



# The Burning Bush

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# THE BURNING BUSH

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# AMILLENNIALISM EXAMINED

Jeffrey Khoo

The word “millennium” means “a thousand years.” This special millennial period is taught in Rev 20:1-7 where the phrase, “a (the) thousand years,” is used six times. Rev 20:6 tells us that during this period of time, the saints “shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” However, there are two ways of looking at the millennium: (1) the *figurative view of amillennialism* (ie there is “no millennium,” or the millennium is a spiritual one—a “realised millennium”), and (2) the *literal view of premillennialism* (ie Christ will return to reign for a literal millennium on this physical earth). The former interprets the millennium to be the *present church age* when Christ reigns in His Church until His return; the latter interprets the millennium to be a *future kingdom age* when Christ reigns over the whole world literally for a thousand years.

## Israel and the Church

It is important first to discuss how amillennialists view the nation of Israel before we consider their principles of interpretation and concept of Christ’s millennial rule. This is important because how amillennialists understand Israel’s place in God’s salvation plan affects how they would interpret the prophetic passages of Scripture, and how they would understand the nature of the millennium.

Amillennialism takes the view that God has forsaken Israel for crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ. For rejecting the Messiah, Israel forfeited her claim to the promises of God. The Old Testament promises to the Nation have now been transferred to the Church. The Church has replaced Israel as God’s chosen. God is no longer interested in Israel; His concern is only for the Church. According to amillennialists, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is proof that God has cast Israel away.

## **God Has Not Forsaken Israel**

The God of the Bible is a covenant-keeping God. His covenantal promises to Abraham and to David cannot be broken (Jer 33:19-26). Despite Israel's disobedience, God remains faithful. He will keep His Word (Deut 7:9). Time and time again in the Old Testament, Israel sinned against God by worshipping idols. God punished Israel but never forsook her. Although He consigned the Jews to captivity in Babylon in 586 BC (2 Kgs 25, 2 Chr 36:17-20), consider how He preserved them through Daniel, Esther, and Nehemiah during this time. True to His promise, the Lord released Israel from captivity 70 years later under Cyrus—the Persian king (2 Chr 36:21-23, Isa 44:28, 45:1, Jer 29:10).

The failure of Israel is seen also in her rejection of Jesus Christ—the promised Messiah (Gen 3:15, Deut 18:15, Isa 7:14, 9:6, Jer 23:5, Zech 3:8, 6:12). The Jews in crucifying their Messiah said, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt 27:25). God finally punished the nation when the Roman army led by Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. The Jews were driven out of their land, and dispersed to all parts of the world. Since that time, they have suffered much persecution especially in the holocaust of World War II. God no doubt punished Israel, but did God forsake her? No, He did not. God had promised in Isaiah 11:11-12 that He will gather them back into their land the second time from every part of the world. This promise was fulfilled on May 14, 1948 when Israel returned to Palestine, and became a full-fledged nation again. Israel will no longer be displaced from the land God had given to her (Isa 11:13).

Although Israel today is still unconverted, she will finally repent when Christ returns. Israel will finally acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. To amillennialists who dismissed Israel from God's plan of salvation, the Apostle Paul has these words, “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of Gentiles be come in. And so *all Israel shall be saved*: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For *this is my covenant unto them*, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom 11:25-27). “Hath God cast away his people? God forbid” (Rom 11:1).

Amillennialists say that “Israel” refers to spiritual Israel, namely, the Church. A careful study of Romans 11 will show that there is a clear

distinction between Israel and the Church. Paul was writing to the Church in Rome which is predominantly Gentile. Now that the Church is blessed by God with salvation, Paul warns believers not to misunderstand that God has replaced Israel with the Church—“God hath not cast away his people (ie Israel) which he foreknew” (Rom 11:2). Paul goes on to explain that the Church is not meant to replace Israel but to provoke her to jealousy (Rom 11:11). This blindness of Israel will finally be lifted when the last elected Gentile is saved (Rom 11:25). So non-Jewish Christians ought not to despise unbelieving Israel. Israel is of the natural olive tree, while we Gentiles are wild olive branches grafted into the natural olive tree (Rom 11:17). Although God has broken them off, He is able in good time to graft them in again (Rom 11:23-24). Paul evidently makes a distinction between Israel and the Church in his analogy of the olive trees.

### **Principles of Bible Interpretation**

God had made many promises to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Many prophecies in the Old Testament speak of God’s total restoration of Israel in a time of unprecedented peace on earth. These prophecies or promises of God to Israel involve the restoration of (1) the Jewish people (Gen 12:1-3, 13:16, 15:5, 17:7, 22:17-18; Isa 42:1-6; Jer 31:31-34), (2) the promised land (Gen 12:7, 13:14,15,17, 15:7,18-21, 17:18; Jer 33:38-40), (3) the Davidic throne (2 Sam 7:12,13,16; 2 Chr 13:5); and the building of (4) a new temple (Ezek 40-48). These prophetic texts of promise to national Israel in the Old Testament pose a serious problem to the amillennial understanding of Israel and her future. In order to explain away those passages of promise that relate to Israel, amillennialists employ the allegorical method of interpretation. They spiritualise the physical and national promises of Israel to make them applicable only to the Church.

### **The Millennium is Literal not Figurative**

David Cooper’s golden rule of interpretation applies: “*When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages, and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.*” Although amillennialists generally agree to this literal rule of

interpretation, they are inconsistent in their application of it. The literal method is applied to most parts of Scripture, but when amillennialists come to the prophetic texts, especially those that relate to Israel or to the millennium, they switch to the allegorical method. This dualistic way of interpreting the Scriptures is due to their presuppositional bias against the nation of Israel. They refuse to see that God still has a future for Israel in keeping to His covenant promises. The spiritualising method of biblical interpretation is fallacious. It fails to allow the text to say what it actually means (exegesis), but imposes upon the text what the interpreter wants it to mean (eisegesis).

In keeping to the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:12-23), Christ the Son of David will rule over all the earth in a future millennium (Zech 14:9, Rev 5:10, 20:6). The Davidic covenant of a worldwide government of God was surely not fulfilled by Solomon. The other kings of Israel have failed miserably in governing the nation. Only Christ can literally fulfill the Davidic covenant (Luke 1:31-33, Acts 1:6). Christ will sit upon the throne of David and rule over the whole world from Jerusalem a thousand years (Isa 24:23 cf 2:1-5, Jer 3:17, Mic 4:2).

### **Premillennialism and Covenant Theology**

A correction of two common misconceptions are in order:

- (1) **Premillennialism is not dispensationalism.** Dispensationalism is a system of theology of which premillennialism is only a part (see my paper on “Dispensationalism Examined,” in *The Burning Bush* [July 1994]: 1-3). All dispensationalists are premillennial, but being premillennial does not make one dispensational.
- (2) **Premillennialism is not incompatible with covenant theology.** As a matter of fact, a consistent covenantalist must reject amillennialism for premillennialism. One of the major emphases of covenant theology is the *faithfulness of God in keeping His covenants*. God does not change, and His covenant promises do not change either (Heb 13:8, Ps 102:26-28, Jer 33: 35-37; see also *The Westminster Confession Faith* VII:4-6, VIII:6-8, XXV:1-3). The Lord has said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, . . . My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me” (Ps 89:3,34-36). As much

as God will fulfill all His spiritual promises to the Church, He will also fulfill all His physical promises to Israel when Christ returns to reign over the whole world for a thousand glorious years. Amen.

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## College News

The following are **new students** of the Far Eastern Bible College: From **India**: Matthews Abraham; **Indonesia**: Riangwati Gula, Evalyna Simarmata; **Kenya**: Henry Kirui; **Korea**: Bai Eun Yong, Choi Hyun Sun, Im Hyoun Ok; **Malaysia**: Harrison Wan Kasip, **Myanmar**: Pau Khen Mung, Pong Hlyan Mone, Thang Vel Kam, **Nepal**: Shachendra Shrestha; **Philippines**: Edilyn Evangelista Abu; **Singapore**: Arthur Koh, Dennis Kwok, Carol Lee, Calvin Loh, Woo Chong Yew, **Thailand**: Anong Wettayanukool; **Vietnam**: Tran Anh Kiet. We also have a new **off-campus** certificate student in Ng York Chiu from Gethesemane B-P Church, Singapore.

The FEBC **Gospel Rally** was held on September 27, 1997. The speaker was Rev Prabhudas Koshy, Lecturer in Hebrew and Biblical Studies at FEBC, and Pastor of Gethesemane B-P Church. The topic was: "An Appointment to Keep (Heb 9:27-28)."

The **FEBC Press/Bookroom** was one of the Christian publishers represented at the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Evangelical Theological Society in Santa Clara, California, November 20-22, 1997. The new abridgment of *Calvin's Institutes* by our principal saw its international release at the Conference.

The **Basic Theology For Everyone Evening Classes** for the January-May 1998 semester are: Monday: **Calvin's Institutes I** by Rev Timothy Tow, Wednesday: **The KJV-NIV Debate** by Rev Jeffrey Khoo, and Thursday: **Joshua, Judges and Ruth** by Rev Quek Suan Yew.

## **ISRAEL A GREAT NATION**

Timothy Tow

Since the end of World War II, many young and vigorous nations have been born, one after the other, which were once colonies of the Great Powers, From the ASEAN Bloc have “emerged” the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Many nations have arisen in Africa with new names that old-timers have a hard time to follow. Among all these new nations there came into being on May 14, 1948 the State of Israel. The majority of Israel is made up of returnee Jews, after 2,000 years of exile.

In land area Israel is one of the tiniest. The only country in the world, to which she can boast of comparative bigness, perhaps, is Singapore. Population-wise Israel has over five million souls, not much bigger than Singapore either. Indeed, Israel is but a speck on the globe, a little dot on the world map. If you stand at a vantage point in the Holy Land on a fine day, say, on the hill of Samaria, you could see almost the four corners of the country. How does a tiny country like Israel become such a great nation as she is today?

Israel is in the news, front page world news, more often than any other of the new-born nations. Israel is in the news side by side with the super powers, most frequent with the United States. How has little Israel gained such global prominence?

In an issue of the Straits Times 1981, the story was told of former Israel Prime Minister Menachem Begin meeting with former US President Ronald Reagan. This is what Begin said of a joke he cracked with the American President. Begin said President Reagan told him he had three phones on his desk. One was white to call British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. One was blue to call France’s Francois Mitterrand. The third which was a red one was for God. But added Reagan, “I don’t use it too much, as long distance is so expensive.”

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Mr Begin told his host he too had three phones. One was for Mrs Thatcher, one for Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and also one for God. "But," added Begin, "I use it all the time as, in Jerusalem, it is considered a local call."

### **Israel is Great Because of God's Law**

Israel is a great nation because it is so closely linked to God. Israel is a great nation not by her own prowess; not because the Jews are a smarter people, a superior race. Israel is a great nation because that is what God had graciously promised Abraham, that his descendants would so become (Gen 12:2). The same promise that Israel would be a great nation He confirmed in Jacob (Gen 46:3) and with the Israelites under Moses (Deut 26:5). Israel's greatness is solely from God.

Now, may we ask, "How does Israel become great?" Israel has become great by being God's receptacle, God's chosen vessel, to receive His Special Revelation.

Sin had polluted the whole world and blinded the eyes of the nations to the light of the truth. Instead of seeking the Creator God who had made them, they groped in the darkness of idolatry. This is particularly condemned by St Paul in the first chapter of Romans. In the midst of such Egyptian darkness, God came first to Abraham, and after several generations to Moses. God took Israel out of the land of their slavery and gave them the Law. This Law which is summarised in the Ten Commandments God delivered to Moses on two tables of stone. By the light of these two tables Israel was delivered from the pollutions of the world, from sins against God and sins against her fellowmen. And it is through Israel that the moral Law, as given in the Ten Commandments, has become the pattern of all modern legal codes of the nations of the world. Thus declared Moses to Israel on the eve of their entry to the Promised Land to remind her of her holy obligations to greatness,

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which

I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. (Deut 4:5-10)

We who live under the justice of a good Government in Singapore must remember the British who gave us our law. But, how did the British possess such good laws? Where did they get them? From the Bible and from the Law of Moses.

In contrast with little Israel, there is that gigantic country China, the land of our ancestors. For hundreds of years until the Manchu Dynasty she had sunken into the depths of poverty and misery, of backwardness in science and technology. And all this because our ancestors had departed from the Creator God, being devoid of His Law. Our ancestors were steeped in idolatry, not knowing the Living and True God. Hence flourished all the social evils that outgrew from their sin without restraint.

As recent as the last two generations, the Chinese people did not enjoy such a divine right of man as the weekly Sabbath. The weekly Sabbath had been enjoyed in the West with the advent of Christianity from time immemorial. The keeping of Sunday as a Holy Day was particularly strong in the days of the Puritans in Great Britain. How both man and beast rested from their servile work in the Light of God's Law! This is but one blessing to mention that comes to the whole world from Israel, yea, even from the Law of Moses. How is it we have no need to go to office or factory when Sunday, our Christian Sabbath, comes around? We in Singapore today are enjoying the blessings of a Law which God first gave to Israel! This law that distinguished Israel from the Gentiles, that made Israel great!

### **Israel is Great Because of God's Son**

Secondly, Israel is a great nation because not only has God's Law been given through her, but also God's Son. Jesus our Lord and Saviour was born a Jew, from the house of David, from the stock of Abraham. The greatness of Israel, as we have observed, is not in her mental powers,

## *ISRAEL A GREAT NATION*

but rather in her spiritual heritage. Through her is the Promised Seed given whereby all the families of the earth are blessed (Gen 12:3). We Christians must remember that we owe the Jews this great debt. Israel was not only, as St Augustine had said, the Librarian to the Christian Church (she has given us by her prophets the Bible). Through her has come to us the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, the only way to God. A young Jewess, the Virgin Mary, was the chosen vessel through whom Jesus Christ was born.

But alas! The Jews who were the very recipients of the Salvation of God rejected Christ and had Him crucified. Their Church leaders were not afraid of the guilt of their crime. They even challenged God to take the Blood of the Spotless Son of God upon themselves and their children (Matt 27:25). Of the Jews that believed in Jesus and were gathered together as a Christian community there were not more than 120. Apart from those 3,000 and 5,000 (Acts 2:41; 4:4) who believed the Lord at Pentecost, the rest of the Jews rejected the Gospel. Therefore the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles. The Jews who rejected Christ were rejected of God. Hence their Diaspora or dispersion, their scattering, to the ends of the earth. Israel the great nation became a small nation, a stateless nation.

By the mysterious decrees of God Israel, like the olive branch, was cut off when they rejected the Saviour. The Gentiles who believed, like a wild olive branch, was grafted in her place. Today salvation is still given to the Gentiles, so this Gospel continues to be preached freely and without restraint to us who live in a free country like Singapore. But soon our time will be up when “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in,” ie when the predestined number of Gentiles to be saved will be counted. Then Israel, the outcast Olive branch, will be reinstated when “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom 11:26).

### **Israel is Great Because of God’s Promise**

One reason why Israel must be reinstated is God’s unchangeable promise to Abraham. The promise given him and his descendants is forever vested in them. Another reason why Israel must be restored to her former glory is that the promise God gave to David of a throne that must remain forever must be fulfilled. And that throne to be set up again is by none other than Christ, the Messiah, David’s Greater Son.

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For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isa 9:6-7)

In the light of these promises, no wonder we see Israel gathered back together to her land as a nation. Israel is become a great nation again, a super power among the larger but weaker Arab nations.

Satan does not like to see Israel restored to her previous greatness as in the days of David and Solomon. Satan has therefore instigated the Arabs to fight Israel. Five wars were fought: In 1948 the Arabs tried to prevent Israel from becoming a nation but they failed. In 1956 there broke out the Second War. Again the Arabs were defeated. In 1967 Egypt, Syria and Jordan were gravely wounded in the Six Day War. The fourth one, fought in 1973 known as the Yom Kippur War or War of the Day of Atonement, again saw Israel victorious. All these victories against her neighbours are foretold by Isaiah.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. (Isa 11:11-15)

The fifth war was waged over Lebanon 1982-85. Israel's invasion of Lebanon is foretold by the prophet Zechariah.

Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: how, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice

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of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled; a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. (Zech 11:1-6)

How is it that the Arabs, like a platoon of soldiers charging on a teenage boy walking alone in the lane were on the contrary thrown back one after the other like in a Kung Fu drama? The secret of Israel's greatness as a nation is God.

And as God is behind the descendants of Abraham His "friend," so has He helped Israel in the epic Entebbe raid, saving over 100 hostages hijacked by Palestine Arabs. Moreover God has enabled His chosen race to carry out the destruction of the atomic plant in Iraq. Iraq retaliated in the recent Gulf War (1990-1) with Scud missiles, but to no avail. Israel continues to be helped by the United States the greatest power in the world in a new age of peace-making according to Daniel's prophecy. That Rabin had shaken hands with Arafat under Clinton's patronage surprised the whole world except students of prophecy. Despite Rabin's assassination, and suicidal bombings by Hamas, peace is relentlessly pursued. All this is in order that Israel might play her role in the coming of Jesus Christ. As Christ, like an airplane, needed Israel to land in the First Advent, and the aerodrome was the Virgin Mary, so must He need Israel, a restored nation at peace, a second time to return to earth to judge the nations.

### **Israel is Great Because of God's Seal**

Israel is bound to be a great nation again, because God has set this seal upon her in Abraham: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen 12:3). Thus those who have persecuted Abraham's descendants the Jews have lost out. Yea, they have been thoroughly extinguished. The sad ending of Hitler, Jew-baitor and arch anti-Semitic is notorious. Then there arose Nasser, who wanted to throw every Jew into the sea before the Six Day War. He soon died in the War's aftermath. How we thank God for Sadat, his successor, who so bravely

stood alone to make peace with Israel. Sadat who fell a martyr for world peace died a glorious death.

With Israel's southern borders secure she can face the enemy with her back to the wall. But war will erupt again culminating in the Battle of Armageddon. In this final Battle the Messiah must come to save Israel. According to the prophecy of Zechariah on the climax of that last Battle:

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, it is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one. (Zech 13:8-14:9)

What is your attitude to Israel? If you have that anti-Jewish feeling like the rest of the world, change over to a lover of Israel. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee." Make peace with Israel! Such a heathen chieftain had the wise insight into the goodness of making friends with Israel: Thus Abimelech, Chieftain of the Philistines, came to Abraham: "God is with thee in all that thou doest . . ." And thus did Abimelech say to Isaac, "We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, let there be now an oath betwixt us and thee, and let us

ISRAEL A GREAT NATION

# Yerushalayim, Messiah Is Come

T. Tow

Swedish folk melody  
Arr. by R. J. Hughes

1. Ye - ru - sha - layim, thy sons and daughters love thee! Two thousand years they've  
 2. Ye - ru - sha - layim, be - hold Christ Je - sus has come To save thy sons, if  
 3. Ye - ru - sha - layim, be - hold Mes - si - ah shall come To save thy Land, when  
 4. Ye - ru - sha - layim, God is thy 'ter - nal pe - ace, Ci - ty of Zion, Da -

wandered in ex - ile. Now by God's grace, they're gathered to thee in peace,  
 they will turn to Him. By death and pain, He has be - come their ran - som.  
 thou shalt cry to Him. He comes on clouds, with awesome loud trum - pet sound  
 vid's throne rise a - gain! Ci - ty of Truth, resplendent in His glo - ry

*Chorus*

By thy embrace, their weeping turns to smile.  
 Ris - ing a - gain, He has forgiv'n their sin. Ye - ru - sha - layim, let  
 To judge the earth - peace a mil - len - ni - um.  
 Till sun shall rise and moon no more shall wane.

peace and freedom ring, To thee Sha - lom! To thee Sha - lom! Ye - ru - sha

layim, lift up thy voice and sing, Messiah is come, Messiah is come!

make a covenant with thee; That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord (Gen 21:22; 26:28-29). This wise choice is what King Solomon had observed: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov 16:7). Make peace with Israel because she is destined to be great. She will be the greatest when our Lord comes back to earth, to sit on His father David's throne in Jerusalem.

### **The Millennial Reign of Christ**

Jesus will rule this war-torn earth with peace for a thousand years.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (Rev 20:4)

No more will there be a United Nations Headquarters in New York. The capital of the world will be shifted to Jerusalem, as seen by the Prophet Isaiah.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isa 2:3-4)

Israel, indeed, is destined to be a great nation when she turns to her Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, whom her people have blindly rejected all these centuries. Let Israel now say: Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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## **JOHN CALVIN: REFORMER, PASTOR AND THEOLOGIAN**

Paul R P Hoole

The famous 19<sup>th</sup> century minister of the Gospel, C H Spurgeon, has said this of John Calvin, the Protestant Reformer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: “Among all those who have been born of women, there is not risen a greater than John Calvin.” To us today, living in an age of moral and intellectual dwarves, it is not easy to get a correct estimate of a man of Calvin’s stature. The task is made more difficult by the fact that Calvin wrote or said very little about himself. This despite the fact that Calvin’s works fill some 55 volumes of commentaries, lectures, apologetics and letters. Regarding his own conversion to Christ and call to Christian ministry, all that Calvin revealed is found in his introduction to the commentary on the book of Psalms. This lack of personal reference from one who wrote volumes, and did a task beyond normal human strength, is in itself significant.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century literature of all kinds, from popular novels and religious books to serious philosophy and science, is littered with personal testimonies and personal experiences. This proliferation of autobiographical material is a hallmark of a self-absorbed, self-seeking and self-admiring human society and people. In contrast to all this, the all-encompassing passion of John Calvin was the cause and glory of the Triune God whom he loved and served. This is one reason that Calvin is beyond the comprehension and appreciation of both religious and secular man today. It is with this sense of our inadequacy that we look at Calvin’s life and work, which may be best summed up in the answer to the first question in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, a distillation of Calvin’s thought: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”

Calvin was utterly devoted to honouring God’s revealed will in the Holy Scripture. He was so absorbed by the concerns of God’s kingdom

that he had very little to say about his own concerns, experience, motivations and life. To a man who was God-conscious and filled with the glory of His matchless Word, nothing else seemed to have really mattered. This in turn explains his elevated view of the Christian church. The church, to Calvin, was “the family where God dwells. . . . It is at the very centre of God’s purposes and providential rule over human history.” The church is “designed to glorify His grace, to honour His Son, to maintain His cause, to execute His will. Here is His family where He is known, trusted, prized, obeyed, loved and enjoyed.” Calvin’s earthly duties and work centred upon the Church. Indeed it is a low view of the Church, its nature and call which is downgrading the evangelical Christian witness today. Calvin has much to teach of God’s work done in God’s way. By any estimate, it is spectacular to look at what Calvin achieved, with God’s help, in one life-time. We can never begin to understand Calvin unless we appreciate his clear, biblical and energising view of the majesty and goodness of the Triune God. It is a high view of God that made God’s Word of truth ever glow and burn in the heart of this humble servant.

### **Highlights of Calvin’s Life**

John Calvin was born on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1509 and died at sunset on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1564. His father worked in the office of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Noyon, France. Calvin was the second son in the family, and was given the best education in three French Universities: Orleans, Bourges, and Paris. He became well versed in Latin, Greek, Hebrew and law. Sometime in 1532, while studying in Paris, he experienced Christian conversion. Although by all social standards of morality, Calvin had lived an exemplary and pure life, he went through a period of deep conviction of his sinfulness in the presence of God. He could later say, in prayer, “Whenever I descended into myself or raised my head to Thee, terror seized me.”

After conversion, he assisted Nicolas Cop, Rector of the University of Paris, who delivered on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1533, an address calling for changes in the Roman Catholic church. These changes he appealed for were based on the New Testament, and it was thought that Calvin had helped him to write this address. Persecution broke out against these men who called for Reformation in the Roman Catholic church. Many were put to death, who supported the cause of reforming the French church.

Calvin had to flee for his life, and under a false name, wandered through Italy, France and Switzerland for over three years. It was during this time, at the age of 26, that he wrote the first edition of the *Institutes of Christian Religion*. The *Institutes*, which is a handbook of the Christian faith and life, the best existing summary of the Scriptures, was first written to defend godly, loyal subjects of Christ who were being hunted out of their homes, arrested and burnt to death under false charges and by painting a false picture of them. This is sadly a technique used by Christians even today to defame and to beat down those with whom they disagree. But in those days, the Roman Catholic church had full power to put these Christians to death, and a cruel one at that. Calvin's masterpiece was born out of the flames of persecution and a hunted, homeless life for Christ.

In July 1536, three months after the publication of the *Institutes*, Calvin was passing through Geneva to a quiet retreat in Strasbourg. In Geneva he was persuaded by a leading Reformer called William Farel to stay in Geneva and to help the newly formed Protestant Reformed church. Unwillingly Calvin stayed. Geneva proved to be his life-time calling.

His ministry in Switzerland, as a foreigner, had its many trials. After two years, powerful people in the city council who found the discipline Calvin imposed on the church too uncomfortable to their immoral lifestyle, had Calvin and Farel ejected from the city of Geneva. This was on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1535. He went to Strasbourg and was pressed by the Reformer Martin Bucer to take up pastorate of the French congregation there, and to lecture at the Academy. The years he spent in Strasbourg were probably the happiest years in Calvin's life. It was there that he married Idelette von Bure, a widow, and wrote his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.

The Council in Geneva, in the meantime, realised what a loss it was not to have Calvin at the helm of the Church, and having voted against the Libertines who continued to trouble Calvin all his life, they appealed for Calvin to return. After rejecting two appeals, but persuaded by Farel, he eventually returned to Geneva with many fears and much anxiety. He seemed to have dreaded Geneva more than any other place on earth, but knew that God had wanted him there.

Twenty-three years of fruitful, fervent and courageous labour for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ followed since his return in September 1541. His labours for God's cause was constantly dogged by trials and hardship. The Libertines threatened him with violence and death. Expulsion from the city was a constant possibility. Physically, as years went by, Calvin became weak and prone to a variety of physical illnesses. Whereas Luther's face became full, rounded and cheerful with the years, Calvin's face became thinner, careworn and flint-like. But Calvin, unlike Luther, by his ceaseless efforts for God's kingdom, in burning himself to the grave, also established the biblical, Protestant Reformed tradition which has stood the test of time. This tradition also became transnational. He was never parochial; his vision for the church of Christ went over the seas to distant lands. But he never neglected his local charge at Geneva. He prepared a Catechism, a Confession, Articles of Faith and an order of discipline. He finally persuaded the magistrates and councilors to establish an Academy, which later became the University of Geneva. He laboured with pen and voice for the propagation of the Christian faith, and in the end knew that his time for departure was at hand. He prayed: "Lord, if it please Thee, let me soon be with Thee."

### **Calvin on Calvin**

On rare and few occasions, Calvin opened the window into the influences which God used to bring him to Christian conversion and ministry, as well as on his earthly pilgrimage and service to Christ. The following are the important extracts from his introduction to Psalms, letter to Farel, and his last will: "When I was as yet a little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology. But afterwards, when he considered that the legal profession commonly raised those who followed in wealth, this prospect induced him suddenly to change his purpose. Thus it came to pass that I was suddenly withdrawn from the study of philosophy, and was put to study of the law. To this pursuit I endeavoured faithfully to apply myself, in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by secret guidance of his providence, at length gave different direction to my course. And first, since I was too obstinately addicted to the superstition of papacy to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more burdened in such matters than might have been expected from at my early period of life. Having thus received

some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was suddenly inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that though I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardour. I was quite surprised to find that before a year had elapsed, all who had a desire after a purer doctrine were continually coming to me to learn, although I myself was yet a mere novice and tyro.

“While I lay hidden in Basel. And known only to a few people, many faithful and holy persons were burned alive in France; and the report of these burnings has reached foreign nations. . . . They excited strongest disapprobation among a great part of the Germans, whose indignation was kindled. . . . In order to allay this indignation certain wicked and lying pamphlets were circulated . . . that they might proceed to the utmost extremity in murdering the poor saints without exciting compassion towards them in the breasts of any, it appeared to me that unless I opposed them to the utmost of my ability, my silence could not be vindicated from the charge of cowardice and treachery.

“This was the consideration that induced me to publish my *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. My objects were first, to prove that these reports were false, and calumnious, and thus to vindicate my brethren, whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord. And next, that as the same cruelties might very soon after be exercised against many unhappy persons. . . . It was published with the design that men might know what was the faith held by those whom I saw basely and wickedly defamed. . . . Wherever else I had gone I have taken care to conceal that I was the author of that performance.

“I had resolved to continue in the same privacy and obscurity, until . . . William Farel detained me in Geneva, not so much by counsel and exhortation, as by a dreadful imprecation, which I felt to be as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand upon me to arrest me. . . . After having learned that my heart was set upon devoting myself to private studies . . . he proceeded to utter an imprecation that God would curse my retirement and the tranquility of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance, when the necessity was so urgent. . . .

“Although Geneva was a troublesome province to me, the thought of deserting it never entered my mind. For I considered myself placed in the position by God, a sentry, at his post from which it would be impiety on

my part were I to move a single step. Yet I think you would hardly believe me were I to relate for you even a small part of those annoyances, nay miseries, which we had to endure for a whole year. This can truly testify that not a day passed in which I did not long for death ten times over. But as for leaving that Church to remove elsewhere, such a thought never came into my mind. . . .

“I thank God that He has not only had mercy on this poor creature, having delivered me from the abyss of idolatry, but that he has brought me into the clear light of His gospel, and made me a partaker of the doctrine of salvation, of which I was altogether unworthy; yea, that His mercy and goodness have borne so tenderly with my numerous sins and offences, for which I deserve to be cast from Him and destroyed.”

In Calvin and Calvinism, these dual strands are always found. Man is always seen as humbled in his sin. God is always lifted up in His purity, power and graciousness.

### **Calvin as a Pastor**

Although Calvin was called to play a manifold role in the life of Geneva and the Protestant Reformed cause in the universal Church, his first loyalty was always to the congregation he pastored in Geneva and to churches in need of support and counsel. In France alone, about 2000 churches were planted from 1559 to 1564, which looked to Calvin for leadership. He never was formally ordained in the church, but his call to ministry was unquestionably recognised by the Genevan church and the wider church in Europe. His convictions regarding the pastor and the church are found in the second volume of his *Institutes*.

Since he saw the church deformed by the Roman Catholic popery, and the pure Gospel of Christ hidden under all kinds of superstition, he laboured to build the church on the simplicity of the Scriptures. To him, the heart of the believer, the life of the congregation, and the worship form of the Church should all demonstrate Christ and His Word.

In pastoral oversight, one must always remember that what ultimately matters is the individual and his or her stand before God. Each is responsible for his or her stand before God. In the preaching of the Word of God, God speaks to the heart of the individuals gathered there. And it is for each to respond in faith and obedience to God's word. No other technique, psychological pressure or ritual must be used to bend or

dull the human conscience and mind. The true pastor has two aims: to call the sheep of Christ and to frighten away the destroying wolves. So we see the double-edged work of proclamation and defense of the truth of God. Preaching, to Calvin who expounded daily from the pulpit the Scriptures book by book (a custom which even great Calvinistic preachers like C H Spurgeon had not followed), was always a pastoral event. The minister should not bring his pet topics, verses or controversies to the pulpit, but he is there to feed the flock of Christ with the wholesome meat of God's whole counsel.

Calvin's style of preaching was always homely, and he also visited homes to catechise and inquire after the spiritual well-being of the people. It is indeed a contrast to today's mega-trends in which the pastor is hardly seen outside a formal setting, and his home address is unknown. "Whatever others may think. We do not regard our office as bound within so narrow limits that when the sermon is delivered we may rest as if our task was done. They whose blood will be required of us if lost through our slothfulness, are to be cared for much more clearly and vigilantly."

Assurance of salvation and God's favour for the individual is something Calvin always aimed at. Assurance must come through true repentance of sin and of complete confidence in the atoning, propitiating blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person in the Trinity. Calvin was unstinting in presenting Christ as the Mediator, as one who is truly, eternally God, who became Man to reconcile us to God. The doctrine of the Trinity itself, takes a strong pastoral tone with Calvin as he rigorously but warmly applies the doctrine to the sinner who must look away from himself, and look up to God for mercy and grace. Calvin also demonstrated a whole wealth of personal sympathy and sorrow for those in sickness, under persecution or trials, and even for those who had opposed the faith. His letters were, for instance, precious balms to those waiting death for their loyalty to Christ. Even with Servetus, who was condemned to death for heresy by the Geneva council, Calvin not only tried to get the severity of the punishment reduced, but also visited Servetus in prison on several occasions to personally bring to him the call and counsel of the gracious Gospel of Christ.

To Calvin the Christian pastor must be a theologian-pastor. This is one of the main messages of his *Institutes*. B B Warfield has pointed out: "It was Calvin's *Institutes* which, with its clear, positive exposition of the Evangelical faith on the infrangible authority of the Scriptures, gave

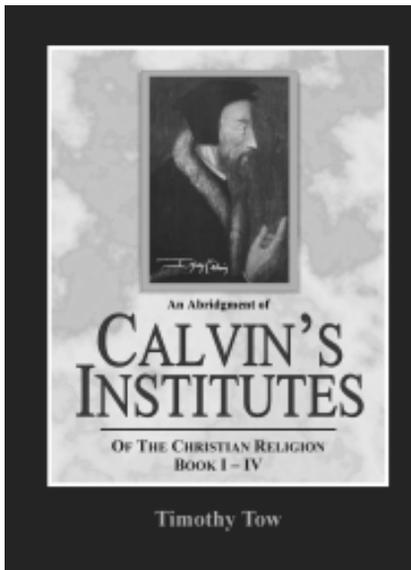
stability to wavering minds and confidence to sinking hearts, and placed upon the lips of all a brilliant apology in the face of the calumnies of the enemies of the Reformation. . . . After three and a half centuries it retains its unquestioned pre-eminence as the greatest and most influential of all dogmatic treatises.”

In an age when evangelicalism has become confused by Barthianism, the Charismaticism, and the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Ecumenism, it is well worth encouraging each evangelical Protestant minister to read through Calvin’s *Institutes* at least once through. We find that even the grand doctrine of predestination is clearly set forth, not to satisfy some academic, intellectual curiosity, but to bring comfort to the troubled conscience of the humble, God-fearing Christian by cutting the root of the doctrine of works, and to rebuke the proud and self-righteous man. The life and work of John Calvin are best epitomised by what he himself had written about man’s highest calling: “The proclaiming of God’s glory on the earth . . . the very end of our existence.”

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# NIV CLAIMS EXAMINED: A CLOSE LOOK AT TODAY'S BESTSELLER

S H Tow

In 1978 Zondervan Publishing House released the New International Version as a “balanced, scholarly, eminently readable Bible, providing the most exact, illuminating rendering of the original languages into English . . . so faithfully accurate, that it ushers in a new era of Scriptural clarity for Christians around the world.”

The Wall Street Journal of November 16, 1978 announced:

Zondervan Corp believes it has struck a new vein of gold . . . blessed with a 30-year exclusive contract to publish the New International Version of the Bible, translated and edited by the New York International Bible Society. . . . Thus Zondervan raised its earnings prediction 10 cents a share . . .

In twenty years the NIV is said to have some 100 million copies in print, capturing 45 percent of the current Bible market. This newcomer seems to have displaced the King James Version from its almost 400-year supremacy, replacing the time-honoured Holy Bible in countless homes, hotel rooms, pews and pulpits around the world.

The publishers claim that the new version is “balanced, scholarly, eminently readable . . .” Is it, truly? We reserve judgment for now.

But we seriously question the claim that the NIV is “*most exact*” and “*faithfully accurate*.” Our one concern is: does the text of the NIV do honour to the *person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ*? After all He is the author of the Holy Scripture which, from first to last, is a record of the person and work of our Lord.

If the NIV text proves *exact* and *faithfully accurate* in those areas pertaining to the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, then we may heartily welcome it into our homes and churches. Our task is lightened by Rev Charles Salliby. His incisive analysis of the NIV supplies all the answers to our quest.

## **If the Foundations be Destroyed**

The reader is referred to Salliby's book—*If the Foundations be Destroyed* (Fiskdale: Word and Prayer Ministries, 1994). In a “verse by verse” scrutiny of the NIV text, Rev Salliby has demonstrated beyond doubt or question that the NIV harbours within its pages the most “devastating and irreparable” attack upon our Lord Jesus Christ.

A successful attack upon Jesus in the Bible, from which all knowledge of Jesus finds its source, can be more devastating to the eternal hopes of men than one can possibly imagine. Almost as shocking as what is found in these Bibles is how it all passes unnoticed. Most Christians are unaware that the Deity of Jesus, His attributes, character, redemptive work, teachings, etc. have been seriously damaged . . . (*from Salliby's Introduction*).

Salliby has analysed in detail the areas in which the person and work of our Lord are under attack in the NIV. Listed under “Contents” are twenty-eight such areas. For our purpose we shall consider seven: (1) Redemption, (2) Eternal Existence, (3) Deity, (4) Son of God, (5) Virgin Birth, (6) Ascension and Glorification, (7) Return.

### **NIV Attacks Christ's Redemption**

(NIV doctored words are in **bold type**).

- (1) **Luke 9:56**, “**For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them . . .**” (KJV). **Note:** In the NIV these words are absent. Why?
- (2) **Matt 18:11**, “**For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost**” (KJV). **Note:** In the NIV these words are absent. Why?
- (3) **Col 1:14**, “In whom we have redemption **through his blood**, even the forgiveness of sins” (KJV). **NIV:** “In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” **Note:** NIV leaves out “**through his blood.**” Why? Satan hates the precious blood of Christ, for God's people “overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 12:11); and “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb 9:22). “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet 1:18-19). To the redeemed of God, the blood of Christ is precious.

- (4) **Gal 3:17**, “. . . the covenant, that was confirmed before of God **in Christ . . .**” (KJV). **NIV**: “. . . the covenant previously established by God . . .” **Note**: “**in Christ**” is absent. Why?
- (5) **Rom 1:16**, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel **of Christ . . .**” (KJV). **NIV**: “I am not ashamed of the gospel . . . .” **Note**: “**of Christ**” is absent. Why?
- (6) **John 6:47**, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth **on me** hath everlasting life” (KJV). **NIV**: “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.” **Note**: In the NIV, “**on me**” (that is “**on Christ**”) is absent. This one verse of the NIV effectively opens the door of salvation to anyone who believes in any religion! Read it again and ponder its ecumenical thrust: *all faiths lead to God*. This would conform with the charter of United Religions to be formed in 2000 AD.
- (7) **Eph 4:6**, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in **you** all” (KJV). **NIV**: “One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” **Note**: The NIV translators, by *omitting* one vital *key word* “**you**” has opened the way to God the Father to all, believers and unbelievers alike.
- (8) **Rev 21:24**, “And the nations **of them which are saved** shall walk in the light of it . . .” (KJV). **NIV**: “The nations will walk by its light . . . .” **Note**: By throwing out “**of them which are saved**” the NIV translators have thrown open their concept of heaven to “the nations,” effectively negating the saving work of Christ our Lord by this verse.

### NIV Attacks Christ's Eternal Existence

The Word of God clearly teaches that our Lord Jesus Christ is eternally pre-existent. To teach otherwise is to reduce Him to a mere man.

**Mic 5:2**, “. . . out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, **from everlasting**” (KJV). **NIV**: “. . . out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from **ancient times.**” **Note**: By changing “**from everlasting**” into “**ancient times**” the NIV translators have destroyed our Lord's eternal pre-existence, making Him a mere man. The Hebrew “*olam*” means “everlasting.” The NIV

translators knew it; they correctly translated it “**everlasting**” in other passages except when it refers to Christ. Why?

### **NIV Attacks Christ’s Deity**

The question is: do the NIV translators acknowledge *Christ* as *God*?

- (1) **1 Tim 3:16**, “. . . **God** was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit . . . believed on in the world, received up into glory” (KJV). **NIV**: “**He** appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit . . . believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.” **Note**: “**God**” in KJV is changed to “**He**” in NIV. By falsifying one word the NIV translators in 1 Tim 3:16 effectively destroy the deity of Christ our Lord.
- (2) **Phil 2:5-6**, “. . . Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (KJV). **NIV**: “. . . Christ Jesus, Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.” **Note**: NIV translators have clearly done mischief by reversing the meaning of the text: whereas in KJV our Lord is **equal** with God, in NIV it states the opposite.
- (3) **Rev 1:8-13**, “I am Alpha and Omega, **the beginning and the ending**, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus **Christ**, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus **Christ**. I . . . heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, **I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last**: and, What thou seest, write in a book . . . And I turned to see . . . And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto **the son of man . . .**” (KJV). **NIV**: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord **God**, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. . . . I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: Write on a scroll what you see . . . “I turned around to see . . . And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like **a son of man . . .**” **Note**: In the KJV text the

titles and eternal attributes of Christ (in bold emphasis) attest to the fact that He is the Almighty. In the NIV, (1) all these bold texts are removed, (2) “**the Son** of man” is changed to “**a son** of man”, an attack on our Lord’s title, (3) in verse 8, the translators have added “**God**” after “**Lord**”, making it appear that Christ is not the Almighty.

- (4) **1 John 5:7-8**, “For there are three that bear record **in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one**” (KJV). **NIV**: “For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” **Note**: This passage in the KJV affirms Christ’s *deity*. In the NIV the *key words*, in bold type, are removed, to wipe off a vital central doctrine.

### NIV Attacks Christ the Son of God

- (1) **John 9:35**, “. . . Dost thou believe on the **Son of God?**” (KJV). **NIV**: “Do you believe in the **Son of man?**” **Note**: The NIV translators attack Christ’s Sonship: “**Son of God**” is changed to “**Son of man.**”
- (2) **Acts 3:13**, “. . . the God of our fathers, hath glorified his **Son** Jesus . . .” (KJV). **NIV**: “. . . the God our fathers, has glorified his **servant** Jesus . . .” **Note**: The translator’s task is to render “word for word.” He has *no authority* (except from the father of lies) to change the text and manipulate God’s inspired word. But the NIV translator has changed “**Son**” to “**servant.**”
- (3) **John 6:69**, “And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, **the Son of the living God**” (KJV). **NIV**: “We believe and know that you are the Holy one of God.” **Note**: At first glance the NIV text appears impressive, but a second close look reveals the deadly subversion of a central truth; the NIV translators have doctored John 6:69, taking away our Lord’s title: “**Son of the living God.**”

### NIV Attacks the Virgin Birth of Christ

- (1) **Luke 2:33**, “And **Joseph** and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him” (KJV). **NIV**: “The **child’s father** and mother marvelled at what was said about him.” **Note**: In the KJV record of Luke’s Gospel, **Joseph** is rightly referred to by his name,

as he was **not** our Lord's father. The NIV translators have subverted the vital central doctrine of the *Virgin Birth* by calling Joseph the "**child's father**" thus denying the *Virgin Birth*.

- (2) **John 3:16**, "For God so loved the world that he gave his **only begotten Son . . .**" (KJV). **NIV**: "For God so loved the world that he gave his **one and only Son . . .**" **Note**: The expression "**only begotten**" (Greek "*monogenes*") refers to the *eternal Sonship* of Christ our Lord; He is "*eternally begotten of the Father*." This excludes any human father in His birth.

The term "**only begotten**" is found in the KJV in John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9. In all five passages of the NIV the translators have removed the key words and substituted "**one and only**." This is not translation but manipulation.

The NIV doctoring of "*monogenes*" is an attack firstly, on the *eternal generation* of the Son, and secondly, on His *Virgin Birth*.

### **NIV Attacks the Ascension and Glorification of Christ**

- (1) **John 16:16**, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, **because I go to the Father**" (KJV). **NIV**: "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." **Note**: The *Ascension* is recorded in the KJV accurately and faithfully as a fact leading to our Lord's glorification with the Father. The NIV translators have removed the words "**because I go to the Father**" in what would appear to be part of their agenda to "wrest Scripture" (2 Pet 3:16), denying what Jesus had said of His own ascension.
- (2) **John 17:5**, ". . . O Father, glorify thou me **with thine own self**" (KJV). **NIV**: ". . . Father, glorify me in your presence . . ." **Note**: All sinners, saved by grace, will one day be glorified in God's presence, but Jesus only could ever be glorified *with God Himself*. The NIV translators' object is *to detract* from Christ's *deity* and *glorification*, which followed His *ascension* to the Father.
- (3) **Matt 25:31**, ". . . then shall he sit upon the throne **of his glory**" (KJV). **NIV**: ". . . he will sit on his throne **in heavenly glory**." **Note**: Observe the subtle and deadly attack on the Glorified Christ. He shall sit upon the throne of **His glory**, not the glory of the created heavens, as the NIV text implies.

### NIV Attacks the Lord's Return

- (1) **Matt 25:13**, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour **wherein the Son of Man cometh**” (KJV). **NIV**: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.” **Note**: The NIV translators have removed six vital words (**wherein the Son of man cometh**), thus denying a crucial promise made by our Lord Himself. The unwarranted and reckless handling of Scripture by the NIV translators has rendered this verse meaningless.
- (2) **Rev 11:17**, “. . . we give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, which art, and wast, **and art to come . . .**” (KJV). **NIV**: “. . . we give thanks to you, Lord God almighty, the One who is and who was . . .” **Note**: The NIV translators have removed those words which speak of our Lord's promised *Return*, a prospect which they seek to deny.
- (3) **John 8.35**, “. . . **the son abideth** ever” (KJV). **NIV**: “**a son belongs** to it forever.” **Note**: While this verse does not refer to our Lord's return, nevertheless it affirms His eternal existence in the future, thus assuring us of His *Return*. The NIV translators *reduce* “**the Son**” to “**a son**” which has no relevance to our Lord Jesus. *Read by itself the NIV rendition is meaningless altogether.*
- (4) **Rev 1:11**, “**I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last**” (KJV). NIV omits this sentence altogether. **Note**: This KJV verse implies that our Lord, the “Alpha and Omega” will come again as Judge, a prospect offensive to the NIV translators, hence the omission of the verse.

### Concluding Observations

This brief examination of the NIV text alongside the KJV touching on the person and work of Christ our Lord in seven key areas is presented to the reader for objective and honest appraisal. The Holy Spirit alone is able to guide into all truth, for He is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). May He be your Guide.

We have identified more than ample evidence to arrive at this one sure conclusion: *The NIV translators have subtly doctored portions of the text to effectively undermine the person and work of Christ our Lord.*

Focusing on certain doctored portions of the NIV text the reader may reasonably conclude that:

- (1) Jesus was merely a man born of natural parents, for Luke 2:33 in the NIV records that He had a human father; and John 3:16 affirms that He was the “one and only Son,” not the “only begotten Son” of God.
- (2) Jesus is *not* the only way of salvation, for in John 6:47 of the NIV Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.” In this verse the NIV has opened salvation’s door to anyone who believes any religion, or anything at all.
- (3) Heaven’s promise is not exclusive to “them which are saved” (Rev 21:24, KJV) but to all people, for the NIV says that in heaven, “The nations will walk by its light” (Rev 21:24). What need is there now for anyone to be saved to enter heaven?

These passages and other doctored portions of the NIV provide sufficient ground for the founding of a new “Evangelical Christianity” acceptable to all religions, a “Faith among Faiths,” a new Christendom for the new millennium.

*This is the realisation of the ecumenical plan; a dream come true.* Does this come as a surprise to you? Not to the Trinitarian Bible Society of England. Their reviewer in 1981 wrote:

The NIV . . . is not a denominational Bible, but is presented as a truly ecumenical project. . . . Two of the news releases also stated that criticism would be invited from outside scholars—“By no means will these be confined to Protestant scholars. Jewish and Roman Catholic scholars and even atheistic experts will be invited to give us their criticisms.”

Now the ecumenical plot unfolds: the Master Planners from the beginning had determined that the proposed NIV should be an interdenominational and interfaith project. The translators have complied. The new version has turned out to be a “*most exact*” and “*faithfully accurate*” translation of that Master Plan.

And who is behind the Plan but the father of lies, the master of deception. See his unseen hand behind the translators’ pens: chopping and changing, manipulating and mutilating the Word of God according to a deadly hidden agenda.

The final product is a doctored version which comfortably accommodates truth with falsehood, light with darkness, God’s Word with Satan’s. Words of life are mixed with messages of death, issuing forth from the one mouth, like the serpent’s forked tongue.

Meanwhile the sales roll on, pouring millions into the coffers of the copyright owners, the Master Planners of the International Bible Society of New York.

But to us who are saved, we cleave to the Good Book, the KJV, on which our beloved Bible-Presbyterian Church was founded. Over these five decades it has been our one faithful unfailing guide, lamp to our feet, light to our path.

To faithful Bible believing Christians everywhere, we send a message from the pen of the Apostle Paul: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Thess 2:15).

Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, our soon coming King. When He appears may He find you faithful. Amen.

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## **THE INSIDE STORY OF WESTCOTT AND HORT**

Charles Seet

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Ps 24-3-5).

### **Their Lives and Work**

Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901), and Fenton J A Hort (1828-1892) were two renowned Anglican scholars at Cambridge University. They were known to be the chief architects of the critical theory which resulted in the revised Greek Testament which has replaced the Textus Receptus (TR) or Received Text. At the age of 23, in late 1851, Hort wrote to a friend: "I had no idea till the last few weeks of the importance of texts, having read so little Greek Testament, and dragged on with the villainous Textus Receptus. . . . Think of that vile Textus Receptus leaning entirely on late MSS; it is a blessing there are such early ones." This early prejudice against the TR began Hort's life-long crusade against it, and efforts to see it replaced with the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus. Scarcely more than a year later, the plan of a joint revision of the text of the Greek Testament was first agreed upon with Westcott.

In 1857, five Anglican clergymen started efforts to secure a revision of the English Bible. Being aware of this, Westcott and Hort worked together on the Greek text for twenty years, preparing for the day when they would be appointed to sit on the New Testament revision committee. They also concocted an imaginary theory (150 pages long) that would be tight enough to convince others to favour a change in the Greek text. The false assumptions are these:

- (1) They assumed that between 250 AD and 350 AD there was a revision of the Greek text which produced the Majority text. Discordant manuscripts were blended together to form this text, and thus many additional verses and passages were added.

*THE INSIDE STORY OF WESTCOTT AND HORT*

- (2) They say that this revision caused the original text to be lost (until the Vatican and Sinai codices were found).
- (3) They say that this was a conspiracy by the whole Orthodox church which has successfully suppressed the original up to and including the present time.

These are the standard arguments against the Text of the King James Version (KJV). They are not fair. They are not honest. They do not deal with the actual facts of the case which show that the earlier manuscripts were probably from a mutilated text produced by the heretical sect called the Adoptionists (a form of gnosticism) late in the second century AD (described in Eusebius' *History*). Orthodox churches recognised these shorter texts as false ones and did not use them. They continued to preserve and make copies of the true text (which is the Majority Text).

In 1870, The Church of England finally passed a resolution to revise the English Bible. The New Testament revision committee finally consisted of 25 scholars (though only about 16 eventually attended the meetings) which included Westcott and Hort. The committee worked for ten years in the Jerusalem chamber, and these two scholars swept the Revision Committee along with them after work commenced. In fact, the "Cambridge trio" (Westcott, Hort and Lightfoot) colluded with others to dominate the meetings with their views of the text and to defeat any who opposed them. Their letters reveal this conspiracy:

Westcott wrote to Hort, May 28, 1870, "Your note came with one from Ellicott this morning. . . . Though I think that Convocation is not competent to initiate such a measure, yet I feel that as 'we three' are together it would be wrong not to 'make the best of it' as Lightfoot says . . . There is some hope that alternative readings might find a place in the margin" (Westcott, *Life of Westcott*, I:231).

Westcott wrote to Lightfoot, June 4, 1870: "Ought we not to have a conference before the first meeting for Revision? There are many points on which it is important that we should be agreed" (Westcott, *Life of Westcott*, I:391).

Hort wrote to Williams: "The errors and prejudices, which we agree in wishing to remove, can surely be more wholesomely and also more effectually reached by individual efforts of an indirect kind than by combined open assault. At present very many orthodox but rational men are being unawares acted on by influences which will assuredly bear

good fruit in due time, if the process is allowed to go on quietly; and I cannot help fearing that a premature crisis would frighten back many into the merest traditionalism” (Hort, *Life of Hort*, I:400).

The only voice defending the Textus Receptus was Dr Scrivener, probably the foremost scholar of the day in the manuscripts of the Greek New Testament and the history of the Text. But he was systematically outvoted by the Cambridge trio and outdone by Hort’s powerful debating skill. When the revision was completed, they had altered the Greek Text in 5337 places, thus violating the original rule that had been set for the committee of not altering the Greek Text unless absolutely necessary to do so.

Today, even naturalistic critics have come to the conclusion that the Westcott and Hort critical theory is erroneous at every point. Epp confesses that “we simply do not have a theory of the text.” K W Clark says of the Westcott and Hort text: “The textual history postulated for the Textus Receptus which we now trust has been exploded.” And again, “The textual history that the Westcott-Hort text represents is no longer tenable in the light of newer discoveries and fuller textual analysis. In the effort to construct a congruent history, our failure suggests that we have lost the way, that we have reached a dead end, and that only a new and different insight will enable us to break through.”

### **Their Beliefs**

According to D A Waite, Westcott and Hort denied certain fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith (see D A Waite, *Heresies of Westcott and Hort* [Collingswood: The Bible For Today, 1979]). The two scholars held modernistic views.

Hort clearly believed in the new theory of evolution. He wrote to the Rev John Ellerton, April 3, 1860: “But the book which has most engaged me is Darwin. Whatever may be thought of it, it is a book that one is proud to be contemporary with. . . . My feeling is strong that the theory is unanswerable. If so, it opens up a new period” (Hort, *Life of Hort*, I:416).

Westcott did not believe in the literal interpretation of the creation account of Genesis. Westcott wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury on Old Testament criticism, March 4, 1890: “No one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis, for example, give a literal

history—I could never understand how any one reading them with open eyes could think they did” (Westcott, *Life of Westcott*, II:69).

Both Westcott and Hort were in favour of the worship of Mary. They were both heavily influenced by the “Oxford Movement” of Cardinal Newman. Cardinal Newman, whom they greatly admired, was a high churchman who led many back into the Roman Catholic Church. According to Benjamin Wilkerson: “By the year 1870, so powerful had become the influence of the Oxford Movement, that a theological bias in favour of Rome was affecting men in high authority. Many of the most sacred institutions of Protestant England had been assailed and some of them had been completely changed. The attack on the Thirty-nine Articles by Tract 90, and the subversion of fundamental Protestant doctrines within the Church of England had been so bold and thorough, that an attempt to substitute a version which would theologically and legally discredit our common Protestant Version would not be a surprise.”

Westcott and Hort, in their own words, openly confessed their adoration of Mary. Westcott wrote from France to his fiancée, 1847: “After leaving the monastery, we shaped our course to a little oratory which we discovered on the summit of a neighbouring hill. . . . Fortunately we found the door open. It is very small, with one kneeling place; and behind a screen was a ‘Pieta’ the size of life [ie a Virgin and dead Christ]. . . . Had I been alone I could have knelt there for hours” (Westcott, *Life of Westcott*, I:81).

Westcott wrote to Archbishop Benson, November 17, 1865: “I wish I could see to what forgotten truth Mariolatry bears witness” (Westcott, *Life of Westcott*, II:50).

Hort wrote to Westcott: “I am very far from pretending to understand completely the oft-renewed vitality of Mariolatry” (Hort, *Life of Hort*, II:49)

Hort wrote to Westcott, October 17, 1865: “I have been persuaded for many years that Mary-worship and ‘Jesus’-worship have very much in common in their causes and their results” (Hort, *Life of Hort*, II:50).

### **Their Secret Beliefs and Practices**

Although the integrity of Gail Riplinger’s work *New Age Bible Versions* (Ohio: AV Publications, 1993), has been questioned with charges that she has made up a lot of the information or got them from

unreliable sources, it may be worth to mention her findings, based on the biographies of Westcott and Hort written by their sons, that:

- (1) As a Cambridge undergraduate Westcott organised a club which he named Hermes, a mythological guide of departed souls to Hades. This club met from 1845-48 and was evidently a precursor to the Ghost Club.
- (2) Westcott and Hort were among the founders of the Ghost Club (or “Bogie Club” as scoffers called it) in 1850, with the purpose of investigating “ghosts and all supernatural appearances of effects, being disposed to believe such things really exist.” Such practices are condemned in the Scriptures in Deut 18:11.
- (3) Both of them were friends of Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung who were enemies of the cause of Christ.

### **Their Fruit**

Some have alleged that the background of Westcott and Hort is totally irrelevant to the issue concerning modern versions like the New International Version (NIV). But this allegation is untrue. Bringing up their background is not just an *ad hominem* argument. If Westcott and Hort had not been the kind of men they were, but had been true, regenerate, God-fearing, Bible-believing scholars like Dr Scrivener, how different the New Testament of the Revised Version (RV) would have been. There would have been no critical theory concocted to sway the committee into rejecting the Textus Receptus. There would have been no pressure to remove portions of Scripture that are not found in the “early manuscripts.” Indeed, the RV might have been an improvement on the KJV if its text had not been altered, and modern translations today would have been based on the Majority text. The background of the two Cambridge scholars has therefore made a very important difference in the recent history of the English Bible.

The foregoing information on the lives and beliefs of the two men have demonstrated that they were hardly objective in their bigoted rejection of the Textus Receptus, but were deeply prejudiced against it by their liberal theology, anti-Protestant and anti-Evangelical stance, and by their low view of Scripture. Yet institutions and seminaries have continued to accept and use their views and dicta as if they were the

totally objective and unbiased judgements of expert textual critics, even when later naturalistic critics have pointed out how erroneous they are.

Moreover, the apostate spirit that motivated Westcott and Hort, as seen in their alleged disobedience to God's Law prohibiting necromancy and spiritism, their persistent rejection of fundamental doctrines, and their elevation of humanistic scholarship above the authority of God's Word, makes them very dangerous to the church. They should never have been allowed to come near to the precious Scriptures with their editorial scalpels. By tampering with the very sustenance that the flock needs in order to survive, they have inflicted much damage on the church for generations to come. They entered in as grievous wolves, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:29).

After Westcott and Hort published their revised Greek New Testament, the only other available printed editions of the Greek text are the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament (UBSGNT) and Nestle's Greek New Testament. Both of these are derived from the Westcott and Hort text. Although the later editions claim to be eclectic, the vestiges of Westcott and Hort remain. For instance, the UBSGNT editions persist in questioning the authenticity of the last 12 verses of Mark (Mark 16:9-20), the passage on the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11), and the Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7-8), following Westcott and Hort.

The New Testament of all modern English translations except the NKJV are based on these editions of the Greek New Testament. Besides that, Bible translators all over the world are using these Greek New Testaments for their translation work. All of these therefore bear the unmistakable legacy of Westcott and Hort to some extent. Thus, the damage done by them has been very extensive.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, let it be said that no matter how good any modern version of the New Testament is in other ways, it is clearly blemished if the work of Westcott and Hort is present in it. The presence of their work means that it is based on a defective text. Those who want to honour the Word of God must not promote the use of any of these versions by the church, not because the content of the version is evil in itself, but because the attitude of being contented to use a blemished version rather than an existing unblemished one, dishonours God. If God has taken the trouble

to preserve for His people a good Greek text of the New Testament for 18 centuries, how dishonouring it would be to Him if His people now chose instead to change over to a version that is based on a defective text.

Let the biblical story of Nadab and Abihu be a lesson to all:

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace. And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said. And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled” (Lev 10:1-6).

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# THE CRISIS OF MORALITY: EUTHANASIA AS A WORLD TREND

Mark P Ryan

## Introduction

According to noted futures specialist, Tom Sine, [r]egardless of whether we view the future with optimism or fatalism, most will agree we are living in a time of turbulent change. Not only are we poised at the threshold of the last decade of the twentieth century and the third millennium since the coming of Christ. We are also living in a world which is changing at blinding speed.<sup>1</sup>

And whilst there are few (if any) aspects of modern society that have been left untouched by the changes sweeping the globe, surely one of the areas to suffer most has been that of ethics and morality.

Along with the proliferation of divergent opinions on matters like abortion, infanticide and euthanasia, the secular world's readiness to embrace new technology, new methods, and new attitudes, coupled with the abandonment of old codes and standards of conduct, has produced a crisis in morality. Today's medical culture is in such a state of flux, that even the most fundamental ethical presupposition, the sanctity of human life, is no longer acknowledged as a given. It too is simply another point lost to debate.<sup>2</sup>

Although abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia, *inter alia*,<sup>3</sup> are all reflective of the rapid (and chaotic) changes occurring in the realm of ethics and morality, making each of them candidates to explore and discuss, yet on this occasion, we are only able to explore but one of them, namely, euthanasia. And as we are looking at euthanasia as a world trend, it will be the purpose of this essay not to delve into particular medical and ethical complexities, but instead, to answer such foundational questions as: (1) What has led to euthanasia becoming a world trend?; (2) What are its effects on society likely to be?; and (3) What can we, as Christian men and women, do about it?

## **Euthanasia: A Rose By Any Other Name?**

Central to most of the debates concerning euthanasia are the various terms which are employed in the literature and in discussion. So before we move on to look at the kinds of attitudes and ideologies that have led to euthanasia's becoming a world trend, and before we can seek to determine its effects on society and what can be done about it; we first need to define what is meant by the term, "euthanasia," and understand several commonly associated phrases.

The word "euthanasia" is itself derived from two Greek words, the adverb "*eu*" (well), and "*thanatos*" (death). Together, these words carry the literal meaning of "dying well." In view is a good or happy death. Originally, the term referred to caring for the dying so that their final days might be as comfortable as was possible. Today, however, the word "euthanasia" refers to the premature and voluntary termination of the life of the dying. Or in slightly more straightforward terms, "killing to relieve suffering."<sup>4</sup> From a careful reading of the available literature, the various forms of euthanasia most commonly spoken of and employed are:

1. **Voluntary Euthanasia:** This is when euthanasia is at the request of another person in respect to him or herself. In view is a fully informed patient giving consent to such.<sup>5</sup>
2. **Involuntary Euthanasia:** This is euthanasia in defiance of a request that it not be done. In view is when it is forced upon the patient without his consent, and against his will.
3. **Active Euthanasia:** This is the intentional taking of life for "compassionate" motives (not that we can discern such), whether by an act or an omission.
4. **Passive Euthanasia:** This is often used to denote the cessation of treatment which is futile (ie which is not of sufficient benefit to the patient, which is burdensome, and/or prolonging life at a high cost). In passive euthanasia the intent is not to kill, nothing is done to kill, and what is done does not cause the death of the patient.
5. **Non-voluntary Euthanasia:** [Not always used as a category] This is euthanasia where there has been no request by the person either because he or she was immature or mentally incompetent, or was competent but not asked (as when it is performed on patients without their consent, but without going against such consent).

In regard to the often raised question, “What actually constitutes euthanasia?,” we need to realise that a variety of answers exist. Some would say all of the possibilities noted above constitute euthanasia. Others would argue that only some of them do. Still others would define euthanasia not in terms of whether it is active or passive, etc, but in terms of motive, ie “whether the death of the patient is deliberately sought. And then there are those who would offer still further definitions.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the medical literature is all very confusing, God’s Word is not. In fact, from a biblical perspective, I would suggest that we can conclude that Scripture does not actually recognise euthanasia as a category at all. The Bible seems only to recognise murder, suicide (ie, self-murder) and manslaughter. If I am right, then:

1. Voluntary Active Euthanasia is in fact suicide/manslaughter. Suicide on the part of the person requesting it, and manslaughter on the part of the person who would carry out the act. (It is manslaughter, because voluntary euthanasia does not meet the criteria for first degree murder in the biblical sense. Death is the free choice of the person concerned, and is pursued in voluntary collaboration with those who act not out of malice or revenge, etc).<sup>7</sup>
2. Involuntary (Non-voluntary) Active Euthanasia is in fact murder/manslaughter. (The act is not voluntary, but the motive is said to be compassionate.)
3. Passive Euthanasia is, in essence, a realistic expression of the fact that man cannot prolong life indefinitely. The allowing of a patient to die is not euthanasia. (However, in a case where no treatment is given to the patient, and this with malice afterthought, the action would then seem to be murder.)

Apart from trying to define what euthanasia actually is, if you are in any way familiar with the literature dealing with this subject, then you may have noticed how the term “euthanasia” is frequently substituted by phrases like:

1. **“Death with dignity”**: A phrase which is usually associated with a reason or as justification for the practice of euthanasia. Though commonly used, the phrase is virtually non-definable. (There is very little concerning death that is dignified.)
2. **“Mercy killing”**: This is another frequently used term which captures the essence of what is involved in the practice of

euthanasia. Unlike the previous phrase, there is no veil here. Rather, the activity (ie killing) and the motive (ie mercy) are put forward as an attempt to justify terminating one's life or inducing death.

3. **“Physician aided suicide”**: This phrase too says exactly what it means. It points to the introduction of a means of death that has less stigma attached to it than suicide. Used predominantly by those who are against or who do not like the idea of suicide, the basic idea behind this phrase is that of giving those who wish to opt out of life a more palatable option.

I believe that what we need to note at this point, is the way in which these and other commonly used phrases are euphemisms, largely designed to sugar-coat bitter pills. With semantics having such a large role to play in the language of issues connected with death and dying, we need to see through the favourable and conscience-soothing impressions that these terms produce,<sup>8</sup> and maintain that, “There is nothing merciful or dignified about killing people—no matter how safe, sure, and least messy it might be!”<sup>9</sup> In spite of popular surveys, humanistic legislation, and all economic considerations, we need to affirm once again that, “None die so dignified as those who patiently await their Maker’s call. None are more merciful than those who tend lovingly and unselfishly to those who suffer.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Euthanasia: The Trends Behind the Trend**

As we can see from the terminology and the way in which it is used, not everything is ‘up-front’ when it comes to discussing euthanasia. So, apart from the language associated with this topic, we need also to note some of the basic presuppositions underlying the current push for euthanasia’s practice and legislation. Ultimately, it is these kinds of considerations that have led to euthanasia becoming a world trend.<sup>11</sup>

1. **Atheism**: Atheism is of course a worldview professing unbelief in God.<sup>12</sup> As a turning away from God, it necessarily involves a turning away from and abandonment of God’s moral standards, As such, it is this that is ultimately responsible for the growing acceptance and promotion of euthanasia world-wide.
2. **Evolutionary Theory**: Going hand-in-glove with this turning from God, is the widespread and popular belief that mankind is not made “in the image of God,” but is simply the best example of

evolution.<sup>13</sup> Viewed this way, mankind is not seen as being qualitatively distinct from the creation. But instead, is assimilated into the animal kingdom, and assigned a relative value. So, being reduced in status, the question then becomes: “why should we feel greater concern over the death of a human being than over the death of a laboratory rat?”<sup>14</sup>

3. **Autonomy and Rationalism:** Having rejected God’s standards, man positions himself in the chair of god, and then having declared self-rule, embraces his own set of values and standards. In the post-enlightenment period, one of these ‘values’ is that man’s own reasoning prowess is ultimate. The ability to think and reason independently is what is all-important. In relation to the euthanasia debate we should note that these two presuppositions of autonomy and rationalism, have led mankind to think that life is no longer a gift from God. Rather, it just *is*,<sup>15</sup> and whether we choose to live or die is dependent upon personal preference or social expediency.<sup>16</sup>
4. **Hedonism:** Hedonism is of course the belief that the pursuit of pleasure is the highest good. In short, indulgence in sensual pleasures is the best thing that we can pursue and, if possible, obtain. That we live in a hedonistic society is a given, but that this form of paganism has impacted the euthanasia debate is usually left unmentioned. The fact is, however, that the hedonism of Western society has trivialised the debate by placing foolish and even silly parameters upon the criteria of dying. For example, with there being a distinct lack of definition to the term (and to some degree the practice) of euthanasia, people come to it from their own autonomous point of view. And so we hear things like: “If I could no longer control my bladder, . . . If I can’t feed myself any longer, or even enjoy my food, . . . If I can’t speak, or communicate effectively, . . . If I was bedridden, I would want euthanasia;” and even, “When I can no longer put on my make-up by myself, I know my time has come.” Examples like these show how our society, with its emphasis on love for self, and the pursuit of pleasure at all cost, destroys any significance in human life.<sup>17</sup>

Naturally other factors or presuppositions come into the debate,<sup>18</sup> but these are key ones, and a knowledge of them is essential to understanding how euthanasia has been allowed to grow and develop into a world trend. Whenever you are reading or listening to information on

the topic of euthanasia, keep these points in mind. You will be surprised at just how often they are hiding under the surface, directing and controlling people's arguments and positions.

### **Euthanasia's Effects on Society: Don't Get Sick and Never Age!**

Having discussed the kind of thinking that has led to the widespread acceptance of euthanasia in our society, we now turn to look at some of its effects. Because it is still relatively early-days for the pro-euthanasia movement, we are somewhat limited in evaluating the numerous and pervasive effects that this practice will have on communities and countries around the world. However, by looking at the United States of America, the Netherlands, and Australia—the three 'high-profile' countries connected to this issue—we can note three major effects occurring right now.

1. **Intense Legal Battles:** In each of the three countries already noted, the advocacy of euthanasia has led to a flurry of legal activity. For example, in the United States repeated attempts have been made to legalise euthanasia in the States of Washington, California, and Oregon. In the Netherlands, law-makers have passed guidelines to allow doctors to escape prosecution for practising euthanasia. In Australia, the parliament of the Northern Territory has just recently passed the world's most sweeping euthanasia legislation.<sup>19</sup> Whilst many of these attempts to legalise euthanasia have failed, or are presently stalled in the courts by right-to-life groups protesting and challenging the various pieces of legislation,<sup>20</sup> yet in many other instances, various pro-euthanasia bills have become law. As this continues, and as precedents are set, we can only expect to see more and more countries, states and territories adopt this kind of legislation. We can also expect to see the legislation itself move from advocating voluntary euthanasia, to non-voluntary, and even involuntary forms of euthanasia. With economic factors already overshadowing the debate, and with the continuing acceptance of anti-Christian presuppositions and standards, the pressure will be too great for our legislators not to go down this path.<sup>21</sup>
2. **The Undermining of Health Care:** With the advocacy and increasing practice of euthanasia comes the ruination of modern health care. The practice of euthanasia has all kinds of detrimental

effects on the health care of individuals and upon the community's health care institutions. For example, euthanasia stifles and even suppresses the development of palliative care techniques, skills and facilities. In Holland, for instance, palliative care has never been able to develop in any significant way on account of easier and cheaper alternative—euthanasia. The same is happening in Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory, where the lack of palliative care services are appalling. This significantly lowers the already fragile doctor-patient relationship. And it “is a contradiction of the fundamental ethos of doctors and nurses, the ‘caring’ professionals.”<sup>22</sup> Besides these basic considerations, the many practical problems associated with euthanasia, and the fact that the practice is open to misuse and abuse of quite frightening proportions, both demonstrate that euthanasia is no friend to a genuine and quality health care system.<sup>23</sup>

3. **Widespread Fear and Mistrust:** Following on, quite naturally, from what we have just looked at, is euthanasia's most discernible effect upon society at this time: widespread fear and mistrust. Right across the world, minority and disabled groups have expressed their fear of being the target of a society accepting of euthanasia. In Holland, the situation has grown so bad that “some elderly nursing home patients are afraid to drink their orange juice for fear it may contain a lethal substance.”<sup>24</sup> In Australia, it is the underprivileged and the aged who, recognising the role that economics play, are most fearful of euthanasia.<sup>25</sup>

### **A Christian Response to Euthanasia: What Can We Do About It?**

Bearing in mind all that we have covered so far, let me now very simply and very practically suggest what I perceive to be the Christian's response to euthanasia. Working from an unashamedly Christian-Theistic base, I offer the following four-fold approach to this issue as a suitable response for all Christians (individually and corporately) to take up.

The first step toward countering euthanasia is to make known the standard and principles of God's Word. Since the Bible is the Christian's authoritative standard in all matters, it should figure prominently in the forming of a Christian attitude and response to euthanasia. Such factors as are relevant to this issue include (only very briefly) the following:

*The Burning Bush 4/1 (January 1998)*

1. Because man is the image of God; life is sacred (Gen 1:26-27; cf 5:1; 1 Cor 11:7; Col 3:10; Jas 3:9).
2. Life itself is a value (Gen 9:6; Prov 3:2; Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:11-18; Heb 11).
3. Suffering does not render a life meaningless or valueless (Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:11-18). The lives of John Calvin, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, and Joni Erickson-Tada are powerful testimonies to the truth of this.
4. Examples of elderly and dying people making positive contributions to those around them are found in Scripture (Eg, Gen 48:21-49:33; Lk 2:25-38; Lk 23:39-43; 2 Tim 4:6-8, 16-18).
5. Our lives are not our own (1 Cor 6:19f; 7:4).
6. The broader doctrine of God's sovereign providence (Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6; Rom 14:7-9).
7. Man will suffer the natural consequences of disease and mortality because of sin (Gen 3, Rom 5).
8. The Bible does not teach that people have an absolute moral obligation to accept treatment that would sustain or prolong life artificially (John 10:11; 15:13; 2 Cor 4-5, esp 5:6ff, 11:21-27; Phil 1:20-26; 1 John 3:16).
9. In the Bible, death is not always to be resisted (Gen 49:33; Matt 27:50; Acts 21:13; 25:11; Rom 14:7f; Phil 1:21).
10. The Bible condemns murder and suicide (Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17; cf Matt 22:39; Eph 5:28).
11. Suicides and "mercy killings" in Scripture are always in contexts of disobedience (Judg 9:54-57; 1 Sam 31:3-6; 2 Sam 1:9-16; 17:23; 1 Kgs 16:15-19; Matt 27:5; Acts 1:18. In each case the person's death represents a tragic end to a life that did not meet with God's approval).
12. Even the most desperate believer in the Bible who desired death did not consider ending his life a morally valid option (Job 3; Jonah 4:3).
13. The Bible is always on the side of dying as naturally and as comfortably as possible, and lends no support to artificial means of dying (Gen 25:8; 49:33, cf vv28ff; 1 Kgs 2:10, cf 1:1). These verses give us quite a beautiful picture of the human side of death with

Abraham, Jacob, and David, being in bed and surrounded by their family immediately prior to their being “gathered to their people.”

14. Death is not the end (Heb 9:27, 2 Cor 5:10; Matt 7:21-23; 25:31-46; Rev 20:11-15; 21:1-8). The Christian view of an after-life and of punishment and rewards are powerful arguments against euthanasia.

Our personal adherence to the Scriptures and our faithful proclamation of the Gospel is a primary concern in addressing this issue. We need to arouse men and women from their moral and mental slumber, and deal with them as God has dealt with us: through the Gospel of His Son. We must point people to Christ who came that we “might have life, and might have it abundantly,” and who offers us “life in His name” (John 10:10; 20:32, cf 5:21).

The second step is to understand something of death and dying, pain and suffering. Concerning these realities, we must come to understand that they are not ultimate; nor is it true that they serve no good purpose (which is the assumption behind the push for the legalisation of euthanasia). As Christians, we need to have in place a theology of suffering. We need to see pain and suffering from the perspective of God; even recognising such to be tools by which He sculpts lives and shapes character. Further, we need to be theologically aware of death and dying. It is only when we understand these issues biblically that we are truly equipped to minister to the dying in a responsible and practical way,<sup>26</sup>

The third step should also be a very concrete one. As individuals and as churches, we need to discourage people from practising euthanasia. If we are to be faithful to our biblical and Christian principles on this issue, it is required of us to act and to exercise a ministry of compassion (Jas 1:22; 2:12-13; 2:17; Matt 25:34-40). Such a ministry—one that will turn people away from euthanasia—must not only be creative in communicating the love of Jesus Christ, but also in committing oneself to see and nurse someone through to the end.

Prayer, which is the fourth and final step, is to undergird and cover each of the previous steps. We need to pray that politicians, health officials, and others will act against this particular world trend. With the general acceptance of a practice like euthanasia representing a huge shift in the outlook, standards and values of society; we need to humbly seek the face of the One who alone, can see the morality of entire nations reversed (Jonah 1:2, cf 3:5-10). God can overrule such a shift, and we

need to pray for such, in accordance to His will (John 14:13, 15:7,16, 16:23-27).

### **Conclusion: It's Up to Us**

Today, euthanasia is the ultimate expression of a throw-away society. A society so committed to flight from God, and so absorbed with temporal, sensual pleasures, that it fails to consider with any seriousness, the questions of life and of death.

The fact that we have fallen so far, and that only a fresh outpouring of the Spirit of God can turn societies and nations around, brings us back to the Gospel, for it is there issues of life and death are squarely faced, and our humanity deepened and restored. As Christian men and women we are the custodians of ultimate answers. Having seen something of euthanasia as a world trend—its deceitful language, its origins in sinful and apostate thought, and its dire effects on society—we are constrained to counter it by preaching the gospel of Christ in the power the Holy Spirit. Let us meet and overcome this grim trend by proclaiming and trusting in Jesus, who died that our sins might be forgiven, and who rose from the dead to give us, through the Holy Spirit, the power to do that which is right (Rom 8:1-4).

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> T Sine, *Wild Hope: A Wake-up Call to the Challenges and Opportunities of the 21st Century*, updated and revised ed (Speldhurst, Kent: Monarch Publications Ltd, 1992), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall Perron, the Northern Territory MP who successfully tabled the “Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill,” said in reference to life being sacrosanct, that, “I reject that absolutely.” See M Perron, “Wrong to ignore pain,” *Herald Sun* (May 25, 1995): 12.

<sup>3</sup> Fetal cell/tissue experimentation, genetic engineering, *in vitro* fertilisation, and homosexuality, also come to mind.

<sup>4</sup> On etymology and definition, see D J W Milne, “Euthanasia: Religious Considerations,” in *A Life Worth Living: The Euthanasia Debate*, ed B Thomas (Melbourne, Victoria: The Church and Nation Committee, The Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1995), 20; J M Frame, *Medical Ethics: Principles, Persons, and Problems* (Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988), 68; *Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*, sv “Euthanasia,” by F J Beckwith.

<sup>5</sup> This (and the definitions which follow) have been adapted from the various sources listed throughout this essay.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, R McQuilkin also speaks of “Ordinary and Heroic” techniques in *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 330.

<sup>7</sup> On distinguishing murder and manslaughter in this context, see D J W Milne, *A Life Worth Living: The Euthanasia Debate*, 20-2.

<sup>8</sup> On the topic of semantic legerdemain, see F A Schaeffer and C E Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (Old Tappan NJ: Fleming H Revell, 1979), 109f.

<sup>9</sup> L J Roberts, *Mercy Killing and the Right to Die* (Federal Way WA: Biblical Foundations International, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> That metaphysical assumptions underlie our ethics and morality is a well established fact. On the place of presuppositions in ethics, see C Van Til, *Christian Theistic Ethics* (Ripon CA: den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1971), and Schaeffer and Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* 121ff.

<sup>12</sup> For a superb discussion of atheism as a worldview (in either its secular-humanist, or Marxist-Leninist forms), see D A Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Story of the Biblical Christian, Marxist/Leninist and Secular Humanist Worldviews* (Manitou Springs CO: Summit Press, 1993), 193-235.

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the connection between atheism and evolution, see I T Taylor, *In the Minds of Men: Darwin and the New World Order* (Toronto: TFE Publishing Co, 1988), 380ff.

<sup>14</sup> Schaeffer and Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* 153. See also McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, 330.

<sup>15</sup> The phrase, “it just is,” is to be taken as pointing to life viewed from the evolutionary atheistic viewpoint. Life is not from God, but is the result of chance/randomness, etc.

<sup>16</sup> On these two presuppositions, see G S Smith, “Ethical problems: Abortion, Euthanasia, and Homosexuality,” in *The Universe, Society, and Ethics*, vol 2 of *Building a Christian World View*, ed W A Hoffer (Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988), 430-3; R C Sproul, *Ethics and the Christian: Right and Wrong in Today’s World* (Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1986), 26f.

<sup>17</sup> These examples come to mind from hearing numerous radio and television debates/editorials, and from various newspaper articles, including H Carter’s, “The Case For . . .,” *Herald Sun* (May 25, 1995): 5.

<sup>18</sup> Eg, Individualism, Egoism, Altruism, Monism, etc.

<sup>19</sup> For basic details see T Brown and M Pinkney, “Mercy Law Wins Praise/Lucky Country Now ‘Suicide Capital’,” *Herald Sun* (May 25, 1995): 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> On the likely development of legislation, see N M de S Cameron, “Bioethics: The Twilight of Christian Hippocratism,” in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F H Henry*, ed D A Carson and J D Woodbridge (Grand Rapids

MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 1993), 336; and P Robertson, *The New Millennium: 10 Trends that will Impact You and Your Family by the Year 2000* (England: Word, 1991), 201f.

<sup>22</sup> J Barlow, "Euthanasia—Medical Considerations," in *A Life Worth Living: The Euthanasia Debate*, 16. Also noted by B Muehlenberg, "Euthanasia Notes," *Family Update* 12 (March-April, 1996): 7.

<sup>23</sup> On the matter of the practical problems associated with euthanasia, see J Barlow, *A Life Worth Living*, 10ff. And as an example of the kinds of misuse and abuse that euthanasia can be subject to, see Schaeffer and Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, 102.

<sup>24</sup> T Sine, *Wild Hope*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> B Muehlenberg, "Euthanasia Notes," 7.

<sup>26</sup> As a starting point, see D A Carson, *How Long O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House 1987); and D Elliot, "Euthanasia—Pastoral Considerations," in *A Life Worth Living: The Euthanasia Debate*.

<sup>27</sup> N M de S Cameron, *God and Culture*, 334.

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# CHRISTLIKENESS AS THE GOAL OF OUR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Robert Gongga Tan

When I was young, I used to ask questions concerning the complexities and mysteries of life and personal existence. I would go to the Bible for answers. The answers in the Bible satisfied my searching soul.

One fine afternoon, I was reading the Bible. A friend of mine, seeing me reading the Bible, asked me this question, “You are reading the Bible! Are you going to be a pastor?” Immediately I closed my Bible. I felt embarrassed. I was not interested in that kind of work then. Now, if asked the same question, I will, without any sense of embarrassment, answer, “Yes, if the Lord so wills.”

In the light of Ephesians 4:4-15, I wish to say that we should study the Bible and theology with the purpose of growing into the likeness of Christ. That goal is mentioned by the Apostle Paul in verses 13 and 15 of Ephesians 4: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” “But speaking the truth in love, may we grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” As theological students, we had better set our goal of learning right at the beginning with clear direction from the Word of God. A right goal demands right means for its achievement. A wrong goal will give way to wrong means. What motivates us to study God’s Word?

When the Dutch came to colonise Indonesia, there came also Dutch pastors to minister to Dutch officers and residents. There were areas where they were disliked by the indigenous population, but there were areas, such as Ambon, in East Indonesia, where they were highly respected. Those pastors were called “*domine*” meaning “master.” They enjoyed special privileges granted by the Dutch government. For instance, they could travel free on luxurious Dutch liners and trains. The

respect and special privileges accorded to them allured certain students to go to Bible schools to study for that office, nothing further than that. Since their goal in entering Bible school was to gain respect and special privileges, could humility, longsuffering, and honesty be expected from them during the trying process of training? What can the people expect from them when they graduate? Can we expect them to show love, care, and respect for others? Or would they demand for themselves all those things?

Paul was a true apostle of Jesus Christ. When the authenticity of his apostleship was questioned, he defended it powerfully (Gal 1-2). Notwithstanding, Paul did not regard his apostleship, which was indispensable to the infant church, as the goal of his life. He considered it as a gift from the Lord (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28-31; 15:9-10). The goal of Paul's life was Christ, the Giver of that gift. It is not the gift but the Giver that must reign supreme. In Philippians 1:21, he clearly states his goal, "For me to live is Christ . . ." His goal was to grow in Christlikeness. This should be the ultimate goal of Christian education.

Christlikeness as our goal of theological education gives us a glorious hope of being changed by the Holy Spirit to the glory of God. If you have been walking closely with Christ, compare your spiritual state now with that of ten years ago. You will find that you are more mature now. Your spiritual state has been changed to a higher degree of glory than before, and that was accomplished by the Spirit of God. When you continue pressing forward to Christlikeness as the goal of your Christian education, you will increasingly find yourself on a higher ground of spirituality.

Now you are studying at Far Eastern Bible College with the hope of becoming pastors, teachers or evangelists, which are gifts given by the Lord for the edification of the body of Christ. If you hope to become ministers of God's Word, you need to become more and more like Christ. You need to allow the Holy Spirit to work in you.

The goal of Christlikeness can save us from being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and from being carried into error by the cunning and deception of man. Paul, who was used to sea-travel, employed the language of navigation to describe a serious spiritual problem arising from the absence of the right goal in one's spiritual journey. Being lost at sea can bring about uncertainty, confusion, fear,

and death. The absence of the right goal or motivation in our theological education can be likewise disastrous. Therefore, have the right goal from now on. Cooperate with the Lord toward this holy goal of Christlikeness with certainty, clarity, and peace of mind. The likeness of Christ should be the ultimate goal of our Christian journey, of which our present theological education is a very vital part. Amen.

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*Robert Gongga Tan is an Indonesian student at FEBC in the MDiv programme. The above sermon was preached during one of the weekly Homiletics classes at the FEBC chapel.*

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## Class Notes

Rev **Tan Choon Seng** (BTh '78) was conferred the Master of Theological Studies by Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary. He has returned to resume his pastoral ministry at Shalom B-P Church.

Rev **Tan Wai Choon** (DipTh '73) is now pastor of Mount Hermon B-P Church meeting at the Chua Chu Kang Bible Centre.

**Freddy Yong** (BTh '80) and **Vincent Silvarajoo** (CertBS '90) were ordained into the ministry on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Zion B-P Church, June 14, 1997. Freddy is part of the Zion pastoral team, while Vincent is with the Military Christian Fellowship.

Rev **Eddy Lim Choon Jin** (DipTh '86) received his MDiv from Prairie Graduate School in August 1997.

**Ranto Simanjuntak** (CertBS '87) is now a teacher at Batu Aji kindergarten in Batam.

Rev **David Wong** (BTh '89) of Kulai B-P Fellowship is editor of *The Bible-Presbyterian Churches of Malaysia Prayer Newsletter*. The August 1997 features an article on "What Constitutes a Calling from God into the Full-time Ministry," by Rev **Jack Sin** (MDiv '96), and a testimony of God's call into full-time ministry by Mr **Errol Stone** (BTh cand). The next issue will be on "Christian Marriage and Family." If you have an article to contribute, write to the editor at 266 Kulai Garden, 81000 Kulai, Johor, Malaysia.

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## **GOD'S SOVEREIGN ELECTION OF ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH: STUDY NOTES ON ROMANS 9-11**

Edward Oliver

### **The Case for Divine Election**

The doctrine of God's sovereignty in the matter of salvation is expressed in His plan for his ancient people Israel. The Jews had raised the question, in the light of Paul's turning to the Gentiles as the objects of God's salvation activity, how can God reject Israel in the light of His great promises to her in the Old Testament? In Romans 9-11 we have a Christian philosophy of history which differs from any human attempt to understand history's purpose or goal.

God's answer to the concerned inquirer is that He has not fully rejected Israel. Israel's blindness is temporary, howbeit rather lengthy, lasting until the "fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (11:25). All of this is not accidental or less than providential, but decretal. God has, from the beginning, planned that history would follow this preordained path.

Did God reject Israel in the light of His great promises to her? The answer is found in Rom 9:3-11:32.

### **Not All Jews Rejected**

**9:3-13**—Not all Jews have been rejected. Some have been saved because of God's sovereign election.

**9:3** "accursed from Christ." Paul is expressing his deep heartfelt desire in the strongest possible terms. Here he is expressing a condition which is only hypothetical. He knows it is impossible for one who is justified to be accursed from Christ. Paul can think of no stronger expression to convey the tragedy of Israel's rejection of the promised Messiah.

**9:4-5**—Paul lists the great privileges Israel has known. These verses serve to confirm the oneness of the covenant of grace through all ages.

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No distinction can be seen in these verses between the principles of salvation in the Old and New Testaments.

**9:5**—“who is over all, God blessed forever.” This is a strong attestation to the eternal deity of Christ. Such texts as Hebrews 1:8, Isaiah 9:6, Titus 2:13, and 2 Peter 1:1 similarly support the clear teaching of the whole Bible that Christ is God.

**9:6**—“they are not all Israel, who are of Israel.” The first Israel in this statement refers to the present day believing remnant from among the Jews who have accepted Christ as Saviour. These are the spiritual Jews of Romans 2:28-29.

**9:7-13**—The fact that some Jews have believed is the result of God’s electing grace. The fact that a small number do believe due to divine election serves Paul’s purpose in proving that God has not fully or finally cast off His chosen people. Israel is still a part of God’s plan of salvation.

**9:8**—“children of promise.” These are the saved from among the nation of Israel in this present age. Paul declares that this number is the result of divine election.

**9:11a**—“the purpose of God according to election.” Chapter 9 of Romans is the strongest testimony to God’s sovereign grace in all of the Scriptures. Many refuse to face its powerful arguments or to preach on it to God’s flock as if the Holy Spirit made a mistake in referring the salvation of individual souls to the choice of God before they were born. This statement by Paul indicates that the salvation of souls can only be attributed to God’s sovereign choice.

**9:11b**—“not of works.” The only other option for salvation of souls is works and none are capable to meet the perfect standards of the law.

**9:13a**—“Jacob have I loved.” The love Paul speaks of is a love flowing from election. Jacob, as a chosen one, is seen through the covenant of grace as a perfected sinner. No sinner deserves the love of God in his unlovely sinful state or condition. God is saying, “Jacob have I chosen to sovereignly elect and to love.” Thus one must be elect before he can become the special object of the divine grace and mercy. Modern Christians are so far from understanding these principles that they cannot grasp the depths of Paul’s argument and thus choose to ignore the passage altogether. But the passage tests the willingness of man to submit his own reasoning and will to the truth of absolute divine sovereignty.

**9:13b**—“Esau have I hated.” A great deal of debate centers on this text. Some who accept the statement of love to Jacob find this statement confusing. The text is a quote from Malachi 1:2-3 where the sovereign acts of God are being declared by the prophet. Since the subject of the context is divine election we must look to that principle for an understanding of this passage. Esau is non-elect and therefore is viewed as being in that lost state which all men deserve because of their sins. The “hatred” in this text is not the passion or rage of men but the judicial pronouncement of God against the sins of Esau. The explanation that hate in this passage simply means to “love less” will not fit the context that salvation results from God’s choice and not man’s. Neither will it suffice to claim that God “hates the sin but loves the sinner.” In Proverbs 16:4 God is angry with the wicked and his wickedness.

### **God’s Sovereign Will**

**9:14-29**—The ultimate cause of Israel’s rejection is God’s higher purposes, ie, His sovereign will. This passage being written to Jewish Christians would tend to settle their minds that God’s plan was being effected in spite of human sin and rebellion. Such a theme is certainly a continued blessing to God’s people in every age. When we cannot explain why some believe and others do not or why we have believed while our neighbour has not, our thoughts must go back to the primary source of grace, the elective choice of God.

**9:14-15**—God cannot be charged with wrong doing in the free exercise of his mercy. The very nature of mercy forbids any claim to necessity or obligation.

**9:15**—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” We should not attempt to qualify this statement from our limited grasp of the divine mind. The passage cannot be understood in more than one way. The distribution of mercy flows discriminately from God.

**9:18**—“whom he will he hardeneth.” When God withholds regenerating grace, the sinner will inevitably be hardened. So it was with Pharaoh by way of example.

**9:22**—“willing to show his wrath.” Paul reinforces the truth of absolute divine sovereignty otherwise taught in Scripture in such places as Proverbs 16:4, “The LORD hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” The highest purpose of the creation is the

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glory of God evidenced in the manifestation of all of His attributes. God will be glorified in the punishment of obstinate sinners who refuse to repent and believe the gospel.

**9:23a**—“riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy.” The attribute of divine mercy will find its great manifestation in all those who are saved by the gospel. These riches will embrace a number so large that no man can count it (Rev 7:9).

**9:23b**—“which he had before prepared unto glory.” Paul does not forget to assign the cause of these “vessels of mercy” to be the sovereign decree of God.

**9:27**—“a remnant shall be saved.” A small number of those who are Israelites after the flesh will believe on Jesus during this present age. The greater number are the tragic lost souls of Israel’s terrible apostasy. Only a “seed” is left (v 29) which is presently redeemed through Christ of the great number of Jews living and dead.

### **Israel’s Rejection of Christ**

**9:30-10:21**—The immediate cause of God’s rejection of Israel is Israel’s rejection of the Gospel.

**9:30-33**—Israel’s downfall is a result of substituting faith for works.

**9:30**—“the righteousness which is of faith.” With this statement Paul contrasts the gift of Christ’s righteousness with the human righteousness of works which will not avail to give eternal life.

**9:32**—“they stumbled at the stumbling stone.” To the proud Pharisee and works-righteous religionist the simple message of “believe and be saved” is an offence (v 33), and becomes the stone which trips them into hell.

**10:1-13**—The simple Gospel of salvation by faith was accessible to Israel.

**10:2**—“zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” No amount of religious activity can bring the soul to peace with God.

**10:3**—“ignorant of God’s righteousness.” Paul shows that this ignorance was no excuse because the Gospel was presented clearly to Israel in the Old Testament.

**10:5**—“shall live by them.” One who chooses to approach God by his own works must perform them perfectly without the help of grace.

**10:6-8**—Paul shows that God has not required man to do what is beyond his capability in seeking salvation. He has not demanded that man ascend to heaven, a thing clearly impossible, or descend to the bottom of the sea or the heart of the earth, impossible as well, to find salvation. (Salvation by works is just as impossible as a bird wanting to fly without wings.) But God has brought the message down to where man is and to his very ears.

**10:9-10**—These verses explain the way the Gospel works in man's salvation. Verse 10 states that sinners first believe on the message of Jesus' death and resurrection, and then confess the reality of their experience to the church. Verse 9 places the confession first but it can only occur after the apprehension of the truth about Christ as it is revealed to the heart.

**10:10**—"believeth unto righteousness." Here again the apostle refers to that righteousness of Christ which is imputed to the account of the believer.

**10:14-21**—Paul shows that Israel was not ignored. The Gospel was preached to them in Old Testament times, and now by Paul.

**10:17**—Faith in God's truth can only come from God Himself through His Word.

**10:18**—"Have they not heard?" Israel had the Gospel in Old Testament times. To prove this, Paul uses Psalm 19:4 as evidence that God had revealed His truth concerning the Messiah long before Christ came into the world. Israel therefore had a long period of Gospel opportunity.

**10:21**—Israel is rejected because she refused the message of mercy extended to her through the prophets for many centuries. Israel has cut her own ties to God's blessings by refusing to receive the Messiah when He came into the world.

### **God's Restoration of Israel**

**11:1-32**—Israel will one day be restored to a right relationship with God. Israel's predicted destiny as a blessing to the nations will then be realised (Ps 72, Isa 60:1-5). The truth presented here should encourage the hearts of all sons of Israel that the future of the nation of Israel is to be one of great honour and blessing.

*GOD'S SOVEREIGN ELECTION OF ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH*

**11:1-6**—Paul repeats an earlier claim that presently some Jews have believed in Jesus as a token of a much wider “election of grace” to come.

**11:5**—“at this present time there is a remnant.” The believing remnant among today’s Jews remains evidence that the nation has not been finally cast off.

**11:6**—Grace and works are consistently contrasted by Paul when he speaks of salvation. These two systems, like oil and water, cannot be mixed.

**11:7-15**—Israel’s rejection served a higher purpose of God.

**11:7**—“the election hath obtained it.” Those of Israel whom God chose to be saved will come to Christ. Divine election extends to the choice of individuals who are granted the grace of regeneration and faith to believe the Gospel. This is otherwise called “unconditional election.”

**11:11**—Israel’s blindness has resulted in God turning to the Gentiles to take out a “people for His name” (Acts 13:46-48; 15:14; 28:25-29). Israel’s rejection of Christ was no surprise to God. It was part of His eternal plan (vv 8-9).

**11:12**—Paul here explains that when Israel turns to Jesus Christ as the true Messiah the world will receive great benefits. We know these benefits from the Old Testament teaching on the millennial kingdom (Isa 11 and 65). As the world of the Gentiles was blessed with the Gospel when Israel was blinded, so the world will be greatly blessed when Israel is brought to the fullness of redemption.

**11:15**—Paul restates the idea presented in verse 12 that as the world of the Gentiles was blessed with the message of reconciliation through Israel’s “casting away,” so shall worldwide blessings flow to the nations when Israel is received through the Gospel. So great will the blessing of the coming millennial kingdom be that Paul describes it as “life from the dead.”

**11:16**—The founding fathers of the nation were holy men. Paul argues that since they constitute the root of the nation, the final branches will also be holy. The legacy of the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David must bear true fruit to God when His final plan is consummated.

**11:25**—“until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.” This refers to the number of Gentiles who will be saved before God turns again to Israel

as the special people of His favour. Here is proof that God will yet deal with Israel as a national body, not in the dispensational sense but relative to the Covenant of Grace. He will “graft them in again” (v 23) “to their own olive tree” (v 24) into which the Gentiles were grafted when Israel was “blinded in part” (v 25).

**11:26**—“all Israel shall be saved.” The conversion of the nation of Israel is a prominent theme of the Old Testament. The event is predicted in such texts as Isaiah 32:15-20, 66:8-9, Ezekiel 36:23,25, Zechariah 12:10, and many other passages. The new covenant (Jer 31:31-34) will take full effect when Israel as a nation is restored. The phrase “all Israel” refers to the entire nation which will be living at the close of the tribulation period. Some interpreters refer to the Israel of this passage as “all spiritual Israel” meaning the saved of all ages. However, it is clear that Israel as a distinct nation is being contrasted to Gentiles in this whole passage.

**11:29**—God will not go back on His ancient promise to the fathers of Israel.

### **God’s Incomprehensible Grace**

**11:33-34**—God’s ways are beyond our comprehension. We cannot fathom the pattern of the whole scheme of redemption and its gratuitous justification. Owing to her disobedience to God’s Word, Israel is temporarily rejected. The Gentiles who did not seek after the true God are brought into the Covenant of Grace. Israel which was rejected is to be finally brought to salvation at the end of this age, and the whole world is to be brought under the power of the Gospel.

**11:35**—God is under no obligation to bestow blessings on fallen creatures. When God blesses anyone it is due purely to His bountiful grace (Job 35:7, 41:11, Isa 40:13).

**11:36**—Man is completely indebted to God for all the good he receives (Jas 1:17). This benediction of Paul constitutes a “door” out of the doctrinal section of Romans and into the practical section. The doctrinal content of the faith has been considered in chapters 1-11 and is the foundation of the practical. In the church today, numerous sermons are preached from the last five chapters of Romans but few from the first eleven. Because of this imbalance the present church has been rendered doctrinally impoverished.

*Dr Edward Oliver is Associate Professor of Bible and Philosophy at Clearwater Christian College, Florida. He is a member of Suncoast Bible-Presbyterian Church.*

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**Continued from page 53**

**Willy Ng** (BTh '91) was ordained a minister of the gospel at Grace B-P Church on June 28, 1997. Willy also holds an MA from Covenant Theological Seminary, and is presently assisting Rev **Tan Eng Boo** (DipTh '78, BTh '92, MA, Columbia Biblical Seminary) at Grace BPC.

**Im Seong Ho** (BTh '92) started the English service of Mokpo Cheil Presbyterian Church, and is actively involved in the Maritime University Christian Fellowship. He has thus far translated 7 booklets of Rev Timothy Tow into Korean. His address: #1108-6, 30/1 Dong Myeong Dong, Mokpo City, Chunnam, South Korea.

**Jeong Un Gyo** (BTh '92) is now working with Rev **Charlie Tan** (BTh '73) at Bethany Independent-Presbyterian Church.

**Jonathan Lee Young Lyoung** (BTh '94), and **Moses Hahn Sung Ho** (MDiv '96) have committed themselves to be missionaries of Life Bible-Presbyterian Church to Cambodia. Both were ordained by a council of B-P pastors headed by Rev Timothy Tow at Life Church, September 28, 1997. A third—**David Koo Kyen Hoe** (BRE cand)—has also decided to serve as missionary in Cambodia.

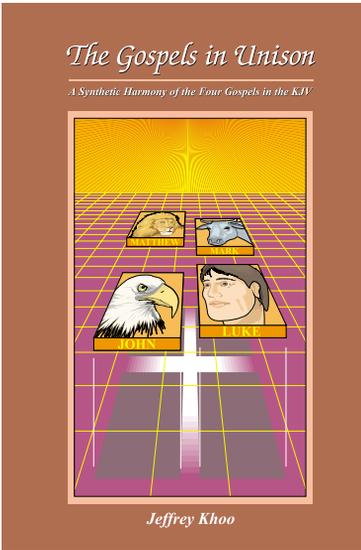


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## **A REVIEW OF *THE GOSPELS IN UNISON***

Randy Mann



*The Gospels in Unison: A Synthetic Harmony of the Four Gospels in the KJV*, by Jeffrey Khoo. Singapore: FEBC Press, 1996. 224 pages. ISBN 981-00-7790-4.

Most students involved in the study of the gospels will be quite familiar with the concept of a gospel synopsis. Dr Khoo has offered to students a different approach—a synthetic harmony which weaves the four gospels together into a chronological narrative which includes all the biblical material from the four gospels, while not duplicating common material found in two or more gospels. As the title indicates, the KJV has been

chosen as the version for the harmony. A map of Palestine during the time of Christ is helpfully included as well as an appendix which offers a critique of the historical-critical method.

This volume offers a handy, manageable tool with which to compare the gospel materials as one reads through any particular gospel. Unlike for instance Aland's Synopsis of the four gospels which is bulky and in which the progression of the narrative is difficult to follow, this is quite a user-friendly volume. Not only does it provide helpful headings, but the Scripture index at the back makes finding any given text incredibly easy. Dr Khoo has made all the biblical data available in a format which clearly indicates the specific elements which are both common and different in the gospel accounts and one could not ask for anything more in a harmony.

## A REVIEW OF THE GOSPELS IN UNISON

Unless one has undertaken the task of attempting a gospel harmony it is hard to appreciate the amount of study and work that goes into such an effort. Those of us who simply pick up such books and use them owe a debt to those who have undertaken such a task. As in any work of this nature there will be areas where differences of opinion arise. It is unfortunate that the reasoning behind the decisions could not have been included, but in such a case one would have been looking at multiple volumes and extensive endnotes. For instance in this volume, Dr Khoo chose to include the phrase that Paul quotes in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," as part of the Sermon on the Mount (61). While Dr Khoo may be correct, it would be fascinating to have had access to his thinking in arriving at this conclusion.

One disadvantage of a synthetic harmony is that at times one might miss interesting variations in the gospel accounts which are not as obvious in a chronological approach. For example, in the accounts of the temptations of Jesus, the order of the second and third temptation vary in Matthew and Luke. Dr Khoo has rearranged the order of Luke's text and brought it into chronological agreement with Matthew's account (35-36). The point that needs to be recognised here is that the Holy Spirit caused one of the accounts not to be written in its historical/chronological order for a reason, and it is the responsibility of the student of Scripture to recognise this and explore what the Spirit is leading us to understand by this variation. One should note also that it appears that Dr Khoo has assumed that the Matthew and Mark accounts are chronological in this instance and that Luke evidences the variation. While this is the generally accepted conclusion of scholars, many of these also assume the priority of Mark, which Dr Khoo rejects (211-4); so once again it would have been interesting to be privy to the reasoning behind his decision and the methodology being employed.

The gospels are often used to argue against inerrancy, as critics of inerrancy point to seemingly conflicting details in the gospel accounts. I found the work of Dr Khoo to be quite satisfactory in dealing with these alleged discrepancies and showing how a harmonistic solution is feasible. For instance, the notoriously difficult account of blind Bartimaeus presents the interpreter with the question: When did Jesus heal him (them) entering or leaving the city, and did the conversion of Zaccheus precede or follow the healing (146)? Dr Khoo has apparently opted for the view of two Jericho sites as a solution. It would seem to fit with his

arrangement of the text; thus after Jesus passes through old Jericho (the Canaanite city), he comes nigh to the new Jericho (a recently built Herodian city) where he heals Bartimaeus and upon entering the city and passing through encounters Zaccheus.

The appendix presents a short but stringent critique of the historical-critical methodology particularly source, form, and redaction criticism. Dr Khoo has rightly raised the banner against these methods as practised by many within the scholarly guild, for they are often practised within a critical context that begins with the presupposition that Scripture is untrustworthy until critical study determines the historicity of the accounts.

This synthetic harmony is a valuable addition to the study of God's Word, and presents us with an admirable synthetic chronology obviously the result of extensive work. This is especially valuable in our day when the concept of a chronological attempt at harmonisation is disdained. We can be thankful for the labours of Dr Khoo, and trust that we may yet be blessed with many other fine contributions in the future.

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*Randy Mann is a ThD candidate of the University of South Africa.  
He is a graduate of Philadelphia Theological Seminary (MDiv),  
and of Grace Theological Seminary (ThM).*

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### **Continued from page 61**

**Ong Hock Khee** (BTh '94) was ordained into the ministry at Galilee B-P Church on the Lord's day, October 12, 1997.

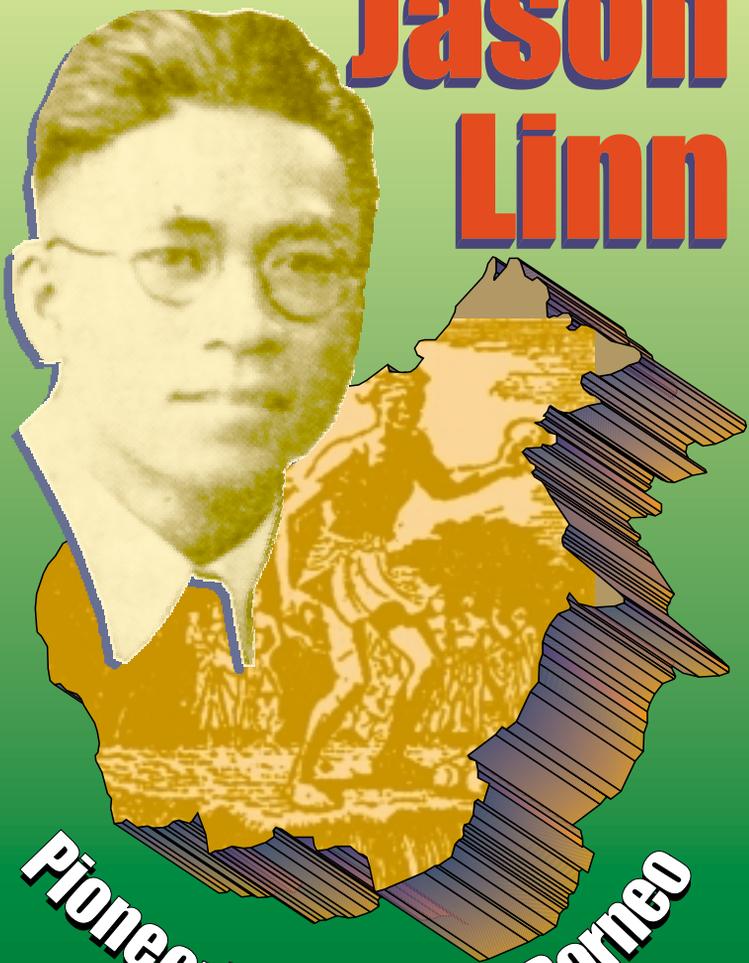
Rev **Shin Yeong Gil** (MDiv '94) has left the Korean Seamen's Mission to serve as one of the pastors of the Korean Church in Singapore. We invite him to pursue the ThM at FEBC.

**Lau Yeong Shoon** (MDiv '97) is now serving in FEBC as part of its administrative and publications staff.

**Lim Jyh Jang** (MDiv '97) is now studying for his PhD at the Evangelical Theological College of Wales.

**Phoa Ang Liang** (BTh '97) and Ady (Ho Ju Cien) were joined together in holy matrimony on September 11, 1997 at Calvary B-P Church in Batam, Indonesia. The FEBC family comprising over 70 faculty and students attended the wedding service officiated by Rev Timothy Tow. Ang Liang now serves in the children's ministry of Calvary Batam.

# Jason Linn



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