

REFORMATION TODAY



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195

CAREY CONFERENCE

6-8 January 2004

Hayes Conference Centre
Swanwick, Derbyshire

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Front cover: *Students of SETIA Seminary, Jakarta, Indonesia, (see News). The primary purpose at SETIA is to train students to be church planters. So far 450 churches have been planted by those who have trained at SETIA. The aim is to plant 7,000 churches mostly in villages by 2030.*

Back cover: *This is a map of Indonesia much reduced in size which points to 23 clusters of unreached people groups. A mammoth task faces the universal Church if the Great Commission is to be obeyed and fulfilled.*

Editorial

Ian McNaughton provides us with a helpful broad historical overview of antinomianism. This is important as a way by which we measure every new teaching on that subject (see review by James Renihan). Pastor McNaughton concentrates on the Baptist side of the debate. The full account of what occurred among the Puritans is recorded in the classic work by E F Kevan with the title *The Grace of Law*. This was republished by *Soli Deo Gloria* in 1999. Therein is described the emergence of antinomianism in 1643. At least nineteen books from both sides were published between 1643 and 1656. Most of them carried colourful titles such as Thomas Gataker's *Shadows without Substance* (1646) and the reply to that by John Saltmarsh *Sparkles of Glory* (1647).

The controversy re-surfaced in 1690 when Richard Baxter wrote again on this subject which resulted in nine more books on the theme of antinomianism in the decade ending in 1700. From this we observe that a multiplicity of words characterises this controversy. For every hundred words you may write to defend the Puritan position do not be surprised to receive 1000 back!

This expense of time must not detract from the importance of the subject. It is imperative to hold the law and grace in biblical balance. The headings of E F Kevan's chapters signal the great breadth of this subject:

THE LAW OF GOD FOR MAN, THE LAW AND SIN,
THE PLACE OF THE LAW IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD,
THE END OF THE LAW,
THE CONTINUANCE OF MORAL OBLIGATION,
CHRISTIAN LAW-KEEPING, PERFECT FREEDOM.

Samuel Bolton's *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (1645) republished as a Banner of Truth paperback of 224 pages, is commended as the clearest exposition comprehending all the central issues.

With regard to the review by Jim Renihan the following observations are apposite:

- a) We are not accusing Wells and Zaspel of being antinomians in an absolute sense.
- b) We are questioning their rejection of the 10 Commandments as the moral law.
- c) We can see historically that the Reformed tradition (including Particular Baptists) embraced the 10 Commandments (including number 4). While

the 1644 only emphasises the commands of Christ (and so might at first sight be seen to support the *New Covenant Theology* position), in fact Spilisbury supported the Sabbath, and Knollys and Kiffin signed both the 1644/46 and the 1689 Confessions. The 1689's position on the moral law is clear.

The Threefold Division of the Law is expounded by Jonathan Bayes in RT 177. In that issue there is a review of *The Weakness of the Law* by Dr Bayes. and also a fine exposition on *The Didactic Use of the Law* by Joel Beeke and Ray Lanning.

Should Christians be Green?

Over the last ten to twenty years 'Green issues' have become prominent. Concern for the environment or 'Green Movement' continues to grow and attracts a wide range of support. Young people are taught about environmental matters such as recycling. Encouragement to active involvement in environmentalism is present in the school syllabus, through the sciences, geography and social studies. What does the Bible say about ecology? Our answer to that is the Bible is a book in which the central theme is redemption but at the same time the Bible represents a world view in which God is sovereign over every realm. Obviously that includes his creation and care of the cosmos. The Bible begins with creation and ends with the new creation. That there will be a new creation does not absolve us from caring for and preserving this one. While evolutionists attribute the glories of creation to blind chance we extol God for his glory displayed in creation. One way in which we do this is with psalms and hymns. Psalm 148 from the *Book of Praises* is an example. It goes well to the tune Camberwell.

Praise the LORD from heaven, praise him in the heights;
Praise him, all his angels; praise him, stars and lights;
Praise him, skies and waters, which forever stand
In your changeless order by his sole command.

From the earth sing praises: creatures of the seas,
Lightning, hail and snowstorms, mountains, rocks and trees;
Praise him, beasts and cattle, all created things,
Young and old together, people and their kings.

Praise the LORD of glory, praise his matchless worth,
Praise his name exalted over heaven and earth:
Praise him, all his people, by his power restored,
Drawn to know and love him: praise him, praise the LORD!

Is Grace Resistible or Irresistible?

Erroll Hulse

The gospel invitation is proclaimed to all the world and is addressed to everyone who hears the message. All without exception are invited to come and drink the water of life freely. With this universal call goes an effectual call by which the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner. He is drawn to Christ. His understanding is enlightened and he is convicted of his need to repent and believe. It is true that fallen mankind resists the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Hence Genesis 6:3, 'My Spirit shall not contend with man forever.' At the time of his martyrdom Stephen said of his hostile Jewish persecutors that they always resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51).

The grace that saves penetrates through this resistance and works a work of regeneration in the soul of the sinner. It is in that saving sense that this work is irresistible.

Irresistible grace is described as a call which comes from God the Father. 'God who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord is faithful' (1 Cor 1:9). Paul humbles the contentious and divisive Corinthians by reminding them of their call, 'Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him' (1 Cor 1:26-29).

The effectual calling of God the Father is expressed in 2 Timothy 1:9, 'who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we

have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time’.

Irresistible grace is likened to the wind. According to the words of our Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit blows where he wills to bring new birth (John 3). Irresistible grace is expressed in the *2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith*, chapter 10, as effectual calling. In the first paragraph the issue is summed up in the words, ‘God takes away their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh’ (Ezek 36:26,27).

This effectual call is ascribed to God the Father who brings believers into union with Christ. It is through this union that the new birth is worked by the direct agency and power of the Holy Spirit. Behind this work is the purpose of the Father. Hence, ‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us the new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Peter 1:3). The finished work of Christ consummated in the resurrection is the basis of the application of all good to believers (1 Cor 1:30).

New life described by Jesus as ‘eternal life’ (John 3:16) begins with a spiritual resurrection and is consummated in the resurrection of the physical body when all sinful tendencies and remnants will be left behind. The spiritual resurrection is described by Paul as follows: ‘But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus’ (Eph 2:4-6). This is followed by describing the spiritual resurrection from the dead, as a creation: ‘For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus’ (Eph 2:10).

Natural man in his fallen state is dead in sin and will only and always resist the truth. Hence the new birth can be described as a superlative gift. The term ‘irresistible’ can convey a wrong meaning. The grace of new birth, or regeneration, is not brought about by compulsion or by force. Stephen Charnock states it like this: ‘The Holy Spirit removes the prejudices against Christ as undesirable, against holiness as troublesome; takes down the strength of corrupt reasonings, pulls down those idols of the mind, and false notions of happiness, out-reasons men out of their inward thoughts of

a happiness in sensual pleasures, pride of life, mammon of honour and wealth, which are the root of our spiritual disease, and first to be cured.¹

There is a preparatory work to the new birth which John Owen reduces to three aspects: illumination, conviction and reformation (John Owen, *Works* vol 3 p 231). But the actual new birth is an instantaneous work which, as has just been noted, is a new creation (Eph 2:10; 2 Cor 5:17). The sovereignty of God in this new creation is clearly asserted in Scripture. 'God made you alive with Christ' (Col 2:13).

This omnipotent work of new birth is hidden and mysterious. As Jesus says, the Holy Spirit is like the wind which you cannot see although you see the effects as on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 were wonderfully converted. Stephen, whose sermon is recorded in greater detail than Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, did not see one conversion on that day of his martyrdom (Acts 7). On the contrary he received the stones of hate hurled at him to kill him. Stephen's dying prayer for his persecutors was that they might be forgiven. Standing there that day was Saul of Tarsus. What an immense difference that one man made in the establishment of the Church! Think for instance, of Paul's role in the missionary programme of the apostolic Church and also the proportion of the New Testament Scriptures ascribed to him. In terms of subsequent achievement we might dare to suggest that the conversion of Paul was greater than all the 3000 converts of the day of Pentecost together. This may help in viewing the tragic early demise of one so talented as Stephen.

God uses means in the new birth as expressed by James, 'He chose to give us birth through the word of truth' (James 1:18) and 'You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God' (1 Peter 1:23). The prayers of God's people are included, to call out from all nations, a people for himself and for the advance of gospel preaching throughout the world. This is part of his grand purpose to bring glory to Christ and reward him for his suffering (Ps 22: 27; Isa 52:11,12 and chapters 54 and 55).

The new birth is a change of nature, described as the removal of the heart of stone (Ezek 36:26) and as the circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6). The

new birth is also described as a cleansing from sin (Titus 3:5; John 3:5). It is a renewal of the mind and of the heart. It is possible for the mind to survey truth and yet be unmoved by the power of that truth. Therefore it is essential that the heart be truly changed. Furthermore many can be moved emotionally, with their religious experience being no more than emotion. This fact has been massively exploited by evangelists who are muddle-headed with regard to the necessity of the Holy Spirit's omnipotent work. They fondly imagine that they can manipulate their hearers and then advertise shallow results which fail the test of time. Often these do more harm than good because those, pressed into decision which is not the same as regeneration, become hardened and view the gospel as something which does not work.

We must not be derogatory about human emotions but we must bear in mind that to be moved emotionally can be temporary and passing especially when there is a charged atmosphere engendered in and by an enthusiastic gathering of people. But the new birth is vastly more than emotion. Such is the extraordinary nature of the new birth that the heart is changed completely from alienation to reconciliation through Christ. Initially this is seen in a 'drawing work' (John 6:44). To quote Charnock again, 'An inexpressible sweetness allures the soul, and an unconquerable power draws the soul; there are clear demonstrations, charming persuasions, and invincible efficacy combined together in this work.'² In this sense there is a work of creation by the Spirit in and under and around the soul of a sinner implanting a new spiritual nature which the Scriptures call 'a new heart' and which is the essence of the new covenant. 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people' (Heb 8:10). This change is permanent. Once a person is born again he or she cannot be 'unborn' again. 'I will inspire them to fear me so that they will never turn away from me' (Jer 32:40).' 'He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion ...' (Phil 1:6).

The precise time of this momentous change is known by some but cannot be pinpointed by others. In all who are born again there is a faith union with Christ. They believe that he is the God-Man (1 John 5:1). They have

an ability to have done with sin (1 John 3:9), to overcome the world (1 John 5:4). And they who are born again love the family of God (1 John 4:7).

The work of regeneration can be illustrated by nations at war. Just prior to D-Day in 1944 when the massed allied forces landed in France to be faced by a vast network of determined resistance: barbed wire, massive fortresses with gun emplacements, mine fields, artillery, tank and infantry regiments, in short the fierce war machine of Hitler's Third Reich. Suppose that a secret peace delegation arrived behind these lines and convinced the Nazi generals that Hitler was like Satan, their cause wicked, their situation doomed and that they should repent and fully surrender forthwith and save their own lives and the lives of their soldiers and the German people. Suppose that from the heart, those generals were convinced inwardly and persuaded and agreed to the terms offered. Would that not have been an astounding event?

But every conversion is like that, because every sinner has his barbed wire defences, his guns and his artillery of resistance. Every sinner has surrounded his soul with defensive and aggressive anti-God arguments. Every unbeliever has his own war machine. No natural man is neutral. That sinners are neutral is a myth. The Holy Spirit alone can breach the aggressive defences of the sinner's soul and work the miracle of new birth which terminates the war with God. The illustration used with regard to D-Day is limited. It would take more than the skills of a peace delegation to convince Nazi generals. A powerful inward work that could come from God alone would be necessary. Nothing else would avail. Again, we should note that new birth precedes repentance and faith. As we have seen, it is God who takes the initiative. The King James Version (KJV) translation of Jeremiah 31:19 points well to the source of repentance and depicts accurately the struggle that goes on in repentance: 'Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, I was confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.'

Is grace resistible? Of course it is. But as I have sought to show, there is an effectual grace which goes round and behind the lines of resistance and

achieves a stupendous new creation. That is why it is sometimes called irresistible.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is one of the most momentous events of history. 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads' (Acts 26:14). Such was Saul's resistance to the truth that he gave his consent to the stoning of Stephen and as Matthew Henry says, 'His rage so swelled against Christians and Christianity, that Jerusalem was too narrow a stage for it to act upon but being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them even to strange cities.' How the change was wrought in Saul we do not know except that he must have, at that time on the road to Damascus, been changed inwardly and born again as are all those who are united to Christ. Saul's resistance was fierce and massive, yet he was turned completely around by effectual grace.

At the International Synod of Dort in 1618, the five points of the Arminian party were debated and formularies published. These are available on the Internet.

Representing the doctrines of Grace, we do not know who the first person was to use the acrostic TULIP in English. The letters spell out:

T - Total Depravity

U - Unconditional Election

L - Limited [Particular] Atonement

I - Irresistible Grace

P - Perseverance of the Saints

In the order of salvation, which comes first, regeneration, or repentance and faith? I trust that the textual work above enables a right answer to be given to that question.

Endnotes

¹ Stephen Charnock on regeneration, Works (Edward Parsons 1815 edition) vol 5, p. 67.

² Ibid p. 81.

Antinomianism in Historical Perspective

Ian McNaughton

(The footnotes are annotated here but to save space are available on the Reformation Today website)

Introduction

The word Antinomianism is used, 'to describe the rejection of the moral law as a relevant part of the Christian experience'.¹ Theologically there are two main forms of Antinomianism. Some argue that the moral law of God is not needed to bring the sinner to repentance. The second group contends that the moral law has no place in the life of the believer and that the law, as a rule of Christian living, does not bind him.² Peter Toon reminds us that 'doctrinal Antinomianism is to be distinguished from practical Antinomianism, which abuses God's grace'.³ This distinction is astute since, for many, their doctrine is very different from their practice, while for others doctrine and practice are very closely linked. In the British and Foreign Evangelical Review (B&FER) article on 'Antinomianism', we are reminded that Antinomians 'have large ideas of Christian liberty, low ideas of sin, and disparaging views of the law'. In this article there is a discerning analysis of the Antinomian mind and it clearly shows that Antinomianism has thrown overboard the moral law as an authoritative guide and rule of life for believers. 'They refuse to see in the Bible any positive laws binding on Christians, and regard themselves as left to the guidance of gospel principles, and the constraint of Christian love'.⁴ The B&FER article reduces Antinomianism to three classes. First, those who believe that Christians can live as they please without 'prejudice to their sanctity'. Secondly, some hold that the moral law has been abrogated and none are subject to its authority. Thirdly, there are those who 'refuse to see in the Bible any positive laws binding on Christians'. Antinomians repudiate the accusation that their doctrine brings believers into a state of sinless perfection but when the theory is pushed to its logical limit the 'believer is under no obligation to love God or man'.⁵

HISTORY OF ANTINOMIANISM

New Testament Times

Throughout the history of the Church the accusation of Antinomianism has been laid upon individuals and groups from time to time. The charge was given to the Gnostic sects such as the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6) in the second century AD.¹¹ From the New Testament it is clear that Antinomianism has infected the Church since apostolic times. The apostles Paul, Peter and James all had things to say to the saints to counter its influence in their lives. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans concludes his defence of justification by faith alone by refuting suggestions that the doctrine of justification leaves room for living contrary to the moral law of God.¹² The apostle Peter has harsh words for those who live Antinomian lifestyles and he forthrightly condemns all those who do so, while the apostle James sees true Christianity in terms of something practical and loving.¹³ The New Testament message on this subject is aptly summed up in this quote from A A Hodge, 'You cannot take Christ for justification, unless you take him for sanctification.'¹⁴

The Reformation and the Magisterial Reformers

The word Antinomianism (*anti*, 'against'; *nomos*, 'law') is said to have been first used by Martin Luther (1483-1546) in his controversy with colleague John Agricola.¹⁵ He exaggerated Luther's emphasis on Christian freedom to the extent of denying the lawful responsibilities of believers.¹⁶ It is said that while Luther was at dinner a letter was handed to him claiming that the law should not be preached in the churches of Germany, because Christians are not justified by it. He replied, 'Such seducers are come already among our people while we live; what will be done after we are gone?'¹⁷ Agricola was a bold man who although he vacillated between orthodoxy and heresy, nevertheless persistently maintained, in opposition to Luther's Commentary on the Galatians, that the law was not to be preached for the purpose of bringing sinners to repentance. Luther's successor Melancthon (1497-1560) regarded Antinomianism as a monster 'that lurked and lay hid [sic] in the church of his times'.¹⁸

John Calvin (1509-1564) wrote against Antinomianism by positing three uses of the moral law.¹⁹ Firstly, the law is like a mirror that shows us our wretchedness. By it we see our impotence and iniquity and the consequences of both - 'by the law is the knowledge of sin' (Rom 3: 23). Calvin, like Augustine, knew that in the absence of the Holy Spirit, 'the law is present only to convict and slay us'.²⁰ The second use of the law is for the restraint of sinners; thus the probate and the elect are restrained.

This acts as a deterrent by denouncing sin and punishing transgressors (1 Tim 1: 9,10).²¹ Thirdly, as to the elect, the law instructs them in holiness and urges obedience because the law is 'like a whip to the flesh and is a constant stimulus'.²² Thus the moral law leads the believer to Christ and, 'under the guidance of the law, terrified and at the prospect of eternal death... he turns to God for mercy'.²³ So when Calvin speaks specifically against Antinomianism he says, 'Some skilful persons...discard the whole law of Moses, and do away with both tables, imagining it unchristian to adhere to a doctrine which contains the ministration of death. Far from our thoughts be this profane notion.' He maintains that the law 'ought to have a better and more excellent effect on the righteous' for it contains 'a perfect pattern of righteousness' and 'rule of life'.²⁴ He concludes this section on Antinomianism by saying, 'The law has lost none of its authority, but must always receive from us the same respect and obedience.'²⁵

New England (1636-1638)

The Antinomian debate in New England brought the issue of the moral law and its relevance to the believer into sharp focus. The debate as K M Campbell rightly posits was 'a theological one; the points at issue were theoretical and theological rather than moral.'²⁶ However it had practical consequences because the Church feared its acceptance would allow or encourage believers to live immoral lives. The main antagonists were Rev John Cotton, an ordained minister of the Church of England, Mrs Anne Hutchinson, a supporter of Cotton who followed him 'across the sea', and the Rev John Wheelwright who was a distant relative of the Hutchinsons from England.²⁷ These antagonists claimed that the Bay Colony Elders gave too great a role to sanctification and that it could amount to no more than a righteousness of one's own. The controversy 'exploded' into life when Wheelwright preached a sermon on 19 January 1637 accusing John Wilson the minister of the Boston church - the largest church in New England - of preaching a 'covenant of works' and not a 'covenant of grace'.²⁸

What fuelled the flames was the argument that those pastors who were accused of being under a covenant of works - i.e. all the pastors except Cotton and Wheelwright himself 'were the enemies of Christ, Philistines, Pharisees'.²⁹ In August 1637 a Synod of Boston churches convened to deal with the problem. Hutchinson also said that all the ministers were legalists with the exception of her two friends, teaching 'that there are not created graces in the believer after union. Before union there is, but after union Christ takes them out of us into

himself.’³⁰ The Synod’s ‘Catalogue of Erroneous Errors’ against their views totalled 82 in number and dealt a heavy blow to the Antinomian party. They persisted in their activities and the general court of election re-convened in November and agreed to expel and disenfranchise John Wheelwright and banish Anne Hutchinson.³¹

In the New England debate of 1637 the key issue was that of assurance and the answer to the enquiry, ‘How do we assess whether a person is a true Christian?’ Calvin taught that assurance came by the witness of the Holy Spirit and by evidence of sanctification in a person’s life. Proponents of Antinomianism deny this latter proof.

Barry Howson gives us four important points of debate in the controversy.³² Firstly, justification and its relation to sanctification. To evidence justification by sanctification is to build, says the Antinomian, my justification on sanctification and to go in for a covenant of works, therefore sanctification on its own is not sufficient evidence of justification. Hutchinson wanted to ‘separate justification from sanctification when it came to assurance of salvation’. Secondly, what is the primary evidence of justification? The Antinomian claims that the only sure evidence of justification must be the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. Works of sanctification could be hypocritical and therefore false evidence. Thirdly, faith and the *ordo salutis*. It is claimed by the Antinomian that faith was a ‘consequence of justification’ and not the active instrument for receiving of grace. If otherwise, the elect’s salvation was based on human works and not free grace. In other words justification by faith alone was in fact being justified by works! Fourthly, uncreated grace as opposed to created grace. The Antinomian denies that God’s grace in the soul (regeneration) brings the elect to faith and repentance by maintaining that it is the Holy Spirit himself that indwells the saint so that ‘the Spirit in effect overrides human participation’.³³

Thus we see that ‘the Antinomians focused on an intimate relationship of oneness or union with Christ, which the Spirit revealed to the person in an immediate experience of faith’.³⁴ However the Scriptures teach that ‘faith is not an act of God; it is not God who believes in Christ for salvation, it is the sinner. God alone regenerates, we alone believe.’³⁵ It is therefore not enough for us to ‘feel’ or ‘think’ that we are forgiven (a subjective notion) there must be a corresponding holy life with humble obedience (an objective evidence). This is the evidence that witnesses to true conversion and new birth. If a professing believer lives like an unsaved person he cannot complain if he is

regarded as one. The Saviour made this clear when He said, 'By their fruits ye shall know them' (Matt 7 v 16-20).³⁶

ANTINOMIANISM AND THE PARTICULAR BAPTISTS

Particular Baptist Leaders

The seventeenth century was a time of great change for the whole of British society. In 1629 Charles I dissolved Parliament for 11 years. During these years he and the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, 'sought to conform the Church of England to Arminian doctrine and sacramental worship'.³⁷ This greatly offended most Puritans. By 1642 the English Parliament and Charles could not agree and the first civil war broke out in 1645. In 1646 Parliament claimed victory because of Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army. The Scots handed Charles to Parliament in 1647 and he was executed by order of the 'Rump' on 30 January 1649. A 10-year experiment with republicanism began in England but ended when Charles II was given the Crown in 1660 by a new 'Convention Parliament'.³⁸

It was during these Revolutionary years that 'radical ideas in religion and politics flourished and the Independents were free to worship'.³⁹ For the new Calvinistic Baptists this was a time of growth and theological controversy. By 1644 the rapid growth of Baptists called forth sustained opposition. However 'the theology of the Particular Baptists was all of a piece with the prevalent Calvinism of the nation and so it offered no obstacle to the mass of Englishmen. In order to distinguish themselves from both the General Baptists and the Anabaptists the Calvinistic Baptists of London determined to prepare and publish a statement of their views.'⁴⁰

The Presbyterians sought through Parliament and the Westminster Assembly to bring about a Presbyterian uniformity of religion.⁴¹ The Assembly met on 1 July 1643 'to complete the reformation in England and to revive English Presbyterianism'.⁴² It consisted of 90 divines, 10 peers, and 20 commoners. It sat until 22 February 1648 and produced a document which 'is the common doctrinal standard of all the Presbyterian Churches in the world of English and Scotch derivation'.⁴³ The Westminster Confession of Faith was the basis from which the Second London Baptist Confession of 1677/89 derived with Baptist modifications.

Three early Baptist leaders are associated with the London Confessions of Faith, the first of whom is John Spilsbury.⁴⁴ Spilsbury formed what was

probably the first Particular Baptist church in London in 1638 after having seceded from Henry Jessey's (1601-1663) London congregation.⁴⁵ Spilsbury signed the *First Confession* in 1644 along with church members George Tipping and Samuel Richardson and is thought by some to be its primary author. The writings of Spilsbury mostly centred on the proper subjects of baptism, but he also confirmed Baptist adherence to the doctrine of Particular Redemption when in 1646 he contended that the Saviour's death was only for the elect. Spilsbury also wrote a treatise (his second) called *God's Ordinance the Saint's Privilege* (1646). It was an attempt to answer the so called 'Seekers' who claimed that the Church had become so corrupt that it had lost, by interruption, its apostolic succession but had held on to the practice of infant baptism. The argument of his work is built around six assertions, the fourth of which is relevant to our understanding of his and the Old Dissenters' theology when it comes to Antinomianism. This states that there is no time in which 'man is freed from obedience to the Scriptures since the New Testament came into force'. An example of this obedience is seen in the obligation to keep the Lord's Day Sabbath. Although it was John Tombes (1603-1676) and not Spilsbury who, when answering Stephen Marshall's *A Sermon on the Baptising of Infants* (1645), said that 'Sabbath observance is moral, and thus a universal obligation for humanity', it is clear that early in Particular Baptist history they were committed to maintaining the validity of the Christian Sabbath.⁴⁶ This is far from an Antinomian attitude.

A second leader was Hanserd Knollys (1598-1691). Knollys, because of his association with John Wheelwright, when he arrived in Boston, has inevitably been tainted with a reputation as an Antinomian.⁴⁷ It appears however that Wheelwright had been instrumental in his conversion.⁴⁸ Although Knollys had been charged with Antinomianism in New England in the 1630s there is no evidence that this was true either as to practical or doctrinal Antinomianism.

Howson, in answer to the question as to whether Knollys was Antinomian or not says:

Our study of his writings puts into question this charge against him. Except on the subject of assurance Knollys does not hold any of the other Antinomian tenets. And even on the subject of assurance Knollys did not espouse the Spirit's witness apart from the promise or Word as did some Antinomians like Mrs Hutchinson; and he believed, along with the orthodox, that the primary evidence of assurance throughout the believer's life is sanctification.⁴⁹

Knollys was not a signatory to the 1644 *Confession* as it appears that he only came into Baptist convictions during that year but he defended Calvinistic soteriology and published a second edition of The First London Confession of Faith in 1646 which he signed.⁵⁰ He was well respected and was a prominent pastor among the Particular Baptists in the 1650s - 1680s. In 1677 The Second London Confession of Faith was anonymously published and became known as *The 1689 Confession*, he put his signature to this document too. In later life Knollys' actions did raise the accusation of Antinomianism against him once again. He signed the complete sermons of Tobias Crisp republished by Crisp's son Samuel in 1690.⁵¹ However after Knollys died the other signatories made it known that their commendation of the sermons was meant only to attest the authenticity of the extra eight sermons that the editor added to the work. Knollys died in his ninety-third year.

William Kiffin (1616-1701) is the third leader of note. He was one of the most influential and important Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century.⁵² His conversion is reckoned to have been some time around 1631 and he joined an Independent congregation in 1638. Kiffin was by all accounts a faithful pastor; he was also active in business, and took an active interest in the affairs of city and state.⁵³ As one of its most respected leaders he was often the object of attack. He signed the 1644 *Confession* and later the *Second London Confession of Faith* of 1689. He has left 'an indelible mark' on Baptist history and he was a founding father of the denomination being 'considered to have been one of the most extraordinary persons the denomination has produced'.⁵⁴

It appears from the evidence above that these three leaders were anxious to avoid the stigma of being labelled Antinomian and although, in the case of Knollys especially, they were accused of such heresy, they worked hard to free themselves of the reputation.

The Testimony of the Second London Confession⁵⁵

Any ambiguity over the Particular Baptist position on doctrinal antinomianism was clearly corrected when they accepted *The 1689 Confession*.⁵⁶ Take for instance, chapter 19 (*The Law of God*):

- i. That true believers are not 'under law' as a covenant of salvation.
- ii They are 'under' it as
 - a) a rule of practice,
 - b) a means of knowing their sin and consequent need for Christ,
 - c) a revelation of Christ's perfection.

- iii That it is also operative upon the unregenerate
 - a) to restrain,
 - b) to warn,
 - c) to reveal God to them.
- iv That ‘a man doing good and refraining from evil because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under law, and not under grace’.
- v That these uses of the law are in no way contrary to gospel grace, but rather essential to it.⁵⁷

Then there is chapter 21 ‘*Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience*’ which corresponds to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, (WCF) chapter 20. It omits paragraph 4 of the WCF, which is summarised by A A Hodge as saying, ‘Since God has established both the Church and the State, obedience to the legitimate authorities of either, acting within their rightful sphere, is an essential part of obedience to God.’⁵⁸ We would expect the Baptists to reject this section for the same reason that they omitted paragraphs 3 and 4 of *The Westminster Confession*, chapter 23 (Of the Civil Magistrate), not for Antinomian reasons but to declare that the State has no jurisdiction in the Church of Christ.⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

The high Calvinism and the ‘Puritan’ love for the Scriptures that the Particular Baptists showed in the seventeenth century worked together to ensure that the two London Baptist Confessions were not Antinomian documents. The First London Confession of 1644 has had an Antinomian shadow over it for a long time but we have seen that its chief signatories, Spilisbury, Knollys and Kiffin worked to remove this reputation. Knollys and Kiffin also signed the later 1677 Confession.

By comparing The Westminster Confession of Faith with the Particular Baptist Second London Confession in 1677 we see that Particular Baptists belonged to the main stream of Reformed life.⁶⁰ It is noted that the Westminster Confession of Faith itself is not a document which has been called ‘Antinomian’, and the changes made by the particular Baptists to the original WCF had to do with Baptist ecclesiology and were not of a soteriological nature.

News

Indonesia

Editor

I spent most of July in Indonesia. It would take too many pages to describe what was

I explained that Western Europe is now a spiritual desert and that for his powerful expanding, awakening work the Holy Spirit has moved from Western Europe to the southern hemisphere, Latin America and Africa including Nigeria, Sudan and



Post graduate students from all over Indonesia gather annually for intense training in the Scriptures, mission and evangelism. A copy of OPERATION WORLD is being held aloft from the back row!

an intense time of ministry so I will highlight some matters of interest. I was working alongside missionary Eric Michael who has had 23 years' experience in Indonesia.

A vital Missionary Institute in Jakarta

We spent a day at the headquarters of a missionary organisation devoted to the promotion of extraordinary prayer for the unreached. Seventy pastors came to listen to a British pastor's perspective on the world scene.

Ethiopia. Also the Holy Spirit has moved eastwards working in many places such as South Korea in an extraordinary way and in China where a stupendous work of increase has taken place. He has also been working in Indonesia where over the last 40 years the number of evangelicals has increased from 1.3 million to 11.5 million.

I described the spiritual climate in Great Britain where the reigning philosophy is secular postmodernism. But I suggested that we are not completely discouraged.

We possess the finest legacies of Reformed and Puritan literature (Banner of Truth, Evangelical Press, Soli Deo Gloria, Day One and others). Never before has there been such a fine range in the English language of expository literature materials that are being translated into other languages. These materials are urgently needed to stabilise and build up rapidly growing churches in developing countries. Also British pastors are in demand to teach in other nations in Africa and in India and Sri Lanka and also European nations like Albania and Moldavia where churches are multiplying.

An extended version of Operation World in colour

Using *Operation World* as a model, this institute in Jakarta has compiled a large size paperback of 155 pages describing 127 Unreached People Groups (UPGs) set out in 23 people clusters. The book with maps and photos is beautifully illustrated in colour. The first 70 pages are devoted to Sumatra, the largest unreached island in the world with a population of about 40 million. Sumatra is about five times the size of England. The Eastern tip is called Aceh. The people of Aceh number about 3.5 million. Like the great majority of the unreached, the people are subject to their book which is perfectly designed to bias against the Son of God. Reaching them is as formidable as it seemed to the children of Israel when they contemplated the cities of Canaan with walls built up into the heavens. Locked up in the heartland of Aceh is another UPG called the Gayo people. They number 200,000 and there is no known believer there and no known effort of any kind to reach them, not by radio nor by literature... nothing! A gateway may be possible because of the dearth of educational facilities and medical help but so far permission has been refused for help to come from Christians.

I drew attention to Psalm 2:8,9 and the relationship of those verses to the great commission of Matthew 28:16-20. Christ has power to break down the barriers as we have seen in the case of the 'iron curtain' of the Soviet Union and the 'iron curtain' that used to surround Eastern Europe.

Prayer is the way forward. My book *Give Him No Rest* (EP) has, as far as I know, not been taken seriously in the UK. By contrast Indonesians take the call to extraordinary prayer very seriously. I explained the origin of *Operation World* and also the role of Jonathan Edwards as the theologian of revival and his influence in furthering special prayer for revival and for missionary endeavour.

Indonesia, with a population of about 220 million, is the fourth largest country in the world. As far as UPGs are concerned, this nation represents the worst human calamity with so many people groups locked into a prison of ignorance concerning salvation. Normal missionary work is not possible. Visas are not granted. The only way is to work along humanitarian lines. Many are taking that route since there is no other. I spent several hours with a young talented couple from South Africa dedicated to that strategy.

A closer look at the UPGs shows just how widely scattered they are along 4,000 miles. I nickname Indonesia 'the ends of the earth'.

The Ends of the Earth

'The ends of the earth' is a phrase used in several vital places in Scripture. In Hebrew the word means extremity. Our Lord referred to the Queen of Sheba who came from *teraton* - the Greek for the uttermost ends or limit of the earth. Where would the ends for the earth be for us? For those who live in Great Britain or

Western Europe the furthest distance away must be New Zealand and the islands of the Pacific. In terms of unreached people groups, Indonesia must surely qualify as the most gospel needy area of the world. Indonesia is an archipelago of over 4,000 inhabited islands representing at least 127 unreached peoples. It is horrifying to think that the hundreds of UPGs of Indonesia are entirely unreached. Why? The principal reason is that they are locked into a religion and to a book designed perfectly to bias and insulate them against Christianity.



Amin Tjung and Eric Michael

*The LORD will lay bare his arm
in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth will see
the salvation of our God (Isa 52:10)*

He will send missionaries to remote places and to the distant islands (Isa 66:19)

A dynamic seminary

A highlight of our time together was ministry to the students of SETIA which is an evangelical school of theology. Situated in a suburb of Jakarta, SETIA trains students for church planting. The work began 16 years ago in very humble circumstances. 677 students have graduated. 450 churches have been planted.

It was a privilege to preach to about 500 students. My theme was the book of Acts as a model for the work that they are doing and the remarkable way in which the Lord prepared Peter for the work he had to do recorded in the first 12 chapters of Acts. And then he gave his Church the gift of the apostle Paul whom he used as the foremost theologian to clarify and

What Hope for the Ends of the Earth?

There is encouragement in the Psalms and Prophets to believe that these unreached ones will be reached. The great sacrifice described in Psalm 22 will be applied to the ends of the earth, 'All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the earth will bow down before him' (Ps 22:27).

OPERATION WORLD describes 230 nations. Within these nations are about 12,000 people groups of which roughly half still have to be reached with the gospel. Psalm 67 describes people groups and ends with this assurance, 'God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him.' The young Spurgeon was saved under the text, 'Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth' (Isa 45:22). The only place in Scripture where our Lord Immanuel expresses discouragement is in the second Servant Song, Isaiah 49:1-7. In answer to the question, 'Have I laboured in vain?' there is the assurance, 'I will make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation to the ends of the earth.'

Prayer is important because we have to lay hold of God and plead the promises such as:

defend the doctrine of salvation (*cf* Romans and Galatians). Paul was a missionary and all his theology is processed to us through his experience as a missionary and church planter. Paul is essentially a missionary theologian.

SETIA has a target which is to plant churches in 7,000 villages by the year 2030. The SETIA premises are bursting at the seams. The students live closely together in dormitories. Each student has a rough mattress on the floor and each is allotted about seven foot square floor area. Training includes preparation for martyrdom. Some delay marriage because they must first recover from malaria or typhoid. They are taught that there is no easy road in the Lord's work. We must be ready to sacrifice everything for Christ. Fruit comes through a long and difficult struggle.

A sideline for SETIA is publishing. The first book just published is called *Blood and Fire - the Story of the English Puritans* by Erroll Hulse. Through the efforts of the principal and the tutors, *The Second London Baptist Confession* has been published in Indonesian but this was under the auspices of another publisher.

I have visited many seminaries but never one with the practical spiritual dimensions of this work. This work is worthy of support and if you wish to contribute, banking details can be obtained from the e-mail address: aras@dnet.net.id

Efforts are being made to purchase an adjacent property for extensions to alleviate the totally inadequate situation which hinders the work.

Argentina

Don Donell

We are encouraged to report that we have baptised our first convert. The work is

steady as we conduct services in our home. Recently I attended a Reformed conference in Santiago, Chile, sponsored by a Reformed Presbyterian church. I stayed with Pastor Omar Ramos, one of the very few Reformed Baptist pastors in the southern cone of South America. He pastors a Conservative Baptist church and is conducting a faithful 'reforming work', among his people. We had edifying fellowship as I spent time with him during the conference as well as at his home. We have scheduled further contact and preaching exchanges in the next few months since we are only about a 1 hr flight apart. The conference itself was a real blessing as Dr. Peter Jones, resident theologian of Westminster West, spoke on the growing Neo-Paganism movement.

It was attended by some 30 men, national pastors and missionaries. I was the only one from Argentina. Dr Jones presented an excellent Christian apology against the neo-pagan movement world-wide and expounded the Scriptures wonderfully to display the God of the Bible who is holy, creator, personal and redeemer. It was encouraging to make so many contacts with Reformed men in Chile. Also speaking at the conference was a dear friend and Christian Reformed brother, Bill Green, of Costa Rica. He is the executive director in Latin America for the World Reformed Fellowship. He spoke on biblical means of church growth and urged the men to remain faithful to the Scriptures alone and trust the sovereign God. Furthermore, as pastors they should labour hard in prayer and faithfulness as shepherds of the great Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. They were challenging messages to us all.

Unfortunately here in Argentina it would be hard to find more than 12 men who believed any Reformed confession with conviction. We have discovered that the



Don and Gail Donell and son Ian

church plant here in Carlos Paz, Cordoba, is the only Reformed Baptist church beginning in Argentina. We are distributing free Reformed books every two months to about 70 pastors whom I have contacted through the Pastors' fellowship of Cordoba. Nearly every pastor in the fellowship is a Pentecostal, Charismatic, or Neo-Charismatic. Sadly the only difference among them is the 'extremes' to which they will go to distinguish themselves from orthodoxy. I have however been asked to speak at one very large Charismatic church in Cordoba as a result of a devotional message I gave to the group. Pray about these books as we give them to the men. Many are responding positively to the books and inform me that when they finish them they give them to others.

This is a long process. I am confident that expository books will be an effective means of reformation here in Argentina. Join me in prayer that in a year or two we will be able to sponsor the first Reformed pastors' conference. It would be ideal for this to spring out of this young church here in Carlos Paz.

Albania

Phil Roberts, pastor of Hartshill Bible Church, Stoke on Trent.

My initial visit to Albania was in February 2002 when I was invited to address the missionaries working with the European Christian Mission. The first impressions of this former Communist country were of its poverty, the amount of new building going on and the rubbish everywhere. I was fascinated at the concrete 'mushrooms' (gun emplacements) seen on almost every hill and roadside - hundreds of thousands of them, using more concrete and steel, it is said, than would have been needed to house the entire population! These reflected the paranoia of Enver Hoxha, the dictator who ruled Albania from the war to the mid-80s and who produced the most closed society Europe has yet seen. What I also saw was something of the natural beauty of this land with its spectacular vista of a coastal plain with a background of high mountains - possessing great promise for future tourism.

The churches I visited comprised mostly young people with few believers over forty. With none more than twelve years old as Christians, and many much younger, these were the fruit of the amazing openness and progress of the gospel in the years following the fall of Communism in this erstwhile atheistic state.

At the end of my visit Andy Oliver from Northern Ireland, who pastors the *Rruga e Paqes* (The Way of Peace) Church in Tiranë, the capital, asked if I would consider a twinning arrangement with his church. Knowing my experience in Ireland as a church-planter, and the relative newness and smallness of the church in Hartshill, he felt we might relate well to their situation. When I put this to the church, agreement was immediately forthcoming and following a visit from Andy in December we planned our first team. Having worked with teams in the past in Ireland one was used to young people giving up a fortnight to do evangelism, but our team comprised only two in their twenties, one in his forties, five in their fifties and one who celebrated her 75th birthday whilst in Albania! Most had never been on such a team yet willingly engaged in various forms of evangelism. Friendships were immediately established with the believers and, importantly, with the older generation. Street-tracting, open air preaching and meals in homes at which testimonies could be shared, filled our time. We were overwhelmed by the generosity both of the believers and the local people we met. Family life is still strong with often more than one family unit sharing a house. The respect shown by the younger generation for their elders was striking and in the open-air there was little if any of the normal harassment and verbal abuse experienced here. To see literature avidly read and not discarded was wonderful! The Lord used our visit to encourage the believers to share their

faith with friends and neighbours and fruit has been reported as a result.

Developing a twinning relationship has focused our interest in missions and given us an opportunity for practical involvement. What the future holds is uncertain though at present one of our young people is going in September to look at the possibility of working in one of the orphanages run by AEM (Albanian Evangelical Mission), whilst possibly another is to spend three months teaching English alongside one of the churches as part of their outreach programme. Further teams are planned for 2004.

The relative youth of the Albanian church and the high emigration rate means that many churches struggle to reach maturity. The proliferation of Christian agencies, especially in the capital, has brought confusion and competition and it is no easy task that Andy and others have. Even though the fellowship has been in existence for around ten years, certain basic concepts of church life are still to be inculcated. For a society with a large Muslim constituency to be confronted by all manner of Christian groups, each seemingly working independently and setting up their own organisation, college, etc. is a problem, but one not unique to Albania, sadly.

Coming away from my second visit to Albania I have become aware of a wonderfully hospitable people, who are struggling to overcome their past and have made great strides in improving their land; of churches that are still in their foundational stages, yet past that initial excitement that marked the earlier years after Communism fell and that are now facing the implications of long-term commitment; of missionaries committed to ensure that those churches are equipped to face the challenges of growing materialism and denominational confusion.

Caterpillars and Butterflies

James M Renihan

A Review of *New Covenant Theology* by Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel
(MD Frederick, New Covenant Media, 2002)

About three years ago Richard Barcellos published the helpful monograph *In Defense of the Decalogue*, the first book-length discussion of theological issues related to the development of a movement that has come to be known by the title New Covenant Theology (NCT). Emerging in the late 1970s, NCT has had a somewhat amorphous quality, as its adherents have not yet expressed settled and unified convictions on many positions. In general terms it has followed in the stream known historically as ‘Doctrinal Antinomianism’ (in contrast with the more noxious ‘Practical Antinomianism’), denying in one form or other the existence of a fixed and abiding Moral Law, the identification of the 10 Commandments with the Moral Law, and the abiding continuing validity of the Sabbath principle expressed in the Lord’s Day. Pastor Barcellos sought to address these issues in his book.

In 2002 a response to Barcellos’ book was published by Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel under the title *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*. The title of the book serves as something of a *double entendre*, since it stands as both the name of a fledgling theological movement, as well as an explanation of the matter discussed in the book. While the authors recognise that the movement is hardly monolithic (one simply has to visit several websites purporting to teach NCT to realise the diversity of views advocated by adherents), they have nonetheless provided the reading public with the first serious attempt at ‘description, definition’ and ‘defense’. For this alone we should thank these men. Throughout the work they maintain a praiseworthy esteem for Holy Scripture, and seek in their words to honour the Lord Jesus Christ, always a commendable virtue in Christian authors.

As a reader committed to the Reformed confessional position, I have a keen interest in the discussion and recognise that Wells’ and Zaspel’s book deserves thoughtful consideration. It is obvious from the beginning that their position is significantly different from my own, and thus provides a challenging grid against which to examine Scripture and theology. Much of the book is not new,

but rather is an updated version of articles and pamphlets that the authors have published in the past. Much of the material has been on the internet for years, and thus lacks the fresh articulation one might have expected. Since the ideas brought together in this book have been expressed in other places in the past, I did not find any new arguments to persuade me to deviate from my established convictions. Rather I was fortified in them through interaction with the material. While advocates of the NCT system may find the arguments convincing, from this reviewer's perspective they are seriously lacking in theological cogency.

I will highlight two areas of concern, exegesis and theology. Much more could be said.

In the first place we must make some comments on the exegetical arguments proposed. Upon close examination the authors in several cases do not present compelling exegetical arguments in support of their conclusions. The central text considered in the book serves as a powerful example of this point. Fred Zaspel recognises that there are certain texts which serve a crucial function in discussions of continuity and discontinuity. Perhaps most notable is Matthew 5:17-20, a passage that receives close attention in no less than four of the book's fifteen chapters. Zaspel himself states that 'the whole N[ew] T[estament] theology of law grows out of this pivotal statement of Jesus' (p 78). While this may be an overstatement, it does express the central importance that must be placed on this passage. Jesus' words here are foundational to the understanding of the relationship between the law of Moses and the law of Jesus. Zaspel seeks to demonstrate that there is a fundamental difference between the two, but does so by means of an interesting interpretive tactic. The reader must take note of the fact that Zaspel, following the lead of D A Carson, asserts a novel interpretation of Matthew 5:17-20, especially in terms of the sense of 'fulfillment' and its relationship to the law of Moses and Jesus' words. In essence, Zaspel asserts that the notion of fulfillment in this text involves eschatological completion: what Moses' law anticipated is brought to fruition in the words of Jesus.

Dr. Greg Welty has examined this argument in some detail in a paper that may be found on the internet at

<http://www.ccir.ed.ac.uk/~jad/welty/carson.htm>

In this critique Welty demonstrates that the approach used is nothing less than an exegetical novelty, having no basis in any other occurrence of the word 'fulfill' in the entire New Testament. Since much of New Covenant Theology is based on Zaspel's interpretation of this text, Welty's critique is devastating.

How can a whole system be based on an interpretation that cannot be substantiated by standard hermeneutical procedures? Do we have here a case of the tail wagging the dog? Do NCT conclusions drive the exegesis of the passage? From all appearances this is the case.

The exegetical problems of the book do not end here. Not only is the central thesis of the book based on a novel and faulty exposition of a crucial passage, but the authors avoid exegesis of passages that do not fit into their schema. Two examples may be noted. First, Barcellos' book gave much attention to the exegesis of Jeremiah 31:31-34, establishing that this explicitly new covenant text, given prophetically in an old covenant setting, speaks to the continuity of law between the covenants. While Tom Wells, in a homespun sort of way, attempts to interact with Barcellos via an analogy using caterpillars and butterflies, there is neither substantial exegetical critique nor positive explication of the text and its relation to NCT. To give a crucial passage such as Jeremiah 31:31-34 (and its New Testament locus Hebrews 8:7-13) such short shrift is a serious flaw in the exegetical argument.

A second example may be found in the chapters dealing with the Sabbath, and especially Colossians 2:16-17. According to the book's index these two verses are cited (individually or together) 13 different times, and always as proof of the assertions of NCT. Strangely the authors do not exegete these verses, but simply cite them as if the meaning of a text may be established simply on the basis of a first reading. But both of these men know that this is not the case. While I have never met either of them, I do know enough about them to presume that they are both committed to the Calvinistic doctrine of definite atonement, and if they are not they are certainly familiar with the careful exegetical treatments of the seemingly universal texts done by many sober exegetes. The Arminian rebuttal of the doctrine, a simple citation of a text followed by the mantra 'all means all' is simply inadequate. If it did, we would all believe in universal redemption. But we do not, and on the most solid of exegetical grounds, dealing honestly with the text. The same approach needs to be taken here.

Those of us who believe in the abiding validity of the Sabbath principle do not wink our eyes when we read these texts - we know that we must deal with them honestly and straightforwardly, being willing to follow the text wherever it leads us. In my own desire to be honest with the text, I have been greatly helped by a comment in JB Lightfoot's commentary on this passage. He notes that the words used by Paul in Colossians 2:16-17 (festival, new moon, sabbaths) appear together several times in the Old Testament. As I have worked through this, I have discovered at least six places where all of these words are

used together in the Septuagint (2 Chron 2:4, 31:3; Neh 10:33; Isa 1:13 and 14; Hos 2:11; Ezek 45:17), and in every case they are used to refer to the fullness of time-related observances in Israel (note that 'sabbaths' is plural, and includes the high sabbaths associated with the high holy days, and not simply the weekly day). Knowing this, I am certain that the apostle Paul, thoroughly trained in the theology of the Old Testament, uses this combination of technical terms in the same way that they are used everywhere else in the Scriptures - to refer to the package of Jewish days. Along with him I am glad to assert with all possible boldness that every characteristically Jewish day has been abolished, and that the Christian is under no obligation to observe them. But this in no way undermines the possibility of the obligation of a distinctively Christian day - the Lord's Day - a memorial of Christ's work in establishing the new creation, the new exodus, and of his eschatological triumph (Heb 3 and 4). This day has substance in a way that the Old Covenant days never could. This is a serious flaw in the argument of the book. Incomplete exegesis means incomplete argumentation. No treatment will carry the consciences of readers unless it handles thoroughly all of the exegetical questions relevant to the subject at hand. Wells and Zaspel simply have not done so.

In the second place, the authors exhibit a dangerous tendency which might be described as the triumph of 'Biblical' Theology over Systematic Theology. By this I speak of the tendency to view Scripture exclusively through the lens of the progress of redemptive history, to the exclusion of a synthetic approach attempting to formulate doctrine, i.e. a rejection of the important role of the analogy of faith. The former method, highly useful in its proper place, may tend to maximize differences and minimize commonalities, and needs the checks and balances provided by a systematic approach to Scripture.

Wells simply rejects the 10 commandments as the moral law of God, and claims that 'no law that can be compiled by us in this age can qualify for the title "the moral law"' - and even that the category of moral law is 'difficult to recognise with certainty' (p.166). He fails to recognise that we must then revisit the doctrine of sin, and the atonement. What, then, is the law written on the consciences of all men? What will condemn them on the day of judgment? What law did Jesus die to satisfy? What were the righteous demands of his Father for which he was crucified?

Much more could be said in evaluation of this book. In any case the conclusion of the matter is that it is unsound in its premises and conclusions. While the authors must be thanked for their diligent effort to explicate their system, in the judgment of this reviewer they have failed to make a cogent case for their position.

The Christian and the Green Movement

Wesley Johnston

My interest in environmentalism, conservation and ecology, now collectively referred to as Green issues, arises from my background, further education and career before entering the pastorate. My family owned and ran a horticultural business that covered nursery production, grounds maintenance and landscaping. On leaving school I completed a Higher National Diploma in Landscape Design Appreciation and Horticultural Technology. During this time I worked for the Opencast Executive of the National Coal Board and was engaged in land restoration following mining works. On leaving college I worked in Local Government for some 13 years, during which I completed a postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Management at Manchester University. I have been involved in the environmental sector at 'hands-on', management and academic levels. My experiences have prompted my concerns for clear presentation of what the Bible teaches about the correct relationship between man and his environment.

You may be asking how all this is relevant to you. First of all, we all understand the importance of affirming biblical teaching on creation in the face of the pervasiveness of evolutionary theory in our education system and society at large. We all welcome recent initiatives to show that belief in biblical creation is just as reasonable and scientifically credible as the various theories of evolution. My contention is that we need to go beyond that and give our people, especially our young people, a healthy, Bible-based framework for the care and management of the earth.

Furthermore, if current trends are anything to go by we will discover that 'Green means growth' in economic and employment terms. Some of you may have seen recent television reports about qualified engineers, accountants and economists retraining to be plumbers, because of the present skills shortage. Given the fact that environmental management in the broadest sense is a developing field it is more than likely that we will have young people in our churches who will want to study and work in one of the environmental disciplines. As well as sound convictions about creation these young Christians will need a good understanding of God's stewardship mandate for the earth.

There are several areas in which the influence of Green thinking is apparent in the UK today. In recent years we have witnessed the steady growth of Green

Party members entering politics and being elected, particularly at local level. Whilst we are heartened to see those who take a responsible attitude to the care of the environment being placed in such positions of authority and influence, study of the current Green Party manifesto gives great cause for concern as it sets out the rationale for all Green policy. Essentially, those committed to Green politics reject the present political system because it divides humans from nature and the individual from society. Greens have a holistic view of the world that blurs the distinctions between man and his environment. To them man has no claim to lordship or authority over nature.

To the majority of environmentalists the proper relationship between humanity and its environment should be one of interdependence within it, not control over it. The overwhelming thrust of Green thinking is pantheistic - everything is God and God is everything. This attitude is also evident in very practical ways. A lack of proportion is often seen in the way in which environmentalists oppose virtually every proposed development. At the heart of such opposition is the basic premise that every living thing, whether human, animal or vegetable is of equal worth or value. Hence protesters will chain themselves to trees or put their own lives at risk in other ways in defence of the planet. I am not suggesting that everyone who has a genuine care for the environment is an extremist; nonetheless many environmentalists are committed to philosophies and worldviews that are antagonistic to the Bible's teaching. It is important that we understand the philosophical assumptions made by Green activists and respond to them biblically.

In the first place the influence of the theory of evolution cannot be avoided. For example, ecology only began to come to prominence in the 1960s. It is now one of the most popular of the scientific disciplines. It is the interaction of a number of discrete disciplines, including biology, geomorphology and climatology to mention a few. The word ecology was first coined by a German zoologist, Ernst Haeckel, who applied the term to the relation of the animal both to its organic as well as its inorganic environment. Ecology deals with the organism in relation to its environment. The significant point is that Haeckel was an enthusiastic advocate of Darwin's theory; in fact it has been said of him that he was more Darwinist than Darwin himself. He developed his own theories about origins and the relationship between species, in which he envisioned all of nature as a unity, while rejecting design and a creator.

The foundations of modern day ecology are firmly anchored to the belief that all organisms are of equal value and merit and there is no place for a designer God. Evolution and ecology are twins. The same philosophy undergirds the majority of environmental disciplines. Also, in 1965, a NASA scientist named J E Lovelock published the first scientific paper suggesting the 'Gaia hypothesis'. Lovelock proposed that the earth and its atmosphere was a 'closed

system'. He considered that the earth was a superorganism with the capacity to regulate its own environment. In other words the earth is self-managing and self-perpetuating - it has a life of its own! This hypothesis essentially denies the existence of a transcendent creator. It is named after Gaia the Greek goddess of the earth. While this theory was first raised in scientific circles it has now found its way into popular culture where environmentalists and advocates of feminist spirituality have embraced it. Hence the increasing reference to 'Mother earth' and the burgeoning number of so-called 'earth mothers'. Most proponents of the Gaia hypothesis are modern pagans who view the earth as divine.

These philosophies, along with others centred on New Age spirituality, are commonly found among those who are committed to careers in the environmental sector. I felt ill prepared to respond as a Christian and so wish to encourage you to take seriously the need to adequately prepare those who wish to make careers in this worthy sector. Those Christians who take the view that 'it will all burn up one day anyway so why bother?' are not taking God's Word seriously on the matter. The paradise to which we all look forward through Christ will not be a repudiation of this physical earth, but its perfection in re-creation -a new heavens and earth without the ravaging effects of the fall. Consequently, we must hold and present a healthy, balanced, biblical view on issues like use of sustainable resources, recycling, alternative forms of energy and so on. Admittedly we may not have to engage with those at the 'cutting edge' of the environmental movement ourselves, but we must prepare others to give an answer that honours God's purpose for human beings and this planet. We must begin by affirming that God as creator is distinct from all that he has made. Many today have been unduly influenced by the Eastern religions, so much so that Hinduism or its derivatives could be said to be the most pervasive worldview in our society.

But the world is not divine. Genesis 1:1 : 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' He made this earth and continues to care for it. John, in Revelation 4:11 : 'You are worthy, O Lord; to receive glory and honour and power; for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created.' God brought everything into being 'ex nihilo' and he sustains all things. Many today make the mistake of elevating creation and investing it with divine status. The result is that human beings are degraded and considered to be just another part of the great 'web of life' or 'the never ending story' (a concept presented in the Disney film 'The Lion King'). Belief in God as creator helps us to recognise that the world is God's gift. That fact alone should cause us to act wisely and responsibly in caring for it.

Furthermore, we must help our people to understand the nature of man as God made him. Genesis 1 :26-27: 'Then God said, Let us make man in our image,

according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' Green philosophy devalues man by putting him on a par with the rest of creation. The consequences of this can be seen in perverse ways in our culture. Sin has now been redefined. To many, especially in the environmental sector, killing a tree or whale is a dreadful crime, while killing an unborn child is an accepted expedient. Green philosophy devalues humanity, hence the need to boldly state the fact that all men are made in the image of God: 'What is man that you are mindful of him, and the Son of man that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honour' (Ps 8:5). Man is made in God's image and no other living organism in the entire universe has the same status. There is a hierarchy in God's universe - man is made superior to every other creature or organism.

One of the most important marks of man's God-given status is the authority we are given. We are called upon to act as God's representatives or stewards on this earth. We are charged to manage and care for this planet, just as Adam was first placed in the Garden of Eden to work and tend it. Man must cooperate with God in the care of this world. We have been given specific directions in Scripture as to how we are to do this. There are instructions warning against the wanton destruction of trees (Deut 20:19); directions to rotate crops in order to maintain the optimum performance of the soil (Deut 23:10-11); and guidance about the preservation of breeding stocks so that bird species can continue to reproduce at a sustainable rate (Deut 22:6-7). When we come to understand that this world belongs to God and that he has charged us to care for it, we should think seriously about our environment and make responsible decisions about our energy use, recycling, the use of fossil fuels, public transport versus car use and so on. We must consider renewable sources of energy and be wise in balancing the need for cheap/green power such as wind turbines and wave generators with the need to preserve the beauty of the natural landscape, which though marred by the fall is still a powerful testimony to the creator. In short, we will love the earth because God has given it to us.

There is one further important factor and that is the testimony that Bible believers must give to creation. Every time we see the glories of God's creation attributed to blind evolution by the likes of David Attenborough we feel the evil of gross unbelief and blindness (Rom 1:18-23). It is our duty to glorify and praise God constantly in the terms of Psalms 104 and 148. The creation is given to us as a means by which we extol our creator and it is our Christian duty to preserve it from wanton destruction.

Conscience: the Soul's Looking Glass

Geoff Thomas

At the Westminster Conference in London in Westminster Chapel on 10th December 2002 Philip Craig of Dunwoody near Atlanta, Georgia, gave a paper on the Puritan, William Fenner. In 1651, after Fenner's death, a work of his on the conscience was published under the title, 'The Soul's Looking Glass'.

William Fenner was born in the year 1600 and educated at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, taking his degree in divinity at Oxford. He became a pastor in Sedgely in Staffordshire where his labours were signally blessed. On his arrival he discovered that ignorance, apathy about religion and immorality were widespread. By his example and clear preaching he had in four years made an impact upon the community. Many became Christians, but he also stirred up much opposition and was forced out of the parish.

From early on in his Christian ministry his speciality was cases of conscience, and many resorted to him for advice, from the poorer people to the upper classes - such as the Earl of Warwick who became his special friend and patron. In 1629 Fenner became a rector in Rochford, Essex where he continued as pastor for eleven more years until his death in 1640. He was

succeeded by Edward Calamy who was ejected in 1662.

Fenner's writings are plain, fresh and awakening, and especially his 'Soul's Looking Glass.' Fenner excelled as a casuist examining cases of troubled conscience. His reputation was as 'a physician of the soul.' Conscience is the judgment of man upon himself, and the main text for the working of conscience is Romans 2:14-15: 'For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another'. The primary bond of the conscience derives from special revelation and the secondary bond from providential and voluntary arrangements. God alone has the power to bind the conscience.

The essential attributes of conscience are that conscience is universal (everyone has it to serve God's justice and to restrain man's sin), unsuppressable (Joseph's brethren could remember their sin in selling their brother into slavery twenty years earlier), is informed by knowledge (the law of God is its light and power. The conscience cannot do its work without the Spirit and the Word), its authority is supreme (because it is the

voice of God) and it is privy (that is, it is intimate to us like a spy in our very bosoms). So conscience judges our actions in the past, and like a court reporter takes down every detail of our lives and never forgets them, and like a judge passes judgment on us.

An enlightened conscience understands God's law; a tender conscience sees the odiousness of sin, and a faithful conscience does good rigorously. A dysfunctional conscience has erroneous views of God's law; a doubting conscience will flee from actions if it is not confident; a scrupulous conscience will seek greater light from Scripture; an enlightened conscience will disable a person exceedingly if it has anything against him; an unfaithful conscience will go along with any actions like a rider giving reins to his mount; a seared conscience lacks sensitivity and sins without remorse.

Two major tests of a peaceful conscience are, are you converted, that is, does God speak peace to you? Do you take delight in the full counsel of God? There is no news from God to the Christian but good news, and so the warnings of the New Testament are given to restrain sin and they are indispensable for believers themselves. They show us the majesty of Jesus Christ; they keep us in trials assuring us that the gospel's enemies must face Christ; they serve to deliver us from God's wrath and they strike terror into our hearts and keep our familiarity with the Lord from turning into contempt.

They will kill the weeds of sin and pull out our corruptions.

In the 21st century we Reformed Christians have become more accountable because we have more gospel light. Too many preachers unconsciously assume that all who come regularly to their congregations must be Christians. Our standards of examining the marks of grace in people are woefully weak, especially in children. We fail to preach the threatenings of the Gospel, so there is a shocking evangelical deadness in many churches. Much of our mission field in fact is within our own congregations. Consider the example of the apostle Paul warning people with tears for three years by night and day (Acts 20:31).

The Westminster Conference Papers for 2002 make a 120 page paperback available from John Harris, 8 Back Knowl Road, MIRFIELD, West Yorkshire, WF14 9SA, at £6.00 which includes post and packing. The other papers, all of excellent quality, are, *God's Terrible Voice in the Nation* being the story of Thomas Vincent's ministry during the great plague of London in 1665 when 68,000 died: *William Tyndale and The Obedience of the Christian Man* by Mostyn Roberts, *John Wesley - Bane or Blessing?* by Geoff Thomas, *Howell Harris - Division and Restoration* by Graham Harrison and *Archibald Alexander - The Shakespeare of the Christian Heart* by Stephen Clark.

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CONTENTS

| | | |
|----|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Editorial | |
| 3 | Is Grace Resistable or Irresistible? | Editor |
| 9 | Antinomianism in Historical Perspective | Ian McNaughton |
| 17 | News | |
| 23 | Caterpillars and Butterflies | James Renihan |
| 27 | The Christian and the Green Movement | Wesley Johnston |
| 31 | Conscience – the Soul's Looking Glass | Geoff Thomas |

