which speak of him in this role, is not so much portrayed as the Messiah as he is portrayed as the Torah in person. He is Wisdom incarnate. In him, the Wisdom/Word with which God created the world, became flesh, became a flesh and blood human being.<sup>21</sup> In the synoptic Gospels it is Jesus himself who frequently enters this role of God's Wisdom in person,<sup>22</sup>

in John it is the evangelist who often portrays Jesus as the substitute of the Torah, and not only in the prologue to the Gospel.<sup>23</sup>

My contention is that the Christology of the Nicene Creed is a spelling out of this very Jewish Wisdom Christology. But if it turns out that the Wisdom Christology of this creed is Jewish enough, how messianic is it? Has this anything to do with the Jewish Messiah?

That is a question not easy to answer. The reason is simple: If there were Jewish texts that made a connection between pre-existent Wisdom and the Messiah, these texts would be suppressed within mainstream Judaism in the early Christian era, precisely because they provided building materials for early Christology. The early Church, for its part, betrays great uncertainty with regard to the contents and status of such texts. The result is that only a part of the Jewish literature from this period is preserved. But in what has been preserved, there are indications that a connection was indeed made (within second Temple Judaism) between Wisdom and the Messiah. This is most clearly expressed in the so-called Similitudes of the Ethiopic book of Enoch (1 En 37-71). Here I must content myself with this brief reference, the theme is fasci-

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19 Translation according to H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis* (London: Soncino, 1939), p. 1.

20 Cf. Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages—Their Concepts and Beliefs I-II* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), pp. 198-202; 776-777.

21 As mentioned in note 15, three metaphors constantly recur in the Fathers when they want to describe the emergence of the Son out of the Father: light from light, tree from root, and river from source (giving rise to the 'x from x' formulas and the 'of the same substance' formula). All three metaphors are used about Wisdom's relationship to, or going out from, God, in the Bible and the Apocrypha: Light from light: Wis. 7:26; tree from root: Prov. 3:18; flowing from God as source: Bar. 3:12. All three metaphors are present in Sir. 24.

22 The limitations of this paper don't allow me to enter the question of how Jesus himself acted and spoke in the role of Wisdom in person. See my book *Incarnation*, pp. 33-38; Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrim-*

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*age of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress/Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994); Martin Hengel, 'Jesus as Messianic Teacher of Wisdom and the Beginnings of Christology', in the same author, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), pp. 73-117.

23 See especially Raymond E. Brown's commentary on John in the Anchor Bible series.

nating and in need of further research.<sup>24</sup>

To those who perceive the Christology of the Nicene creed as very Hellenistic or Greek, I have one basic challenge: how do you then explain that all Greek writers we know of, reacted with an instinctive disgust to the most obvious implication of the Nicene Creed, namely that it portrayed a God who suffered in his Son, of one essence with him? If there was one theological dogma shared by all educated Greek men and women, it was the impassibility of God or the divine nature.<sup>25</sup> Let us listen for a while to an eloquent opponent of Christianity, Celsus the philosopher, ca. AD 175, making this specific point:

God is good and beautiful and happy, and exists in the most beautiful state. If then He comes down to men, He must undergo change, a change from good to bad, from beautiful to shameful, from happiness to misfortune, and from what is best to what is most wicked. Who would choose a change like this? It is the nature only of a mortal being to undergo change and remolding, whereas it is the nature of an immortal being to remain the same

without alteration. Accordingly, God could not be capable of undergoing this change (rendered by Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.14).

Either God really does change, as they [the Christians] say, into a mortal body; and it has already been said that this is an impossibility. Or He does not change, but makes those who see Him think He does so, and leads them astray, and tells lies (*Contra Celsum* 4.18)!

Jews and Christians: no God or child of God either has come down or would have come down [from heaven] (*Contra Celsum* 5.2)!<sup>26</sup>

Not only did critics of Christianity react this way, but all the early Fathers of the church felt this difficulty themselves, because they were used to thinking about God in Greek terms.<sup>27</sup> I shall never forget how a modern Jew saw this point very clearly, and turned it into an argument for the Jewishness

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<sup>24</sup> In addition to the literature of the two preceding notes, see also Gottfried Schimanowski, *Weisheit und Messias: Die jüdischen Voraussetzungen der urchristlichen Präexistenzchristologie* (WUNT 2, 17; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1985); and William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> See Robert M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), esp. pp. 111-114.

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<sup>26</sup> These three quotes rendered according to the translation in Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum, Translated with an Introduction & Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 192f; 195 and 264.

<sup>27</sup> The best example, perhaps, is Tertullian. To him the suffering of God's Son, consubstantial with the Father, is so offensive that he can say: 'Surely these things [human emotions and suffering] could not have been believed, even about the Son of God, had they not been given us in Scripture; possibly they could not have been believed of the Father, even if they had been given in Scripture!' (*Adv. Prax.*, 16.13, translation according to *ANF* 3: p. 612, modified). Tertullian is able, however, to turn this offensiveness of the incarnation into an apologetic argument for its credibility: the incarnation is something so offensive we could simply not have invented it.

of the Christian dogma of the incarnation and suffering of God's Son. In a televised interview on Norwegian National Television Pinchas Lapide<sup>28</sup> said the following:

I used to think that becoming incarnate was impossible to God. But recently I have come to the conclusion that it is unjewish to say that this is something the God of the Bible cannot do, that he cannot come that close. I have had second thoughts about the incarnation...

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28 Norwegian Television April 1978.

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# The Institutions of Hope

Christopher Fung

**KEYWORDS:** *Sabbath, sabbatical year, Jubilee, Lord's Supper, church, kingdom, creation*

THE SABBATH AS A concept and an institutional complex is uniquely forward looking in the Bible, and the ministry of Jesus bears a unique and foundational relationship to the Sabbath. From all biblical evidence, the fundamental reason why Jesus' opponents put him to death is because of his deliberate and persistent challenge of the prevalent interpretation of the Sabbath through words and deeds.<sup>1</sup>

## I Act One

When Adam and Eve fell, the effects of their transgression percolated and reverberated throughout the created order, necessitating a redemption no

less than sin's cosmic reach. The Sabbath day together with its derivatives, the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee, are to induct the concerned entities into the overall redemption of God. All the three concepts and corresponding institutions are founded on the same ideas, but applied to different aspects of God's creation. Given man's unique sentience among God's creatures, he is the first and only fitting recipient of God's instructions regarding the Sabbath.<sup>2</sup> Man is thus the leader of the Sabbath for the rest of creation and this is one sense in which the Sabbath is made for man rather than the other way around.<sup>3</sup>

The Sabbath for man is founded on God's sovereign and creative acts. In the beginning, God exercised his freedom to create. Thereafter, God did not remain indifferent towards his creation, but judged each individual part to be good and the synergistic totality very good—a qualitative leap. He takes pleasure in the works of his own

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1 C. Fung, 'Sabbath, The Alpha and Omega of God-Man Partnership', *Asia Journal of Theology*, 20:2 (October 2006), p. 455, and 20:1, pp. 182-204 (or [http://www.geocities.com/layman\\_chrisfung/Hope](http://www.geocities.com/layman_chrisfung/Hope) as at February 2008); Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 207-208.

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2 Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation, An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM, 1985), pp. 77-78, 224.

3 Mk. 2:27, 28.

hands. But he did not create a mechanistic clockwork which follows its own laws to move towards a target with totally predictable exactness. Instead, he bestowed on one of his creature types—humans—freedom of choice and action.

Not only does the mechanism of this freedom elude the exerciser, but the exercise of this freedom also causes God himself surprises, pleasant and otherwise. That is why God did not stop working after he celebrated his pleasure in his creation in his first Sabbath. He continues to work<sup>4</sup> in response to the creative choices taken by his free creatures—humans. Yet he looks forward to a grand finale in which the freedom of man exercised with respect to God and to the rest of creation will be aligned with his own. This will be the ultimate Sabbath which unites the Sabbath of God with the Sabbaths into which God has initiated humans and nature.

The Sabbath for man and for God as a concept of creation is founded on freedom, responsibility, work and ultimately the hope of pleasure in one's free and responsible creation. This explains why the Sabbath was instituted for the Israelites only after they had been freed from their slavery in Egypt, at a time when they could hope for a future of their own,<sup>5</sup> be held accountable for their actions and also work diligently and meaningfully towards that end without having the fruits of their own labour robbed from them by their slave masters.

Among all the festivals and feasts in

the Old Testament, the Sabbath is unique.<sup>6</sup> First, all the other biblical commemorations look to an event within history for remembrance, yet the Sabbath alone is super-historical by its reference to the super-historical act of God's creation and by extension also to a future which transcends history.<sup>7</sup> Second, while all other festivals are annual observance, thus pegged to nature's rhythm, the Sabbath is supernatural by imposing rhythms not found in the natural daily and yearly cycles.<sup>8</sup> Third, no other biblical festivals demand man's work but look to God's work for commemoration, but the Sabbath is process-goal balanced through insisting on man's work first—the process—which is then to be punctuated by a Sabbath of rest and pleasure—the goal.<sup>9</sup>

Fourth, the other feasts and festivals look to a return to the past, but the Sabbath is purposeful through accustoming man to and reminding him of that ultimate future pleasure in his own work as God had in his. Fifth, while the other festivals all testify to the incompleteness of man's repeated annual observances, the Sabbath heightens this sense of incompleteness through its much more frequent periodic reminder. Hence man's Sabbath is incomplete. Sixth, while all other festivals invite only observance, the Sabbath invites meaningful participation

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<sup>6</sup> Fung, *Sabbath*, pp. 188-191.

<sup>7</sup> Ex. 20:9-11.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (HarperCollins Canada, 1979), p. 10; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 285.

<sup>9</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, p. 28; p. 22.

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<sup>4</sup> Jn. 5:17.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. 5:14-15.



through leaving room—without specifying the details of observance—for man to express his creativity. Finally, the Sabbath is yet to be consummated by God and humans together when the final Sabbath dawns, but all the other festivals have already found fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

The Sabbath day is the spearhead in the Ten Commandments which are for the sentient being—the human. On the other hand, the Sabbatical year, being modelled on the Sabbath day, is meant for the land.<sup>10</sup> On its own with its lack of sentience, it may seem that the land is to be laid idle<sup>11</sup> by man only once in every seven years so as to allow it to recuperate from being overworked. This seems to follow from the superficial understanding of man's Sabbath, namely to grant respite—something they did not have in Egypt—from their works through the newly initiated Sabbath day, yet there is no record of the land being abused by its pre-Exodus inhabitants. On the contrary, the description of the land as flowing with milk and honey and its confirmation by spies<sup>12</sup> suggest the very opposite. A deeper meaning must have been intended.

Romans 8:18-22 matter-of-factly<sup>13</sup> attributes to non-sentient creation a

longing for freedom which corresponds to the central idea of the Sabbath day for man. This freedom of the children of God, within the context of Romans 8, is that the law of the Spirit would enable them to do joyfully what they have been intended, but so far unable, to do to serve the purpose of God. No more coercion, goading and disciplining are necessary. With that goes the associated pain and suffering. Freedom, albeit only a foretaste and incomplete, has finally arrived for these first fruits. Nature's longing and freedom are modelled on these first fruits.

God has indisputably intended man to be sustained physically by the land—nature. There are two ways this can be done: to dictate to the land what man wants through agriculture or to live off the land directly. The first can allay man's insecurity about the future more if he has lost faith in the overall integrity of God's creation and ultimately God. But this, because of man's ignorance of himself and nature, would gradually reduce him to an impoverished and hardscrabble existence and further alienate him from nature<sup>14</sup> which in this process suffers man's harsh treatment exacerbated by wanton greed. This goes against the integral design of God.

The Sabbatical year aims to undo this alienation and bring nature and man into confidence in each other. For six years, people can force the land to produce what they think they need, but for one in seven, man is to give up this prerogative and place himself at the discretion of nature, over which he is charged to exercise stewardship, and

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10 Lev. 25:2-7.

11 John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), p. 60; Oswald T. Allis in the *New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 164-165.

12 Num. 13:17-28.

13 Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 163-164.

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14 Gen. 3:17-19.

more importantly to place himself in the hands of the Creator. The Sabbatical year makes room for nature to come into its own when man's ploughing and pruning—mutilating—stop. By living off the land directly, man will have to allow nature to show him what it has been designed to produce which is also good for him. During the Sabbatical year, man takes from the land what nature naturally produces to sustain himself. In case man's faith is small, he can draw on God's extra provision before the Sabbatical year to tide him over.<sup>15</sup>

But the goal remains though the steps are gradual. In this way, man and nature are brought into a harmony which gives a foretaste of the mutual freedom of the final Sabbath. As in the Sabbath for man, the Sabbatical year looks forward on nature's behalf to the finale when it will spontaneously satisfy and enrich man in multitudinous aspects. Man and nature will have entered into a redeemed mutuality while retaining their unique role and identity. In this way, the Sabbatical year draws nature into this hope of cosmic redemption through the sentient man.<sup>16</sup> Practising the Sabbatical year goes beyond abstract faith in God, but trustingly rests oneself in God and his creation.

The mutual trust built up through seven Sabbaths of years would give man confidence in celebrating the Jubilee. The Jubilee consummates<sup>17</sup> both the Sabbath day for man and the Sabbatical year for the land but the

unmistakable reference of the Jubilee is God: First, man must not take advantage of others but fear God because he is YHWH; Second, the land must not be sold because it belongs to God and men are but aliens and tenants of God's land. The services of man and nature may be valued according to their utilitarian worth, but man and nature per se must not be so valued because they belong to none other than God himself. That is why hiring servants is acceptable, murdering is severely punished; picking from nature is acceptable, destroying it incurs great divine wrath.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, this is also the favourable year of the Lord and all the instructions pertaining to this year must be seen as the Lord bestowing favour on man and the land and in this act he brings both man and nature into the forward march of the grand redemption of the Lord. Yet the goal of the Jubilee is not the compartmentalized redemption of man and of nature separately, but redemption of the relationship between man and his fellow humans, between humans and nature and ultimately between God and his entire creation. A grand and all-encompassing harmony is the goal of this redemption.

The Jubilee is indeed the Lord's periodic Sabbath called by another name, and it is distinguished from his original Sabbath celebrated only once upon the inauguration of his first creation. This periodic Sabbath of the Lord goes with the paces of man and nature to bring both into his redemptive rhythm which looks forward to the future. The seven Sabbatical attributes

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15 Lev. 25:20-22.

16 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 68.

17 Lev. 25:8-17.

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18 Gen. 9:5; Rev. 11:18.

identified before for man's Sabbath also hold for the Jubilee: First, God the creator initiated history and will bring history to a close in a super-historical redemptive act; Second, God—the ultimate super-natural being—pulsates with the rhythm of nature by taking a year as the unit of counting time and then super-imposes a super-natural reference on both man and nature.

Third, without God's intervention and redemptive work, there can be no Jubilee and without the Jubilee, the Sabbatical year has no direction, hence God's periodic Sabbath balances the goal with the process. Fourth, God looks purposefully to the ultimate Sabbath when he can take pleasure in a harmonious creation through the freely-given submission of man and man's tutorship and leadership of nature; Fifth, the Jubilee is still periodic, testifying to its incompleteness, looking for completion through the continual work of God. Sixth, God seeks the willing participation of sentient man to bring about the Jubilee, but has also fittingly included sub-sentient nature as a necessary partner and a foundation of his grand creation. Seventh, God's final Sabbath will be consummated with the totality of his entire creation and himself—the Creator and his creation, the covenantor and the covenantee—in consummated unison.

The individual looks forward to the pleasure in his own work in the Sabbath day. Under the tutorship by man in the Sabbatical year, the land—nature—looks forward to its freedom. In the Jubilee of God, every aspect and individual part of God's entire creation looks forward to its respective pleasure in each and every part of God's

creation and God looks forward to the complete redemption of his creation. These Old Testament institutions are thus intended to march man and nature inexorably forward in perfect unison to the final tryst with God himself. The Sabbath day, Sabbatical year and Jubilee are thus the institutions of hope in the Old Testament because individually and collectively, they uniquely point towards a bright and inspiring future rather than looking backward to what has already taken place in history.

## II Concluding Act One

In bestowing free-will, hence also partial freedom of choice and action, on one of his creature types—man, God has willingly denied himself the right to exercise direct and absolute control over man and the consequential areas of influence to allow man to find himself in God and his creation. This is a process necessitated by the creative image of God in man which prompts him to go beyond the dictates of his surroundings<sup>19</sup> to discover and to create for himself.

The process is not complete, if it ever will be, until the creative potter—man—has fully impressed upon the clay of God's first creation<sup>20</sup> his own creativity-driven idiosyncrasies. Knowing and understanding the creation in which he is placed would be the pre-requisite in this process. Yet he

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<sup>19</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), p. 206; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Joseph Boorstin, *The Creators* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 43.

was not handed this knowledge when he made his debut in God's creation. He still had to learn and to carve out his as-yet-undefined but dynamic and interactive niche therein.<sup>21</sup>

Naming God's creatures is the first step towards this discovery and is just the way man shows God how he wants to order things creatively. Then God listens and accepts provisionally: 'and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name'.<sup>22</sup> The process continues in the cycles of the Sabbatical Year which bring nature directly into this onward journey of mutual discovery. Since man is made to be the steward of God's creation and this steward cannot act against his basic nature of creativity, his stewardship must be creative and open-ended, to be guided only by a future vision born out of a partnership between God and man, after fully appreciating the wholesome integrity of nature.

This self-emptying has been taken one step further in the Sabbatical year to relate man to nature. After man has re-constituted nature—worked the land for six years, he is to reverse the order of the communication and let nature talk back in the seventh, allowing his creation to show him its goodness. God did this in his first creation—after declaring his creation very good, he rested on the seventh. The major dissimilarity with God's self-emptying is that man has fallen and nature is cursed because of man, but the goal of God remains: let creation speak to its steward. Nature is not creative in the conscious and delib-

erate sense of sentient man, but it is prodigious, prolific, dynamic and abundant in its material creativity. It constantly shows off its mind-boggling intricacy and pours forth its awesome power to the utter amazement of the humbled man.<sup>23</sup> Man's only proper reaction is to say to nature's Creator: 'How great Thou art!'

The process of self-emptying is now complete with the Sabbatical year. The all-knowing God has instituted for man what he himself practised—to limit the exercise of his power to leave room for his creation to tell him what is good for man's sake and for nature's sake.<sup>24</sup> Yet this freedom for man created through the self-limitation of God is not without limits.

In nature, physical laws are made known to all and they deal mercilessly and swiftly with those who trifle with them. But in the moral realm, there is by necessity a delay between actions and reward. This delay is but the temporal aspect of God's self-limitation, yet it can mislead transient sentient beings into believing that there is no moral consequence to their actions, be they good- or ill-intentioned. Instructions, encouragements, warnings and goalposts will thus have to be given to guide them to their destiny. Following the powerful redemption of the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, God gave the Decalogue for their instructions together with encouragements and warnings.<sup>25</sup> He then set the Sabbath day, Sabbatical year and the

21 Kung, *On Being a Christian*, p. 393.

22 Gen. 2:19.

23 Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1964), p. 88.

24 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 77; p. 258.

25 For example Ex. 20; Deut. 27-28.

Jubilee as distinctive goalposts for them to measure progress towards the final Sabbath. In this consummation when all creatures would rejoice in the wholesome goodness of God's creation, the self-limitation of God would have gained the voluntary adoration and praise of his handiwork thus making God's self-limitation obsolete.

All the transient self-limitations, through God's patient tutorship of man and man's patient tutorship of nature, would now be replaced by the spontaneous alignment of the three wills—God's, man's and nature's (with the last being an expression of its own natural potentials). Yet this voluntary alignment would not bring about the elimination of one's will.<sup>26</sup> On the contrary, it would lead to a mutual self-expansion into the will of each other.<sup>27</sup> God will have reclaimed more than what he has given up in the Sabbath and man will also have reclaimed more than what he gave up in the Sabbatical year. Though creatures are still creatures and the Creator is still the Creator, this self-expansion would eliminate many of the limitations that creation has experienced, be it self-imposed or through it being creation per se.

Creation, in its multi-faceted manifestation as we know it now, will be set free into the freedom of the children of God which in turn would be set free into the freedom of God. The spontaneous yearning of creation and the spontaneous longings of the children of God would reverberate and resonate

with the call and purpose of God. Freedom in the fullest possible sense for us creatures will arrive. Redemption is now full and wholesome. Self-limitation will have achieved its goal of freedom for all. Harmony and freedom are one and the same.<sup>28</sup> The morning stars will once again sing together and all the sons of God shout for joy.

Impressive as this plan to bring man and nature into God's forward march and continual creation is, it has not achieved its purpose. The instructions to guide man—the lynch pin in the process—on his way have not been heeded and in the end, man has failed miserably through flouting what God explicitly taught. Man fell off the intended track. As opposed to finding sustenance in nature, man finds himself struggling against nature. As opposed to finding love within the human community, he finds himself fighting against other members of the community. As opposed to finding hope in the pleasure in his work, he finds himself enslaved to phantoms. As opposed to finding his destiny in a loving God, he finds himself under God's wrath. As opposed to finding harmony in existence, he finds discord and dissonance everywhere. The higher the goal set for man, the more spectacular was his fall.

But God did not give up. He chose individuals, a family, a tribe and eventually a nation to carry on his plan. Along the way, he gave detailed instructions and instituted reminders to help his people. Yet, these also

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26 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 190.

27 Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM, 2002), p. 123.

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28 St. Augustine, *City of God* (New York: Doubleday, translated by Walsh et al., abridged version, 1958), pp. 540-545.

failed. The basic institutional reminders of his goal, the Sabbath day, the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee have been flouted with no attempt, no matter how feeble, to implement the last two.<sup>29</sup>

The Sabbath day was originally observed, but the underlying intent became so twisted that it became an abomination.<sup>30</sup> The delayed retribution finally kicked in<sup>31</sup> with the land enjoying freedom from man, but without the intended reciprocation of man learning from nature. Meting out the promised punishment for not practising the Sabbatical Year brings to a close the first experiment. No further warnings against repeated offences were issued. Instead, Ezekiel looked towards a new era in which individual and moment-by-moment responsibility is the rule, and Jeremiah, a time when the laws of God are internalised like Ezekiel's swallowing of the scrolls. These are the first stirrings of a new episode.<sup>32</sup>

### III Act Two

The new approach entails God going beyond self-limitation to self-sacrifice. But this sacrifice is not any sacrifice just to impress upon the beholder how much pain God has suffered. It entails a specific engagement with the people on the very institutions that God has placed for man's instructions—a

struggle for the hope encapsulated in the Sabbath-Jubilee complex.

It is clear from the biblical record that the fundamental earthly reason for putting Jesus to death was his unyielding position on the Sabbath.<sup>33</sup> his claim to be the Lord of the Sabbath, his repeated provocations of the people on the Sabbath, allowing almost no neutral bystanders on the issue and his unique statement on why the people were putting him to death.<sup>34</sup>

The apparent loser in this struggle for the Sabbath was Jesus because, instead of the people grasping the true meaning of the Sabbath, he died a condemned criminal. But God considered him worthy to be resurrected, thus turning this apparent failure—a lost-sacrifice—into a success such as creation has never seen.

Jesus' engagement on the Sabbath must at least be part of the reason for this reversal.<sup>35</sup> Under the Jews, the Sabbath had been turned into a stricture and a burden to the people, the very opposite of the freedom, responsibility, labour and pleasure of which it was intended to remind the people. Jesus wrested this cosmic pointer of hope—the Sabbath—from the custodians of the Jewish laws so that it could once again be the universal pointer of hope for all and sundry as intended.

On the earthly level, Jesus lost his life in the struggle, apparently going down with the very cause for which he fought. But God had a better plan. In Jesus, willingly and unflinchingly pay-

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<sup>29</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 289; Yoder, *Politics*, p. 73, quoting D.W. Blosser, *Jesus and the Jubilee: The Year of Jubilee and Its Significance in the Gospel of Luke*.

<sup>30</sup> Is. 1:13; Amos 8:5.

<sup>31</sup> 2 Chr. 36:21.

<sup>32</sup> Is. 40; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 3, 33.

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<sup>33</sup> Fung, *Sabbath*, pp. 185-187; Kung, *On Being a Christian*, p. 335.

<sup>34</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, p. 129.

<sup>35</sup> Kung, *On Being a Christian*, pp. 382-383.

ing with his life for challenging his opponents on the Sabbath, the foundation of the institutions of hope, the hope of the whole creation, has irrevocably, inseparably and uniquely been identified with and vested upon Jesus. When God resurrected Jesus from the dead, this cosmic hope in the Sabbath-Jubilee complex was resurrected together with its bearer, not to the old form of the letters of the law, but to the newness of a life in the resurrected Jesus Christ, never to be destroyed again.

With the Sabbath vested in the ever living person of the resurrected Lord, this cause became a living hope for all. Only in the resurrection does hope remain possible. If God cannot fail, then the cosmic hope vested in Jesus cannot be snuffed out and, as such, Jesus must resurrect to become Jesus Christ. The unity of the cause and its bearer in death has issued in a personified and embodied vision in the resurrection.<sup>36</sup> Jesus' seemingly blasphemous claim to be the Lord of the Sabbath in the previous earthly struggle has now been concretely validated in the cosmic Lord of the Sabbath.<sup>37</sup> The supra-physical material attributes of the resurrected Jesus—not constrained by walls, doors and space, but fully interacting with the physical in acts such as eating and touching—has now become embodied in the hope of this new Sabbath. Jesus Christ becomes the first fruit and his children are another type of first fruits awaiting the redemption of their bodies. And the cosmos, having tasted this new cre-

ation, looks forward to a grand harvest.

With this reversal of events in the resurrection, what was understood to be a static set of laws for perpetual and unchanging observance has now been transformed into a life, personally leading forward to a future consummation. The first three commandments relating man to God and the last six commandments relating man to other humans are now led by the personified and embodied hope—the living Sabbath—based on the transformed fourth commandment in relating man to himself and his future. These are then summarised in the often-repeated virtues—faith, hope and love of the New Testament with hope<sup>38</sup> being the dynamic and living pointer.<sup>39</sup> The resurrection has brought about more than a name change—a fundamental transformation has been wrought to the institutions of hope themselves.

On the night when Jesus was betrayed, he established the Lord's Supper so that as often as his followers gather together, they will remember him through the breaking of the bread and sharing of the wine. Accordingly, after Jesus died and then resurrected on the third day, his disciples gathered to re-enact the Lord's Supper as instructed. Here the disciples had a choice in interpreting the frequency ('as often as') of this remembrance since Jesus, unlike God in his instructions in the Old Testament, did not specify it. To Jesus, man must be left room to fill in the 'as often as' for themselves.

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36 Kung, *On Being a Christian*, p 383.

37 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, pp. 123-125.

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38 Schwarz, *Eschatology*, p. 368.

39 Heb. 11:1.

The first obvious choice would be to peg this remembrance to the Passover as this forms the unmistakable and most significant background for understanding Jesus as the Messiah and he has indeed been called the Passover Lamb.<sup>40</sup> This would be a yearly observance and would be how most people would be or would want to be remembered. But instead, the disciples have spontaneously opted for an extraordinary choice: as often as the creation of God is to be remembered in the weekly cycle of the Sabbath. By pegging the remembrance of Jesus' death to God's creation, the disciples have grasped the undeniable cosmic import of Jesus' resurrection.

The first day of the week recalls the beginning of God's creation process. In this first-day-of-the-week choice, the disciples have spontaneously proclaimed that in the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, he has started a new creation, the like of which is at least on par with the original creation of God. This means not just one individual resurrecting, even though only Jesus Christ has resurrected so far. If it were just one individual, the event would be appropriately celebrated yearly as birthdays (in this case rebirth) are celebrated. But now the entire creation will be made anew in a way similar to how God has created *ex nihilo* in his first creation and this creative process will transcend the rhythm of nature itself just as the Sabbath is super-historical and super-natural.

With the Lord's Supper embedded in and forming the essential core of the

Lord's Day celebration,<sup>41</sup> the sacrifice of Jesus and the hope from the ensuing resurrection are united in the celebration. The remembrance of what happened on the night of the betrayal and the looking forward to the Lord's return are now inseparable. The shedding of blood remembered in the cup is now transformed into the wine of celebration when Jesus Christ will drink it anew in the Kingdom.

Though one cannot say that this weekly observance is not intended by God, we do not see God dictating it in the way it eventually took shape. But believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit have joyfully institutionalized this Lord's Day celebration which is then accepted by God as his own when Jesus appeared on that day to guide his new creation forward.<sup>42</sup> By its spontaneous weekly observance, redeemed man, that new creature in Christ,<sup>43</sup> is telling God that he too wants to sign on to be part of the forward march of God's new creation. It is as if man is demanding to be enlisted in this cosmic cause rather than God recruiting him.

What a contrast it is to the Israelites' reception of the erstwhile prophets! While the Sabbath is to celebrate the completion of one's work, the first-day-of-the-week-turned Lord's Day is to celebrate the newness of God's creation and the excitement of being a partner in this on-going march, looking forward to the final consummation. In the shift from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day, man is picking up his

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<sup>41</sup> Acts 20:7; 1Cor. 16:2.

<sup>42</sup> Rev. 1:10.

<sup>43</sup> 2 Cor. 5:17.

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40 1 Cor. 5:7.



hoe all over again for that future. O what a cosmic future this is and the excitement<sup>44</sup> has just begun for God's children!

In the Lord's Supper set against the Passover celebration, God's children remember Jesus' suffering. Bread and wine rather than the cross are used as symbols. The cross symbolizes the suffering of mankind, but bread and wine given for our sustenance represent the wholesome integrity of creation. Through the breaking of the bread, the brokenness of the universe and the brokenness of the relationships therein are being taken up in the broken body of Jesus. Through the wine symbolizing blood, the life being given up to mend the brokenness of creation is now shared among his children.

But it does not and must not end here. Jesus Christ resurrected, gives tangible proof that the brokenness of creation leading to his death, is indeed done away with. The all-pervading brokenness induced by man's rebellion is now on the mend. The process of the healing of the cosmos has started. This new beginning is also shared among his children who henceforth will look forward<sup>45</sup> to the day when Jesus will drink the wine anew in his Kingdom. A new hope, an engaged hope for all creation, is born on the Lord's Day.

Out of the expectant communities formed by Jesus' followers scattered to different parts of the then-known world arose many organizations called churches identified in the Bible by their geographical locations. These took the

name from the 'church' which Jesus founded after Peter recognized him as the Christ.<sup>46</sup> Jesus did not found this church on any royal lineage, sacred rites, organizational principles or talent pool,<sup>47</sup> but on the simple identification of himself—apparently a mere man born of a human mother—with the Christ, the son of the living God,<sup>48</sup> the creator of the universe.

If this impossible-sounding claim is substantiated, then the redemption of God has broken into the created order in a tangible and recognizable form. What has hitherto been the call of God through the Sabbatical Year to bring God's own creation into his redemption has now been set on a clear foundation in this matter-of-fact recognition: Jesus Christ is none other than the creator of the universe and is continuing to work with man to bring about full redemption, not only of humans, but as appropriate for the Christ, of the entire creation. No matter how fierce the opposition to God may be, this truth of Jesus, the man, being the Messiah, the supernatural Christ, the redeemer of God's entire creation, will never be snuffed out. The gates of Hades, first to foil redemption, then to limit redemption's scope<sup>49</sup> will not prevail.

Redemption is either cosmic or nothing. Jesus Christ is either the cosmic redeemer or he is nought. There can be no partial redeemer and this truth founds his church.

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46 Mt. 16:15-18.

47 Kung, *Christian*, pp. 285-86.

48 Hans Kung, *The Catholic Church, A Short History* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 4-5.

49 Mt. 16:21-23.

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44 Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 232.

45 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 310.

The reason Jesus shunned the populace's demand for him to be their leader was definitely not because he understood his Messiahship as only spiritual—which it cannot be if God is creator—and not because he espoused non-violence—which in fact he did.<sup>50</sup> He did not accede to this popular request because he could not allow his cosmic redemption to be hijacked and limited by politics or any other causes less than cosmic in dimension. Consequently he rebuked Satan who was behind Peter for suggesting a toned-down redemption, one not involving his death, and therefore also without his resurrection to usher in the new and living hope of the God-man-creation Sabbath.

Jesus could not and did not settle for a reform when the prize is a new creation. The role of the Sabbatical Year, sandwiched between the hope of the Sabbath day for humans and the universal hope of the Jubilee, has now been taken up into the church that Jesus founded. What nature has been unable to 'observe' because man has failed it is now being championed by the community of the eager, founded on the simple truth that Jesus is Christ. The creator of the universe is now inducting and engaging his full cosmic creation through his church.

But unlike some megalomaniacs, Jesus never made claims about his divinity without commensurate verifiable action as he challenged sceptics to believe him on the basis of his works.<sup>51</sup> Yet this work cannot be just the display

of raw super-human power, just as the wanton use of force bespeaks moral bankruptcy rather than godliness, but must be the right work. To claim to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, is a theological proposition demanding verification by the right work. That work is the series of pitched battles which Jesus fought with the Jews on the Sabbath issue. In doing this, Jesus vested upon himself the cosmic cause. The less confrontational alternative—to die as just a sinless and benign human being—would not have him living up to whom he really is<sup>52</sup> and claims to be: the creator of all that has come into existence. Also, the need of a one-and-only cosmic Messiah because of man's all-pervading sin would not be met. He would just be the saviour of mankind, in a pitifully compartmentalized redemption.

The redemption of the cosmos will have to be left to another saviour specially assigned for that job. Jesus would be just an amoral sacrifice whose only job is to cancel out man's moral debt, thus rounding the bottom line of the divine accounting of guilt. He would be powerless for anything else. But as the biblical facts show clearly, Jesus uniquely considered his Sabbath challenge to be the basis of his opponents' murderous motive,<sup>53</sup> yet he persisted in his Sabbath provocations regardless. When he made clear to his disciples, immediately after he revealed himself to be the Messiah, that this son of the living God must suffer many things and die at the hands of

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50 Yoder, *Politics*, p. 94-97.

51 Jn. 10:37; 14:11.

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52 Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:15-17.

53 Jn. 7:19-24.

his opponents,<sup>54</sup> he was appropriately vesting upon himself the cosmic cause of the Sabbath and taking it to the cross.

What started out as an identification of Jesus being Christ, followed by the proclamation of the founding of the church, is now progressing to its tangible manifestation as Jesus Christ set his face towards Jerusalem to bring to completion his long-running conflict on the Sabbath.<sup>55</sup> Of all the causes Jesus took up, only the Sabbath has the cosmic dimension to link the flesh-and-blood Jesus to the super-natural Christ to enable him, upon his resurrection, to become the indivisible Jesus Christ as he has so adamantly and forcefully claimed must be the foundation of his church. The truth of Jesus being Christ is proclaimed not only in words, but now in the earth-shattering validation of the resurrection.

In this series of events, the role of the Sabbatical Year to bring nature into God's redemption has been assimilated into the church founded on Jesus the Christ. The church is not the New Testament counterpart of the Sabbatical year. The church is more. But any entity worthy of the name church can no longer shirk this responsibility of cosmic redemption. Humans and the entire creation of God must be initiated into a grand harmony under God through the church which must give a foretaste of the freedom and bliss in the Kingdom.<sup>56</sup> Jesus initiated this process when he pointed to how even the birds of the sky and lilies of the

field are sustained and beautified by the creator<sup>57</sup> and in so doing updated the intention of the Sabbatical Year for a new beginning.

When Jesus inaugurated his ministry, he read from Isaiah 61:1-2a, the personalized poetic version of the Jubilee, and announced that this has been fulfilled among his listeners. He went on to preach the Kingdom, impressing upon his audience that the favourable year of the Lord—the Jubilee—is now fulfilled in the Kingdom of God or of Heaven. While the sum total of the aspiration of man and nature in the Old Testament is the Jubilee, Jesus started outlining the Kingdom in the Beatitudes<sup>58</sup> as a future for man before which one would feel totally inadequate.

While the realization of the Jubilee was bogged down in man's waywardness and was never even attempted collectively, the aspirants to the Kingdom—humans—would consider themselves blessed when persecuted for the Kingdom's sake. While those in the Old Testament who mourn because their meekness has disadvantaged them (resulting in their hungering and thirsting for justice) can look forward to the Jubilee, and if they relapse and live long enough, even the next Jubilee, those in the Kingdom will be blessed by being comforted, inheriting the earth and being satisfied, respectively. Unlike the Jubilee, the blessings in the Kingdom are now final, no longer subjecting the aspirants to relapsing into another round of longing.

The Jubilee seems to administer jus-

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54 Mt. 16:21.

55 Fung, *Sabbath*, pp. 192-194.

56 Kung, *Christian*, pp. 478-484.

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57 Mt. 7:26-32.

58 Mt. 5:3-10.

tice more on the side of the oppressed, restraining the rich and powerful in their ambitions, but the Kingdom has a place even for these earthly winners if they are merciful, pure in heart and peace loving. The Kingdom transcends socio-economic boundaries and goes right to the heart of the matter—the heart of man. The Jubilee is imposed from above, though no less to the rejoicing of many, the Kingdom is what all people of good faith, regardless of their walks of life, would naturally aspire to without prompting, even at the cost of being persecuted. The Jubilee has God as the ultimate arbiter between humans and between man and nature, but the Kingdom sees God as the ultimate of all that his children aspire to with the deep longings of the cosmos being satisfied therein.

Like the taking up of the Sabbatical Year into the church, Jesus has backed up his transmutation of the Jubilee into the Kingdom with dramatic actions at the height of his career. Right after founding his church, he stated factually that those around him would see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom. This puzzling foretelling came to pass in the only pre-resurrection ‘supernatural’ event of Jesus recorded outside of the Gospels—the Transfiguration.<sup>59</sup>

A week after founding his church, Jesus went up on a mountain and was transfigured before the eyes of three of his apostles, then Moses and Elijah appeared. Yet at Peter’s very suggestion that Jesus, Moses and Elijah might be sheltered in human tents, the latter two were immediately removed from the scene in favour of Jesus with a

direct pronouncement from God. From now on, Jesus is the only figure to be followed. God gave the Law through Moses and enforced the Law through Elijah, among others. The institutional aim of the Law is the Jubilee in which all would obey God, resulting in the planters of vineyard enjoying their grapes, the builders their houses and the fiercest creatures commingling in the land with the most defenceless and a little boy leading them all.

But both Moses and Elijah failed to deliver God’s promises by not measuring up to the Law and being disheartened in work, respectively.<sup>60</sup> In time, the Law with the dynamic pointer of the Sabbath in its core has been misunderstood as static and turned into the very opposite of liberation—a stifling burden. In conferring with Jesus on how he would suffer and die in Jerusalem, these two Old Testament giants have passed their torches to Jesus with an admission of their own failures to reach the Jubilee.<sup>61</sup> In Jesus’ struggle on the Sabbath, he has re-invested the proper dynamism into the Law so that it is the pointer to the transformed Jubilee once more.<sup>62</sup>

Henceforth Jesus would transmute the Jubilee into the Kingdom to complete what Moses and Elijah had started but failed to complete. Yet the promised Son of Man coming in his Kingdom, with the wonderful pronouncement among divine brilliance, speaks of a mission not of unbroken glory, but first of sacrifice to the point

<sup>60</sup> Ex. 2:12 vs. Ex. 20:13; 1Ki 18-19, cf. 19:1-3.

<sup>61</sup> Lk. 9:31.

<sup>62</sup> Kung, *On Being a Christian*, p. 216.

<sup>59</sup> Mt. 17:1-8; 2 Pet. 1:17-18.

of death. Just as for the church, the brilliance of the Kingdom leads not through gradual improvements of man's work first, but the death and resurrection of the one who proclaimed the fulfilment of the Jubilee in the Kingdom.

When Jesus had drunk his last vine on earth, he looked forward to drinking it anew in his Father's Kingdom. The old institutions—the Sabbath day, Sabbatical year and Jubilee complex—had passed away and were buried with Jesus upon his death, but have risen with the resurrected Christ in the celebration of the Lord's Day, the proclamation of the church and the hope of the Kingdom.<sup>63</sup> Henceforth, every person who calls upon Jesus Christ as Lord has been united with him in his death, has been resurrected with him and has been ineluctably inducted into the new institutions of hope.

#### IV Act Three

This Kingdom is new wine in an old wineskin. Starting from the appetizing description in the Beatitudes, its power to burst old constraints would issue forth in all directions to achieve what the Jubilee could not do. It grows silently from the smallest seed into a big tree, but is hardly recognized by people because of the tares that grow up to obscure it, until the discriminating harvest reveals its presence. Unlike the Jubilee, it has no institutional structure to be reckoned with, yet it is the ultimate destiny where Jesus Christ will be drinking the vine anew. When the image of this Kingdom

comes into better focus, one sees a city, a river and a tree constituting the new heaven and new earth.<sup>64</sup>

Like the aspired Jubilee, the city<sup>65</sup> is where man's patience and labour are consummately rewarded, where God accepts the decidedly human-centred measure of man as his own and where God welcomes the glory kings and nations are bringing in.<sup>66</sup> Man has been placed on an esteemed pedestal<sup>67</sup> despite his former rebellion. God claimed sovereignty over the land in the Jubilee, but nature is now nourished directly from God through the river in the Kingdom. The tree of life thriving by the river will produce spontaneously for the sustenance and healing of the nations without having to suffer the pains of hoeing and pruning by man.

Explicitly mentioned is the absence of tears, pains and deaths in this future, but just as conspicuous is the absence of the groaning of creation under its own decay and through battling man with thorns and thistles.<sup>68</sup> The curse on the land is no more. The mutuality and justice that the Jubilee could see realized only in rigid institutions are now fulfilled in the Kingdom in spontaneous harmony. This loving mutuality is all encompassing, extending to every nook and cranny, warp and

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<sup>64</sup> Rev. 21, 22.

<sup>65</sup> Rev. 21:17, 24, 26.

<sup>66</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City* (Cambria: Paternoster, 1997), p. 162; Schwarz, *Eschatology*, p. 284.

<sup>67</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), p. 89-90; Ellul, *City*, p. 177.

<sup>68</sup> Gen. 3:17-19.

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<sup>63</sup> Schwarz, *Eschatology*, p. 321.

woof of the cosmos. The tabernacle of God has now covered that of man and the cosmos.

The space that God has created for man in the Sabbath through limiting himself and further emptying himself and the space that man has created for nature in the Sabbatical year has now been filled with the rejoicing of the universe in the Jubilee-transfigured Kingdom. The prime mover of the emptying process, the Lamb—Elohim and YHWH<sup>69</sup>—has now carried the Sabbath cause of creation to its Omega point. And the community of the eager is his partner.

In bringing Jeremiah's prophecy<sup>70</sup> to pass, God established a new covenant with his people by writing his Law into their hearts so that no one needs tell his brothers to know the Lord since they all know him. When the disciples exercise their freedom to institutionalise the Lord's Day and the 'church,' they fulfil this prophecy. Whatever his children decide within this covenant in the Spirit, God accepts, not reluctantly, but indeed as his own just as he accepted each part of his original creation as good.

Showing his acceptance, Jesus appeared to John, not on the anniversary of his resurrection, but on a man-instituted Lord's Day, and he addressed individual churches as if they were directly founded by him. These churches are not structured according to divine proportion like the Temple<sup>71</sup> but according to the needs of the situation of man and his world. In

the city, the measures of man are nonetheless angelic and the handiwork of kings and nations nonetheless glorious. Starting from the simple act of naming living creatures, God's chosen have now fulfilled the role of stewards of God's creation and are embraced by both the Creator and his creation.

## V Between Acts Two and Three

In the first creative acts of God in the first chapter of the Bible, two of his attributes are apparent: freedom of will and action and a desire for purposeful consummation of his creation.<sup>72</sup> Humans are made in God's image and consequently share these two attributes in creaturely form: they have partial freedom of will and action, and they desire their work to be consummated in the grand mosaic of the creator. To grant partial freedom to humans, God has limited his direct action in human affairs. To consummate his creation, God seeks partners in humankind. But after the Fall of man from God's grace with the consequential disharmony that percolated throughout the created order, both the partial freedom of man and his role in God's grand mosaic have been thrown out of kilter.

To remedy the situation by once again giving man a clear vision and setting him on a path to the future, God instituted hope among his chosen people through the Sabbath Day, Sabbatical Year and the Year of the Jubilee. Yet these top-down institutions never caught on and were even distorted by

<sup>69</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 15.

<sup>70</sup> Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Heb. 8:8-12.

<sup>71</sup> Ex. 35-39.

<sup>72</sup> Gen 1, compares the 'good' and 'very good' usage.

man's ungodly genius into the very opposite of what they were intended to be.<sup>73</sup> The institutions imposed on the people demonstrated that God's self-limitation did not elicit the intended response.

God has not changed, but deepened his commitment to his creation: to take his self-emptying, of which self-limitation is the first form, one step further to self-sacrifice in having his own son die on a cross. By vesting upon himself the first institutions of hope and resurrecting, a new hope has henceforth been born. The resurrection so excited God's people that they spontaneously initiated new institutions which unwittingly fulfilled and transcended the old institutions to radiate a contagious cosmic hope.

These new institutions start with the Lord's Supper as the core of the creative Lord's Day which is then celebrated within the hopeful communities that confess Jesus as Christ, the creator and redeemer of God's creation, to look forward to the Kingdom. The hope that was misdirected and short-changed in the Fall is now restored: God's children have properly exercised their freedom in building and sharing in the institutions of hope and through the same institutions, they have also seen much more clearly the real content of this hope, the hope of universal redemption which must reach to every corner which sin has once touched.

The hope hinted at in the Old Testament is now given fuller dimensions in that it is first, a living rather than a lifeless irresponsible hope, led by a risen and ever-living Lord who can respond

to every situation as the world changes in response to creatively dynamic humanity; second, a participating rather than a passive hope, though founded indisputably on Jesus' death and resurrection, which was institutionalized by man who is to shape a future that God will accept and in which he will take pride; third, it is a harmonizing rather than a compartmentalized hope, so that each participant in shaping this hope will find and be excited by his role in the beautiful and intelligent mosaic of God in fulfillment of the longing of all creation;

Fourth, it is a self-emptying rather than an assertive hope so as to welcome the future through constructive sacrifice and not destructive coercion; fifth, it is a present-transforming rather than a distant hope through the redeemed first fruits acting out their anticipation in the here and now and in the process bringing the present closer to the substance of the hope; sixth, it is a tension-filled<sup>74</sup> rather than a lopsided hope so as to balance man's present-transforming element with the element of sheer anticipation. The former may foreclose the latter with misguided human power (e.g. military power) while the latter may lapse into disengagement from reality if the tension is not properly maintained. Seventh, it is a godly rather than a human hope which sees the beginning and end of this hope in none other than God himself, despite man's participation.

The centrality of this hope in the Bible is best summed up by the Epistle to the Hebrews which contends that all Old Testament types and regulations

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73 Mk. 2:23-28.

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74 Schwarz, *Eschatology*, p. 128 (footnotes).

have either been made obsolete or fulfilled, but one goal still remains—the Sabbath rest of the new covenant—and one leader to follow to that goal—Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. The original and only mandate of man—to steward God’s creation—has not changed throughout the eons even after the Fall of man. Indeed, the need of faithful stewardship has been made more urgent, given man’s destructiveness and ignorance resulting from his Fall.

With man voluntarily enlisting in the New Testament’s institutions of hope, the real journey to full stewardship of creation has made a solid and irreversible start. Man’s debut in nature was the task that God initiated with him, to name the animals. This contains two parts—to gain an appreciation of nature and to manage it for man’s own good. Correspondingly, this task was split into two for the Israelites: the working years and the intervening Sabbatical years. The goal is that these two seemingly separate tasks—work the land and appreciate creation—would so complement each other that they would merge back into the one intended task to be completed with the redemption of the cosmos. This will happen in the Kingdom.

The goal of this stewardship is not to move backward to ‘pristine’ conditions, if such existed at all in the past, but to go forward to a dynamic future which will again usher in a harmony that has been lost since Adam fell. Man’s continual creativity in the institutions of hope should not throw this future out of kilter, but will be fully nurtured and accommodated in the grand harmony of the Kingdom. The hope of creation lies in the redeemed’s

dynamic stewardship guided by the future of a God-man-creation rendezvous.

The institution of the Jubilee-turned-Kingdom has now become a vision, a goal and ultimately a hope. It is what all the institutions of hope are pointing towards. In itself, it is not exactly an institution, but rather what energises and leads forward the institutions. It cannot be bound by any institutions, but will give rise to institutions dedicated to moving creation towards it. It is a super-institution, transcending the more tangible and formal institutions that man is used to.

The arithmetic of the Sabbatical Year and Jubilee offers an interesting ambiguity<sup>75</sup> with rich theological overtones in elucidating the link between the Kingdom and the church. The question is: is a Jubilee fixed in time in relation to the closest Sabbatical Year? The Bible allows no definite interpretation, but however one understands the relative timing, the Sabbatical year does not exactly coincide with the Jubilee. In fact, the Sabbatical year initiated for the land is never meant to be the Jubilee of the Lord. As later clarified by Isaiah, the Jubilee is the favourable year ‘of the Lord’ rather than of man. God is the actor, bestowing favour on his creation rather than man creating a utopia, despite his efforts in the Sabbatical year.

In the same way, the Kingdom, being the goal of the church, remains paradoxical. Every redeemed mortal must seek earnestly the Kingdom, but no mortal has the right to proclaim a

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<sup>75</sup> Compare Yoder, *Politics*, p. 71 (footnotes) with Allis, *Commentary*, p. 164-165.



human entity to be the Kingdom of God. Any time this is proclaimed, no matter how godly the entity may seem to be, the announcer is completely wrong and the steps to straying further from the goal of the Kingdom have already begun. The church will remain that entity constantly struggling<sup>76</sup> against the gate of Hades and aspects of the Kingdom will break out within the church from time to time to varying degrees, but the Kingdom per se is ever out of reach of the provisional church. Political, economical or even Christian Messianism must always be a heresy.<sup>77</sup> Yet the tension between these institutions<sup>78</sup>—Lord's Day, church and Kingdom—will keep our hope blazing until the end.

The Promised Land is not the Israelites' final destination. Rather, it is the land which enables the progressive promises of the Sabbath, then the

Sabbatical year and finally the Jubilee to be realized. This promise is not a divine transfer of some externalities to man, but a joint venture of God and man<sup>79</sup> with nature being as much a partner as an enabling condition.

Throughout the long journey of the church towards the Kingdom since her foundation on Jesus being Christ, she has, under the guidance of God, created many more enabling conditions for her forward movement. These come in the form of the full enterprise of humanity—socio-economic-political-techno-cultural—and the challenge for the church is to submit these to the draw of the Kingdom through remembering her Lord in the bread and wine. In the recent struggle for stewardship of creation, human greed<sup>80</sup> usually has the upper hand. The institutions of hope should redeem us from this losing streak.

76 Schwarz, *Eschatology*, p. 207.

77 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), p. 1373.

78 Kung, *On Being a Christian*, p. 221.

79 Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), p. 146-7; p. 107.

80 Ellul, *Subversion*, p. 178.

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# 'Material Provision' or Preaching the Gospel: Reconsidering 'Holistic' (Integral) Mission

Jim Harries

**KEYWORDS:** *Dependency, missiology, mission, church, aid, development, partnership, spiritual, language, linguistics*

## I Transition to Holistic Mission<sup>1</sup>

We 'cannot properly help a person... while disregarding his or her... material or bodily needs...' and 'merely preaching the Gospel is a 'misunderstanding of God's purpose' says Rene Padilla<sup>2</sup> as part of an occasional paper of the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization, hosted by the Lausanne move-

ment at Pattaya, Thailand. Padilla cites the well known British theologian John Stott in his support. However, Glenn Schwartz rings warning bells by pointing out that current mission activities create unhealthy dependency. He is 'working hard to encourage church leaders, particularly in Africa and America, to stand on their own two feet and to discover the joy of breaking out of the stranglehold of dependency'.<sup>3</sup> These two approaches are quite different from each other and it must be asked if these authors have realized that their strategies are inadvertently

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1 The views expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the WEA Theological Commission which has raised some concerns with the author.

2 Rene, C. Padilla, 'Holistic Mission', pp. 10-23 In: Lausanne Occasional Paper. No. 33. Lausanne committee for World Evangelisa-

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tion. Held in Pattaya, Thailand from September 29th to October 5th 2004. (2005) <[http://www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP33\\_IG4.pdf](http://www.lausanne.org/lcwe/assets/LOP33_IG4.pdf)> accessed 14 Feb 2007 p. 15.

3 Glenn Schwartz, 'A Voice for a New Emphasis in Missions' Revised February 2006. An Interview with Glenn Schwartz. <<http://wmausa.org/Page.aspx?id=150494>> accessed 17 Feb 2007.

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**Dr Jim Harries**, who has worked in Zambia and then Kenya since 1988, is a part-time lecturer at Kima International School of Theology, Maseno, Kenya, coordinator of the Yala Theological Centre and on the adjunct faculty of William Carey International University, California. He holds a PhD in Theology (Birmingham UK), and degrees in Education, Agriculture, Rural Development, missiology and Biblical Interpretation. He is a fluent speaker of Kiswahili and Dholuo and has published a number of articles on mission including 'The Magical Worldview in the African Church: what is going on?' (Missiology: An International Review, XXIV/4, 2000) (Email: [jim@vulnerablemission.com](mailto:jim@vulnerablemission.com))

at loggerheads? Is there any resolution to these differences and what is the way forward in mission?

Christopher Little explains how the parting of the ways in the evangelical Christian church occurred following disagreement between those who advocated the 'horizontal' (relationships with men) as against the 'vertical' (relationship with God) roles of the church.<sup>4</sup> According to Little, the evangelical wing of the church turned to follow a more horizontal direction in the early 1970s—represented especially by a 'change of mind' at the Lausanne convention in 1974.<sup>5</sup> For Little, this represents an abandoning of the legitimate role of the church in the world, because after all '... the deepest impoverished state a person can suffer is alienation from God and therefore the greatest demonstration of his compassion is the remedy for this plight'.<sup>6</sup>

Underlying this switch in emphasis, I suggest, is the current state of ideology in western nations. Western Christians are influenced by an academia that has for centuries denied the role of God in human lives. Christians living in the west should be acutely aware that they see the world through tinted spectacles, with blinkers barring from view significant aspects of the nature of people and the nature of God as understood in the majority world.

Appeals for cultural sensitivity by

western nations relating to the non-west seem increasingly to fall on deaf ears. Reasons for this include: First, increasing emphasis on *short-term* mission, meaning shrinking opportunities for learning cultures and languages; second, the end of the cold war and the ever rising confidence of the West in its own capabilities has reduced the need for cultural sensitivity; third, the rise of the internet and global communication in general enables geographically isolated communities to continue to relate closely to their societies of origin, thus reducing the need to identify with a foreign (non-western) people even if a westerner is living among them.

Even if more experienced people were to advise new missionaries to learn the language and take a more accommodating and understanding approach to the culture they are meeting, new workers often ignore this. They are not looking at a clean-slate scenario of 'untouched people', but a legacy of repeated expressions of a lack of cultural knowledge by their predecessors. Some African people, having given up hope of being understood by westerners, are becoming less willing to be open, if only to minimise damage in the many sensitive areas of church and community life.<sup>7</sup>

The west's perception of international concerns is narrowing as a result of its operating from an ever

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4 Christopher Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?' *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, (January 2006) 42:1, pp. 78-87.

5 Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?' p. 79.

6 Little, 'What Makes Mission Christian?' p. 85.

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7 Jim Harries, 'Language in Education, Mission and Development in Africa: Appeals for Local Tongues and Local Contexts', *Encounters Mission Ezine*. Issue 19 August 2007. [http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/Language\\_in\\_Education\\_19.pdf](http://www.redcliffe.org/uploads/documents/Language_in_Education_19.pdf) accessed 10 Oct. 2007.

shrinking pre-suppositional base.<sup>8</sup> Mission emphasis today is frequently operated on the basis of a short-term involvement providing technical assistance. Those who consider these issues to be neutral to broader theological or ecclesial issues in Africa are unfortunately misguided for at least two reasons: first, African religion is rooted in a search for power, including financial power, so projects with outside funding become part of how Christianity (or other 'religion') is understood in Africa. They are not seen as 'extras' to the church, because there is no extra space beyond the category of 'religion' that can be occupied by 'secularism' as is the case in the West. (This is a part of what it means to be 'holistic'); second, relatively poor locally funded African church budgets are often dwarfed by ambitious schemes funded and administered from abroad.

Central to this article, is the understanding that word meanings, including the meaning of the term holistic itself, arise from the context of their use. In parts of the world where the dominant worldview is secular, it means that the gospel is to be presented in hand with finance and technology to improve people's lives. In parts of the world where the worldview is 'magical', it means that the gospel is accompanied by 'magical' powers to improve people's lives. (I acknowledge

that the term 'magic' is very difficult to define or translate. Numerous anthropological accounts of African people point to their dependence on ancestral spirits, witchcraft, vital forces, mystical powers and so on, that I here refer to as 'magic'.<sup>9</sup>) One people's science becomes another's magic.<sup>10</sup>

## II Biblical Background

We need to include reference to the biblical background because God's Word is not presented hand in hand with projects, finance, aid or technology, a fact which western advocates of holistic mission seem to ignore. Instead, in the Old Testament, God is shown revealing his plan of salvation in a variety of ways. Then in the Gospels, we see Jesus presented as a teacher of God's profound truths, and in particular as a miracle worker and one who had a heart of love greater than any other man before or after him. This love was demonstrated in the ways that he interacted with those around him, culminating in his shameful (from a human point of view) death.

Never having risen to political fame or having vast quantities of earthly wealth, Jesus nevertheless acquired great renown because, as Christians

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8 One reason the 'pre-suppositional base' is shrinking, I propose, is because inputs from outside of the west are increasingly being presented in western languages, so obviating the need for westerners to consider the loss of detail incurred in the course of translation.

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9 See Jim Harries, 'The Magical Worldview in the African Church: what is going on?' *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 (October 2000), pp. 487-502.

10 It should be clear that asking an African person, 'Do you believe in magic?' is not a valid test for this thesis, because people will understand the term 'magic' in different ways, and they will respond in respect to particular agendas.

have believed up until today, he is God incarnate. His followers continued his ministry after being filled with godly power, resulting in the existence of bodies of believers around the world up to today, known as the *ecclesia* or church. Up to now those in the church, colloquially known as 'Christians', continue to follow the example of Jesus and proclaim his teachings around the globe.

Some years after the life and ministry of Christ and his disciples, Christian writings were gathered together with what had become the Jewish canon of Scriptures to form the Bible as it is today. That Bible remains the written text that guides and inspires Christians. The words contained in it are considered uniquely inspired by God himself to provide counsel in all areas of life. Ever since, and even before the canon was closed, Christians have been challenged to know just how to interpret the Bible. This has become a particularly critical issue since the Reformation in 16th century Europe resulted in the formation of the Protestant church whose numbers include the World Evangelical Alliance and churches affiliated to it.

Even modern translations of the Bible do not mention many things that have become a normal part of day to day life by many in the English speaking world—especially technological things arising from science and from more recent thinking about society and the nature of humanity. There is no overt mention of electricity, of vehicles, of rockets or telescopes, even of strategies, programmes or projects in the modern sense. The Bible does not advocate hospital medicine or primary and secondary schooling, formal uni-

versities are not discussed or referred to, pensions are not even alluded to, neither is formal insurance in case of theft, damage or death. The Scriptures rarely even mention countries outside the Eastern Mediterranean basin and seem not to anticipate that one day there will be nuclear power, space travel or x-rays as a means of examining one's teeth. Terms (and concepts) such as bureaucracy, socialism, capitalism, development, AIDs and sustainability are not found in the Bible.

Every generation of Christians looks to the Bible for answers to questions as to how they ought to live. They attempt to understand the Scriptures through the guidance of God the Holy Spirit. They want to do the will of God. I am here trying to point out that knowing the will of God is no straightforward mechanical task. God has not left us with closely defined instructions in a legal document. In the current globalising world, questions on what to do and how to do it are more pressing than ever—as certain people in the globe find themselves with the technological means and powers to influence the lives of others on a hitherto unknown scale. How are they to know the will of God in this circumstance?

The practice of Jesus himself could support diverse positions in this regard. How did he respond to people who he met? Does Jesus' healing many sick people justify western medical projects as part of Christian mission today? Does Jesus' feeding 5,000 set an example for us to follow, or in the light of the response of those whom he fed (Jn. 6), is it teaching us *not* to feed people, as Jesus' temptations strongly imply (Lu. 4:1-13)? The words that people find on studying the Bible have

to come out of their own cultures.<sup>11</sup> It has often been suggested that people read out of the Bible what they want to, although that is not entirely true. I arrive at the positions that I do from the context of what I believe to be a life of commitment and sacrifice in God's service, guided by his Word and led by his Spirit.<sup>12</sup>

### III Power in the Church

Personal observation (in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia) has taught me that donors offering finance and material to the Third World (African) church thereby acquire power to influence the church concerned. I have considered this in more detail elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> An offer of aid is like a trap that recipients usually cannot avoid. This is particularly true in contexts of 'poverty' in which the extended family is powerful, and in which needs for finance are increasingly being advocated (such as education, health, the need to have things and so on); this is increasingly the case as the 'poor' world is being incorporated in the globalising process. That

is to say, because a leader's refusal to accept assistance that has been offered will undermine his/her authority, s/he can be forced to accept an offer of help in order to maintain popularity even in the knowledge that the overall impact of the assistance will not be to the people's advantage. Thus a receiver, at least in Africa, generally cannot avoid putting him/herself into a position of dependence, even if they are aware that this is 'unhealthy'.<sup>14</sup>

### IV Different Understandings of 'Holistic'

A basic, important but little considered matter in the discussion of *holistic* mission, is the implicature (what is implied by the use) of the term holistic itself. Whereas it may be clear to westerners that the material side of holistic mission is achieved through rational means, others (certainly in Africa) are busy bringing it about through what can loosely (given the weaknesses of English in this area) be called 'magic'. Many African people have traditionally understood that they prosper if they can please their ancestors. The same reasoning can now be applied to the acquisition of wealth and prosperity in the modern world. So Balcomb tells us that for African people; 'the goods... could be accessed by pre-modern means'.<sup>15</sup> People debating the advan-

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11 See Jim Harries, 'Pragmatic Linguistics applied to Translation, Projects and Inter-cultural Relationships for Frontier Missionaries (not only for Bible translators): an African focus', <http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/pragmatic-linguistics.html> accessed 12th Jan 2008.

12 Jim Harries, 'Biblical Hermeneutics in Relation to Conventions of Language Use in Africa: pragmatics applied to interpretation in cross cultural context', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 30:1, January 2006, pp. 49-59.

13 Jim Harries, 'Power and Ignorance on the Mission Field or "The Hazards of Feeding Crowds"', <http://WWW.geocities.com/mis-sionalia/harries.htm> accessed 15 Jan. 2003.

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14 David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters* (Dallas: SIL International, 2001).

15 Anthony O. Balcomb, 'Modernity and the African Experience', *Bulletin for Contextual Theology African Theology* Volume Three, No.2, 1996, <http://WWW.hs.unp.ac.za/theology/mod.htm> accessed 29 Sep 2004.

tages of holistic mission are understanding the term 'holistic' in profoundly and importantly different ways!

Examples of the 'magical' approach abound in Africa. The classic one is perhaps the African funeral and death-rites, that are increasingly being incorporated into churches in some parts of the Continent (including Western Kenya that is my home). Some African people will use massive amounts of time and resources in funerals and burial programmes. Additional ceremonies often occur again months and years after burial. An important orientation of all these activities is ensuring that the ghost of the departed be not troublesome, that is that s/he does not interfere with people's *acquisition of important basic needs*. The same orientation is reflected in a pre-occupation in African churches with cleansing; that is a rallying of spiritual forces aimed at the removal or de-activation of troublesome ghosts or spirits of the dead (driving out evil spirits). The difference between Africa and the West is not in the desire to meet needs, but in *how they are to be met*.<sup>16</sup>

African people who deeply and implicitly believe in magic cannot (from a westerner's point of view) get their act together to run projects on the basis of western rationality. Westerners who assume their rational route to be correct get frustrated, de-motivated and even give up when they realize that those being 'targeted' are the very people damaging the structures that they so carefully set up, because they are interpreting them from the perspective

of their own cultures. How felt-needs are to be met—through western rationality, or through combating untoward spiritual forces—is an important question.

Designers of formal holistic mission strategies are typically westerners. (If they are non-westerners, then they will be imitating western blueprints.) Non-westerners are consumers of such 'mission'. Holistic mission designed by the non-west will be a combining of the gospel with 'magic' (as defined above<sup>17</sup>) and not western rationality.

The west assumes that physical needs should be met through donated contributions. This is clearly not the pattern given by the Scriptures. The classic instances in which Jesus fed thousands as recorded in the scriptures are given as 'miracles' (Greek *semeion*—signs). That is, Jesus did not raise funds and purchase bread in order to feed the 5000, but instead he multiplied a few loaves so as to satisfy thousands of people (Jn. 6:5-13). Similarly, Jesus did not heal people through the use of bio-medicines, but by praying for them and on the basis of their faith.<sup>18</sup> Jesus was a healer and 'miracle worker', and not a project coordinator, highly trained scientist or fundraiser. It is non-western societies and not the rationally oriented West who are in this respect more closely in line with the Scriptures.

The difference between these is important. 'Spiritual healing' (for want of a better term) and miracle working are not dependent on foreign links and a distant economy. They do not create

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16 See also Maranz, *African Friends*, p. 135.

17 Jim Harries, 'The Magical Worldview'.

18 For example see Mark 2:5.

dependency. Their operation is not restricted to a particular people of a particular culture and a particular economic and social class. Spiritual gifts of healing and miracle making may be given to anyone who genuinely believes in Christ.

Those who understand holistic mission as being the utilization of western reason from the platform of the global economy together with biblical teaching are not following a biblical model. The economic rationality that underlies today's globalisation was not there at the time of Jesus. It is surely wrong to assume that, because Jesus fed people by miracles (on very few occasions) and healed people (rather more often), western Christians now have a mandate to create material dependence of the rest of the globe on them by imitating his actions using alternative rational means. An extra-rational justification and foundation for rationality is a questionable mixing of categories.<sup>19</sup> Modern technology and foreign funded projects are not neutral mediums of action, but have numerous implications for the society to which they are being applied. These have been outlined in brief above. Making peoples and societies dependent on technologies that they cannot understand, control or perpetuate from within their own worldview and so creating a high level of vulnerability to foreigners, is immoral.

## V Holistic Mission Gone Wrong

Whether or not he was himself anticipating this, Padilla's words,<sup>20</sup> once validated by people like John Stott at the Lausanne congress, have been interpreted by others as ecclesial license for relief and development work. Padilla categorically states that '... holistic mission is mission oriented towards the satisfaction of basic human needs, including the need of God, but also the need of food, love, housing, clothes, physical and mental health and a sense of human dignity'.<sup>21</sup> Hence 'the atmosphere generated by the (1974) Lausanne Congress has been described as "euphoric", particularly for relief and development workers who "could now appeal to the evangelical constituency as family, without the fear of either being rebuked for preaching the 'social gospel' or being charged of compromising on evangelism."<sup>22</sup>

Did Padilla realize that his legitimizing of the idea that provision of mutual assistance should be a part of gospel preaching in the Third World would result in a class-segregated church leadership—that is, that proclaiming the importance of the church's role in meeting physical needs can illegitimise the evangelistic efforts of those not privileged to have access to a material surplus (or technological know-how)? Given that the church is now multi-cultural and multi-

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19 That is, justifying the spread of dependency-creating 'rational' technologies by Christ's command to minister to people spiritually.

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20 Padilla, 'Holistic Mission'.

21 Padilla, 'Holistic Mission'.

22 Padilla, 'Holistic Mission'. This quote is taken from Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, (eds.), *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2003), ix.



national, that is a slap in the face to two-thirds or more of the world's Christians. Western domination of the world church occurs because it is the west that has the economic powers to provide for the 'basic human needs' mentioned, and this provision buys power. This suggests that a church not linked to benevolent western donors cannot be preaching the true gospel. Is this a view that should be encouraged?

The ancient message deeply rooted in scripture and church tradition encouraging persistence in Christian faith and service even in a context of poverty, suffering and trials (never mind persecution) is nowadays all too often replaced by materialist consumer-driven Christianity. That is saying in effect that non-western Christians are given official (foreign) ecclesial approval to move to churches that have the most generous donors.

Surely choosing a church according to the possibility of socio-economic advance through donor contributions is ignoring the biblical mandate? Christ called his disciples to *leave* their worldly society in order to be his followers (Jn. 15:19). 1 Kings 17 tells how God sent a *famine* (and not food-aid) in response to the sin of Ahab. The apostle Paul endured much affliction in the course of his preaching. With the possible exception of the collection for Jerusalem, he initiated no 'compassionate ministries' in the modern sense. (I believe that the collection for Jerusalem was not assistance for the materially-deprived, but the making of an ecclesial/prophetic statement.<sup>23</sup>)

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23 Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: the history of Paul's collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

Why then are modern day prophets insisting on being prophets of profit?

Padilla tells us that:

All too often, the stumbling block and the foolishness that prevent non-Christians to turn to Christ is not really the stumbling block and the foolishness of the gospel centered in 'Christ crucified' (1 Cor. 1:23), but the self-righteous attitude and the indifference to basic human needs on the part of Christians. The first condition for the church to break down the barriers with its neighborhood is to engage with it, without ulterior motives, in the search for solutions to felt needs. Such an engagement requires a humble recognition that the reality that counts for the large majority of people is not the reality of the Kingdom of God but the reality of daily-life problems that make them feel powerless, helpless, and terribly vulnerable.<sup>24</sup>

Have the financial donor/dependency implications of the way this can be heard by a western audience been sufficiently thought through? It seems to say that 'those with money *must* give it to those without it'. Have Christians always sought to resolve other people's 'problems' in this way? The foolishness of the gospel and offence of the cross (Gal. 5:11) include that someone should give up worldly prestige or advantage on entering the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field (Mt. 13:44), promising a deep heartfelt peace and eternal reward to those ravaged by the storms

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24 Padilla, 'Holistic Mission', pp. 19-20.

of life. The insistence that the cross be accompanied by material reward is an offence to the gospel. The quote above bypasses the possibility, implicitly believed by millions of people around the world, that felt needs are met *through* the gospel itself. It is their faith in God that helps people to overcome the 'powerlessness and helplessness' described by Padilla. It is through trusting in God that demons of poverty, disease and helplessness are driven away. What do we say to people who believe this? Remember that Christ himself was himself heavily engaged in removing demons.

It is widely understood that a genuine Christian life will raise someone's economic standing. That is, someone will be better off as a result of becoming a Christian, without the church being actively involved in 'social action'. Many reasons often given for this include:

- stable monogamist Christian marriages rooted in true love and mutual respect between husband and wife
- avoiding excesses of alcohol and drugs.
- in the classic Protestant sense—expressing one's Christian commitment through diligence in one's worldly calling
- mutual support from a wide Christian family
- overcoming fear of ancestral spirits and thereby avoiding expensive and time consuming funeral rituals otherwise necessitated
- undercutting the fear of witchcraft that dominates many societies and binds them to relations

of mistrust, hatred and suspicion

- a unified and purposeful view of life, that arises from belief in the power of a single, concerned and influential God

These are extremely powerful factors contributing to improvements and changes in people's circumstances. Associating the gospel strongly with westernisation, which holistic mission seems to imply, may by orienting people primarily to a search for material wealth, deny them access to the above. 'Striving' in life comes to mean looking for money and relationship with donors, instead of for productivity, personal holiness, and morality.

'The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist', shares Stott.<sup>25</sup> But is it always easy to identify and discern 'evil' and injustice? Once identified, how is it to be tackled? Depending as it does on the desirability of ultimate ends, identifying evil is a theological process. The Bible is replete with examples of redemptive suffering. Is it better for someone to live with pleasure and joy for seventy years and then go to hell, or is it better to struggle and suffer for sixty years and then spend eternity in heaven? Definitions of evil that ignore such questions make implicit theological assumptions. On what basis are these assumptions

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25 John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), p. 24. cited in Padilla, 'Holistic Mission', p. 12.

made if not faith? Surely this points to the foundational importance of faith and theology, i.e. 'preaching' to bring about social change.

What should be done to someone whose actions we find to be evil? Are they to be punished? Is change to be forced? Or is the primary role of a Christian to point out where they are wrong? The former is tempting, but inter-culturally often paternalistic and arousing of (justified?) opposition, even if this is underground. The latter, while a demanding and complex task, is part of the essence of traditional missionary work, classically carried out by means of teaching and preaching that 'holistic mission' proponents seem to be so unhappy with. Should the church join western governments in using its economic, educational, social or even military might to forcefully extinguish evil whenever it is 'spotted', or is there a valid alternative of 'appealing' to people through preaching?

Even if we choose to leave aside the ultimate questions regarding evil discussed above, complexities still abound. Is it wrong to steal, if theft is the only way to avoid death through starvation? Is wife beating to be condemned out of hand if it happens in a community in which the alternative is prostitution that results in AIDS? Is dictatorship to be outlawed if it is the only way to maintain peace between warring factions? Family disputes are notoriously difficult for outsiders to handle. Who will identify the 'evil' in the actions of husband and wife to one another, or that occur within a foreign community? Ethicists have for centuries argued the relative advantages of deontological (norm based) as against teleological (end based) under-

standings of good and bad.<sup>26</sup> Do we now have the solution? Is it good to allow your child to enjoy eating chocolates from morning to night if he/she wants to, even though the long term effect is an early death through a heart attack caused by obesity? Is it good to assist African populations to mushroom if there is no visible way for them to sustain their increased population density, such that people end up engaging in mass homicides such as occurred in Rwanda in the 1990s? When are actions evil, and when does 'aid' become 'interference' in other people's lives? There are other similar examples that could be given.

Short-term mission is in these days much on the increase. So is the differential in wealth between the poor and the rich parts of the world. So is the degree to which the 'poor' world imitates and depends on the rich. Short-term workers from the west are greatly materially advantaged by comparison with most African people whom they come to meet. Is it helpful for them in addition to be told that they have divine authority to condemn the evil that they find? That is, that which appears to them to be evil, given their (frequently very limited) life experience and contextual training? An ecclesial stamp of approval on what can easily be a narrow bigoted perspective is not, it seems to me, doing anyone any favours. It is much better to concentrate on 'merely' preaching the gospel' (see above) than to blunder forcefully, blindly and destructively into other people's affairs.

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<sup>26</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Ethics: alternatives and issues* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House 1971), p. 13.

To say that 'The church fulfills her vocation as "light of the world" not merely by preaching the Gospel, but by letting her light shine through 'good deeds'...' (Matthew 5:16)<sup>27</sup> is absolutely correct. I doubt whether any preachers would disagree. If some disagree, then let us pray for them to change.<sup>28</sup> The importance of the life and work of preachers to the effectiveness of their message has long been known. Differences between the current age in the west and New Testament times are that in the west, first of all, preached words are themselves no longer considered effective either in drawing blessing or driving away bad spirits, and second, that love is all too often these days interpreted as being expressed financially in monetary generosity and gift giving, and not in empathising, spending time with people, listening or understanding (except with rational or quantitative ends in mind).

Christians born and raised in the west are facing a dilemma—secular norms threaten to undermine their faith. Already historically Christian nations present a secular face to the world. 'Secularism' is an example of a great non-translatability. It does not make sense in the 'religious' majority of the world. I dare say that it does not make sense to God either, or to those who hold it in tension with some kind of 'private religion'. This confusing state of affairs should cease to be the front which the West presents to the world.

The key to comprehending a people has always and everywhere (except perhaps in the west in the last few centuries or decades?) been to understand what they believe about God(s). The key to bringing lasting heart-rooted change to a community is to enlighten people on more of the great truths of who God is and what he is like. If the West is to have a helpful message for the world then it should share what it knows about God, and not its confusion about 'secularism'. For 'social action', in the broad sense of the word, to be a part of the work of the church is normal. But promoters of 'integral gospel' are unwittingly playing into the hands of people whose agenda can do more harm than good by promoting unhealthy dependency because what they do is rooted in secularism.<sup>29</sup>

The problems of holistic mission are in its implementation. In reality people's problems are complex, so finding solutions is complex. It is in giving license to western people to force their solutions onto African (and other Third World) communities using western money and technology that holistic mission has not been helpful.

## VI The Anti-Dependency Movement

The growth in 'holistic mission' in encouraging wealth transfers from the west to the poor world' has aggravated dependency concerns. Schwartz is in my view correct to say that 'depen-

27 Padilla, 'Holistic Mission', p. 21.

28 As suggested by the apostle Paul in Philippians 1:15-18.

29 See Jim Harries, 'Is Secularism a Mystical Religion? Questions of Translation in Relation to Millennium Goals and Mission in Africa' (2007 Unpublished document).

dency on outside funding'... is 'one of the most difficult problems facing the Christian movement at the beginning of the 21st Century'.<sup>30</sup> He is absolutely correct to say that modern missions methodologies result in 'the Gospel itself [being] distorted' and that people's interest in the gospel for the sake of material possessions means that 'something goes terribly wrong in the spread of the Gospel'.<sup>31</sup> Schwartz has 'stood in the gap', filling that difficult and apparently contradictory position of being the American who is telling people to give (or in the case of Third World churches *receive*) less!

Robert R. Reese calls dependency '... a perversion of the Gospel'.<sup>32</sup> He points out that 'under the title of partnership local churches or associations have been able to circumvent established missionary policy based on field experience',<sup>33</sup> thus agreeing with other authors such as Rheenan that partnership has simply '... frequently become a disguised form of paternalism'<sup>34</sup> and Helander and Niwagila's saying that in

Tanzania 'fixation in the roles of "rich giver" and "poor receiver" has taken place'.<sup>35</sup> 'There cannot be a partnership in a setting up of dependency and patronage'<sup>36</sup> say Helander and Niwagila. 'The sharing of material resources is perhaps one of the most difficult matters in the history of partnership'.<sup>37</sup>

Promotion of dependency may be inadvertent: 'American missionaries in Zimbabwe almost automatically seem to be preaching a prosperity gospel even if this is not their intention... In such a situation, missionaries need a strategy just to avoid adding to dependency.... yet Africans are embracing them with zeal'.<sup>38</sup> Such inadvertency occurs because African people make an implicit link between the gospel and the wealth of foreign visitors; as if the wealth has arisen directly *as a result of* the gospel. Western preachers may say things that are true in their own context, but far from true in the African context. For example, someone from America saying that they 'trust completely in God' is assumed to mean this as 'in addition to their pension and medical insurance'. Such aspects not being picked up by African listeners results in the prosperity gospel. Much could be added—many Christians visiting from the west claim to be 'spread-

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30 Glenn Schwartz, 'Is there a Cure for Dependency amongst Mission Founded Churches?' (2000), <<http://wmausa.org/page.aspx?id=83812>> accessed 17 Feb 2007

31 Schwartz, 'Is there a Cure?'

32 Robert Boyd Reese, 'Dependency and its Impact on Churches Related to the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Christian Fellowship', PhD Thesis, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, May 2005 (Version that I read did not have the original page numbers), p. 64.

33 Reese, 'Dependency and its Impact', p. 9.

34 Gailyn Van Rheenen, 'Money and Missions (revisited)', MMR#13, 2001, <http://vlib.anthotech.com/bin/jump.cgi?ID=1077> accessed 20 March 2002.

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35 Eila Helander, and Wilson B. Niwagila, *The Partnership and Power: a quest for reconstruction in mission* (Usa River, Tanzania: Makumira Publications [number seven] 1996), p. 74.

36 Helander and Niwagila, *The Partnership*, p. 85.

37 Helander and Niwagila, *The Partnership*, p.125.

38 Reese, 'Dependency and its Impact', p. 37.

ing the Gospel' while being mostly engaged in dispersing wealth. 'Bringing the gospel' can be like a cover for handing out money and material.

The solutions that Schwartz advocates to resolve dependency issues include: first, recognizing that non-dependent churches are healthier; second, addressing the issue with serious determination; third, teaching local people of their obligation to give to their church; fourth, encouraging spiritual renewal; and fifth, ensuring that there is local ownership.<sup>39</sup> Reese talks of the need for mission programmes that do not create dependency, good training for missionaries, and mission euthanasia.<sup>40</sup> He advocates steps that Zimbabwean churches and the American churches relating with them ought to take to resolve dependency issues.<sup>41</sup>

I stand with the above in the solutions they advocate for resolving dependency. I add additional ones below.

## VII Additional Means for Overcoming Dependency

I would like to make two suggestions in addition to those above as aids to resolving the *dependency issue*. I do so in order to encourage 'missionary work'. I believe that the unity of the church will be aided by having more and not fewer people travelling between its branches and to the unreached. But I see such work as

needing to have a different character from what is common today. Western missionaries all too often use their control of the purse strings to 'take charge' of or dictate (even if unwittingly—see above) to churches. I propose that western missionaries not subsidise their ministries. In much of Africa western missionary superiority is almost guaranteed because official languages used are European. I propose that missionaries insist on ministering using local tongues.

### 1. Missionary Poverty

Westerners are these days reluctant to take leadership in Africa through fear of accusations of paternalism. This is very different from the situation in the west itself, where different races of people are actively being integrated into society. At the root of this difference is the wealth of foreigners on the African scene that (combined with their failure to learn local languages—see below) keeps them aloof from and so ignorant of local people's ways. This ignorance, plus the 'don't bite the hand that feeds you' mentality inhibits what could otherwise be helpful cross-cultural interchange. The church, as a foundationally egalitarian body, should be leading the field in resolving this perpetuation of inter-racial barriers.<sup>42</sup>

I do not mean by this that western missionaries should be too poor to keep themselves and therefore go hun-

39 Schwartz, 'Is there a Cure.'

40 Reese, 'Dependency and its Impact', pp. 77-80.

41 Reese, 'Dependency and its Impact', p. 76.

42 Jim Harries, 'Issues of Race in Relating to Africa: Linguistic and Cultural Insights that Could Avoid Traps.' <http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/issues-of-race-in-relating-to-africa.html> accessed 12th Jan 2008.

gry. Yes, it is good to have a 'simple lifestyle', but most important is for missionaries *not to use their western wealth to further their ministry*. This is in line with the biblical model of missionaries making their living by receiving from those whom they serve (1 Cor. 9:11). The absence of foreign funding will force western missionaries to operate according to the contours of African culture. Not being preoccupied in promoting their own culture will result in opportunities of all sorts for missionaries to learn from locals. (This is not to say that missionaries should stop people from benefiting from what the west has to offer. They don't need to stop them at all. Only, their own energies should not be spent in promoting 'westernisation' [which is what 'development often amounts to] but in interacting with people, using locally available means.)

## 2. Use of Local Languages

Operating one's Christian ministry in the local language has numerous effects and benefits that are these days rarely considered. It results in 'enforced humility' as the missionary begins as 'learner'. Using someone's language, is boosting *their* self-worth and a sign of respect for *them*. Using a European language tends to confine a missionary to the upper classes, but using a local language enables ministry across the economic spectrum. Knowing and working in the local language will ensure a 'fit' between ministry and the local context. Knowing and working in the local language will

be building a foundation that local people will understand and can imitate. It is a way of avoiding serious blunders in communication.

Setting a foundation for people in other than their own language will, especially in this day of global communication and if the language is rooted in a very different culture, make them dependent on the owners of that language. This is currently happening over much of Africa, and in such rendering people incompetent in their own communities prevents what could have been helpful progressive thinking and activities from occurring.

## VIII Conclusion

Implementation of 'holistic mission' strategies across Africa (and presumably elsewhere) has inadvertently resulted in serious problems, especially unhealthy dependency of African churches and communities on the west, and a serious impeding of local African initiatives and ecclesial or social/economic development. In addition to anti-dependency measures promoted by Schwartz, this author advocates two mission strategies to be followed at least by some western missionaries to remedy this situation—western missionaries ministering in indigenous languages and not using outside resources to subsidise their ministry. These two strategies, together known as 'vulnerable mission', will enable a clear contextual communication of the gospel and an empowering of non-western Christian communities.

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Editor: Colin Brown

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# Book Reviews

ERT (2008) 32:3, 272-273

## Israel, God's Servant: God's Key to the Redemption of the World

David W. Torrance and George Taylor

Edinburgh: Handsel Press and Paternoster: Milton Keynes, 2007  
978-1-84227-554-2

Pb., pp 224, bibliog., index

*Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,  
Evangelical Review of Theology*

Using some material from earlier lectures and conferences, the authors (Torrance, a retired Church of Scotland minister and Taylor is a pseudonym) present in this book a sustained argument against 'replacement theology', the view that with the coming of Christ, God's covenant and plan for the Jewish people in relation to 'his purpose of love and salvation for humankind and for all creation' came to an end. The argument is wide ranging but is focused especially on Paul's ministry and theology as seen most clearly in Romans 9-11—in fact, chapter 11 of this book consists of an exposition of this passage. Heavy weight is also placed on the biblical witness to Jesus being the messiah of Israel and that the cross must be understood in this context.

Events in Middle East, especially since the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, are regarded as being part of God's plan, even though Israel is obviously not (yet) believing. From this perspective, the issues existing there today must be seen as basically and emphatically religious, not merely political. The authors believe that many in the church have 'yielded to the secular pressures of the world and seek to interpret events in the Middle

East today in a purely secular way' and are therefore 'deeply prejudiced in their judgements' whereas 'What we are witnessing today is an immense spiritual struggle... between Christ and all the evil powers of the world'.

As the subtitle indicates, the church has not replaced Israel, but instead 'Israel continues to be God's servant and, together with the Church, is God's instrument, God's key, for the redemption of the world'. This does not mean that Israel and the church are somehow lumped together, but they have 'under God, different roles to play'.

Furthermore, this unique and continuing role for Israel does not rule out the call for them to believe in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord—in fact, quite the opposite: it is 'a matter of urgent priority' for the 'church to take the gospel to them' because, 'Without faith in Jesus Christ, the Jews cannot fulfil God's calling in the way that he wants'. So the authors take seriously the Pauline priority, 'to the Jew first' in both chronological and theological-missional terms. God 'grieves over their sin, their rejection of himself and his salvation... but he loves them and wants all to repent to receive his salvation and enjoy his love'. Chronologically of course, the church took the gospel to Jews first, so 'The Church's attitude to the Jewish people can be seen as a touchstone of its attitude to God', and 'its attitude to Jewish mission provides a measure of the Church's keenness to accomplish God's salvation project according to God's design'. Appropriately, there are two helpful appendices on 'Messianic' churches and mission activity in Israel today.

According to the authors, one easily overlooked danger of replacement theology is

that it spiritualises the OT and the land, thus making it well nigh impossible to deal with the issues in the Middle East; moreover, this approach has serious implications for the rest of theology, rendering it fundamentally anti-holistic.

This well argued book gives considerable attention to difficult related issues such as anti-semitism (treated in one of the three major sections), relations with other religions (Islam in particular, including Jihad, the Intifada and the PLO), and the refugee problem. It combines a strong biblical theology with a realistic understanding of the practical issues, deep spiritual sensitivity and a passionate concern for the people of the Middle East. As such, its message should be considered carefully by all, including those who take a different view. It is particularly important for those many Christians and churches who have ceased to give attention to the evangelization of Jews (often with the flow-on effect of lessening interest in mission or evangelism of any kind), and those who ignore believing Jews and their churches.

ERT (2008) 32:3, 273-274

### **Spirituality Old and New Recovering Authentic Spiritual Life**

**Donald G. Bloesch**

**Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press,  
2007**

**ISBN 978-0-8308-2838-8  
Pb., pp 192 Indexes**

*Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,  
Evangelical Review of Theology*

After completing his seven volume 'Theological Foundation' series, Donald Bloesch has turned to the topic of spirituality, simply defined as 'the way we live

out our religious commitment'. This is a book which gives him the chance to draw on many of his distinctive theological themes, especially Word and Spirit: 'True spirituality is based on the paradoxical unity of Word and Spirit, and this unity is conveyed to us through earthen vessels—especially the preaching of the Word in the assembly of believers' (p. 142). It also displays in a sustained manner his distinctive style of writing—the juxtaposition of contrasting views of the topic under consideration. For example, in differing systems of spirituality, the body is seen as 'the vessel of the soul', 'the tomb of the soul' or 'the seed of the soul', or they stress 'eternity of God', 'the sovereignty of God' or 'the potential or future of God'.

This book lends itself well to this kind of treatment because more than half of it consists of a delineation of three ideal types of spirituality—mysticism, classic biblical personalism and 'the new spirituality'. The main focus of three systems can be characterized distinctively from various perspectives. For example, 'in mainstream mysticism life is a quest for happiness in union with God. In biblical religion life is a witness to God's gracious election brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In modern religion life is an invitation to demonstrate heroic virtue. Or life is a transmutation of matter into spirit' (p. 131).

After various introductory topics are considered, Chapter 3 gives a brief outline of these three types of spirituality, with the following chapters devoted to extended presentations of their features, but always in reference to each other, comparing and highlighting the contrasts. Chapter 7 continues the same method, but by showing how each of the three types of spirituality relates to key Christian doctrines and practices, such as

the person of God, Christology, ecclesiology, prayer and the like. Thus, 'Faith in biblical religion is trust in the under-served mercy of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. In classical mysticism faith is a venture into the darkness of the unknown culminating in the vision of God beyond the boundary of death. In the new spirituality faith is power force that works miracles' (p. 132).

This is a very helpful synthesis which cannot help but leave the reader completely clear about the author's views on the nature and values of biblical or evangelical spirituality, which is 'centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ and dedicated to the conversion of a lost humanity' (p. 140) and is guided by 'Holy Scripture as the infallible norm for faith and practice (p. 22).

It leads on to the final chapter which takes the author's own personal views further in terms of the Kingdom of God, showing how evangelical spirituality involves fellowship, service and witness arising out of a personal relationship of trust in and worship of the personal God of the Bible. This chapter serves to reinforce Bloesch's concern that there is a 'crisis in spirituality' caused by 'theological erosion' in which the church has been 'accommodated to new winds of doctrine' that contradict historic Christianity. This spirituality is without doctrinal substance, and, he explains, can be seen in a variety of forms including the electronic church, the New Age movement, some forms of Pentecostalism (including contemporary worship, prosperity doctrine, the positive confession movement), feminist spirituality and the emerging church movement.

Most of the treatment of spirituality in this book is general and theological (rather than oriented to spiritual practices) and, typically of the author, with a

very wide perspective on history and the scope of Christian experience. Appendices throughout the book treat particular issues—Gnosticism, the new age spirituality and Thérèse of Lisieux (who is presented as one with significant evangelical sympathies); a final appendix highlights one of the hymns of Pietism. However, it is only in the last chapter that there is any specific reference to the dominant Pentecostal or Charismatic spirituality which, according to the author, is 'basically evangelical in orientation'. But it 'reflects mystical motifs' (due to its roots in mysticism and pietism) and has the 'danger' of tending to 'elevate the Spirit over the written Word' and, reflecting the new spirituality, sees God as 'erupting power rather than redeeming mercy' (p. 146).

Another appendix reflects the main conclusion of the work—the unresolved tension between evangelical spirituality and the other two streams selected for discussion. While Bloesch is at pains to emphasize repeatedly that individuals, whether contemporary or from the past, may exhibit any of the three types of spirituality in varying degrees and combinations, the systems themselves are in principle irreconcilable. This means that evangelical Christianity cannot contemplate adopting either of the other two system if it wants to remain faithful to its sources. With this clear message reinforced strongly and with a warm and passionate presentation, this is a book from a senior evangelical theologian that is important reading for Christians today.

ERT (2008) 32:3, 275-277

**Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of more than 100 Disputed Questions**

Wayne Grudem

Sisters OR: Multnomah, 2004

ISBN 978-1-57673-840-5

Pb pp 856 appen., bibliog. Ind.

**Recovering Biblical Ministry by Women: An Exegetical Response to Traditionalism and Feminism**

George and Dora Winston

n.p.: Xulon Press, 2003

[orig. Dutch ed. by Apeldoorn: Novapres, 1996; 2nd print 1999]

ISBN 978-1-59160-182-1

Pb, pp551, ind

*Reviewed by Jürg Buchegger, Evangelical Free Church Buchs, Switzerland*

Both of these two are impressive books—not only because of their number of pages, but because of their content. Grudem has been known for a long time as an advocate for the so-called complementarian position on the Bible and gender. He also is one of the editors of the standard defence of this view (*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* 1991). He has co-edited two other monographs on the topic since then.

This new book is meant to be a supplement to the earlier, standard work. According to the preface, the book wants to update the ongoing discussion, arguments and research. After two introductory chapters, 118 'disputed questions' are dealt with in chapters 3-12, questions which set the egalitarian camp against the complementarian view.

Each chapter groups a couple of questions around one of the following key

themes: (1) a biblical vision of manhood and womanhood as created by God and (2) in the church, (3) evangelical feminist claims from Genesis 1-3, (4) from the rest of the Old Testament and (5) the Gospels and Acts, (6) evangelical feminist claims about marriage and (7) about the church from the New Testament epistles, (8) about the church from 1 Timothy 2, (9) about how to interpret the Bible, claims (10) from theology and from ideas of fairness and justice, (11) claims that the complementarian view is harmful. The book closes with chapters (13) 'Is evangelical feminism the new path to liberalism? Some disturbing warning signs' and (14) 'The current state of evangelicalism regarding biblical manhood and womanhood'.

Grudem's book leaves no stone unturned. He deals with every question imaginable that is connected with the biblical texts on the topic from Genesis 1 to 1 Timothy 2. The complementarian view itself is nowhere explicitly expounded, but the two introductory chapters explain the position well: man and woman are equal in value and dignity, they have different roles in marriage as part of the created order, both equality and differences reflect the differences and equality in the Trinity. The idea of headship and subordination also stretches out into the realm of the church. That becomes clear, when texts dealing with leadership in the church are closely connected with questions of family as in 1 Timothy 3:4-5. 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is the clearest statement, restricting some governing and teaching roles in the church to men.

In all cases Grudem tries to argue in the best way possible, taking into account the most recent research and literature on each topic. The appendices contain among other things the most updated version of earlier papers on *kephale* and

*authentico*. The book is meant to be used as a reference book when looking for answers to a specific argument in the debate. Extensive indices prove very helpful and a special website for future arguments, additions and corrections has been established ([www.EFBT100.com](http://www.EFBT100.com); see also [www.cbwm.org](http://www.cbwm.org)).

While Grudem is clearly complementarian, the Winstons' book 'proposes a third way'. George and Dora Winston have both taught for more than 30 years at the Belgian Bible Institute. According to the authors, their book 'is merely an attempt to determine what the *Bible* teaches' and concerning the current gender-debate, they are convinced, 'that inerrant Scripture, interpreted according to straightforward grammatical-historical exegesis, provides a coherent total picture and common ground upon which open minded people from both camps can meet'. They make it explicit, that their most important dialogue partner is the above mentioned book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*.

Starting with some methodological questions and rejecting the deculturizing and traditionalist approaches as sidetracks, the first part of the book addresses the question of authority. According to the Winstons we find within the Bible five different relationships in which God recognizes the authority of one person over another: wife/husband, children/parents, citizens/magistrates, church members/church officers and employees/employers. The important point: '... both males and females can be either in authority or in submission with respect to each other depending on the relationship in which they are placed to one another...'. It is not gender which decides who has authority over whom, but 'relationship'. Headship and submission are limited to the sphere of marriage,

not only in Eph. 5:22-33, but also in 1 Cor. 11:3, 14:34 and 1Tim. 2:12. In these passages *aner* and *gynē* must be translated by 'husband' and 'wife' and not by 'man' and 'woman'. This becomes the main thesis of the book: No gender-based distinctions may be made outside of marriage.

The next part of the book (pp.175-296) deals with gender-based distinctions and concludes, that men and women are equal, but (in their sexuality and connected with it in some functional physical and psychological differences) not identical. Ch. 9 is especially crucial, because it answers the question, 'Do gender-based distinctions apply outside of marriage?' with a blunt 'no'. This then means that gender-based distinctions do not apply in the sphere of the church either. Consequently, chaps. 10-11 try to answer questions in connection with Gal. 3:28 (its application is restricted to the church) and to show that 1 Cor. 11:11 and Eph. 5:21-22 teach reciprocal submission.

The rest of the book (pp. 299-525) argues, that in the church women may teach, be ministers of the Word according to their gifts (Part 4: Speaking for God) and that they can take every office (Part 5: Church Office; yes, Junia was a woman Apostle and 1Tim. 5:2 is talking about women elders). There is an index of names and scripture but no bibliography.

Looking at the literature that has been cited, some will probably want to criticize a lack of interacting with newer research on the texts and issues involved. But this is not the real weakness of the book. The Winstons have done an admirable job in bringing into the ongoing discussion a fresh viewpoint and an immense effort has been made in answering every possible objection to their view. There is much to gain for every reader in the exegetical

discussions and in some places the book is almost a compendium on biblical texts on one topic (e.g. on partnership in marriage). The book and its main thesis surely deserve a closer look and answer from both camps of the debate on women's roles in church.

For this reviewer the Winston's main argument is still open to question, not only because their view is unique and quite isolated (despite their reference to Luther and other older commentators, who took *aner* and *gyne* in 1 Tim. 2 as referring to husband and wife, they cannot be counted as advocates of this view of the Winstons), but also because in their discussion of methodology, they insist, for example, that induction is the only way to argue a case, and deduction is always misleading (pp. 7f). Their treatment and exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:11-12 (pp. 106-115, 355-362) furthermore is not convincing. According to the authors, in this passage Paul wants 'to indicate to married women who teach in church only *how* they are to go about it: with unostentatious dress (vv.9-10), after learning in a quiet spirit (v.11), and so as to avoid lording it over their husbands (v.12). But when it has not been possible to *prevent* women's teaching in church, ways have been found to *limit* such teaching' (362).

I doubt that this is what the text is saying. I think it is highly unlikely that by using Adam and Eve (v.13) for his argument, Paul is thinking of *married* women and men *only*. In a text like this one, where an unambiguous hint to marriage is lacking, the burden of proof lies with those who want to read the narrower meaning for the terms *aner* and *gyne*. As so often in this debate (almost) everything comes down to 1 Tim. 2! Because a question/answer or objection/answer format is used throughout the whole book, one misses in-depth studies of the most

important texts within their biblical context. This is especially wanting in a book that claims in its subtitle to give 'an exegetical response' to the pertinent questions.

ERT (2008) 32:3, 277-278

### The Wondrous Cross: Atonement and Penal Substitution in the Bible and History

Stephen R. Holmes

London: Paternoster, 2007

ISBN 978-1-84227-541-2

Pb., pp130

*Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,  
Evangelical Review of Theology*

In this short book, the author, who lectures at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, defends the doctrine of penal substitution (spelt wrongly on the title page!) as a valid way of talking about the atonement today. His discussion is set against the background of considerable recent debate on the topic amongst evangelicals. However, he qualifies this defence very strongly, arguing that penal substitution must be seen as only one of a number of ways of telling the 'story' of the cross that are legitimated by Scripture and history. Although it was highly prominent in the western evangelical world after its first full scale appearance at the Reformation, Holmes believes that it may come to be discarded in the future when it no longer resonates with the cultural context of the day—in the same way that earlier explanations of the meaning of the Cross have done (such as Anselm's satisfaction theory). Even now, penal substitution can be presented badly by both supporters and critics, masking its true significance as a model which speaks strongly of God's love, justice,

and the seriousness of sin. So it must be explained carefully and in the context of the full story of God and his action in the world, including the Trinity, the Incarnation and the transformation of people brought about by salvation. But no one 'story' is satisfactory by itself because the biblical material and the nature of Christ's death and resurrection are too complex for such a simplistic approach; each one of those discussed in the book has its own distinctive value and cannot be dropped without loss. Thus penal substitution stresses, inter alia, the objective nature of the atonement which is perfectly proper, but not in isolation from the subjective elements found in other views.

This a popular level book (with no index or footnotes) which in the first half gives a simple overview of the biblical and historical material, pointing out in particular the variety of views that have been held, although there is little recognition of the dominance of 'power theology' in recent times. In the much more substantial second half, the author tackles key questions relating to the meaning and significance of various approaches to the doctrine of the atonement, and examines more deeply penal substitution itself. In an appendix he refers specifically to recent debates, especially in the UK in which he has been involved. In these circumstances, the author is particularly sensitive to criticisms of penal substitution as the stereotypical evangelical view, (especially by those who might have been expected to support it). Among those that he addresses are the claim that it is based on an injustice or a defective view of God while at the same time it is promoted as the only view faithful to the teaching of Scripture, and also the problematic idea that guilt can be transferred from one person to another. Yet in the process of

recognizing these claims and of seeking to be even-handed in his treatment, the author's defence is rather muted until the closing stages of the book; furthermore, the reasons for the dominance of the view in the hey-day of evangelicalism are left more or less unexplained.

But more questionable still for many readers will be the way the author considers penal substitution (and indeed, all the models he reviews) to be simply another way (albeit important) of explaining the meaning of the cross, but not one that is part of the essential truth of Scripture itself.

ERT (2008) 32:3, 278-280

### Overcoming Sin And Temptation: Three Classic Works by John Owen

Edited by Kelly M. Kapic and  
Justin Taylor

Wheaton, Ill. Crossway Books  
ISBN 978-1-58134-649-7  
Pb, pp 462 Append., Indices

*Reviewed by Norman T. Barker, Brisbane  
Australia.*

The editors have made available to the modern church an attractively printed new edition of three works by eminent 17th century Puritan theologian, John Owen (1616-1683). Under Oliver Cromwell, Owen was appointed Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, in 1651, and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University in 1652, but displaced at the accession of Charles II in 1660. He participated in drawing up the Savoy Declaration of Faith of 1658.

*Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers* (1656), *Of Temptation: the Nature and Power of it* (1658), and *The Nature, Power,*

*Deceit, and Prevalency of Indwelling Sin* (1667) are based on key texts (Rom. 8.13; Mt. 26.11 and Rom. 7.21). Owen's alleged heavy literary style has been made reader-friendly by editorial overviews, footnoted archaic words, and the addition of headings and italics to clarify the steps of his argument.

Owen reaches across the centuries to address the modern church. 20th century theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr, succinctly described Liberal theology—'A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without a cross.' What of modern Evangelicalism? Is our concept of the grace and love of God devalued by our failure to understand the gravity of sin? Owen could be considered an exposition of Augustine's famous dictum, *Nondum considerasti, quanti ponderis sit peccatum* (not yet have you considered of what weight is sin).

Don't read Owen to be immediately uplifted, but to be deeply disturbed in our often too comfortable discipleship. His spiritual logic rolls inexorably onward to uncover layer upon layer of indwelling sin and temptation. 'Mortification' or 'putting to death' is never a once-for-all act, but a continuous struggle against sin. Evil remains present in believers, as 'an inbred, working, impelling law' fighting against the believer's desire 'to do good' (Rom. 7.21), as a 'contrary principle' (Gal. 5.17; Rom. 8.23).

Appealing to 1 John 2.1, Owen argues that the primary purpose of the gospel is to keep God's people from sin—'that you may not sin'. But we rush to the second part, 'If any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father.' So, he says, 'the deceit of sin... changes this method and order of the application of gospel truths... "If any man sin, there is a pardon provided" is all the gospel that sin would willingly suffer to abide on the

minds of men.'

He displays fine insight into the moral and spiritual significance of episodes in biblical history. He warms the heart by his insistence on renewal and the necessary work of the Holy Spirit. There is much, not only to dismay our half-heartedness, but also to delight earnest believers with gospel truth.

His works sparkle with memorable gems—'Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.' He observes the ineffectiveness of law preaching for conversion; men live many years in congregations where the law is powerfully preached, but are not moved by it—they receive no more impression from the stroke of it than blows with a straw would give to an adamant (diamond, hard substance).' People can also continue to live under the dispensation of the gospel and word of God all their lives, and yet 'continue as senseless and stupid as the seats they sit upon'. For our era of rampant abortion and homosexuality, he cries against murder of children and all unnatural sins, for 'herein sin turns the strong current of nature, darkens all the light of God in the soul, controls all natural principles'.

His arguments abound with telling illustrations. He reminds us that, when we imagine sin's tumults have been calmed, indwelling sin remains like a deep river, seemingly unruffled on the surface, but with a powerful current still. When mind and will consent to temptation, 'the soul goes into sin as a ship before the wind with all its sails displayed'. Indwelling sin is like a capped volcano or a plastered ulcer that will erupt unless subdued constantly by the Holy Spirit. Giving the lie to a common view of the Puritans, he warns that indwelling sin often erupts in professing Christians as self-righteousness or censoriousness of others.

Sometimes he seems to dwell too long in



the dark mood of Romans 7, neglecting its triumphal climax in v.25a. But against triumphalists who feel that the second part of this verse is misplaced, Owen, with Paul, recalls us to the life-long struggle against the 'law of sin' within.

Owen would leave us no rest except in Christ and his cross—'Labour to fill your hearts with the cross of Christ' for 'there is no death of sin without the death of Christ'. There is no victory without the Holy Spirit—'A man may easier see without eyes, speak without a tongue, than truly mortify sin without the Spirit.'

In his Foreword, John Piper, says that Owen 'speaks to leaders who should be helping the church to know and feel the seriousness of indwelling sin (Rom. 7.20) and how to fight it (Rom. 8.13).' There is no doubt that Owen lays his finger on the weak pulse, not only of the Christianity of his age, but of ours.

ERT (2008) 32:3, 280-281

### Inhabiting the Church: Biblical Wisdom for a New Monasticism

Jon Stock, Tim Otto, and  
Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

ISBN 978-1-59752-990-7

Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books,  
2007

Pb ix+129 pp. bibliog

*Reviewed by Paul R. Dekar, Memphis  
Theological Seminary, Memphis, TN, USA*

The evangelical heritage rejects justification by work, an idea that violates the priority of grace and perhaps a concern for readers of the *Evangelical Review of Theology*. Members of three communities that have adopted to varying degrees the label 'new monasticism' address the concern head-on. Jon Stock is part of Church of the Servant King ([\[aproject.org/\]\(http://aproject.org/\)\). A part-time nurse at a hospital working with AIDS and cancer patients, Tim Otto is part of the Church of the Sojourners in San Francisco \(\[www.churchofthesojourners.org\]\(http://www.churchofthesojourners.org\)\).](http://www.ekklesi-</a></p>
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Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove is a member of Rutba House in Durham, North Carolina ([www.newmonasticism.org/](http://www.newmonasticism.org/)).

Jon Stock begins by exploring the legitimacy of vows, foundational to an older monastic order, the Benedictines. Vows taken in each new monastic community differ, but generally they involve a commitment to deepen awareness of self and others; to use goods rightly; to share in Eucharist and in service. The key idea is this: God is a covenanting God. The self-understanding of ancient Israel, Jesus, and modern Christians must be that of promise keeping and fidelity to responsibilities that arise out of the biblical witness. Stock writes that 'the language of covenant faithfulness, steadfast love, self-sacrifice, patience, long-suffering, vulnerable, enduring, loyalty, and promise appears to justify vow making as an appropriate expression for the people of God'.

Monasticism has always insisted that it is possible for ordinary people to live the way that Jesus taught and practised. This is conversion, less a matter of changing one's religion, and more about returning to God (Hebrew, *shuv*) and changing one's heart (Greek, *metanoia*). Christian monastics experience repentance, trust, and the transformation of one's whole life most directly in prayer, especially praying the Scriptures, and in finding support by living in community. As Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove summarizes, 'Conversion is the work of a tribe, not of an individual'.

Tim Otto explores obedience. The idea of making life-long commitments under authority of an abbot or abbess will be a hard sell in a culture built upon the

autonomous self perfectly free to fulfil felt needs immediately. Founders of new monastic communities have often been charismatic persons. Less authoritarian figures like Jim Jones and David Koresh, the 'abba' and 'amma' to whom members of new monastic communities profess obedience are able to communicate the shared vision for life together. 'Motherlike,' they listen, nurture, and share.

Finally, Jon Stock explores stability, a commitment to abiding. Those who wish to interiorize monastic values would be well warned that authentic community takes time. To maintain a commitment to stability is not to be taken lightly, most of all because it is made before God and renewed each year.

This book of essays gives a biblical perspective on aspects of the new monasticism: a gospel *telos* that sees the whole of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ, which has the effect of blurring any division between sacred and secular; the priesthood of all believers, a mark of the Protestant reformers who rejected the division of the people of God into 'religious' and 'secular' vocations; balance of right belief and right practice, or *Lex orandi, lex credendi* (law of prayer, law of belief); a disciplined life. Writing not just for monks, the authors address the challenge of being Christian today, and the good news Jesus offers for our whole world.

In contrast with the bad press Christians often get these days, legitimately at least in North America, the new monastics have generated quite a stir. God-centred, Shalom-seeking, and intentionally political in all areas of life, the communities offer a different face and fresh approach to Christian life and practice. The authors have provided a handbook for theologians, seminary students, and mission leaders seeking to discern core expres-

sions of authentic Christian faith and witness today.

ERT (2008) 32:3, 281-283

### Trinity in Human Community: Exploring Congregational Life in the Image of the Social Trinity

Peter R. Holmes

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Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2006

Pb pp 230 bibliog Index

*Reviewed by Carl Brook, South Coast Bible School, Republic of South Africa*

It is refreshing to review a title that has a living community as its application! Peter Holmes is co-founder of *Christ Church Deal* (CCD) in the UK, an 'intentional therapeutic faith community'. According to its web-site, CCD emphasizes 'Christ-likeness as a journey, our membership with the Association of Therapeutic Communities, and our being home to the Rapha Journey'. As we shall see, all of these distinctives feature prominently in Holmes' book.

*Trinity in Human Community* is a hybrid work, an amalgam of theoretical reflection and community input. Typically, a chapter will consist of discourse along with two or three staggered interruptions, blocks of verbatim quotations from CCD members interacting with the material. This approach makes for fascinating reading as one attempts to reconcile community observations with the author's argument. Holmes is concerned with relationship and human maturity in the context of church life. Noting the mass exodus from British congregations, the author offers 'no new theologies or fairy-tale answers' but the simple conviction that the church exists to love and serve those willing to receive it.

Part of the problem in the contemporary church, argues Holmes, is embedded in western theology. Augustine, trained in the Greek classics, elevated intellectual knowledge *about* God over an experiential knowledge *of* God. Neglected in particular was Jesus' humanity, 'God-in-man-in-Christ-on-earth'. The resultant view was a God who is transcendent and unchanging, removed from his creation and unresponsive to human need. In contrast to this western bias, the Cappadocian Fathers understood the Trinity in communal terms: 'God has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion'. We may thus speak of a *social* Trinity—and of *perichoresis*: the persons of the Trinity 'pouring life into one another permanently in divine loving harmony'. Such a trinitarian understanding has in view a God who promotes relational life, not just private faith.

On the basis of this theology Holmes probes modern humanity's selfism and loss of community, noting philosophers such as John Macmurray who stood against Enlightenment individualism. Each person in a local congregation is a God-given 'Other' to be loved in mutual personhood. The measure of 'success' in church maturity should be the capacity of members to give love to one another. Fundamental to the philosophy of ministry at CCD is the appropriation of Exodus 15:25—*I am the Lord your physician*. The Hebrew word for 'heal', *rapha*, suggests that Yahweh is able to restore us in the way a piece of torn cloth is mended. Thus, the author translates the *Rapha* promise as: 'I am the mender, the one who sews you together, into Christ.' This principle undergirds the model of relational healing at CCD: 'being woven back together within ourselves'.

The author then turns to concrete application: what did community actually look

like in Bible times? Recalling Israel's Early Settlement period, Holmes explores 'kinship' sociologically and theologically. He identifies the Hebrew *mishpachah*, a cluster of houses accommodating extended families that made up small villages. 'The formation of community seems to have been Yahweh's central act. From the time of Exodus He emphasized *theocentric community*, that is, he himself as kinsman in their midst.'

The rise of Israel's monarchy and Temple weakened the notion of theocentricity, but Christ extended the idea by introducing the Kingdom. In Jesus, 'community returned to a focus on Yahweh and kinship relationship, though not centred on the *mishpachah* or the Temple, but on Christ Himself as Son of the Father'. The Greek word *koinonia* is understood by the author as encompassing both concepts: Hebrew theocentric community and Christ's Kingdom community. The models that Paul implemented exhibited several distinctives: they focused on the exercising of spiritual gifts; they were 'flat' organizations (no hierarchy) with no full-time workers; they existed as a living *koinonia* that honoured both men and women; they expected and required positive, personal change.

The journey toward Christ-likeness encouraged by Holmes is nothing more or less than biblical discipleship. To be effective, however, the invitation to change should occur *in community*, in the context of relational healing. Through the *Rapha* principle, the social Trinity engages us on those issues which prevent us becoming more like Christ. More important is the idea and experience of a journey *together*, helping each other along the way.

With so much buzz about the Emerging church these days, it is encouraging to see a working alternative flourishing in

the UK. *Trinity in Human Community* will be of help to pastors and lay-people seeking to be (or *become*) church in the post-modern era. Counsellors in particular will appreciate the attention given to relational healing. One caveat: despite the book's Christocentric focus, evangelicals will be wary of the rather free interpretation of the ways in which God speaks to us.

ERT (2008) 32:3, 283-284

**Christ, Baptism and the Lord's  
Supper: Recovering the  
Sacraments for Evangelical  
Worship**

Leonard J. Vander Zee

ISBN 978-0-8308-2786-2

Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press,  
2004.

Pb, pp. 249. Indices

*Reviewed by W. Travis McMaken,  
Princeton Theological Seminary, NJ, USA*

Recognizing the preponderance of theological studies in this area, Leonard Vander Zee, pastor of South Bend Christian Reformed Church in South Bend, Indiana, poses the question, 'Why another book on the sacraments?' (p. 10). His reply is that few of these are written from a more general evangelical perspective, and Vander Zee hopes to address this paucity by presenting an account of the sacraments 'that is thoroughly biblical, Reformed and evangelical' (p. 11).

Chapter one attempts to rehabilitate the 'sacramental universe' (p. 13). Vander Zee contends against iconoclasm, arguing instead that 'Created things, by their very being and nature, give praise to God' (p. 18). The whole of creation is *sacramental* in this sense, but a *sacrament* is a 'particular created thing to which God attaches a word of promise' (p. 23). This distinc-

tion is parsed in chapter two where he discusses figures such as Augustine and Calvin, the relation of sign and thing signified, and how the sacramental signs 'bestow what they symbolize' (p. 33) through the work of the Holy Spirit. Chapter three offers a biblical overview of sacraments, and chapter four argues that Jesus Christ is the 'quintessential sacrament' (p. 45). 'Christ is the one mediator between God and humanity' (p. 48) and 'the sacraments are one of the ways God brings us into union with Christ' (p. 45). Chapter five offers a description of how sacraments work, explicating the relationship between Christ and faith in the sacraments. Vander Zee rightly affirms that 'it is the Holy Spirit who makes sacraments effective' (p. 64) as the agent who enlivens our faith and, through faith, unites us with Christ in the sacraments.

Vander Zee's treatment of Baptism begins in chapter six, discussing its biblical background, explicating Jesus' own baptism, and ultimately affirming that 'the Holy Spirit is the one who accomplishes in our hearts and souls those things that baptism signifies' (p. 94). Chapter seven elucidates the relationship between water and Spirit baptism. Vander Zee declares that 'baptism does not effect regeneration' (p. 107) and, following T. F. Torrance, writes, 'Baptism is not primarily a response and follow-up to faith; faith is our response to baptism' (p. 114). In chapter eight, Vander Zee rightly recognizes that infant and adult baptism must share the same meaning and basis. Because baptism is a sign of salvation and not the baptizand's personal faith, 'faith may be present before baptism, or it may come after baptism, but it always looks back on baptism as a sign and seal of incorporation into Christ's death and resurrection' (p. 130).

Chapter nine introduces the Lord's

Supper by exploring its biblical background. An historical overview is presented in chapter ten. Vander Zee offers his proposal in chapter eleven, much of which is reworked from the chapters on sacraments in general. One important section is his analysis of how Protestants might think about the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice, arguing that 'we offer ourselves in and through the offering of Christ' (p. 208). The work concludes in chapter twelve by exploring the Lord's Supper in broader terms, most notably engaging with William T. Cavanaugh's work on its political dimension.

Despite a wealth of insight, Vander Zee's volume contains weaknesses. First, beginning with an attempt at reclaiming a worldview that renders the sacraments intelligible endangers Vander Zee's statement, expressed in the preface, that 'the sacraments derive their meaning from Christ' (p. 11). Indeed, Vander Zee later approvingly quotes Alasdair Heron, who writes that 'the bond between visible and invisible on which everything turns in Christian theology is not that supplied by a "sacramental universe," but is rather Jesus Christ himself' (p. 167). This contradiction might have been avoided by beginning with Christ as the quintessential sacrament (chapter four) or biblical material (chapter three).

Second, Vander Zee affirms that there is no difference in basis or meaning between adult and infant baptism. However, he also maintains the propriety of liturgical differences between them, like 'the proxy confession of faith by parents or other sponsors along with the congregation' (p. 132) in infant baptism. Liturgical practices ought to clearly communicate theological meaning, and it is difficult to see how maintaining different liturgical practices for adult and infant baptism corresponds to their unitary basis and meaning.

Third, Vander Zee stumbles when he describes the sacraments as 'ways in which we appropriate God's grace in Christ' (p. 189). Appropriation implies a form of human activity in salvation that falls outside the realm of Reformed soteriology. To say that the Lord's Supper 'aids our appropriation of God's promises' (p. 191) suggests that the human person is the primary agent in both the sacraments and salvation. However, Vander Zee elsewhere rightly describes faith as 'the opening of the heart by the Holy Spirit' which 'plays no causal role whatever. It participates in salvation without in any way displacing the primary work of the Holy Spirit' (p. 63).

These shortcomings notwithstanding, Vander Zee provides an instructive and penetrating account of the sacraments that has emerged from Reformed soil, hugs the biblical text, and is geared toward a broadly evangelical audience. Furthermore, Vander Zee's relaxed writing style, peppered with pastoral reflections and illustrations, ensures that this complicated but important subject will be accessible to the lay reader.

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### **Doing God's Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace**

**R. Paul Stevens**

ISBN 978-0-8028-3398-3.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006  
Pb, pp 251 pp.

*Reviewed by Mark L. Russell, Asbury Theological Seminary, KY, USA*

R. Paul Stevens, an emeritus professor of marketplace theology and leadership at Regent College in Vancouver, British

Columbia, has written a scholarly yet popularly accessible book that amounts to a theology of business. The book is littered with anecdotal case studies and all eleven chapters have discussion questions and resources for further reading. There is an extensive bibliography and a helpful index. The first part of the book is devoted to *meaning* and develops a marketplace theology. The second part, *motivation*, is an exploration of spirituality in the marketplace.

There have been many books that have addressed the intersection of faith and business. This book is different from some of these books in that it does not look at business as having primarily *instrumental* value, but rather as having *intrinsic* value. An instrumental value relates to the positive things that business produces, such as financing for ministry, opportunities to establish relationships, etc. Intrinsic value means that while business does have instrumental value, it is also inherently and fundamentally spiritual.

This book is a foundational work that articulates a marketplace theology. As it was written by a Christian graduate school professor who has worked in the marketplace, it is something of a 'crossover' work, meaning that it will be helpful for Christians in the marketplace as well as for those who minister to Christians in the marketplace.

Stevens argues that we are called by God to develop creation's potential in the cultural mandate in Genesis 1. Business, as a corollary of the cultural mandate, is a 'legitimate part of undertaking the stewardship of creation to make a human imprint on the earth'. He notes that the creation of wealth is an essential part of human well being and says that business can partner with God to multiply the earth's resources. We partner with *God*

*the Creator*, who is still creating new things; we partner with *God the Redeemer* by fixing, mending and transforming; finally we partner with *God the Consummator* by working to bring the human story to a beautiful end. He says all work that is mandated by God, synchronized with God's purpose, and done in his virtuous way, matters to God.

Stevens helpfully notes that the globalization of business has positive and negative consequences and points out that capitalism has not benefited everyone (as some have claimed). He says that Christians need to understand the phenomenon, be actively involved, and take the lead in caring for the poor. He says that the Old and New Testaments generally see wealth as a blessing from God but issue many cautions and warnings against those who abuse it or use it for their own benefit. While saying that globalization is not the kingdom of God, he asserts that it offers great potential for the expansion of God's kingdom.

The second half of the book gives some pastoral guidance and practical suggestions for how Christians can live in a spiritually integrated way in pluralistic workplaces. This section will be especially helpful to pastors and other church leaders who would like to help Christians live meaningful lives in the marketplace, but do not have much experience addressing the issues involved.

Stevens' book is truly a strong work and should merit serious attention and recognition from those interested in these topics. He has a unique way of sounding like a businessperson, a theologian and a pastor all at the same time. This comes undoubtedly from his own work in the marketplace and significant time spent personally mentoring marketplace leaders as well as his years as a professor of marketplace theology. Perhaps the strongest

parts of the book are the more pastoral sections in the second section. Frequently ministers do not know the issues that marketplace people face well enough to give them effective guidance. Stevens does. However, the first part is theologically strong and persuasive yet written in readable language that is free of jargon.

It would be a good book for generating discussion in a classroom setting. The case studies and discussion questions would provide the substance for deep and meaningful conversations whether in the classroom or the office. This is a recommended book for people wanting to integrate faith-work issues in theological and practical ways. For anyone who has not thought seriously on the theological nature of business, it is a must read. It would not require significant time to read but would produce serious reflection.

ERT (2008) 32:3, 286-287

**Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics:  
Biblical-theological Foundations  
and Principles**

Graeme Goldsworthy

Nottingham: Apollos, 2006

ISBN 978-1-84474-145-8

Pb, pp 341

*Reviewed by Matthew Cook, Côte d'Ivoire.*

Amongst a spate of hermeneutics books, why should this one receive special consideration by readers interested in the subject? The first reason is the author. Graeme Goldsworthy has contributed numerous years in the classroom and multiple volumes in print to help the world understand the Bible better. Among his books are the following: *According to Plan* (IVP, 2002), *Preaching the whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Eerdmans, 2000), *Gospel and Kingdom, Gospel and*

*Wisdom, and The Gospel in Revelation* (all three in one volume, Paternoster, 2001), etc. Although officially retired, he continues to teach at Moore Theological College in Sydney. He is well known and respected in the theological world even if not everyone agrees with his position.

The second reason why this book should receive special attention is because it offers so very clearly a general hermeneutics textbook from a well honed 'gospel-centered' approach. This 'gospel-centered' approach is well named because it holds to the gospel as the organizing principle for interpreting the Bible. Although there are many implications of this, two strike me as central: first, the gospel is preached in every verse of the Bible. Goldsworthy takes very seriously the position that the Old Testament, like the New Testament, is about Jesus. Second, only by accepting and living according to the gospel can one rightly interpret the rest of the Bible. The gospel-centered approach is not new. A. B. Simpson, among others, was using it in a much less refined manner over a hundred years ago. Goldsworthy's contribution is to interact clearly with contemporary hermeneutical movements from the gospel-centered perspective. For someone who adopts this approach, Goldsworthy has offered a hermeneutics textbook of great value.

The plan of the book is to present the gospel-centered approach in the first section. The second section is devoted to a historical review of hermeneutics. Each chapter is quite commonplace. The real gem is in the assessment, at the end of the chapter, which clarifies the difference between what was happening historically and the gospel-centered approach. The third section navigates the difficult terrain through contemporary issues so as to nuance the gospel-centered approach even more. For example, the Bible as lit-

erature and the Bible as history are both evaluated even-handedly by saying that the Bible is neither exclusively literature (which is the result of purposeful writing) nor exclusively history. The Bible can still be literature or history while at the same time being a literature or history of grace, a supernatural work, inspired by the Spirit and available through the spirit. Also found in this section is the difficult topic (especially for this position) of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Here is where the author denies *sensus plenior* while affirming typology. All meaning was in the divine author's mind even though it can be worked out only in further revelation (through Christ). Since every text is about Christ, it is up to us to work out how it speaks of him. 'We certainly may never exhaust the exegetical potential of a given text.'

Although I had interacted with this model before, terms like hermeneutical conversion, hermeneutical salvation, hermeneutic justification, hermeneutic sanctification, and hermeneutic glorification felt odd. Essentially, they refer to the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life so that s/he is able to read ever more accurately the Word of God. It is a matter of supernaturally overcoming the noetic affects of the fall. In spite of this position, Goldsworthy puts forth a great deal of effort helping the reader to correctly

interpret the Bible. It is not merely letting the Spirit guide. There are clear steps to take (pp. 310-312) as well as errors to avoid (most of sections 2 and 3).

Goldsworthy makes clear that he thinks this position is *the* evangelical one. That is all the more clear in the subtitle of the book as published by IVP in North America, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation*. He makes clear that neither neo-orthodoxy nor the historical critical method is evangelical. While I agree that every evangelical should be able to agree that Jesus Christ in the gospel is the central communication of the Bible, I am not sure that every one could agree that it is also the central norm for hermeneutics. The author may conflate the two a bit too strongly in his form of presuppositionalism.

I, nonetheless, heartily recommend a good reading of Goldsworthy's text on hermeneutics. If his presuppositions fit your own it may be just the textbook for which you have been looking for late college or seminary, or for a personal refresher that deals with contemporary issues. His bibliography reads like a 'who's who' of hermeneutics in addition to the names and scripture references indexes. His summaries, bullet points, and analyses make this quite a usable text and a welcome contribution.

Stephen Sizer: *Zion's Christian Soldiers: The Bible, Israel and the Church* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007); ISBN 978 1 84474 214 1 Pb., pp 199, illus., index

This popular level book is a sustained crusade against 'Christian Zionism' and similar beliefs which strongly support the state of Israel on the grounds that this is the biblical position; such views also support US intervention in the Middle East and oppose the policies of the UN and the European Union. This book is a follow up to an earlier volume by the same author and is based on a recent doctoral dissertation which claims fundamentally that the Christian Zionists completely misread the Bible, thereby wrongly under-



standing such basic issues as the identity of God's 'chosen people', the 'promised land' and the place of Jerusalem and the temple in God's scheme of history.

Sizer, a British Anglican vicar, maintains his strong polemic throughout the book, quoting numerous examples of the views he rejects (such as the Scofield Reference Bible), and giving outlines of his hermeneutical approach and understanding of world history and eschatology. He seeks further support with the inclusion of a sermon by John Stott on 'The Place of Israel'. However where some of these topics are notoriously controverted (such as the interpretation of Romans 11:26), he is less than clear about his own positive solutions. Convinced that Christian Zionism is a view that is 'not shaped by the Bible' and that it 'probably has a greater detrimental effect' than many other well known forces on the Christian cause in Israel, he feels that he has won few friends in pressing his case; he believes his is a lonely and courageous path, challenging 'the assumption that Bible-believing Christians will automatically support Israel'. The book is a passionate presentation of the theme and does not discuss other important topics such as the evangelization of Jews, the development of Christian life and witness in Israel, or relations between Christians in the Middle East.

Reviewed by David Parker, Editor, *Evangelical Review of Theology*

## NEW FROM PATERNOSTER

### **The Wondrous Cross Atonement and Penal Substitution in the Bible and History**

Stephen R. Holmes

Stephen Holmes has been described as one of the bright lights of the new generation of evangelical theologians. In this book he offers an accessible and enlightening account of the way the saving work of Jesus is presented in the Bible, and has been understood throughout Christian history. In particular, the book offers background to the current debates about penal substitutionary atonement by looking at that idea in biblical and historical perspective. Holmes argues that we can, and should, continue to talk of the cross in penal substitutionary terms, if we understand this as one of many complimentary descriptions of the salvation we find in Christ.

*Stephen R. Holmes* is a Baptist Minister and Lecturer in Theology at the University of St Andrews, Scotland.

978-1-84227-541-2 / 216 x 140mm / 144pp (est.) / £9.99

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## NEW FROM PATERNOSTER

### Body, Soul and Human Life The Nature of Humanity in the Bible

Joel B. Green

Are humans composed of two different substances – a material body and an immaterial soul? The view that they are is common amongst Christians yet it has been undermined by developments in brain science. But is the common Christian view actually a biblical view? Recent biblical studies have gravitated away from the idea that humans are composed of a distinct body and soul and towards more monist accounts. Exploring what Scripture and theology teach about being in the divine image, the importance of community, sin, freewill, salvation, and the afterlife, Green argues that the biblical teaching on being human is not in conflict with the discoveries of recent science.

This is a wide-ranging discussion taking in the broad sweep of biblical theology, detailed examination of key biblical texts, theological and philosophical considerations, and the most recent work in brain science. It is sure to provoke much thought and discussion.

**Joel B. Green** is Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky.

978-1-84227-539-9 / 216 x 140mm / 224pp (est.) / £12.99

### A New Kind of Conversation

#### Blogging Toward a Postmodern Evangelical Faith

Myron Bradley Penner & Hunter Barnes (editors)

Using the format of the weblog, *A New Kind of Conversation* is an experimental book that enters into a conversational theological exploration with five evangelical leaders and academics (Brian McLaren, Bruce Ellis Benson, Ellen Haroutunian, Mabilia Kenzon, and Myron Bradley Penner), who are the primary bloggers. Originally posted on anewkindofconversation.com, people all over the world were invited to blog on the following topics: What is 'Postmodernity'? What is a Postmodern Evangelical? Theology and (Non)(Post) Foundationalism; The Bible, Theology and Postmodernism; Evangelical Faith and (Postmodern) Others; Postmodern Apologetics; Postmodern Ministry; Spiritual Formation in a Postmodern Context. The book is a condensed version of that conversation.

**Myron Bradley Penner** is Professor of Philosophy and Theology, Prairie College, Canada; **Hunter Barnes** is Creative Arts Director for Zarephath Christian Church, in Zarephath, New Jersey.

978-1932805-58-1 / 229 x 152mm / 240pp / £11.99

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