IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

BIBLICAL STUDIES IN HONOUR OF ARCHBISHOP DONALD ROBINSON

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THE PASTORAL APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Graeme Goldsworthy

Responsible Pastoring

The Lord's command to Peter, 'Feed my sheep', is a constant reminder to the parish minister that the Bible is central to pastoral practice. Spiritual food, like bodily food, may be served in a health-promoting way, or it may be badly served, or adulterated, so as to induce sickening, lethargy, and other forms of malfunction. The responsible pastor will seek to discern and to promote the most beneficial ways of ministering the word of God, and also encourage all those with teaching or pastoring roles in the congregation to do the same. Is it good enough for the evangelical pastor to examine Bible study aids only for the underlying presuppositions of biblical authority? Is it a matter of indifference if a small group or Bible study group uses only inductive studies or concentrates on character studies? How does one evaluate the structure and content of the Sunday school curriculum?

Most evangelical pastors are conscious to some degree that they are heirs to the heritage of the Reformation. Essentially, the Reformation gave the Bible back to the ordinary people in the Church. Ever since that great revival of true religion, pastors and theologians seem to have worked very hard to take the Bible

away again. On the one hand there is the philosophical subversion of Christian theism which has reduced the Bible to an ever-changing and unreliable word. But on the other there is the evangelical junk-food industry with its proliferation of brand names, each producing a smorgasbord of savoury titbits and sweets, but never a good ploughman's lunch.

It is with great pleasure that I make this contribution to the Archbishop Robinson festschrift. As a theological student at Moore College I found the unity of the Bible both intriguing and elusive. On one occasion during my final year the Vice-Principal, as he was then, was lecturing us on a matter of biblical interpretation when he gave, almost parenthetically, a description of his understanding of the structure of biblical revelation. He explained how he saw the whole structure of salvation revealed first in the context of Israel's history, then in prophetic view of the future coming kingdom of God, and thirdly in the New Testament declaration that Jesus Christ, in his being and doing, fulfilled all the Old Testament expectations. It was simple, profound, and like a bolt of lightning which produced a radical and permanent shift in my thinking on the Bible.

From that point on I began to experiment with this concept, to test it, and to refine my understanding of it and its application. When I began to teach Old Testament at Moore College I found that somewhere along the track this simple schema seemed to do much for the students in bringing the one message of the Bible together for them. Years later I returned as a visiting lecturer to teach biblical theology to the first-year students. It was the 'Robbie' schema that structured the course and which found great acceptance among the students. At the insistence of the students I wrote down my own attempts to develop the ideas, and this was later published as *Gospel and Kingdom*.[1]

For the past ten years I have been in parish ministry in Brisbane where I continue to teach biblical theology and to look for its pastoral applications. I write this from that background with the hope that I may encourage others in the parish ministry to give biblical theology the place it deserves in the nurture of Christian people. My chief concern is the responsible pastoral use of the Bible that gives it to people and teaches them to value it as their own God-given possession.

The Centrality of the Gospel

There is enough general agreement about the definition of biblical theology for us to mention only that it is the historically formatted description of revelation as it actually occurs in the Bible. From the perspective of Reformed theology it is also the first fruits of exegesis of the canonical texts. Although defined as a discipline only in the eighteenth century, its roots lie in the recovery of the unity of the Bible in the Reformation. Behind that lies the evidence that the apostolic Church was as much committed to the concept as the Reformers were. While the New Testament writers do not set out a full biblical theology step by step, their interpretations of Jesus stand upon the redemptive-historical structure of the Old Testament. Thus, the implicit symbolism of the new Israel is shown to rest on both Jesus and on the remnant community of his disciples. It is asserted that the ministry of the Christ and his glory are discernible in the Old Testament (Luke 24:26) and that, in fact, the whole Old Testament testifies to Christ (Luke 24:27, 44-45; John 5:39). Jesus is portrayed as restoring Israel but in a manner not expected by the disciples (Acts 1:6-8). This shows, not that he has departed from the dynamics of Old Testament theology, but rather that he gives it its definitive interpretation. Thus, Peter begins the Christian proclamation by linking the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the outpouring of the Spirit, to the expectations created by Old Testament redemptive history (Acts 2:16-38). Paul is even more explicit in rehearsing the acts of God in Israel and the Old Testament promises, all of which are fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:17-41). In like manner Stephen interprets the Jewish opposition to Jesus in the light of biblical theology (Acts 7:1-51).

This New Testament perspective dominated the theology of the Reformers. The sense of the unity of Scripture established on the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the historical context of a progressively revealed redemption, and the fulfilment of all the expectations of the Old Testament, rescued the gospel from being the inner, mystical event that mediaeval theology had made it. Giving the Bible back to the people meant

a radical reappraisal of how it functions in the life of the Christian individual and congregation. Of course, the reforming process was not carried out perfectly or even completely before various reversals and detours in the road began again to rob the people of the Bible.

The revival of biblical theology as a discipline in the eighteenth century was dogged by many unbiblical assumptions so that the modern movement, as Brevard Childs has indicated, came into crisis due to a failure to grasp the authority of the Bible.[2] The modern study of biblical theology has, however, emphasised some of the problems that the serious student of the Bible encounters. These include the relationship between the two Testaments, the relationship of history and revelation, the unity of the Bible, and the problem of a centre or cohering theme for a theology of the whole Bible.[3] Childs has also pointed up the problem of the source of theology by urging that we define the context of the theological task in the canon rather than in the attempted reconstructions of the canonical antecedents.[4] The suggestion that evangelical presuppositions, including the application of the analogy of faith or the analogy of Scripture, provide a way through all these problems is not to opt for slick or superficial solutions. It is, however, to recognise that the gospel is the starting point for epistemology and for hermeneutics. I have elsewhere indicated my firm conviction that Christian apologetics points us to the possibility of doing theology and of knowing God through revelation alone, and this only as such revelation breaks into our rebellious mindsets through the power of the Holy Spirit.[5] I wish now to take that point a step further to its practical and pastoral implications.

The Prophet puts it beautifully and majestically, 'The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him (Hab 2:20). God, from his holy temple, reveals himself to a world that can only listen. That temple is Christ, the incarnate Word, and Christ clothed in his gospel is the fixed framework by which alone we can know the truth. Thus a dogmatic principle, namely that Christ is Lord and the only truth, controls all theologizing. Biblical theology is therefore concerned with the theology of the whole canon of Scripture as it reveals Christ. The same dogmatic principle establishes and controls the systematic formulation of

doctrine and its practical application. But it does so through the structures of biblical theology.

Thus, biblical theology, rightly pursued, provides the matrix of revelation which safeguards all theological endeavour from short-circuiting the meaning of biblical texts. The interrelationship of theological disciplines is such that no unqualified order or priority can be established. Yet exegesis and biblical theology cannot operate in an area of neutrality but only with the presupposition of the lordship of Christ that faith alone grasps. Right thinking and right theological method stem from the fact that God's word is not a dialogue with mankind, but a gracious and sovereign revelation which must not only inform, but also conquer the rebellious mind and will which suppresses the truth in wickedness (Rom 1:18).

The Reformers not only recovered the historical gospel event as the basis of salvation, but they also saw it as the centre of all revelation in Scripture. Grace in the Old Testament foreshadowed the saving work of Christ, and judgment in the Old Testament foreshadowed the sufferings of Christ. Christians are regenerated and justified by the gospel, they are sanctified through the gospel, and the power of the gospel will ultimately bring them to glory. This being the case, the Christian pastor needs to come to terms with giving the Bible to the people in such a way that this central function of the gospel is not obscured. It is the constant recourse to the historical dimension of the gospel through a self-conscious use of biblical theology that will go a long way towards achieving this goal.

Good hermeneutics and good biblical theology are interdependent, and both begin with Christ. If we are to be consistent with the gospel we must employ sound exegetical method. The grammatico-historical method, rightly understood, is demanded by the incarnation of Christ and not by extra-biblical and self-evident principles. The recognition of this fact is important if we are to avoid the idea that grammatico-historical exegesis necessarily demands that we adopt the non-biblical presuppositions of critical scholarship. Jesus, as indicated above, also points us to the biblical-theological method by the way he used Scripture and applied it to himself. All the time we bear in mind the fact that the gospel represents for the believer a radical

renewal of the mind which establishes the necessary dogmatic platform from which to operate. This involves both the recognition that theological method is from God, and also that the gospel is the definitive event for theology. The incarnation of the Word of God instructs us in the relationship of God to his people by confirming and explicating the perspective of the Old Testament of the one and the many. Those who dismiss Chalcedon as a piece of Hellenistic dogmatizing seem to ignore the fact that its unity-distinction formulation is utterly Hebrew. Furthermore, none of the critics of the Chalcedonian formula have come up with a manifestly more biblical way to deal with the phenomena of revelation.

Biblical theology, then, leads to a number of important hermeneutic gains. First, it puts all revelation into a dynamic framework which prevents every text from being given the same value. Each text is related to the absolute reference point in the person of Christ. He, as the final and fullest word from God, interprets all other words. The relationship of Jesus of Nazareth to the promises of the Old Testament is not empirically self-evident. The self-authenticating Word declares the relationship to be fulfilment in himself. Second, the gospel of the incarnate Word points to the inscripturated word in the Bible as a union of the divine and the human which has certain parallels to the incarnation. Thus, there is a union of the divine inspiration with the human cultural and language context. Third, the gospel as event in history reaffirms certain categories of the Old Testament, such as the physical nature of the creation, as permanent features of the plan of God, so that we are prevented from reducing Christianity to a form of mystical gnosticism.

Biblical theology provides us with a chronological and historically grounded dimension in the structure of revelation. This makes it more attractive to the theologically untrained than purely abstract dogmatic arrangements. Unfortunately, what so often happens in the parish teaching program is that the Old Testament is reduced to the merely historical presupposition of the gospel. Application of the historical is then achieved as a moralising on the characters or events without reference to their place in the revelation of the gospel.

The Application of Biblical Theology

1. Biblical Theology in the Family

How we assess the authority of the Bible and how we read it are two distinct, if related, questions. Christian parents have a heavy responsibility to inculcate a sense of the authority of the Bible into their children, and to translate the truths of the Bible into the practicalities of spiritual nurture. Their own perceptions of gospel-based relationships and behaviour will be influential in the development of the children's own ideas of being Christian. First, the attitude of parents to the baptism of their infants can be modified from the outset, if necessary, by biblical theology. The theology of the people of God under the covenant prevents Christian parents from regarding their children as Canaanites that must be proselytized. At the same time superstitious mediaeval notions of baptismal regeneration are censured without removing the importance of the sacrament as an effectual sign.

Second, the nurture of children in the home requires planning by the parents in which the pastor's assistance may be consequential. Since the narrative literature of the Bible is most easily adaptable to the children's level, it can be used to instil good habits of application or conversely, as is often the case, to develop the deplorable 'God-looked-after-baby-Moses-God-will-look-after-me' syndrome. Parents can either use the narratives to build an understanding of how God has acted in history for his people, or, conversely, to develop a human-centred moralising approach. If the Christian faith is perceived as the big stick to bring children into line, the effect is not likely to reflect a sense of the grace of God in the gospel. The family, when rightly perceived as the covenant unit, will function more as the environment of nurture and godly discipline than as a confrontation between Christian and pagan.

2. Biblical Theology in the Church

i. Ministry to children

In primary church-based Christian education the same dangers

exist as in the home-based nurture. The pastor is in a better position to have some control over it through his oversight of the Sunday school curriculum and teacher training. Increasingly, the Sunday school is becoming a place of education for Christian children as fewer unchurched children are being sent for their dose of religion. This makes it easier to design its purpose as nurture, and to see the task of teaching for commitment in the long-term. However, teaching for commitment does not mean that every lesson has to include application in terms of what the child should do. Rather, it means that we have a golden opportunity to carefully inculcate a redemptive-historical perspective in the children. One way is by the judicious use of a spiral curriculum which keeps pace with the child's development of an ability to cope with the more abstract concepts involved in typology as a the dynamic of revelation. I suggest that the redemptive-historical scheme of biblical theology shows a spiral curriculum at work in the three-fold way God revealed the coming of his kingdom. Of course the pattern of biblical revelation does not imply that children only learn about Jesus when they mature, but rather that the pattern of relationships between the Old Testament events and Jesus can be dealt with in graded levels of complexity.

The nurture of Christian children should be clearly distinguished from evangelism among outsiders even though the gospel is central to both. The decline in nominal attachments to the Church makes this distinction easier to maintain. The teaching of the Church's children should go hand in hand with congregational activities which reinforce the family as the covenant unit. Children who are locked out of the morning fellowship while they attend Sunday school will probably come to see education as kids' stuff. If, on the other hand, the whole congregation learns and fellowships together, its members will perceive a unity that transcends the generations. A biblical-theological approach to the signs of the covenant suggests that inclusion of Christian children in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, and that without a non-biblical rite such as confirmation, is much to be desired.

ii. Shepherding teenagers.

The teenage years are crucial for the formation of mature, adult views about life and faith. While it may be important to treat matters in a more problem-centred way, the last thing high school students want is mere legalism or a mystical relation with Jesus. Problem-based studies dealing with relationships, sexuality, drugs, social justice, environment and the like, need a biblical-theological underpinning so that it becomes second nature to search for the Christian position as one that is implicated by the gospel. The alternative is to provide pat answers supported by proof texts and in isolation from the solutions to other problems.

At this stage it is as important to teach a sound method for problem-solving as it is to provide some of the answers. A well designed primary curriculum will lay a good foundation for this process. Nothing removes the Bible from the people as effectively as the style of evangelical teaching which relies solely on the content provided by a third party and often with a dubious methodology. If the maturing teenager, already learning independence of mind and action, is forever kept at the level of spiritual dependence on the teacher, he or she is robbed of the means of spiritual warfare and of growth to real maturity.

Take, for example, the teenager's concern for guidance in the big issues ahead, such as tertiary education courses, career, marriage, and Christian service. Evangelical piety frequently recommends a dependence on God's leading through the Holy Spirit which makes the Christian life a puzzle and robs us of responsibility. This approach is easily supported with proof-texts which are taken out of their context so that they appear to mean something quite different from the intended meaning. Biblical theology can be applied fairly simply to the major guidance texts to show that they indicate a pattern of guidance towards the gospel and its goal, rather than the provision of a ready-made plan that relieves one of the need to think through to a decision and to wear the consequences. Once the Christian sees that the goal and end has been reached for us in Christ, life is set free to be lived with a degree of risk that nevertheless cannot remove us from the goal.

iii. Adult Christian education.

If a church is growing by evangelism as well as by natural (baby-booming) means, there will be a constant influx of adults who have had little or no basic nurture. There will be the need to provide teaching at a variety of levels and at the same time to avoid making Christian education a kind of smorgasbord of interesting topics. Church-based adult education is usually carried on in three main venues, each with distinct advantages and disadvantages. These are the Sunday sermon, the Sunday adult education hour, and the weekday study or small group. I will defer my comments on preaching until later.

Where an all age Sunday school exists there is a great opportunity for the pastor to capitalise on the benefits of biblical theology. Evangelical piety, no more nor less than other types of piety, is easily diverted from biblical patterns into forms moulded by imperialistic traditions which are accepted simply because there exists no understanding of the need to test such traditions against Scripture. Often they are perpetuated by the teaching of evangelical "gurus" whose eloquence usually outruns their exegetical abilities. On the one hand, there is the warm, effusive and undefined language of piety supporting unreflective propositions about the nature of authentic Christian existence. Cliches abound, often liberally salted with superlatives, but never clearly defined. And on the other, there is the hard-nosed attention to dogmatic detail in doctrine which can easily replace practical standards of care and personal concern. The teaching of the perspectives of biblical theology has the potential for breaking through both the woolly piety and the overly cerebral attention to doctrine for its own sake. Both these extremes tend to depend upon a degree of proof-texting, and it is this that biblical theology challenges. Proof-texting is a method that assumes that the context of the text is handled fairly. Biblical theology extends the context of any text to the whole of revelation and shows up the problems of restricting it.

To be fair, we need to recognise the possibility that biblical theology will call into question some of our more venerable traditions such as certain aspects of our subordinate authorities. For example, those who stand firmly by their Reformation heritage may find it difficult to accept that maybe the Reformers

did not necessarily get it absolutely right all the time. A biblical-theological investigation of the function of the law, in my opinion, comes into conflict with the conclusions of the Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Anglican reformers who all seemed to agree on the normative place of the Ten Commandments in Christian teaching. Presbyterian sabbatarianism does not entirely solve the problem of the fourth commandment as 'moral' law.[6] Furthermore, the broad approach of separating cultic and national law from moral law, and then focussing on the latter for the teaching of duty to God and neighbour simply has no parallel or basis in the New Testament. The subordinate authorities should never be elevated to a *de facto* absolute authority. It is too easy for Reformed Anglicans or Presbyterians, when besieged by their opponents, to place all their confidence in the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession or other established formularies. One problem is that, even when it is recognised that some adjustments are called for in Church formularies, we fear the kind of revision that may be forced on us by a majority of modernists in the legislature.

Small group home-based Bible studies, especially if not supervised by trained leaders, are easy prey for the preponderance of certain types of inductive Bible study helps which are readily available in book shops. While I do not wish to suggest that there is no place for inductive studies, there is a tendency to regard them as the sacred cows of the literature. It is not the wholly legitimate inductive method that is the problem, but the application of it. Some inductive studies are written in a way that obscures the theological horizon of the individual texts. Thus, a group of particulars may be selected from quite different parts of the matrix of revelation. Unless the student is aware of the particular hermeneutical questions relating to each, the result may be poor interpretation and the learning of bad habits of Bible study. The inductive method cannot be properly extended to be a wholly empirical approach. There is a necessary deductive approach to the individual texts and their authority within the canon.

But given the theisitic presuppositions of biblical theology, it then proceeds on mainly inductive lines. Its value is that it then puts strong constraints on the type of inductive study which

invites the student to read a number of isolated texts and to draw conclusions from them which are pre-arranged to add up to the required general result. Often the application bypasses the control point in the person of Christ. When the same texts are anchored to their own theological horizons in the biblical redemptive history they are frequently shown to have a force which was quite unrecognised beforehand.

iv. Preaching.

Preaching was returned to its rightful prominence at the Reformation. At the heart of it is the *kerygma* or proclamation of the gospel to the lost. At a time when the very activity of preaching is under attack, a biblical theology of preaching is not only necessary to reinforce the place of biblical exposition in the church, but also to structure the message which is proclaimed. The Reformation saw the recovery of the historical meaning of the gospel along with that of the Old Testament. In that sense it was a rediscovery of biblical theology that went hand in hand with the recovery of the historic gospel.

Perhaps the greatest service biblical theology can do to the church's preaching is to remind the preachers that every text is above all about Christ in the historic gospel event. It means that every sermon must lead us from the text to Christ before ever trying to apply the text to ourselves. It means that every sermon, whether on Old or New Testament, should make absolutely clear, even to a casual visitor to our church service, that we are in the business of proclaiming Christ. A sermon which moves from text to believer, or unbeliever, without taking us first to Christ is not a Christian sermon. At the same time biblical theology guards the preacher from assuming the connection of a text, particularly an Old Testament text, to Christ. Allegory and bland spiritualising give way to a controlled typology based on the structure and unity of revelation.

When a congregation is exposed regularly to preaching which structures its texts on biblical theology a cumulative defence against the eschatology of the sects will be established. Eschatology is constantly degraded by being moved from its gospel-based perspective of the last days to enticing and titillating expositions of prophecy which is said to be fulfilled in anything

and everything but the gospel. Eschatology can be rescued by biblical theology and returned to the people as the message of how Christ brings his people to the eternal goal by what he has done, is doing, and will yet consummate.[7]

v. Worship.

The fact that biblical theology as a discipline is so neglected may, in part, be due to the recognition that it puts almost all our cherished ideas of worship under attack. We can make no more radical assault on how people conceive of "church" than by subjecting church and worship, along with related subjects, to a biblical-theological study. The trouble is, it is not only the layperson's misconceptions that are attacked, but also a lot that has been taken on board as the norms of denominational practice. After all, where do the laypeople generally get their notions of church and worship from if not from the clergy and, through them, the theological hall?

A biblical-theological study of worship points up the implications of the coming of Christ for the transformation of the structures of worship in the Old Testament. It shows that the gospel event radically alters the perception of holy places (where God meets his people), holy times, and priesthood. Much of the argument about women in the priesthood could be avoided through the recognition that the gospel makes all God's people priests. This discussion is generated partly of a linguistic confusion where the one English word expresses two quite different biblical offices of priest and presbyter. The wider problem of priestly ministrations is in part due to the reversion to Old Testament ideas of ministry and worship in the early church, a situation that the English Reformation did not wholly overcome, so that this regression received new impetus in the Anglo-Catholic revival. Biblical theology highlights the differences between the New Testament ideas of worship and the popular use of the word exclusively to refer to what we do in church on Sunday. It also shows the similarities between that which Christ abolished and that which is so assiduously practised in the name of worship today.

When it comes to the bottom line of what we should be trying to achieve in our Sunday services, biblical theology will

challenge any attempt to order things merely to preserve denominational traditions and distinctives. It will nag us with the questions of what we need to do to win the unchurched, to evangelize the unconverted, and to build up the body of Christ.

vi. Pastoral leadership.

Much work needs to be done in this area so that questions of ministry structures in the local church can be rescued from the purely pragmatic and the oral tradition of denominational practitioners. A biblical theology of church leadership would help the clergy-trainers to address the practical issues of parochial ministry in a more integrated way than it frequently is. If we believe there is a legitimate place for professional clergy then we must address the question of how God uses human leadership to bring his people to the goal of salvation. Priorities in training should then be given to those ministry skills needed in such pastoral leadership. Vital to pastoral practice is the matter of mission and evangelism since that is a key reason for the church being in the business of ministry. The perspective on mission given by biblical theology provides the best motives and the best guide lines for evangelistic practice.

vii The Experiment at St Stephen's

At St Stephen's, Coorparoo, within the Anglican diocese of Brisbane, we are attempting to address the matter of giving biblical theology the place it deserves in the life of the congregation. As yet we are not in a position to provide our own Sunday school materials. The lack of biblical theology in the average Christian's thinking has been approached in a number of ways. Over the last six or seven years the preaching program has included each year at least one topical series of a biblical theological nature. Expository preaching has also been the norm as the basis upon which sound methods of application can be taught in the light of the redemptive history in revelation. Last year a basic course in biblical theology, which has since been published,[8] was given in two-hour sessions over some twenty-six weeks. Twenty-six people completed the course. This year another twenty have started the course which includes a number

of sessions on the Reformed presuppositions to the study of biblical theology.

A major boost to the pastoral applications of biblical theology has been given with the introduction in 1991 of an adult Christian education hour between the two Sunday morning services. Although incomplete as yet, the plan of adult Christian education is based on the centrality of the person and work of Christ in the gospel. From there we move to four areas of teaching: Bible (including biblical theology); Theology (systematic, based on the XXXIX Articles, and historical); Christian living; and Ministry skills (including social involvement). These are being pitched at four graded levels to provide for growth and maturity in understanding. Leadership gifts are expected to be in evidence at least by the end of the third level, and possibly earlier. The aim then is to provide for people at level three, or subsequently, to undertake parallel courses, including advanced biblical theology, with the object of developing leadership potential in evangelism, group leadership, and pastoral care. In all this the gospel and the basic biblical-theological perspective is at the heart of the educative process.

One other aspect of this experiment is to minister to the pastor. Apart from the mutual ministry that is exercised at the level of the church staff and the three wardens, there is a specific attempt to aid the Rector by providing research assistance in his study towards a higher degree. The Sunday morning Advanced Biblical Theology group (numbering about ten parishioners who have done the basic course in biblical theology, or something akin to it), has set itself the task of researching a biblical theology of leadership, which is at the heart of the Rector's dissertation topic. It is confidently anticipated that this exercise carried out by members of the congregation will contribute to the formation of more biblical ministry patterns and styles in the future. The idea of a group of parishioners, with the appropriate training, assisting the staff and providing input for the wider ministry would seem to have merit.

An Integrated Theology

As a concluding remark I would stress that biblical theology should not be, and never was in my experience, taught as an end in itself or in opposition to other theological disciplines. It is in fact the best way forward to a truly integrated theology to serve the needs of God's people.[9] Systematic, historical, and pastoral theologies are all essential to the training of Christians in life and ministry. The mature Christian assessment of the findings of all of these proceeds from sound theistic presuppositions. But biblical theology is the indispensable foundation for the structures of all the disciplines and the means of keeping firm biblical control of them.

An integrated theology is only possible in the pastoral context if the distinctions are also maintained. First, the pastor, as the one primarily responsible for the oversight of the congregation, needs a deliberately planned program of reading which keeps abreast of the main perspectives in theological study (biblical, systematic, historical and practical). Second, the congregation must be encouraged to own a program of Christian education which keeps its members in a pattern of learning in which all perspectives are in view. When the gospel (rightly understood as the saving events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth) is maintained as the controlling factor, it should lead to an integrated theology. The nature of the gospel event is such that it demands, for the reasons already stated, that its depth and texture be exposed through biblical theology. Biblical theology, in turn, creates a momentum which leads to an appreciation of the history of the church's understanding of the gospel. Systematic and practical theology are the contemporary expressions of what will become a new chapter of historical theology. It would be a tragedy if this chapter were to be shaped by the theological lunatic fringe rather than by the faithful pastors and people of God who are working to bring the healing and salvation of the gospel to a world in confusion and darkness.

Notes

1 *Gospel and Kingdom* (Exeter/Homebush West, NSW: Paternos-

ter/Lancer, 1981). It is a tribute to Archibishop Robinson that this work, which he essentially inspired, continues in print after ten years and has been translated into Korean and Chinese, with an Indonesian translation in preparation.

2 *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970).

3 See: G Hasel, *Old Testament Theology, Basic issues in the current debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); and *New Testament Theology, Basic issues in the current debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978). H G Reventlow, *Problems of Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century* (London: SCM, 1982); and *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Philiadelphia: Fortress, 1986). H-J Kraus, *Die Biblische Theologie: Ihre Geschichte und Problematik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979).

4 *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (London: SCM, 1985).

5 '"Thus says the lord!"–the Dogmatic Basis of Biblical Theology', in *In God Who is Rich in Mercy*, eds, P T O'Brien and D G Peterson (Homebush West NSW: Lancer, 1986)

6 See chapter XXI, sections VII and VIII of the Westminister Confession.

7 An excellent discussion of this perspective is given by Adrio König, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

8 G Goldsworthy, *Accoring to Plan* (Leicester/Homebush West NSW: IVP/Lancer, 1991).

9 Some modern attempts have been made to integrate the various perspectives in theology. An evangelical treatment is given by G R Lewis and B A Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (two volumes published so far) (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1987 and 1990). The six-volumed work of Michael Schmaus, *Dogma* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968-1977), has a less self-conscious but extremely useful integrative treatment of Roman Catholic post Vatican II theology.