



The Evangelical Review
of Theology and Politics

Vol. 3, 2015
Christianity & Culture
Conference Papers
25–26 September 2015

ISSN : 2053–6763
KING'S DIVINITY PRESS



The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

www.evangelicalreview.com



TER

www.evangelicalreview.com

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

ISSN: 2053-6763

Copyright © 2015 King's Divinity Press.

All material is copyright protected and may not be reproduced, stored or transmitted without written permission (except where a licence exists to do so).

Typesetting :: Ash Design (UK)

Minion Pro 10.5pt on 14.5pt



The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

Volume 3
2015

Edited by
Calvin L. Smith
Stephen M. Vantassel

KING'S DIVINITY PRESS
(A DIVISION OF KING'S EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL)
UNITED KINGDOM

Core Values

The *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* subscribes to the historic decisions of the early church councils. We hold dearly to the deity of Christ, the virgin conception, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the Trinity. We also believe in the unity of Scripture and consider the Bible as the final authority on all issues of faith and practice. This high view of Scripture requires submissions to be underpinned by a thoughtful biblical and theological analysis. The Editors also welcome non-Evangelical contributors to submit critiques of Evangelical political and social thought, providing they are suitably respectful of our values and beliefs, and that submissions are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal. Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors.

Editors

Dr Calvin L. Smith, King's
Evangelical Divinity School, U.K.

Dr Stephen Vantassel, King's
Evangelical Divinity School,
U.K., and, University of Nebraska
(Lincoln), U.S.A.

Book Reviews Editor

Timothy Lim T. N., Regent
University (Virginia, U.S.A.) and
King's Evangelical Divinity School
(U.K.)

Design, Web, and Production Manager

P.H. Brazier (Ash Design),
Wimbledon London, U.K.

Consulting Editors

Dr Mark R. Amstutz, Wheaton College, USA

Dr P.H. Brazier, Wimbledon, London, UK.

Dr Jonathan Chaplin, Kirby Laing Institute for
Christian Ethics, England

Dr David Cowan, University of St Andrew's and
King's Evangelical Divinity School

Dr Brian Edgar, Asbury Theological Seminary, USA

Dr Paul Freston, Institute for Studies of Religion,
Baylor University, USA

Dr Douglas Petersen, Vanguard University, USA

Dr Timothy R.A. Sherratt, Gordon College, USA

Revd Dr David Smith, International Christian
College, Scotland

Dr Daniel Strange, Oak Hill College, England

Dr Michael Vlach, The Master's Seminary, USA

The *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* is an online journal. All articles and reviews are published online as PDF files, and are downloadable by subscribers. All articles and reviews are published in real time. Once peer reviewed and typeset they are immediately published online and the subscribers notified by email. This takes the place of a printed journal. Subscribers can print-off articles and bind them in a folder for future reference. This means there is no delay between acceptance and publication of an article: the material becomes available immediately to the academic and Church communities. Periodically a selection of the articles/essays is published in book form. For subscriptions and submission guidelines and further information concerning the journal visit www.evangelicalreview.com and download our style sheet. Consideration begins immediately upon receipt.

Abstracts

This journal is abstracted in Religious and Theological Abstracts, 100 West Park Ave (Box 215), Myerstown PA 17067, USA. <http://rtabstracts.org>

www.evangelicalreview.com

Christianity & Culture

September 25–26, 2015

Alfreton, Derbyshire

*Evangelical Theology
in Post-Christian Britain
Conference*

www.evangelicalreview.com

“Christianity & Culture”
Conference Programme:
September 25–26, 2015
Alfreton, Derbyshire

Friday 25 September

PAPERS

7.30pm *Calvin L. Smith:*

Evangelicals in the Public Square:

To What Extent Should Evangelicals Be Socially and Politically Engaged?

8.30pm PARALLEL SESSIONS

Daniel Kayley:

The Case for Post-tribulationism and implications for Social Engagement.

David Williams:

Same-Sex Relationships: Final Frontier in The Sexual Revolution.

Saturday 26 September

10.30am *Paul Diamond:*

Legal Challenges Facing British Christians and Where We Are Heading.

11.15am Live Q&A With Paul Diamond:

12.00pm PARALLEL SESSIONS

Andy Cheung:

“What not to do when writing an Essay”

Calvin Smith:

Preparing to research for and write a dissertation.

2.00pm PAPERS

Alex Jacobs:

Cultural Challenges to Jewish Evangelism:

Some insights from the Ministry of CMJ.

3.15pm PARALLEL SESSIONS

Thomas Fretwell:

Anti-Semitism, Modern Israel and the Evangelical Church.

Anthony Royle

‘An Apocalyptic Hermeneutic for Biblical Hospitality’

4.15pm PAPERS

Andy Cheung

Social and Cultural Impact Upon Modern Bible Translations.

Contents

Foreword	ix
Contributors	xi
Introduction to The Evangelical Review	xv
Articles	
Calvin L. Smith 'Introduction to the Conference: Evangelicals in the Public Square –To What Extent Should Evangelicals Be Socially and Politically Engaged?'	1
David Williams 'Same-Sex Relationships: Final Frontier in The Sexual Revolution?'	11
Andy Cheung 'Equivalence and Bible Translation: Cultural Concerns and Concepts'	29
Thomas Fretwell 'Anti-Semitism, Modern Israel and the Evangelical Church'	49
Alex Jacobs 'Cultural Challenges to Jewish Evangelism: Some insights from the Ministry of CMJ'	63
Anthony Royle 'An Apocalyptic Hermeneutic for Biblical Hospitality'	77
Notes	93



Foreword

British society has been radically transformed in just a few short years to become, arguably, anti-traditional and anti-Christian, with social media contributing to the phenomenon. This new reality presents Christians with considerable challenges, for example how to respond to other faiths, atheism, proclaiming Christian truth within a pluralist context, and human sexuality. A conference held on Friday 25th and Saturday 26th September 2015, *Christianity & Culture: Evangelical Theology in Post-Christian Britain*, sought to bring biblical, exegetical, legal, political and practical perspectives to bear upon these issues to help equip today's Evangelicals to engage this new expression of culture for Christ. Calvin L. Smith spoke of Evangelicals in the public square, asking the pertinent question, to what extent should evangelicals be socially and politically engaged; David Williams confronted the thorny question of same-sex relationships also asking the question, was the final frontier in the sexual revolution; Anthony Royle considered what an apocalyptic hermeneutic for Biblical hospitality would consist of; Daniel Kayley extended the debate by focusing on the case for post-tribulationism and the implications therein for Social Engagement (who cannot be published here). Paul Diamond (who likewise cannot be published here) examined the legal challenges facing British Christians and what the implications are for recent legislation. Alex Jacobs widened the debate to consider the cultural challenges to Jewish Evangelism (drawing on some insights from the ministry of The Church's Ministry for the Jews (CMJ)). Thomas



Fretwell extended this by examining anti-Semitism, the question of modern Israel and the Evangelical Church. Andy Cheung brought in a further perspective by bearing in mind the social and cultural impact upon modern Bible translations.

**To order an audio CD of the conference please call email:
office@kingsdivinity.org**



Contributors

ANDY CHEUNG

Andy Cheung is the Director of Operations at King's Evangelical Divinity School, UK, where he has taught courses in New Testament Studies and Biblical Languages. His PhD (Birmingham, 2012) was titled *Functionalism and Foreignisation: Applying Skopos Theory to Bible Translation*, with particular interest in the Letter to the Romans. His research interests have predominantly been in descriptive translation studies, particularly in mapping purposes (*skopoi*) for Bible translations. He is currently undertaking research into relay translation, looking particularly at the development of Bibles with English as a mediating language.

PAUL DIAMOND

Paul Diamond is a barrister who combines his considerable strength in the field of religious liberty with his knowledge of public and European law, he is a specialist in European Human Rights law, EU law and certain aspects of International Law. Paul's analytical expertise of socio legal developments in the United Kingdom and internationally, combined with his sense of humour and blunt eloquence make him an exceptionally dynamic speaker. His counsel and strategic insight is sought out by policy makers and religious leaders. Paul Diamond is an independent practising

barrister and is currently Standing Counsel to the Christian Legal Centre, a sister organisation of Christian Concern. As such, he does not presently receive any direct financial support from any other group or organisation based in Europe, the United States or elsewhere.

THOMAS FRETWELL

Thomas Fretwell holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in Theology and works as an Associate Tutor for Kings Evangelical Divinity School. He serves as an Elder and Youth Minister at Calvary Chapel Hastings in the UK.

ALEX JACOB

Alex Jacobs is a United Reformed Church Minister, ordained in 1985. Since 2006, he has worked with the Church's Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ). Alex has travelled widely in his teaching, pastoral, evangelistic and leadership role within CMJ and is the author of three theological books: *The Case for Enlargement Theology* (2010), *Receive the Truth!* (2011) and *Prepare the Way!* (2014). Alex is also a major contributor to and the editor of the Olive Press Research Papers. These are occasional papers promoting insight into key areas of Jewish-Christian relations. Alex holds an M.A. in Theology (Cambridge Theological Federation/Anglia Ruskin University) and a M.Phil research degree (Nottingham University). Alex lives in Cambridgeshire and is married to Mandy and they have three grown up children.

ANTHONY ROYLE

Anthony Royle is a Tutor for the Know Your Bible and Certificate in Jewish-Christian Studies courses at King's Evangelical Divinity School. Anthony has papered at various conference including The British New Testament Society conference. He is also the editor for the forthcoming book *Purge the Old Leaven: Aspects of Church Discipline in the Bible, Theology, and Culture*.

CALVIN L. SMITH

Calvin Smith (Ph.D., University of Birmingham) is Principal of King's Evangelical Divinity School and editor of the *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics*.

DAVID WILLIAMS

David Williams holds a BTh [Hons] from the University of Wales [Lampeter] and an MA [Theology] from the University of Chester. He is an Approved Tutor of the University of Chester and is a member of King's Evangelical Divinity School's Academic Committee. He is the tutor for several modules on KEDS' BTh and MA programmes. Additionally he is the Director of Studies for KEDS' "Knowing Your Bible" course. He has recently published his first book, *It's All In Your Head* (2015).



Introduction to The Evangelical Review

Calvin L. Smith

About

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics is an online journal. All articles and reviews are published online as PDF files, and are downloadable by subscribers.

All articles and reviews are published in real time. Once peer reviewed and typeset they are immediately published online and the subscribers notified by email. This takes the place of a printed journal. Subscribers can print-off articles and bind them in a folder for future reference. This means there is no delay between acceptance and publication of an article: the material becomes available immediately to the academic and Church communities.

What you have here are the articles, review articles, and reviews from 2014 collected together in a single edition for subscribers to print-off, or consult in electronic mode on Kindle or an e-Book reader.

In addition all past volumes of The Evangelical Review of Society and Politics are available for subscribers from the website:

www.theevangelicalreview.com

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics is a peer-reviewed, online, subscription journal exploring God's revelation to humanity in the form of Jesus Christ. Scholarly submissions that are suitably respectful of the Evangelical Christian tradition are welcomed and invited from across the disciplinary spectrum: Evangelical theology, biblical studies, biblical theology, politics, society, economics, missiology, homiletics, discipleship, preaching, conversion, salvation, atonement, redemption, the Church et al.

About...

The Evangelical Review of Society and Politics and *The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics*, are international peer-reviewed journals exploring Evangelical issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. The purpose of the journal is to bring an international and scholarly Evangelical analysis to bear upon various social and political issues of national and international interest. The Editors are committed to presenting the full spectrum of Evangelical thought to provide readers (whether Evangelical or those analysing Evangelical phenomena) with thoughtful, scholarly debate and original research that is biblically based and theologically sound.

Core Values

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics subscribes to the historic decisions of the early church councils. We hold dearly to the deity of Christ, the virgin conception, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the Trinity. We also believe in the unity of Scripture and consider the Bible as the final authority on all issues of faith and practice. This high view of Scripture requires submissions to be underpinned by a thoughtful biblical and theological analysis. The Editors also welcome non-Evangelical contributors to submit critiques of Evangelical political

and social thought, providing they are suitably respectful of our values and beliefs, and that submissions are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal. Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors.

Submissions

Scholarly submissions that are suitably respectful of the Evangelical tradition are invited from across the disciplinary spectrum. Given the broad and interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter covered by the journal, contributors should refer to our core values and submission instructions, which provide further details of material suitable for inclusion.

Intending authors should see our guidance notes for articles, review articles, and reviews and use and electronic submission form:

www.evangelicalreview.com/ter_authors.html



Introduction to the Conference: Evangelicals in the Public Square – To What Extent Should Evangelicals Be Socially and Politically Engaged?

Calvin L. Smith

KEYWORDS:

| Evangelicalism | Culture | Politics |
| Public Theology | Public Square |

ABSTRACT:

This paper, which opens the conference, serves as an introductory comment to the current cultural and political situation in the United Kingdom insofar as it affects British Evangelicals. The fundamental premise of this short paper is that British Evangelical faith, on several moral and cultural issues, is increasingly being forced into the private realm. Moreover, even private faith is increasingly being singled out for criticism. The paper concludes with some practical points on how to respond to the new orthodoxy.

RATIONALE FOR AND AIMS OF THIS CONFERENCE

There are several reasons why at King's Evangelical Divinity School we considered it important to organise a conference such as this. First, we believe it is imperative to draw awareness among students and friends of the school to deeply significant social and political changes that are affecting (and will increasingly affect) Evangelical Christians here in the United Kingdom. Thus, this conference seeks to explore how several of these social and political trends are developing and where they may lead in the future, together with the ramifications for Evangelical believers, churches and ministries in this country.

This leads to a second conference aim, namely, to contribute towards equipping and providing analytical tools for responding to and engaging with the public square, and also exploit any opportunities available to fulfill our task of proclaiming the Gospel.

There are, of course, various Evangelical organisations in the UK that, likewise, are raising and exploring these issues among the wider Evangelical community. Some enjoy a high profile in this field and do an excellent job. This conference is primarily aimed at our student body, both postgraduate and undergraduate (together with friends of the school), which will increasingly encounter some of these issues within a future ministry setting. However, we are also keen to go beyond the next thirty six hours and, in time, make some of the resources emanating from this conference available to the wider British church.

TERMINOLOGY

Before proceeding, it may be useful to identify and define several terms I will use throughout this brief paper. The first is "public theology", which as the term implies, is Christian theological engagement with the public square. Thus, this is theology that engages society, the political sphere

and the public realm as a whole. An opposite position is the concept of “private faith”, where theology is strictly personal and private, focusing on spiritual issues. Outsiders seeking to limit Christian engagement with public issues aim to enforce the concept of private faith, while Christians themselves can so separate the world from the divine that they become sectarian and insular in outlook. The result can be a form of “apoliticism”, or lack of political engagement. Apoliticism can take various shapes, from a highly sectarian form to a more nuanced version that separates some issues as truly of little interest to Christians from other issues, including within the social and political spheres, that patently are of interest to Christians.

In any discussion such as this we will also inevitably come across the word “postmodernism”. Obviously it is impossible to define it here (whole books have been written seeking to define and explain the phenomenon), and as students most of you will already have encountered the word and explored its meaning in some depth. But in short (and at danger of oversimplification), postmodernism rejects what it considers are traditional, dominant metanarratives, in favour of pluralism, where each alternative mini-narrative is given equal consideration and status. Moreover, in a marketplace of ideas postmodernism promotes subjectivism and relativism over objectivism and absolutism. In practice, of course, that is not the case. Christian apologist William Craig Lane states:

The idea that we live in a postmodern culture is a myth. In fact, a postmodern culture is an impossibility; it would be utterly unliveable. People are not relativistic when it comes to matters of science, engineering, and technology; rather, they are relativistic and pluralistic in matters of religion and ethics. But, of course, that's not postmodernism; that's modernism!¹

1 “God is Not Dead Yet”, *Christianity Today*, 3 July 2008.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS ENGAGE IN POLITICS?

Throughout history there has been an ebb and flow in Christian thought concerning the extent to which the Church should engage with the social and political realm. For example, the early church in the book of Acts arguably concentrated most of its efforts on proclaiming the Gospel, evangelisation and growth. It is from the post-Apostolic era, and particularly from the time of Emperor Constantine onwards, that we see the institutionalisation of the church and its increasingly cosy relationship with the state.. This was particularly the case during the medieval, Catholic era (which goes some way to explaining why many nonconformists, including many Evangelicals, are so suspicious of engaging with the state). Puritanism and other more recent expressions of theonomy (for example 20th century dominionism and “Kingdom Now” theology) have sought to promote Christian government and laws. Yet others have taken a completely opposite position, for example early 20th century dispensational-influenced Pentecostalism, where the view that an imminent *parousia* precluded social and political activity in favour of an urgent focus on evangelism.

Such apoliticism (for various reasons) continues to exist today, in varying degrees of intensity. Many Evangelicals avoid Christian social and political engagement because it is seen as worldly, irrelevant to Christians, or creates the potential for division within the church. Others have firm views on social and moral issues (for example, abortion, homosexuality, marriage and the family, and so on), while others are equally engaged with political issues interpreted through a theological worldview and lens (e.g. membership of the European Union), but tend to keep their opinions to themselves, or else share them privately within like-minded circles. So although many Evangelical scholars, leaders and individuals are increasingly engaging the public square, many in the past have preferred to take (despite in many cases quite strong views), a

“render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s” approach.

I think this is an increasingly problematic approach in light of what we are seeing today in this country (and Western society as a whole). My title for this talk is, “To what extent should Evangelicals be socially and politically engaged?” Really, though, given recent developments here in the UK, that question arguably should be re-phrased to, “To what extent can Evangelicals *avoid* being socially and politically engaged?”

Let us, for a moment, consider the New Testament milieu the earliest Christians found themselves in. Arguably, the focus of the New Testament church was predominantly upon evangelism, praxis, ethics, church building, and so on. It is true that there was also a social aspect, although it is important to note that this was within a *congregational* setting/context (consider, similarly, the congregational context of the Old Testament, namely the congregation of Israel, in which social work by the congregation took place). So because the New Testament church raised money to help their own, much like the Old Testament had rules to assist the most vulnerable within the congregation of Israel, this does not in itself make the Bible a handbook for transforming society. Thus, social engagement is by and large limited to the congregational setting, so that we see much more of a focus on evangelism and church activity in Acts. To be sure, obedience to ruling authorities is instructed (Romans 13:1-7), but I see little in the New Testament that encourages *proactive* social and political engagement by the church.

But there is plenty of evidence of *reactive* social and political engagement in Acts onwards. The early church faced a constant barrage from the state, whether from the Sanhedrin (Acts 4, 5), Paul breathing threats, even going to Damascus, and imprisoning believers, or the scene involving Paul and Felix, the riots by the silversmiths in Ephesus, Paul’s high profile trial in Rome (and his later execution), or the circumstances Christians found themselves in following the AD 64 great fire of Rome. Following the conflagration Nero, accused of having the fire started, found a scapegoat with the Christians, who were thrown to wild animals

or dipped in tar and set alight in Nero's gardens. In short, the early church could not ignore society or the state, bury its head in the sand and ignore it, because the state would not allow it.

And similar attempt to bury one's head in the sand is occurring today. Small churches and ministries up and down the country are burying their heads in the sand, keeping a low profile, hoping and praying some of the social and moral issues that increasingly challenge Christian orthodoxy somehow will not affect them. Yet gradually the state's powers – and society's worldview and mores – are encroaching upon the private sphere, so that even remaining silent is regarded with suspicion. Increasingly, there is arguably a witchhunt against those who do not enthusiastically embrace and celebrate the new orthodoxy. Thus, in one of the sessions tomorrow you will hear first-hand some cases represented by Christian barrister Paul Diamond where everyday Christians are encountering severe difficulties by virtue of their faith on a daily basis.

If anyone is in any doubt as to whether any of this will affect them, consider for a moment how many of us are so careful about what we say, who may be monitoring our views, even within a private social context. The coercive nature of the new orthodoxy is such that to even express a reasonably-presented, traditional view of human sexuality in a non-polemical, thoughtful manner immediately brings charges of "homophobia" or similar. Recently, a well-known international personality, interviewing a Christian lawyer on a chat show, accused him repeatedly of homophobia, simply because the Christian guest explained that Christians believe marriage is between one man and one woman.

Yet it is not just human sexuality, or Christian views on abortion, marriage, or other issues that are causing problems for Christians. It is easy to become overly focused on the homosexuality issue, but I think there is a deeper issue at play here. Consider, for example, how social media recently expressed outrage when a Christian described adultery as a sin in a national publication. Increasingly, I suggest, in a pluralist, postmodern context that constantly preaches tolerance, there is zero

tolerance for anyone who suggests certain views or practices are sinful. It goes against the essence of relativist pluralism. The irony, of course, is that those preaching against intolerance are often strongly intolerant of those disagreeing with their liberal worldview. It is interesting to see a growing debate within political left, between liberals promoting free speech and an illiberal hard left that seeks to silence alternative viewpoints, even within the political left.²

A far more important issue, however, is the extent to which this directly impinges on the proclamation of the Gospel. Now, I understand how many Christians in the past have not made themselves the most popular of people by going around preaching judgment, fire and brimstone, and so on. Inevitably, some have turned the proclamation of the Gospel into finger-pointing, forgetting that we are all sinners and have been saved by grace. This is a pity, as it fails to communicate the theological concept of sin, what it is, how it came about, God's view of it, and how the Gospel is his response to sin. It is this theological understanding that forces individuals to grapple with their relationship with God and the need for his forgiveness. Yet increasingly, I believe we will see more societal rejection of the actual concept of sin (whatever the sin is and however de-personalised it is). Previously people would simply ignore or sneer at Christians and their talk of sin, whereas today many are directly challenging it, demanding Christians change their views or remain silent. You can see, then, how an increasingly antagonistic societal view towards the concept of sin strikes at the very heart of a gospel that proclaims how God's love overcomes and frees individuals from sin.

Besides such views growing in popularity, there are other ways in which society is encroaching upon Christians' lives. Public preaching is increasingly under threat in this country, with various high profile cases of public preachers being arrested and/or charged. At the current time, the British government is considering a proposed register of religious

2 Consider the backlash following the publication by a liberal criticising the diminution of free speech within the political left, Kirsten Powers, *The Silencing: How the Left is Killing Free Speech* (Regnery, 2015).

speakers and leaders, which, if it were to come into law, would allow the government to police who is and is not a *bona fides* religious speaker. Quite rightly, the proposals have been met with outrage. Meanwhile, some Christians are being called out on their private beliefs, with some people demanding to know their views on this or that issue. I am reminded of George Orwell's 1984, where there is a demand to know what you think and believe, even if you have never expressed your beliefs in public.

Liberalism has a long and worthy history. Emanating from Protestantism, modern liberalism emphasizes the worth of all individuals and the need to respect all humanity. That is nothing new, of course, we see that in passages throughout the Bible concerned with assisting and treating with dignity the frail, the destitute, the old and young, the vulnerable, widowed, and so on. Notwithstanding, Protestantism, which has shaped much of Western society's values, has played a crucial role in making this mindset part of the West's shared values.

However, we are increasingly seeing a shift from liberalism to hard left illiberalism, a form of cultural Marxism, where some have seized upon these values and use it as a weapon of the most illiberal kind. Inevitably, anyone not conforming and toeing the line, including Christians, will increasingly be singled out by an illiberal society. Try as they may, British Evangelicals will find it increasingly difficult to remain apolitical.

CHALLENGES CURRENTLY FACING EVANGELICALS

Evangelicals in the UK (and much of the West in general, as well as elsewhere) face various challenges in the present and not-so-distant future. As the current culture wars take their course, evolving societal views will bring further – and greater – challenges for Christians. For example, currently there is a growing focus on the trans issue, gender “fluidity” and how parents are increasingly being encouraged to indulge their children's rejection of a gender “assigned at birth”. Such views go

the very heart of Christian views of humanity, human sexuality, and the traditional view that God created man and woman.

Other challenges include the increasingly coercive power of the state, how technology drives society (and provides authorities with ever more powerful methods of policing viewpoints and beliefs), an increasing number of legal challenges aimed at Christianity (to be covered in the next talk), and more and more encroachment upon the private sphere. But perhaps one of the greatest challenges we face is from within, in the form of apathy among Evangelicals. There is a real danger that we are sleepwalking into serious trouble when, one day we will awaken to find all manner of freedoms curtailed.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

I want to suggest very briefly some ways in which we might respond to current social and political developments that directly challenge Christian values and activity.

First, we should ensure as Evangelicals we desist from feeding the fundamentalist stereotypes. Evangelicals should always aim to be reasonable, thoughtful, analytical, knowledgeable, biblically based, less judgmental. Also important is the need to ensure we do not fall for sensationalism, as circulated by some Christians. Too often on social media we see fake stories seized upon by Christians, which are further shared and promoted (almost like a mirror-image of the hard left groupthink we see so much of today). When it transpires a story is not true or the facts have been exaggerated, all it serves to do is reinforce the straw man view that many Evangelical Christians are lunatics on the fringe of society.

Second, it is imperative that we know our Bible and our theology, so that we are ready to provide persuasive biblical responses to the world's questions. Christians ought to work hard on knowing and understanding the issues, rather than merely offering knee-jerk reactions,

to develop robust and thoughtful arguments. Of course, we recognise that pluralism is nothing of the sort, nonetheless we should seek to exploit postmodernism's marketplace of ideas.

Finally, we need to make a commitment to stand and fight. Some Christians will respond with Jesus' words to "Turn the other cheek" as justification for not engaging an increasingly anti-Christian social and political realm. But those words are very much about individual responses to persecution, rather than a collective response to those who seek to challenge Christian values. The New Testament has plenty to say about believers uniting to challenge the enemies of God. If we do not at the very least make our voices heard, much like the prophets in the Old Testament, one day our grandchildren may well ask why we did not do more to challenge the current wave of anti-Christian sentiment.



Same-Sex Relationships: Final Frontier In The Sexual Revolution?

David Williams

KEYWORDS:

| Human Sexuality | Sexual Revolution |
| Culture | Theology |

ABSTRACT:

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, the weight of scholarly opinion interpreted the biblical texts in a manner that suggested homosexuality is a significant aberration and departure from biblical norms on human sexuality, thus majority opinion deemed all same-sex relationships as sinful. Subsequent to the 1960s sexual-revolution much has changed such that many heterosexuals within Western cultures now grant approval of same-sex relationships.

This paper explores the definition and trajectory of the 1960s sexual-revolution suggesting that the basis and progress of the sexual revolution since the mid-1960s provides precise philosophical and ethical grounding for the current widespread accommodation of same-sex relationships. Additionally, this paper proposes that the sexual revolution is in essence a rebellion against God's sovereignty and design of the human race. Therefore the issues involved are fundamentally and thoroughly theological. The paper concludes suggesting a number of likely future scenarios within the trajectory of the sexual revolution.

INTRODUCTION

“Space: The final frontier
These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise
Its five-year mission
To explore strange new worlds
To seek out new life and new civilizations
To boldly go where no man has gone before.”

The original series of Star Trek debuted in 1966 and immediately reinigorated the longstanding debate over the use of split infinitives. Hitherto, as early as 1897, a contributor to an Academy magazine article noted that to always insist upon eliminating the split infinitive was little more than to blindly follow the minor irritations of language mavens and pedants,¹ thus prohibiting pleasant turns of phrase. Strict grammarians, however, were outraged at the opening lines of Star Trek, insisting that ‘to boldly go’ should correctly be rendered ‘to go boldly’. Yet, already, by the mid-1960s people generally concerned themselves more with the topic of implied sexism than erroneous grammar such that Star Trek’s introductory “no man” reference generated much heated debate and complaint. Consequently, by the time *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was aired in 1987, the show’s producers had opted for the more politically correct last line, “Where no one has gone before”. With Patrick Stewart now at the helm, perhaps in truth it had become a case of “to baldly go”. Nonetheless, the split infinitive remained.

This disgruntlement with perceived sexism and ambivalence to the mangling of the Queen’s good English is somewhat telling, and perhaps amusingly illustrates, in microcosm, something of the essence of the 1960s socio-cultural revolution. Certainly had the opening lines of Star

1 “Are our critics aware that Byron is the father of their split infinitive? ‘To slowly trace’ says the noble poet ‘the forest’s shady scene’.” Cited in <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/columnists/brian-viner/brian-viner-elect-a-leader-who-doesnt-split-infinitives-846271.html>.

Last accessed 20th October 2015.

Trek been crafted, say, twenty years earlier, the focus and debate would have been singularly the grammatical rather than nascent sexism issue. Did people suddenly get out of bed one morning in the mid 1960s and collectively decide that emergent sexism was a priority, or can other previous factors account for this change of focus? And what, if anything, does all this have to do with the topic of same-sex relationships and the sexual revolution? In this paper there is no space to address the former rather intriguing question² but hopefully I will be able to contribute some connecting points for the latter question.

I hope to address four main objectives:

1. Define what is meant by the term 'sexual revolution' and briefly trace the post 1960s trajectory of this movement.
2. Seek to understand why so many heterosexuals are in favour of same-sex relationships. I will suggest that the basis and progress of the sexual revolution since the mid 1960s provides precise philosophical and ethical grounding for the current widespread accommodation of same-sex relationships, such that it should be no surprise to note the current mass approval of same-sex relationships.
3. I will propose that in the current sexual revolution we are witnessing a wider rejection of biblical notions of ultimate truth. That is, the sexual revolution is in essence a rebellion against God's sovereignty and design of the human race. Therefore the issues involved are fundamentally and thoroughly theological.
4. I will suggest that the current trajectory will continue such that same-sex relationships do not constitute a final frontier in the sexual revolution. I will thus conclude this paper suggesting one or two likely scenarios for the near future.

² For an intriguing discussion arguing for the emergence of a liberalizing sexual permissiveness and the declining influence of religion during the 1940s and 1950s, in contrast to the general consensus that views this period as one of conservative values and behaviour, see Alan Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

WHAT IS THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION?

It is imperative to clarify, from the outset, what is meant by the term ‘revolution’; that is, to identify which features are typical of a revolution. All revolutions are transitional in nature, and by implication can be difficult to identify, chronicle or evaluate. Broadly speaking, it can often be easier to identify a revolution in retrospect. Certainly one may confidently assert that a revolution has happened when a considerable measure of change occurs relatively quickly and with such all-encompassing breadth and depth that it becomes difficult to comprehend and absorb. Perhaps, to significantly and eisegetically misquote Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, we may characterise any revolution by stating that “the old has been swept away, behold the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Traditions, social structures, ways of thinking and perhaps just as importantly the people who espouse such values become obsolete.

One can easily think of historical examples, even from the twentieth century, to flesh out this understanding: German Nazism, Italian Fascism, Mao Tse-tung’s China. Perhaps, for those too young to remember those situations, more contemporary examples could be provided via reference to the Iranian Revolution, the fall of various Eastern European communist regimes since the late 1980s, or the very recent Arab Spring. Yet typically each of these revolutions were primarily political in nature and obvious to recognise. By contrast, that which has been experienced in the West has been a little different, appears less ferocious, yet nonetheless has achieved as deep a mutation of culture and society as any of the above revolutions. We could label it the “seductive revolution” or the “smiling revolution” as it promises untold blessings to all, and although it has not been a revolution of *Coup d’état* velocity, it has occurred with reasonable haste.

Specifically, with respect to the topic of same-sex relationships, consider that prior to the mid-twentieth century, the weight of scholarly opinion generally interpreted the biblical texts such that homosexual activity was deemed to be both a significant aberration and a departure

from biblical norms on human sexuality. For example, as recently as 1953 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher condemned what he termed 'homosexual indulgence' as 'a shameful vice and a grievous sin from which deliverance is to be sought by every means'.³ Such a viewpoint would not have been echoed only within the various church denominations, but would have been a relatively common opinion held more broadly across society. Yet just two years later the emergence of a significant book by D Sherwin Bailey⁴ represented the first of many serious challenges to this consensus. Somewhat dated now, and although described as "careless"⁵ and having been "borrowed, often slavishly, by a number of later writers and has had a far longer innings than it deserves"⁶ Bailey's work together with a subsequent work by John Boswell⁷ both remain highly influential and represent the foundation of much of the thinking within contemporary pro-homosexual circles.

Consequently, as traditional understanding of Scripture is perpetually challenged and re-evaluated, constantly evolving revisionist approaches regularly conclude that the Bible is not as unequivocal as previously thought. A simple example from my own denomination thoroughly illustrates this point. In his April 2014 Presidential Address to members of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of the Church in Wales, suggested that it is no longer possible to countenance a single Christian viewpoint on the issue of same-sex relationships. He went on to assert that our attitudes are shaped by various matters including which particular part of the Bible texts we emphasize,

3 Quoted in Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (Chichester: Princeton, 1987), 16.

4 Bailey, D. Sherwin, (1955). *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, 1955).

5 David J Atkinson, *Homosexuals in the Christian Fellowship* (Oxford: Latimer Trust, 1979), 81.

6 David F Wright, (1989). "Homosexuality: The Relevance of the Bible" *EQ* 61:4, (1989): 292

7 John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

stating that ‘We often see what we want to see’,⁸ before finally concluding that, in his opinion, the Church in Wales will and should eventually accept same-sex relationships.

And so the contemporary pro-homosexual movement has, perhaps in less than a single generation, achieved much of its aim of establishing itself as acceptable within mainstream opinion. It will not recede any time soon nor lose momentum in its quest for ever greater recognition and rights, largely because it is so intimately tied to the deep revolutionary changes within post 1960s Western society, in particular those associated with philosophical postmodernism. Continued resistance to the homosexual lifestyle is now increasingly impugned as illiberal, bigoted, hateful and so much worse within contemporary society and therefore an element of boldness is required to even begin to articulate a position in opposition to the zeitgeist.

HETEROSEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AND SAME-SEX APPROVAL

One commentator suggests that “Homosexuality may be the key to understanding the whole of human sexuality”⁹, yet a curious factor in this situation is why so many heterosexuals are in favour of same-sex relationships and same-sex marriages. One reason, amongst several that could be legitimately proposed¹⁰, for the current mass support of same-sex relationships is the very similar trajectory of heterosexual inter-relational behaviour since the commencement of the 1960s sexual

8 Barry Morgan, “Presidential Address – Governing Body 2014.” Online: <http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/structure/bishops/sermons-and-addresses-archbishop-barry-morgan/presidential-address-governing-body-april-2014/> Last accessed 20th October 2015.

9 Camille Paglia, *Vamps and Tramps* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 67.

10 For a discussion on how the “sexual revolution was in large part successful because it used entertainment media as a principal tool of cultural subversion.” See Brian Mattson, “The Sexual Revolution, Entertainment, And Christian Art.” Online: <http://drbrianmattson.com/journal/2015/10/26/the-sexual-revolution-entertainment-and-christian-art>

Last accessed 20th October, 2015.

revolution. Specifically, the fundamental presuppositions and behaviour that underscore the homosexual lifestyle are the very same principles central to the trajectory of post 1960s heterosexual history. For example, temporary relationships, multiple partners, serial cohabitation, liberal laws that legislate for divorce upon demand and non-procreative sex replacing fecundity as the pinnacle of sexual fulfilment. This is the inherent tendency to narcissistic sexual anarchy that is common to all sexual practices and preferences that have by their very nature rejected God's Genesis 2 design for "monogamous, exogamous, heterosexuality",¹¹ that is the marriage of one man to one woman from outside of the immediate familial context.

Decades prior to the dream of de-closeted homosexual relationships, heterosexual culture had already deemed recreation and personal pleasure as the primary aim of all sexual activity. And so the growing dissolution of marriage as a conjugal, monogamous bond and the attendant rise of no-fault divorce provided proverbial wrecking balls for the destruction of the ancient architecture of long held Christian notions of human sexuality. Unquestionably, since the seminal decade of peace and love that was the 1960s western societies have witnessed the brisk demise of what had appeared to be relatively safely anchored cultural environments. Yet, to continue this maritime metaphor, stormy seas lay ahead, and we may now observe with hindsight that the hedonistic party has been well and truly shipwrecked by the consequences of flirtation with the mythical Sirens of lust and immorality, as the intoxicating effect of 1960s 'free love' made way for the decidedly darker decades that followed. The Apostle Paul warned the Galatians that a man should not be deceived, for God is not mocked and that man will reap what he sows (Galatians 6:7). That which is true individually is also true corporately, and western culture has manifestly reaped what it has long sown, as, to once again change the metaphor, the chickens have come home to roost, in the form of sexually transmitted diseases (particularly the spectre of HIV/AIDS) and other

11 David M. Gunn and Danna N. Fewell, *Gender, Power And Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 29.

wider societal implications.

The ramifications of this nihilistic narcissism are everywhere to see, be they sexual, interpersonal or even familial. Widespread spousal disgruntlement has predictably led to a tsunami of divorce on demand and the extensive acceptance (and approval) of the wreckage of marriage and the family. Narcissists require mirrors of course, and so we arrive at a thoroughly fragmented, terminally self-indulgent, self-centred, self-obsessed, lust enslaved, porn infested, postmodern individualism. Having been sold the mythical dream of the individual's human right to romantic and erotic passions with whomever one wishes, whenever one wishes, regardless of consequence, the sexual-narcissist tragically discovers that what he believed was a lover's swoon is in truth little more than a self-gratifier's glance at his own image. He has fallen in love with his own sexual self and consequently we may observe that what began as narcissistic self-worship culminates ultimately in personal nihilistic destruction. The cultural environment is riddled with so many self-obsessed demands and so many diverse ways of slaking the lusts for those demands, that the confused cacophony of multiple sexual options places a perpetual assault upon the senses. All is placed before the sexual-narcissist, yet nothing has meaning, as true intimacy is foolishly exchanged for despairing egocentric sexual experimentation, be it heterosexual or homosexual. The sad irony is that this self-centred pursuit is ultimately self-destructive. W B Yeats put it well in his wonderful poem "The Second Coming",

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity”¹²

12 William Butler Yeats, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Churchtown, Dundrum: The Cuala Press, 1920), 19.

Yeats continues his poem, questioning whether something like the antithesis of the Christian notion of a “second coming” is about to occur.

“Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second coming is at hand”.

Yet rather than earthly peace, this will, instead, bring terror as things fall apart and the centre fails to hold. Yeats drives home his point culminating with his haunting climactic question, asking;

“And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”

But Yeats’s beast isn’t deteriorating or dying in its slouching, as so many references to his poem would have us believe. No, his beast slouches in steady, dedicated progress toward a terrifying goal. The beast is coming to wreak unbounded disorder and devastation. Is this perhaps an allusion too strong to be applied to the sexual revolution generally and mass acclamation of same-sex relationships specifically? Dedicated progress? Unbounded disorder and devastation? Surely such exaggerated rhetoric is little more than strained hyperbole.

If one is tempted to think such is the case then recourse should be taken to a very important 1989 book by Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen¹³. This seminal book emerging out of the modern homosexual movement was published with little fanfare yet was received with huge and widespread acclaim. Throughout, the authors devastatingly combine public relations savvy with sophisticated psychological techniques and mass media tactics to propose that a change in presentation, to a more benign face of the homosexual lifestyle would be required to achieve mass heterosexual acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle. The book represents a gay manifesto for the 1990s that aimed to repackage the homosexual community as a long-suffering victim of “antigay bigots”¹⁴. Note well this

13 Marshall Kirk & Hunter Madsen, *After the Ball: How America will Conquer its Fear and Hatred of Gay in the 90s* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

14 *Ibid*, 153.

shrewd tactic, employed here and throughout the book, of identifying all critics of homosexual behaviour as “bigots.” This language is deliberate and purposefully employed to enhance this idea. The authors suggest that; “The trick is to get the bigot into the position of feeling a conflicting twinge of shame”¹⁵. This will be achieved by ensuring that whenever “his homohatred surfaces” then “propagandistic advertisement” can be usefully employed to;

“depict homophobic and homohating bigots as crude loudmouths and assholes - people who say not only ‘faggot’ but ‘nigger,’ ‘kike,’ and other shameful epithets - who are ‘not Christian.’”

The authors press the point, noting that such propaganda “can, in short, link homohating bigotry with all sorts of attributes the bigot would be ashamed to possess, and with social consequences he would find unpleasant and scary.”¹⁶

And it works of course. It works because the psychological tactics employed are devastatingly profound as the already sexually self-centred, egocentric, hedonistic heterosexual culture is persuaded that at the root of the homosexual movement is a harmless cry for similar equality, similar liberty and similar self-fulfilment. And it works because of the peculiar vacuity that seemingly attends all public discourse, sexual or otherwise; that is, the outcome of so much of modern media’s encouragement is for fragmentary, emotive sloganeering and a childishly Manichean view of cultural history. With the benefit of several decades of hindsight it is clear that this constant repetition of the “bigot” mantra has been hugely successful in eventually achieving the desired psychological effect on large masses of people. The slouching beast, that is the pan-sexual revolution has, and continues to come to wreak deliberate and unbounded disorder and devastation.

Borrowing the final line from Yeats’ poem, Joan Didion in her 1968

15 *Ibid*, 151.

16 *Ibid*, 151-152.

book "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" expands on this notion describing a social catastrophe, as things fall apart and the centre fails to hold. Didion reports from the culture of the 1960s Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco's hippy scene, narrating accounts of mass drug taking, crude sexism, child neglect and of the disoriented youth she met there, including a troubling description of a five-year-old named Susan whose mother fed her LSD¹⁷. As she observes the young hippies, Didion states that this 'was the first time I had dealt directly and flatly with evidence of atomization, the proof that things fall apart'¹⁸. She concludes

"At some point between 1945 and 1967 we had somehow neglected to tell these children the rules of the game we happened to be playing."¹⁹

Subsequent to Didion, Robert Bork, also borrowing Yeats' line, wrote of how western culture, and American culture in particular, is according to the title of his book "Slouching Towards Gomorrah".²⁰ As he also echoes Yeats' words that "Things fall apart and the centre cannot hold" Bork offers a prophetic critique of a culture in decline as radical individualism and the drastic reduction of limits to personal gratification have undermined morality, intellect and culture. A final example here of the borrowing of this same line from Yeats' poem, is a 2014 book by W C Harris, an American professor of English Literature, who joyfully claims that rather than Bethlehem or Gomorrah, Western culture is in fact "Slouching Towards Gaytheism"²¹. His central argument is that homophobia will never be eradicated until religious faith is thoroughly extinguished. Harris shockingly claims, with all intended seriousness,

17 Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 125-126.

18 *Ibid*, xi.

19 *Ibid*, 123.

20 Robert Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).

21 W C Harris, *Slouching Towards Gaytheism: Christianity and Queer Survival in America* (New York: Suny Press, 2014).

that breeding HIV for fun is a concept of true love, in which, with clearly incestuous overtones, the infected partner becomes the daddy or the brother of the man he infects²². Harris acknowledges that such behaviour is risky but suggests that such action is morally equivalent to attending church, which he deems to be equally risky.²³ Harris' book reaches its *reductio ad absurdum*, scarcely even attaining to the level of nonsense, when he informs his readers how there is

“violence recommended toward Christians or apostate Christians in Deuteronomy 18 and 82, which parallel koranic (sic) verses to slay unbelievers”²⁴

The reader of Scripture will of course experience acute difficulty locating not just chapter 82 of Deuteronomy but any Christians therein, apostate or otherwise.

REJECTING BIBLICAL NOTIONS OF TRUTH FOR HUMAN SEXUALITY

In truth the pan-sexual revolution is fundamentally a rebellion and same-sex relationships represent merely an extreme form of this pan-sexual revolution, a moment-by-moment, day-by-day rejection of God's sovereignty and design. At its centre there is no virtue, for such must be absent in the narcissistic self-love of rejecting one's own God ordained essential gendered self and treating it as “only half intact”, seeking to sexually unite with what one already is, such that “two half-males unite to form a whole male, (and) two half-females unite to form a whole female”.²⁵ Same-sex relationships can offer no life affirmation and are

22 *Ibid*, 79.

23 *Ibid*, 86.

24 *Ibid*, 171.

25 Robert Gagnon, “The Bible's Surprisingly Consistent Message on a Male-Female Requirement for Marriage”, Online: <http://www.robagnon.net/homosexKnustCombinedResp.htm>.

Last accessed 20th October 2015.

unable to long camouflage a rebellious deviancy against God's design. This being the case, it is no excess to assert that the pan-sexual revolution is essentially theological in nature, that is, whether it wishes to or not, it must address both the intrinsic nature of humankind as *Imago Dei* beings and the divine purposes for human sexual function.

Yet contemporary Western culture has, via Darwinian evolution, removed both God and theological reflection, replacing the Creator with mini-creators who each define reality for themselves. This is the vitally important connection between the various strands of the pan-sexual revolution, be it heterosexual immorality, homosexual couplings or the now emerging trans-genderism of individuals such as Bruce Jenner. Users of social media website Facebook may now chose between an array of seventy-one different genders,²⁶ including the term 'gender fluid'²⁷, that is the ability to flit from one gender to another according to how one feels. This is Alice in Wonderland's "through the looking glass" territory. The caterpillar asks Alice 'who are you?' She responds to the caterpillar "I hardly know sir, just at present. I knew who I was this morning, but I've changed a few times since then".²⁸ One may indeed wonder which is stranger, the notion of talking caterpillars or that there are now seventy-one different genders. Yet why not? This is the manifestation of the autonomy of the human race, an utterly unwarranted confidence in mankind's own capacity to work out truth.

By contrast Christians should begin at a different point. In Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus is asked a tough question about divorce and his response is instructive here. "Have you not read? From the beginning, God created them male and female...". His response presupposes a worldview that includes three specific givens: Firstly, Jesus crucially presupposes a worldview that includes God as creator. Secondly, this God has spoken to

26 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/facebook/10930654/Facebooks-71-gender-options-come-to-UK-users.html>.
Last accessed 20th October 2015.

27 Ibid.

28 Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*. (Barcelona: Children's Golden Library, 2003), 41.

mankind; a point that leads directly to Jesus' third presupposition, namely, that which God has spoken has been communicated to mankind via a readable text. In other words mankind can know what God has spoken. This challenges the very core of the current situation for if there is a Creator, a God who has spoken in a meaningful way such that all humanity can understand, then it also follows that there is a special creation, humankind. Consequently Jesus' statement in Matthew 19 is thoroughly meaningful in outlining the pre-fall requirement for male and female identities and therefore gender and genetic distinctions or complementarities in God's design for human sexuality. To reject this notion is to remove the very core of what God commanded in the beginning, that is, in the image of God he created them, male and female, commanding them to be fruitful and multiply. Autonomous man responds with a defiant and resounding "no" to such a notion and with the command to be fruitful thus thoroughly rejected it is no surprise to note mass societal recourse to, and approval of, the destruction of the unborn via abortion. Camille Paglia succinctly summarises the predicament;

"Nature exists, whether academics like it or not. And in nature, procreation is the single relentless rule. Our sexual bodies were designed for reproduction".²⁹

So in Genesis 1 we discover the ultimate foundation is that God exists and created everything. Narrowing this down, the pinnacle of God's creation is humanity, *Imago Dei* beings, male and female brought together as one to propagate the species. Consequently the chief rejection within society is this primary foundation: God exists. Everything else follows from this rejection of primary truth. It is thus no coincidence that the redefinition of marriage is being currently attempted in a climate of aggressive and hostile neo-atheism. We thus witness a hostile reaction to the notion of the existence of God, a hostile reaction to any question of Darwinianism,

29 Paglia, *Vamps and Tramps*, 70-72.

a hostile reaction to gender distinctions and a hostile reaction to the notion of marriage as a foundation for godly society.

WHERE NEXT?

So, having painted a somewhat gloomy picture, the question remains; where are western societies headed? Are we, as the title of this paper asks, at the final frontier of the sexual revolution or are there further likely developments? I wish to suggest that there remain a few frontiers, strange new pan-sexual worlds that will likely open up in the relatively near future. Firstly, there will be increasing calls for widespread acceptance of polyamorous unions; that is multiple partner marriages. Western societies already permit and even encourage serial polyamorous unions, thus it remains a case of permitting concurrent multiple partner unions. Secondly, there will be increasing calls, and sympathy for, widespread acceptance of incestuous unions. Clarification of meaning is vital here, that is, reference here is to sympathy towards calls for mutually agreed adult-committed incest. Why these two specific frontiers?

I have alluded to Yeats' falcon that no longer hears the call of the falconer, as a metaphor for how culture rejects the Creator and his voice. Consequently culture can no longer recognise the fundamental design in creation for human sexuality, which is what God has provided in the Genesis 1 and 2 texts. Returning to Jesus' words in Matthew 19 we have seen how he appealed to these very same Genesis texts to show how important a male-female pre-requisite was to his view of marriage and human sexuality. Specifically he argued that the twoness of the sexes, ordained by God at creation, was the foundation for restricting the number of persons in a sexual bond to two; that is a requirement for one male and one female. Removing the requirement for either one of the sexes in a sexual union is not just a direct violation of Jesus' foundational sexual ethics; it also removes any logical requirement for two persons within a sexual union. Why not three, four, five, ten? Thus the promotion

and legalisation of same-sex marriages opens a door of strong logic whereby not only will we begin to encounter strong calls for recognition of multiple partner unions, but the very logic for resisting such, having been long abandoned, will no longer be useful in countering such notions. Polyamorous unions will increasingly be very much on the agenda.

Yet the intended pattern of human sexuality is not just monogamous heterosexuality, one partner of the opposite sex. The Genesis texts also clearly patterns an exogamous requirement, that is an “outside the family” criteria. “Partnership according to this agenda, demands not just gender difference but also familial difference”³⁰. Certainly if homosexuality represents sexual coupling between persons who are too alike from a gender perspective, then adult committed incest represents sexual coupling between persons who are too alike from a genetic perspective. Removing the requirement for gender distinctions within marriage opens a door of strong logic whereby it is untenable to oppose the removal of the requirement for genetic distinctions within marriage. Corporate societal approval for the former now granted, calls for acceptance of the latter will yield to the very same logic employed to secure approval of the former.

As postmodern man continues to reject the notion of divinely revealed morality in favour of his own constructivist approach, creating both his individual self and his collectivist world³¹, additional further sexual frontiers will inevitably open up. The emergence of an infinite number of genders exemplifies this self-invention. Likewise, a spectrum of sexual preferences will emerge, each demanding acceptance and recognition. Intriguingly a recent United Nations Family Planning Agency report commences, suggesting

“men who have sex with men” (MSM) “should be understood to include young men, i.e. those in the age range 10-24 years”³².

30 Gunn and Fewell, *Gender, Power and Promise*, 29.

31 For a detailed critique of this notion, see, for example, Thomas Molnar, “Utopia, the Perennial Heresy”. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967).

32 United Nations Population Fund, “Implementing Comprehensive HIV and STI Programmes with Men who have Sex with Men: Practical Guidance for Collaborative

This definition attempts to create a community based upon mutual behaviour, despite the fact that boys as young as ten years old may not consider it fitting for themselves to be included in such communities. The implications of this definition are clear and should not pass unnoticed.

CONCLUSION

Seeking to identify the central characteristics of any revolution, we have noted that with hindsight all revolutions are transitional in nature, and that it is generally easier to identify a revolution in retrospect once it is noted that a considerable measure of change has occurred with relative haste. Applying this understanding to the changes in post-1960s western society, specifically with respect to the contemporary pro-homosexual movement, we noted that in less than a single generation, advocates of the movement have achieved much of their aim of establishing itself as acceptable within mainstream opinion.

A curious factor in the situation is the sheer volume of heterosexuals who are in favour of same-sex relationships and same-sex marriages. One reason, proposed here, for this phenomenon is the very similar course that heterosexual inter-relational behaviour has tracked since the commencement of the 1960s sexual revolution. Specifically, we have seen how decades prior to the dream of de-closeted homosexual relationships, heterosexual culture had already deemed recreation and personal pleasure as the primary aim of all sexual activity.

The pan-sexual revolution is, however, fundamentally a rebellion with same-sex relationships representing an extreme form of this revolution against God's sovereignty and design. The Christian response must commence from a biblical perspective, in the knowledge that not only does God exist but also that he has communicated to mankind via the

words of scripture. Failure to do so will inevitably give rise to an utterly unwarranted confidence in mankind's own capacity to work out sexual and ultimate truths.

In the final section it has been suggested that whilst same-sex relationships represent a frontier in the sexual revolution, they are certainly not the final frontier. Societal acceptance of same-sex relationships opens a door of logic such that calls for recognition of polyamorous relationships and adult-committed incestuous relationships become inevitable. In conclusion there are a number of additional strange new pan-sexual worlds to visit and explore before the final frontier is reached.



Equivalence and Bible Translation: Cultural Concerns and Concepts

Andy Cheung

KEYWORDS:

| Bible Translation | Equivalence | Cultural Turn |
| Functionalism | Translation theory |

ABSTRACT:

Since the middle of the 20th century, ‘secular’ translation theory has moved from a predominantly linguistic activity to one that incorporates sociocultural elements. The so-called ‘cultural turn’ of around the early 1980s precipitated significant changes in the way translations were conceived and created. The movement from linguistics-oriented study to a more cultural perspective has been pronounced among scholars working in ‘secular’ fields but is much less common in Bible translation circles. To date, Bible translators have exhibited stronger adherence to the older equivalence-based linguistics methods but there are good reasons to consider issues raised by research undertaken in ‘secular’ translation studies. This article explores these issues from the perspective of Bible translation highlighting items relevant to evangelicals. Certain criticisms appear less valid than others but overall, there is much to gain from considering Bible translation from a more cultural and functionalist perspective.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article is to consider the general notion of equivalence in Bible translation, including Eugene Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence, together with a discussion of contemporary comments and critiques. Perhaps as a result of Nida’s close association with Bible translation, his ideas remain significantly more influential among Bible translators than among ‘secular’ translation theorists.¹ There is useful research in language and linguistics studies that may be helpful for Bible translation work.

Academic research in translation studies, be it in sacred texts, children’s books, newspaper articles, science fiction, medical notes, or legal publications, may be expected to share common academic bases. In general they do: translation scholars commonly interact across the spectrum of human writing. But in Bible translation circles, there remains a particular adherence to Eugene Nida’s views – especially in terms of advocating dynamic equivalence.²

Although Nida’s role as a prominent Bible translator probably accounts in the main for his continuing influence, another factor is the unique status of Scripture: the source text is sacred. That fosters particular reverence for Nida’s notion of linguistic equivalence. When the prominence of the source text is combined with cultural concerns in the target text community, a number of problems may arise. This article assesses some of the potential issues deriving from such equivalence-based translation.

* * *

1 See Andy Cheung, “A History of Twentieth Century Translation Theory and Its Application for Bible Translation,” *Journal of Translation* 9, no. 1 (2013).

2 See for instance Scott MacLochlainn who observes that “for Bible translators working among language groups that have no history of Bible translation, this theory of dynamic equivalence has remained the guiding and foundational approach to translation.” Scott MacLochlainn, “Divinely Generic: Bible Translation and the Semiotics of Circulation,” *Signs and Society* 3, no. 2 (2015): 235f.

In translation studies, 'equivalence' is usually understood as a general term that refers to the nature and extent of the relationship between a source text and a translation. Typically, it concerns the linguistic relationship between two texts, a relationship that can be examined at a wide level, such as a discourse or paragraph, or limited to a sentence, word or morpheme.

Until about 1980, scholars working in *translation studies* – in the broadest academic grouping, not just Bible translation circles – were content enough with the above notion. Linguists such as J.C. Catford could assert, with little dissension, that translation is “a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another”³ and that “the theory of translation is essentially a theory of applied linguistics.”⁴ In subsequent decades such statements came to be seen as incomplete: not exactly wrong but sorely lacking in definition and cultural context.

What subsequently arose was a defining period, roughly dated to around the early 1980s, and now called the 'cultural turn.' This refers to a movement across the social sciences to incorporate matters of socio-cultural convention, history and context in conjunction with the development of cultural studies. Among translation scholars, it is understood as a change from a linguistic approach (one word/sentence = another word/sentence) to one that emphasises extra-textual factors and cross-cultural interaction.

This cultural turn saw a rejection of theories based on linguistic equivalence in favour of emphases on non-linguistic matters and on cross-cultural interaction. Theo Hermans has commented:

Translation used to be regarded primarily in terms of relations between texts, or between language systems. Today it is increasingly seen as a complex transaction taking place in a communicative, socio-cultural context. This requires that we bring the translator as

3 J. C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1.

4 *Ibid.*, 19.

a social being fully into the picture.⁵

Words are part of the process but no more: the process of translation is a transfer of culture and must be studied and acted upon in such measure. This was no sudden change: material from the 1980s onwards suggests a two decade long growing acceptance of such ideas. In some circles, it took longer to move away from the notion of translation as linguistic recoding. And of the groups working in translation, it is perhaps Bible translators who hold strongest to the linguistic models of the 1960s and 1970s. Why would that be? Are the cultural models in contemporary translation studies less applicable to Bible translation? Are the criticisms of linguistic equivalence less relevant for sacred texts? Has recent research in translation studies been neglected by Bible translators?

I have dealt with two of the above questions in other recent publications, arguing that Bible translators have neglected potentially useful research in ‘secular’ research and that cultural models of translation, particularly skopos theory, are highly relevant to Bible translation.⁶ Those points won’t be revisited here. The other question, however, on the applicability of linguistic equivalence to sacred texts, requires a rather longer answer and deserves the remainder of this paper for closer examination. Presented below are major concerns offered by critics of linguistic equivalence together with thoughts on their relevance for Bible translation.

EQUIVALENCE IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFINE WITH PRECISION

One of the most common criticisms of equivalence is its definition, with the implication that an imprecise definition suggests a theoretically

5 Theo Hermans, “Norms and the Determination of Translation: A Theoretical Framework,” in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, eds. Román Álvarez and María del Carmen-África Vidal, (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 26-51.

6 See especially Andy Cheung, “Foreignising Bible Translation: Retaining Foreign Origins when Rendering Scripture”, *Tyndale Bulletin* 63, no. 2 (2012): 257-73.

unsound concept. There is little debate that the term is used in different ways and is awkward to define. In a widely quoted example, Mary Snell-Hornby claimed to have identified fifty-eight different meanings attached to the term 'equivalence' in academic writings.⁷ The precise number is sometimes contested but the basic argument stands: there is widespread inconsistency in terminology. Snell-Hornby later added that 'equivalence' has continued to become increasingly variable in definition, and particularly so since the 1980s when its definition becomes "increasingly approximative and vague to the point of complete insignificance."⁸

The counter argument to this is that even if equivalence is difficult to define, it should not necessarily be abandoned. Difficulty of definition does not necessarily equate to impossibility of existence. Indeed, equivalence in translation *must* exist at some level even if its theoretical status is hard to pin down. This is because somewhere, if only fleetingly, a translation *has* to equate to an original text, otherwise how can it be translation? This point was raised by Gideon Toury in his landmark descriptive analysis of translation practice, who argued that equivalence is a feature of all translations, irrespective of their linguistic or aesthetic qualities.⁹ More recently, Anthony Pym has said that, "equivalence is artificial, fictive, something that has to be produced on the level of translation itself. But it *must* be produced" (emphasis original).¹⁰ Even if the notion of equivalence is synthetic, or theoretically undefinable, it is difficult to study translation without acknowledging that at some level it is a notion central to the interaction between languages or cultures.

7 Mary Snell-Hornby, "Übersetzen, Sprache, Kultur," in *Übersetzungswissenschaft – Eine Neuorientierung*, ed. Mary Snell-Hornby, (Tübingen: Francke, 1986).

8 Mary Snell-Hornby, *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1988), 21.

9 Gideon Toury, *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute, 1980), 63-70.

10 Anthony Pym, *Translation and Text Transfer: An Essay on the Principles of Intercultural Communication* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1992), 49.

EQUIVALENCE SHOULD BE SEEN AS ONE OF MANY POSSIBLE GOALS

This concern is related to the above where equivalence is criticised for representing too grand a vision of translation. While some criticise equivalence for being defined too broadly, here it is criticised for trying to do too much.

Skopos theorists such as Hans Vermeer prefer to restrict the meaning of equivalence so that it can be understood as viable and achievable in a narrow fashion.¹¹ For them, equivalence is where a translated text has exactly the same function as the source text, and is thus only one of many goals that translators may choose to attain. Only where both the source and the target text have the same function (or purpose) is there said to be equivalence; a condition also known as ‘functional constancy.’ Given that that such a scenario is unusual, equivalence is therefore rare and should not be presented as a common case, as Nord notes: “Functional equivalence between source and target text is not the ‘normal’ skopos of translation, but an exceptional case in which the factor ‘change of functions’ is assigned zero”.¹²

Not all would agree with this use of ‘functional equivalence’, not even all functionalists. If there is already a term in existence to describe a state where source and target texts have the same function (i.e. functional constancy) why commandeer another term (i.e. functional equivalence) and redefine it as a synonym for the first? The best term for two texts sharing the same function is ‘functional constancy’. Functional equivalence should then be reserved as an alternative, if unwise, synonym for dynamic equivalence.

11 Hans J. Vermeer, *A Skopos Theory of Translation* (Some Arguments for and Against) (Heidelberg: TEXTconTEXT Verlag, 1996).

12 Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 26.

EQUIVALENCE ASSUMES THAT LANGUAGES
EXHIBIT INTERCHANGEABLE SYMMETRY

There is great uncertainty about whether languages exhibit the kind of linguistic symmetry that is sometimes presupposed by equivalence theorists. Total equivalence could only be demonstrated if invariable back translation can be demonstrated: that is, when Object A in the source text is invariably translated as Object B in the target text and can be unerringly reproduced vice versa.¹³ This subjectivity of equivalence is ironically demonstrated by Snell-Hornby, who points out that the word equivalence itself is commonly used in a different way from *Äquivalenz* in respective English and German works on translation studies. She concludes that “the term equivalence ... presents an illusion of symmetry between languages which hardly exists beyond the level of vague approximations and which distorts the basic problems of translation.”¹⁴ The counter response to this is that a good number of equivalence theories already account for the inability to achieve total equivalence, thus “Equivalence ... always implied the possibility of non-equivalence, of non-translation or a text that was in some way not fully translational.”¹⁵

Among Bible translators, Nida affirmed that total (or true) equivalence does not exist and encouraged instead that, “one must in translating seek to find the closest possible equivalent.”¹⁶ The problem, however, remains that expressions such as “closest possible equivalent” remain somewhat difficult to define (cf. the previous criticism), and even in Nida’s own Chomsky-derived theoretical basis, he argued for the existence of universal, underlying and cross compatible structural features in

13 Andrew Chesterman, *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 9.

14 Mary Snell-Hornby, *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1988), 22.

15 Anthony Pym, “European translation studies, une science qui dérange, and why equivalence needn’t be a dirty word,” *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 8, no. 1 (1995): 164.

16 Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 159.

languages. Therefore, at some level, there remains the view that there is always some kind of interchangeable symmetry and it is upon such a conclusion that critics pounce.

THERE ARE MORE USABLE OR MORE EFFICIENT ALTERNATIVES TO EQUIVALENCE

This is an extension of the previous item where researchers complained that equivalence assumes an illusion of symmetry: that ‘equal value’ (equi-valence = equivalence) can be established between languages. As we saw, the counter argument would be that total equivalence is not necessarily expected: scholars such as Nida called for the closest possible equivalent of a linguistic object.

In response, it has been pointed out that such approximation is less helpful than alternative ways of describing translation that promise less in terms of one-to-one linguistic matching.¹⁷ Here then, are commentators who argue not so much that equivalence is impossible but that it is impractical. Chesterman, for instance, claims that the notion of equivalence is ‘inefficient’, suggesting instead that translators aim for something like ‘adequate similarity’ because the demands on the translator are less burdensome:

We can also translate adequately without needing to believe in the illusion of total equivalence. Adequate similarity is enough – adequate for a given purpose in a given context. Indeed, anything more would be an inefficient use of resources.¹⁸

Chesterman’s point is in regard to non-religious texts, but the problem from the perspective of Bible translation is that target audience users may well hold suspicions about a Bible that is produced ‘adequately’ in order

17 Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *Discourse and the Translator* (London: Longman, 1990), 8.

18 Andrew Chesterman, “Where Is Similarity?” In *Similarity and Difference in Translation. Proceedings of the International Conference on Similarity and Translation*, edited by Stefano Arduini and Robert Hodgson (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004), 74.

to save resources, since this may arouse suspicions over its faithfulness to the source text. This is one of the problems with translation theory: what works for some types of literature does not necessarily work for others. Chesterman is doubtless correct in certain circumstances, for one can imagine that certain types of writing (children's fiction for example) might be enthusiastically received if they are 'similar enough' and reflect an 'adequate translation', but translators and readers are likely to have more stringent expectations with regard to sacred texts.

EQUIVALENCE DISCOUNTS THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION

This is one of the most significant criticisms of equivalence. The very history of equivalence-based methods of translation is the starting point: as noted already, equivalence was once the dominant idea underpinning linguistics-based translation theory in the 1960s and 1970s, but since then, translators have begun to think about their work in more interdisciplinary ways. To recap, the so-called cultural turn saw translation theorists view their work in terms of societal and cultural factors that coexisted with language and meaning. For theorists working primarily from the perspective of the target culture, equivalence is too narrow, positing translation as only a linguistic notion whereby translators' sole or central concern is with reproducing textual information from the source to the target text.

Let us now compare two highly cited definitions of translation, one from Catford in the linguistics-dominated era of the 1960s, and a more recent one by Umberto Eco

Translation is "a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another."¹⁹

Translation is always a shift, not between two languages but

19 J. C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1.

between two cultures or two encyclopaedias. A translator must take into account rules that are not strictly linguistic but, broadly speaking, cultural.²⁰

The change, hopefully, is clear to see. The first quotation speaks of translation in textual terms; the second emphasises cultural shifts.

Importantly, however, it is not accurate to believe that equivalence theorists simply ignored or forgot about cultural factors, since that would be an unfair caricature. Indeed, Nida wrote extensively about the need to engage with target cultures in various works.²¹ More accurately, it is not so much that Nida and others ignored cultural factors, but that they invariably assumed that target cultures always wanted one particular type of translation, in this case dynamic equivalence translation – typically readable, easy to understand versions. But this assumes that target culture readers cannot or will not appreciate other translations such as literal versions. Hans Vermeer, writing on the more restricted meaning of culture in the 1960s and 1970s, commented that:

‘Culture-sensitive translating’ needs further explanation. I do not have in mind a simple adaptation of the text to target-culture circumstances, definitely not in order to facilitate its reading ... I admit such a procedure as a possible type of translating, but there are other cases too.²²

His point is that translating with cultural concerns in mind is often thought to mean that translators must produce a text that is easily understood. But with his functionalist approach, Vermeer argued that, “skopos theory does not restrict translation strategies to just one or a few; it does not introduce any restrictions.”²³ So instead of mandating easy to read translation,

20 Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 17.

21 For example, *Customs, Culture and Christianity* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), and *Religion Across Cultures: A Study in the Communication of Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

22 Hans J. Vermeer, “Starting to Unask what Translatology is About,” *Target* 10, no. 1 (1998): 45.

23 *Ibid.*

skopos theory aims to produce a translation suitable for whatever purpose the target culture requires. A similar point has been made elsewhere:

As long as you are analysing modes of equivalence to the source, you are doing linguistics of one kind or another. But if you have to choose between one purpose and another ... linguistics will not be of much help to you. You are engaged in applied sociology, marketing, the ethics of communication, and a gamut of theoretical considerations that are only loosely held under the term "cultural studies."²⁴

The argument here is that equivalence is bound up primarily within a linguistic paradigm and does not sufficiently engage in cultural aspects of translation study. Many contemporary theorists prefer to understand translation within a larger context of intercultural transfer, and therefore its process must be bound, regulated and guided by the norms and conventions of the particular groups concerned. When one reads the works of equivalence theories from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, there tends to be comparatively less discussion about how translators operate in an intercultural context and how differing needs and expectations of target text readers should be met.

How should Bible translation be influenced by this? Much of the target-oriented cultural approach should sit well with Bible translation where the target text may be used for many different purposes: public reading, church preaching, private devotional, evangelistic work, and so on. In addition, target readers differ in understanding and experience in handling the biblical text: pastors and scholars may be well trained in exegesis and hermeneutics, while others may be newly embarking on personal Bible reading. All of this calls for different types of translation for different purposes, allowing the cultural norms and expectations of the readership to influence the form of the text, be it dynamic, literal, free, or interlinear.

But some caution is warranted due to the high status of the source text.

24 Anthony Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories* (London: Routledge, 2010), 49

It is likely that Bible readers, particularly evangelicals, will desire a text seen as ‘faithful’ or ‘accurate’ to the source text. As a genre, translated religious texts generally tend to be closer in style and substance to the source text compared with other types of literary works.

EQUIVALENCE DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DEVELOPMENTS IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

This is an extension of the above category and again relates to equivalence as principally about linguistic recoding. It deserves a separate section because postcolonial writers have reserved particular criticism for equivalence, and also because there is an ethical slant to the discussion, with which critics from the previous perspective may not necessarily agree. The postcolonial perspective views translation from the perspective of power relations and considers there to be an inequality of status between source and target text, which reflects the unequal power relations found in colonial contexts. Sometimes, the very act of translation itself has been questioned as representing a form of cultural appropriation, in that it is seen as a collusive activity that reinforces the position of colonised cultures as subordinate to a superior power.

More commonly, the criticism takes aim at the notion of ‘sameness’ or equivalence between texts as too restrictive and incapable of fully describing the link between translation and empire:

The notion of fidelity to the “original” [i.e. of equivalence] holds back translation theory from thinking the force of a translation. The intimate links between, for example, translation from non-Western languages into English and the colonial hegemony they helped create are seldom examined.²⁵

Here, equivalence is criticised for encouraging a notion of ‘sameness’ which is too restrictive, hampering postcolonial efforts to break free from

25 Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 58.

dominant cultures in order to create and reshape literature and translations. Elsewhere, R. S. Sugirtharajah has criticised English Bible translations for being too restrictive in their use of language: "What we aim for is a version of the Bible which will take into account the postcolonial English and mobilise it radically to rewrite the text, to soak it with new angles and new perspectives."²⁶ This is set expressly against equivalence which is unsuited to postcolonial perspectives:

Translation in a postcolonial context is not merely seeking dynamic equivalence or aiming for linguistic exactness, but desires to rewrite and retranslate the texts, as well as concepts against the grain. Rewriting and retranslating are not a simple dependence upon the past, but a radical remolding of the text to meet new situations and demands.²⁷

But significant widening of the range of Bible versions to include radical rewriting of its contents will likely prove problematic among most Bible readers who tend to expect a high degree of resemblance (indeed, 'equivalence', however that is defined) with the source text. Postcolonial perspectives, though widespread in the scholarly community, may not be so popular among the general Bible reading public: it is questionable if such Bibles would be commercially viable, especially among those aimed at evangelicals.

Nevertheless, postcolonial studies have brought some necessary insight into practical problems of Bible translation. Vicente Rafael noted that the 1610 Tagalog Bible produced by Spanish missionaries in the Philippines, was infused with Latin language. Rafael argued that the Spanish translators' introduction of Latin words for key theological terms and concepts acted as a controlling influence because understanding of Latin was necessary for full appreciation of the Bible. At the same time, the usage of Latin terms implied that the Tagalog language was

26 Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 95

27 *Ibid.*, 96-7.

incapable of carrying the full meaning of sacred Christian terms.²⁸ This contrasts with, for example, the work of William Tyndale who invented new English words such as ‘atonement’ and ‘scapegoat’, rather than reuse Latin or Greek terms. The neologisms themselves soon became a normal part of English.

Overall, postcolonial viewpoints have generated many important insights into translation theory, but such views have attracted criticism of their own. Munday has pointed out that postcolonial writers themselves will inevitably hold political agendas: “The promotion of such translation policies, even though it is from the perspective of the ‘minority’ cultures, still involves a political act and manipulation of translation for specific political or economic advantage.”²⁹ It is difficult to agree that translation must always be produced according to postcolonial ideologies, since this would assume that all readers desire translations that are moulded and written with postcolonial ideology in mind. This is especially the case given the evident success of both dynamic and formal equivalence Bible translations throughout the former colonies. For evangelicals, with a ‘high view’ of scripture, it is unlikely that postcolonial viewpoints will gain much ground in Bible translation activity.

EQUIVALENCE ELEVATES THE SOURCE TEXT TOO HIGHLY

As seen already, the cultural turn saw a fresh emphasis on the target text and target readers thereby opposing the source-text oriented focus of equivalence and linguistic approaches. Since evangelicals hold a ‘high view’ of scripture, to what extent does this criticism apply to target readers who expect fidelity and faithfulness to the source text? First, to the criticism itself: it appears partly through the emergence of the so-called

28 Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

29 Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 134.

'descriptive branch' of translation studies (which seeks to describe and define the field) and partly through the emergence of functionalism (which argues that the needs of the target audience should shape the translation). Scholars working from both perspectives seek to consider translation from the perspective of the target text culture, an activity that sits well with the 'cultural turn.' Since equivalence based theories seek first to establish some kind of 'equal value' with the source text, the function of the translated text in the target community is therefore of a lower rank of importance. Toury, the most prominent figure in the descriptive branch of translation theory, has said that:

Translating ... is to a large extent conditioned by the goals it is designed to serve, and these goals are set in, and by, the prospective receptor system(s). Consequently, translators operate first and foremost in the interest of the culture into which they are translating, and not in the interest of the source text, let alone the source culture.³⁰

All well and good for many text types, be they novels, poetry, student textbooks or business reports, for the theory is here applied to translation of all sorts. But Bible translation is rather different – to regard religious source texts as superior is no bad thing, and it would be difficult to imagine many situations where the target audience would expect otherwise. The idea of altering a sacred text in pursuit of some perceived target audience goal would ordinarily be rejected by most translators. Of course, Toury is not talking specifically about the high status of sacred religious texts; his comment about the source text being superior concerns the starting point or the most important factor in translation, but both of these naturally incorporate thoughts about the perceived venerated status of the source text. At least as far as Bible translation is concerned, most functionalists would probably agree that the source text remains superior, *but only because the target audience expects it, and not because an equivalence theory demands it.*

30 Gideon Toury, "A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies" *Dispositio* 7 (1982): 23-39.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The relevance of equivalence to Bible translation is not a simple consideration. First, there are concerns about its very definition but an exact and consistent definition is perhaps mostly unnecessary. Translation Studies has gotten this far already without ever finding agreement on its precise meaning. In general terms, there is broad agreement: that equivalence relates to the relationship between a source and target text. That is perhaps enough and all that can be achieved – what then of its practical usage?

In Bible translation, the usefulness of equivalence, including Nida's prominent notion of dynamic equivalence, is mixed. There are multiple uses of Bibles: for preaching, for personal devotion, children's work, evangelistic purposes, serious exegetical study, liturgy and worship. Different versions for different functions exist, be they easy to read, or literal or somewhere between. In some cases, an equivalence-based option such as dynamic equivalence is viable, but not in all cases, contra Nida. That is where functionalist approaches, which advocate different types of translation for different purposes depending on reader needs, offer a useful alternative to equivalence.

Therefore, some aspects of the cultural turn are useful, particularly the idea that the role of the target text is elevated. On the other hand, some caution may need to be exercised with such target text oriented translation. Compared to other literature types, Bible translations ordinarily exhibit close fidelity to the source text, but this should be seen as fully in line with functionalist approaches: it is not an equivalence-based theory that is advocating adherence to the source text but expectations of target readers, which is a key perspective of the cultural turn. Apart from a minority, for example those taking a postcolonial perspective, the majority of Bible readers will expect translations to be faithful to the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. This could be seen as a partial continuation of the success of equivalence but more accurately, it is an example of the usefulness of

functionalist approaches in enabling translation to suit the purpose of the target text.

Bibliography

- Álvarez, Román and María del Carmen-África Vidal (eds). *Translation, Power, Subversion*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996.
- Arduini, Stefano and Robert Hodgson (eds). *Similarity and Difference in Translation. Proceedings of the International Conference on Similarity and Translation*. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004.
- Catford, J. C. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Chesterman, Andrew. *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997.
- Chesterman, Andrew. "Where Is Similarity?" In *Similarity and Difference in Translation. Proceedings of the International Conference on Similarity and Translation*, edited by Stefano Arduini and Robert Hodgson, 74. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004.
- Cheung, Andy. "Foreignising Bible Translation: Retaining Foreign Origins when Rendering Scripture." *Tyndale Bulletin* 63, no. 2 (2012): 257-73.
- Cheung, Andy. "A History of Twentieth Century Translation Theory and Its Application for Bible Translation." *Journal of Translation* 9, no. 1 (2013).
- Eco, Umberto. *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003.
- Hatim, Basil and Ian Mason. *Discourse and the Translator*. London: Longman, 1990.
- Hermans, Theo. "Norms and the Determination of Translation: A Theoretical Framework," in *Translation, Power, Subversion*,

- edited by Román Álvarez and María del Carmen-África Vidal, 26-51. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996.
- MacLochlainn, Scott. “Divinely Generic: Bible Translation and the Semiotics of Circulation.” *Signs and Society* 3, no. 2 (2015): 234–260.
- Munday, Jeremy. *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Nida, Eugene A. *Customs, Culture and Christianity*. London: Tyndale Press, 1963.
- Nida, Eugene A. *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden: Brill, 1964.
- Nida, Eugene A. *Religion Across Cultures: A Study in the Communication of Christian Faith*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- Niranjana, Tejaswini. *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Nord, Christiane. *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991.
- Pym, Anthony. *Translation and Text Transfer: An Essay on the Principles of Intercultural Communication*. Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1992.
- Pym, Anthony. “European translation studies, une science qui dérange, and why equivalence needn’t be a dirty word.” *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 8, no. 1 (1995): 153-76.
- Pym, Anthony. *Exploring Translation Theories*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Rafael, Vicente L. *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Sugirtharajah, Rasiah S. *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998.

-
- Snell-Hornby, Mary. "Übersetzen, Sprache, Kultur," in *Übersetzungswissenschaft – Eine Neuorientierung*, edited by Mary Snell-Hornby, 9-29. Tübingen: Francke, 1986.
- Snell-Hornby, Mary (ed.). *Übersetzungs-wissenschaft – Eine Neuorientierung*. Tübingen: Francke, 1986.
- Snell-Hornby, Mary. *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1988.
- Toury, Gideon. *In Search of a Theory of Translation*. Tel Aviv: Porter Institute, 1980.
- Toury, Gideon. "A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies." *Dispositio* 7 (1982): 23-39.
- Vermeer, Hans J. *A Skopos Theory of Translation (Some Arguments for and Against)*. Heidelberg: TEXTconTEXT Verlag, 1996.
- Vermeer, Hans J. "Starting to Unask what Translatology is About." *Target* 10, no. 1 (1998): 41-68.



Anti-Semitism, Modern Israel and the Evangelical Church

Thomas Fretwell

KEYWORDS:

| Anti-Semitism | Israel | Theology |
| Evangelical | Romans | Gentiles |

ABSTRACT:

Anti-Semitic sentiment has been increasing in Europe at an alarming rate. The continued crisis in the Middle East has produced a huge spike in anti-Semitic incidents across the globe. Often these incidents are justified under the guise of anti-Zionism. A segment of the evangelical Church has unfortunately been caught up in this movement. The Church needs to speak with a clear voice when it enters into the conversation. The Church must take into consideration not only the political and ethical aspects but chiefly the theological aspect of the controversy. The subject of Israel must be treated as a larger theme of Biblical Theology. This paper will endeavour to construct a brief theology of Israel based upon Romans 11:25-29.

INTRODUCTION

The discussion that often surrounds such emotionally charged topics can be both passionate and complex. The debate has at many times taken on an unfortunate and overly pejorative tone as those from different viewpoints argue for their respective positions. Both in the political and theological arenas there exists a multitude of polarising opinions and theologies that

make it difficult to gain a clear perspective. The debate draws its content from many different sources; history, theology, ethics and politics. This serves to render it immune to quick simple answers and dogmatic pronouncements. In reality, any attempt to simplify the topic runs the risk of mischaracterising viewpoints and offering reductionist narratives. From within the evangelical tradition the relationship between Israel and the Church and the subject of anti-Semitism is still one of huge importance and interest. These concerns have been exacerbated by the litany of news reports that document the ever prevalent existence of anti-Semitism. In 2014 the level of anti-Semitic attacks in the UK was at the highest level ever recorded. The Community Security Trust, a Jewish Charity which runs an incident hotline reported 1168 anti-Semitic incidents against Britain's Jews.¹ British Jews have expressed that they sense an increasing atmosphere of foreboding and many fear they no longer have a future in Britain. Following the latest outbreak of the conflict in Israel-Gaza anti-Semitic sentiment has increased and resulted in the highest number of anti-Semitic attacks on UK soil since records began. Sadly for many this response is seen as a legitimate form of "justice" for the Jews as they have supposedly inflicted much suffering on the innocent Palestinians. For most, the zealous anti-Israel sentiment is not associated with anti-Semitism; however it is now becoming obvious that the Israeli-Jewish conflation is the most popular form of anti-Semitism. Reporter Emma Barnett, writing for the Telegraph comments that:

A new working definition of anti-Semitism, by the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), now includes "drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis", and "holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel". (It does, incidentally also state that "criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic."²

1 *Anti-Semitic Incidents Report 2014*, The Community Security Trust, p. 11. Last accessed 02/11/16

<https://cst.org.uk/docs/Incidents%20Report%202014.pdf>.

2 Emma Barnett, 'Somewhere Between the Holocaust and 2015 it Became OK to

In addition to this we witnessed the spectacle of an elected Member of Parliament declaring his constituency to be an “Israel-free Zone”, he further commented that:

We don't want any Israeli goods; we don't want any Israeli services; we don't want any Israeli academics coming to the university or the college. We don't even want any Israeli tourists to come to Bradford even if any of them had thought of doing so. We reject this illegal, barbarous, savage state that calls itself Israel - and you have to do the same.

Such inflammatory language should have no place in British politics but unfortunately it is fast becoming normative. In spite of all this the UK branch of the human rights organization Amnesty International still voted not to support a campaign against anti-Semitism in the UK. On April 19, AIUK held its 2015 Annual General Meeting, and adopted 16 of 17 motions. The only proposed resolution that was rejected called on AIUK to “Campaign against anti-Semitism in the UK,” as well as to “Lobby the UK Government to tackle the rise in anti-Semitic attacks in Britain” and “monitor anti-Semitism closely.”³

Unfortunately the global scene fairs no better – In France we witnessed the shooting of four Jewish shoppers at a Jewish Kosher supermarket in Paris which led to a national manhunt and increased security being deployed at Jewish schools and Synagogues around the country. In Israel the population are currently witnessing “a new kind of terrorism” as young Palestinians with kitchen knives embark on a ruthless campaign of murder which Israel attributes to recent Palestinian Authority incitement. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reported that since September 2015 there have been 174 stabbings, 70 shootings, and 38 vehicular

Blame Jews Again,' *Daily Telegraph*. 15 January 2015. Last accessed 13/02.16.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11345643/Paris-shootings-anti-Semitism-Its-OK-to-blame-Jews-again.html>.

3 'NGO Monitor. Statement on Amnesty International UK's Rejection of a Resolution to Campaign against Anti-Semitism, April 21 2015.' Last accessed 02/01/16:
http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/statement_on_amnesty_international_uk_s_rejection_of_a_resolution_to_campaign_against_antisemitism

attacks.⁴ These events are coupled with the growing presence of Islamic anti-Semitism across the Middle East as it is shaken by the atrocities of ISIS who continue to militantly expand their territory across the region.

This list could really go on ad infinitum, but even as it is it is enough to understand the increasing sense of unrest felt by Jews around the world. Those within the church are wondering what to make of all this. Historically the evangelical tradition has been very supportive of Israel and stood firmly against anti-Semitism, although in recent years the resurgence of supersessionism and pro-Palestinian liberation theology has eroded much of this support. Many now lack the proper tools to correctly navigate the situation with confidence seeing it simply through the lens of the modern Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However this is a single facet approach to a multi-faceted problem. Such blatant outward expressions of anti-Semitism have really meant that lines of demarcation are being drawn, not only among opposing political ideologies, but also and most importantly for us, among the church as well.

The Year 2015 witnessed the passing of the world's foremost authority on anti-Semitism, Professor Robert Wistrich. He served as head of the Vidal Sassoon International Centre for Anti-Semitism at the Hebrew University. He was a hugely sought-after speaker and author, effective in countering the ever increasing scourge of anti-Semitism.

The cover synopsis for his seminal 1992 publication: *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred* reads as follows:

No other prejudice has displayed such intensity and historic continuity, nor resulted in such devastating consequences, as anti-Semitism.⁵

Professor Wistrich's death comes at a time when his message is most needed. He knew and warned that global anti-Semitism was on the rise

4 IMFA. *Wave of Terror* 2015/2016, 10 Feb 2016. Last Accessed 13/02/16:
<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Wave-of-terror-October-2015.aspx>

5 Robert S. Wistrich, *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred*. Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1992.

inflamed in the West by a leftist Pro-Palestinian ideology and in the East by an ever increasing radical Islamic anti-Semitism.

The question is where is the voice of the Church in all this? Admittedly, the topic is complex and requires examination from both political and ethical vantages. However, the concern for Christians is to ensure that the issue is given adequate theological treatment before engaging with the subject on other levels. In order to achieve this, the church needs to ensure that biblically, the subject of Israel is not used only as a way to adjudicate between the different viewpoints concerning the Modern State of Israel – but rather that the entire subject of the house of Israel is seen for what it is in the biblical corpus – perhaps the largest meta-narrative in all of scripture. The subject of Israel needs to be treated as a Biblical Theology theme.

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF ISRAEL FROM ROMANS 11:25-29.

This text is the final portion of a much larger corpus in Romans 9-11 that expounds upon the subject of God's dealings with Israel in light of God's larger salvation-historical drama. While time does not allow for a complete contextual survey of this passage we will draw a number of observations from the text that relate to the title of this paper.

1. The Gentile Church is Prone Towards Ignorance and Arrogance regarding the Issue of Israel.

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—
so that you will not be wise in your own estimation

—ROMANS 11:25 (A)

Paul cautions the Roman church to ensure that they are not “uninformed” of the biblical teaching concerning Israel in order that they are not “wise in their own estimation”. In other words the Church must be careful not to display an attitude of ignorance concerning Israel's current position of

blindness and not to allow this position to produce in them an attitude of superiority or arrogance. Unfortunately the ugly mixture of ignorance and arrogance is an apt description of the church’s attitude for much of its history, indicating that Paul’s warning has gone largely unheeded. The doctrine of supersessionism, more commonly known as replacement theology, has been the majority view throughout the history of the church. This is the term given to the view that the Church has replaced Israel in the future plan of God. In this view the covenantal promises regarding Israel’s future have now been transferred to the Church, which has become the new ‘spiritual Israel’. Walter Kaiser Jr., defines it this way;

[R]eplacement theology declared that the Church, Abraham’s spiritual seed, had replaced national Israel in that it had transcended and fulfilled the terms of the covenant given to Israel, which covenant Israel has lost because of disobedience.⁶

Supersessionism quickly became the dominant viewpoint in the Post-Apostolic Church. As the influence of supersessionism grew, it brought with it a shameful legacy of Christian anti-Semitism that persisted, and some would say culminated, in the terrible events of the twentieth century. It has been said that one can trace the abuses of anti-Semitism from Augustine to Auschwitz. Indeed, as Prager and Telushkin note, “Christianity did not create the Holocaust...but it made it possible. Without Christian anti-Semitism, the Holocaust would have been inconceivable”.⁷ They continue that for, “nearly two thousand years...the Christian world dehumanized the Jew, ultimately helping lay the groundwork for the Holocaust.”

Much of the external imagery that is associated with traditional anti-Semitic calumnies tragically owe their origin not to the Third Reich or the Mufti’s, but to the church. The ghetto, yellow stars and identification

6 Kaiser, W.C. Jr. “An assessment of Replacement Theology: The Relationship between the Israel of the Abrahamic covenant and the Christian Church”. *Mishkan* 21 (1994)

7 Prager, Dennis; Telushkin, Joseph. *Why the Jews: The Reason for Anti-Semitism*. New York: Touchstone. 2003

badges, pointy hats, segregation, banishments, job restrictions and synagogue burnings were mainly European Christian initiatives. It was the German church that opened up the genealogical records to the Nazis. Of course not everyone who holds to a supersessionist viewpoint will be anti-Semitic, yet at the same time, as Vlach concludes, “it is undeniable that anti-Jewish bias has often gone hand in hand with the supersessionist view”.⁸ Although Post-Holocaust theology made efforts to redress this imbalance, recently there has been a resurgence of supersessionism in the evangelical church. This resurgence has been inflamed by the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the support of left-leaning progressives who advocate imposing a social justice narrative onto the scriptures. This type of narrative portrays the Palestinians as helpless underdogs trying to resist the indomitable might of their imperialist overlords – Israel! This movement is known as “The New Supersessionism” and it fuses together traditional supersessionist doctrines with Palestinian nationalism and quasi-Marxist liberation theology. This movement is unapologetically anti-Zionist in its politics. However it is here that the problem arises as the line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism has been pushed to the limits in contemporary discourse, to the point that in many cases the two are one and the same. Israel is now seen as the collective Jew and can be hated all the same. Listen to the words of Robert Wistrich again:

You have the denial, for instance, that there is any relationship between so-called criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism, but, in fact, most of what goes by the name of criticism of Israel is feeding on a daily basis the growing demonization of the Jewish state, which in turn spills over, I would say, almost with mathematical inevitability into some form of dislike, hostility, or even loathing of Jews.⁹

Such sentiments are often greeted with immediate aversion by those

8 Vlach, Michael J. *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* Nashville: B&H Publishing. 2010.

9 Sam Sokol, ‘Robert Wistrich , Leading Scholar of Anti-Semitism Dies of Heart Attack,’ *Jerusalem Post*, 21/05/15 accessed on 22/09/15. <http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Robert-Wistrich-leading-scholar-of-anti-Semitism-dies-of-heart-attack-403590>.

involved with the anti-Zionist cause. Yet the realities of Wistrich's words can be visually illustrated by events this past year in the UK. After the recent conflict in Gaza thousands took to the streets of London to protest against Israel and in support of the Palestinians. The level of emotion was intense and the hatred against Israel was palpable. Yet the question remained: were the crowds there because they hate Israel or because they care for the welfare of the Palestinians? The evidence leans toward the former. For if this outburst was motivated solely by concern for the Palestinians these people would also be protesting against the continually corrupt leadership of the Palestinians who have stolen aid money from the people, or the government sponsored media that indoctrinates children to hate and kill! One surely would have expected a small crowd to gather when thousands of Palestinians were slaughtered by the Islamic State in Syria, especially as ISIS was besieging official UNWRA maintained Palestinian refugee camps such as the one in Yarmouk on the outskirts of Damascus.¹⁰ Strangely the silence was deafening! No protest, no marches in front of Parliament, nothing! Would this have been the case if Israel stormed a refugee camp? Unless Israel is able to be portrayed as the aggressor the international outcry seems to dissipate. Yet can genuine concern be displayed only when the "correct" perpetrator is indicted?

The line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism is dangerously blurred. Evangelical theology should make sure that it is able to stand against any form of anti-Semitism whether it is directed at individual Jews or collectively against Israel. This does not mean that we have to support the nation Israel in a nationalistic sense or even agree with Israeli policy, but it does mean that our theology is not guilty of predisposing us towards a political ideology that practically crosses the line into anti-Semitism.

10 Ara News Agency, 'At Least 3000 Palestinians Killed in Syria Conflict,' October 20th 2015. Last accessed 02/13/2016:
<http://aranews.net/2015/10/at-least-3000-palestinians-killed-in-syria-conflict/>.

2. The Hardening of Israel is Partial and Temporary.

That a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

—ROMANS 11:25 (B)

This next clause is a theologically rich and important statement by the apostle Paul. The annals of church history will show that gentile Christendom has often reacted against charges of anti-Jewish bias by pointing out that the Jewish people rejected Christ and are presently unbelievers. Paul here seems to pre-empt this arrogant response by explaining the reason for Israel's present obduracy. These final verses of Romans 11 stand as a book end to the whole argument crafted throughout Romans 9-11. Here we see the explanation for the juxtaposition of Israel's present hostility towards God (9:1-3) and the expression of God's irrevocable promises to Israel (11:28). The resolution of this conflict is to be found in properly understanding the "mystery" which Paul writes about. Moo comments that the term mystery is derived from Jewish apocalyptic writings and "usually refers to an event of the end times that has already been determined by God-and so, in that sense, exists already in heaven, - but which is first revealed to the apocalyptic seer for the comfort and encouragement of the people of Israel."¹¹

Paul had previously explained the reason for God allowing Israel to stumble (11:1-15) and here reaffirms his interpretation of Israel's current position as the result of divine hardening. He emphasises that the current hardening is only "partial" and there remains a faithful remnant of believers within the nation, Paul himself being one of them. This remnant is evidence of God's continued faithfulness to Israel which proves the nation has not been rejected (11:5). However the real content of the mystery is not just that a believing remnant in the nation would remain as this concept is found in the Old Testament. Neither is the mystery the fact

¹¹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. NICNT. Grand Rapids. Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1996, p. 715.

that Israel would one day experience a national revival beyond the locus of a small remnant, as this too is clearly taught in the Old Testament. Moo comments regarding the mystery by noting that the novel aspect was:

[T]he idea that the inauguration of the eschatological age would involve setting aside the majority of Jews while Gentiles streamed in to enjoy the blessings of salvation and that only when the stream, had been exhausted would Israel as a whole experience these blessings.”¹²

This period within the larger context of salvation history is set to continue “*until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in*”. The word “until” in this context definitely indicates a temporal cessation of one situation and the commencement of another. The term is reminiscent of the words of Jesus to the people of Israel when He said:

For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘
BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”
—MATT 23:39

Paul is saying that this present position of hardening will exist until the full number of gentiles has been reached. The “fullness of the gentiles” is this present age when God is “taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14)”. The phrase is closely related to the expression “times of the Gentiles” which is used in Luke 21:24. The former seems to have a numerical focus whilst the latter is chronologically focused. The termination of the times of the gentiles would seem to be when Jesus returns (cf. Acts 15:14-16, Luke 21:24-27) thus indicating that the “fullness” of the gentiles in a quantitative sense will coincide with the end of the “times of the gentiles” when Jesus returns. Paul’s brief sketch of salvation history then includes unbelieving Israel in the present age and this must factor into any biblical theology concerning Israel.

12 *Ibid* p. 717.

3. Israel will experience National Regeneration.

²⁶ and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,
“The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness
from Jacob.”

²⁷ This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.
—ROMANS 11:26-27

This clause is the “eye of the storm” for understanding Romans 9-11 and the hermeneutical challenges it presents should not be underestimated. For the sake of brevity the identification of “all Israel” shall be our primary focus. There are a number of possible interpretations that have been offered by theologians throughout church history. Some see “Israel” here as pertaining to the elect, the one people of God comprising both believing Jews and Gentiles. This position seems doubtful given that Paul has used the term consistently ten times throughout Romans 9-11 to refer to ethnic Israel. Others have claimed that “all Israel” is to be understood as a reference to all Jews throughout history. This position however raises a myriad of soteriological problems and does not fit the context of the discussion without raising too many additional questions. Still others simply see this as a reference to the elect within Israel who are now part of the church. The multitude of interpretations only shows how disparate the Church’s theology of Israel has become. In this paper I will not engage with all of these viewpoints but argue for the view that seems to be the most straight forward reading of the text. If we read it without any preconceived presuppositions inherited from our particular theological systems then some of the confusion evaporates. To interpret “all Israel” as a reference to the ethnic nation of Israel seems to fit the context best. Moreover to understand the words “will be saved” as a reference to the national salvation of Israel should not be seen as somehow unfair to those outside of Israel, or as God giving a certain group of people a second chance he is unwilling to give anyone else. The national regeneration and

eschatological salvation of Israel is one of the most frequently recorded hopes of the prophets (cf. Eze 37:25-28, Jer 31:31-34, Mic 4:1-4).

Paul seems to emphasise this point by his selection of Old Testament quotations. He first quotes a verse from Isaiah 59:20. The context is crucial; Isaiah 59 is an eschatological chapter dealing with the second coming of Christ in judgement at the end of the age to repay those whose deeds are wicked. This same chapter describes Jesus as a “redeemer” who will come to Zion (location) and remove the sins of Israel (ethnicity). The next verse Isaiah 59:21 links these events, the salvation of ethnic Israel to the New Covenant. This is supported by the second Old Testament quote that Paul selects from Jeremiah 31:33-34 where he explicitly ties the salvation of Israel to the New Covenant. Most theologians today would not deny that the New Covenant awaits its final consummation with the coming of Christ. Paul has now explained that part of this consummation involves the national salvation of the nation of Israel. Paul utilised covenantal promises from the Old Testament to demonstrate that this is a theme that runs through the scriptures and these same scriptures have provided a chronological sequence for their fulfilment. The “mystery” then pertains to the order of these events in relation to Israel’s present unbelief and the blessings of Gentile salvation. Having provided such a broad sweeping overview of these truths Paul now seeks to sum up his argument in the next two verses.

4. Unbelieving Jews are our Beloved Enemies.

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake,
but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the
sake of the fathers.

—ROMANS 11:28

Paul here gives a clear summary of Israel’s dual status and how it relates to the main thrust of the argument that he is addressing in chapters 9-11. Israel who even now is hardened towards the gospel and in a state of

enmity towards God is not completely rejected. The Gentile church is to understand that this present state of hardening was necessary for salvation to come to the Gentiles. Given this situation the Gentiles must be careful not to become arrogant towards the “natural branches”. Understanding and accepting this fact should provoke a response from unbelieving Israel – to make them jealous;

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

—ROMANS 11:11

With this response in mind it is important to understand how a church that has become arrogant against the natural branches because of their unbelief, or a church which actively promotes theology that is anti-Semitic, stands little chance of provoking Israel into a state of jealousy.

Israel then remains the elect nation, beloved by God for the sake of the fathers on account of the enduring efficacy of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This dual status of Israel is the key to understanding the “mystery” and her place in the larger history of Gods redemptive plan.

5. The Promises given to Israel are Irrevocable.

²⁹ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Romans 11:29

Paul now finishes by grounding his argument theologically. He has argued that Israel remains important in God’s plan based upon the promises given to the patriarchs. As long as those promises stand true then so does his argument concerning the future of national Israel. He confirms this simply by announcing that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. It is best to see the phrase “calling” here as referring to the election of Israel as a nation and “gifts” is best identified as encompassing all the privileges and blessings that accompany this. The term irrevocable carries with it

the idea that something cannot be undone or changed. The promises of God concerning Israel are certain, for the word of God cannot be broken, his promises are sure. Paul has been building his argument towards this climatic theological crescendo throughout chapters 9-11 and now having beautifully explicated the redemptive purposes of God for the nation Israel and the blessings that came to the gentiles, the apostle breaks out into doxological praise to end chapter 11.

These four verses in Romans chapter 11 provide for us at least a basic outline of a biblical theology of Israel. Any attempt to address the topic theologically must provide a response to the areas outlined in these verses, i.e. that Israel was elected in the past, that the majority of the nation repudiated the claims of the gospel at the first coming of Messiah, but even in this unbelieving state they still remain an elect nation who one day will receive the promised covenantal blessing of national salvation when the Messiah comes again. Such a narrative of Israel simply will not allow for any triumphalist supersessionism or anti-Semitic theology whether it manifests explicitly as such or whether it hides behind the veneer of political anti-Zionism.



Cultural Challenges to Jewish Evangelism: Some insights from the Ministry of CMJ

Alex Jacob

KEYWORDS:

| Jewish Evangelism | Contextual Mission |
| Cultural Changes | Post-Holocaust Theology |

ABSTRACT:

All missionary work is set within a prevailing cultural context. In this paper I reflect upon the insights gained from the work of The Church's Ministry among Jewish People (CMJ) over the past 206 years in regards to Jewish evangelism.

Attention is given to the cultural challenges and shifts arising from the re-establishment of the State of Israel (1948), the Shoah (Holocaust), the growth of Messianic Judaism, the changing 'mission focuses' within the Church and the legal and cultural climate of 'post-modern' Britain. In addition to this work issues around identity and values are explored from a Biblical perspective.

The paper concludes with a renewed sense of confidence in the changeless Gospel message set within the ever-changing landscape of the Jewish community, the Church and wider society.

INTRODUCTION

The Church's Ministry among Jewish People has been active in pioneering innovative and biblically astute Jewish evangelism since 1809. During this long period there has been immense cultural change with associated cultural challenges.

Firstly let's begin by exploring what is meant by the all-embracing term 'culture'. I think it is fair to say that the term 'culture' along with many other terms is a somewhat 'slippery term' but I have found the following three definitions to be helpful;

- Culture refers to a way of living and thinking which is unique for a specific group of people, based on language, values, symbols and norms of behaviour.
- Culture is primarily the ideas and social customs shaped by knowledge, experience, values and hierarchies of a particular group of people.
- Culture is an individual and social construct which reflects values, traditions, meaning, creativity and governance.

Throughout the history of CMJ mission activity we have worked at the meeting points between 'Jewish culture', 'church culture' and the 'culture of the wider society'. In every mission encounter and in every Christian community there is an awareness of the importance of place (culture). Places shape people. Also faith shapes people.

These two powerful forces often clash and result in much conflict, yet also at other times and in other places such a meeting is immensely creative. I suggest one can see in much of Paul's missionary writings the wrestling between place and faith as he seeks to help the church and each Christian to grow in genuine discipleship.

EXPLORING 'OUR' CULTURE

In terms of the 'culture' and associated 'values' of Britain today, the Evangelical Alliance recently carried out a major survey of British values¹, based on 1730 responses from Christians. In terms of positive values the three most important were seen to be, 1) A sense of humour, 2) Tolerance and 3) Fair play. The three most negative values were, 1) Consumerism, 2) Obsession with celebrities and 3) Sexual promiscuity.

I suppose when one sees these values, it is important to explore how these may have or are currently influencing church culture and specifically evangelistic mission. Also there is a need to dig a little deeper to know what is really meant by these values. For example, historically, tolerance in a British context is linked to toleration of religious differences and specifically the Act of Toleration passed in 1689, which allowed for 'religious freedom' to dissenting Protestants.

Today I think most people would be unaware of this historic context and would see tolerance in terms of 'accepting the other' within a non-discriminatory pluralistic society. Tolerance would therefore for many people seem to undermine to some extent evangelistic work. However, from a Christian perspective tolerance is a virtue which can spur evangelism, for true tolerance gives genuine space for engagement with different opinions, belief and cultural practices. As Christians (and Messianic Jews) we expect and enjoy the right of sharing our faith publically. Sometimes this can be in a 'robust way' but while doing this it is vital that we allow the same rights for others and to make absolutely sure that our methods of outreach do not give any space for the maligning or abuse others.

To this end CMJ has a strong code of behaviour² for all our evangelist workers as they engage with Jewish people and Jewish communities.

1 See the *Idea* magazine, Sept/Oct 2015 (The magazine of *The Evangelical Alliance*).

2 See the *CMJ* website for details:
<http://www.cmj.org.uk/>.

Hopefully, this code gives proper boundaries to our work and shows cultural sensitivity and the marks of the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit, while at the same time not reducing our work to bland platitudes and without an undermining of the direct and radical challenge of the Gospel. This is the ‘tight-rope’ we walk, as do all involved in evangelistic mission, especially mission with a strong ‘cross-cultural’ element.

In terms of building a true missionary church, the fundamental challenge is I believe, ‘how to live out and apply genuine Christian holiness in the middle of a rapidly changing culture?’ The current Archbishop of Canterbury, in a recent address to church mission leaders challenged the church to be culturally astute by seeking to be a community which values and seeks to incarnate within its life three things above all. Firstly, Christ-like love. Secondly, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, a true biblical perseverance which deals with differences by allowing and celebrating ‘diversity within unity’. I am sure these community cultural values would indeed enhance the mission of the church.

As we turn to the Jewish world, one sees a great amount of diversity in Jewish culture. This should not surprise us as Jewish culture has evolved (and is evolving) over 4000 years of history. One key insight we have learned as CMJ, from over 200 years of ministry is that our evangelistic approach must be flexible as one approach would not be acceptable for all shades of Jewish culture. As one of our evangelistic workers recently stated; “One size does not and never will fit all.”

In terms of the diversity within Jewish culture we have tried to establish modes of evangelism which are culturally relevant to a number of Jewish groups, such as those who would self-define as Orthodox, Conservative, Liberal (reform) and Secular. My reading of current Jewish culture is that it has (and is) being shaped primarily by five realities—namely, 1) The Holocaust (Shoah) and related anti-Semitism, 2) Zionism and the modern re-establishment of the State of Israel, 3) The growth of Messianic Judaism, 4) The Jewish academic and to some extent religious ‘reappraisal of Jesus’ and, 5) Growing secular values relating to the

advancement of post-modern and multi-cultural contexts.

While we see great diversity within Jewish culture, there are however a number of shared values and views to note. Namely, I suggest a shared calling to belong, to celebrate and to survive alongside an on-going 'Messianic hope' which in some way holds onto the belief that the goals of the prophets, priesthood and kings will be, at some future point, fully consummated.

As one looks at the cultural shifts within Jewish communities, the church and wider society, it is clear that such shifts will bring opportunities and challenges in regards to Jewish evangelism. With the risk of some over-simplification, let me now explore these five cultural shifts.

THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL IN 1948

Firstly, it deepens the faith of those who have always held together the 'two pillars' of Jewish evangelism and Jewish restoration. For if the LORD has restored the people to the land in fulfilling some of the Scriptural promises, how much more can we trust that the LORD will restore the people to Himself through the Messiah?

Secondly, it changes how we may well read and interpret scripture. The restoration of Israel provides an additional 'hermeneutical lens' for us. For example, Isaiah 19 has a renewed immediate and eschatological context for many readers now that Israel is a nation. The vision of the Isaiah 19 highway can renew those working in the mission contexts alluded to in the text.

Thirdly, it changes the practical focus of mission and the deployment of mission resources. For example, probably for the first time since the destruction of the second Jerusalem temple more Jewish people now live within Israel than outside Israel. For those historical mission agencies, like CMJ which may have had in the past a primarily European focus there has been a need to radically invest new mission resources in Israel, in order to respond to new opportunities.

Fourthly, it changes the relationship between the sent mission worker (and his or her church network) and the receiving community, especially as indigenous and in some cases independent messianic congregations are established and as they begin to develop their own identities and mission strategies within a well-established Jewish setting. A greater value is therefore rightly placed on partnership with local congregations. It seems to me that in the past mission history of groups like CMJ the focus was upon the actions of heroic individual missionaries, while today the focus is more upon wider partnerships of mutual support with the local congregations and more self-sustaining shorter term mission projects.

Fifthly, it creates a different reality when compared with a focus on the Holocaust. The holocaust led to most Jewish-Christian encounters and theological reflection becoming ‘Holocaust shaped’. With this there is often the view of Jewish people as victims. This view often stimulates a reappraisal of ‘anti-Semitic Christian theologies’ and some liturgical practices. While an alternative focus on the re-establishment of the State of Israel often leads to seeing Jewish people as victors and in some theological contexts as oppressors.

Sixthly, it brings about in some cases a new openness to the Gospel. I believe this is linked to renewed Jewish confidence in their identity and cultural life. In this sense what was once anathema to a loyal Jewish person suffering in a European ghetto may become a possibility on a Tel Aviv beach. This personal openness to the Gospel (and many other things) has also been reflected in wider areas of academic study. For example, there is a well-known Jewish reappraisal of Jesus and a moving away from former polemical views. This has also produced fruitful work in areas of shared textual studies and in areas of exploring the Jewish roots of Christianity and the Christian influence on Rabbinic Judaism and upon Talmudic texts. In addition new pioneering Jewish-Christian studies are taking place in areas of religious identity, pilgrimage, spirituality and a shared reflection on the on-going engagement with Islam.

THE HOLOCAUST

As one reflects upon the Holocaust one enters the deep mysteries of God sovereignty alongside the dual dark aching realities of human sinful actions and demonic activity. In the light of the Holocaust Jewish evangelism can be challenged in a number of ways. Firstly, it can instil into many Christians a sense of shame and an associated loss of confidence in the church and even the Gospel. This in turn leads to a shift away from direct 'evangelistic ministry' to an emphasis on dialogue and to the development of a 'servant mission' approach. Often this also brings about a theological re-appraisal and the development of a Two-Covenant approach³ which undermines the need for any Jewish evangelism. This approach is expressed clearly by Arnulf Baumann who states:

The terrible facts of the Holocaust and the contributing teaching of contempt gradually dawned on Christians in Germany and other countries. It can well be understood how such Christians began new ways of relating to Jews and Judaism, a way which would exclude any sort of contempt, hatred or triumphalism on the Christian side. It seemed to be a fascinating idea to understand Christianity and Judaism as two separate entities, emerging from the same root but now neatly separated; one belonging to the world of the nations with the task of leading all nations to the true God through Jesus Christ, the other belonging to the one elect people, with the task of leading the scattered remnants of this people to covenantal faithfulness in the ancient way of Israel. If the relationship between Christians and Jews was seen in this light there would be no room for interference with each other anymore.⁴

Secondly, in the light of Hitler's attempted annihilation of the Jewish people, Jewish survival and Jewish identity is seen as especially important.

3 For a full study of the development of Two Covenant Theology alongside a study of Replacement Theology and the promotion of Enlargement Theology, see Alex Jacob, *The Case for Enlargement Theology* (Saffron Walden (UK): Glory to Glory Publications), 2010.

4 Arnulf Baumann, 'The Two Ways/Two Covenants Theory,' *Mishkan Journal*, 11, 1989, pp. 37-38. See, <http://caspari.com/new/en/resources/mishkan-archive>

This again has been interrupted by some theologians as a reason to restrict or remove Jewish evangelism. Margaret Brearley outlines this position and states:

If Christians knew Orthodox Judaism better, they would judge it more humbly. The Holy Spirit has been widely taught and experienced in the Synagogue and the Word of God loved, cherished and lived out in countless Jewish homes since Rabbinical times. The exiled Jewish people have been faithful to the covenant, sensing God's forgiveness, love and blessing being renewed each Shabbat and festival, sustaining them in the task of *tikkum olam* (mending the world).⁵

Thirdly, Jewish evangelism has also been undermined by a growing pluralism and liberalism within part of the Church and also some extreme forms of Dispensational Theology which have taken root within segments of Church thinking and mission practice. While these factors are not directly connected to the Holocaust they need to be noted at this point as they connect with the promotion of Two-Covenant thinking.

Our response to this theological and cultural challenge is to state the following. Yes we need a servant ministry alongside a more evangelistic mission; yes we need to give space for genuine dialogue alongside proclamation. Yes we need to re-examine our theological models, especially where there may have been elements of anti-Semitic teachings contained within, for these we must repent and reform. However, the Gospel remains Good News for the Jewish people⁶, in fact not to try and share the Gospel sensitively and appropriately with Jewish people may become a form of anti-Semitism. Also we must state clearly (and have the theological⁷ and missional models in place to back this up) that Jewish identity is not lost, terminated or destroyed when a Jewish person

5 Margaret Brearley, 'Jerusalem in Judaism and for Christian Zionists,' in, P.W.L. Walker (ed.), *Jerusalem, Past and Present in the purposes of God* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 1994), p. 21.

6 See Rom. 1:16.

7 *Op cit*, Alex Jacob, *The Case for Enlargement Theology*.

becomes a disciple of Jesus (Yeshua) but rather there is a renewal and enlarging of this identity. On one level what could be more Jewish than to put your trust in the Jewish Messiah.

Let me give the final word in this section to a contemporary Jewish Believer in Jesus- Mitch Glaser states:

The salvation paradigm which has the Jew going through Moses and gentiles through Jesus is untenable, as it confuses the great intent of the great Old Testament covenants. The Mosaic covenant was never intended to provide salvation for the Jewish people; its purpose was to point toward the New Covenant. Paul says the Law was a schoolmaster to teach us the way of salvation in Christ (Galatians 3:34). It would be the height of irony if we Jews were barred from graduating from the school of our own Law! For according to the Apostle, Christ is the very fulfilment of the Torah (Romans 10:4).⁸

THE GROWTH OF MESSIANIC JUDAISM

Messianic Judaism is another slippery term, so let me offer you some definitions I have found helpful:

- Messianic Judaism is a biblically based movement of people who as committed Jews, believe in Jesus (Yeshua) as the Jewish Messiah of whom the Torah and prophets spoke.
- Messianic Judaism is a movement of Jewish congregations committed to Jesus (Yeshua) who embrace the covenantal responsibility of Jewish life and identity, expressed in tradition, and renewed and applied in the context of the New Covenant.
- Messianic Judaism is an important work of God in which He is grafting back some of the original branches (Romans 11) and also restoring the whole church to its Jewish root.
- Messianic Judaism is the movement of Jewish believers in Jesus who affirm that their Jewish identity comes alive in Jesus rather than is terminated by faith in Jesus. Such believers seek to live out their faith

8 *Op cit, Mishkan Journal*, 11, 1989, p. 64.

in traditional Christological categories and to serve fully as part of the church while seeking to uphold and develop special links to the wider Jewish community.

The growth in Messianic Judaism in Israel (and also especially in the USA) can be seen over five modern periods, namely the late Ottoman period, the Mandate period, the birth of Israel period(1948+), the Jerusalem period (1967+) and the twenty –first century period. In this twenty –first century period, one can see the growth due largely to the high number of Messianic Jews from Russian (and the former Soviet Union) making Aliyah to Israel. Within each period one can trace significant developments and growth factors. It is especially encouraging today to see 3rd and 4th generational Jewish believers in Jesus.

I have found it particularly significant to see how many Messianic congregations are transitioning through the three main cultural stages of community identity, firstly the ‘continuity stage’ in which there is a strong connection to the biblical narrative. Namely our story is part of the big story of the bible. This stage has particular resonance for Messianic Jewish communities. Secondly, the ‘indigenous stage’ in which one works out that God has and is meeting us in our own contemporary culture. This stage reminds us that the Gospel is transformative within all cultures and the out-working of the incarnation is that that the Gospel brings forth much culture richness and diversity. Thirdly, the ‘pilgrim stage’ in which a community is aware of the challenge to “go beyond’ one’s own cultural ‘comfort zones’ in order to witness and share with the so-called ‘outsider’. I suggest we should see an awareness of these three stages in all true mission communities. Also I suggest one can see these stages in the early mission life of the church, as outlined in the Acts of the Apostles.

For us in CMJ we have been involved in the support and nurture of the Messianic Jewish movement from its modern inception in 1813. One of the challenges is how to celebrate Jewish Messianic identity while maintaining wider unity within the church. Clearly if this can be achieved a great catalyst for Jewish evangelism will occur. For many within the

wider Jewish world the growth in Messianic Judaism has challenged the way in which Jewish identity and culture is defined.⁹ Some may argue a paradigm shift in Jewish identity is taking place. Equally many within the church are equally challenged by this growth and much reflection and study is taking place.¹⁰

LOSS OF MISSION FOCUS AND CONFIDENCE WITHIN THE CHURCH

This cultural shift has already partly been commented upon in relation to the emergence of Two-Covenant Theology. Associated with this has been the post-modern rejection of any meta-narrative and the diagnosis that any declaration of 'objective truth' is linked to the misuse of power. This understanding has clearly undermined all evangelistic missions. However I feel Jewish evangelism has been especially hit hard when one adds to this cultural mix the widespread disengagement with Old Testament texts, a loss of eschatological hope and an anti-Semitic and anti-Israel agenda which has particularly impacted parts of the church. This disengagement with the Old Testament has I believe been so serious in some cases that the church leaders have unknowingly sown the seeds of the ancient 'Marcion heresy' back within the church.

For us within CMJ we recognise that at times some evangelism and mission endeavours may have been unhelpfully linked to imperialism or other unhelpful cultural agendas. However the best response to any past misuse is seldom non-use, but rather right use. Therefore, we have learned the need to make sure that our motives and methods in Jewish Evangelism are biblically astute and personally authentic and transparent. We have

9 See, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (London & New York: Continuum, 2000).

10 See, Peter Hocken, *The Glory and the Shame* (London: Eagle, 1993); see also, Daniel Juster, *Growing to Maturity* (Rockville, MD: Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, 1985; reprinted 2011); and Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology* (Series: Studies in Messianic Jewish Theology; Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2009).

also sought to equip the church to appreciate the fullness of Scripture and to grasp the ‘big picture’ of a true Biblical Theology. I believe throughout the history of the Church effective Jewish Mission has been and always will be the ‘litmus test’ for the uniqueness, all-sufficiency and power of the Gospel.

Also within the church decline in mission giving and the changing patterns of this mission giving (often with a greater focus on personalities and short term projects) have tended to make gaining support for more ‘traditional’ mission agencies a struggle. However, one also sees encouraging areas of support and many new mission opportunities opening up, partly through the social media revolution. This revolution has made levels of communication possible which would have been unthinkable to even our most visionary missionary leaders in previous generations.

THE LEGAL CLIMATE

I will not say much on this as one of the papers today is being presented by Paul Diamond who is a barrister and standing legal counsel to the Christian Legal Centre. Clearly he will be able to speak with more insight on these issues. However CMJ has faced legal and charitable challenges partly from having a focused (but not exclusive) Jewish mission. This has raised questions for us from the outworking of the Equality Act of 2010. Also the charitable preference scheme which is currently at the committee stage in parliament may (probably unintentionally) make it very difficult for us and other charities to use our current method of fund-raising in regards to contacting donors.

In the wider context I am concerned that in the near future Christian evangelism and Christian educational ministry may not be regarded as in the wider “public good” in regards to maintaining or gaining charitable status.

CONCLUSION

Over 206 years CMJ has recognised cultural challenges to Jewish evangelism from historical events and from changing attitudes within the Jewish community, the church and wider society. I have briefly attempted to flag some of these up and to reflect upon them. However, regardless of how we understand these challenges and cultural shifts it is vital that we stand firm in the following two ways:

Firstly, we are strong in our own identity in Christ and our ministry callings. Ephesians 2:18-22 is a helpful starting point. Here Paul states that our relationship to God is enabled by the one Spirit (:18) and we are built upon strong foundations and this same Spirit (:22) renews and secures us in our individual and corporate identity in God.

Secondly, we have confidence in the power of the changeless Gospel to be communicated well in the turmoil of a changing world with so many fluid cultural reference points. Above all we can do this because the Gospel message is not rooted in us or in any one mission endeavour or agency, but in the eternal God, who keeps His covenantal promises in every generation.



An Apocalyptic Hermeneutic for Biblical Hospitality

Anthony Royle

KEYWORDS:

| Apocalyptic Hermeneutic | Hospitality | NT use of OT |
| Mission | Pluralism | Post-Colonialism |

ABSTRACT:

Hospitality is often considered pluralism's bedfellow. Many scholars have undertaken a hermeneutic towards the Scriptures that views hospitality as unconditional and preference for the "other". This approach to understanding hospitality in Scripture has impacted responses to inter-faith dialogue, homosexuality, migration, and Christian mission. This hermeneutic is imposed upon the Abrahamic narratives and on the ministry and teachings of Jesus, caricaturing the protagonists as inclusive hosts.

This paper argues for a hermeneutic which takes into consideration the apocalyptic nature of narratives of Genesis 18 and 19 and their subsequent use in the New Testament. This places emphasis on the reception of the servant of God as "the guest", where acceptance is reciprocated with blessings, deliverance, and salvation; and the rejection of God's servant and message results in curses, destruction, and damnation. From this perspective, the Christian response to pluralistic and post-colonial readings of the Abrahamic and Gospel narratives must be challenged, while at the same time, guidance is needed in appropriating hospitality as part of the Church's mission.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of hospitality has largely been explored in Christian theology and philosophy over the last century, primarily in discussions concerning inter-religious dialogue, immigration, the marginalisation of homosexuals, and Christian mission. Many scholars, pioneered by French philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Paul Ricœur, have undertaken a hermeneutic towards the Scriptures that views hospitality as unconditional and gives preference towards the “other”.¹ Marianne Moyaert, in her chapter on Biblical, Ethical, and Hermeneutical Reflections on Narrative Hospitality, explains that “Ricœur regards hospitality primarily as a form of hermeneutical openness, which challenges growing tendencies of closure, exclusivism, and isolation.”²

This hermeneutic is often imposed upon the Abrahamic narratives, and upon the ministry and teachings of Jesus, caricaturising the protagonists as inclusive hosts. Abraham, who is considered a patron of hospitality for his reception of three strangers in Genesis 18, provides a bridge for the Abrahamic religions to conform to the attitude of Abraham and share hospitality in a pluralistic setting.

Likewise, Post-colonialists³ regard Jesus’ reception of sinners and tax collectors in table-fellowship as radically inclusive towards those

1 See Volf, M. (1996). *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. Yong, A. (2008) *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbour*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. McLaren, B. D. (2012). *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

2 Moyaert, M. (2011) “Biblical, Ethical, and Hermeneutical Reflections On Narrative Hospitality” in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions*, Kearney, R. and Taylor, J. (eds.) New York, NY: Continuum, 102

3 Post-colonialism became popular in the 1990’s as a form of Liberation Theology in reaction to Colonial Theology and Western thinking and interpretations of the Bible. The Scriptures were often viewed as a means to justify Western oppression of other cultures. The reaction influenced biblical interpretation to not only adopt non-western readings of the bible, but to look at scripture as a book that was against oppression and champions those marginalised in society. See Young, R. J. C. (2003) *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Also, McLeod, J. (2000) *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

marginalised by society. Such readings impact practical issues within the church resulting in an inclusive model for mission. The exclusiveness of the gospel message is therefore vilified from Christian mission with a preference and emphasis on showing the love of God through social action in order to bring social justice.

In this paper I wish to look at an alternative hermeneutic that puts the gospel at the centre of hospitality and reflects a biblical theological pattern rather than imputing a worldview upon a text. I propose that Genesis 18, in relation to Genesis 19⁴, was interpreted with an apocalyptic hermeneutic by the synoptic Gospel writers in the pericopae of Jesus sending out the twelve (Matthew 10, Mark 6:7-13, and Luke 9:1-6) and the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1-16). When we read these New Testament texts in light of their Old Testament source, we will see that the Gospel writers portray Jesus' use of Genesis 18 and 19 as thoroughly apocalyptic and that the gospel message, when received or rejected through hospitality, results in either blessing and salvation or curse and destruction. Once our hermeneutic and texts have been established, I will then look at the application to mission compared to the "hermeneutic of openness."

APOCALYPTIC HERMENEUTIC

First, we must define an apocalyptic hermeneutic. Dale Allison explains that the term "apocalyptic" is used in three different ways: firstly, apocalyptic is a literary genre containing revelation from an otherworldly being to a human recipient, which envisages eschatological salvation.⁵ This type of literature contains distinctive features that determine its

4 Gordon Wenham argues that Genesis 18 and 19 form a clear unit within Genesis because of the narratives plot and structure. There are many parallels between the two chapters, as well as with Noah's story, which suggests the author is providing an intertextual reading to make his point. (Wenham, G. J. (1994) *Genesis 16-50*. WBC. Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 40-45.

5 Allison Jr, D. C. (1992) "Apocalyptic" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Green, J. B., McKnight, S. and Marshall, I. H. (eds.) Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 17.

genre. Writings such as 1 Enoch, Daniel, and Revelation contain heavenly visions and divine revelation through otherworldly mediators. Secondly, apocalyptic is described as a particular form of eschatology which places emphasis on signs, an expectation of a cosmic cataclysmic event, belief in the nearness of the Kingdom, and a concern for universal human history.⁶ Thirdly, apocalyptic can be described as a movement. Apocalypticism was a hypothetical movement thought to be short lived during the Second Temple Period that influenced the apocalyptic literature written during this period and various Jewish groups in theology such as the Qumran Community and Early Christianity.⁷

I believe a fourth category can be added to this list; apocalyptic as a hermeneutical approach. The common features of apocalypticism are, therefore, present in a method of interpretation. The apocalypticist draws upon both Scripture and history in order to interpret present day as part of the eschatological revealing of God's plan. An example of this hermeneutic is found in a sectarian writing from the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Habakkuk Peshar* (1QpHab). This scroll interprets the book of Habakkuk in light of the Qumran community's current situation between the Wicked Priest and the Teacher of Righteousness. The commentary uses Habakkuk to show that prophecy is being fulfilled as the Wicked Priest persecutes the Teacher of Righteousness and perverts the Law of God. The commentary concludes by predicting judgement will come upon the wicked by the *Kittim* and that there would be a further eschatological judgement.

It is with this particular hermeneutic I believe that Jesus and the apostles interpreted the narrative of Genesis 18 and 19. One may accuse this hermeneutic of imputing a theological ideology onto the text, but this is not the case. Genesis 18 and 19 warrant an apocalyptic interpretation because of the apocalyptic features of the content of both chapters.

6 *Ibid*, 18.

7 *Ibid*, 19.

GENESIS 18 AND 19

The narrative begins with the appearance of the Lord to Abraham, which expresses divine revelation fundamental to apocalypticism. In this case, His appearance is rather ambiguous because the relationship between Genesis 18 verse 1 and verse 2 is unclear. In verse 2 Abraham lifts his eyes and sees three men passing by and it is difficult to determine whether the text is insinuating that one of these three men is the Lord or that Abraham is conversing with the Lord who is speaking from heaven. The ambiguity of the text means both are possible, and perhaps from a Christian perspective both are true.

Theologians have speculated about the identity of the three guests for centuries. Some believe that the three guests were mere wayfarers⁸. The text, of course, refers to the three guests as men; however, we may note that in Daniel 9:21 that the angel Gabriel is referred to as a man. In Jewish tradition the three guests are identified as the three Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael.⁹ It is thought that two of these guests were the two angels described in Genesis 19 that continue on to Sodom. In Christian tradition, two of the guests are angels but the third is thought to be a Christophany, a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Lord Jesus.¹⁰ Christian interpreters come to this conclusion because Abraham calls one of the guests Lord and bows before the guest, an act usually discouraged by angels in other parts of Scripture (Revelation 19:10, 22:9).¹¹

8 Moyaert agrees with Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks that the three guests were men (Moyaert, 96-97).

9 Josephus describes the three guests as angels in *Antiquities* (1.11.2). The Talmud identifies these angels "one was Michael, to inform Sarah she would have a son; the second was Raphael, to heal Abraham's circumcision; and the third was Gabriel, to overthrow Sodom." (*Bava Metzia* 86b).

10 Kaiser, W. C. (1998). *The Christian and the "Old" Testament*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 38. This view can be traced to Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) in *Dialogue with Trypho*.

11 Also note that in Acts, Peter was worshipped by Cornelius (Acts 10:20-23) and Paul and Barnabus were worshipped by the people in Lystra (Acts 14:8-18). In both cases the men of God refused to be worshipped as they were just men, and encouraged their devotees to worship God alone.

Angels are a prominent feature of apocalyptic writings. They are the otherworldly beings mediating revelation from God to human recipients. In Genesis 18 the three guests give a prophetic message to Abraham that when they return in a year's time Sarah will give birth to a son.¹²

A second revelation is then proclaimed by the three guests in Genesis 18:20-21, warning of imminent judgement upon Sodom and Gomorrah. A feature within apocalyptic writings is the immanency of a cataclysmic event. The prophecy usually contains promises of salvation to the righteous and warnings of judgement on the wicked. The description of fire and brimstone raining down on Sodom paints a vivid apocalyptic picture of God's wrath upon the wicked. Genesis 19:24 describes the fire and brimstone as coming "out of heaven". An open heaven and heavenly visions are a fundamental feature for apocalyptic literature, especially God's wrath revealed from heaven.

Another feature of apocalypticism in this passage of Scripture is the question of theodicy. Stephen Travis explains that "the crucial concern of apocalyptists was the problem of theodicy".¹³ In Genesis 18 Abraham questions the destruction of Sodom for the sake of the innocent and the righteous that live in that city. In verse 23 Abraham asks "will You destroy the righteous along with the wicked?" Abraham continues in verse 25, "should the Judge of the whole earth do what is Just?" So, Abraham is able to convince God to save the city if there are at least ten righteous people in the city. Unfortunately, there weren't ten righteous in the city. But God did not allow the few righteous to perish in the city with the wicked. The angels took hold of Lot and his family and fled to the mountains as God destroyed the city. The immanency of judgement upon Sodom required the angels to visit Sodom with a message of warning. This message was received by Lot and his family through his hospitality of the two angels,

12 Timetables are an important part of apocalyptic literature. These timetables usually revolved around religious calendars. An example is the Book of Jubilees which is a rewritten work of Genesis which emphasises the prophetic timetable of God according to years of Jubilee. It is interesting to note that according to Jewish tradition, Isaac was born on the 15th Nisan (Passover).

13 Travis, S. H. (1979) "The Value of Apocalyptic" *Tyndale Bulletin* 30, 57.

whereas the other residents of Sodom rejected the angel's message by wanting to do harm to them. Therefore, Hospitality of God's messengers brought blessing to Abraham in the form of his son and salvation to Lot and his family from Sodom. The rejection of God's messengers and the message brought destruction to Sodom.

The pattern of blessing and salvation for receiving God's people and curses and destruction for rejecting them is present throughout the book of Genesis, in particular the other Abrahamic narratives. Abraham was not only the archetypal host but was also a sojourner, a Hebrew¹⁴, a guest. He was to be a vehicle for blessing the nations and his reception would be key to receiving those blessing, but his rejection would result in curses.

In Genesis 12 God makes a covenant with Abraham and promises to bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham; and through him all the nations will be blessed (v3). Sarita Gallagher identifies the function of the Abrahamic covenant in the reception of Abraham in Canaan, Egypt, and Philistia.¹⁵ Gallagher notes that in cases like the misappropriation of Abraham's wife by Pharaoh resulted in a curse (Genesis 12:14-17).¹⁶ Likewise, the blessings of Abraham came upon those who allied themselves with Abraham. The four Kings who went out to battle, and the Amorite brothers who joined Abraham, were blessed from the booty from the battle (Genesis 14:22-24).¹⁷

So, we can see from Genesis that a theme concerning hospitality regarding apocalyptic blessings and curses is part of a biblical metanarrative. Space does not allow me to present a complete biblical theology from Genesis to Revelation on this thesis¹⁸; however, it is worth

14 Scholars believe "Hebrew" was an ancient designation for foreigners related "Haribu", which is a word found in ancient texts to describe displaced people.

15 Gallagher, S. D. (2013). "Blessings on the Move: The Outpouring of God's Blessings through the Migrant Abraham" in *Mission Studies* 30, 155.

16 *Ibid*, 155.

17 *Ibid*, 153-154.

18 For an Old Testament theology on Abrahamic blessings and curses and their trajectories see Anderson, J. S. (2014). *The Blessing and the Curse: Trajectories in the*

noting that this theme is consistent with the blessings and curses of the Law through Israel (Deuteronomy 30:7-9), the reception of the prophets¹⁹, and the reception of Jesus and his Church.

THE SENDING OUT OF THE TWELVE AND THE SEVENTY-TWO DISCIPLES

Similar apocalyptic features and allusions to the narrative of Genesis 18 and 19 are found in the pericopae of Jesus sending out the twelve and seventy-two disciples, which would indicate that the Gospel writers relied upon the reader's knowledge of those chapters. I previously noted that each of the Synoptic Gospels share this same narrative in one form or another. Luke's account offers an expanded version of events and includes the sending out of the seventy-two; however, Matthew provides some interestingly unique detail as well.

The narrative begins with Jesus sending the twelve disciples out in twos to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, to heal the sick, and to cast out devils (Matthew 10:1, Mark 6:7, Luke 9:1-2). He instructs the disciples to take nothing with them on their journey- no money, no food, and no extra clothes (Matthew 10:9-10, Mark 6:8-9, Luke 9:3). This puts the disciples at the mercy of hospitality as they travelled from town to town. Jesus gives instructions concerning being received and rejected. In Luke's account, Jesus only instructs that the disciples stay for a short time where they have been received (Luke 9:4). Matthew's version provides a few further instructions that are worth highlighting. Jesus tells them to find someone who is trustworthy and stay with them. Once the disciples depart, they would bless the household (Matthew 10:12). The reception

Theology of the Old Testament. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

¹⁹ This ultimately led to the exile prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah for rejecting the word of the Lord (Isaiah 5:13, Jeremiah 20:6). Likewise, Nineveh received salvation when they listened to the prophetic word through Jonah (Jonah 3:9-10) but received judgement at a later date when they went back to their old ways (Nahum 2:8, 3:7; Zephaniah 2:13).

of the disciples and the acceptance of the gospel of the Kingdom brought blessings to those who had received it.

Alternatively, when the disciples were not received by a city they are to “shake the dust” from their feet as a testimony against that city (Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5). Various scholars have highlighted a rabbinic teaching that the dust from Gentile lands carries defilement, which would require strict Jews to remove their sandals when they returned from foreign lands.²⁰ This symbolic act from Jesus and his disciples declared that Jews who rejected the Kingdom were no better than the Gentiles. Those who reject the disciples, therefore, rejected the gospel message, and rejected Jesus (Matthew 10:40, Luke 10:16).

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus makes a reference to Sodom and Gomorrah concerning the cities that reject the twelve disciples. Jesus said “Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgement for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.” (Matthew 10:15, ESV)²¹ Luke’s account differs from Matthew and Mark as the reference to Sodom isn’t made in the sending out of the twelve (Luke 9:1-6) but is present in the sending out of the seventy-two (Luke 10:12). The reference is also expanded to include the judgement of contemporary cities that rejected the gospel of the Kingdom, comparing them to gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon.

I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. 16 “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

(Luke 10: 12-16, ESV)

20 Bock, D. L. (1994). *Luke 1:1-9:50*. BCNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 817.

21 Mark 6:11 also contains reference to Sodom and Gomorrah.

The judgement upon these cities are eschatological and immersed in apocalyptic language. The fiery destruction of Sodom was already a biblical motif in Scripture for God's judgement of the wicked (Deuteronomy 29:23, Isaiah 13:19, Jeremiah 49:18, Lamentations 4:6, Amos 4:11, Zephaniah 2:9), but was used in the New Testament in describing the eschatological judgement (2 Peter 2:6, Jude 1:7). Chorazin and Bethsaida's judgement is even worse than Sodom and will be brought down to Hades because of their own exaltation to heaven. Interestingly, upon the return of the seventy-two from their journey they rejoiced in the fact that they were able to cast out demons (Luke 10:17); however, Jesus tells them that He saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven (Luke 10:18), an allusion to Isaiah 14:12 which refers to the Morning star falling to the pit after his own exaltation. Such a vision and reference of a spiritual battle reflect the dualistic expressions that feature in apocalyptic writings. The preaching of the Kingdom was to thwart the evil one and accompanied by the act of casting out Satan. The rejection of this mission would result in the same fate as Satan, which was judgement in Hades.

So, from the sending out of the twelve and seventy-two disciples we can see that the acceptance or rejection of God's messengers result either in blessings and salvation, or curses and destruction in similar fashion to the acceptance and rejection of the angels in Genesis 18 and 19.

APOCALYPTIC HOSPITALITY AND CHRISTIAN MISSION

So, how does an apocalyptic hermeneutic on the Abrahamic and Gospel narratives impact Christian mission compared to the hermeneutic of openness provided through pluralism and post-colonialism? Pluralistic and postcolonial readings of the Abrahamic and gospel narratives focus on the Christian being the host to the world rather than the guest. Those who propagate these views believe the Church can bring change through social action by welcoming people with unconditional hospitality. An example

of the impact of such a view was demonstrated recently in Sweden where the Bishop of Stockholm recently proposed the removal of all signs of the cross from a church in her diocese near the Eastern dockyard where there is an influx of traders and immigrants passing through who belong to different faiths.²² In her blog, the Bishop of Stockholm Eva Brunne refers to the travellers as angels and cites Hebrews 13:2, a verse that scholars believe is related to Genesis 18 and 19.²³

Yet, our reading of the Abrahamic and Gospel narratives indicate that it is the Christian who is a guest in the world, a sojourner, a pilgrim. The application to mission then differs to that of pluralism and post-colonialism. The Christian is to go out into the world with the ultimate revelation of God, which is that Jesus Christ died for their sins and rose on the third day conquering sin and death, and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (1 Corinthians 5:1-4; John 3:16). The message of the cross, therefore, is central to the mission of the church and should not be vilified in favour of building bridges with other faiths. Christian mission should avoid a hermeneutic of openness and recognise clear boundaries, set by God, proclaiming salvation through accepting Christ and His good news, including warning people that rejection brings judgement and damnation.

Contrary to Brunne's analogy, it is Christians who are the messengers like the angels and the apostles, and not peoples of other faiths. Christians are the one who hold the revelation of God and bring an invitation to the Kingdom for others to receive the hospitality of God. This scenario is illustrated beautifully in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22, where the King sends his servants out to invite guests who were both good and evil, from places of distinction to the highways and byways (Matthew 22:9-10). The invitation was for everyone without partiality. Many rejected the invitation by mocking and even killing the servants, thus incurring the wrath of the King (Matthew 22:5-7). Some accepted

22 <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/10/05/worlds-first-lesbian-bishop-calls-church-remove-crosses-install-muslim-prayer-space/>

23 <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=1318087>

the invitation but did not come appropriately dressed for the occasion (Matthew 22:11-12). The parable is summarised by Jesus with the famous saying “many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14). Andrew McGowen explains “The banquet is universal in scope, but selective in application”.²⁴ This is contrary to the view of hermeneutical openness that decrees that the banquet is universal with no regard to holiness or boundaries and yet, ironically, marginalises the gospel and Christians who believe Jesus is the only way to salvation.

The Christian’s mission of preaching the gospel presents the universal scope by reaching out to every man, woman, and child regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation; however, it is the King who accepts or rejects into the fold those who are invited, not the Christian messenger. The disciples made this mistake when they were rejected from entering a Samaritan city in Luke 9:52-56. James and John turn to Jesus and said “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”²⁵ James and John were referring to the wrath that God brought on Sodom for the rejection of the angels. They had forgot the Lord’s instruction that when they are rejected by a city they should shake the dust off their feet and move on. It is not the Christian’s responsibility to call fire down from heaven.²⁶ Rather, when the gospel is rejected in a

24 McGowen, A. (2005) “Dangerous Eating? Jesus, Inclusion, and Communion”. *Liturgy* Vol. 20 Issue 4, 16.

25 There is a textual variant at the end of Luke 9:54 that includes the words “as Elijah also did”. This is thought to be a later gloss on the text from some “extraneous source, written or oral”. Likewise, Jesus’ rebuke is also thought to contain the additional words, “do you not know what manner of Spirit you are?” (Metzger, B. M. (1971). *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. London: United Bible Societies, 148). Although Elijah did call down fire from heaven to consume two armies in 2 Kings 1:10-14 and also in 1 Kings 18:20-39 where Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to call fire from heaven. In both narratives, the call of fire from heaven was to prove that Yahweh was God and Elijah his prophet and not just because of the rejection of God and his messenger. Bock writes that the reference to fire from heaven in Luke 9:54 is more than likely to recall the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 970), therefore, I believe the Luke 9:54 is an allusion to Genesis 19 rather than 2 Kings 1:10-14.

26 It is awarded to the two witnesses in Revelation 11:5 that fire will proceed out of their mouth to devour their enemies if they are harmed. Greg Beale argues that the fire is metaphorical and is an allusion to Jeremiah 5:14, “I have given my words in your

town or city, Christians should shake the dust of their feet and move on.

The world will be judged for how they treat God's people. The question of theodicy for Christians today is when will God bring an end to the suffering and violence against his people? We read that the nations will be judged for how they treat the Jews (Joel 3:2). We also read that judgement will come upon those who persecute Christians and that the blood of the martyrs cry out to the Lord for vengeance (Revelation 6:9-17). It is in our time that thousands of Christians are killed by groups such as ISIS and Islamic governments. It is in our time Christians are being sent to prison by totalitarian regimes like North Korea. It is our time that once Christian Western nations have Christian businesses and Christian employees taken to court for standing by their beliefs. In this vision of openness and inclusiveness the world propagates, the gospel is marginalised, and Christians find themselves excluded and isolated. Just as Jesus declared woe upon His contemporary cities, Chorazin and Bethsaida, for the rejection of His disciples, likewise there will be woe upon the United Kingdom and the United States of America when Christians shake the dust from their feet. These two so-called Christian nations who have had the Scriptures proclaimed within them for centuries, have exalted themselves above heaven and will consequently one day receive a worse judgement than Sodom.

Christians should not cheer or gloat about the fate of those who reject Christ. Jesus wept for Jerusalem when he entered the city before His crucifixion because of their rejection of the prophets who they had killed and the forthcoming rejection of Himself as Messiah (Matthew 23:37-38). Jerusalem suffered the consequences for rejecting Jesus when the city was destroyed in 70 AD. Yet, after Jesus wept He remembered the promise that upon His return Israel will accept Him by saying "Blessed

mouth [as] fire... and it will consume them". Similarly, two angels guiding Enoch in 2 Enoch 1:5 are portrayed as having "out of their mouths... fire coming forth". (Beale, G. K. (1999). *The Book of Revelation*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm b. Eerdmans Publishing, 580) If there is a possibility that one may take the fire proceeding from the witnesses mouths literally, the event is unique to them and for their protection only, not a means of judging people for rejecting their prophecy.

is He that comes in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39). We should weep for our nation and the rejection of the gospel, but also be fervent in our endeavours with the hope that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Jesus Christ as Lord. (Philippians 2:10-11)

CONCLUSION

The use of an apocalyptic hermeneutic when reading the Abrahamic and Gospel narratives places the gospel at the centre of God’s interaction with man, providing blessings and salvation on acceptance, or curses and destruction if rejected. This provides a more honest approach for a biblical theology of hospitality. This theology forms a model for Christian mission that should move away from the modern tendency to bring social justice by removing barriers and vilifying the message of the cross.

Norman Young writes:

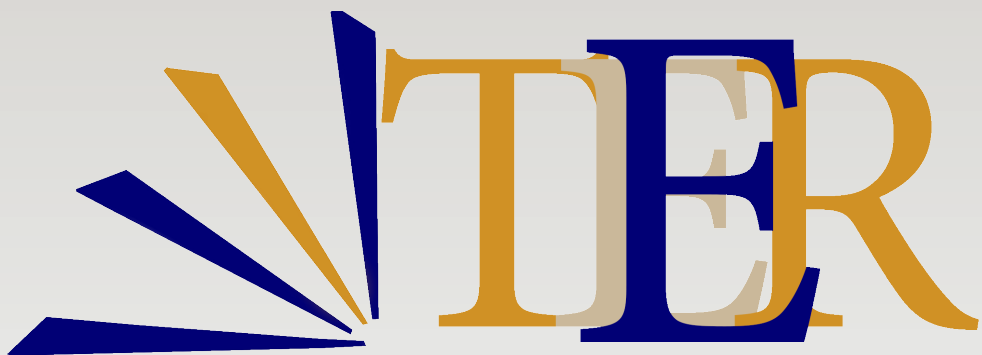
Social action becomes pointless without this apocalyptic vision because there are no grounds in past history of expecting a lasting change for the better in human affairs. Only belief in God as one who breaks in against the possibilities resident within human history can provide the hope that makes any present reforming action worth the effort.²⁷

It was God’s revelation in human history, which came in the form of His Son Jesus and His atoning work on the cross that changed the course of history. A Christianity that views the cross as an obstacle rather than a doorway is powerless. We should not be ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).

As Christians, we are the otherworldly messengers to the lost people of this world. We are the guests, sojourners, and pilgrims. The Christian’s mandate is to preach the gospel, the immanency of the Kingdom, and warn of the coming judgement. Future Christian missions, therefore,

27 Young, N. (1976) *Creator, Creation, and Faith*. London: Collins, 72.

should rely on an apocalyptic hermeneutic and centred on taking the revelation of Jesus into the highways and byways. Only the climax of the apocalyptic vision of the Kingdom of God come, can there be any chance of genuine change, genuine peace, and genuine justice.



The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

ISSN: 2053-6763

Copyright © 2015 King's Divinity Press.

All material is copyright protected and may not be reproduced, stored or transmitted without written permission (except where a licence exists to do so).

Typesetting :: Ash Design (UK)

Minion Pro & Times New Roman 10.5pt on 14.5pt

