Editorial

International tensions have recently been at the forefront of the news. Today as I write, newspapers report a 'trade war' on the horizon. In the same week there is change in government in Italy and Spain. Relationships between the United States, Russia, China, North and South Korea have frequently been in the news. Tensions have risen again in the Middle East. Closer to home Brexit negotiations are an ongoing concern. In addition we are conscious of the secular ideology increasing in influence. There is much uncertainty and consequently fears arise about the future. How can Christians react?

The Bible teaches repeatedly that we are to 'stand firm' in the Lord. This does not mean Christians are to be unconcerned about these events. Rather we should take a prayerful interest in them. After all, Christians are affected by the decisions made in government. It seems in the West Christians are being increasingly challenged about their convictions. Where judgements have been unfavourable some have been compelled to give up liberties that others enjoy, and have been freely enjoyed in the past, constrained by conscience in their walk with God. These are not easy decisions and can be costly, yet they are decisions made through faith in Christ, and which we believe will be rewarded accordingly.

Should we find ourselves in a trying position of making difficult choices, standing firm in the Lord may mean making a decision that leads to being out of favour with the world, but not with God. In Christ's life, faithfulness led to rejection. Yet God raised him from the dead and overcame evil. The same mind was among the apostles who by the Spirit had firm conviction that whatever happened to them in their walk with Jesus should serve to advance the gospel. Even when it might appear not to be the case, such as when Paul was imprisoned, they believed. Unquestionably their convictions were proven true.

When we worry about how governments will affect us and the world, the Bible brings to our attention the most significant decisions affecting the world have already been made. Revelation 12 opens up a heavenly perspective towards earth. Satan and death have been defeated, 'the salvation and the power and kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come.' Christ offers stability in troubled times.

Consequently Christians overcome evil 'by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.' The Christian's union to Christ in his life, death and resurrection is deeply impressed upon us in this text. Christian faith is not only belief that Christ died and rose from the dead, it is the means by which God

joins us to him in his death and resurrection. Believing in him we can say we died with him that we might live with him. It is because of belief in him and therefore this union to him that we may overcome evil.

In uncertain and tense times assurance is found in Christ to whom, 'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given' (Matthew 28:18). The events of the day can tempt us away from Jesus, we might seek answers elsewhere. However when we ask 'what is going to happen?' with our eyes fixed upon him, the same events can serve as a catalyst to inquire further into the union we have with him through faith. Consequently we may take courage, 'for I have overcome the world'.

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The Greatness of God: A Meditation

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We begin our session this morning with the Shorter Catechism's celebrated answer to the question, What is God? Described by Charles Hodge as the 'best definition of God ever penned by man',[1] the Answer reads, 'God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.' (*Shorter Catechism*, Answer 4)

The first thing to note here is that these words apply to the triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They describe the divine essence in all its fullness. The one God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable. But they also describe each of the divine persons. The divine essence subsists fully and equally in each, none being greater and none being lesser; and this means that when we speak of the deity of the Son or the Spirit we are saying that each, with the Father, is 'infinite, eternal and unchangeable.'

But we must note, too, that these attributes are not separate parts of the deity. The divine essence is one and indivisible. This is the truth enshrined in the doctrine of the divine simplicity: a word introduced into theology not to hint at some naïveté in God, but to highlight the fact that he is not a composite. The attributes are not like the segments of an orange, allowing you to take one away and leave a remainder. Nor they like different areas of the brain, where one area controls cognitive functions, another mobility, another speech, and so on, and where one area can cease to function while the others continue. There is no 'area' in God which is wisdom or righteousness or holiness. His attributes are what God *is*, not what he *has*. He is justice, he is goodness, he is truth, and he is each of them infinitely, eternally and unchangeably. Furthermore, each of the attributes characterises all the others, and this immediately rules out any tension between them. Mercy and justice do indeed meet in holy concord, but not (as older preachers sometimes suggested) after dramatic negotiations. His justice is merciful and his mercy just, in the same way as his wisdom is holy and his goodness powerful. For God, to be is to be such a God, and he could be different only by ceasing to exist. This is equally true of God's triune-ness. It is not that God has three persons. He is three persons, and this three-ness is co-eternal with his essence. He has never existed, and could never have existed, except as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the form of eternal being.

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1 *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (London: Nelson, 1871), p. 367.

It is also notable that in this list of divine attributes there is no mention of his greatness, even though Scripture (and particularly the Book of Psalms) abounds in references to it. Nor is the Catechism alone in such an omission. Few of the weighty tomes of Christian Dogmatics give separate treatment to the greatness of God.

What are we to make of this?

First, greatness is an attribute of all God's attributes. He is great in wisdom, great in power, great in holiness, great in justice, and great in goodness and truth. And the same would be true if we were to extend the list. God is great in knowledge and great in graciousness and great in love. He is great in all that he is.

Secondly, greatness is not so much a distinct quality of deity as the sum-total of all that God is. It is, overwhelmingly, the impression he makes on us. He is a magnitude: an infinite, eternal and unchangeable magnitude; a towering, unbounded eminence; an immense and awesome majesty.

This immediately means that any attempt at a detailed analysis would be presumptuous. But we can make contact (to put it no more strongly) with a few aspects of it.

GOD FILLS AND TRANSCENDS ALL SPACE

First, God fills and transcends the whole of space. The Old Testament already had a clear grasp of this. God's active presence was everywhere: in the depths of the earth, at the heights of the mountains, on sea, on dry land (Ps. 95:4–5); the clouds were his chariot, the wind his wings (Ps. 104:3–4); the stars were exactly where he had placed them, he was on intimate terms with all of them (calling them by name) and it was due to his power that not one was missing (Is. 40:2); the whole earth was full of his glory (Is. 6:3, ESV); and it was impossible to evade him. Even if one fled to the farthest seas, to the highest heavens, to the depths of *sheol*, to the darkness of the womb, to wherever, he is there before us, and the fleeing soul cries, defeated, 'Thou there!' (Ps. 139:8).

Today, we have a much fuller understanding of the vastness of space than had our Old Testament forebears, or even our 19th century ones. We no longer see the stars as little, twinkling things a few miles above us. We know that they are vast bodies, and that they are so far distant from us that their twinklings have taken millions of light-years to reach us. We know that many, indeed most, are beyond the reach of even the most sophisticated telescopes; and we know that, even as we speak, space itself is expanding at a phenomenal rate. For all practical purposes, space is

infinite. We can never reach its boundaries, because it has no fixed outer edges.

Yet God is present to it at every point, even to what to us are its remotest extremities, not by extension, like some physical substance stretched out over some 'immense' area, but as an all-present mind of infinite intelligence and power; and he is present not as an idle or curious observer, but as an active preserver, governor and loving carer, upholding the cosmos, not from a distance, but from a position of the closest conceivable proximity to its every part. There is no space between him and any point in space. Every atom, every galaxy, every living creature, is equally near him; and this presence means more than mere proximity. It is also means accessibility, and for us, his weak and wayward children, this is the most glorious fact of all. God has no postcode. Instead, he is always within shouting distance; even, indeed, within whispering distance; close enough to hear our groans, even when least articulate, and even when coming from the deepest pit.

But though God fills space, he is not confined by it. As Solomon reminds us, the highest heaven cannot contain him (1 Kings 8:27). Space is not co-eternal with God, nor should we imagine him fitting his creation into space as if it was there before the universe itself. He created space in the very act of creating the world and gave it whatever characteristics it pleased him. Here it is important to distinguish between God's omnipresence and his immensity. Omnipresence is a relational term, defining God's relation to the created universe, and reminding us that God is all-present to the world he has made. But the universe does not contain him nor set limits to his freedom as creator. He was when space was not, and his presence is not exhausted by his omnipresence. What C. S. Lewis called, 'the land of the Trinity',[2] transcends space, and it is closer to the truth to say that God lives parallel to space than to say that he lives in it.

GOD FILLS AND TRANSCENDS TIME

Secondly, God fills and transcends time. He is eternal, and here again is a clear Old Testament emphasis. In the Beginning, God already was (Gen. 1:1, Jn. 1:1). He *was* from everlasting (Ps. 90), and he *will be* to everlasting (Is. 40:28), present to every moment of time as he is present to every moment of space; and present not only as a witness, but as the supremely active agent, ruler and carer. He was there at the creation of light, billions of years ago; he was there at all the great moments of salvation-history such as the birth of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea and the resurrection

[2] C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (1960. Repr. London: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 169.

of Christ; and he is there (and here) in every moment, whether critical or commonplace, of our own lives. He will be there when the heavens and the earth pass away, supervising the unimaginable moments of final apocalypse; and he will be there, for ever, in the new heavens and the new earth.

Yet he transcends time, existing not merely before it, but above it. This is not to say that time does not exist for God. Like space, it is an inalienable and permanent element in the form of his creation, and he takes full account of it as an objective reality. He created the world not in an instant, but in successive stages (Gen. 1:1–2:3). Yet his creative word was not spoken in successive stages.[3] It was spoken in eternity, but fulfilled in time, each effect coming at its own appointed moment. This is not to say that God creates 'in time', as if it were a medium which existed before creation and to which God had to adjust, or a box into which he had to fit his creation.[4] He created time itself, and he gave it the exact features needed to support life and, above all, to facilitate the redemption of his people. He no more violates or ignores the properties of time than he violates the liberty of his moral creatures, and we see this even in his arrangements for the incarnation. Not only does the Son come 'in the fullness of the time' (*chronos*, Gal. 4:4), but he repeatedly recognises that he is working to time: hence his references to, 'My hour has not yet come' and, 'The hour has come.'[5] God is a meticulous time-keeper.

But time is not a condition or modifier of his own existence. He is 'the Being One' (*ho ōn*, Ex. 3:13, LXX) who eternally is, and whose being explains all other being. He was never young, he will never be old, he suf-

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[3] Cf. the language of Augustine: 'You call us, therefore, to understand the Word, God who is with you (John 1:1. That word is spoken eternally, and by it all things are uttered eternally. It is not the case that what was being said comes to an end, and something else is then said, so that everything is uttered in succession with a conclusion, but everything is said in the simultaneity of eternity […]. Yet not all that you cause to exist by speaking is made in simultaneity and eternity.' (*Saint Augustine: Confessions*; tr. Henry Chadwick; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 226).

[4] This point was highlighted by Anselm in his *Proslogion* (9): 'You exist neither yesterday nor today nor tomorrow but are absolutely outside all time. For yesterday and today and tomorrow are completely in time; however, You, though nothing can be without You, are nevertheless not in place or time but all things are in You. For nothing contains You, but You contain all things.' See *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 98.

[5] See for example John 2:4, 7:6, 7:30, 17:1.

fers no change or decay, he undergoes no development and he is never in process. Nor does he experience things successively, one after another.

Is he not bored then? Does he not feel the time long? How does he pass the day, if every day is the same? Let's remember that he is the blessed God, and he enjoys that blessedness without past, present or future, in an eternity which has been well defined as 'simultaneity in the present.'[6] All, the eternal and the temporal, is simultaneously present to him in one eternal 'moment' of blessedness: his blessedness in his own fellowship as the eternal Trinity; his delight in his finished creation; his satisfaction in the obedience of his Son; his joy when sinners repent; his delight in his children. This is one single moment of infinitely varied blessedness, as the triune God enjoys both the joys of the Land of the Trinity and the joys of his space-time creation. Even the doctrine of divine passibility, if we embrace it, must be set within this single moment of blessedness. The cost of the Father's love as expressed on Calvary was not a transient moment, but part of the one eternal 'moment' subsumed, we know not how, into his infinite blessedness.

TRANSCENDENT HOLINESS

Thirdly, God is great in his transcendent holiness. Holiness is not in the first instance an ethical concept, but a relational one, expressing the otherness and separateness of God. This is why it is so often expressed in spatial imagery. In Isaiah 6:1, for example, God is 'high and lifted up', and the same sort of language appears in Isaiah 57:15, where it is amplified in the divine pronouncement, 'I dwell in the high and holy place'; and in this very same context we note that God's name is 'Holy'. Not only does he have a holy name. His name is 'Holy'.

What such language is pointing to is that there is no continuous chain of being, with God as the final, most impressive link. On the contrary, there is an infinite gulf between him and all other forms of being. However high we rise, in time or eternity, God is on another plain and at an infinitely higher level; and this is not simply a matter of his magnitude, but of the very mode of his being. He *is* in a way that marks him off from all creaturely being. He is ever awesome and ever mysterious. We can know him only to the extent that he chooses to reveal himself, but this revelation itself serves only to give a glimpse of a form of being which is far beyond our experience and far beyond our conceptual framework. We

[6] This phraseology derives ultimately from Augustine as in Footnote 3 above. In a footnote to his edition of the *Confessions* (p. 233) Chadwick adopts Augustine's language to provide a definition of eternity: 'the reality of eternity is simultaneity in the present.'

can say in words that God is triune, but how can we begin to understand what it means to be one being in three persons, united in community of nature, mutual adoration and a shared commitment to saving the world? Then there is the fact of his *aseity*, a Scholastic term which means, literally, that God is from himself. His being has no cause. He is self-sufficient. He is independent. He has no needs that men or angels can meet. He has no need to be needed, and though he made us for his own glory he did not need us in order to receive glory: the Trinity itself is an eternal symphony of doxology. And at the same time, he is awesome in might and power, the source of all the forms of energy in the created universe, yet more powerful than the sum-total of all these put together. We cannot even begin to imagine omnipotence at work, creating and then re-creating the heavens and the earth.

But while in its root-meaning holiness refers to the awesome otherness of God, part of that very otherness is his moral grandeur, and particularly the spotless purity which sets him apart from sinful humanity. This is reflected in the way the Scriptures emphasise that every approach to God involves some prior rite of purification. One outstanding example of this is the elaborate ritual prescribed for the consecration of the priests in Exodus 29:1–46, and, following on from this, the detailed prescriptions for the cycle of Levitical sacrifices, culminating in the great annual ritual of *yom kippur* (Lev. 16:1–34). Only on the basis of purification-through-atonement was it possible to approach God, and this typology found its fulfilment in the self-sacrifice of Christ. He, too, Son of God though he was, could enter the Holy of Holies only as one bearing blood, but the whole ritual was elevated to a new plain by the fact that the blood he offers was his own, the blood of God (Heb. 9:12; Acts 20:28). Nothing could more dramatically underline the fact that sinners can get access to 'Holy' only on his own terms, as those who have been 'purified' in accordance with his own prescriptions. Everyone who hopes to see him as he is 'must purify himself as he is pure' (1 Jn. 3:3); but although this is clearly something to which we must give the most serious personal attention, we also know that it is something for which God himself has taken ultimate responsibility. Christ shed his blood not only to secure the remission of our sins (Eph. 1:7), but to bring us to the point where we stand before him in perfect moral splendour, 'holy and without blemish' (Eph. 5:27).

In our case, perfection and purity consist in obedience, but this clearly cannot be its meaning as applied to God. Being subject to none, and under no law, his perfection lies in his self-consistency. He is always true to himself: always just, always true, always faithful, always wise, always holy; and, perhaps above all, always good.

It has often been remarked in criticism of the *Shorter Catechism* that its 'definition' of God makes no reference to his love, and this omission is clearly in stark contrast to the modern Christian tendency to give love a primacy, and even a regulatory function, over God's other attributes. This pushes us relentlessly towards the point where 'love is God' and when we reach that point then, as C. S. Lewis pointed out, love becomes demonic, serving as a pretext for anything and everything.[7] To make matters worse, our understanding of love is isolated from its New Testament context. Far from being a wonder, it is taken for granted, as if it were just what we would expect,[8] and we then compound the error by assuming that love means that God is all-indulgent and that forgiveness no more than his *métier*. Above all, we have divorced the divine love from its greatest manifestation — the cross, where God, not sparing his own Son, delivered him up as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world (1 Jn. 4:10). Deny this divine action, deny that Christ was judged in our place, deny that the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all (Is. 53:6), and you completely evacuate God's love of its biblical meaning.

In highlighting the goodness of God the Westminster divines had not the least intention of obscuring or down-playing the divine love, but they saw the divine goodness as the more comprehensive term. God is good through and through; and that goodness is infinite, eternal and unchangeable; wise, just, powerful and holy. It includes his benevolence towards the whole of his creation. He wishes his every creature well: Shedd even goes so far as to say, 'There is no malice in the Eternal Mind toward the arch-fiend himself.'[9] It includes his patience, not only towards the sinful

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7 Lewis is restating a comment by M. Denis de Rougemont to the effect that, 'love ceases to be a demon only when he ceases to be a god'. Lewis puts it positively: 'love begins to be a demon the moment he begins to be a god'; and when this happens love 'attempts to override all other claims and insinuates that any action which is sincerely done "for love's sake" is thereby lawful and even meritorious.' (*The Four Loves*, pp. 7–8). Cf. James Packer's contrast between divine and human love: 'God's love, as the Bible views it, never leads him to foolish, impulsive, immoral actions in the way that its human counterpart too often leads us.' (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973, p. 136).

8 This modern attitude is in stark contrast to that of Anselm, who wrote: 'How do You spare the wicked if You are all-just and supremely just? For how does the all-just and supremely just One do something that is unjust? Or what kind of justice is it to give everlasting life to him who merits eternal death?' (*Proslogion*, 9).

9 W. G. T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Spiritual Man* (1884. Repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), p. 66.

human race in general, but towards every individual in particular (even his children sorely try his patience). It includes his kindness and generosity, lavishing his gifts where they are not deserved and where there is little gratitude in return. It includes the blessings of his common or general grace, extended even to those who are his enemies. His sun shines, and his rain falls, on the unrighteous as on the righteous (Mt. 5:45); nations which give him little or no recognition still enjoy the benefits of civilisation and stable government; and individuals who have no hesitation in blaspheming him are often the very ones most distinguished for the artistic, technical, and scientific gifts which come so freely from his hand.

But God's goodness also includes his justice; and justice, as far as the Bible is concerned, means retribution. This is not an idea with which moderns have much patience. Justice, they argue, is not a matter of punishing wrongs, but of putting things right, and what we must emphasise is God's graciousness and his unconditional forgiveness. Yet when the man in the street sees power abused, and sees fraud and violence and oppression and criminal negligence go unpunished, his immediate cry is, 'There's no justice.' Just as the psalmist recognised that there can be no deliverance for the oppressed without the crushing of the oppressor (Ps. 72:4), so people today recognise instinctively that goodness cannot be indifferent to evil. 'God is not just,' writes James Packer, 'that is, He does not act in the way that is *right*, He does not do what is proper to a *judge*, unless He inflicts upon all sin and wrongdoing the penalty it deserves.'[10] It is this ultimate divine justice that gives legitimacy to our human judicial systems with their law-courts and prisons and war-crime tribunals; and it is this same divine justice which explains why, even within history, God's wrath is revealed against pagan society (Rom. 1:18–32). In fact, as we read through the Psalms one of the things that strikes us most is the frequency with which the psalmist prays for God's judgement on the enemies of truth. Where we might content ourselves with praying for the conversion of Islamist extremists, and deem this the Christian thing to do, the Psalms are uncompromising in their belief that only by punishing wrong can God put things right: 'Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies […] let the evil of the wicked come to an end' (Ps. 7: 6, 9).

Nor is this some outdated Old Testament sentiment rendered obsolete by the progress of revelation and the disclosure of God's grace and truth in the incarnation of his Son (Jn. 1:14). On the contrary, when that same Son returns in glory it will be to destroy the Lawless One (2 Thess. 2:8). A universe where the Supreme Judge treated evil and goodness indifferently

[10] James I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 166.

would be a nightmare. Goodness and justice cannot be divorced, and that is why history as we know it will close with what John Wesley called the Great Assize.

But it is especially in his redeeming love that God's goodness shines. The first thing we have to ask here is how this love fits into the description of deity with which our reflections began, and the answer, surely, is that God's redeeming love has all the attributes listed in the Catechism's statement. It is infinite, in that it is unsearchable; eternal, in that it had no beginning, but is co-ages with himself (God never was without loving his people); and it is unchangeable in that it never diminishes, never lets go and cannot in any circumstances be diverted from its purpose. But equally, his love is wise, powerful (able to achieve all its objects), holy, just and true; and conversely, all his other attributes are suffused with love. His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and truth all serve the purposes of his redeeming love.

All this becomes apparent at the cross, which is simultaneously the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. 1:24) the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:25) and the love of God (1 Jn. 4:10); and just as God is great in his being, wisdom and all his other attributes so he is great in both the manner (1 Jn. 3:1) and the magnitude (Jn. 3:16) of his redeeming love. But this greatness is many-faceted.

First, God's redeeming love was great in its condescension, stooping down to choose for adoption into his family people who had nothing to commend them, but were utterly helpless sinners at enmity with all that God stood for (Rom. 5:6–11).

Secondly, it was great in the plan that it formulated: not only to cancel the guilt of our sin, but to transform us, body and soul, till at last we are completely Christ-like and fit to share the glory he had with the Father before the world was (Jn. 17:5, 22).

Thirdly, it was great in its attention to detail. God would call each one of his chosen individually (Rom. 8:30), watch over our going-out and our coming-in (Ps. 121:8), and personally ensure that all things, even our failings and our lapses, work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Fourthly, God's redeeming love was great in the price it was prepared to pay and the cost it was prepared to bear in order to bring his plan to fruition: a cost borne by each person of the Trinity, though in different ways. The Father sacrificed his Son to atone for the sin of the world and, in doing so, had to turn a deaf ear to his anguished cry, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!' The Son became flesh specifically in order to carry our sins in his own body to the cross (1 Pet. 2:24), and there he plumbed the depths of mental and spiritual anguish as he descended into that Black Hole of Dereliction which love could never reach. And the

Holy Spirit, grieved by the criminal darkness of Calvary, still upheld the Son (Heb. 9:14), sharing in the pain of him whose Spirit he was and from whom not even imputed sin could separate him (the paradox is one we have to live with. The Father forsook him. The Spirit upheld him.)

Finally, and perhaps above all, redeeming love is great in its constancy. This is the truth enshrined in that magnificent Hebrew word, *hesed*: God's steadfast love, the love that never lets go, the love that's still there when everything has fallen or fled. Redeeming love is love that has made its choice. It has laid its plan, met the cost and then gone on to unite us to Christ in all the glory of his obedience and all the power of his resurrection. In him, God has adopted us as his children, flooded our hearts with a sense of his love (Rom. 5:5) and given us the boldness to cry out, 'Abba, Father!' (Gal. 4:6). He will never put us out of his family; nor will he ever allow us to walk out of it. Whatever it takes to keep us to the day of salvation (1 Pet. 1:5), he will do it.

This doesn't mean that as believers we can sin with impunity. True though it is that we can never again fall under God's judicial condemnation, yet as his children we may, by our sins, fall under his fatherly displeasure.[11] He may hide his face, discipline us through adversity, humble us by leaving us for a season to the corruptions of our own hearts, and even deprive us of all sense of his love; and there can be no restoration to his favour until we abase ourselves, confess our sin and renew our faith and repentance. At such times we need a repentance without despair and a faith without presumption. But not for a moment does God let us go. Neither death nor life, neither earth nor hell, neither what happened in our past nor what may happen in our future, neither pain nor backsliding, can ever separate us from his love (Rom. 8:38–39). It will never stop until, brimming over with joy, it presents us faultless before the presence of his glory (Jude 24).

It is in this sheer goodness that we see what the psalmist referred to as the 'beauty' of the Lord (Ps. 27:4, 90:17): the quality which led Rudolf Otto to describe the holy as not only mysterious and intimidating, but fascinating.[12] Holiness not only repels. It also attracts, but as is the case with his greatness, beauty is not such a distinct attribute of God as a description of the total impression he makes on those who live in communion

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[11] See the splendid statement on this in the Westminster Confession's Chapter on Justification (11:5); and compare Chapter 5:5 ('Of Providence').

[12] Otto's 'formula', describing God as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, is expounded in Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational*, tr. John W. Harvey (2nd edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 12–40.

and fellowship with him. Within the Trinity, each person sees and loves the beauty of the other. Likewise, properly adjusted angels and human beings are fascinated by the beauty of God. The psalmist was not content with a mere glimpse of it: he wanted to gaze and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord (Ps. 27:4). But here, more than anywhere, appreciation depends on the eye of the beholder. The unbeliever sees no beauty in God: nothing to make him desirable (Is. 53:2). Conversion, however, gives us a new aesthetic, because where there is faith there is love, and where there is love God is seen as utterly adorable; and this in turn leads to longing and desire. There are some dramatic representations of this in the Psalms. In Psalm 42:1, for example, the psalmist is panting for God with the same urgency as the parched deer pants for the flowing streams. Conversely, where there is no sense of God's presence the soul is desolate and cries out, 'O LORD, how long?' (Ps. 6:3) To the pure in heart, the supreme blessing is that they shall see God (Mt. 5:8).

This beauty is closely linked to the idea of the divine glory and, of course, neither the one nor the other is visible. God has no physical form, and categorically forbade any attempt to represent him in a visible or material image. God is spirit (Jn. 4:24), and his beauty is a moral and spiritual beauty consisting of such qualities as his immaculate purity, his unfailing love, his compassion, his caring, his gentleness and his tenderness. These are the attributes which make us love him and long to see him, not 'through a glass, darkly', but face to face; and while these qualities were preached by Old Testament prophets and experienced by Old Testament believers, we of the New Testament era enjoy the greater privilege that we have seen this beauty enfleshed in the person of Christ. In him, the glory dwelt among us, full of graciousness and faithfulness (Jn. 1:14). It shone in his face (2 Cor. 4:6), but it shone, too, in his actions: in his pity, his patience, and above all in the self-sacrificing love by which, at unimaginable personal cost, he secured for us life more abundant. It is by his beauty he draws us to himself, and then we happily endorse the words of William Guthrie, 'Less cannot satisfy, and more is not desired'.[13]

GOD TRANSCENDS ALL OUR HUMAN WORDS AND CONCEPTS

Finally, God's greatness means that he transcends all our human words and concepts. No definition of him is possible, because definition means setting boundaries, and he is boundless. This is simply to remind our-

[13] William Guthrie, *The Christian's Great Interest* (1658. Reprinted 1951 by the Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, n. l.), p. 43.

selves, if we need reminding, that the finite is not capable of taking in the infinite. We cannot contain God, or wrap him all up, in human statements.

Yet we need to be careful here. It doesn't mean that we have to be agnostic, admitting (or even boasting) that we can never know God. On the contrary, the Bible insists time and again on the importance of knowledge. The psalmist prayed that God would make him 'know' his ways (Ps. 25:4), our Lord himself declared that it was life eternal to 'know' the only true God (Jn. 17:3), and the Apostle Paul prayed that the Colossians might be filled with the 'knowledge' of his will (Col. 1:9). The fundamental truth here is that though our fallen and finite intellects could never discover God, he is able to reveal himself to us and able, too, to make us understand his revelation. This is why Paul can speak of 'what can be known about God' (*to gnōston*, Rom. 1:19). The word clearly implies that there are limits to what can be known, but it implies no less clearly that something can be known, provided God shares with us a little of what he knows about himself. His very act of creating is itself a revelation, his works making known his eternal power and God-ness (Rom. 1:20). But beyond that, he has revealed the secret (mystery) of his great redemptive plan through his messengers, the apostles and the prophets; and he has given their message fixed and permanent form in Holy Scripture, which is not merely a record of the word of God, but is itself the word of God *written* (and living).

It is no humility on our part to ignore this revelation, or to make a virtue of not being interested in theology (speech about God). Instead, it is incumbent upon us to cherish every word that God has shared with us, and to engage with the Scriptures not merely sentimentally, but cognitively. They weren't intended just to wash over us, but to challenge, persuade and correct us. Indeed, one of the Bible's key-words is 'consider'.

Yet our words and our concepts can never fully capture God. No list of divine names, no summary of the divine attributes, and no collation of the great creeds and confessions, allows us to search out the Almighty unto perfection; and even of the most recondite and thorough tomes of theology we have to say what Solomon said of the Temple, 'Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this system that I have built' (2 Chron. 6:18). Our systems may contain truth, and nothing but the truth, but they can never contain the whole truth. Even if we knew our whole Bibles intimately, our knowledge would still not be complete, because, as Calvin pointed out so often, God's revelation, though never misleading, is always accommodated to the 'rudeness' of

his people.[14] Some passages of Scripture still baffle us; others assure is that there are secret things that God has kept to himself (Deut. 29:29); and sometimes the Bible itself makes plain that there are questions we shouldn't even ask (Acts 1:7). Nor is this condition of 'not knowing' a merely transitional phase of our discipleship, to be left behind once we arrive in glory. On the contrary, it is an unavoidable consequence of our human finitude. Granted, one day we shall see God 'fully', as Paul puts it (1 Cor. 13:12), but even such perfection is relative to our human condition, and for ever limited by our finitude. Only omniscience can comprehend deity, and we shall never, ever, be omniscient. Even to the glorified human mind of Christ the depths of deity (his own deity) remain an inexhaustible (and delightful) mystery.

But there are two further points we must bear in mind.

First, though we cannot know all *about* him, we can still know him. In this respect, the praying believer, bowed down with a sense of sin and need, and overwhelmed by the majesty of God, can converse with him more intimately than the most brilliant theologian whose heart grace has never broken. As Packer reminds us, 'John Owen and John Calvin knew more theology than John Bunyan or Billy Bray, but who would deny that the latter pair knew their God every bit as well as the former?'[15]

Secondly, we have infinite time to get to know God. The school of Christ never closes, discipleship never ends, and God, as the object of our adoration is never exhausted. The excellencies of the one who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9) will provide abundant stimulus to our hearts and minds throughout eternity. God's self-knowledge is one instantaneous eternal present: *our* knowledge of him will be unendingly incremental, as the Lamb leads us, day after day, to the headwaters of the River of Life, deep within the Throne (Rev. 7:17).

WHERE DOES HE DWELL?

But if he is high and lifted up, and inhabits eternity (Is. 57:15), how can we ever make contact with him, far less enjoy his communion? Is he not infinitely remote from us? Is he not awesome in majesty? And if we dare to gaze at him steadily, are we not reduced to crying, 'Woe is me! I am lost' (Is. 6:5).

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[14] See for example, his comment on Ex. 28:30: 'What the Scripture sometimes relates as to the enquiries made by Urim and Thummim, it was a concession made by God to the rudeness of his ancient people.' (*Harmony of the Pentateuch*, Vol. 2; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1853, p. 198).

[15] James Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 34.

Yes! But then, precisely here, we meet what is perhaps the greatest of all the paradoxes of Scripture. 'I dwell in the high and holy place,' declares the LORD (Is. 57:15), but this is immediately followed by the words, 'and also'. There is somewhere else that the LORD dwells: 'and also' with the one 'who is of a contrite and lowly spirit.' He dwells with (and in) those who cry to him, crushed by the pressures of life and looking to him for help and support. He dwells with the penitent, who have been led by God on a terrible journey into self-knowledge and are now crying, 'Lord, be merciful to me the sinner', as if that were the whole truth about them, and as if they were the only sinners in the whole wide world.

But those with whom God dwells are also lowly: they know that their place is at the bottom, and see themselves as less than the least of all saints (the littlest of the littlest). They are poor in spirit, knowing they are completely devoid of righteousness, and readily confessing that they have nothing to bring to the Mercy Seat but their sin. It is of such people that the New Testament says that the life of God is in their souls (Gal. 2:20). It is such people the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, leads, fortifies and consoles. And it is from such people that the Father never takes his eye.

But to what end? We could reply that such an indwelling is, surely, an end in itself, and in many ways it is (Ps. 73:25). But still, like all of God's acts, it is for a purpose, namely, 'to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.' (Is. 57:15) 'Blessed are they that mourn,' said our Lord, 'for they shall be comforted.' (Mt. 5:4)

The Psalms abound with dramatic portrayals of such contrition and such revival. Take, for example, the fortieth Psalm. Here was a man in a pit, surrounded by trouble and almost overwhelmed (verse 12) by the knowledge of his own sin. All he could do was cry to God; and wait. God heard him, and pulled him out. But he did more. He put his feet on a rock, he got him going again, and he set him singing (verse 3). God had restored to him the joy of salvation (Ps. 51:12). That joy, the joy of the Lord, is our strength (Neh. 8:10). Without it we are useless.

What are we to do, then? The starting-point, surely, is to realise that this promise is already fulfilled in the life of every Christian. The High and Holy One is already with you. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. The Holy Spirit is already by our side, and the fruit of his presence is 'love, joy and peace'. I am already equipped to 'do all things through him who strengthens me.' (Phil. 4:13).

The very thought should be enough to revive us.

Getting Real about the Holy Spirit

Rose Dowsett

'In seeking the Holy Spirit our motivation is to be transformed as well as empowered'

Let me begin with some stories. True stories, not fiction.

In the 1970s, Dick and I were living in Manila, Philippines, as OMF missionaries, seconded to Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship. A Filipino colleague turned up in great distress one day. Her brother, demon possessed, was doing terrible things to those around him. He could not be restrained. The extent of his supernatural power was evidenced by his ability to break great rocks apart with his bare hands. What would you have done?

A few years before, I lay in a deep coma in a Manila hospital. The saintly Christian doctor looking after me told Dick to make plans for my funeral. Medically at that time there was no possibility of recovery. But after an extended period of coma, the risen Lord Jesus appeared to me and lovingly touched my wasted body, telling me to trust Him. When I emerged from coma, the doctor said 'There is no medical explanation. Truly the Lord has done this.' Would you have said, 'Well, doctors aren't always right?' or humbly praised God for His intervention?

Back in Scotland, a Malaysian student came to us, agitated and frightened. He was a believer, but struggled with a sense of darkness around him. Before he left Malaysia, his non-Christian mother insisted on giving him an expensive amulet and animistic strings. She had bought them from the most powerful spirit medium she could find, saying they would give protection to the son in an alien land. After a considerable struggle, and trembling, the young man took off the amulet and strings and burned them in a fire in our garden in Glasgow. The black smoke was dramatic, and out of all proportion to the size of the objects. Afterwards, he said, the darkness lifted and he experienced great joy in wholly trusting the Lord Jesus. Would you perhaps have dismissed that as 'all in the mind', explained it away in purely psychological terms?

Perhaps you are thinking, well, these things may happen in the two thirds world, but not here. So let me tell you two more stories, both from the UK.

Sometime around 1968, I don't remember the exact date, I was involved together with Os Guinness and another friend at a small university mission at the still young Essex University, a place founded on

quite aggressively secular, indeed committedly atheist, lines. Each evening a tiny group of Christian students in a neighbouring room would pray throughout the evening meeting, in which Os was explaining the gospel in this hostile environment. One evening, a young woman enveloped in a pink velvet cloak came and sat at the front. As Os began, she dropped her head on the chair back in front of her and shrank into her cloak. Afterwards, thinking she may perhaps have been on drugs or in some other kind of distress, Os and I went over to her. I have almost never before or since seen such naked hatred in a person's eyes. She told us she was the leader of the local witches' coven, which had been operative in the area for centuries. She had come to break up the meeting, but found herself almost paralysed and unable to utter a word. She finally left us, cursing us and the Lord, crying out as a parting shot that only Christian prayer could have gagged her in this way. Do we pray for evil to be bound, the victory of Christ to be experienced, and the power of the Spirit to be displayed? Two students came to faith that night, and went on to a lifetime of discipleship.

And one final one. In 1984, OMF was buying a new property in Jordanhill, a very respectable area of Glasgow. For reasons too complicated to explain here, the task of finding and buying a house to accommodate an office as well as a family was delegated to myself and a member of the Scottish OMF Council. We found a suitable house, but I noticed as we went round it that there were signs of occult activity in several places, including a crucified cat, still nailed to its board, in the attic. The vendor expressed her dislike that a bunch of Christians should be buying the place, but, needing a quick and reliable sale, sold. The day we got possession, a veteran OMF colleague with years of experience in Thailand, a rather bemused Church of Scotland minister, and myself, went round every nook and cranny of that house, praying that the victory of Christ might be known, evil banished, and God's honour upheld through everything that would happen in this place.

By now, some of you may be feeling rather uncomfortable. We don't like arguing from experience (too subjective) and have been trained to prefer propositions over narrative. But that's not how most of the global church families look at things. Maybe we need to recalibrate.

From the time I first went to university as a very young Christian in 1962, through subsequent staff work with IVF (now UCCF), then a lifetime with OMF International, with secondments along the way to BTI/Glasgow Bible College, the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission and several other ministries, I have been privileged and enriched by being embedded in interdenominational and mostly international bodies.

I say that because I have no doubt that this shaping of my life has also shaped my theology and thinking in a way that is different from those

whose experience has been strongly dominated by mono-denominational and mono-cultural life. We delude ourselves if we think that our study of Scripture is unaffected by these things.

Sadly many Scottish evangelicals do not grasp that the overwhelming majority of the world's Christians are neither Reformed (as we understand that term in Scotland) nor Presbyterian. Again, we all have a tendency to read books mostly within our own comfort zone, by our own favourite authors and publishers, and to avoid the challenge of weighing up seriously unfamiliar approaches, be they from other streams of the Christian Church, even from different tribes within Evangelicalism, and even more from the theological and biblical reflection increasingly being generated from the non-western world.

I say all that because I think we need with honesty to see what we can learn from parts of the world church where love for the Lord and his Word prevail as much as we like to think it does among ourselves, yet whose reflection on Scripture sometimes leads them to conclusions different from those most familiar to us here in Scotland. This is especially the case when thinking about the Holy Spirit.

Having said that, we need to refer to a few landmarks from the Western post-Reformation story, because until comparatively recently, this was the locus of Protestantism, though not exclusively of the global Church. Indeed, to this day, Roman Catholicism and the various strands of Orthodoxy numerically outstrip Protestants worldwide.[1] We also do well to remember that since around 1980, the majority of the world's professing Christians have been in the global south, and with the extraordinary growth of the church in China in the past thirty years, the Church in the non-western world — no longer all 'south' — continues to grow while the original heart lands of Protestantism — Europe and North America — see a diminishing presence. We need, however difficult it is, to ask whether there have been deficiencies in the way the gospel has been transmitted to account for that decline, and whether our much-loved theological traditions are quite as unassailably right as we like to think. Are we willing to learn from this situation — decline here, growth there — or will we just say 'Well, it has to be the sovereign will of God' — or perhaps cast all the blame on the liberal hollowing out of God's truth by others? In particular, we need to try to understand why Pentecostalism and churches embracing the charismatic movement have been, and are, the main spearheads of church growth globally in the past fifty years, and also the ones most

[1] For extensive information and statistics about the world church, see *Atlas of Global Christianity*, ed. by Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

effective in discipling those outside predominantly middle-class evangelicalism.

The great Reformers of the C.16th and the Puritans of the C.17th clearly had plenty to say about the Holy Spirit. They were, after all, avid students of the Scriptures, and you can't go far, especially in the New Testament, without references to Him. Further, they lived in a world where there was ready acknowledgment of the supernatural world, largely through the negatives of superstition, the occult, magic and witchcraft. However, their main concern was to re-establish the authority of the Scriptures rather than that of the Roman Catholic Church, and the true and comprehensive meaning of the Cross in salvation — a huge task, for which we remain in their debt. I think often their attention to the Holy Spirit was largely tied to these two colossal spheres, and understandably so. I hasten to add, Luther, and many of the Puritans in particular, made their appeal strongly to the heart as well as to the mind, encouraging love for God, not just belief, and Puritans such as John Owen wrote extensively about the Spirit.

However, much as we owe the Reformers and Puritans under God, we must not stay in the C.16th. The worldview, and specific historic context, through which they read Scripture and within which they focused their theological concerns is very far different from the worldview and context surrounding us in Scotland today, and some at least of the things we need to wrestle with were never on the Reformers' radar screen. So it helps to trace at least some points in the historical unfolding and changes if we are to understand where we are now and how we need to respond. Each generation, including our own, brings both discernment and blind spots. That was true of the Reformers, too. They were not infallible.

By contrast with the Reformation and Puritan worlds, the Enlightenment of the C.18th to a large extent threw the supernatural baby out with the bathwater, and ever since, large swathes of western theology as well as culture have found it increasingly impossible to accommodate what cannot be explained in material and scientific terms. We are familiar with the depressing habit by some within the church as well as beyond it of trying to explain away the miracles recorded in Scripture, and supremely the Spirit-breathed Incarnation, the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord. In our culture, and generally in our churches, the supernatural has been reclassified as superstition.

Along with that, the Holy Spirit has in many circles become an embarrassing mystery to many in our churches, mentioned briefly in the Creed (for those who embed that in their services), but often reduced to some kind of impersonal inspiration, vaguely 'there', but shorn of divine Personhood and marginalized, generally irrelevant to daily life. The python

of secularism, along with the presumptions of the Enlightenment, squeezes the church, leaving less and less space within which to recognize the Spirit for whom He is and for what His role is. Evangelicals I believe have been more impacted by this than we care to acknowledge.

This is often far less of a problem for our brothers and sisters in the non-western world. Many in Africa, Asia and Latin America live cheek by jowl with the open manifestation of the supernatural, and are familiar with spirit mediums, witchdoctors, demons and all the naked activity of the Evil One. But equally believers are then often more sensitive to the every day presence of the Holy Spirit, and have no difficulty in relating to the unseen world because they do not compartmentalize life. I still remember the moment when in Asia I woke up to the fact that the 'great cloud of witnesses' in Hebrews 12:1 are not simply examples from the past but a present reality, a point where time and eternity intersect.

Further whereas from the Enlightenment onwards, western cultures have placed more and more emphasis on the cerebral, and theologians have focused on the intellect, sometimes in a form of scarcely baptized philosophy, non-western Christians are more likely to know that knowing God is not just about cognitive acquisition, but involves the whole person — body, mind, emotions, heart and strength, relationships and community, and our sense of the aesthetic as we worship God in His beauty: all that and more is to be swept up into true knowledge, truly knowing. That is often far closer to biblical and Hebrew understanding of 'knowing' than is allowed for in much that is taught and experienced in our Scottish churches.

Even as evangelicals, we can be so taken up with the need for right words and terminology that we lose sight of the messiness of love and of surrendered-to-God living, and of the limitations of our understanding. We can be nervous about mystery, and try to have clear definitions of everything with no loose ends. How much we need vivid multi-dimensional experience of God as the Spirit takes the Word and brings it into all its living, active, life-bearing, transformative intent so that we can say with awe and wonder 'We have met with God in Person, and He's as real to us in every part of our lives as the persons we share our homes with, the people we work alongside: truly, God within us….' That surely is the dynamic of the Spirit. Is that what we share with our people, and demonstrate unmistakably in our lives, individually and corporately? If it were, would the current story of the church in Scotland not be far different?

Let me share with you a comment from the Ghanaian theologian, Kwame Bediako, on the way Western theology has been shaped by the Enlightenment:

> Coinciding as it did with significant advances in scientific discoveries, the Enlightenment acted to direct intellectual attention away from the realm of transcendence to the empirical world that could be seen and felt, that is, from the intangible to the tangible. By and large, Christian theology in the West made its peace with the Enlightenment. It responded by drawing a line between the secular world and the sacred sphere, as it were, and so established a frontier between the spiritual world on the one hand, and the material world on the other, creating in effect, a dichotomy between them. Many earnest Christians have been attempting by various means since then to bridge the two worlds.[2]

Let's return to our glimpses into western Protestantism, starting again at the C.18th Revival. Here, against a backdrop of the Protestant churches being at a low ebb, God in His grace again poured out His Spirit in great power. At Herrnhut in Saxony in August 1727, a motley collection of refugees from religious persecution came reluctantly and in a spirit of mutual dislike and mistrust to a shared Communion table. Arvid Gradin, who was present, wrote afterwards of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them in a way that seemed like Pentecost all over again. 'They were so convinced and affected that their hearts were set on fire with new faith and love towards the Saviour, and likewise with love towards one another'.[3] The renewed, formerly disparate and fractious, group became the united Moravian community, who were to be instrumental in the conversion of the Wesley brothers a few years later.

First in America in 1734 under Jonathan Edwards' ministry, and then a little later in Britain under John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, God answered the prayers of those who recognized how dead the Church was and longed for something far different. It is I think significant that history records over and over again that a small group of deeply praying people can become the channel through whom God graciously does something beyond all our feeble faith dares to imagine, and where the Spirit comes in great power.

Whitefield came to Scotland fourteen times, the second time being associated with the Cambuslang revival in 1742, only seven years after his own conversion. Despite his strong Calvinist convictions, he nonetheless appealed passionately to the crowds who came to his mostly open-air preaching to turn to Christ and be saved: no passive idea of God's sover-

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2 Kwame Bediako, 'Worship as Vital Participation: Some Personal Reflections on the African Church', *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 8 (2005), 3–7, (p. 3).

3 *The History of Christianity*, ed. by Tim Dowley (Oxford: Lion; revd. ed. 1990; repr. 1992), p. 446.

eignty there. There were local revivals in other places, too, for instance, Kilsyth under James Robe, or in the northern Highlands under John Balfour. Those who experience such revivals, and all the records of them, highlight the recognition of the Holy Spirit coming in great power to convict and save, and to transform both individuals and sometimes communities.

John Wesley visited Scotland 22 times, and while theologically perhaps less in tune with Scottish Presbyterianism than Whitefield, left an important imprint, especially emphasizing assurance of the Spirit, evidenced through progressive sanctification and transformation, as being a hallmark of true conversion. In an age when the indiscriminate baptism of all infants, an integral element of Christendom practice, was still the norm — even legally required as the sole basis of civic registration — I think it is understandable that Wesley urged a fresh and genuine encounter with God. I think we should bear that in mind when trying to assess his apparent teaching of a second blessing, which disturbs most in the Reformed tradition. In general, the concept of baptismal regeneration, for centuries, and widely, a Christendom given, had not been dislodged by the Reformation, and if you have universal infant baptism you have to have some way of describing subsequent coming to real faith. And of course, the Wesleys provided us to this day with a wealth of wonderful hymns, at the time a superb teaching tool of biblical truth in memorable form, alongside the metrical psalms.

Then we come to the Holiness movement of the C.19th. In some ways this was the direct descendant of the Wesleys' ministry, with its concern that professions of faith without subsequent evidence of growth in Christlikeness were a form of St Paul's clanging cymbal, and now a second blessing was seen as being the deliberate receiving of the Holy Spirit in a fuller way to empower people to live the so-called Higher Life. But there were some serious flaws. Increasingly shaped by the rising tide of pre-millennial eschatology, and with growing preoccupation with prophecy, along with the emergence of Darby's dispensationalism, the concept of holiness became more and more detached from anything other than individual change in a rather mystical manner, a 'withdrawal from the secular', and a downgrading of the role of the church.

Iain Murray, in his book, *The Puritan Hope*, comments:

> Practically no area of life remained unaffected by this eclipse of the old hope [*i.e. eschatology as understood by the Reformers and Puritans*]. Political and social endeavor, such as marked the lives of a number of prominent Christians in the Reformation and Puritan periods, and, in more recent times, in William Wilberforce and the 'Clapham Sect', was no longer regarded as legit-

> imate evangelical activity. To engage in such pursuits savoured of the error that the world could be made better and it involved participation in a 'human' order of things.[4]

Christian faith was individualized and privatized. On the positive side, and also as a result of pre-millennial beliefs, there was a significant impetus to engage in world mission in order, so it was said, to 'hasten the Lord's return', though there were of course other factors that stimulated mission at the time, such as growing awareness of the wider world, easier and faster travel and communications, and the expanding role of Protestant European empires. But the truncated and individualised view of transformation still divides the global missionary movements today.

As far as I am aware, pre-millennialism is not a big issue in Scotland's churches today, but in parts of North America and some parts of Asia it is powerful, and lies behind the tension found in movements such as Lausanne and the World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission, and in evangelical international mission agencies, where many North Americans and some others view mission as only concerned with individual conversion and personal spirituality, and holistic mission or concern to see societal change as unbiblical: a sort of acceptance of being light, but leave the salt out of it.

Sadly, in some parts of the UK church today we have swung to the opposite extreme, and find it easier to be concerned about social welfare and development than about the urgency to see men and women and children become citizens of the Kingdom of God. Biblical transformation must surely be both–and, not one without the other. As John Stott once said, 'Holiness is not a mystical condition experienced in relation to God but in isolation from human beings. You cannot be good in a vacuum but only in the real world of people.' Equally he would have said emphatically that a gospel concerned only with physical well-being is no gospel at all.

By the late C.19th, the increasingly influential Keswick movement, which had its roots in the Holiness and prophecy movements, was teaching that holiness comes from a second distinct and decisive experience after conversion, when the Holy Spirit is explicitly sought. This was based on some NT references to being filled with the Spirit happening subsequent to some prior commitment to Christ e.g. Acts 2:4 and the experience of the Apostles at Pentecost; Acts 9:17 and the ministry of Ananias to Saul; or Acts 19:1–6 where Paul finds 'disciples' who have never heard of the Holy Spirit though baptized with John's baptism. At its most extreme

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[4] Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), pp. 203–4.

it was sometimes taught that this second stage of blessing could so change the believer's heart that he would never sin again — that is, at conversion a person could be delivered from the guilt of sin, the second blessing would save from the power of sin — a complete and final deliverance from sin in this life. This manifestly makes a nonsense of passages such as Romans 7:7–25, where Paul describes the ongoing battle against sin.

I should add that Keswick long ago abandoned such teaching, though it remains a high concern to encourage believers to embrace whole-hearted discipleship in every dimension of life, a seeking after Christlikeness as the Spirit brings the Word to life and transforms people. Often people can look back on significant steps forward in their commitment to Christ as a result of being at conventions such as Keswick. But from early on, the Keswick message also emphasized that the Holy Spirit's ministry was to empower God's people for mission and service, looking out to the world as well as inwards for personal holiness, and in the last years of the C.19th and at other points, too, hundreds went around the world with the gospel as a result. Sadly, they all too often took an inadequate Western version with them. It's grace and mercy that the Lord gently uses flawed and far from perfect servants.

At the start of the C.20th, the Pentecostal movement brought fresh attention to the Holy Spirit, and new ideas. In fact it is hard to say exactly when Pentecostalism was birthed, as there were certainly antecedents to what is usually described as its beginnings in 1906 in Los Angeles, California. On the day following the terrible earthquake in San Francisco that had killed many thousands, a small group of mostly poor and racially mixed believers met together, and heard their leader, an African American, declare that this event was a sign that the Lord was close to returning, and that God by His Spirit was restoring the Apostolic church, which would include all the gifts bestowed at Pentecost. The message quickly and powerfully spread, and like Wesley's Methodism or William and Catherine Booth's Salvation Army, especially impacted the poor and those on the whole not effectively reached by most of the mainstream churches at the time. This empowerment of the poor and marginalized has been especially significant in Latin America and Africa, but impacts urban poor in Europe and America, too.

And so we come full circle, because these were — and are — people and cultures who by and large were not impacted as the West has been by the Enlightenment and all that flowed from that. For them there is no question of denying the existence and power of the supernatural and spiritual world. That reality is to this day the air they breathe, permeating every dimension of life. Why would God, if He is who He says He is, not perform miracles today? Why, if on the Cross Christ was not only atoning

for sin but also disarming and triumphing over all powers and authorities, as Paul tells us in Colossians 2, would He not still by His Spirit and through His servants be in the business of casting out demons, liberating from many sicknesses, and delivering from evil? On what grounds would anyone believe that any of the gifts of the Spirit, as experienced in the early Church, would mysteriously disappear, since there is no biblical indication that any were only temporary? Why would the Creator Spirit not still be intimately involved in the health, fruitfulness and renewal of the whole universe? And if the Lord promised that his followers, with the Spirit at work within them, would do even greater works than he had done in his earthly ministry, isn't that what we should seek and long for?

Yes, there have been, and are, some instances that we can all cite of abuse, wild ideas and practices, and vulnerabilities to wandering well away from biblical truth. But we, too, have been guilty of error, of pride in believing we have always got everything right, of shying away from radical discipleship, of domesticating God by assuming our theology is the pinnacle of absolute truth.

Of course, if you are Dispensationalist, your system has to conclude that only a handful of gifts remain. Perhaps some Scottish Christians are functionally Dispensationalist without knowing it. But if you go back through church history and trace the route by which our Western heritage started picking some gifts as permanent and others as non-permanent, you may need to question the grounds on which such decisions were made, especially as they were often in the context — and interest — of the church changing from movement to institution, and the dynamic of the Spirit being replaced by ritual, hierarchy and control by the powerful. And there are always the sticky fingers of the Enlightenment, the default rejection of the miraculous and supra-rational.

Like Wesley's ministry, Pentecostalism was marginalized for much of the C.20th by the mainstream churches, even when revivals and awakenings achieved what those churches were not achieving. Run forward to the 1960s and the coming of the Charismatic movement. Many people brought to vibrant new life were cold-shouldered by their churches and went off and established new and independent ones, including here in Scotland. Maybe their enthusiasm was not always matched by biblical wisdom, but at least they were alive and not asleep or dead. Others brought a breath of fresh air and renewed faith and vision into mainstream churches. In England, the most common hostility to the Charismatic movement revolved around the issue of speaking in tongues, which some eager charismatics, like most Pentecostals before them, reckoned was the evidence of new life — or baptism — in the Spirit. In some parts of Scottish evangelicalism, the grounds of rejection was because the mobilization of the laity — a

strong feature of the charismatics, because of their emphasis on the need for all the gifts — was deemed to downgrade the authority of the Minister and his ministry of the Word.

Evangelicals do indeed hold the ministry of the Word in a very high place. But is that only vested in the Minister? And is it right to set that in a completely different category of value from other complementary gifts, all of which the Word tells us are vital for a true and healthy Body life? Does the professionalization of the preaching ministry in so many of our churches not carry dangers as well as gifts: the Minister who normally only listens to his own voice as a preacher may grow to assume he or she is always right. If you are a church leader, especially a teacher of the Word, are you equipping the saints for ministry or holding all the strings in your own hands?

One of the key reasons why Pentecostalism has spread so well has been precisely because it has empowered the laity to be active in meaningful ministry: evangelism, discipling and teaching others, leading worship, serving Christ in the workplace, not just in church. They are entrusted with starting networks of new believing communities, who in their turn then sow gospel seeds in their families and neighbourhoods, and then in the next, and so on. Where the strengths of Pentecostalism and of the charismatic movement have been absorbed into existing churches, this has brought renewal and growth. Here in Scotland, the 2016 Church Census showed that Pentecostals doubled in numbers since the previous Census in 2002, standing at 19,000, which is 5% of all Scottish churchgoers. If you add self-identifying charismatics as well, the percentage is considerably higher.

But even Pentecostalism, in the West at least, despite its bringing the Person and work of the Holy Spirit back into focus, has not dealt fully with the dualism that has dogged us for so long. The late South African, David Bosch, traces the root of it all the way back to Augustine, and his absorbing ideas from Greek philosophy. In his (that is, Augustine's) wrestling to find the answer to his need for personal salvation, Bosch writes,

> The human soul is lost, therefore it is the human soul that has to be saved […] God became human in order to save human souls that are hurtling to destruction. Not the reconciliation of the universe but the redemption of the soul stands in the center. This redemption is understood to be both otherworldly and individualistic, in contrast not only to much of the Old and New Testament, but also of the traditional religions of Europe, which were exclusively this-worldly and communal […] The theology of Augustine could not but spawn a dualistic view of reality, which became second nature in Western

> Christianity – the tendency to regard salvation as a private matter and to ignore the world.[5]

What might we need to ponder for Scotland today, a Scotland that is both deeply secular and also often trying to fill the vacuum with irrationality, and yet intent on marginalizing Christian faith as empty superstition, and where Christian truth is devalued as at best the private eccentricity of those who choose to subscribe? Have we been contributing, however unwittingly, to that conclusion by teaching that salvation is highly individual, spirituality an interior matter, by our failure to integrate the seen and the unseen, and by our preoccupation with fighting over who may have the most correct doctrine rather than longing to see the power and glory of the Lord unmistakably transforming congregations and through them communities?

Have we bought into the humanization agenda of the Enlightenment, with its elevated views of human autonomy, so that our church people are uneasy in the presence of the Spirit displayed in ways that are beyond our desire to control? Please don't tell me that Scots don't do emotion: just go to a football or rugby match, or to a pop concert. And please don't tell me that expressing strong emotion in our worship is incompatible with reverence: Peter could write of 'unspeakable joy', which doesn't sound too restrained to me. And the Lord receives gladly the extravagant, emotional love of the woman who anoints his feet with tears streaming down her face. Does our Scottish love affair with systematic theology leave us reading the Gospels through the grid of Romans, with all its logic and order, in the process often losing much of its passion, rather than Romans through the grid of the Gospels, with its narrative and demonstration of a life lived perfectly in the power of the Spirit? Do we then reduce the Holy Spirit to facts about Him rather than as the dynamic, God-with-us-here-and-now Person in us and among us that He truly is? Do we think of the fruit of the Spirit in rather anaemic terms of just a bit more joy or peace, a bit more love and goodness than those of our nice unbelieving neighbours, or do we look for and expect a qualitative difference in the way Scottish Christians live — a difference that the watching world would not fail to see?

Power and transformation are both tricky words to use wisely. If you buy into the Enlightenment package, they both end up as what humans think they own and can achieve, and church becomes a place of philosophy with a slim veneer of Bible, and a comforting therapy club. That's so far removed from the community we are designed and called to be, a

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[5] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), p. 216.

visual aid of embodiment of the very life of God. We can't rewrite history, and the church in Scotland today has been shaped by her history for both good and ill. But maybe we are being called today to long for something far different from what we mostly see and accept as normal Christian life. Timothy Tennent of Gordon Conwell Seminary quotes Samuel Escobar's observation, 'Evangelical Protestantism emphasized the "continuity of truth by the Word," whereas Pentecostalism has emphasized the "continuity in life by the Spirit"', and concludes that we need both.[6] Then perhaps we will see more of the transforming power of God, more of His Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, and more Scots who become worshippers to the glory of God. Lord, let it be, for your Name's sake.

[6] Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), p. 189.

Recovering the prospect of final judgment.

Dick Dowsett

'The fear of God is being airbrushed out of Scottish preaching.'

Stanley Smith was one of the Cambridge Seven, a much publicised group of wealthy young graduates who determined to live and work as pioneer missionaries in China. Deeply immersed in Chinese culture, by the 1890s Smith had become a 'Larger Hope' universalist, unable to cope with the traditional view of the lostness of those who are not Christians. He was finally asked to resign from the China Inland Mission in 1904. Henry Frost, at that time North American Director of the mission, wrote of the tragedy that Smith had made 'the unintentional mistake of interpreting the Scriptures by heathenism rather than heathenism by the Scriptures.'[1] That same mistake is increasingly made by 21st century Christians, profoundly moulded by our post-modern, post Christian culture. Nowhere is this more so than in thinking about the seriousness of God's judgment, the lostness of humanity, and the dangers of hell.

FINAL JUDGMENT: ONCE A MOTIVATION FOR WORLD MISSION

For previous generations one of the most significant motivations for world mission was the belief that those who did not trust Christ were dreadfully lost for ever. Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), whose writings influenced many who became missionaries, at the age of twenty wrote a letter to his sister. He told her he had decided to work his passage to China immediately rather than to save for two years to pay the fare and travel in comfort. His reasoning was that in two years twenty four million Chinese would die without Christ.[2] His belief in their lostness engendered a sense of urgency rarely seen today. He later wrote: 'I would never have thought of going out to China had I not believed that the Chinese were lost and needed Christ.'

Similarly, Amy Carmichael (1867–1951) was motivated by a vision of multitudes of blind people heading for a precipice while those who could see sat unconcerned making daisy chains. Her tract 'Thy Brother's Blood Crieth' helped many to see the urgency of mission. But few evangelicals

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1 Henry W. Frost, *The Days That Are Past* (typescript memoirs in CIM/OMF Archives, Toronto, 1888 onwards), p. 653.

2 Dr & Mrs Howard Taylor, *Biography of James Hudson Taylor* (CIM/OMF, 1965), p. 34.

of that era doubted that judgment and hell was the fearful prospect for unbelievers.

The influence of such missionary heroes was still felt in the early 1960s when I was a student wondering what to do with my life. While the vision of judgment had long faded in theologically liberal circles, evangelical Christians were largely firmly convinced about the awful reality of final judgment and of the eternal perdition of the unbelieving world, though they were never drawn into the sort of speculations about the detailed timetable of judgment that divided evangelicals in the U.S.A.

BRITISH CULTURE AND ATTITUDES TO JUDGMENT DOCTRINE 1960s–2017

The 1960s were, however a turning point in western popular culture. Prior to that, it was commonplace to talk in terms of right and wrong, black and white, duty and responsibility. After that, subjectivism and experimentation, free expression and personal choice, relativism and the denial of authority, pluralism and the denial of any meta-narrative became normal, no longer avant garde or confined to academia. And increasingly the Church allowed the world around it to squeeze it into its own mould.[3] By 2017, despite some attempt to resist the flow of the tide, Christians have at worst turned their backs on doctrines of judgment and universal lostness, or at best become intimidated so as to rarely mention them.

What does it mean to be a *British* (or even just a Scottish) Christian? We pride ourselves in being *tolerant* people. In practice, however, this means that we disapprove of all strong convictions that rule that anyone else is wrong or sinful. We are relativistic: we speak of 'what is true for them', easily accepting that something incompatibly different may be 'true for me'. We are uncomfortable with ideas of retributive justice, preferring therapeutic justice which aims to make criminals better. As a society, we endlessly seek to pass the buck of blame, like Adam, blaming first his wife and then God for giving her to him, we blame parents, social workers, advertisers, schools, even structures rather than accepting responsibility for our actions.[4] At the end of life, we are piously optimistic that our departed relatives are 'looking down on us', are 'stars in the sky', have 'gone to their reward' — even though in our more rational moments we affirm that 'there is nothing there' after death while more and more of us also believe in reincarnation — the ultimate conviction about recy-

[3] J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (London, 1960). Rom. 12:2.

[4] Gen. 3:12.

cling. In such a society Christian concepts of God's judgment of all, his wrath against sin, and his holding people responsible for their lives are under siege.

CHEAP GRACE AND CLOSET UNIVERSALISM

There is little doubt that the content of much 21st century British preaching has been affected by this. As early as 1937, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was warning about the dangers of 'cheap grace' which he defined as 'grace without discipleship'[5]. Later in the 20th century John Stott warned of the dangers of a preaching a false Christ of 'love but never judgment […] comfort but never challenge'.[6] Today, perhaps one of the most common popular pulpit statements is 'nothing we ever do can make God love us more and nothing we ever do can make God love us less.'[7] And this is gloriously true, but it is only one side of the coin, like the Epistle to the Romans with the first three chapters removed, it is incomplete.

This emphasis on grace, so often cheap grace, has led in many circles to a loss of evangelistic imperative. In 1988, in his important discussion with David Edwards, published as *Essentials*,[8] John Stott wrote:

> I am imbued with hope. I have never been able to conjure up (as some great Evangelical missionaries have) the appalling vision of the millions who are not only perishing but will inevitably perish. On the other hand, as I have said, I am not and cannot be a universalist. Between these extremes *I cherish the hope that the majority of the human race will be saved.* And I have a solid biblical basis for this belief. [emphasis mine]

The biblical basis he then added was unusually thin by his standards,[9] but, as perhaps the most significant leader among British evangelicals,

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5 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (SCM Alva, English translation; 1959), p. 36.

6 John Stott. Langham Partnership Daily Thought, 17 February 2017. Email newsletter <http://langham.org/get-involved/sign-up-for-email-updates/>.

7 Philip Yancey, Richard Rohr, Nicky Gumbel, et al. I am not suggesting that all these authors fail to preach about judgments and lostness. In a soundbite age, single sentences are often quoted with little regard to context or qualifications made by the speaker or writer. It is the soundbite that now moulds mindsets. Theologies are built on them!

8 David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Evangelical Essentials: a Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (IVP London, 1988), see pp. 312–29.

9 Acts 17:25–28; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4; Luke 13:29; and Rev. 7:9. Though none of these passages explicitly teach that the majority of the human race will be saved.

his opinion carried huge influence. The popular evangelical mindset changed: shifting to a belief that the majority of the world's people could be saved even if they never heard the gospel.

When, in 1982 I wrote *God That's Not Fair!* for students, it was commissioned as a response to the reportedly widespread closet universalism amongst evangelicals. Since then, evangelical universalists have increasingly moved out of the closet, influenced by popular speakers, like Rob Bell, the former pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Michigan, U.S.A., who argued that universalism was a biblical option.[10] Far fewer church members really believe in the necessity of evangelism any more.

As a result, many now talk of holistic ministry, but their holism does not include evangelism. People urgently need clean water supplies, good education, health care, and freedom from oppression and justice — and that is, of course, correct. The gospel is no longer regarded as the most urgent need of people everywhere: it has become just an option, a preference, a luxury that can wait until later.[11] The Bible Training institute in Glasgow used to be the most important training ground in Britain for cross-cultural missionaries. The global significance of BTI graduates was impressive.[12] By 1980, the culture of the college had changed. Mission, though on the agenda of the lecturers, was not to be found on the agenda of almost all of the students.[13]

We live today in a post Christian society where Christians are under pressure and often theologically compromised as a result. Nowhere is this more so that in thinking about the judgment of God and the lostness of humanity without Christ.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IN SCRIPTURE AND TODAY

The God who is revealed in Scripture is pictured neither as a cuddly therapist nor as an honourable gentleman. Certainly, he is described as being as carefully wired to his children as a breast-feeding mother and his commitment to his promises to us are not all all iffy, but totally reliable. He is also a roaring lion, an awesome judge, a consuming fire. The default position of human beings who experience anything of his glory is terror and a desire to hide. The sinful Adam and Eve hid from him, people at the

10 Rob Bell, *Love Wins* (London: HarperCollins, 2011).

11 Tearfund is often a notable exception in that many of its workers include evangelism in their holistic approach.

12 Rose Dowsett: unpublished research.

13 As a visiting lecturer on cross-cultural mission, I was congratulated that I gained the ear of students who invariably read or slept through mandatory classes on world mission.

foot of Sinai backed off in fear, Gideon feared for his life, as did Samson's father Manoah. Isaiah cried: 'Woe to me! I am ruined!', shepherds were scared out of their lives, Peter asked the Lord to go away from him, John fell at his feet as though dead.[14] Moreover, these were all people who had experienced God's blessing and would experience more of it.

The fear of the Lord, though known to be the beginning of wisdom,[15] is rarely to be experienced in contemporary services. Neither cheerful singalong services, nor the more serious and structured alternatives acknowledge the awesomeness of dealing with the living God.[16] We neither worship nor live in the light of judgment.

JUDGMENT IN APOSTOLIC EVANGELISM

Undoubtedly the preaching of final judgment was a normal part of the apostolic gospel. The Acts sermons are strikingly confrontational: Christ's enemies will become his footstool, anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off, and people are declared to be betrayers and murderers of God's Christ. Italians are told that Jesus will judge the living and the dead: even Greek pagans are warned that God 'has fixed a day when he will judge the world by the man (Jesus) he has appointed,' giving 'proof of this by raising him from the dead.'[17] As a result, many asked what they should do to be saved, while others ridiculed the message or were profoundly angry.

Clearly the apostles believed that people urgently needed to be reached with the message of the gospel. They were in trouble, and needed to be told the way of salvation. The Epistle to the Romans, never written as an evangelistic tract, may be helpfully read as a justification for the missionary enterprise, a diagnosis of the human race and its dangerous condition. It is like a medical textbook, designed to help doctors successfully treat patients rather than to help sick people self-medicate.[18]

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14 Gen. 3:8; Exod. 20:18; Judg. 6:22, 13:22; Isa. 6:5; Luke 2:9, 5:8; Rev. 1:17.

15 Prov. 9:10.

16 The exception is found in some of the Hebridean isles, where the Lord is feared and the seriousness of sin is profoundly acknowledged, but assurance of salvation is often sadly missing. Today's church has great difficulty in holding the love of God and the holiness of God in wholesome balance.

17 Acts 2:23, 35, 3:13–15, 23, 4:10–12, 7:51–53, 10:42–43, 17:30–31.

18 Reading Romans as a rationale for world mission makes sense of the text. Paul stated his commitment to world mission at the beginning of the epistle (1:14–15) and then justified this by his long exposition of the gospel. At the conclusion (16:25–27) he restated his ambition that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith.

INTERPRETING THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON JUDGMENT AND HELL

Much of the biblical material on judgment comes from the Gospels and from the teaching of Jesus himself.

He described judgment as inescapable, like an unexpected and unwanted thief or a snare that suddenly springs and there is no release. He spoke of people perishing, of being destroyed. He warned of being cast out, disowned, rejected. He spoke of no way back and of painful regret and personal torment.[19]

Evangelicals have traditionally believed that Jesus taught that unbelievers would suffer conscious, everlasting torment in Hell. However, throughout at least the last seventy years, many orthodox evangelicals have questioned this conviction, as various others did before throughout the Christian Era. Michael Green wrote with his customary candour that Christians 'should reject the doctrine of conscious unending torment for those who have never heard the gospel just as firmly as they reject universalism.'[20] They variously question whether the immortality of the soul is really a Christian doctrine rather than a gospel gift to believers, whether people can be condemned to eternal destruction without ever being destroyed, whether the different degrees of punishment that Jesus taught makes sense if all suffer terribly for ever.[21] Much annihilationist theology argues that unbelievers simply cease to exist at death, a position hardly distinguishable from that of contemporary atheists. These evangelicals call their conviction 'conditional immortality'. They believe in the final judgment and in the reality of divine punishment and of hell. And as such they show an exemplary enthusiasm for preaching the gospel. John Wenham claimed that belief in conditional immortality freed him

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Of course, the epistle may also be seen as a pastoral letter to help Christians in a multi-cultural congregation appreciate and value one another and live in harmony together. Even this is grounded in Paul's longing that multi-cultural mission should work well.

19 Matt. 24:34; Luke 21:34; John 3:15–16; Matt. 7:13, 7:23, 8:12, 13:41–42; Luke 16:26; etc.

20 Michael Green, *Evangelism through the local Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton; 1990), p. 70. Relevant and readable books include: John Wenham, *Facing Hell* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998); *The Nature of Hell: A report by the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth Among Evangelicals* (Carlisle: Acute; 2000); Edward William Fudge & Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell — A Biblical & Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove, Il: Inter-Varsity Press; 2000).

21 Luke 12:47–48.

up to preach strongly about the dangers of judgment and of people's need of Christ.

Some have dismissed such questioning as a flirtation with the heresy of Jehovah's Witnesses, it seems to me to be worthy of more serious investigation and more charitable dialogue. Thirty years ago, John Stott wrote of the issue: 'I do plead for frank dialogue among Evangelicals on the basis of Scripture. I also believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.' I agree with his generosity, but would also plead for something more than frank dialogue. When discussing different honest interpretations of Scripture, we need to learn to engage in kind and gentle dialogue, which the Scripture commands and evangelicals too frequently fail to obey.[22]

LEARNING CHRISTLIKE EVANGELISM

It is significant that Jesus was never described as the hounder of sinners, but was well known as their friend. He spent time with them, he partied with them, he valued them and they knew that he loved them. He was frequently accused of giving sinners preferential treatment. His theology of final judgment did not result in a judgmental attitude towards those with ungodly lifestyles.[23] Moreover, there is remarkably little of his teaching about judgment in his dialogues with the 'sinners' he encountered. That was largely reserved for the Pharisees who heard his teaching and aggressively rejected him.

The call to follow Christ must include a commitment to imitate him in his evangelistic ministry. His commitment to rescuing lost people cost him his life. He saw them as lost, helpless and perishing, understanding profoundly the dangers of judgment and hell. Yet with this understanding, he never treated them with disregard for their temporal and physical needs. His ministry was to the whole person, completely holistic. Although not part of the sin-problem of humanity, he was never detached or uncaring, condemning of those who sought him out, but full of compassion. He loved people, and they felt loved. A measure of true discipleship must involve a similar burden for people's salvation, and a compassionate commitment to them in all their needs. Loveless, condemnatory evangelism is unworthy of our Saviour. Perhaps it was because lost seekers were already aware of their sin and shame before God that he barely mentioned the subject to them. Similarly, the evangelist might not need

[22] 2 Tim. 2:24–25.

[23] Luke 7:34–50; Matt. 15:21–28, 20:29–34; John 4, (8:1–11), 9:1–7, 34; etc.

to labour the consequences of sin and judgement with those who already understand something of their great need.

Yet Jesus did speak with anger and aggressive condemnation to those who opposed him and the good news that he brought, and he taught his disciples in their mission to graphically convey the grave danger that those who rejected the message were in, shaking the dust off their shoes.[24] There is a place where strong preaching on judgement is a dominical necessity.

Some of the great evangelists of the past were powerful preachers of judgement and hell, seeing considerable numbers 'fleeing from the wrath to come'. Jonathan Edward's famous, or perhaps notorious sermon of 1741: 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' was typical of many preached during the Great Awakening of 1730–55. His graphic descriptions of the horrors awaiting the unrepentant were the verbal equivalent of the cartoon-like paintings of judgment by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525–69) and Michelangelo (1475–1564) communicating a warning to the impenitent of a more illiterate age. Both painters and preachers exercised considerable imagination in depicting the much less graphic teaching of the Gospels.

Hanging sinners over the mouth of hell does not appear to have been the preaching method of Jesus. It could be argued that, in the era of Christendom, most people claimed to be Christians and knew much more of the teaching of the Gospels but often refused to let it affect their lives and moral values. As such, they were more akin to the Pharisees of the time of Jesus and therefore needed the warnings, even the threat of judgment and hell. In today's terms, if we are those who confine our evangelism to those who attend church each Sunday without ever coming to Christ, we may find it appropriate to follow Jesus in his preaching to the Pharisees. If, however, we are reaching out to the majority of our population who never set foot inside a church, we might choose a different approach, learning more from Jesus' encounters with seeking 'sinners'.

As we consider the loss of traditional teaching on judgment, we might profitably consider why Western theology has focused on the law court model of guilt and condemnation and paid so little attention to the parallel more relational and subjective model of shame and dishonour and exclusion. The Chinese-American theologian Jackson Wu's work[25] has highlighted the fact that the legal model, while being clearly biblical, is not the *sine qua non* of gospel preaching.

While his concern is that the honour and shame model is more culturally appropriate for Chinese, it is also more in tune with the mindset of

[24] Matt. 21:33–46; 23:1–39; Luke 11:37–53; 14:15–23; John 12:47–48.

[25] Jackson Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualisation of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (Pasadena CA: WCIU Press, 2012).

our post-modern contemporaries who look at life through a more subjective and experiential window than previous generations did.[26] Judgment may be approached effectively, using the subjective language of shame and rejection rather than the more objective concepts of guilt and condemnation. Many now identify with feeling cut off from God, with shame and even fear in his presence, and with a sense of helplessness to put it right. It is important to reclaim the doctrine of judgment and hell for the present generation, but not in a way that speaks to the present as though the mindset of people was stuck in the 18th century.

PREACHING JUDGMENT SENSITIVELY.

Judgment teaching may yet be effectively used with seekers, but it needs to be done with compassion and gentleness. In 2016, I was asked to speak at St Andrews University Events Week on the subject of 'Hell and a God of Love'. After the apologetic but also firmly evangelistic address, I expected hostile questioning. Instead I was met by a queue of students asking for prayer. It is wrong to argue that today's generation reject judgment teaching out of hand.

However, there is prejudice to be overcome. The biblical God of Judgment has been frequently mocked by the opinion-formers of contemporary media. Richard Dawkins, Oxford professor for Public Understanding of Science, wrote in *The God Delusion* (2006): 'The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak.' The comedian Stephen Fry describes God as 'utterly evil, capricious and monstrous.'[27] Such blasphemy can easily provoke a vindictive and argumentative approach in the Christian preacher — and that is counter-productive.

It is important to reflect on what might be called the trauma of judgment and Hell — for God. The God of the Noahic flood is not petulant, but filled with grievous regret. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather longs for people to repent and live. He is not willing that any should perish: he loves people. Nowhere is the trauma of God shown

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[26] Andy Crouch, 'The Return of Shame', *Christianity Today*, March 10, 2015 at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/march/andy-crouch-gospel-in-age-of-public-shame.html>. See also the website <honorshame.com>. Accessed March 2017. While these sites are based in USA, the articles are largely relevant to British culture too.
Jayson Georges, 'The Good News for Honor-Shame Cultures', *Lausanne Global Analysis*, March 2017, Volume 6/Issue 2. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2017-03/the-good-news-for-honor-shame-cultures>. Accessed March 2017.

[27] *The Meaning of Life*, RTE One, broadcast on 1 February 2015.

more clearly than in the tears of Jesus over unresponsive Jerusalem and his almost maternal longing to cover and protect them, like a chicken with her chicks.[28] Jesus chose to die in our place, taking the consequences of our sin and rebellion. Such is God's commitment to save people from the horrors of judgment. The compassion and utter winsomeness of the Lord of judgment is a picture ignored by apologists of atheism, but is attractive to a generation that takes emotions seriously.

If the Lord Christ reveals God's emotional grief at the human situation and his longing to deliver people from the shame and punishment that they deserve, we cannot be content with a detached, clinical but uncaring preaching of God's wrath against sin. Our manner and tone in preaching can help or hinder the listeners in their response.

There is much written as an apologetic for the doctrines of judgment that is beyond the scope of this paper. Interestingly, C.S. Lewis's relevant chapters in *The Problem of Pain* (1940) and *The Great Divorce* (1946) are still persuasive for many. Evangelists fearful of tackling such an unpalatable and counter-cultural doctrine should learn from Peter's handling of criticism of his pioneer approach to reaching Gentiles. The gist of his response was: 'Don't blame me. I didn't like it either. But God insisted: it was his word, not my idea. I just obeyed and the Holy Spirit worked!'[29] The issue is not whether we or other people like it. It is what God has said and what Jesus taught.

PREACHING JUDGMENT TO BELIEVERS

Finally, it is important to remember that the Scriptures frequently relate the doctrine of final judgment to ethical demands placed upon disciples of Christ. Throughout the epistles, the return of the Lord in judgment is taught as a motivation to holiness and godly living. Judgment begins with God's household: everyone is included. Old Testament stories of judgments are taught as warnings for believers to live differently. There is no heavenly inheritance for the ungodly or disobedient, no mercy for those who are merciless themselves.[30]

The accountability of the believer is rarely preached upon. Rightly fearing to undermine the completeness of the atonement, preachers are hesitant to suggest that Christians might lose out on God's blessings because of sin and disobedience. Yet the image of believers being saved, but only like people escaping from a house gutted by fire, is a powerful

[28] Gen. 6:6; Ezek. 18:30–32; 2 Peter 3:9; Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41–44.

[29] Acts 11:1–17.

[30] 1 Pet. 4:17; 1 Cor. 10:6–10; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:5–6; Heb. 2:1–3; 12:25, 29; Jas. 2:12–13; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10–12; Jude 12, 14–15.

reminder that Christians may invest their lives in the sort of rubbish that will be destroyed at judgment. They do not lose their salvation which is secure in Christ, but they do lose rewards that could have been theirs.[31] In a generation that believes all should get prizes, teaching on rewards for godly service is less attractive than it used to be. However, even the apostle Paul was concerned that he could be sidelined in his ministry, missing out if his life did not match up to his teaching.[32]

'Because I enjoy it' has become the primary British justification for behaviour choices. It is inappropriate for the believer, who must be encouraged to seek first to bring God pleasure. The reminder of solemn accountability is too rarely heard in our churches today.

The coming judgment is also taught in the New Testament as an encouragement to Christians facing unnerving persecution. When anti-Christian activity gains the upper hand in society, believers become intimidated, plagued with doubt, and tempted to apostatise. The epistles reassure believers that at the judgment it is not the believers, but their opponents who will be the losers. Final judgment becomes the spur to perseverance, even rejoicing in suffering.[33]

While British Christians know nothing of the intensity of persecution found in many parts of the 21st century world, they struggle with the pressures of a profoundly secular society, and are in need of this pastoral application of eschatological truth.

Many have argued that fear of judgment should not be our motivation for mission. Certainly there are higher motives. However, the New Testament does employ the doctrine in this way. Paul confessed that 'since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others,' and then used the same doctrine to motivate his disciple Timothy. Both our judgment and the more awful judgment of unbelievers should cause us to readjust our diaries so that we have significant time for outreach to unbelievers.

CONCLUSIONS

Judgment is not so much a doctrine to be ticked off on a statement of faith as a lifestyle to be lived. We are to live as those who will give account of our lives: our public ministry and our private, more hidden side. We are to live and minister as those who appreciate and acknowledge our own vulnerability, our sin and our relative ignorance, and our fallibility. Apart from the grace of God, we are as hellbound as anyone else. We are also

[31] 1 Cor. 3:10–15.

[32] 1 Cor. 9:27.

[33] 2 Thess. 1:4–10; 1 Pet. 4:5, 16–18; 2 Pet. 2:9; Revelation *in toto*.

to live as those who believe that the unbelieving world is dreadfully lost, despite all the touches of common grace that make most people tolerable and many delightful. Godliness of life, humble, pastorally relevant preaching, passionate outreach to the unbelieving world are all time-consuming, even exhausting. But they are our calling. It is a calling, however, from the one who is committed to work with us and in us and through us, knowing exactly what a risk that is to his own reputation.

The details and small print of final judgment and the events around it have generated much often shameful division within the church, not least in the evangelical community. We need to work harder at recognising the limits of our understanding, the fallibility of our own expositions (and not just those of the believers we disagree with), and the difference between fundamental and secondary issues of faith. On secondary issues, Paul warned against arguing in aggressive, dismissive or destructive ways, reminding his readers, even in the area of theological debate, to remember the coming judgment. 'Eventually, we're all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgment, facing God. Your critical and condescending ways aren't going to improve your position there one bit.'[34] Let us begin with a determination to make sure that we live the truth ourselves, even in our theological discussions and disagreements!

[34] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1993), Rom. 14:10.

Glorifying God in Worship
Finlayson Memorial Lecture, 2017

Mike Parker

'Contemporary worship must become more concerned with being overwhelmed by the glory of God than with self-fulfilment.'

As we've considered what it means to be 'Reforming Tomorrow's Church Today,' we've encountered the majesty of God, the movement of the Holy Spirit, the challenge of globalisation, the good news of the reality of final judgement, and the imperative of united Christian witness. They all find their focus in worship.

Working in the Middle East, I've become acutely aware that Western versions of the Christmas story don't entirely tally with Gospel texts.[1] Some years ago I heard of an Islamic nativity performed in a northern English school. There was one very revealing difference between this and the usual fayre. In the final cameo, *no-one bowed to the baby*.

Proskuneo (bowing down in reverence, approaching to kiss), is the most common New Testament word for worship and is regularly used to describe believing responses to God and Christ. Both Matthew and Luke end their Gospels with the disciples *worshipping* the risen Christ (Matt. 28:9 & 17; Luke 24:52). Matthew leaves room for questions as Jesus sends his friends out to *make disciples of all nations*. Luke has them *worshipping*, then *returning to Jerusalem with great joy*, with a new focus on Christ and eager to embark on daily life again.[2]

This worship is at the heart of Christian witness to families, neighbours, colleagues and contemporaries, and is what got the first Christians into such trouble. Can you honour Caesar's regime while at the same time declaring there's someone greater? Christian leaders in the early centuries

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1 Among Kenneth Bailey's incisive insights after over forty years in the Middle East is 'The Manger & the Inn', in the Fall 2007 issue of 'Bible & Spade' magazine. His observations are summarised in Part 1 of *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (London: SPCK, 2008). His Nativity play script, faithful to both text and culture, is *Open Hearts in Bethlehem – A Christmas Drama* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013).

2 Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), identifies early Christian worship of Jesus in chapter 3. Church is shaped by intimacy, participation, fervour, significance, potency, prayer, asking for forgiveness, baptism as new people join, gathering for the Lord's Supper, songs/hymns, and prophetic speech.

were constantly trying to show how their people were more reliable citizens because of their loyalty to Christ.[3]

Christians living in majority Muslim countries face the same challenge, and their leaders encourage them to engage even as they face growing pressure over religious choices, politics, economics and security. In a self-interested world, Middle East remainers wanting to be biblical Christians recognise they're called to go beyond themselves, to serve and work among people of all faiths and none. They have a lot to say to us, caught in our recent Western bubble of safety, security, controllability and a life of choice and consumption. As global population grows and balances shift, change is coming, as it has come before.[4]

Five hundred years ago, a massive change came to both church and society in one part of the world. We'll explore how questions asked then can steer church life and witness now; we'll take a brief journey to a major church that was never reformed but is being renewed; and we'll consider where we can join in with another twenty-first century reformation.

FIRST, REFORMATION ASKS QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR WORSHIP

In five of the seven letters in Revelation 2 and 3, Christ critiques churches which are too like their surrounding cultures. His final vision is people from every nation, tribe and time gathered around the Lamb who is the Lion and united in worship, yet our experience this side of heaven falls short.

Luke quickly flags up the reality as Jesus continues *to do and teach* through Acts (1:1). By chapter 5, despite early successes we meet Ananias and Sapphira, seeking self-fulfilment by cheating the church, attempting to deceive the community and the Holy Spirit. In chapter 6 ethnic disputes over aid provision endanger the church's witness and ministry. I'm convinced Luke is deliberate, keen to head off any dichotomy between following Jesus and involvement with his church.[5]

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3 Alan Kreider, 'Patience in the Missional Thought and Practice of the Early Church: The Case of Cyprian of Carthage', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol 39:4, October 2015.

4 Larry Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016) captures the against-the-tide nature of twenty-first century worship. David W. Smith's *Against the Stream* (Leicester: IVP, 2003) teases out the implications for us.

5 The best question we were asked in training for Anglican Ordination was by John Wesson: 'Can you find or design a Gospel outline that takes the church seriously?' We couldn't in the mid-1980s, though outlines are slowly bring-

Luke shows us we are called to be part of this church, a mixed bunch the wrong side of heaven, God's work-in-progress. As our conference will affirm, God sees and can be trusted to judge justly; we are called to take radical action to keep keeping the church on track, no more so than in what we call public worship. *'Contemporary worship must become more concerned with being overwhelmed by the glory of God than with self-fulfilment.'*

In Reformation Europe the presenting issue was assurance of salvation, which had steadily been prised from the grasp of ordinary believers and placed into the hands of professional religious people. Much of the wrestling concerns what we do when we meet. As Luther leads his first Mass on Cantate Sunday, 3rd April 1507, he's not just nervous about doing and saying the right things in the right way, leaving things out, or fumbling the elements. He's utterly daunted by what the service *means* and whether he is worthy to be *involved* in it, never mind *lead it*.[6] The encounter and the journey that followed becomes the engine for continuing reformation. In danger of being crushed by uncertainty, he recovers the biblical understanding that God is the one on the move, entering our world, revealing his grace, sending his Son to die for us, coming to rescue us. We receive first, then respond.

Luther's church had thrown this into reverse, replacing assurance with uncertainty and God's grace with human duty. Church systems were keeping God distant, exhausting people to the point where they were willing to pay the religious to pray for them. Professionals were apparently closer to God; maybe they had better and more effective access to him. Luther countered, a brilliant and compulsive communicator, using informal and contemporary language, 'short, clear and direct, speaking not only to his professional peers but to the wider Christian people'.[7]

In talking with the Samaritan woman in John 4, Jesus turns things round to redefine worship. Her poor choices, five husbands plus one, mean she's living in the shadow of shame. While others wisely hide from

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ing church in from the footnote at the end to being an integral part of God's picture.

6 A moment well captured by Thomas Lindsay's *Martin Luther* (Tain: Christian Focus, 2004), p. 37.

7 Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, (New York: Penguin, 2016), p. 5: 'In an age that valued prolonged and detailed exposition, complexity, and repetition, it was astonishing that Luther should have instinctively discerned the value of brevity. Luther in effect invented a new form of theological writing, short, clear, and direct […] This revelation of style, purpose, and form was at the heart of the Reformation.' 'Among friends and relaxed [… he] sometimes spoke to shock, and delighted in the outrageous' (p. 4).

the sun, she braves the heat of the day to avoid them and be alone at the well. Jesus asks for her help, and is stimulated by her conversation. Talking to her at all is culturally risky. Worship is the topic. What he says to her is completely unexpected: 'The hour is coming when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him' (John 4:23). 'Seeking' is flipped from its usual meaning of people looking for things, even God, to describe Almighty God, out and about, searching every bush and scrub, turning over every stone, determined to see if there's anyone ready and willing to worship him.[8]

To someone with a confused Jewish framework, as to someone from a Muslim background for whom God is only greater and not close to us and assurance is presumption, this is dynamite. God takes the initiative and comes looking for you. He provides the ultimate way through his Christ, and you can know you are welcome in his presence.

In England, the first two years of Thomas Cranmer's reform programme were focussed on common preaching, with twelve Homilies to be repeated in Anglican churches every quarter. As that foundation was being laid, Cranmer revised the liturgy, in particular the Eucharist. His Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 reversed the direction of the service from an offering *to* God to receiving *from* God and *responding* to his mercy and grace.[9] Ashley Null has shown Cranmer's notes were influenced by the Alexandrian fathers' 'affective reading of Scripture', which expected God's word to warm hearts and shape wills.[10] Cranmer's theology was essentially devotional, like R. A. Finlayson's and Douglas MacMillan's who both exhibited a beautiful combination of depth and warmth.

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8 H. G. Link in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), Volume 3, p. 532 — the word *zetein* 'includes God's claim to the fruits of obedience (Luke 13:6, the fig tree), to true worship (John 4:23), to faithful stewardship (1 Cor. 4:2) […] also the dedicated pursuit of the Son of man whose mission it is to seek that which is lost and rescue it (Luke 19:10).'

9 Rowan Williams, 'Faith and Worship', Prayer Book Society, p. 80: 'When we look at some of the prefatory material of the Book of Common Prayer, we find in the little essay "Of Ceremonies" this very simple definition of what's going on in public worship: "to declare and set forth Christ's benefits unto us".'

10 Lecture to celebrate the opening of the Alexandria School of Theology's new premises in February 2017: 'When I say "affective reading", I mean that reading of Scripture should move the affections, the motions, one's deep-seated longings.' See Ashley Null & John W Yates ed, *Reformation Anglicanism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), where Null reflects on the 'Reformers' favorite verb to use with the gospel: allure' (p. 107f).

John Knox shared these concerns, weighing in to revise the Communion service and insisting on the church's right to choose its own leaders.[11] Fast forward to the 19th century Disruption, where again the trigger was who chooses church leaders. David Drummond, founding Rector of St Thomas's Episcopal Church in Edinburgh, was part of that movement and is seen in David Octavius Hill's Disruption Portrait. The network of English Episcopalians he led used the English Prayer book, rejecting Scottish communion liturgies as being in practice too Catholic.[12]

The Reformation was thus a recovery of a biblical view of worship. We're agreed with Augustine and Karl Barth and a host of others on the need for our churches to be continually reformed, and thus to keep examining and adjusting our worship. There are vigorous social media debates between musicians, sound managers, and church leaders, and struggles continue in almost every congregation around 'the dualisms: authenticity versus performance; music as immersion versus accompaniment; education versus encounter; information versus adoration.' These are not so much choices; they are all to be pursued because we are whole people, thinking, feeling, deciding people, and God meets us at every level.[13]

We need to look back through the Reformation to the beginning, as David Smith urges: 'A church confronting the world that lives after Christendom might anticipate discovering useful parallels and principles in the experience of the church that existed *before* Christendom.'[14]

While these conversations are 'out there', Reformation principles urge us to get in on the conversation, in three areas:

1. Direction: What's communicated about God? How are we knowing God better?

A few years ago, the leader of the largest Presbyterian church in Egypt commented: 'Everyone believes in God. The question is, what is God like?' Every service and event starts and goes somewhere, and takes a route. We come together, we give thanks and praise, we hear God's word, we respond in prayer for ourselves and the world, we receive bread and wine,

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11 R. G. Kyle, 'Knox, John', *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), p. 465f.

12 Patricia Meldrum, *Conscience and Compromise* (Exeter: Paternoster 2006) researches the story thoroughly and movingly, especially as it impinges on church plants and communion today.

13 I'm indebted to Mark Cameron, Worship Director at St Paul's & St George's Church, Edinburgh for these insights.

14 *Mission After Christendom* (London: DLT, 2003), p. 124.

we rejoice and prepare to send one another out.[15] Our needs are met, as we understand how God is able to welcome us, as we stand within the bigger picture of who God is, why it's best to follow him, and what our role is in his new community. This is the big picture, within which other aspects of worship take their place. Sometimes it is overwhelming.

Contemporary worship believes God is at work among us while music plays. More than singing, it creates an atmosphere, sometimes loud and exultant, sometimes quiet and reflective, assuring us God is with us, opening us to be ready to hear the word of the Lord. This kind of worship usually carries with it the conviction that God speaks in a variety of ways. Our appeal is for the Word to be the governing, controlling framework for discerning the voice and call of God. When we say 'We welcome you Lord,' he's already here, ahead of us. 'We acknowledge you Lord' would be better, or 'We're ready to hear.' God speaks, we hear and follow.

2. Participation: What's our part in this?

The Reformation's reaction to Priestcraft is all too easily replaced by other controllers of worship. Is the worship leader closer to God? Or the projectionist? — PowerPoint is designed to make sure you understand what you are being told, rather than foster interaction. Or the pastor-teacher? Will Storrar concluded that 'the Scottish Christ is the minister.'[16]

Though we may sometimes feel distant and unsure what's happening and where it's going, we're all involved, and we all have a view. Leading worship is a difficult and exposed ministry; let's encourage those who write songs and lead them. Let's raise the game from 'I like this song or that…' to talk about how songs help us understand scripture and reinforce its application. We're not just looking, tuning in and out, watching (and critiquing) a performance. We're involved. Scottish Reformation churches have us sitting together round the table, the platform, encouraging one another to hear and respond to the word of God.

Which gets us thinking about language. What we do often undermines what we say, as evidenced by the persistent confusion in our language: 'A time of worship' still mostly means singing; we talk about 'church community' while sitting in rows; we hear a message on relationships with songs about me.[17]

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15 David Peterson's summary in the Epilogue to *Engaging with God* (Leicester: Apollos, 1992).

16 From the video that came with his book *Scottish Identity* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1990).

17 My colleague in Beirut, Perry Shaw, researched the hidden curriculum — the gap between what we say and what we do. See his *Transforming Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham Global, 2014).

Living a few years in Egypt's corporate culture has left me struggling with the 'me, my, I' language of so much of our singing and speaking. We sing what we believe and we believe what we sing. Athanasius of Alexandria doggedly defeated Arius, but it was an uphill struggle as Arius was a musician. He had the songs, and he nearly won the day.

I realise many classic nineteenth century hymns are individual (though Luther's sixteenth century 'Ein Feste Burg' is not). Yet when you're a minority, what matters is to know you're not alone and that others stand with you. Most of the yous in the New Testament are plural, and native English-speakers mostly miss them.[18] To involve all of us, some leaders know how to weave scripture in to support the theme, steer the songs, and strengthen our encounter with God. Others are good at bringing in people's stories of how their faith has come alive and grown, deepening our appreciation of what God is doing.

Individualism, as the American management guru Tom Peters might say, is the unintended consequence of the Reformation's emphasis on personal responsibility. Marva Dawn's questions from Psalm 96 would help us push back and find places to talk together.[19] What are we singing and how? What idols distract us? How does creation help us appreciate and respond to the greatness of God? How is our character transformed? How do we understand evangelism and God's sovereignty? And how are we being formed by the future to live in the present?

3. Outcome: Where is this taking us?

As we leave this gathering and this place, what impression about God and ourselves and our world are we taking with us? How are we changing? How do we see what we're called to do and be? How will we glorify God through the rest of our time?

We assume Western language is universal, but other global strands are significant. I offer a brief reflection on the historic Egyptian church, which never had a reformation but which is definitely renewing.

Egyptian Christians use different language from us; they are more likely to ask 'Where do you pray?' than 'Where do you worship?' In a 90% Muslim nation, the Coptic Church is 90% of the Christians and has played a vital part since the apostle Mark's arrival. We're the latecomers;

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[18] David Smith wonders if 'To judge from the lyrics of songs sung in churches across the Western world, the whole drama of the incarnation, of cross and resurrection, was designed to meet individuals' needs for comfort and reassurance.' *Liberating the Gospel* (London: DLT, 2016), p. 188.

[19] Marva Dawn, *How Shall We Worship? Biblical Guidelines for the Worship Wars* (republished by Christians Equipped for Ministry, 2015).

it's very moving to be where the Lord's people have been from the beginning.

That said, Coptic church is formal, with robes and candles and acolytes and priests and Mary and saints. It seems somehow to have missed Hebrews, and is thus a kind of Old Testament Christianity; most things are done to you and for you from the front. Yet their focus is Jesus, and there are four renewers at work in the Egyptian churches.

1. The Bible Societies are releasing and applying the Word of God

In Scotland the Bible is one of the least-read best-sellers. In Coptic culture, scripture is woven in to the fabric of public worship, known by memory and recitation and images. The previous Pope, Shenouda III, had memorised scripture and held weekly Wednesday question and teaching evenings attended by five thousand in St Mark's Cathedral. Ramez Atallah, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Egypt, describes 'an insatiable appetite for the scriptures' such that he and his colleagues can hardly keep up. Bible Societies have taken a lead to respond to crises, boldly and imaginatively opening up conversations and answering questions. Biblica/IBS Egypt publish a red-letter Gospel of Luke, not with Jesus' words highlighted but explaining words and concepts Muslims find difficult to understand.

2. There's a strong commitment to young people's ministry

Though once under suspicion, the Bible Society is now warmly welcome at Coptic festivals, whole weeks where they're free to teach and explain scripture to young people especially.

The church has a Bishop for Youth, and sponsors multiple camps and training events.[20] Protestant churches also host conferences, sports camps, prayer events, and there is a growing youth Alpha movement. These streams have led to an explosion of authentic music and song, using contemporary language and Arabic rhythms.[21]

3. The rhythm of retreat is being normalised

Coptic Bishops come from the Monasteries, and many Copts take their families to visit relatives who are monks. Church groups and Christian

[20] Documented in German by Wolfran Reiss, *Erneuerung in der Koptisch-Orthodoxen Kirche*, Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte (1998).

[21] Among my current favourites are 'Emmanuel' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjEehbjbIAY> and 'Zeedo el-Maseeh' (Praise Jesus more): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWYiS8i5RiA>. All web addresses valid in May 2018.

agencies have invested massively in out-of-town retreat centres. The rhythm of withdrawing and engaging, church gathered and church scattered, has been strengthened by this movement.

4. Responding to the Uprising and the failure of the Arab Spring

The 2011 Uprising brought Christian leaders together in common witness to the state. Church leaders have challenged their members to recognize God's hand in the resulting people movements, and they're learning to respond and reach out. At the same time, in the light of the present tensions, fighting between Muslim factions in the region and the global rise of violent extremism, Muslims are questioning their inherited faith as never before. In a culture where questioning is disloyalty, churches are engaging.[22]

Bishop Mouneer Anis of Egypt encourages all his congregations and agencies to witness boldly to a majority Muslim society as they share their faith, study and learn to know their faith, and show their faith in practice. His friend Richard Chartres, recently retired Bishop of London, visited Egyptian clergy and spoke about growing churches which are 'Unafraid to question, and unashamed to adore.'[23]

WHAT DOES CONTEMPORARY REFORMATION LOOK LIKE?

To return to Scotland. In addition to the requirement to keep reviewing our public worship, there's another reformation going on, reflecting the second strand of the Reformation five hundred years ago. Calvin's concern was for the interface between belief and behaviour, the personal and the public. Much of his writing was done while shaping and developing city life. This is worship in its widest sense.[24]

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[22] An incisive treatment is Mindy Betz, *They Say We Are Infidels* (Tyndale, 2016). David Garrison's *A Wind in the House of Islam* researches the shifts currently taking place (Monument, CO: Wigtake Resources, 2014). Brother Andrew with Al Janssen give insights from inside in *Secret Believers* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2007).

[23] See his fascinating Lambeth Lecture, 1st October 2015, about the transformation of the London scene: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/speeches/bishop-london-delivers-lambeth-lecture-church-growth-capital>. The Diocese of London lists its priorities: to be more confident in speaking and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ, more compassionate in serving communities with the love of God the Father; and more creative in reaching new people and places in the power of the Spirit.

[24] As a school chaplain in the 1990s I remember sitting through a School Board dominated by discussions about buses and dog excrement and wondering

If the original Reformation was about giving the Word of God back to ordinary Christians, this present reformation is about returning worship and ministry to the people of God. A major catalyst is the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, fruit of John Stott's determination to engage scripture in one hand with the world in the other. Mark Greene has led and developed this quiet revolution to recover biblical witness. Mission Scotland fostered it and brought Mark here, and it is being welcomed throughout the country.

Mark calls it 'whole life Christianity'. At the first major conference at Stirling University, we were all given a badge 'FTCW', to signal that every one of us is a 'Full-Time Christian Worker.' This demolishes the destructive sacred-secular divide with its notion that what happens on church premises is somehow more important to God than what happens elsewhere. It gives people their heads and hearts back, helping them live integrated lives and overcome their sense of uncertainty about where work and witness fit in to God's purposes. Exodus 31 describes Bezalel, the first person in scripture to be *filled with the Spirit*, who with his colleague Oholiab used craft gifts to make a beautiful space for God and people to meet. Your workplace, your 'frontline', can be the same.[25]

Peter Neilson showed me some years ago that this kind of integrated life is deeply embedded in Scottish spirituality, as in David Wilkie's 1837 painting 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'. Here is a household who live, work and play together, meeting round God's word as they prepare for Sunday. The light in the picture comes solely from the pages of the Bible.[26]

This is about recovering the priesthood of all believers and redefining ministry. I've been urging LICC to take this global, especially to younger Arab Christians in cultures where the only models on offer are priesthood or working for Christian organisations. Bishop Mouneer wants something like 'As you leave this place, your worship begins' on the inside of

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what I was doing there. At the time I read Alister McGrath's *A Cloud of Witnesses* (Leicester: IVP, 1990) and realised that the proper place to do theology was while building a city, in all its dimensions.

25 From Mark Greene, *Thank God It's Monday* (Bletchley: Scripture Union, 1994) to the 'Imagine how we can reach the UK' project, to Mark Greene, *Fruitfulness on the Frontline* (Leicester: IVP 2014), LICC continues to resource this reformation. The week following this lecture, 'Whole Life Worship' was launched, with a book of the same title by Sam & Sara Hargreaves (Leicester, IVP 2017) and with a 'Journey Pack' of videos and Bible Studies. <www.licc.org.uk> has the details.

26 Burn's poem and Wilkie's picture are together at: <http://www.robertburns.org.uk/Assets/Poems_Songs/cotters_saturday_night.htm>.

Cairo Cathedral's doors. As a dynamic strategy for reaching our nation, this is indeed to the glory of God.

Mark Greene's favourite benchmark character is more prosaic: it's Bond, James Bond.

Wherever Bond goes on mission, he is briefed, trained, resourced and supported. For what?

Your character, your opportunities and your impact as you go about your life.

Which adds a final question to our list: if this, in the language of Romans 12, is true spiritual worship, our reasonable service, whole-life worship, and if each of us is actually an FTCW, how does what we do in our churches and groups equip us to engage with the world and our calling to be God's witnesses in it? What does it mean for every member of our congregations to be 'briefed, trained, resourced, supported'?

The key challenge for our churches is to re-set our public worship around God, ourselves and the world we live in, and to equip people for their work and witness so they go out and 'Thank God it's Monday.' We want to learn to acknowledge, affirm and support every ministry. As we recover biblical views of worship, we reform our minds, we review our language, and we re-set our priorities.

I've offered four questions to keep checking we're on the right lines when we meet. Our biggest desire is to honour the glory of God. Glory has the meaning of weight, the heaviness of holiness, the serious joy of purity. It has depth and joy. As Eric Liddell said, 'God made me fast. And when I run, I feel God's pleasure.' With the glory of God our focus, we find true self-fulfilment, because we are thus connected to God, to his people, to his world. Our reformation vision of worship is that we become who we are, the people God intended us to be.

Cognitive Linguistics and the Principle of Scripture Interpreting Scripture

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In fulfilment of Kevin Vanhoozer's assumption 'that every form of literary theory and criticism eventually comes to roost in biblical interpretation'[1] Cognitive Linguistic analysis has entered Biblical Studies and there is no going back. Most people will be unfamiliar with Cognitive Linguistics. In this paper I aim to answer the question: Can Cognitive Linguistics be used in the service of the church, or is it a hindrance that should be rejected? What concord is there between Cognitive Linguistics and biblical interpretation?

In order to answer this question I will first outline what Cognitive Linguistics is. I will then outline Ellen van Wolde's cognitive linguistic interpretation of Sodom and Gomorrah. I will finish with a critique of this interpretation drawing on Cognitive Linguistics and the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture.

COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS: AN IMPRESSIONIST'S SKETCH

In Cognitive Linguistics, language use is considered in the context of cognition.[2] This places meaning firmly in the mind. Langacker, one of the 'fathers' of Cognitive Linguistics writes

> Our concern is with the meanings of linguistic expressions. Where are these meanings to be found? From a cognitive linguistic perspective, the answer is evident: meanings are in the minds of the speakers who produce and understand the expressions. It is hard to imagine where else they might be.[3]

With this focus on meaning being found in the mind, hard distinctions between linguistic and world knowledge become irrelevant. It is not hard to find an example of this in Scripture. In Isaiah 10:26a (ESV) we read

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1 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'Translating Holiness: Forms of Word, Writ and Righteousness', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 13.4 (2011), 381–402 (p. 384).

2 Dirk Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 182.

3 Ronald W. Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 27.

'And the Lord of hosts will wield against them a whip, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb.' World knowledge is required here to understand what is being conveyed. Unless we know the events recorded in Judges 7 (the shared knowledge about Midian at Oreb), while the words themselves are comprehensible, the words lose their force.

This is a system 'in which language use is the methodological basis of linguistics.'[4] It is important to understand that although the cognitive perspective locates meaning in cognition, this does not eliminate the importance of the speech community.

> For purposes of studying language as part of cognition, an expression's meaning is first and foremost its meaning for a single (representative) speaker […] An individual's notion of what an expression means develops through communicative interaction and includes an assessment of its degree of conventionality in the speech community.[5]

In order to communicate, we talk in words, phrases, sentences, genres, and languages which are understood in a certain way within a speech community. The words we use necessarily mean more than we say. At the level of the word we can see this in action through the uses of 'Ephraim' in the Bible. 'Ephraim' is both the word for one of the sons of Joseph and also refers to the clan of Israel. However, it is also used as a meronym to refer to the whole of the Northern kingdom (e.g. Isa. 7). The meaning of the writer will not be understood correctly unless we share the community's understanding. In the case of Isaiah 7 the meaning can be retrieved from the discourse.

Similarly, at the genre level of discourse we can only understand the meaning of a prophecy if we share the correct context. Prophecies in the Bible need to be understood in terms of Jeremiah 18. God does not need to declare an 'if-clause' in prophecies. It is implied that if humans change their ways that the prophecy may not necessarily come about.[6] This is demonstrated clearly in 2 Kings 20:1–11 (cf. Isa. 38:1–22) where Isaiah prophesies simply that Hezekiah will die from an illness. Hezekiah pleads with God and the prophecy is reversed. Similarly it is demonstrated in Jonah 3 where Jonah prophesies simply that in forty days Nineveh will be overthrown. The people repent of their evil and God reverses the prophecy of destruction (3:10). If, as a modern reader we approach this genre of

4 Geeraerts, p. 182.

5 Langacker, p. 30.

6 Note that there are clearly some prophecies that are not contingent on human behaviour such as in Ezekiel 36:22–32 and Jeremiah 31:31–34 in which God says he will act despite the disobedience of his people.

prophecy expecting it not to be contingent on human action we will be baffled when God seems to change his mind on something he had 'firmly' declared (e.g. 1 Sam. 2:30–36). It is shared world knowledge that helps the reader to correctly interpret these prophecies.[7]

COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

Ellen van Wolde, has written extensively on the application of Cognitive Linguistics to Biblical Interpretation. In her 2009 book *Reframing Biblical Studies* she writes:

> I intend to prove that it is possible for biblical scholarship to study meaning as "emergent reality," which on the one hand arises from linguistic, logical, and literary structures, from experience and perception-based cognitions, and from cultural- and context-bound routines; and on the other hand constitutes a new reality of its own.[8]

She proposes a method of analysis which incorporates findings from both linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts to the interpretation of the text.[9] So far so good. An example of the incorporation of extra-linguistic information can be found in her use of archaeological information to illuminate the text of Job 28. In the ESV, Job 28:9a reads 'Man puts his hand to the flinty rock'; however, the word *hallamish* (flinty rock) is more likely to refer to a flint tool 'the many flint tools found in the mining areas demonstrate that reference is made to the equipment, the flint tool in the worker's hand.'[10] This leads van Wolde to the translation 'he stretches out his hand with flint tools.'[11]

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7 Although Vanhoozer (originally published 1988) is not dealing directly with Cognitive Linguistics, his comments on genre are essentially compatible with this view I am describing here. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), pp. 335–50.

8 Ellen J. van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), pp. 20–21.

9 For her rather technical summary of 'The Cognitive Method of Analysis' see van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies*, p. 204.

10 Ellen J. van Wolde, 'Wisdom, Who Can Find It?: A Non-Cognitive and Cognitive Study of Job 28:1–11', in *Job 28: Cognition in Context*, ed. by Ellen J. van Wolde, Biblical Interpretation Series, 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 1–36 (pp. 19–20).

11 van Wolde, 'Wisdom, Who Can Find It?', p. 20.

This is relatively straightforward and makes sense. Who would argue that the application of Cognitive Linguistics impedes clarity? It instead appears to make things clearer. However, this is not the conclusion of the matter. Indeed, that is simply a small portion of van Wolde's argument concerning Job 28. I will illustrate some additional possibilities for application through her analysis of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

VAN WOLDE ON SODOM AND GOMORRAH

A few scholars have commented on the judicial language present in the Sodom and Gomorrah episode (Gen. 18–19).[12] This marks the base on which van Wolde builds in her study.[13] Her interpretation hinges on the language of the episode being interpreted as judicial. She examines the various judicial words and phrases in the episode. First, after looking at all the uses of the two nouns and verbs for *outcry*, she argues that the translation of Genesis 18:20 'outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah' inadequately translates the Hebrew phrase. Instead she argues that it means 'the outcry *of* Sodom and Gomorrah'. This implies that the outcry is 'not directed against the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah,' rather it is 'uttered by them'.[14] She argues that 'It is mainly the literary context and the interpretation of that context that brought biblical scholars to the conclusion that Gen 18:20–21 and 19:13 express "the outcry *against* Sodom and Gomorrah."'[15] In response to this outcry God begins a legal inquest.

The next feature of the text van Wolde analyses is the word *ša'ar* (gate) from Genesis 19:1. This is the 'site of judgement or decision-making' for the community implying that Lot's presence in the city gate is 'not gratuitous or incidental to the narrative of Genesis 19.'[16] Based on the description of Lot as a 'resident alien' or sojourner (Gen. 19:9 — 'This fellow came to sojourn…'), his presence in the gate acting as though 'he were in charge, […] admitting men who came to the city by night' and then inviting the men to his house 'would have been offensive to the men of

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12 For example Scott Morschauser, '"Hospitality", Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1–9', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 27.4 (2003), 461–85.

13 Ellen J. van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', in *Cognitive Linguistic Explorations in Biblical Studies*, ed. by Bonnie Howe and Joel B. Green (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 172–203 (pp. 177–82).

14 van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 192.

15 van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 192.

16 Morschauser, p. 464; van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 194.

Sodom.'[17] Unsurprisingly then, the men accuse Lot of acting as judge over them despite being a sojourner.

In the Genesis 18–19 narrative, God is set up as the judge. The verb *yada'* (to know) occurs throughout the story beginning at the start of the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative. In Genesis 18:19 the ESV translates it as *chosen* in 'For I have *chosen* him [Abraham]…'. It occurs again in Genesis 18:20–21 together with the verb 'to see' which together form part of the judicial vocabulary.[18] God is presented explicitly as the judge towards the end of the discourse with Abraham (Gen. 18:25).

Moving in to Genesis 19, we see the verb 'to know' next used by the people of Sodom. Van Wolde writes 'They use legal terminology: "bring," "before us," and "so that we may know them."'[19] In this context, she argues, the verb means to know 'so as to make a decision'.[20] The reaction of Lot is to take the role of negotiator. His offer of his daughters may be one of hostage exchange (as opposed to an offer of a sexual object).[21] In response the men get angry and command Lot to 'Draw near' (translated 'Stand back!' in the ESV) which is also a legal term — meaning to draw near for questioning — following which they 'draw near' to the door (Gen. 19:9).[22] This action ultimately leads to the blinding of the men such that they are unable to act as judges.

Van Wolde in placing this story within the wider context argues that 'The behavior of the townsmen of Sodom does not legitimize the deity's severe punishment or their total destruction. Their wish "to know" is completely regular. Yet what is at stake here is the right to judge.'[23] Her conclusion is as follows

> the people who are crying out are the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. These people could not have directed their outcry to YHWH, whom they did not know. Nevertheless YHWH initiates a legal inquest. Because the narrator shares in these chapters of Genesis only the perspective of Abraham and his family, and not the perspective of the Canaanites of whom the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah are the most representative rulers, the intended Israelite audience understands the message of this text, namely, that YHWH is the

17 van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 195.
18 van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 196.
19 van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 196.
20 van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 197.
21 Van Wolde does not argue for this, but citing Morschauser, suggests it may be the case. For her it is a side point. See van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 197; and Morschauser, pp. 474–82.
22 van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 197.
23 van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 199.

> superior judge who has chosen Abraham and his offspring as the righteous owners and rulers of the land that until now is under Canaanite rule and jurisdiction. The behavior the Sodomites are accused of is not that they are intending sexual assault, but that they consider YHWH's messengers as spies, Lot as an intruder who wants to judge them, and more importantly, that they do not acknowledge YHWH as the judge of all the earth or the Abraham family as the rightful owners and rulers of the land.[24]

Van Wolde fields a linguistic argument that makes claims about the meaning of the text. The threat of such an interpretation is that it claims to be a *translation*. It concerns the understanding of the vocabulary and grammar of the text and therefore could be presented as part of the 'ordinary means' for understanding Scripture.[25] In such a manner one may feel their ability to understand Scripture based on a translation is questionable. How can the average evangelical judge between interpretations? Can they adequately understand their own Bible?

EVANGELICAL INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES

The answer to this conundrum, I suggest, is the same it always has been. The ordinary means includes not only translation, but also the mediation of biblical interpreters, subordinate standards (such as the Westminster Confession of Faith), traditional interpretations, all of these things *as far as they align with the light of Scripture itself.*[26]

The key then is determining whether a 'translation' aligns with the light of Scripture. Ultimately all translation involves some level of interpretation,[27] so the question is now: Is this interpretation better than

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[24] van Wolde, 'Cognitive Grammar at Work in Sodom and Gomorrah', p. 203.

[25] Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, ed. by Banner of Truth Trust (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), sec. 1.7; Martin Luther, 'The Bondage of the Will', in *Career of the Reformer III*, ed. & trans. by Philip S. Watson, Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), xxxiii, 3–295 (p. 25).

[26] Luther, xxxiii, p. 91; Wayne Grudem, 'The Perspicuity of Scripture', *Themelios*, 34.3 (2009), 288–308 (pp. 296–97); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), pp. 143–46; Philip D. Foster, 'Making Clear the Doctrine of the Clarity of Scripture', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 35.2 (2017), 172–85 (pp. 175, 180).

[27] We can essentially refer to any *interpretation* as a *translation* in the light of Cognitive Linguistic theory. Others also have affirmed the idea that any communication involves translation from one person to another. See George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, 3rd edn (Oxford:

the traditional interpretations? We can examine this question effectively using the following principle outlined in the Westminster Confession:

> IX. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.[28]

However, to apply the principle above we must be able to trust our ability to understand the words of Scripture. This trust need not be for perfect understanding, but rather for adequate understanding. To suggest that some amount of misunderstanding negates the possibility of any certainty of understanding is a child of scepticism; taken to its conclusion we would end up in the same place as the Academicians of Ancient Greece who taught that the wise person should affirm nothing.[29] Such a position is absurd.

Just as it is absurd to say we can affirm nothing, it would be absurd to say that many faithful translators in the past failed utterly in translating the Bible. Similarly, it would be absurd to say that we can know nothing of the meaning of the words we read because we do not live in the right culture. Rather we can know *something* of what it means, just not *everything*.[30] Furthermore, we can to some small degree become enculturated in the biblical world through a thorough reading of Scripture. From this starting point we can use what we have in imperfect translations to examine another imperfect (although perhaps more accurate) translation.[31]

Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 49; and Vanhoozer, 'Translating Holiness: Forms of Word, Writ and Righteousness', p. 385.

28 Westminster Assembly, sec. 1.9; this idea is also present in Augustine's thought, although in his application it generally involves allegorical interpretation; Augustine of Hippo, 'On Christian Doctrine', in *St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, ed. by Philip Schaff, trans. by J. F. Shaw, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 1, 14 vols (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1887), ii, 522–97 (sec. 2.9.14).

29 Augustine of Hippo, 'Against the Academicians', in *Against the Academicians and The Teacher*, trans. by Peter King (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), pp. 1–93 (secs. 3.4.10.90–100).

30 Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, pp. 463–67.

31 I have argued here as though Scripture were a purely human text. Where the faithful and prayerful believer is involved, and with the oversight of the Holy Spirit this position is surely all the more firm.

SCRIPTURE INTERPRETS SCRIPTURE

I will demonstrate application of this principle by first examining van Wolde's analysis of 'outcry', then 'know' and finally her comments concerning Lot and God's judicial positions.

Van Wolde's presentation of the meaning of *outcry* is problematic. She is right in what she says about the other uses of the word. This method can be a powerful tool in disambiguating meaning. However, her comment on the context is surely misplaced. A cognitive linguistic perspective on language *requires* that literary context be taken into account.[32] The literary context has a powerful effect in constraining word meaning.[33]

Given that context is so important, we can proceed to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Earlier within the narrative (Gen. 13:13) we were told that the people[34] of Sodom were very bad and sinful. This sets up expectations about Sodom and Gomorrah. In the very same verse as the first use of *outcry* (Gen. 18:20) God informs Abraham that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is very grave. In the second use of *outcry* (Gen. 18:21) we find out that it is in response to something that Sodom and Gomorrah had supposedly done. This context does not leave room for claiming that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (who were being investigated) were crying out in distress. In addition, we can see the similarities between the language of Genesis 18:20–21 and that of Jonah 1:2. In Genesis, the outcry comes to God, and in Jonah the evil of Nineveh comes before God. In both of these cases there is the threat of judgement on the sinners.

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[32] For example, see Cruse's dynamic construal of meaning. Alan Cruse, *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*, Oxford Textbooks in Linguistics, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 119–24.

[33] Not to mention the fact that the particular Hebrew grammatical construction which is used here can be validly interpreted in the way it is interpreted in the translations. Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), sec. 25.4.2.

[34] Peterson argues that it was specifically the *men* of Sodom due to the use of the term *'anashim*. However, there are instances where this term clearly includes men and women (Job 42:11; 1 Chr. 16:3). Given these occurrences and how other gendered terms function in Biblical Hebrew we should be cautious at saying this group excludes women. Brian Neil Peterson, *What Was the Sin of Sodom: Reading Genesis 19 as Torah* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), p. 34.

Knowing in Context

Concerning the use of the verb 'know' we can also rely on Scripture to interpret Scripture. There is little problem acknowledging that 'know' has a special meaning in Genesis 18:19.[35] Indeed, the context renders any attempt to use either the normal translation of 'know' or the sexual euphemism untenable. God 'knows' Abraham so that he will command his children to follow God in righteousness and justice. However, what about Genesis 19:5 which has traditionally been taken to refer to sexual intercourse? Van Wolde's argument is that this use of 'know' is also judicial because of the wider judicial context of the text.

I would argue that the key is in comparing Genesis 19:5 with Judges 19:22. Van Wolde ignores this parallel, instead arguing about the surrounding language of Genesis 19:5.[36] However, applying the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture means we should make careful note of the parallel account. Additionally, from a cognitive linguistic perspective, this parallel is particularly important: the events can be compared as examples of Ancient Hebrew cognition in context.[37]

In examining the parallel account we see that in both accounts the event starts in the same way. The men of the city come to the house and surround it (Gen. 19:4; Judg. 19:22).[38] Using *the same language* the men call the hosts to bring out the visitors so they may *know* them (Gen. 19:5;

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35 Cf. Amos 3:2 which seems to have the same use.

36 See footnote 41 below for problems with van Wolde's identification of judicial language here. Morschauser, who van Wolde references (but not on this issue), brushes off the idea these two accounts can be compared. In my view Morschauser does not adequately deal with the similarities of the texts. See Morschauser, p. 471.

37 If someone was to object and say that the judicial narrative context of Genesis 18–19 renders the parallel questionable we could answer that within the judicial narrative there is a sub-narrative at Sodom which foregrounds a hospitality event, not a judicial event. This is directly comparable to the Judges 19 account.

38 Morschauser argues that the group in Judges 19 contained a different demographic 'the sons of Belial'. In Judges 19:22 we read in the ESV 'the men of the city, worthless fellows'. As can be seen as clearly in the translation as in the original, 'the men of the city' is in apposition to 'worthless fellows' (sons of Belial). We are invited to think of the men of the city as worthless. It paints all the men of Gibeah with the same broad stroke, this is not a particular subset of 'worthless fellows', but some (or all) of the men of the city, and they are 'worthless fellows'. This is similar to how the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were presented in Genesis 13:13 and 18:20–21 only we had not been informed of the moral standing of the men of Gibeah until this point. See Morschauser, p. 480.

Judg. 19:22). In both accounts the host steps out and calls on his 'brothers' not to act so wickedly (Gen. 19:7; Judg. 19:23). Then both hosts suggest bringing out women instead (Gen. 19:8; Judg. 19:24). Here the stories diverge. In the Judges narrative the host adds 'violate them' to his proposal (Judg. 19:24), which is exactly what the men do to the Levite's concubine after she is cast out (Judg. 19:25–26).

We can illuminate the language of 'know' by using the responses of the characters in the narrative itself (hence Ancient Hebrew cognition in context). Both the hosts were responding to basically the same circumstances *and* language use.[39] The more specific language in the host's proposal in Judges 19:24 (violate them) can be used to interpret Lot's language in Genesis 19:8. They are both presenting women to be used for a sexual purpose. The continuation of the Judges narrative validates this understanding 'And they *knew* her and abused her all night' (Judg. 19:25), so we know the host in Judges did not misunderstand their intent.[40] Similarly, it is only logical to assume that Lot did not misinterpret the intent of the Sodomites.[41] This assumption is strengthened by the New Testa-

[39] Someone might object that the Sodomites in the time of Lot spoke a different language to the Benjaminites of Gibeah in the time of Judges, but both texts were written to be understood by the Ancient Hebrew speaker and so the Canaanite language Lot and the Sodomites shared is irrelevant to the problem. What is important is how the Ancient Hebrew speaker understood the text, and the above analysis demonstrates the congruence between the Genesis and Judges accounts and how they would be understood in the same light.

[40] Contrary to Ron Pirson's who analyses the language of the offenders in both Genesis and Judges and concludes that in both instances they did not have sexual intent. He does not address the fact that the men in Judges appeared to accept the offer of the concubine. Victor Matthews does address this, but does so by suggesting that the legal situation is not well defined as the men of Gibeah are presented as 'a gang of hooligans', but this interpretation suggests there is no difference in the language (which contradicts Pirson). See Ron Pirson, 'Does Lot Know about Yada'?', in *Universalism and Particularism at Sodom and Gomorrah: Essays in Memory of Ron Pirson*, ed. by Diana Lipton and Ron Pirson, Ancient Israel and Its Literature, 11 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), pp. 203–13 (p. 210); see also Victor H. Matthews, 'Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19', *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 22 (1992), 3–11 (p. 5).

[41] Pietro Bovati's examples of the verb 'know' in judicial contexts seems to suggest that it should occur in parallel with another verb of investigation or contain a different object, such as *knowing the heart* of someone. Van Wolde acknowledges this, but does not seem to appreciate its likely significance. See Pietro Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice: Legal Terms, Concepts, and Procedures*

ment account where the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is explicitly said to involve sexual immorality (Jude 7).[42]

Lot and God's Judicial Positions

Concerning Lot taking a judicial position in the gate the interpretation may bring useful insight. There are numerous examples of sitting in the gate referring to some judicial position or place for judgement.[43] Lot is clearly a sojourner in Sodom and the passage is within a judicial narrative. However, this might not mean Lot was taking a judicial position, he may have merely been doing business at the time (cf. Gen. 23:18; Ruth 4:1–9). The reference to judicial position may be intended as allusion by the narrator rather than indicating that Lot had assumed this position on himself or had it conferred on him.

In Genesis 19:1–3 Lot appears to (perhaps anxiously) press the angels to stay. Considering this comment in the context of the recognised sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:20b) and that Lot has lived there some time, we may consider it certain that Lot knows the men and their wickedness and this is why he wanted to get the travellers out of the square. In doing this he is judging the behaviour of the Sodomites as wicked. This is what angers the Sodomites in Genesis 19:9 — a sojourner presuming to counsel them on what is right. However, Lot is vindicated by the angels who act to protect him and his family (Gen. 19:10–11).

Van Wolde is incorrect in asserting the text sees Abraham's family as the (current) rightful owners of the land. In Genesis 26:3 God says to Isaac 'Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your offspring I *will* give all these lands…'. Clearly the land was not yet the property of Abraham's family in the narrative of the text.

In some sense, van Wolde's argument about God as judge rings true. The men of Sodom are judged for not recognising God as judge of all

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in the Hebrew Bible, trans. by Michael J. Smith, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 105 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1994), pp. 244–46; Ellen J. van Wolde, 'Outcry, Knowledge, and Judgement in Genesis 18–19', in *Universalism and Particularism at Sodom and Gomorrah: Essays in Memory of Ron Pirson*, ed. by Diana Lipton and Ron Pirson, Ancient Israel and Its Literature, 11 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), pp. 71–100 (p. 92). Interestingly, John Calvin argued that while they were seeking sexual intercourse, the verb *know* here did not imply sexual intercourse. John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. by John King (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), pp. 497–98.

42 Peterson examines the interpretation of the sin of Sodom across extra-biblical and New Testament texts. See Peterson, pp. 99–114.

43 Genesis 23:10; Ruth 4:1; 2 Samuel 19:8; 1 Kings 22:10; Proverbs 31:23.

the earth. However, contrary to van Wolde, the behaviour of the men of Sodom *does* legitimise the punishment. What is right in their eyes does not align with what is right in God's eyes. The angels investigate the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah and confirm their sin which is then the basis for its destruction. God succeeds in his purpose of going and seeing whether they had done according to the outcry (Gen. 18:21).

CONCORD BETWEEN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

In this article I have examined one case study of interpretation using Cognitive Linguistics. Although a number of points were found in the interpretation of the Sodom and Gomorrah episode that did not appear to sit well, the interpretation also contained helpful insights. The judicial context means that the behaviour of the Sodomites can be seen as a perversion of justice: they were destroyed not because of one particular act, but because of a pattern of behaviour which was verified through one instance.

Cognitive Linguistics is a useful tool for interpretation. Although many facets of the interpretation critiqued above were considered false, a cognitive linguistic understanding was employed in the critique itself (although the conclusions could be reached without knowing the theory of language being employed). Cognitive linguistic theory foregrounds the importance of cultural background in understanding texts. It reminds us that the biblical culture is not our culture, that the words of the Bible are not our words. Thus archaeological, geographical, cultural, linguistic and other studies can provide valuable information for interpretation. Acknowledging this can help us to come to a clearer understanding of the bible. However, as with all interpretation, it is the work of an interpreter. Therefore a cognitive linguistic interpretation must measure up to the bar of the Scriptures it seeks to interpret. Cognitive Linguistics can, therefore, be used profitably as a tool in conjunction and cooperation with the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture.

The layperson can prayerfully, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, read the words of Scripture for themselves, in their own language, and check the claims of the academy against this mediated form. If the claims regarding the text sit well within the canonical context then the reader can (always provisionally) affirm what has been claimed. They need not fear to read and interpret Scripture themselves. However, due to their own limitations as an interpreter (and every interpreter has limitations),[44] the

[44] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?,* pp. 463–67.

layperson may show wisdom in turning to other sources of the ordinary means — be that in the form of books (written by those committed to the faith), church leaders, or other sources to help them weigh arguments they hear. It is also important to acknowledge with Martin Luther, the role of the church as the locus of interpretation: 'Thus we say that all the spirits are to be tested in the presence of the Church at the bar of Scripture.'[45] Whatever interpretations we may come to are to be tested not just at the bar of Scripture, but also in the presence of the church.

[45] Luther, xxxiii, p. 91; Vanhoozer talks about the importance of the interpretation of Scripture in the presence of the church, see Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, pp. 210–11, 232.

Reviews

Divine Will and Human Choice: Freedom, Contingency, and Necessity in Early Modern Reformed Thought. By Richard A. Muller. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. ISBN: 978-0801030857. 336pp. £30.

How can sovereignty of divine will be compatible with freedom of human choice? Throughout church history, theologians and philosophers have wrestled with this question by adopting various philosophical tools to explain the precise nature of necessity, possibility, and contingency. In this study, Richard Muller provides a comprehensive reassessment of medieval background of the early modern Reformed thought on those philosophical concepts. The book was written in direct response to a thesis put forward by Antonie Vos and his associates who contributed to the book *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology*, edited by Willem J. van Asselt, J. Martin Bac, and Reolf T. te Velde, (Baker, 2010). According to this thesis, John Duns Scotus is the major formative figure behind a number of early modern Reformed orthodox thinkers. This is in large part due to their adoption of Scotus's concept of synchronic contingency. According to this concept, something is contingent if there is a true alternative for what actually occurs in the same moment of time. This is in contrast with diachronic contingency, according to which something is contingent if an alternative can occur at some other time. With this synchronic view of contingency, Scotus is seen to overcome deterministic tendency of diachronic understanding in Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Against this thesis, Muller offers an extensive critique in this book. Muller argues that the idea of synchronic contingency should be taken not so much as replacement of diachronic contingency as refinement or adding nuance to the diachronic counterpart. Then, he argues that the philosophical background of the early modern Reformed should best be described as eclectic rather than solely Scotistic.

In order to achieve this purpose, Muller divides his book into three parts. Part I sets the scene for the rest of the book by describing the state of the research, analyzing the multi-layered nature of the problem, and setting out both logical and historical issues involved with the idea of synchronic contingency. Part II then deals with the question of reception of Aristotle during the medieval period. Here Muller focuses on the issue of principle of plenitude: the idea that all possibilities must be actualized at some future time and what is never actualized are regarded not as possibilities but as impossibilities. This issue becomes his focus as deter-

ministic, 'statistical' interpretation of Aristotle and Thomas was based on their supposed advocacy of the principle. Against this, Muller demonstrates quite convincingly that Aristotle and Aquinas indeed rejected that principle. More controversially, Muller argues that synchronic element is already present in Aquinas's thinking on contingency despite his diachronic orientation, and that Scotus with his synchronic orientation did not alter the basic understanding of contingency but only added an emphasis on the simultaneous nature of multiple potencies. Based on this analysis of the medieval background, Part III finally goes on to examine prominent Reformed thinkers in the early modern period (including Franciscus Junius, Franciscus Gomarus, William Twisse, John Owen, Gisbertus Voetius, and Franciscus Turretin) and shows that the philosophical outlook of the Reformed orthodoxy should be best described as eclectic. This is particularly the case as examination of the model of divine concurrence in many of the Reformed orthodox indicates their Thomistic inclination.

Throughout this study, Richard Muller provides his penetrating analysis of the multi-layered issues involved. In addition to his meticulous scholarship on the early modern period, for which he is well known, here Muller displays that he also has a surprisingly thorough familiarity with a wide variety of both primary and secondary sources from the ancient and medieval periods. Nevertheless, this important scholarly debate will likely continue, particularly as the intricate nature of relationship between diachronic and synchronic contingency demands further clarification. For example, Muller draws his definitions of diachronic and synchronic contingency from Ian Wilks's study because his definition of diachronic contingency 'does not follow the "statistical" definition' (p. 49). The purpose of Ian Wilks's study, however, was to show some cases where diachronic and synchronic contingency do stand opposed to each other (Ian Wilks, 'The Use of Synchronic Contingency in Early Fourteenth Century Debate over the World's Temporal Duration', in *Disputatio: an International Transdisciplinary Journal of the Late Middle Ages*, 2 (1997), pp. 143–58). In other words, even if the deterministic reading of Aristotle and Aquinas based on their advocacy of the principle of plenitude can be disputed, it does not necessarily mean negation of the radical nature of synchronic contingency. Therefore, Muller's basic claim that the synchronic contingency provides refinement to diachronic counterpart rather than replacement might still be questioned.

Although highly philosophical nature of the subject matter does not make this book particularly appealing to many outside the field of Reformed scholasticism, it is yet recommended for those who are seeking to be informed about how the Reformed orthodox theologians wrestled

with the age-old issue of divine will and human freedom and about the nature of their medieval scholastic background.

Takayuki Yagi, University of Edinburgh

In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian Past and the Evangelical Identity Crisis. By Kenneth J. Stewart. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. ISBN: 9781783596072 (UK); 978-0-8308-5172-0 (USA). 300pp. £17.99.

In this book the author, who teaches theological studies at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, USA, addresses what he identifies as an identity crisis among contemporary evangelicals. He sees the most obvious symptom of this crisis to be the notion that evangelicalism is a latecomer in Christian history, prompting a number of evangelical leaders to convert to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox confessions which claim unbroken continuity with early Christian tradition. The writings of recent converts such as Tom Howard in America and Michael Harper in the UK reflect the contention of the 19th century Anglican convert to Rome, J. H. Newman, that 'to be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant.'

Stewart sets the crisis in context by noting, Michael Harper notwithstanding, both that it is mainly a North American phenomenon, and that the drift from evangelicalism to Rome becomes a trickle when contrasted with the flood in the other direction, with 30% of US evangelicals being first or second generation former Roman Catholics. However, the claims of Newman and others demand a response.

Stewart offers a strong apologia for the historical pedigree of evangelical doctrine. He argues that throughout the entire history of the Christian church evangelical movements have been perennial and recurring. While recognising that evangelicalism took particular organisational forms in the 19th century in the emergence of some parachurch bodies, Stewart argues that key evangelical doctrines are rooted in Christian antiquity. He cites G. S. Faber's collation of evidence that twenty-eight Fathers from Clement of Rome (ad 96) to Bernard of Clairveaux (1090–1153) viewed justification to be by faith, and not by contributed merit. Furthermore, many of what today are regarded as evangelical convictions are reflected in the early creeds of the church.

Stewart asserts that, overall, evangelical scholars cannot be justifiably accused of neglecting the study of the development of doctrine in the early church. T. M. Lindsay, James Orr, and J. C. Ryle are referenced among others for their work in the nineteenth century, as are J. G. Machen, Geerhardus Vos, F. F. Bruce, and Geoffrey Bromiley in the twentieth, as well as

D. F. Wright, Alister McGrath, and Gerald Bray who continued researching this important sphere into the twenty-first century.

In addition to reviewing such treatments of the apostolic church Fathers, Stewart supplies two chapters appraising evangelical scholarship on the frequency of the Lord's Supper and early church baptism. The former contains a somewhat critical evaluation of the traditional Scottish communion seasons, while the latter offers a somewhat ambivalent understanding of infant baptism. Surprisingly, the significant role of the Scottish communion seasons in 18th and 19th century revivals is passed over. These chapters on the sacraments are followed by a useful review of the interaction between theological exegesis, biblical theology and the history of interpretation.

In Search of Ancient Roots helpfully evaluates the Apocrypha which modern Christian marketing is bringing to the attention of evangelical Christians. Stewart reviews the claims that the apocryphal books are canonical scripture, and finds them wanting. At the same time he recognises that early Protestant Bibles kept them accessible as an appendix at the end of the Old Testament, but disassociated from the canonical writings. He also considers these books to be valuable in providing information about the period when the Jewish state was a colony of the Persians, Greeks and Romans, as well as forming 'part of the thought world of Jesus' (p. 169).

The author offers a fascinating study of J. H. Newman and his belated positive influence on the theology underling debates at Vatican II. Also on offer in this book is a study of the current evangelical fascination with 'lite' monasticism, at a time when full-blown Roman monasticism appears to be languishing in the cloisters. Following a chapter questioning whether Christian unity depends on a central bishop of Rome, there is an insightful chapter on justification recounting that in the first half of the sixteenth century there was a justification by faith alone movement within the Catholic Church. This movement was represented at the Catholic-Protestant Colloquy at Regensburg in 1541 where a remarkable concurrence on justification was achieved. Sadly this success was not followed up by Pope Paul III, and a few years later the Council of Trent anathematised justification by faith alone.

In Search of Ancient Roots is beautifully written, well researched, and easily read. It is incisive in its analysis, but irenic in its critique. Its investigation of why some younger evangelicals are turning to Catholicism and Orthodoxy is surely a call to evangelical pastors and leaders of parachurch ministries to pause in their activism. In effect, this book challenges readers to take a prayer-breather which will create space and make time to reflect on whether a laissez-faire ecclesiology, an obsession with

cultural relevance, a proneness to divide, an addiction to faddism, may be asphyxiating some sections of the body of Christ in our generation.

Fergus Macdonald, Edinburgh

Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas *in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity*. By Kevin J Vanhoozer. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016. ISBN 978-1-58743-393-1. xii + 269pp. £13.99.

This book champions 'mere Protestant Christianity' with 'mere' taken to mean essential rather than minimal. It does so by exploring the interpretive authority of Scripture against a background which lacks both a consensual criterion for evaluating interpretation and visible church unity. Vanhoozer's key strategy is to 'retrieve' the five *solas* of the Reformation in an attempt to move forward faithfully by looking back creatively.

The five *solas* — grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone, and for the glory of God alone — are construed as 'theological insights into the ontology, epistemology, and ideology of the gospel.' Their special function is 'to preserve the integrity of the triune economies of revelation and redemption,' thus providing 'a pattern for reading Scripture theologically that enables Protestant unanimity on theological essentials, and thus the possibility of genuine fellowship in spite of secondary and tertiary doctrinal differences' (p. 28).

Vanhoozer grounds *Sola gratia* in the Trinity. 'The grace of God concerns the way the Father, Son and Spirit share their love, life and light respectively with those who are not God' (p. 35). The author maintains an interpretive consensus exists among mere Protestant Christians that the Bible is fundamentally about grace which is mediated to us by the Spirit as we read and interpret the words of Scripture. Thus grace provides the framework of biblical interpretation. Locating biblical interpreters and interpretation in the all-encompassing economy of triune communication, prompts the author to claim that *sola gratia* refutes the charge that the Reformation caused secularisation.

The chapter on 'Faith Alone' argues that Christian faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit, is 'properly basic.' This term borrowed from Alvin Plantinga describes a belief that does not need to be justified or inferred from any other belief in order to be considered rational. The validity of this claim for Christian faith is founded on the triune God being the rightful authority in that he has constituted the essential nature of things, determined their proper function, and ordered their final purpose. Because the triune God reveals in Scripture his will for humanity, Scripture is the faithful's default 'fiduciary framework' — i.e. an interpretive thought

structure that one initially takes on faith until it proves itself by yielding a harvest of understanding.

In his treatment of *sola scriptura*, Vanhoozer promotes two key principles of biblical interpretation. First, there is the *canonic* principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture. 'Scripture provides the overarching metanarrative and hermeneutical framework for understanding its parts.' This self-interpreting role is vitally facilitated by the Holy Spirit who accompanies the Word and illumines the interpreter. The second is the *catholic* principle which recognises that church tradition, as the consensual teaching on Scripture's core storyline, is an important marker for interpreters. Scripture is 'the primal and final authority, not the sole authority' (p. 111).

The chapters on 'Christ Alone' and 'For the Glory of God Alone' are both studies in ecclesiology. *Solus Christus* is expounded in terms of *corpus Christi*. Jesus asserts his lordship over the world by commissioning a visible human society to represent him and his rule. Members of each local church are responsible for ordering their church to reflect the truths of all five *solas*. As a royal priesthood they are the recipients of the 'keys' — i.e. they have 'authority to make binding interpretive judgments on matters pertaining to statements of faith and the life of church members insofar as they concern the integrity of the gospel' (p. 174). Although, according to Vanhoozer, this authority is conferred on local churches, they are to confer with other local churches, for each local church is wholly the church, but not the whole church. For this reason denominations are given a place provided they are committed to reform and renewal through a continuing reading of Scripture and allow disagreement on doctrines of lesser importance.

The final chapter is a plea for Protestantism and evangelicalism to find one another. Evangelicalism can be a shot in the arm for a tired Protestantism by opening up the possibility of a confessional unity on first-order doctrines, while permitting liberty on doctrines considered to be of second and third order of importance. On the other hand, because the *solas* resonate with key features of evangelicalism, Protestantism can supply confessional stem cells to a culturally compromised evangelicalism.

This book is a challenging read, but it offers a wide range of riches to persevering readers. There are some marvellous theological one-liners, and a series of fascinating 'sidebars.' Will it promote 'plural interpretive unity'? Yes, among the Protestants in view, for the 'mere' qualifier suggests they are already agreed on first rank doctrines. It will also resource mainline evangelicals as they argue theologically for reform within denominations which are somewhat less than 'merely' Protestant. However, the contention that interpretive authority lies with *local* churches

rather than also with wider representative bodies may make it problematic even for many 'mere' Protestant denominations to heed Vanhoozer's call. And his vision of evangelical energy reviving a weary Protestantism will significantly depend on parachurch organisations developing a more mutual relationship with churches than often currently obtains.

This volume is warmly commended for many reasons, and particularly for: (1) its advocacy of an authority principle founded in the Triune God which is articulated externally in Scripture and internally in the believer by the Holy Spirit; (2) its strong focus on the importance of respecting catholicity both historically in tradition, and contemporaneously in conferring with other interpreters; and (3) its assertion that biblical interpretation is less a procedure that readers perform on the text than a process of spiritual formation that the text performs in readers.

Fergus Macdonald, Edinburgh

The Doctrines of Grace in an Unexpected Place. By Mark R. Stevenson. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-4982-8109-6. 320pp. £31.

This interesting volume considers whether the early British Plymouth Brethren leaders in the middle of the nineteenth century in Britain can be described as Calvinists, or at least as moderate Calvinists. The author provides definitions of degrees of Calvinism in England in the nineteenth century and seems to suggest that the Brethren belonged to the category of moderate, but it is questionable if this is a satisfactory way of distinguishing them or other types of Calvinists.

The author begins by providing two chapters which detail the influence of Calvinism in the centuries from the Reformation onwards. Those details indicate that Calvinism has a reluctance to disappear since there was more than one recovery of Calvinism in the decades before the Brethren Movement commenced in the 1830s. Some early Brethren leaders were aware of and some were in contact with those who promoted Calvinistic teachings in the 1820s and 1830s.

There then follows a set of chapters considering how several Brethren leaders, in different ways, approved of a Calvinistic interpretation of human sinfulness, divine election and the atonement. Several well-known names are included, such as J. N. Darby, A. N. Groves, C. H. Mackintosh and W. Kelly, as well as numerous others. One non-Calvinist appears throughout the book, an evangelist by the name of Alexander Marshall, but he belonged to a later generation of Brethren leaders.

One chapter considers an area of belief about which the Brethren were often under attack from other Christian leaders and that concerned how

the Brethren thought of the relationship between faith and assurance. They were criticised for ignoring the need for repentance and for assuming that assurance belonged to the essence of saving faith, with some writers accusing them of the heresy of Sandemanianism (faith basically is only mental assent to gospel invitations). There was some basis for the accusations in the preaching of several Brethren evangelists, but those statements were not endorsed by the leaders assessed by the author, and their views on the nature of saving faith were similar to other orthodox Christians.

With regard to assurance, one reason for the Brethren's attempts to get their listeners and readers to focus on Christ for assurance rather than on changes within themselves was that many Christians at that time did try to gain assurance from their way of life and failed to have it. So it is not surprising that the Brethren and others stressed a different way of finding assurance by focusing on Christ rather than on inward experiences and life changes.

The final chapter provides a summary of the perspective of the early Brethren leaders. They opposed human creeds on principle, were radically biblicist (they accepted only what could be proved from the Bible), and were passionate about evangelism (they did not believe it was appropriate to introduce deep truths into evangelistic preaching). Since this was the case, it is not surprising that eventually subsequent generations of Brethren forgot the Calvinist convictions of their founders. Of course, the same outlook is found in other churches as well.

The author proves his case that some of the early Brethren leaders can be classified as Calvinists, although to be so identified would probably not be their choice given that they objected to all human classifications of believers. Nevertheless, one can ask why those leaders had those beliefs, and an obvious reason is that several of them had undergone theological training in other denominations before they became Brethren and retained those doctrinal beliefs after adopting some or all of the doctrines or practices usually regarded as Brethrenism.

The book is a reminder that origins of spiritual movements within the church are varied, and that various groups can walk together for a time before some of them head away in their own directions. Early Brethrenism shared with others a desire for a return to New Testament Christianity, for involvement in worldwide mission, for the priesthood of all believers, and for lay participation in church activities. Such a desire was very commendable, although the history of Brethrenism is a clear example of the difficulty of attaining such a goal even when core principles have been identified.

Sadly, many of the leaders referred to became responsible for dividing the Brethren Assemblies and, some would say, diverting them away from the original vision. Whatever else may be said about their Calvinistic leanings in doctrine, they did not prevent sad developments among those who once walked together. Nevertheless, this book is an important study of an aspect of the theological beliefs of a spiritual movement that affected its contemporaries in widespread ways, and which for a while in the nineteenth century contributed to the adoption of Calvinism in churches in Britain and Ireland.

Malcolm Maclean, Greyfriars Free Church, Inverness

Anthony Tuckney (1599–1670): Theologian of the Westminster Assembly. By Youngchun Cho. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017. ISBN: 978-1601785701. xii + 164pp. £28.67.

Anthony Tuckney was an important member of the Westminster Assembly who played a crucial role in the development of the Westminster Larger Catechism. An examination of his theology has certainly been needed and Youngchun Cho's volume helps fill that gap. Cho explored many aspects of Tuckney's theology, and uses an excellent variety of sources. Although more and more monographs appeal only to easily available, English sources, Cho made outstanding use of manuscript and Latin works. This is a significant strength of the work, and provides readers with access to material that may not be accessible to everyone. Additionally, his translations are well done, and accurately construe the Latin text from Tuckney's disputations. In this way, Cho is a superb guide to all of Tuckney's works and leads us into the full range of his corpus.

Another strength of Cho's volume is that it explores that major aspects of Tuckney's theology in an orderly way. This means we have helpful pointers to where Tuckney engaged with various topics of theology. Cho demonstrates that Tuckney was a formidable advocate of standard Reformed theology. He leads us through the menagerie of sources to provide a fully rounded description of Tuckney's theology and explain the exegetical and theological arguments that undergird those views.

This book, however, has several shortcomings. First, there is no clearly stated overall thesis to the book. The argument appears to be, 'Under these influences [William Perkins and Laurence Chaderton] and from early in his career, Tuckney presented the accomplishment and application of the gospel primarily in terms of union with Christ, and set forth each redemptive benefit in terms of communion with Christ; yet while arguing the primacy of union with Christ, he did not neglect the necessity of articulating distinct aspects of union with Christ in an orderly

manner.' (p. 6) Yet, union with Christ does not appear as a main feature of the chapter on 'reason and revelation,' the chapter on 'in pursuit of Reformed catholicity,' or a large part of the chapter on Tuckney's 'Trinitarian understanding of salvation.' In other words, much of the volume seems to be about topics that are not related to the main argument. Additionally, the thesis itself needed to be more carefully posed. What about Tuckney's view of union with Christ makes it worth a monograph? The fact that he discussed union with Christ tells us little. Not only did most of the Reformed theologians speaks about union with Christ, but competing theologies like Roman Catholicism also talked about union with Christ, albeit in different ways. This means the thesis as it is stated tells us little of significance. We need to know what makes Tuckney's doctrine of union distinctive or what it tells us about the nature of theology in the period.

The second problem is that Cho neglected to analyze the broader relevance of Tuckney's theology. The minutes of the Westminster Assembly show that he was important for the Larger Catechism and that would have been an aspect of Tuckney's work worth exploring. As the work stands, however, there is no investigation of how others appropriated or received Tuckney's ideas. There is also no examination of where Tuckney received his ideas. Although Cho mentioned Perkins, Chaderton, and a few other cited by Tuckney, there is no analysis of how Tuckney received, modified, and argued the positions of his forebears. There is also little discussion about the contextual considerations and philosophical apparatuses that helped shape the theological positions Tuckney took. There is some mention of antinomianism and Cho did outline some Trinitarian debates, but the contextual analysis of antinomianism was minimal and the discussions about early-modern Trinitarian heresies were never shown to be connected to Tuckney's own work. It could be that Tuckney weighed into those debates, but Cho does not demonstrate that. This lack of broader discussion has the overall effect of making the work primarily descriptive and summative rather than analytical.

Lastly, despite the use of good primary sources that was mentioned above, Cho often seemed not to keep his sources in the proper relation to one another. For example, at one point he cited Tuckney's disputations from Cambridge as documents that give insight into 'the context in which the Westminster Confession of Faith locates the timing of justification' (p. 123). Yet, these disputations must have been written after 1649, which was after Tuckney left his work at the Assembly. Cho himself indicates Tuckney's citation of Richard Baxter's *Aphorisms of Justification*, which was first published in 1649. This makes it unlikely that, as important as this book is as a source of Tuckney's theology, it does not

seem to be informative about the context of discussions at the Assembly. Another example of Cho's disorganized use of sources is when he cited an early debate from the minutes of the Assembly to make an argument about the text of the Confession itself (p. 121). During the debate he cited, however, the Assembly was not yet writing the Confession and was still involved in revising the Thirty-Nine Articles. In this regard, Cho actually seemed to misunderstand the primary sources. He cited the minutes of the Assembly to argue that George Walker (1581–1661) appealed to union with Christ to refute antinomian overemphasis on forensic justification (p. 122). In the discussion Cho cited, however, Walker actually seemed to be defending forensic notions of justification by using union with Christ to further an argument against Roman Catholic notions of justification. Cho certainly explained that Tuckney upheld the forensic understanding of justification, but he appears to have misread his emphases.

Cho's work is an introductory outline of Tuckney's theology and an informed guide to the primary sources. This book should spark more discussion about Tuckney and his contributions to the Westminster Assembly and the education of ministers in Cambridge. It is a valuable volume in drawing needed attention to a neglected figure who played important roles in the history of Reformed theology.

Harrison Perkins, Queen's University Belfast

Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif. By Bryan D. Estelle. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. ISBN: 9780830851683. 392pp. £33.99.

Many in the last century have tried to follow Geerhadus Vos's method of biblical theological investigation, but Bryan Estelle has proved to be Vos's true heir. This work looks at how the 'Exodus motif' resounds throughout the canon of Scripture. That motif, however, is not simply the crossing of the Red Sea. It includes the whole narrative pattern of slavery, release, crossing, wilderness-testing, and Promised Land inheritance. Estelle persuasively argued that this pattern of events appears throughout the Bible and structures many of the ways biblical authors conceived of redemption. He, thankfully, avoided any notions of having found the centre of biblical theology, but instead focused on hermeneutical factors involved in understanding the multifaceted use of the Exodus motif across the Bible. The Exodus became the paradigm of God's redemptive work in the later phases of the Old Testament and the New Testament authors adopted that theme as well and developed it in light of the coming of Christ. Estelle summed up the developing Exodus pattern as: 'the salvation complex involves liberation, presence with God, sanctification in the wilderness wanderings, and entry into the Promised Land.' (p. 222)

This book is not a simple work of exegesis though. It is also a case study in hermeneutics of inner-biblical citation. The biblical writers constantly quoted or alluded to previous passages of Scripture and especially the New Testament authors who built their doctrine upon the Old Testament. Estelle is a helpful guide to developing clearer thinking about inner-biblical citation. The first chapter is devoted to exploring these hermeneutical issues and the appendix further develops those ideas. A careful reading of this work will help readers shape their own ability to analyze inner-biblical citations as they come across them for academic exegesis or sermon preparation.

The bulk of the book develops the case that the Exodus motif was prevalently used throughout the Scripture. It is not, however, simply that authors refer to the event. It is also that the event itself is repeated. Even in the creation story, there is the fashioning of the world through the waters, Adam is placed in probation, and there was the offer of the eschatological Promised Land if he had resisted the serpent. God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt through a similar cycle and it appeared again in the time of the exile. Each time the narrative pattern is recognized and heightened by the biblical authors themselves. In the coming of Christ, the new exodus occurs. Christ himself came through the baptismal waters, was designated as 'son' as Adam and Israel had been, was tested in wilderness, but Christ succeeded in faithfulness where the others failed. The Synoptic Gospels, the Pauline writings, 1 Peter, and Revelation all draw on this theme.

This book makes a massive contribution not only to exegetical understanding of the Exodus motif, but also makes substantial theological contributions. The Exodus narrative pattern itself is not just historical, but also personal. The pattern of slavery-freedom-wilderness-Promised Land is the pattern of the Christian life. We were bound in sin, Christ first freed us from the eternal consequences of sin, and we are in the difficult pilgrim wanderings as we wait the Promised Land. The import of this is the full compatibility of biblical and systematic theology. Those who would abandon the 'order of salvation' for the 'history of redemption' need to take account of Estelle's masterful exegesis. As it happens the history of redemption teaches the order of salvation. Narrative soteriology reveals personal soteriology. Estelle's work shows those two should never been opposed. The first Passover sacrifice enabled the first Exodus event and the ultimate Paschal lamb purchased the ultimate Exodus for his people.

This volume does leave a few lingering questions (note that questions are not the same as concerns). Estelle surveyed essentially the entire canon. Notably absent though is the Gospel of John and the Catholic Epistles save 1 Peter. Space prevented analysis of John and Hebrews from

being included, but we can hope Estelle will release this material in some capacity soon. Further, the prevalent notion of the Exodus's influence on biblical writers raises the question of active and passive appropriation of material. If, as Estelle argued, Paul at times made unconscious use of the Exodus motif, how do we explain that? With regards to this interface between a scriptural author and God's inspiration of the text, Estelle could have helped this reviewer with an exploration of the unconscious psychological processes that might take place in the mind of any author who alludes to and echoes previous scriptural motifs. What significance do we make of the difference between conscious, active appropriation of prior biblical material versus unconsciously, passively echoed themes? None of these questions undermine the value of this work. On the contrary, they provide fuel for future studies to forward the work Estelle has begun here. Everyone should read deeply of this rich work and digest it fully.

Harrison Perkins, Queen's University Belfast

The Letter to Philemon. By Scot McKnight. (The New International Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7382-8. xxxii + 127pp. £20.99.

Scot McKnight's commentary on Philemon replaces the original volume in the NICNT series by F. F. Bruce, published in 1984. McKnight's fresh look at this little letter brings its entanglement with Roman slavery sharply into focus. Close to half of the main text in the book is dedicated to providing the reader with a helpful overview of the phenomenology of slavery in the First Century CE as well as its more recent forms. This introduction is well researched and helpful in accurately setting the letter in its historical context.

At the centre of the discussion surrounding this epistle is the lack of 'any overt appeal from Paul to Philemon to manumit Onesimus,' (p. 1). This has given rise to the accusation that the letter is pro-slavery, morally inferior and in need of updating. The alternative approach is to diminish the significance of slavery in the Roman Empire by arguing that it was unlike the racial slavery of the New World and thereby attempt to escape the moral problem that the letter raises, (p. 4). McKnight is honest in facing the stark reality of the original setting as well as the moral challenge of a Christian master owning a Christian slave. He acknowledges that Paul's vision for a new, kind humanity, established in writings like Colossians 3:11 and Galatians 3:28, a humanity where there is neither slave nor free, was effectively the dropping of a world altering stone into the Mediterranean. However this new vision did not immediately demand the manumission of slaves by their Christian masters. We

should not expect Philemon to read like the 1807 British Slave Trade Act, (my words not his), instead we should see it more as 'Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*.' McKnight believes Paul was focused on equality within the *Ekklēssia* not the Empire. The intent of the letter was not to persuade Philemon to manumit Onesimus, but to welcome him home as a forgiven brother even though he was a runaway slave who had probably stolen from him during the course of his escape. Philemon is being asked not 'to pursue justice but to create a cycle of grace, forgiveness, restitution, and reconciliation' (p. 5). In this letter Paul envisioned 'a fellowship of equals in which the slave owner and slave were brothers (and sisters) in Christ' (p. 5). On this basis, McKnight believes that the letter to Philemon demands that the Church today should be a place of reconciliation and liberation where people, deemed by others as unequal, feel welcomed and valued. Christians should embody a way of life that establishes social equality and that this way of life should serve as the ground rules for new communities in Christ.

The commentary on the text itself provides the kind of analysis, insight and detail that one would expect from any volume in *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* series. The discussion on the various aspects of the story as it unfolds is informative, fair and helpful. The volume ends with some interesting reflections on what might have happened to Philemon and Onesimus. For instance, is the letter's survival a sign that Paul's request to have Onesimus work with him was granted? Was Onesimus, as Ignatius of Antioch suggested, the eventual bishop of Ephesus? McKnight concludes 'I hope that is true,' (p. 114).

Not everyone will agree with all of McKnight's conclusions. Some may feel that Paul's appeal to welcome Onesimus back as a brother has stronger implications than acknowledged or that the differences between slavery then and now are not given as much credence as they would like. However no one will be able to deny that it this a very well researched and written commentary. It is honest in facing the horrible realities of first century slavery and balanced in its consideration of the complex issues that surround the idea of a Christian slave owner. There is an extensive bibliography for those who wish to consider the matter further.

This is a commentary that will be of benefit to scholars and pastors alike and I highly recommend it. It is a significant thing to write a commentary that will replace one written by F. F. Bruce but McKnight's volume is a worthy successor.

Robert Murdock, The Faith Mission Bible College

Saved By Faith and Hospitality. By Joshua W. Jipp. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7505-1. xiii + 206pp. £16.99.

Joshua Jipp's book sports a provocative title inspired by the early Christian book of 1 Clement (p. xii). However, to contrast this statement directly with *Sola Fide* would present a false dichotomy. Rather he emphasises that hospitality to strangers is at the core of the Christian faith (p. 2). Following his introduction, Jipp first examines divine hospitality in Luke-Acts, Paul, and John before moving on to talk about human hospitality. He is primarily an exegete (p. 9) and that comes through clearly in his approach which is saturated with references to biblical texts and explanations of these. At the end of each chapter he concludes with a series of 'study questions' for the reader to think through. The book is a valuable reminder of the hospitality of God and the need for the church to model this hospitality.

His first chapter examines divine hospitality in Luke-Acts. He demonstrates that many elements of hospitality (food, meals, houses, and travelling) pervade these books. Through Jesus' words and actions during the Last Supper in Luke, hospitality is even seen to encompass Jesus' death (pp. 25–26). In his examination of Acts he shows how divine hospitality continues through the church after the resurrection. Towards the end of the chapter he examines what this means for the church today. He argues that the identity of the church as recipients of divine hospitality means sharing hospitality with others indiscriminately. This necessitates embracing the stigma of those whom society treats as outcasts.

He then moves on to divine hospitality in Paul. He argues that the church's experience of divine hospitality is the foundation for its identity and this is the identity that transcends all social distinctions leading to unity in diversity. He claims Paul argues 'that those who have experienced God's hospitality extended to them in the saving death of Christ are called upon to lay down their rights, privileges, and preferences as a means of loving and welcoming their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.' (p. 54). He argues that those with higher status need to lower themselves so as to make all people feel welcome.

In his chapter on John he demonstrates again the offer of divine hospitality in the life of Jesus. In John the elements of 'wine, water, bread, foot washing, and home are used to express humanity's deep desire and need for God and the overcoming of that which separates humanity from God and life.' (p. 82). Those who receive hospitality from God are then to be those who share this with others. He demonstrates this with Jesus' foot washing in John 13.

In his remaining three chapters he discusses three threats to hospitality that are challenged by this biblical model. He names these areas as 'tribalism', 'xenophobia', and 'greed'. In his chapter on tribalism he discusses the need for Christians to not just be hosts, but also submit to be guests to others. This means entering into their homes, practices, and cultures. He is careful to point out that this is not indiscriminate, that there are limits to what we enter into (p. 101), but he does not flesh this out thoroughly.

Sodom and Gomorrah receives its inevitable mention in the chapter on xenophobia, along with Gibeah (Judges 19). As positive models he presents Ruth and the legislations of the Torah. This sets up an effective argument for the present church to welcome the stranger in its midst including those outside the faith — this offer is not simply a covert evangelism. This model receives a thorough grounding in Jesus' indiscriminate hospitality to those who both accepted and rejected him.

In addressing greed he discusses the prevailing culture of economic scarcity. That is, in our consumerist culture we tend to operate under the assumption that resources are scarce and we need to protect ourselves. He presents divine hospitality as the antithesis in presenting a model of economic abundance — we are to share resources because God knows what we need and when we need it and can provide. One of the examples he employs here is the offering collected for the Jerusalem church (2 Cor. 8–9). The model of economic abundance rejects the idea that the receiver is obligated to provide some sort of return for the gift. Instead, God will provide the return.

Occasionally Jipp relied on unusual readings of the text. However, his main points stand apart from these readings. At times his work would benefit from further development of thinking in how principles might be applied in the church. However, he does give a number of examples which may stimulate the reader to think of how they may practice divine hospitality. Overall, I commend this book for its valuable biblical exegesis and critique of hospitality practices.

Philip D. Foster, University of Edinburgh

The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation. By Rod Dreher. New York: Sentinel. ISBN: 978-0-73521-329-6. x + 262pp. £13.95.

To live in a Western country today means living in an increasingly post-Christian nation. Many of us have struggled from time to time with what it means to live as a Christian in such a nation. This problem is often exemplified in questions raised by the continuing sexual revolution.

Dreher wrote *The Benedict Option* in response to the question of how to live in a post-Christian nation. The book is inspired by the rule for living developed by the monk Benedict of Nursia who lived at the turn of the 6th Century. Dreher's stated purpose is 'to wake up the church and to encourage it to act to strengthen itself, while there is still time' (p. 3). Although his target audience is decidedly American and he comes from a Roman Catholic-Orthodox perspective, the ideas in the book will be of value to Evangelical Christians living in the post-Christian West.

The Benedict Option is divided into two major sections. Following on from Dreher's introductory chapter, the first section forms the first three chapters. In order, these chapters cover the 'challenge of post-Christian America' as he sees it, the philosophical and theological developments that led to this point, and how the Rule of Saint Benedict can be appropriated for believers today. The second section fills the larger part of the book and covers chapters 4 to 10. Through these chapters Dreher seeks to elaborate on how the Rule can be applied to modern, theologically traditional Christians of all churches and confessions. He writes 'The Rule offers insights in how to approach politics, faith, family, community, education, and work' (p. 5). He also gives examples of groups who have already implemented or begun to implement the ideas he is advocating. Dreher ends the second section by devoting two chapters to contemporary issues of sex and technology.

The first section begins with an outline of recent political developments in the United States of America linked to religious freedoms which have shocked the church. It also covers statistics on theological understandings of American Christians. For example, Dreher references a 2011 study by Christian Smith which 'found that only 40 percent of young Christians sampled said that their personal moral beliefs were grounded in the Bible or some other religious sensibility' (p. 11). Dreher adds that 'It's unlikely that the beliefs of even these faithful are biblically coherent.' Dreher then compares this current crisis to the crisis the church faced after Rome was sacked in the 5th Century which led to the founding of the Benedictine order in 529.

Dreher then moves on to discuss the roots of the crisis. According to Dreher the roots of the crisis can be traced to the fourteenth century. He identifies 'five landmark events' beginning in that century:

- In the fourteenth century, the loss of belief in the integral connection between God and Creation — or in philosophic terms, transcendent reality and material reality

- The collapse of religious unity and religious authority in the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century

- The eighteenth-century Enlightenment, which displaced the Christian religion with the cult of Reason, privatized religious life, and inaugurated the age of democracy

- The Industrial Revolution (ca. 1760–1840) and the growth of capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

- The Sexual Revolution (1960–present) (p. 23)

After outlining these different areas and the effects they have had on the Christian faith, Dreher leads the reader into a discussion of the Rule and how it could benefit the church. Essentially the idea of the Rule is 'to order one's life to be as receptive as possible to God's grace, both individually and in community' (p. 47).

In his third chapter, Dreher discusses the Rule, explaining through conversation with modern Benedictine monks, its different emphases. The areas he discusses are: order, prayer, work, asceticism, stability, community, hospitality, and balance. In the evangelical church many of us would turn our noses at ideas of asceticism and the like. However, Dreher provides a thought provoking defence of such practices. We train to become good at certain things. Dreher presents asceticism as follows: 'Relearning asceticism–that is, how to suffer for the faith–is critical training for Christians living in the world today and the world of the near future' (p. 65).

After discussing the Rule, Dreher moves on to the second section of his book. In this section he applies the Rule to the following areas of modern society: politics, faith, family, community, education, work, sex, and technology. I felt it more important to highlight the premise of the book at greater length so these areas will not be discussed here. Suffice to say that he applies the rule in a thought provoking and valuable way, not advocating a full-scale withdrawal from society, but arguing for greater separation than we have currently. This greater separation is in order to maintain our faith in the world. 'If we are going to be for the world as Christ meant for us to be, we are going to have to spend more time away from the world, in deep prayer and substantial spiritual training – just as Jesus retreated to the desert to pray before ministering to the people' (p. 19).

The reader will need to wrestle with whether or not they consider Dreher to be a bit too alarmist. For example, he writes 'Christ promised

that the gates of Hell would not prevail against His church, but He did not promise that Hell would not prevail against His church *in the West*. That depends on us, and the choices we make right here, right now' (p. 5). Although he may be too alarmist, he does present reason for alarm, and at minimum deserves to have his presentation thoughtfully considered. Has the Evangelical church lost something in the attempts to reject unhelpful theologies that have been tied to liturgy and ascetic behaviours? How long will we in the West continue to live out materialist and consumerist lives with few qualms? Although the reader will need to push past a few grammatical errors, I would recommend Dreher's book. Overall I found it to be an inspiring read.

Philip D. Foster, University of Edinburgh

The Persistence of God's Endangered Promises. By Allan J. McNicol. London: Bloomsbury. ISBN: 978-0-5676-7758-7. xiii + 228pp. £75.

Allan J. McNicol's book is his response to what he sees as a crisis in Biblical Theology introduced by the Enlightenment. The problem he seeks to address is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. In his opinion the best way to tie these together is through the theme of the persistence of God's endangered promises. However, his position on historical issues will be jarring to many evangelical Christians. He adopts positions which, if they do not compromise the orthodox understanding of God, surely come close to doing so. This work may, however, have value for the evangelical biblical theologian.

McNicol begins by highlighting his problem of apparent disunity and his proposal for solving the issue. He proposes that the Bible be read as a 'realistic narrative'. In such a reading the truth of the work is not contingent 'on the presumed factuality of any particular history-like event or incident' (p. 28). In some sense, everything in the Bible, historical or not, draws the reader into 'absolute reality'.

He takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of how he sees the narrative of the OT focusing on the theme of God's endangered promises before focusing more fully on the NT. It is relatively easy to follow the thrust of his argument here. As the story of the OT unfolds there are numerous threats to the promises of God. However, despite these threats the promises persist.

Before discussing the narrative of the NT, McNicol discusses Jesus and his mission within the Second Temple context. He then moves on to discuss how the portions of the NT writings relate to the theme of God's endangered promises. He spends a chapter on each of the following sections: Matthew; Paul; Luke-Acts; Mark; key non-Pauline letters; and

Johannine works. Across it all he demonstrates that the church is considered to be a part of the story of Israel. The church is a partial fulfilment of God's promises, with the final fulfilment awaiting the second coming. In some sense then the promises are still endangered:

> as God's people await ultimate fulfilment they learn the promises will remain endangered until the full glory of the kingdom emerges. Luke and John wrestle with what this means for traditional Israel while writings like Mark and 1 Peter focus on implications for the Gentiles. In all these writings the earlier narrative of the persistence of God's endangered promises in Hebrew scripture is recapitulated and reaffirmed in new and wider dimensions. This reading of the two Testaments not only brings coherence to the biblical narrative but demands they be united together. (p. 212)

This book has honourable intentions. However, the historical-critical position from which McNicol works is completely integrated into the work. For the reader who disagrees with the underlying assumptions, it is often difficult to see how the work is of benefit. One major issue I found with the work was a failure to ask how much of the Biblical story must be historically based for the Christian to be able to trust it as truth.

Here I intend to demonstrate more clearly the position he works from, and further highlight this issue. In discussing the covenant with Israel McNicol writes 'Ultimately, whatever constituted the origin of Israel entering into covenant with Yahweh to live by Torah it is clear that its observance spawned a narrative that frames the Pentateuch' (p. 35). In discussing the conquest of the land, McNicol resorts to describing the genocide texts as being metaphorical 'Their function is not to relate actual descriptions of warfare' (p. 65) instead it was to emphasise the need to be separate from the practices of the other cultures. It seems part of the motivation for this reading comes from the texts being troubling for today's readers: 'Especially for Westerners it is troubling in this post-colonial era to read about Yahweh fighting on behalf of Israel against native populations' (p. 64).

The issue of what actually happened becomes the elephant in the room when he discusses Jesus in chapter 5. Jesus seems to lose all divine attributes. McNicol's Jesus is a product of his upbringing in esoteric circles 'Guided by his eschatological outlook Jesus was convinced that Israel was in a time of crisis' (p. 88). His text is full of hints that Jesus did not comprehend his divine mission. For example he writes that Jesus 'began to conclude that "this generation" will have to answer for its tepid response or even hostility to his mission' (p. 88). He demonstrates a belief that Jesus' plans changed in response to this hostility (pp. 88–89).

His presentation assumes some historical aspects, but in suggesting the narrative need not be historical one needs to answer the question of how historical it needs to be in order to truthfully convey 'absolute reality'. With regard to Jesus, the Bible presents him as aware of his ancestry from a young age (Luke 2:49) and of his mission from the beginning of his ministry (hence his baptism). Therefore, one may wonder whether Scripture is regarded as authoritative when even the incarnate divine character is presented as initially mistaken as to his mission.

Philip D. Foster, University of Edinburgh

The 'Fellowship of Trial': Religious Rhetoric in World War One: The Sermons and Poetry of Revd Walter Mursell, Minister of Thomas Coats Memorial Baptist Church, Paisley. By Brian R. Talbot. (John Howard Shakespeare Memorial Paper 2017). United Board History Project, 2017. 42pp. £3.50.

Many readers may recall when Karl Barth famously proclaimed, 'Pastors […] must aim their guns [i.e. their messages] beyond the hills of relevance' (*Homiletics*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1991, p. 119). So too thought many of the congregants who listened to the sermons of Scottish Baptist minister, Walter Mursell. Mursell, it seems, thought differently from Barth. Five short weeks after Britain declared a state of war on 4 August 1914, Mursell began a series of war related sermons. The series included titles such as: 'Intercession during Wartime' on 6 September, 'The Duty of Courage' on 13 September, 'The Red Cross' on 20 September, and the 'The Fellowship of Trial' on 27 September. The final sermon listed here ('The Fellowship of Trial') is where Talbot's lecture derives its name. In this sermon Mursell challenged his congregation as Paul did to Timothy, 'As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, accept your share of suffering' (II Tim. 2:3). Talbot maintains this sermon best characterizes Mursell's attitude to the war (p. 41).

What constitutes this printed lecture? Talbot's lecture features some biographical elements, some denominational history, and some literary-theological analysis of Mursell's sermons and poetry as they relate to the First World War. The paper is divided as follows: Introduction; Walter Mursell: his background and ministry; His sermons and poems at the beginning of the war; His sermons and poems towards the end of the war; and Walter Mursell and the personal impact of the war. For source material, Talbot draws from Mursell's books of sermons and poetry, including: *The Waggon and the Star* (1903), *Afterthoughts* (1914), *The Bruising of Belgium and Other Sermons During War Time* (1915), *Ports in the Storm* (1919), and *Echoes of Strife* (1919). He supplements Mursell's own writ-

ings with excerpts from denominational records, journals, magazines, and newspaper articles, as primary sources. He discursively includes a number of secondary sources, as well.

Who might be interested in this lecture? Those interested in the study of the First World War are offered a view 'from the inside' of a significant churchman, who arguably influenced the opinions of his contemporaries. Pastors may find Mursell's sermons either exemplary or find themselves agreeing with Barth's perspective. Still, preachers will need to develop ways of thinking about war, as Jesus reminds his Church, 'There will be wars and rumours of wars' (Matt. 24:6). Additionally, I imagine it will interest those in Scottish studies, those concerned with Baptist theology in history, and those concerned with the ways in which religious rhetoric is used in times of war and peace. For an example of his rhetoric, Mursell wrote in one sermon, 'I do not hesitate to say […] that Belgium is Christ to us today – Christ clothed in modern garb, Christ represented in the unspeakable need of his hunted brethren […] Christ a refugee, holding out imploring hands for help in desperate extremity' (p. 21).

Overall, I found Talbot's lecture convincing. His project's aim to 'determine if the [themes and emphases Mursell raised] were representative of the views of the wider Baptist constituency in Scotland' (p. 5) provides valuable insight into aspects of shared Scottish interpretation of the war. At first seeing the war as 'unexpected and unwelcome' (p. 12), Mursell seems to be representative of other Scots in his belief that supporting war efforts is a moral imperative. Finally, on the other side of the massive loss, the war is seen to have left an indelible mark on the Baptist church and the world. Talbot balances his own narrative comments with key quotations, which invite readers into the changing attitudes of the early twentieth century. More critically, this publication appears unpolished, as small infelicities of style can distract. Further with a stronger developing line of argument this work would better serve readers.

Kyle Lincoln, University of Edinburgh

The Mind of the Spirit: Paul's Approach to Transformed Thinking. By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9776-8. xliii + 402pp. £24.57

In this study, Craig Keener provides a thorough engagement with Paul's view of the mind. Drawing upon a wealth of scholarly learning and a vast range of sources, Keener sets Paul's theology of the mind in its first-century context and draws out numerous exegetical and theological insights. Although disciplined historical work forms the core of this study, the

reader is also invited and exhorted to consider the relevance and pastoral implications of Paul's vision for the church of today.

Across eight chapters, each addressing a key Pauline text, we are invited to trace Paul's distinctive approach to the mind. We are shown how Paul perceives the condition of the mind apart from Christ and then the mind as transformed and renewed through an identification, by faith, with Christ, and the presence and working of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we find engagement with texts such as Romans 1:18–32 and 7:22–25 which present Paul's understanding of the negative and futile characteristics of the mind apart from Christ, amongst pagans and Jews respectively. These chapters serve as a foil for an exploration of Paul's positive construal of the mind as transformed by faith in Christ (Rom. 6:11). Keener unpacks how Paul demonstrates that this transformed mind, in contrast to the mind of the flesh, is of Christ and of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5–7). A series of texts are expounded to demonstrate Paul's conviction that the exercise of the Christian mind leads to both wisdom and renewal in the life of the believer (Rom. 12:1–3; 1 Cor. 2:15–16). Furthermore, we see how, for Paul, the mind is integral to the life and unity of the church and how believers are called to frame all thought and contemplation in the light of the heavenward hope found in Christ (Phil. 2:1–5; 3:19–21; 4:6–8; Col. 3:1–2).

The chapter in which Keener considers Romans 7:22–25, exemplifies the merits of the study as a whole. It is the longest chapter of the book; an appropriate measure given the interpretive quandaries arising from this text. Keener contends that Paul is offering an account of the mind of the flesh under the law. Whilst readers may demur from this or that interpretive decision (e.g. who is the 'I' in Rom. 7:7–25?), Keener is far from strident; at each point in the argument alternative positions are presented and his conclusions are responsibly cautious. The judicious inclusion of an excursus on 'flesh', setting Paul's usage of the term alongside Stoic and Jewish sources, is employed to good effect, inviting the reader to delve deeper into finer points of interpretation without distracting from the central thrust of the argument. Moreover, Keener's prodigious use of footnotes is indicative of a near-exhaustive engagement with ancient texts from both the Jewish and Graeco-Roman milieu. This attentiveness to Paul's first-century context allows a fresh and clear delineation of the apostle's unique approach to questions, shared by Jews and pagans, concerning the relationship between the mind, passions, and the Law.

In a postscript, Keener suggests some pastoral implications. Specifically, the reader is urged to critique contemporary epistemologies, worldviews, and indeed, much Christian teaching, on the shared charge that they fail to respond to the full scope and coherence of Paul's teaching concerning the transformed mind. Moreover, Keener encourages inter-

disciplinary work to bridge the gap between theology and psychology. This postscript indicates why an ongoing neglect of this aspect of Paul's thought and theology would be to the detriment of the church. Therefore, this work has relevance not merely for students of Paul's writings, theology, and context, but also for preachers, pastors, and other church leaders.

Tim Sinclair, Partick Trinity Church of Scotland, Glasgow

The Disruption of Evangelicalism: The Age of Torrey, Mott, McPherson and Hammond. By Geoffrey R. Treloar. Downers Grove, USA: InterVarsity Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780830825844. 334pp. £19.99.

If one is to write the history of the evangelical movement as it existed in the English-speaking world in the first half of the twentieth century, there are two immediate challenges to be faced. The first is to locate a suitable standpoint from which to appraise this transoceanic movement entailing Britain, 'Greater Britain' (the then-Empire extending to the South Pacific Antipodes, Canada and South Africa) and the USA. A historian situated in Britain or America might struggle mightily to overcome a tendency to dwell most on developments close at hand and upon abundant archival material most easily accessed. A second challenge is to navigate one's way through an abundance of earlier accounts (most focused upon single regions) the writing of which was occasioned by the felt need to explain (after the fact) how the disintegration of the broadly evangelical Protestantism which was such a force in the Victorian age necessitated new structures.

Geoffrey Treloar, the Australian historian best known for his impressive work on the labours of nineteenth century New Testament scholar, J.B. Lightfoot, *Lightfoot the Historian* (1998), has succeeded magnificently in meeting both of these named challenges. From an Australian standpoint in what was earlier reckoned part of 'Greater Britain' and assiduous library work in Canada, the USA and the UK, he has composed a compelling account taking in the vicissitudes and the larger-than-life personalities which exerted powerful influence upon the transoceanic evangelical family across a half-century. Attempting to fill the role of an irenic interlocutor, he has sifted through massive amounts of literature which both defended the fragmentation of evangelicalism in the post WWI world as something necessary and pointed the finger of blame at the combative leaders who (it is argued) accelerated the process.

This is not absolutely new territory. The American Presbyterian historian, Bradley Longfield explored it as regards his own American constituency in his fine work of 1991, *The Presbyterian Controversy*. The British writer, Keith Ives, has drawn attention to the theological polarities open-

ing up in British Nonconformity as displayed in the now-defunct *British Weekly* (*The Voice of Nonconformity* 2011). What is new (and especially commendable) about this IVP volume (itself a constituent part of a five-volume series) is its geographic 'reach'. The dominant broadly evangelical Protestantism which exerted so much influence and which so much reflected the sensibilities of the Victorians did not simply expire: it fragmented in the face of the new challenges posed by natural science, biblical criticism and war. The basic issues were the same whether one lived in Sydney or Toronto, in Manchester or Chicago. One detects that in Treloar's estimation, this fragmentation was by no means inevitable and that even where it produced polarities of thought and proclamation, these did not necessarily lead to the dividing of denominations. It must be noted that Treloar has excelled in mining books and religious periodicals from this period to an uncommon degree.

It is appropriate to draw attention to several admirable features of the book. Never before has the reviewer read in one place chapters (6, 7 and 8) that distilled so much from so many sources about evangelical Christianity's engagement with the Great War (1914–1918). Evangelical concerns about the already-current breakup of doctrinal consensus did not prevent keen support for a war effort waged in defence of what was still reckoned to be a 'Christian civilization'. Similarly, these same concerns (considerably accentuated by the 1920s) did not hinder evangelical Christianity's determined post-war efforts to be engaged in reconstruction of the world order through the League of Nations and negotiations for disarmament.

Similarly, Treloar offers the reader much food for thought in surveying how Christian mission needed to reconnoitre in the post-Great War period (chap. 11). 'Christian' Europe had besmirched the Christian message by its war of attrition which drew in colonial troops from Africa and the Indian subcontinent. The Paris Peace Talks of 1919 did not extend to colonial domains as it did to Eastern Europe the self-determination pled for by Woodrow Wilson. And after 1917, the Soviet Union began exporting Communism with a missionary zeal of its own.

Perhaps most refreshing of all was a late chapter (12) maintaining that, in spite of the 'mea culpas' which began to be issued by evangelicals in the late 1940s about the neglect of social ministry, the overwhelming evidence suggests that most expressions of evangelical Christianity never repudiated this expression of the Gospel and took it seriously.

In sum, here is a book that holds out great explanatory power. If we are predisposed to think that the theological polarities which so dominate church life in the Western world today have been perpetual fixtures, Treloar helps us to see that the first half of the twentieth century was an era which — for all its tensions — still had Christian people of clearly differ-

ing tendencies in conversation with one another. Christians of evangelical sympathies but who had made accommodations over questions of science and biblical criticism (liberal evangelicals, Treloar terms them) continued to be an important and influential constituency well past mid-century.

Every book has some loose threads and this one does also. Pentecostal Christians will with some justification wonder why their global movement (officially traceable to 1906) is introduced late (as a mere portion of chap. 10) and primarily in connection with the career of the flamboyant Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944). Those interested in the theological controversies of the late Victorian period will justifiably take the view that the continuity between those struggles and those which so polarized in the era of the Great War has gone under-recognized. And, for all its attempts to portray an English-speaking evangelical movement not overly-equated with Britain or America, we still have a book whose subtitle heralds three Americans and an Irishman transplanted to Australia.

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Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity. By Andrew F. Walls. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-62698-258-1. xii + 284pp. £26.99.

The name of Andrew F. Walls is revered within the field of Mission Studies and the development of the discipline of 'World Christianity'. Despite his significance as a towering figure in the academic area, Walls is not known primarily for major academic publications. In fact, it might well be said that Walls, like Paul the apostle, has produced 'living publications' in the form of the many students he has supervised and encouraged over the years. Yet Walls has published many papers in various journals and other publications, many of which would not be easily accessible to most readers. In recent decades, two collections of Walls's essays were published: *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (1996) and *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (2002). Now, after a long wait, a third collection has been produced, edited by Mark Gornik, Director of the City Seminary, New York. Without doubt, this collection will be warmly welcomed both for the inherent value of the essays and as a further testament and tribute to the pioneering work that Walls has done.

The essays are grouped into three main parts: 'The Transmission of Christian Faith', 'Africa in Christian Thought and History', and 'The Missionary Movement and the West'. The topics discussed by Walls reflect the range of his interests. Essay titles include, 'World Christianity and the Early Church', 'Towards a Theology of Migration', 'The Discovery of "African Traditional Religion" and Its Impact on Religious Studies',

'Kwame Bediako and Christian Scholarship in Africa, and 'The Future of Missiology—Missiology as Vocation'. Some of the essays reflect personal friendships and collaboration (with Kwame Bediako and Harold Turner) and Walls's interest in and association with Sierra Leone is marked with the essay, 'A Christian Experiment: The Early Sierra Leone Colony'. The essay 'Missions and the English Novel' is an interesting discussion of mission and missionaries as portrayed in some classic English fiction. Several essays focus on notable figures in the history of mission: one discusses John and Charles Wesley (evidence of Walls's Methodist affiliation and his passion for hymnody), another looks at Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd. I was pleased, having a strong connection to the Eastern Cape of South Africa, to see the inclusion of an essay that discusses Tiyo Soga.

Walls writes in an engaging style. In his introduction to the book, he writes, 'This book […] is a ragbag, reminiscent of those bags of my grandmother's day that held strips of cloth from miscellaneous sources to be used for making clootie mats (rugs, warm if dust retaining)' (p. ix). He also comments in the introduction on his thoughts about the term 'World Christianity', noting that he is 'a late convert to the use of the term' (p. ix). Sometimes Walls includes personal reflections, in which he is gently self-deprecating. For example, in the first essay, Walls recounts his decision, in choosing the topic of his doctoral dissertation, to focus on a fragmentary Latin text of a Greek original, rather than one of the other versions in Coptic, Arabic or Ethiopic. He comments, 'And so, following conventional wisdom, I missed an important point about the early church that the history of this text illustrated: its vast geographical spread and linguistic diversity' (p. 3).

Some themes run through more than one essay, even to the point of similar phrasing. One of these themes is Walls's conviction that Western theology has been dominated by an Enlightenment worldview, and that theology must take more account of spiritual realities that are 'bracketed out in an Enlightenment worldview' (p. 47). He comments, 'It is not that Western theology is wrong; it is simply too small for the operating systems of Africa (and indeed, of most of the world) (p. 47). Walls continues, 'Perhaps we need to consider more deeply what Paul calls the principalities and powers in charge of the course of the world, yet defeated by the Resurrection of Christ and dragged behind the triumphal chariot of the cross' (p. 48, with reference to Colossians 1:13–15). This is a helpful emphasis, when taken as part of the whole scriptural account of the work of Christ, and several recent scholars have given more attention to Christ's victory over the Powers in their writings. While I welcome Walls's call to learn from the 'big universe' of Africa, I am not convinced that it is helpful

to regard the category of 'ancestor' as a valuable concept in developing Christian theology. In the same essay, Walls adds,

> Perhaps a richer theology of the family, one that has a place for the ancestors, will come as richer family reality of Africa and Asia than the atomised one of modernity. African Christianity may help us to reflect more on the Lord's words about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: 'He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. (p. 48)

I would like to hear the response of African and Asian theologians as to whether the concept of ancestor can be used without importing with it aspects of indigenous beliefs and practices that would stand in tension with Christian confession. Nonetheless, Walls's citation from Luke 20:37–38 highlights his readiness to face his readers with challenging ideas from the text of Scripture as well as from African culture.

I would encourage readers who wish to understand the contours of the church today, of World Christianity, to read this book. It is not intended to be a systematic introduction to the topic. Other books accomplish that task more effectively. What this book does is to bring the reader into contact with a brilliant and fresh thinker who wishes to draw together Scripture, voices from the early church, the lessons of mission history, and the perspectives of contemporary Christians throughout the whole world, so that the church of Jesus Christ will grow and thrive. There is much to learn here.

At the time of writing, Walls recently marked his ninetieth birthday. He comments in his opening remarks to this book, 'My deepest gratitude must be for the privilege of being allowed for so long to move around the amazing workshop in which the renewal and construction of World Christianity has been taking place. *Gratias Domino refero*' (p. xii). In his concluding essay, he asks the question, 'Is there any more exciting vocation at the present time than missiology?' If the implied answer ('no'!) is correct, then that is in no small measure thanks to the work of Andrew Walls. Many will echo his expression of thankfulness to God for his life and work.

Alistair I. Wilson, Edinburgh Theological Seminary