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What's in a word? Editor

APOCALYPTIC

What is the difference between prophetic and apocalyptic literature? The prophets, speaking forth for Yahweh, condemned and threatened. The apocalypticists were inspired to exhort and encourage. The prophets were called to afflict the comfortable; the apocalypticists set out to encourage the afflicted. The prophets, although they use figures of speech and colorful symbols, write straight forward prose, which is generally comprehensible. The apocalypticists use weird designs and cryptic images. Every word of the prophet should be considered carefully. The pious reader is tempted to do the same with apocalyptic literature — a mistake. Its images are closer to a political cartoon or an impressionistic painting.

The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, a century apart, confronted Israel with its corruption and promised divine judgment.

Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. (Isaiah 1:4)

I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshipping what their hands have made (Jeremiah 1:16.).

Daniel in contrast, although acknowledging Israel's sin (9:5-19), presents an encouraging word from God and a positive view of his people. The interpretation of dreams, the fiery furnace, the lion's den, the preeminence of Daniel in the Babylonian and Persian courts present a positive, encouraging outlook for the people of God. The seventy year exile was ameliorated by Cyrus' decree allowing a return to Jerusalem, and the Messiah will "put an end to sin" after seventy-sevens of years (9:24).

Revelation, with all its strange symbols, is a reassuring, encouraging book. In the cosmic battles between Christ and Satan, Christ always wins. After a final historical battle, the divine kingdom is established. Pain and sorrow are no more. In light of certain victory, John assured his readers, “Blessed are the dead who die from now on in the Lord. ... They will rest from their labors for their works follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

The distinctions should not be drawn too sharply. The prophets reassure their people that restoration will come. The apocalypticists challenge the people to behave.

What significance does the distinction between the prophetic and the apocalyptic have for the Advent Christian denomination? Here is a thought for someone to develop. Advent Christendom is an apocalyptic movement in a prophetic era. The western world’s slide into moral decadence calls for an Amos and a Jeremiah. It may not take long before we are “taken captive” by our own degeneracy. And Armageddon need not be far away.

The last week of August 2010, Iran revealed its possession of an atomic weapon. A Muslim fundamentalist, or a power hungry petty tyrant, could easily use “weapons of mass destruction” to spark the final world war. Then the Advent Christian Church might come into its own with a mature grasp of the significance of the Second Advent and the rest of biblical apocalypse. (Not that we should be idle meantime.)

What do you think of the idea?

* * * * *

A MAN, A MESSAGE, A MOVEMENT AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

An address to the North Springfield, Vermont,
Advent Christian Church
On Adventist Heritage Sunday, June 20, 2010

Floyd L. McIntyre

INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Advent Christian Church. The story is all in the history books and much too detailed to cover in the time we have today. Suffice to say, a conference of like minded met in Providence, Rhode Island, on July 25, 1860. The determination of those attending the conference resulted in the presentation of a constitution consisting of seven articles, the first of which read, “This Society shall be known by the name of The Christian Association.” Steps were taken to implement the objectives of the group, including the formation of a Christian Publication Society and the naming of officers like a president, H. L. Hastings, and a secretary, C. F. Hudson.

In the words of Clyde Hewitt in his book, *Midnight and Morning*, “The fateful step had been taken! A new denomination had been born” (244). After only three months, what was called the First Annual Meeting of the Association was held on October 16. It changed the name to “The Advent Christian Association.”

All this is not as simple and straightforward as it might sound. We do not have time to plumb the depths of this very colorful history. To get a better overview, I will speak to three components: **a man, a message, and a movement.**

A Man

No one will be surprised to hear that the man is none other than William Miller. No history of the denomination would

be complete without due consideration being given to this man, giving a proper understanding of his life and times. Again, more could be said of him than we have time for, so we have to summarize the highlights of his life and resist the temptation to repeat again the stories that are legendary. For those who are really interested in knowing more, many resources are available, not the least of which is the 2008 publication by Eerdmans authored by David Rowe, *God's Strange Work, William Miller and the End of the World*. A sample copy is on the display table. This, in my opinion, is the best source available currently on the life of William Miller.

William Miller was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on February 15, 1782, the first of sixteen children. At the age of four, his father moved the family to Low Hampton, N.Y, where he grew into adulthood with the normal experiences of a pioneer family immediately following the Revolutionary War. He had an intense interest in history and geography, which he studied through the borrowing of books from neighbors and libraries. He was highly influenced by the writings of David Hume, Voltaire and Thomas Paine. He became a deist and poked fun at organized religion.

Miller was civic minded, participating in local politics and becoming a justice of the peace. He served both in the Vermont State Militia and the Regular US Army. Promoted to the rank of Captain, he served in the war of 1812 and most famously in the Battle of Plattsburg. He married a Vermont girl, Lucy Smith; and following his return from the war in 1815, he built a home and established a farm in Low Hampton where he raised his family and established his livelihood.

Eventually Miller fell under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and gave his heart to Jesus on September 11, 1816. Following that experience he wrote: "The Scriptures became my delight and in Jesus I have found a friend." He did not live a long life. He died at his home on December 20, 1849, at the age of 67.

Although at this point we transition from the Man to the Message, it is impossible not to make further mention of The Man. It is safe to say that William Miller is probably one of the

most misunderstood persons in American church history. He was sincere and passionate about bringing the message of Jesus Christ to people so that they might be prepared to meet Jesus. His incomplete Statement of Faith (again available for your examination) shows a clear portrait of his orthodoxy. The back cover of Rowe's book begins with these words: "Calvinist Baptist preacher William Miller ... " — a fact consistently overlooked. Again from the cover: "The fascinating story of an intriguing and little understood religious figure in nineteenth century America." He was initially responsible for the proclamation of the Message to which we will now turn.

A Message

The message that Miller proclaimed was discovered through his private study of the Scriptures. In that study, he came to believe that Jesus had promised to return to earth again. It was understood as being his SECOND ADVENT. This foundational truth resulted in thirteen years of itinerant preaching with thousands being converted to Christ.

It is often said that the doctrine of the Second Coming was not being taught or preached or even believed by most prior to Miller's ministry. Not so. Miller's message was different relative to the time of Jesus' promised return. Whereas the popular ideas of the day were that Jesus would indeed return AFTER the golden age known as the millennium, based on the 1,000-year prophecy of Revelation chapter 20, Miller's understanding was that Jesus would come BEFORE that period of time. Charles Grandison Finney, a popular evangelist, and contemporary of Miller, represented the common view when he said: "If the church will do her duty, the millennium may come to this country in three years." Finney was a postmillennialist and Miller premillennial.

In the book *Our Destiny We Know*, Dr. David Dean comments on this subject in his article titled "Rediscovering Millerism: Modern Evangelicalism's Debt to the Nineteenth Century Adventual Awakening." He states: "The most obvious debt which

today's evangelicalism owes to William Miller is its widespread acceptance of pre-millennialism" (31). He goes on to explain how these ideas continued to develop and differ over time. But of course there is more to the story of Miller's message than just premillennialism. If there is one thing that people remember about Miller, it would be the part of his message that created such urgency in his preaching and such controversy in its wake.

On the basis of his long study of biblical prophecy, Miller set the date for Christ's return at the Jewish year 1843 (i.e. March 21, 1843-March 21, 1844). Most who are critical of this aspect of Miller's message fail to take into consideration that he was not the only one who ever set a date for the Lord's anticipated return. But once again, time does not permit us to explore all that. Miller himself believed that Jesus COULD come as soon as thirteen years from the time of his discovery. That would put the time at "On or About 1843." It is often overlooked that Miller himself was not specific about a day. He did specify a year. After the last day had passed, Samuel Snow suggested that the right date was October 22, 1844. Some of Miller's followers put considerable pressure on him to endorse the new date, which he eventually did.

Miller's first invitation to deliver the prophetic message is legendary, and we do not have time to tell it again. After the first invitation, others followed from the local area and throughout nearby Vermont. According to the record, he preached some 800 times between 1831-1839. Invitations came from far away. In 1839 he preached in Exeter, N.H., and it was a providential engagement for while there he met a man who became for him the great motivator and inspiration behind further development of the message. Joshua Vaughn Himes challenged Miller to take the message to the cities, which he did with Himes' promotional help. It is said that by the end of the period, he had preached 4,000 times in over 500 cities and towns. He became nationally known.

At this point I would call your attention to a fact that is significant to us right here. Miller was not a well man. He suffered physically from various illnesses. Sometimes these prevented him from keeping his appointments, but when he recovered he

would pick up where he left off and go on again. Rowe points out that the spring of 1843 was one of those periods. He was found to be very low with boils and a cold and fever that greatly enraged his other complaints, and brought him to death's door. After another down turn in July his health gradually improved to the point that in September he could once again accept speaking engagements. With son George accompanying him, Miller set out for Springfield, Vermont.

Based on other tidbits of information I have accumulated through the years, I have come to believe that in Miller's visits here and there, at least two of them were to Springfield. They are listed in Sylvester Bliss' book, a copy of which is marked on the table; also framed copies of the news releases are on our foyer wall. Several embraced the second advent message and ultimately formed a society and eventually the church which we are a part of today.

The message was in its most basic form, JESUS IS COMING AGAIN! This was clearly a biblical promise and even though the days came and went without the Lord's return, the biblical promise did not become null and void. The promise remains to this day, and it is embraced by all who take the message of the Bible seriously. Various interpretations continue to exist amongst those who otherwise believe in the soon return of the Lord. Various interpretations of the prophetic passages and the book of Revelation in particular continue to co-exist, unfortunately not always in peaceful ways! But for the most part, serious scholars agree to disagree and try to continue to make the "man thing the main thing."

William Miller was the Man, The Second Coming of Jesus was the Message. What about the Movement?

The Movement

What took place in the 1830's and 40's is sometimes called the Adventual Movement or The Adventual Awakening. Although the movement as such probably peaked at the time of the "Great

Disappointment,” as it was called, it did not cease altogether. In 1845 a conference was held in Albany, N.Y., to try to figure out what went wrong and to maintain a moderate center to the movement in the midst of extreme and erratic tendencies. That is an overly simplified statement. The issues were complex and the outcomes were many.

Perhaps one of the most important things to note at this point would be the eventual developments of various groups or denominations. Several can trace their roots back to the movement. However, for us today we are primarily interested in two. The Advent Christians and Seventh Day Adventists are the two most visible today. And although the Advent Christian Denomination is older in organization by about three years, it is by far the smaller of the two. Over the years the differences between these two Adventist bodies have caused considerable controversy and confusion. The differences cannot always be seen by the casual observer. Most are aware that the Seventh Day folks determine to observe the OT Sabbath Law and thus the name Seventh Day. There are also Seventh Day Baptists. In addition to what we call Sabatarianism, various dietary restrictions are observed.

A more serious issue over the years has been the elevation of the writings of Ellen Harmon White. Their literature will often quote Mrs. White as an authority almost equal to the Scriptures. There is considerable lessening of that today, but it still exists.

One other difference not realized by most folks is what the Seventh Day Adventists refer to as the Sanctuary Doctrine. Miller put considerable emphasis on a verse of Scripture from the book of Daniel. Chapter 8:14 says that after “2,300 evenings and mornings the sanctuary will be cleansed.” Based on this text one early Adventist claimed to have a supernatural vision, whereby the meaning of this verse explains what went wrong with the 1844 date. The conclusion was that Miller was wrong about the EVENT but not about the DATE. In fact the Lord did do something on that date! He cleansed a heavenly sanctuary. His coming to earth is still future. This viewpoint is not accepted

by Advent Christians, who maintain that Miller's EVENT was right, the coming of the Lord, but the DATE was incorrect and should not have been set in the first place.

After all these things, and near the end of his life, Miller wrote a document titled *Apology and Defense*. Copies are readily available. In this document he explains much but in the end says that he is still looking for the Lord's coming. And would continue to do so, **today and today and today until he comes.**

There are a couple of final things I need to say. First, it is often heard said that Miller was the founder of the Advent Christian Denomination. That is false. He was against the formation of new denominations. He wanted the Adventist message to be accepted by all groups: Jesus is coming again. And for the most part his desire has been fulfilled. Further, since he died in 1849 and the Advent Christian denomination was not formed until eleven years later, it would be chronologically impossible for him to be involved in its formation.

Miller was ordained a Baptist preacher and continued to be recognized by that body until the end of his days, albeit with some difficulty. And the doctrinal distinctives that are held by both Adventist bodies today, regarding the nature of man, conditional immortality, and the unconscious state of the dead with the emphasis on the resurrection as the true hope of the Christian were not a part of Miller's belief system. He spoke against them, as they were beginning to make inroads into the thinking of the people before he died. Although considered the Father of Adventism, he was not an ADVENTIST by today's definition, apart from his strong conviction that Jesus is coming again.

WILLIAM MILLER WAS THE MAN,
JESUS IS COMING AGAIN WAS THE MESSAGE
THE MOVEMENT has resulted in a denomination of which we
are a part today.

CONCLUSION

Every time we walk into this facility we pass by a sign that boldly states; ADVENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Probably most of us do not even notice. It is there to identify who we are. Most passers by do not know what it means and probably do not care. According to the statement on the cover of our weekly service bulletin, this church has been a part of this denomination for 141 years. That means that this church has been in existence and been affiliated with this denomination since the denomination was nine years old! It has been pointed out recently that many churches in our conference have either changed their name from Advent Christian Church to something more generic, reduced the denominational identity to a subtitle or parenthesis, or have dropped the name Advent Christian from their official titles all together. Justification for this is often given as an effort to avoid being confused with that other and larger Adventist group that meets on Saturday!

Every time we drop a dollar into the offering plate, 10.75 percent leaves for the National, Regional and Conference ministries of the Advent Christian Denomination.

Some have also become convinced that the day of denominations is over. The most recent issue of *Christianity Today* magazine [June 2010] carried this question forward in its cover article: The cover shows a picture of a grave marker with R I P at the top and DENOMINATIONS written where a family name would normally appear. The cover wording is: “Are Denominations Dead?” A smaller parenthesis at the bottom carries the wording” (not really).” The feature article carries the title, “Life in Those Old Bones.” Subtitle: “IF you’re interested in doing mission, there could hardly be a better tool than denominations.” Ed Stetzer does a commendable job in stating the problems and describing the current situation and convictions.

As with every point I have raised today, the information available here is way too long to digest. Copies of this article can

be made available. One quotation from the article is a paraphrase from Winston Churchill's comments about democracy: "Denominations are the worst way to cooperate — except for all the others." Well, I guess I would have to be considered a loyalist. Am I happy and content with every aspect of current denominational life, focus and ministry? No. Do I think we should cease being an Advent Christian Church? No. Do I plan on becoming less loyal to the church family that has given me more opportunities to serve the Lord than I would otherwise ever had to say nothing of being used to bring me to faith in the first place? No. Do I plan to change my theology or downplay what I believe is the most biblical understanding of certain beliefs? No.

These questions have been answered in the negative. But I want to ask just one more.

Do we as a church have a place of unique ministry in this community where we have been for 141 years? YES. Why? Because in spite of the Man and the Movement, the MESSAGE is still the same and more urgent than ever.

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN!

THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD

Stephen C. Brown

On the 25th Anniversary of the beginning of the ministry of
Rev. Floyd McIntyre
at the Advent Christian Church of North Springfield, Vermont

July 25, 2010 • 10:00 AM
North Springfield, VT

INTRODUCTION

The invitation to deliver a sermon on the occasion of Rev. McIntyre's 25th anniversary at the North Springfield Advent Christian Church kindled a keen temptation. It came as a perverse impulse to turn the message into a roast. Floyd and those who know him understand how deserving that would be. The idiosyncratic, annoyingly opinionated, bearded theological part-time chicken farmer is a perfect target for a few barbed zingers. And I have never been averse to hurling an insult or two his way over the years. To roast the Reverend would have been a delight. I am totally convinced he deserves it. But temptation need not lead to action.

There are, of course, other ways to bring tribute — testimonies, reflections, stories, pictures, mementos are but a few. But it is worth looking behind the curtain to discover more profound explanations of the person. And that is what I would like to do this morning.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great English pastor of the 19th century, wrote in his autobiography: "The life of Jonah cannot be written without God; take God out of the prophet's history, and there is no history to write ... in a man's life the great secret of strength, and holiness, and righteousness, is the acknowledgement of God. (Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, Vol. I,

Banner of Truth, pp. 206,207). Ministry done right, regardless of its visible outcomes, is very much a matter of an inner secret as Spurgeon noted in his analysis of Jonah. By that I mean, the open secret of effective ministry is one's inner acknowledgment of God and dependence upon His activity in history — even the history of a pastorate up here in “Cowmont.” There is a question, which can frame this a little more precisely. What is the secret of competency in the ministry?

Well, the answer was written by Paul in his most autobiographical book, 2 Corinthians. Here are his words from chapter 3 verses 4-6:

And such is the confidence we have through Christ toward God, not that we are sufficient of our selves to claim any thing as coming from us; but our sufficiency is from God who has qualified us to be ministers of the new covenant not in the written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills but the Spirit gives life.

Effective ministry requires the renunciation of all reliance on human adequacy — not just once, but continually, in every way. Paul describes this reality using the word “sufficiency” or “competency” depending on which translation is used. The point is simple. Competency in ministry is never rooted in us. Rather, the source of sufficiency is God himself.

In our text are three prepositional phrases, which signal the true basis of Gospel ministry. When each one is understood properly and actively applied, there results a glorious and profound effect among men called “the Ministry of the New Covenant.” Let's examine those three prepositional modifiers of the sufficiency of God to understand how the kingdom of the Lord is built in boldness and triumphant victory.

You may remember that this text was written by Paul to defend his ministry. His own converts at Corinth were challenging his credentials as an Apostle. Upon declaring that the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was one of triumph and victory, he then

gave the reason for his confidence and why he expected nothing less than total success in everything he attempted for God.

OUR SUFFICIENCY IS FROM GOD (v.5)

Americans are in pursuit of the Holy Grail of self-fulfillment. There is an impulse in the collective soul of the culture to establish self as the ruling deity. If you don't love yourself, you cannot love others, the thinking goes. The pastor will be called upon to affirm that yearning. Church members enter his study and ask him what is wrong with living for self after all the years that have been lived for the unfaithful marriage partner or the ungrateful child. Some of them will have already sought counsel outside the church and will simply seek affirmation in the advice they have received. But they are deceived — and woe to the church if the ministry is deceived as well.

In the psychotherapeutic/religious marketplace there are hundreds of counseling techniques available to the consumer. They all claim success even though they are contradictory in theory not to mention application, and they range from the silly to the satanic. At the root of it all is the simple quest for sufficiency — or adequacy — or self-fulfillment — or personal affirmation — or whatever you choose to call it. And the pastor must beware of the subtle imposition of self between him and the Word of the Lord.

On another level there will be the temptation to shape one's ministry after the most recent management model as if the key to success in the church is to become a spiritual Donald Trump (minus the casinos, of course). Or a corollary is the undue emphasis put on seeker sensitivity to grow the church at the expense of theological integrity and ecclesiastical purity.

Sometimes the pastor is tempted to rely on formal educational models as the pathway to sufficiency. I am not as sure about the efficacy of education as I was earlier in life. I remember coming out of seminary prepared to answer a lot of questions. But I quickly found that I had answers to questions few were asking. Besides, the questions are changing all the time, especially now that we

are in a major shift from truth-based thinking to fragmented, feeling/impression based living.

Well then, you ask, where does sufficiency come from? Where is the seat of authority in the work of the ministry? Let us hear from the Apostle in v. 5 of 2 Corinthians 3 as he responds to his critics in Corinth: “Our sufficiency,” he writes, “is from God who has qualified us to be servants of the New Covenant.”

There is at once an objective and subjective aspect to vocational ministry. Objectively, that call rises out of the nature of God in terms of His holiness and love — the knowledge of which is squarely predicated on His revealed truth. There is not a person among us worthy to serve the One who is thrice holy. R C Sproul wrote:

No minister is worthy of his calling. Every preacher is vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy. In fact, the more faithful a preacher is to the Word of God in his preaching, the more liable he is to the charge of hypocrisy. Why? Because the more faithful a man is to the Word of God the higher the message is that he will preach. The higher the message the further he will be from obeying it himself. (*The Holiness of God 4*)

Nevertheless, because God has ordained that His Word be preached, He sets apart the unholy to this most noble pursuit. So, the pastor recoils at his own unworthiness to even speak the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the subjective anguish of soul, which is the lot of any true church leader.

The night before Martin Luther was to appear before the Diet of Worms to defend his stand against the excesses of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church, he fell prostrate before God. In a private Gethsemane he cried out in the anguish of his soul:

O God, Almighty God everlasting! how dreadful is the world! behold how its mouth opens to swallow me up, and how small is my faith in Thee! ... Oh! the weakness of

the flesh, and the power of Satan ... I lean not upon man. It were vain! Whatever is of man is tottering, whatever proceeds from him must fail. (Sproul 110-111).

George Whitefield, in a sermon in his later years of ministry, reflected on this “holy dread”:

God alone knows how deep a concern entering the ministry and preaching was to me. I have prayed a thousand times, till the sweat has dropped from my face like rain, that God ... would not let me enter the Church before he called me and thrust me into his work. (Dallimore, *George Whitefield* 86-87)

But Whitefield cried out for assurances from God in terms of signs and confirming circumstances and he received them. In the same way (although I have never heard him say so), Floyd has received them over and over again in terms of a financial provision here, a minor miracle of timing there, or evidence of God blessing His church with a good outcome or two along the way. When such things happen it confirms that the sufficiency for the ministry is not from ourselves but from God who qualifies us for the work He calls us to do.

OUR SUFFICIENCY IS THROUGH CHRIST (v.4)

How, then, does this divine sufficiency become active in the ministry of the preacher? The answer of the Apostle Paul is “through Christ” according to verse 4 of the text.

Accepting a call to the ministry involves a certain madness. Lower pay, long hours, misunderstanding, enormous pressure, and anguish of soul lie in wait for the pastor. Even the glory of preaching has its ragged edge. Consider the Sunday morning as he ascends to the pulpit to deliver the best of his own particular craft. Exegetically prepared, thematically unified, doctrinally sound, and homiletically honed, he commences — only to see

one of the deacons dozing, his wife scowling, while three moms arise to lead the little ones to the bathroom. The pianist drops a hymnal on the keys, his son begins to crawl under the pews and Brother Smith's cell phone goes off — again. So much for divine moments.

But God not only calls a man; He also gives him a message — a message written in blood. Sure, he is a preacher; but he is more than a preacher — he is a preacher of the Gospel. And it is that Gospel which compels him, drives him, enflames him, emboldens him, and gives him that inner resilience to carry on, often in spite of his leaders, the children, the family, and the Brother Smith's of this world.

Let us be completely clear as to what we mean by this word "Gospel." The timeless truths of salvation in Christ are perilously close to eclipse in this new century. The preoccupation of the culture with self has infected the church, as culture usually does, and if we are not extremely careful, we will have nothing to say to this world gone awry.

While the call to the ministry is from God, the content of the ministry is the cross. The work of Christ in the glorious atonement was at once objective, sacrificial, propitiatory, complete, redemptive and representative. You see, God does not call us to the affirmation of self but to its crucifixion. Thus, the sinless Son of God established a new basis of relationship between God and man called the New Covenant. His perfect character, His obedience to divine law, and His righteous life were reckoned sufficient to meet the demands of God who is at once holy and just and insists that sin be punished through the forfeiture of human life.

Any pastor worth his salt knows the awful future that awaits the sinner; he knows that the Gospel of "try harder" followed by a call to "dedication" leads to despair in this life and a fiery destruction after judgment. But he also knows the true hiding of sufficiency before God. Therefore, he will never tire of presenting the old Gospel of the justifying work of Jesus while he holds up the standard of the cross as the sinner's powerful hope of salvation.

The teaching of the Bible throughout is that God has taken our sins and laid them upon His beloved Son. “He laid upon Him the iniquity of us all,” “behold, the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world,” “He gave His life as a ransom for many,” and “by His stripes we are healed.”

Therefore, our competency for salvation and for service is through Christ. Though we have sinned, we may trust wholly, completely, solely, utterly and entirely in the Son of God. Oh, that today the pulpit may ring forth with this message in all of its unadulterated purity and hope. As Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the great English preacher in the middle of the last century, wrote:

Oh, the riches of His grace! Oh, the abundance of His love! It is here, and here alone, we truly see and contemplate that love so amazing, so divine. Go to the cross; and stand there and look at it. Stay there until you see that you never have had, or ever will have a vestige of righteousness, that all your goodness is as ‘filthy rags.’ But see your sins laid upon him, and see Him paying the price, the purchase price, of your redemption, your salvation. (*Ephesians*, 1:158-159).

OUR SUFFICIENCY IS IN THE SPIRIT (v.6)

Third, we must give attention to the meaning of the Apostle when he writes that God has made him a servant of the New Covenant “in the Spirit.” I am grateful for Floyd because he has attempted to conduct his ministry in the Spirit. That is, he has depended upon the Holy Spirit to empower his preaching, teaching and leading even though he may have often felt inadequate or ineffective.

There has been much debate in the last forty years over the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. Whatever one may believe about such things as the second blessing, the baptism in the Spirit, and the gift of tongues, surely,

there can be little debate about the necessity and the importance of the ministry in the Spirit in the church.

While the call to the ministry is from God and the content of the ministry is through Christ, the power for ministry is discovered in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit seals the ministry of Christ in the human heart, charging the soul with divine energy and resurrection power. No one in his right mind would set out to bring dead men to life — it is not fun working in a graveyard. But that is just what the preacher has been called to do.

Death works all around us; the observant student of the times realizes we are not living in the same world into which we were born. The policy of abortion on demand is a disgrace to our nation. The pursuit to legitimize sexual perversion in our culture exacts a heavy toll in human hearts, families and national life; and there is more to come. Educational institutions are toxic with anti-Christian philosophy. Teens and twenties are skeptical, hurt by a generation of adult role models whose pursuit of the good life has left them with a legacy of loneliness, confusion and shabby materialism.

In this suffering world the pastor must demonstrate the life-giving Power of God. Such Power must not simply be the spiritual counterpart of the good life (“God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life”); it must carry with it deliverance from life-encompassing sins, and an intellectual pry-bar to liberate the mind from life-destroying philosophies. This Power must be observable in the life of the pastor and the church. It must be a Power pulsing from the heart and flowing like a river of pure mountain water.

Such Power must be like that of Jeremiah, who announced the New Covenant as something written upon the tablets of the heart. Yet, it is not so much that the Christian church does not have this Power today, as it is that the church does not appropriate it or know how to use it. That, then, is the job of the pastor. He must be a man driven by the indwelling Holy Spirit. When and where the church is overtaken by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men and women, there will be the reformation for which the

heart cries. I ask, why shouldn't North Springfield be one place for that Power to break out into time?

So then, if our sufficiency is in the Holy Spirit, why do we not see Him at work in the ways He wonderfully promised? The answer does not lie in the usual explanations offered. It is not our lack of training or technique (although God knows we lack so much in those areas); it is not in our lack of praying (although I suspect we do not pray aright); nor is it in our lack of money and material (as helpful as those may be).

Let us be men humble in spirit, recognizing our utter incompetency for Holy service. We must be meek, surrendering our rights for recognition and respect to the Lord, allowing no root of bitterness to spring up in our hearts. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness, seeking the refinement of our character and mind to become fit to serve as God sees fit to have us serve. And we must be merciful to the people we serve to help them, always mindful of what it meant for God to be merciful unto us. We must see that after all is said and done, the sufficiency of God is THE only hope.

God's test of success will not be the computation of our numbers but the measure of our maturity. Therefore, may our sufficiency be found in the work of the Spirit. Who else could cause us to appear before Him as blameless and harmless without rebuke? (Philippians 2:15) In the last 25 years I am confident that Floyd has labored among you with awareness and longing that his ministry would reflect the sufficiency of God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

There you have it: the three-fold chord of ministerial sufficiency. It is the work of the Almighty Tri-unity — God, our Father calls; Jesus Christ, our Savior, clears the way; and the Holy Spirit supplies the power. Floyd, I pray that each Person of the blessed Trinity continue to infuse your ministry, and may the people of God celebrate the secret of your sufficiency today. Dr.

Lloyd-Jones wisely observed: “The business of preaching is not to entertain but to lead people to salvation, to teach them how to find God” (Murray 130).

We believe you have attempted to make that your business with all your heart and we thank you for it.

Amen.

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THE EVANGELICAL DEBATE ABOUT HELL 1974-1989

Freeman Barton

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Section 2. History of the Debate 1990-2010. [to be continued in
36:2 (2010)]

Key to abbreviations:

CI	Conditional Immortality
TV	The Traditional View
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
D-S	Timothy Dudley-Smith. John Stott
EA	<i>Evangelical Affirmations</i> . Conference & book
EE	<i>Evangelical Essentials</i> . Edwards & Stott
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>Themelios</i>	<i>Journal of Covenant Theological Seminary</i>

INTRODUCTION

“Hell disappeared — no one noticed.” So said liberal theologian Martin Marty in the Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality at Harvard in 1985. Not so in the evangelical realm during the

period of conservative resurgence. The destiny of unbelievers has been a popular topic for the last three decades. It has aroused strong passions, raised doubts about some people’s evangelical orthodoxy, and strained friendships. It may have received a disproportionate amount of attention compared to what has been said about those going in the opposite direction. Nevertheless hell is a serious subject.

FWIW — The increase in literature on hell

Statistics on the appearance of the words hell, immortality and eternal destiny in ATLAS, the bibliographical database of the American Theological Library Association:

	hell	immortality	eternal destiny
1950-59	16	70	
1960-69	49	98	1
1970-79	123	215	5
1980-89	225	292	2
1990-99	462	236	3
2000-09	401	158	

Not too much should be made of these figures. Some of the increase is probably due to more extensive indexing, and the figures for 2009 are probably not complete. Nevertheless, the spike in 1990-1999 is suggestive. It comes in the decade that followed Stott and Hughes “put[ting] the cat among the pigeons” (about which more below).

Robert A. Morey claimed in 1984 that his “research has involved every conditionalist work, in or out of print, that is accessible today” (*Death* 204). He had not, and neither have I. I have read thousands of pages on the destiny of unbelievers, with at least that many to go. In 1996 the *Journal of Religious and Theological Knowledge* published my “Evangelicals in Defense of Hell,” a bibliographical essay on ninety-eight items. A second installment would involve at least that many more, including a

dozen by Robert A. Peterson (whose work is much more valuable than Morey's).

Note the limitations of the present paper. It includes evangelical literature, with a quick glance elsewhere. It is limited to the past quarter century. It is strong on periodical material, includes books devoted to the subject, but neglects systematic theologies (except Norman Geisler because of some interesting quirks) and reference works. Like the 1996 bibliography, it describes; it does not advocate.

THE ALTERNATIVES AND VOCABULARY

What are **the alternatives**? Basically they are three: eternal conscious punishing (the “traditional view” or “orthodox view” [hereafter TV]); conditional immortality (sometimes called “annihilationism” [hereafter CI]) and universalism. The last is held by few evangelicals, and it is of no concern to us today. The advocates of CI have multiplied, arousing a backlash from those holding firmly to the TV.

A word about **the labels**: The TV is often called eternal torment, especially by those who oppose it. Its adherents nowadays tend to mollify the pain to an extent that it is somewhat less than torment. Call it eternal punishing. Punishing is used instead of punishment to distinguish the view from CI, which affirms eternal punishment. For the TV eternal punishment is a process without end. For CI it is an irreversible verdict of death, although the period of detention before the execution may be lengthy. “Annihilation” is a poor word to use in this connection because it is almost inevitably misunderstood. It suggests something — like the vaporization of the island in the South Pacific when the first atomic bombs were being tested — which CI does not believe. All that is intended is that a person is dead, not alive. “Wicked” is another word avoided below. We tend to associate the word with particularly evil people, Hitler and Stalin being the chief examples. The fate of all unbelievers is involved in this debate.

Section I. HISTORY OF THE DEBATE 1974-1989.

Step 1. Cullmann 1955. A Prelude.

The subject of dualism has a great deal to do with eternal destiny. Is the individual person a psychosomatic unity, or is s/he a rather loose combination of soul and body, the latter of which can be disposed of without much effect on the person? An answer to that question was suggested back in 1955 in a small book by Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or the Resurrection of the Dead?* It was the Ingersoll Lecture on the Immortality of Man delivered at Harvard University in which Cullmann called attention to the “radical difference between the Christian expectation of the ‘resurrection of the dead’ and the Greek belief in the ‘immortality of the soul’” (7). This opposition to a body/soul dualism has had some influence on moving evangelicals toward a more holistic anthropology. N.T. Wright many years later first came to my attention when in a series of lectures at Gordon-Conwell he referred to the “near Gnostic” views of popular evangelicalism.

Step 2. Wenham 1974.

Another significant step was the publication in 1974 of English scholar John Wenham’s book, *The Goodness of God*, which included seven pages advocating CI. It required considerable negotiation with InterVarsity Press before they would accept the book with those seven pages, apparently the first publication of conditionalist material in the twentieth century by an established commercial publisher. Earlier conditionalist scholars, Basil Atkinson and Harold Guillebaud, had to publish privately. Except for the slight opening in the publishing industry, these seven pages probably did not make much of a stir.

Step 3. Fudge 1982.

Edward Fudge’s 500 page book, *The Fire That Consumes*,

was published in 1982 by Providential Press. It is an extensive presentation of the case for CI. It was an Evangelical Book Club alternate selection, and it received considerable attention. Fudge is a practicing attorney in Houston, has extensive graduate training in theology, and has an active preaching and lecturing ministry within the Churches of Christ denomination and beyond.

Step 4. Stott 1988.

By 1988 John Stott was probably the most influential English-speaking evangelical leader. Billy Graham says, “John Stott is the most respected evangelical clergyman in the world today” (D-S, back of slipcover). In his dialogue with David Edwards in *Evangelical Essentials*, Stott revealed his inclination to favor conditional immortality, which he prefers to call annihilationism. He states,

As a committed evangelical, my question must be — and is — not what does my heart tell me, but what does God’s word say? And in order to answer this question, we need to survey the biblical material afresh and to open our minds (not just our hearts) to the possibility that Scripture points in the direction of annihilation and that “eternal conscious torment” is a tradition which has to yield to the supreme authority of Scripture. (EE 313)

Because of his respect for Christian tradition and out of desire for Evangelical unity, he had been hesitant to express his views. But they are important, and he thanks Edwards for putting him in a position where he has to do so.

Stott sets forth four arguments favoring CI.

1. The first is the vocabulary of destruction. “It would seem strange, therefore, if people who were said to suffer destruction are in fact not destroyed; and, as you [David Edwards] put it, it is ‘difficult to imagine a perpetually inconclusive process of perishing’” (EE 316).

2. Next is the imagery. “But the main function of fire is not

to cause pain, but to secure destruction, as all the world's incinerators bear witness ... the fire itself is termed 'eternal' and 'unquenchable', but it would be very odd if what is thrown into it proves indestructible. Our expectation would be the opposite: it would be consumed forever, not tormented forever" (EE 316).

3. The third is the question of justice. The penalty should be commensurate with the offense. "Would there not, then, be a serious disproportion between sins consciously committed in time and torment consciously experienced throughout eternity?" (318).

4. Stott's last CI argument involves the universalist texts — the restoration to cosmic perfection " ... the eternal existence of the impenitent in hell would be hard to reconcile with the promise of God's final victory over evil, or with the apparently universalistic texts which speak of Christ drawing all men to himself" (EE 319).

I do not dogmatize about the position to which I have come. I hold it tentatively. But I do plead for frank dialogue among evangelicals on the basis of Scripture. I also believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment. (EE 319-320)

The response was explosive. As J. I. Packer put it concerning Stott and Philip Hughes (also a conditionalist), "These two respected friends ... put the cat among the pigeons" ("Evangelical Annihilationism" 37). Stott's biographer, Timothy Dudley-Smith, describes what happened.

Perhaps because this is a subject of such sensitivity, John Stott's words in this chapter provoked continuing and sometimes bitter controversy (not to say calumny). It would be difficult to trace the full repercussions of this tentative statement through the wide range of publications ... which it seemed to provoke. (353)

He quotes John Gerstner's response: "If there is anything sadder than seeing Philip Hughes fall into the terrible error of denying God's eternal punishment of the unrepentant wicked, it is seeing the one sometimes called 'the pope of the evangelicals' do the same." Gerstner says that Stott "seemingly without hesitation," wrests Scripture from its plain meaning and denies the existence of hell (D-S 353).

Probably the most problematic opponent was J.I. Packer. Dudley-Smith notes:

The disagreement was particularly painful to both men in the light of long-standing personal friendship, and many battles fought side-by-side. It did not prevent each continuing to commend the other's writings with enthusiasm, nor did it lead to a lasting break in fellowship. (ca. 353)

"In this," John Stott wrote to James Packer, "you have been a model which I gratefully acknowledge and applaud" (D-S 495, note 91). Stott is generous. Within the year after the publication of *Evangelical Essentials*, Packer made two addresses, one in Australia and one in Illinois, both condemning conditional immortality and naming Stott as a culprit.

Step 5. Evangelical Affirmations 1989: J. I. Packer against Conditionalism.

Packer's second address was delivered at a convention called to deal with confusion about the meaning of the word evangelical. Sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals in cooperation with Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, the four-day conference in May 1989 was to come up with a number of affirmations characteristic of evangelical theology. Various issues were discussed and affirmations were constructed.

Conditional immortality was the only controversial doctrine. Was it an acceptable alternative to eternal conscious punishing?

The 350 representatives were split almost evenly. When it came time to vote, a bare majority voted against excluding conditionalism as a viable option. “The vote could well have gone the other way had not a representative of the Advent Christian General Conference pleaded that the denomination would be excluded by such a resolution” (D-S 495, n. 91). The representative was Robert J. Mayer, then director of publications for ACGC. The relationship of Advent Christians to the wider evangelical community today would almost certainly be quite different had Mayer not spoken.

In his Foreword to *Evangelical Affirmations*, Carl F. H. Henry summarizes the reasons for the conference:

We sincerely hope that the papers and the responses will help fellow Christians, and will help others as well, to identify what is essential and inessential to an evangelical spiritual testimony in our era of woeful cognitive and ethical confusion.

I have not discerned any explicit connection between Stott’s revelations in *EE* in 1988 and the convening of EA in 1989. Once convened, however, Packer made the connection in his address, “Evangelicals and the Way of Salvation: New Challenges to the Gospel.”

Packer sees four tendencies which threaten the health of evangelicalism: making salvation less urgent (universalism) and less agonizing (conditionalism); making justification less central and faith less substantial. We are interested here only in the second. Packer grants that the number of conditionalists is increasing, a trend which he considers dangerous. He is convinced that it is time to

give it a bit of humpty [a cricket term], and attack. Truths that seem to me vital are threatened, and to reaffirm them effectively I shall have to hit out — not only at non-evangelicals, but at some of my evangelical brothers too.

I have no wish to hurt anyone's feelings, but I must take a risk on that, for my judgment is that on matters so grave only forthright statement can be appropriate or adequate. So prepare for strong words. (107)

He dispenses with this threat to evangelicalism with three of his thirty pages.

Packer analyzes conditionalism by listing its four chief arguments.

1. Argument one for CI is that the “vocabulary of destruction” (Wenham's term, not Packer's) — die, death, destroy, kill, burn up — demands it. Packer responds:

In all the contexts cited, the natural meaning of the phrases in which these words appear is ruin and distress, not entry upon non-existence. Conditionalism can be read into these passages, but not read out of them. (125)

On the previous page Packer had put it even more strongly:

Conditionalism is never advocated as expressing the obvious meaning of Scripture, for this it does not do. It advocates back into it, rather, in horrified recoil from the thought of billions in endless torment.

John Wenham (and all other CI scholars) must have been surprised upon reading this assessment. Wenham finds 264 references to the fate of the lost in the New Testament.

It is a terrible catalogue, giving most solemn warning, but in all but one of the 264 references, there is not a word about unending torment and very many of them in their natural sense clearly refer to destruction. (Case 174).

Fudge spends 156 pages trying to prove that capital punishment is the natural meaning.

2. Argument number 2 for CI, according to Packer, is that justice does not require eternal conscious punishing. Packer answers that the rich man's torment in Hades (The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus) proves that God does torture people for long periods. And CI is cruel in having unbelievers raised for judgment, then killed (126).

3. CI maintains that the perfection of the new heavens and the new earth would be marred by an eternal hell. Packer responds: "But again it must be asked how the conditionalists know this. The argument is pure speculation" (126). Maybe we know it, the conditionalist would answer, because Scripture promises it — no pain, no crying, no death.

4. Knowing that loved ones are in torment in hell would diminish the joys of eternity. Packer's answer — those in heaven "will be like God in character," untroubled by human pain (126).

Packer finishes with strong words for his friends, John Stott and Philip Hughes:

What troubles me most here, I confess, is the assumption of superior sensitivity by the conditionalists. Their assumption appears in the adjectives (awful, dreadful, terrible, fearful, intolerable, etc.) that they apply to the concept of eternal punishment, as if to suggest that holders of the historic view have never thought about the meaning of what they have been saying. John Stott records his belief "that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment." Respectfully, I disagree, for the biblical arguments are to my mind flimsy special pleading and the feelings that make people want conditionalism to be true seem to me to reflect, not superior spiritual sensitivity, but secular sentimentalism which assumes that in heaven our feelings about others will be as at present. (127)

Nearly a decade later in “Evangelical Annihilationism in Review,” Packer summarized the situation colorfully and with a softer tone. Only recently, he says, has annihilationism become “part of the mainstream of evangelical faith” (37) and “been widely discussed in the evangelical camp” (38).

What is at issue?

The question is essentially exegetical, though with theological and pastoral implications. It boils down to whether, when Jesus said that those banished at the final judgment will “go away into eternal punishment” (Matthew 25:46), He envisaged a state of penal pain that is endless, or an ending of conscious existence that is irrevocable: that is (for this is how the question is put), a punishment that is eternal in its length or in its effect. Mainstream Christianity has always affirmed the former, and still does; evangelical annihilationists unite with many Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists and liberals — just about all, indeed, who are not universalists — to affirm the latter. (“Evangelical Annihilationism” 38)

He quotes conditionalist John Wenham favorably:

Beware of the immense natural appeal of any way out that evades the idea of everlasting sin and suffering. The temptation to twist what may be quite plain statements of Scripture is intense. It is the ideal situation for unconscious rationalizing.

Packer makes an interesting concession very different from his Statement in EA that conditionalists back into the doctrine for sentimental reasons. “Both men [Stott and Wenham] adopted annihilationism, in which they may be wrong, but they embraced it for the right reason — not because it fitted into their comfort zone, though it did, but because they thought they found it in the Bible” (“Evangelical Annihilationism” 43).

Step 6. First Respondents: Extremists — Pinnock and Gerstner.

Clark Pinnock and John Gerstner are representative of the extreme reactions on either side. The conditionalist, Pinnock, begins his treatment of the subject thus:

Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed. How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon His creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary moral standards, and by the gospel itself. How can we possibly preach that God has so arranged things that a number of his creatures (perhaps a large number predestined to that fate) will undergo (in a state of complete consciousness) physical and mental agony through unending time? Is this not a most disturbing concept which needs some second thoughts? Surely the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is no fiend; torturing people without end is not what our God does. Does the one who told us to love our enemies intend to wreak vengeance on his own enemies for all eternity? As H. Küng appropriately asks, “What would we think of a human being who satisfied his thirst for revenge so implacably and insatiably?” (*Criswelll Theological Review* 4 [1990]): 246-247)

John Gerstner, at the request of the NAE after EA, wrote the inflammatory *Repent or Perish* in defense of traditionalism. He states, “Fudge insists on the ‘eternal fire’ while denying the eternal torment of people in the ‘eternal fire’” (157). “This ‘retribution’

[2 Thessalonians 5:8] cannot be annihilation either at Christ's return or afterward for annihilation is not retribution" (166). In the end Gerstner's argument is philosophical, not exegetical. "A person is not being condemned eternally who does not exist eternally. ... Either the wicked are eternally condemned or they are not eternally condemned. Fudge's wicked are not eternally condemned" (170). "Fudge merely asserts that these words mean what he says they mean" (173). (In fact Fudge does not merely assert it; he wrote a 500 page book to argue the point.)

Gerstner again: "Needless to say, Fudge's 'The Lake of Fire' is going to be a pool for summer vacationers" (182). He uses Luke 16 to prove that the miserable in hell will be made even more miserable eternally by watching the bliss of the saved (190). On the other hand "Heaven's joy overflows as they see the wicked suffering their just desert" (191). Those who do not preach eternal torment will be tormented forever:

Hell is made for those supposedly solicitous of man who are disobedient to God. So far from saving men by not offending them with 'hell-fire rantings,' we will perish with them, having them add to our torture by damning our 'tenderness' as long as they live in hell; that is forever. (217)

Robert Peterson well calls this book "a stick of dynamite designed to blast Christians out of the doldrums." Another book gently tries to wake the church. "Gerstner rouses the sleeper by punching her in the nose!" (*Themelios* 19, 58).

Step 7. Peterson against Conditionalism.

If Packer was the first prominent defender of the TV, Robert A. Peterson has become the outstanding champion of the cause. For a quarter century he has been on a campaign for the TV. A long time teacher at Covenant Seminary (PCA) in St. Louis and a prolific author on various subjects, he has written and lectured

much on the eternal destiny of unbelievers. Peterson is a Christian scholar and gentleman. Passionate in his traditionalist view of hell, he is nevertheless consistently knowledgeable, cogent, fair and kindly. I first came across him when he gave four lectures on eternal destiny at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1992.

Perhaps Peterson's (and Fudge's) most accessible work is *Two Views of Hell* (2000) in which he presents "The Case for Traditionalism" (117-181) and Edward Fudge presents "The Case for Conditionalism" (19-82). Each has a substantial amount of space for a (sometimes sharp) "Response" to the other (Peterson 83-113 and Fudge 182-208).

Fudge, like Pinnock, begins with theodicy — "The idea of conscious eternal torment was a grievous mistake, a horrible error, a gross slander against the heavenly Father" (20). He plunges immediately, however, into "the vocabulary of destruction." He establishes that humans are mortal. He deals with the references to death as the fate of the ungodly in the OT, the intertestamental literature, the gospels, the letters of Paul, and "The Rest of the New Testament." He argues on the basis of the frequent references to death and destruction (Sodom, ashes, chaff, worms, fire, Gehenna, meteorites) that God will ultimately destroy unbelievers in hell. We must settle here for one example. Concerning the worm and fire of Isaiah 66, he states, "It is inexcusable to interpret language from this text ... to give a meaning diametrically the opposite of Isaiah's clear picture" (32-33).

In Peterson's response to Fudge he brings four charges against his opponent: (1) "Straw man arguments," i.e., answering arguments that Peterson does not use; (2) "The argument from silence" (see Peebles attack on Peterson below); (3) "Ostentatious use of Greek"; (4) "Emotionally charged language." Then he gives traditional responses to specific passages which Fudge cites in favor of conditionalism.

In his own "case for traditionalism," Peterson begins with a "tour" through church history, visiting seven ancient and

medieval traditionalists, plus four in the twentieth century. These eleven very diverse figures “all believe that the wicked endure eternal punishment” (127).

At the end of the tour, Peterson builds his “foundation” for TV on ten passages of Scripture Isaiah 66:22-24; Daniel 12:1-2; Matthew 18:3-9; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 9:42-48; 2 Thessalonians 1: 5-10; Jude 7, Jude 13, Revelation 14: 9-11, Revelation 20:10, 14-15. In each case he compares the true meaning to Fudge’s misinterpretation. The righteous enjoy the sight of worm and fire tormenting the wicked. “Dead bodies” does not mean that they are dead but that they are ashamed. Fudge is mistaken when “He takes the words ‘dead bodies’ literally (133). Next is “shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:1-2). Both the righteous and the wicked live consciously forever (137).

Jesus compares the destinies of believer and unbeliever, the latter sentenced to “eternal fire” (Matthew 18:8-9; 13:42, 50; 25:41). The agony of the Rich Man proves the existence of postmortem pain. Similarly Revelation 14:10-11; 20:10-14. Then Peterson devotes six pages to “historically the most important biblical passage on hell,” Matthew 25:31-46. The “symmetry” proves that the destinies of both sheep and goats are the same length — both conscious, both everlasting (140-145). If 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 referred just to “destruction,” it might mean total obliteration, but since it says “eternal destruction,” it is another support for the TV.

In Jude 7 and 2 Peter 2:6 (“ ... if he [God] condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly”), Sodom and Gomorrah are cited as examples of the certainty of God’s wrath without requiring the same result — literal destruction. Similar are Jude’s references to the death of the disobedient Israelites in the wilderness, the shooting stars and the blackest darkness. Finally the “forever and ever” passages of Revelation prove the TV (159-168). In his response to Fudge, he does make this concession:

It is not necessary, however, to interpret the New Testament vocabulary of destruction literally as teaching annihilationism. Rather it is possible to understand it figuratively as teaching traditionalism. (94)

These scriptural foundation stones are a common element in the debate about eternal destiny. Fudge deals with them and others. When Peterson turns to systematic theology, a new twist appears in the charge that “annihilationism” involves a heretical Christology (174-181).

Fudge responds vigorously. Scripture, not tradition, is decisive. He had dealt with Peterson’s ten passages earlier in the book.

... Peterson stands in the long train of traditionalist authors who for centuries have focused on a handful of proof texts, never letting the Bible interpret itself and completely ignoring the multitude of Scripture passages that flatly contradict their view. Peterson admits that several of his own proof texts seem to say that the wicked will truly perish. ... Because he rules out that possibility to begin with, however, he has to engage in creative mental gymnastics to avoid their plain meaning. (183)

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ADVENTIST HERITAGE REVIEW

TO THE DOCTORS ORAL COLLINS AND CARL FREDERICK EHLE, JR.

Expressions of Appreciation to the Two Adventist College Profs Whose Ministries Have Lasted the Longest

Berkshire Hills Country Club
Pittsfield, Massachusetts
June 26, 2010

DR. CARL FRED EHLE AND DR. ORAL COLLINS

Wesley A. Ross

I want to begin by thanking you all for coming this evening. I know that spending a night in the Berkshires in the summer is a considerable financial commitment — to say nothing of the expense of getting here — and we are very thankful that you have come. We believe that our time together will be well spent. We began planning this night about two years ago, and I am very thankful for the many who have helped us — especially for the staff at BICS. I'm sure that they would all say that it has been a labor of love, but there has still been considerable labor!

Tonight we come together to honor two great men — men who have been next-door neighbors on Stockbridge Road for 52 years. Suzanne and I have lived on the other side of Fred and Pixie for the last 27 years — so I am tempted to tell you about the many times we had to call the Lenox police to report their wild parties, but I will refrain. Seriously, it has been a privilege to live next to these two men — and their wives — for nearly three decades. We have enjoyed so many of Pixie's delectable apple pies and times of fellowship in the Collins' living room.

The lives of Fred Ehle and Oral Collins have had profound influence on literally hundreds of young people over the years. We have heard from so many who would love to be here tonight, but instead send their deep love and gratitude. Some of you here have memories of Oral and Fred in the classroom, others as their classmates, some as church friends, some as Dad or Grampa, and some of you may have come just to show your appreciation for these godly men and to thank the Lord for their lives of ministry.

Many of you here this evening fondly recall Dr. Ehle standing in front of your class, with his left foot perched upon the table in front of him, holding forth on some fine point of Bible history or language detail. Or maybe you recall desperately trying to pass one of Dr. Collins' challenging quizzes or trying to jot down an unending volume of class notes.

Fred and Oral — along with their colleagues Dr. James Nichols, Dr. David Dean, Dr. Freeman Barton (and we will hear from him later), Dr. Wendell Stearns (whose widow, Betty, is here tonight), Dr. Carlisle Roberts, and so many more wonderful people — together these men shaped the thinking of so many of us, and they developed in us a deep appreciation for the Word of God. They taught us by example to live in submission to that Word of truth, and their lives were marked with sacrifice and commitment. How good it is that tonight we have an opportunity to say thank you to them and to thank the Lord for the joy of sitting under their teaching!

Fred also taught me the importance of grammar and correct speech. It was he who corrected me when I said “... to you and I” or “with you and I” instead of “to you and me.” I guess I have him to thank for the frustration I feel whenever I hear so many otherwise gifted speakers incorrectly use the pronoun “I” as the object of a preposition. But he taught me that words are important, and they should be carefully chosen to have the greatest impact. And most of you know that Oral is my uncle, so I have had the joy of knowing him not only as teacher at BCC and BICS and first-elder at Hope, but as family. Of the more than six

months of my life that I have spent in the Middle East co-hosting Biblelands trips, nearly half of that time has been spent with Oral — and sometimes we even shared the same room. Believe me, living together closely and having responsibility for a group of anywhere from 15 to 30 international travelers is very revealing. I am grateful for the practical lessons in day-to-day living that I have learned watching Oral's life at school, at church and at home. One of the greatest things that I have learned from Oral is the importance of attention to detail — and I mean **DETAIL**.

I could go on and on, but I want to close my part with two true stories. The first is about Fred from my days as a student at BCC. Our freshman Old Testament Survey course was being held in the patio room of Vannah Hall — the room with the tile floor on the other side of Room 1. There was an unwritten rule that professors had a 10-minute grace period to arrive late to class and Fred frequently took advantage of that mercy. However, on this occasion, the clock on the wall read 8:09. In gleeful anticipation of a reprieve from class, the entire group of us gathered up books and coats and waited expectantly for the final click of the clock. Just before the click came, we heard Fred come through the door of the outer room. Then — “click.” As he came through the door of the patio room, those of us who couldn't get to the lone outside door were actually leaping through the four or five open windows with books and papers flying. Landing on the ground outside, we heard him shouting “I'm taking attendance anyway!”

My other story is about a very humbling encounter President Brown and I had in Oral's office near the end of our senior year. Apparently, we had been reported for causing a disturbance in the library, and we had received a note demanding that we report to his office at our earliest convenience. (Remember those tiny offices at the end of the hallway on the upper floor of Vannah Hall?) Anyway, Steve and I stood reluctantly at the door of his office and summoned the courage to knock — hoping that maybe he wasn't in. Through the door came the voice inviting us in, and he suggested that we sit down before his desk in two folding chairs. He began by sternly expressing his deep disappointment

in us both. After all, we were seniors and were expected to be role models for the other students, and he had certainly never thought that we were capable of such inappropriate behavior. As we sunk lower and lower in the chairs, on and on he went for what seemed to be an eternity, but was probably more like 10 or 15 minutes. Eventually, he let us go with the threatening final words that he never wanted to hear of our misbehaving in the library again. We mumbled our sorrowful regret for the disappointment that we had caused, and we practically crawled out of his office.

However, to this day, I am so grateful for the mentorship of both of these men since the fall of 1964 — nearly 46 years — and after all this time, I still find that the fear of disappointing either of them is a motivating factor in my life, and that is not a bad thing. But they would both say, for us all here tonight, let us determine to live our lives in such a way that we do not disappoint the Savior whom they — and we — love and serve.

Finally, in the spirit of their classroom style, I want to leave you with an assignment. When you get back home and reflect back upon this evening, take a few minutes to write a letter to Oral and to Fred with your own personal memories of their teaching. These will be collected into a book that they will be able to enjoy over and over in the years ahead.

A Tribute to

Dr. Oral Edmond Collins and Dr. Carl Frederick Ehle, Jr.

on behalf of The Board of Directors, Faculty, Staff and Alumni
of The Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies

By Stephen C. Brown, President

If an institution had a living essence, Dr. Oral Collins and Dr. Fred Ehle would be the fragrance of life at the Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies. Because of these men BICS has been able to offer emerging adults a unique opportunity to set their trajectory toward the Kingdom of God.

It was Fred who gave shape to the vision the founders of BICS adopted over 20 years ago to provide a one-year program for integrating the biblical worldview and acquiring the rudiments of wisdom for implementation in life. He shepherded the academic program and established many of the business practices that have enabled us to receive recognition by other institutions of higher learning. Laboring without salary or stipend, Fred made it possible for BICS to make a significant contribution in theological education within our denominational circles and beyond in other networks of the Kingdom.

For example, Fred inspired us to keep our eyes on Israel as the index of God's prophetic intent. The modern return to the Land and the coming restoration of the Jewish people to the Lord are pivot points in the last of the Last Days. He helped us appreciate the promises of the prophets as the backbone of good biblical theology.

Furthermore, Fred encouraged us to understand the opening chapters of Genesis as the informing center of cosmology. Those six days of creation are the biblical anchor point for the coming restoration of the earth when Jesus returns. Why nudge the text enough to accommodate enlightenment science, he asked? Why, indeed?

Oral contributed his expertise in biblical studies, library science, archeology, churchmanship, and first-hand knowledge of the lands of the Bible. It was his vision and strategy that laid out the Institute's Bible Lands Seminar. He understood long before the rest of us the powerful impact of classroom study and research welded to travel in the lands where the Bible narratives unfolded.

For example, on the first seminars in 1989 and 1990, the professional guides in Egypt learned from Oral the significance of sites within their own country, especially for people interested in biblical as well as Egyptian history. Oral partnered BICS with Dale Nystrom, president of IGM Tours, to distinguish the Institute's travel concepts so that Egyptian touring companies established itineraries similar to the one he developed. Wes and I vividly remember those early tours into the northeast Nile Delta and the Sinai searching for sites and artifacts of which the touring professionals had never heard.

From those early journeys, our friend Khaled Osman became an expert in guiding Christian groups through the country. He realized that people had a large interest in the Bible wanting to learn about the biblical stories of Egypt (and he understood that American dollars would be left behind as well).

Dr. Collins finished and published his lifework on the prophecies of Jesus during his teaching and traveling ministry at BICS. It is the first major modern work on the book of Revelation from the historicist school and an example of the hermeneutics Oral modeled for us in our training and in our professional ministries. We are grateful for its publication and for the role BICS played behind the scenes in encouraging its publication.

Drs. Collins and Ehle are a vital link to the biblical heritage of BICS. Some of us here tonight remember Dr. James A. Nichols. When the Class of 1968 arrived at Berkshire Christian College, he was in the twilight of a distinguished career teaching and writing. His impact was not nearly as profound upon us as it was on these two men. (We seemed not very serious freshman in those days and certainly we were unwise — of course, I am speaking only for myself).

In conversation with Fred and Oral, Dr. Nichols' approach to the text often becomes a topic of conversation. Nichols submitted seriously to God's intentions conveyed in words, sentences, contexts and genre. He insisted on the use of ordinary tools of interpretation unsullied by postmodern philosophical linguistics. Nicky's hermeneutic permeates their interior disposition toward the Bible. So, the same biblical theological methodology has been transmitted to the Institute. It is a heritage we value and, frankly, without it there would be no zeal to fuel our working with the "unwise" of this era forty years later.

Together, Dr. Collins and Dr. Ehle embedded certain imperatives in the life of BICS that infuse the ethos of the Institute. I can summarize them in ten aphoristic-like statements:

Read the Word of God. He intended to say something. Not only does He expect us to understand His intent but to do something about it.

Value good books. Nonsense is plentiful but of matters that point to God you can never learn enough.

Study history. It is the tapestry on which God has woven His plan.

Investigate the Promised Land. At the crossroads and along the ancient paths in the Middle East you can see the footprints of God, yesterday and today.

Understand the times. When God prophesies, He will bring it to pass.

Sacrifice for a cause. The truth, the church and the transformation of the heart are more important than recognition, wealth and personal success.

Love young believers. Teach them to think and exhort them to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Trust God for the money. He supplies our needs and more often than not, many of our wants.

Serve others. Denying yourself is worth the effort.

Hope in God's promises. A day will come for triumph, joy, good solutions and warm reunions.

The Berkshire Institute for Christian Studies salutes Dr. Oral E. Collins and Dr. Carl F. Ehle, Jr. and thanks these great men for all they have done to inspire us in love, life, service and hope.

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CONDITIONALIST REVIEW

The Problem of Hell: A Review Essay

Buenting, Joel, ed. *The Problem of Hell: A Philosophical Anthology*. Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2010. x, 236 pages.

These thirteen chapters are written by professional philosophers who teach in five public universities, five Christian colleges, two evangelical seminaries, and by the director of the Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Intellectual Discipleship. One would expect a generally evangelical orientation, but the book includes some surprises. Scripture references are few, and exegesis is conspicuously absent. In this column we are usually wrestling with conservative evangelicals and their view of eternal tormenting. It is good to balance our continuing debate with those who hold traditional views of hell (see the article above) with this moderately liberal collection.

“The Problem of Hell” is theodicy, “A vindication of God’s goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil” (Answers.com). These authors are firmly convinced of the love and justice of God. They are also convinced that the traditional view of hell

is mistaken. Stephen Davis (Claremont McKenna C) defines the traditional hell as “a place of punishment where sinners are sent, against their wills, into eternal fiery torment” (91). One or two of these authors retain a small punitive aspect of hell. A couple deny its existence altogether. None favors “annihilationism.”

The chapters are well written and carefully argued. Conclusions are generally undogmatic (see, e.g., Davis 102). They are informative about the current state of the academy (including some of evangelicalism) and mainline Protestantism. They will not help much in determining the biblical doctrine of hell. Most contributors, maybe all of them, are believers, but they determine truth by complicated syllogisms, not by Scripture. The current evangelical debate on the subject is barely recognized.

What are the solutions suggested for “the problem of hell”?

1. The first answer is that no one is in hell. This is universalism and it is unusual among evangelicals. Thomas Talbot (Willamette U.), however, makes a good case for this view, and unlike most in this collection, he does so from Scripture.

2. The second attempt to exonerate God from responsibility for the terrors of hell is to lower the temperature. It is frequently maintained that the suffering in hell, if any, is much less than the traditional view maintains. In “Annihilationism: A Philosophical Dead-end?” Claire Brown (Notre Dame) and Jerry Walls (Asbury TS) look at three “motivations” (philosophical arguments) used by conditionalists: (1) “non-existence is the natural consequence of sin or rejection of God”; (2) God’s moral perfection rules out eternal torment; (3) “the continued existence of the sinful in hell is incompatible with the final supremacy of Christ” (46). The second relates to theodicy.

The contributors to this book use two responses to the conditionalist argument that a loving and just God would surely not torment a person forever. One used by Brown and Walls makes “annihilationism” irrelevant by making hell less fearsome. An eternal hell does not require torment. Many contemporary

interpreters diminish the pain, sometimes to as little as an intense regret at what the person is missing. As Brown and Walls put it,

Mild and moderate views of hell are significant for our purposes because, by providing alternatives to stronger views of hell, they deprive annihilationism of the claim to being the only legitimate afterlife option whose very nature is consistent with what humans, even the most wicked ones, could deserve (56).

So the traditionalists accuse conditionalists of “secular sentimentalism,” and the liberals accuse them of being too harsh.

Brown’s and Walls’ reasoning is acute, they write well, and some of their conclusions are convincing. They are largely irrelevant to conditionalism, however, because the philosophical reasoning is at most peripheral to the subject. For evangelical Christians the key is the teaching of Scripture.

3. Some deal with the theodicy issue as C. S. Lewis did by making hell self-chosen rather than divinely imposed. Stephen Davis (Claremont McKenna C) asks, “... why are the damned in hell? They are in hell because they choose to be there. People are not sent to hell, kicking and screaming, against their wills” (96). Justin Barnard (Henry Institute) agrees. Scripture references to undying worms and unquenchable flames cannot be interpreted literally as divinely imposed punishments. Whatever suffering is experienced is self-imposed. It is likely “an agonizing and conscious awareness of loss, ... a deep, eternal regret nags at the person who becomes a lover of self” (69). The suffering cannot be divinely imposed or it would destroy the argument concerning theodicy.

Bradley Sickler (Northwestern College) calls this view “infernal voluntarism,” and his chapter is devoted to its defense. “Currently, a popular rival to the traditional view of hell is Universalism” (163-164). But both Universalism and the traditional view have a common weakness. “Each of them

presumes that no one would choose to go to hell and everyone would choose to go to heaven. The assumption is this: people in hell are there against their will” (164). Sickler argues that people are in hell because they jump into it. He uses C. S. Lewis’ *The Great Divorce* and Augustine’s *Confessions* to expand on the idea. “God will honor our choice, whether it is to follow him or to persist in rejecting him. ... — this is what Lewis calls ‘the courtesy of Deep Heaven’” (178). This view retains a punitive element.

What may happen to the person after his self-chosen descent into hell? Two answers are given: the natural consequence model and the escapist model. “Natural consequence motivations” include the “deprivation argument” and the “corruption argument.” Some argue that evil is nothing, and an evil person may keep getting more and more wicked and less and less human until he ceases to exist as a human being. The “corruption argument” is similar. The person made in the image of God corrupts the image by his unrighteousness until he ceases to exist as a human being. N.T. Wright favors a version of this argument. So does Justin Barnard in this volume. “ ... if the denizens of hell are all (and perhaps only) wanton [that is, subhuman], then strictly speaking there are no persons in hell)” (74).

Brown and Walls object that

we lack sufficient reason for thinking that being evil, i.e., failing to live up to one’s substantial form/suffering privations, naturally leads to non-existence, the complete eradication of one’s substantial form, as opposed to a (perhaps ever-increasing) loss in the extent to which one actualizes it. (49)

A side effect is also problematic for this view — the people who are the most wicked are the first relieved from the discomforts of hell.

“Escapism” is sometimes suggested as a further means to get God off the hook, so to speak. A person in hell may have an opportunity to repent and escape to heaven. Stephen Davis maintains that “it would be unjust on the part of God to condemn

people to hell because, for reasons beyond their control, they never had faith in Christ. So perhaps there are ways — unknown to us — by which those who die in infancy, or who are mentally impaired, or who live and die in ignorance of Christ can be saved through Christ” (97).

The chapter by Andrei Buckareff (Marist C.) and Allen Plug (Malone U.) is devoted to the defense of escapism. Hell is not for punishment. It is a gift from God to those who do not want to be in his presence. “... the denizens of hell enjoy positive (quantitative) well-being,” although it is inferior to heaven (79).

In his chapter, “Hell and Punishment,” Stephen Kershner (SUNY Fredonia) maintains that God will not, probably cannot, send anyone to hell. Hell does not exist (115). But if it did, it would be a good place, although not the equal of heaven. If it were like traditional views of hell, God would be kind enough to put them out of their misery (121).

Kenneth Himma (Seattle Pacific U.) in “Birth as a Grave Misfortune: The Traditional Doctrine of Hell and Christian Salvific Exclusivism,” constructs an argument which, although not directly favoring conditionism, logically undercuts traditional views of hell. Here is his “New Life Principle (NLP)”:

It is morally impermissible to bring a new child into the world when there is a sufficiently high probability when doing so will create a substantial risk that the child will invariably suffer severe harm as a direct consequence of being born. (192)

So (1) if personal faith in Christ is required for salvation, and (2) if the traditional view of hell is true (everlasting conscious torment of all unbelievers), then (3) it is immoral for Christians to have children. Himma does not believe any of these propositions (surprisingly for a teacher at Seattle Pacific), but his wry approach to “the problem of hell” is interesting.

In the last chapter John Kronen (University of St. Thomas) and Eric Reitan (Oklahoma State U.) examine “Species of Hell”

(variations of the traditional view) to see if they have any “God-justifying” utility. Species of the DH [doctrine of hell] can be distinguished by (1) the type and degree of suffering and by (2) the agent responsible for it. The distinction between objective evil and experienced evil is significant for conditional immortality.

While someone might well hold that privation of the beatific vision necessarily generates objective evils, it is harder to maintain that it necessarily generates experiential evils. Conscious awareness does not seem to be a necessary concomitant of being denied the beatific vision. Hence, while alienation from God may give rise to objective evils that afflict the soul and even the body, it does not necessarily give rise to suffering. The kinds of conscious suffering that are generated by an awareness of being deprived of the beatific vision, or by an awareness of the various positive evils that result from being so deprived, are ancillary. They are not necessary concomitants of being denied the beatific vision, for the simple reason that those denied the beatific vision need not be conscious at all. (207).

To translate the point into plain English, punishment does not always require that the person being punished be conscious. If one concludes that DH has actual suffering beyond the basic deprivation of the beatific vision, the question is whether it is punitively inflicted by God or is self-inflicted. Either view presents severe problems. **“... any version of DH seems to commit one to the view that God is either defeated by sin or complicit in its perpetuation” (217). The first is “verging on blasphemy.” The second means that God punishes wickedness, especially disrespect for him, by guaranteeing its perpetuation eternally. “We cannot conceive of any coherent conception of justice under which this would make any sense at all” (218).**

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BOOK REVIEWS

Two books for pastors and church leaders, they are admired and recommended by Pastor Floyd McIntyre, North Springfield (Vermont) Advent Christian Church.

The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-shift that Changes Everything, by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne. Kingsford, N.S.W.: Matthias Media, 2009. 196 p. Reviewed by Carol Clark.

Analogy

The book is based on a natural analogy. The trellis is the church framework (management, finances, organization, governance, infrastructure, somewhere to meet, some Bibles, basic structure of leadership within the group). Often the actual work of growing the vine falls to a very few. Often a member's involvement with the church is just Sunday morning attendance. The pastor is overworked, underappreciated, and discouraged by lack of fruit. Trellis work tends to take over from vine work. Trellis work is more visible and structural; it is tangible.

The Great Commission — make disciples, reproduce — is what Jesus himself has done with us. Vine work is doing the same with others. To be a disciple is to be called to make new disciples. A church tends towards institutionalism and secularization. Focus shifts from making disciples to preserving traditional programs and structures. Our goal should be not to make church members but genuine disciples of Jesus. Goal — grow the vine, not the trellis.

How do you do this? Change from running programs to building people. One approach is to take programs and fit people to them. Another approach is to start with the people and see how to help them grow. Focus on putting people first and building ministries around them. Change from event-based evangelism to training and equipping, from using people to growing people. Instead of thinking, "Who can fill this gap?" think "What ministry could this member exercise?"

Develop team ministry

Churches can integrate formal or external training into their regular training and growing of people. Aim for long-term expansion. Concentrate on growth of the gospel, not so much growth of the local church. Emphasis is not on the growth of the congregation as a structure — in numbers, finances and success — but on the growth of the gospel, as it is spoken and re-spoken under the power of the Spirit.

It is time to say goodbye to our small and self-oriented ambitions and abandon ourselves to the cause of Christ and his gospel. The growth God is looking for is in people who mature and bear fruit, grafted into Christ, enjoying mutually edifying fellowship. People-growth only happens through power of God's Spirit as He applies His word to people's hearts.

We plant and water, He gives the growth. A Christian brings a truth from God's word to someone else, praying that God would make that word bear fruit through the inward working of his Spirit. That's vine work — everything else is trellis.

Who does the vine work?

The call to discipleship is the same for all — no two sorts of disciples; to be a disciple is to be a disciple-maker. Different parts of the body fulfill their proper functions (Hebrews 3:12-13; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians. 1-16). We are urged to build (edify) in different ways, but all should be builders.

Christians should be partners, not spectators. Training partners has much more to do with Christian thinking and living than about specific skills or competencies. Paul talks about imparting doctrine and life (1 Timothy 4:7). Sound doctrine is vital. The teacher passes on, not a skill, but accurate biblical teaching. It is a lifelong process. The believer needs to know what to reject and what to live by. The result is a godly life.

Relationship and imitation: Training like parenthood

Through personal relationship, prayer, teaching, modeling, and instruction, people can grow in conviction, character and competence. Sunday sermons are necessary but not sufficient. The pastor plays various roles — clergyman, shepherd, CEO and trainer. He multiplies gospel growth through training co-workers. Churches do not make disciples — disciples make disciples.

* * * * *

The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church, by Timothy Z. Witmer. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2010. 268 p. Reviewed by F. Barton.

The simple thesis of this book is, “the fundamental responsibility of church leaders is to shepherd God’s flock.” ... shepherding is not merely the responsibility of those called to be pastors but also of those who are called to be elders or its equivalent in our churches. In fact you will see that “shepherding” is at the very heart of the biblical picture of leadership. (2)

Are the elders or leadership team a “board of directors” or a team of shepherds caring for the flock? (3)

Witmer traces the image of the shepherd throughout the Old and New Testaments. Conclusion: Proper leadership always involves shepherds — and is always plural. When an elder devotes full time to shepherding, s/he may appropriately be paid. Next Witmer takes a quick tour through church history with special attention to the Reformation and to John Calvin. Presbyterian ecclesiology is extolled.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to “The Shepherd’s Biblical Right to Lead: A Few Words about Authority.” Witmer agrees with David Wells that in an individualistic age when “nothing is true and everything is permissible,” evangelical leaders have become timid and cowardly. God gives the shepherds (elders) authority over the sheep; the sheep should obey. The shepherding movement and the emerging church movement represent the extremes of authoritarianism and lack of authority respectively (94-98; I think Witmer is attributing to Scott McKnight views which he is simply describing.)

Knowing

Shepherd-leaders carry out these functions: knowing, feeding, leading and protecting (103). “New Testament evidence clearly indicates that there are particular sheep for which particular shepherds are responsible.” (109). An aspect of “macro-knowing” is regular review of the membership list in order to determine who are the sheep for whom the shepherds are responsible. I suspect that most Advent Christian churches, like the one to which I belong, have a list at least double the actual number of sheep in the congregation.

Feeding

Macro-leading: 1. Feed Scripture to the sheep. 2. Use expository preaching. 3. Focus on fathers. 4. Contextualize.

Micro-leading: 1. Display godly character. 2. Lead by example. 3. Shepherd the home flock first.

Protecting

Macro-protecting: 1. Public warnings against the wolves. 2. Know the corrupt culture.

Micro-protection: 1. Pursue stray sheep. 2. Build fences. 3. Monitor church attendance.

Chapter 9 has “Seven Essential Elements of an Effective Shepherding Ministry.” They are: biblical, systematic, comprehensive, relational, the four shepherding functions (see above), accountability and prayer. “Implications of Having a Shepherding Ministry” (chapter 10) include the qualifications and training of new shepherds, evaluating existing ones, orienting new members, eliminating term limits, church discipline, shepherding the shepherds. The final chapter lists “ten steps for elders to implement a shepherding ministry” and “four steps to prepare the congregation.”

The Shepherd Leader is not especially profound. One reads it and says, “Of course.” But it is a helpful compilation on a subject our churches think about too little. Right now our local Advent Christian church is giving long overdue attention to the membership list. Witmer rightly reminds us that we ought not cross out names too lightly. Long delayed contact might reclaim a lost sheep (197-219). And his suggestion that elders be appointed to terms of unspecified length (life terms?) is worth consideration (229).

(On membership transfers, Witmer (179-181) cites *Stealing Sheep* by Advent Christian pastor, William Chadwick [Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001].)

“Pug” Henry, the central figure in *The Winds of War*, is standing on a ridge looking down on Pearl Harbor at dawn the morning after the Japanese attack. What a mess!

The familiar religious awe came over him, the sense of a Presence above this pitiful little earth. He could almost picture God the Father looking down with sad wonder at this mischief. In a world so rich and lovely, could his children find nothing better to do than to dig iron from the ground and work it into vast grotesque engines for blowing each other up? Yet this madness was the way of the world. He had given all his working years to it. Now he was about to risk his very life at it. Why?

Because the others did it, he thought. Because Abel’s next-door neighbor was Cain. Because with all its rotten spots, the United States of America was not only his homeland but the hope of the world. Because if America’s enemies dug up iron and made deadly engines of it, America had to do the same, and do it better, or die. Maybe the vicious circle would end with the first real world war. Maybe it would end with Christ’s second coming. Maybe it would never end. (Herman Wouk, *The Winds of War* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1971], 887.)

