

- **Evangelicalism at the Outset of the 21st Century: A Review Essay**
- *Le futur du mouvement évangélique: un essai en quatre recensions*
- *Die Zukunft des Evangelikalismus: Ein Rezensionsartikel*
- **Craig Bartholomew, Cheltenham, England**

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article fait la recension de quatre livres sur le mouvement évangélique: Oliver Barclay, Le mouvement évangélique en Grande-Bretagne, 1997, Alister McGrath, Connaître et servir Dieu: Biographie de James Packer (1997), John Wenham, Face à l'enfer, une autobiographie de 1913 à 1996 (1998), David Smith, Transformant le monde: L'impact social du mouvement évangélique britannique (1998). Barclay retrace la résurgence extraordinaire du mouvement évangélique britannique au XX^e siècle, en analyse les raisons, et exprime ses préoccupations quant à la santé du mouvement à la fin du siècle. McGrath raconte la vie de James Packer et relève en particulier combien Packer a insisté pour que le mouvement évangélique soit fondée sur la théologie. Wenham raconte l'histoire d'une vie

passée davantage aux études bibliques qu'à la théologie, mais dit sa lutte avec la doctrine de l'enfer et sa préférence pour la thèse de l'annihilation conditionnelle. Smith pose la question de savoir si le mouvement évangélique transforme ou non le monde.

L'auteur trouve ces livres utiles pour une évaluation du mouvement évangélique au début d'un nouveau siècle. Il considère à leur lumière que le mouvement nécessiterait une analyse plus approfondie et plus rigoureuse. L'orthodoxie évangélique est importante dans notre contexte post-moderne et il trouve la position réformée évangélique de Packer et Wenham précieuses à cet égard. Enfin, il aborde la question d'une pensée chrétienne, ou d'une vision du monde chrétienne, et affirme qu'il serait profitable pour les évangéliques de réévaluer l'héritage Kuyperien.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Rezensionsartikel geht auf vier kürzlich erschienene Bücher zum Thema Evangelikalismus ein, d.h. auf Oliver Barclay, Evangelicalism in Britain 1935–1995 (Leicester: IVP, 1997), 159 S., Alister McGrath, To Know and Serve God. A Biography of James Packer (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997), 350 S., John Wenham, Facing Hell. An Autobiography 1913–1996 (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 279 S. und David Smith, Transforming the World. The Social Impact of British Evangelicalism

(Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 146 S. Barclay geht dem erstaunlichen Wiederaufleben des britischen Evangelikalismus im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert nach und zeigt die dafür verantwortlichen Gründe auf. Er äußert aber zugleich Bedenken zum Gesundheitszustand der Bewegung gegen Ende des Jahrhunderts. McGrath erzählt die Geschichte von James Packer und hebt vor allem Packers ausdrückliche Betonung hervor, dass jegliche Evangelisation theologisch fundiert werden muss. Wenham erzählt seine eigene Geschichte, bei der mehr die

Bibelwissenschaft im Vordergrund steht und weniger die systematische Theologie. Teil dieser Geschichte ist jedoch seine Auseinandersetzung mit der Lehre von der Hölle, wobei Wenham für ein Verständnis der Hölle als einer konditionalen Vernichtung eingetreten ist. Smith schließlich fragt nach, ob der Evangelikalismus eine weltverändernde Rolle einnimmt.

Der Autor betrachtet die Bücher als hilfreich für die Bewertung des Evangelikalismus zu Beginn eines neuen Jahrhunderts. Es ist jedoch

darauf hinzuweisen, dass die Bewegung einer gründlicheren Untersuchung bedarf. Die evangelikale Orthodoxie nimmt in unserem postmodernen Kontext eine wichtige Rolle ein, und der reformierte Evangelikalismus Packers und Wenhams ist dabei ein hilfreicher Ausgangspunkt. Abschließend wird die Frage einer christlichen Weltanschauung aufgeworfen, wobei betont wird, dass eine neuerliche Prüfung des Erbes von Abraham Kuyper für Evangelikale gerade zur jetzigen Zeit von Nutzen wäre.

I. Introduction

At the outset of the twentieth century the continued existence of Evangelicalism seemed uncertain. At the start of the twenty-first century the scenario is very different. Evangelicalism made phenomenal strides in the twentieth century and its influence is not in doubt at the start of the second millennium. However, despite the phenomenal growth of Evangelicalism, all is not well. Evangelicalism is deeply fragmented and it is hard to see signs of a healthy consensus.

Evangelicals have, for example, reacted to postmodernism in a variety of ways ranging from Wells' and Carson's Reformed critiques,¹ to Walsh and Middleton's *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be*,² to 'post-Evangelicalism', to the embrace of the experiential represented by the Toronto blessing, and so on. At the turn of the century Evangelicalism is truly a 'very contested' tradition.³ Consequently, if Evangelicalism is to contribute to and influence the twenty-first century as it could and should, then assessment of where we have come from and just what constitutes Evangelicalism is urgently required. In this article I review four recent books about (mainly) UK Evangelicalism which are an important contribution to such an assessment. Although these books deal mainly with British Evangelicalism—the biography of Packer, who has significant influence in

American Evangelicalism, is the exception—it should be remembered that UK Evangelicalism has wielded international influence this century. The books are:

- Oliver Barclay *Evangelicalism in Britain 1935–1995. A Personal Sketch* (Leicester: IVP) 1997, 159 pp.
- Alister McGrath *To Know and Serve God. A Biography of James Packer* (London: Hodder and Stoughton) 1997, 350 pp.
- John Wenham *Facing Hell. An Autobiography 1913–1996* (Carlisle: Paternoster) 1998, 279 pp.
- David Smith *Transforming the World. The Social Impact of British Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster) 1998, 146 pp.

Together these books provide a fascinating insight into the growth and struggles of Evangelicalism this century. Barclay, Packer and Wenham have all shaped British Evangelicalism in powerful ways since its resurgence after World War II. Barclay writes about the trends in Evangelicalism in the UK this century, whereas McGrath tells the story of a key player in the resurgence of UK and North American Evangelicalism, namely James Packer, who now teaches at Regent College, Vancouver. John Wenham, now deceased, tells his own story. David Smith, presently of the Whitefield Institute, Oxford, asks the important question—is Evangelicalism world transformative or not?

II. Barclay—UK Evangelicalism's Recovery in the 20th Century

Barclay starts off by asking, 'Who is an Evangelical?' He settles for Bebbington's four characteristics and adds another. Bebbington discerns four distinctives of Evangelicalism:⁴

- *conversionism*: people need to come in to a personal relationship with Christ.
- *activism*: faith must be lived especially in terms of telling others about Christ.
- *biblicism*: the final authority in thought and life is the Bible.
- *crucicentrism*: the cross is all important; we are saved by Christ's death as a substitute for sinful humankind.
- to these four Barclay adds: *Christ-centred*—all the above depend on a personal relationship with Christ.

Barclay points out that in the 1930's Evangelicalism was in the doldrums for four reasons:⁵

- it was not taking theological education seriously enough
- it was anti-intellectual. Barclay notes that 'What was a serious weakness was their failure at this stage to grapple with the modern mind in a biblical way'.⁶
- it had legalistic tendencies (don't dance, don't smoke, don't drink!)
- and it was anti-cultural (wary of art, politics, economics, etc.)

Evangelicals were pious and knew their Bibles well but these weaknesses were debilitating.

Barclay goes on to tell the astonishing story of British Evangelicalism's resurgence since World War II as it has tackled these weaknesses and grown in all sorts of exciting ways. Key people were Douglas Johnson, Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Stott. The student and publishing work of Inter Varsity Fellowship (IVF) played an important role in this resurgence, doing effective Christian work on university campuses and getting literature published to demonstrate the academic credibility of the gospel. It is because of the work of publishers like IVP that there is

so much good Christian material available today, and we easily forget the vacuum in this area for most of this century.

Take biblical studies for example. A range of commentaries and good Evangelical books are now available, but at the end of World War II virtually none of this was in existence. IVF leaders launched an initiative to set up a research centre in biblical studies, and this became the influential Tyndale House in Cambridge and has led to a renaissance of Evangelical biblical study. Barclay recognises the need for Christians to develop a Christian mind and he relates how the ministries of Francis Schaeffer and Hans Rookmaker played an important role in helping Christians to think and act Christianly in relation to politics, economics, philosophy, art etc. John Stott and the Lausanne Conference on evangelism in 1974 played a vital role in helping Christians to rediscover socio-political involvement as a constituent part of the mission of the church.

In all these ways one can see how many of the weaknesses of Evangelicalism in the 1930s have been addressed, and consequently how Evangelicalism has experienced a phenomenal resurgence in the UK and the West this century. Barclay relates this resurgence to four areas in particular:

1. A love of biblical doctrine reflected in the commitment to expository preaching.
2. A commitment to finding the whole biblical outlook—a 'vision of the great biblical scheme from creation to eternity captured the evangelical community in a new way, and gave depth to both preaching and evangelism'⁷—that emerges from a study of the Bible.
3. A new awareness of the need to love God with all our minds and to develop a Christian mind in relation to all areas of life: 'The old defensiveness was lost. They believed that there are Christian approaches to be worked out in every sphere, from academic theology to art, science, education and medicine, and in society. Evangelism and apologetics were greatly improved. Many were, by

God's special blessing, converted and then well taught'.⁸

4. The recovery of biblical themes like creation and providence gave Christians perspectives for dealing with the contemporary world of culture and society. 'A belief that "everything God created is good" (1 Tim 4:4) enabled them to value the material world and to have an approach to the environment and to society. They recovered a responsibility to alter society for the better, which had been such a marked feature of the evangelicals of the early nineteenth century. In brief they arrived nearer to a biblically balanced position'.⁹

These are remarkable achievements! However, at the end of the twentieth century Barclay feels that all is not well in Evangelical circles. Evangelicalism has become more respectable, but Barclay fears that some Evangelicalism is going soft on the Bible and fundamental doctrine and that Biblical illiteracy is rampant in our culture. Barclay calls Evangelicals to be clear on and committed to the core Christian doctrines and to make these the basis of a Christian mind.

III. Packer and Wenham: Key Players in the Evangelical Resurgence

The Packer-Wenham books tell the stories of two key players in the Evangelical resurgence since World War II. Both men are deeply committed Evangelicals and their passion for God is wonderfully evident in a myriad of ways. Biography of this sort is a kind of theology with legs and it is thoroughly enjoyable to read. It also gives one an idea of the hard and visionary work of men like Packer and Wenham, and a sense of just how indebted we are to those who have gone before us. Wenham's book is an autobiography and this gives it a stronger, more personal sense than the more descriptive biography of Packer.

McGrath rightly describes Packer as a great 'theologizer' rather than a great

theologian.¹⁰ In an accessible way Packer has communicated theologically what he felt Evangelicalism needed to hear. As McGrath makes clear, Packer's major contribution is his insistence that Evangelicalism be *theologically* grounded and that to do so it needs to be at home in the Christian tradition. Packer has been a champion of (Reformed) Evangelicalism and yet he has shown a refreshing openness to working with Christians in other traditions when it is important to do so. Most recently this was evident in Packer's participation in and endorsement of *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (1994).

Like Packer, Wenham contributed massively to theological education and institution building, but his academic work has tended to be more biblically than theologically focused. John Wenham is probably most well known for his *Elements of New Testament Greek*! The personal, honest nature of Wenham's autobiography is delightful and the title of his book—*Facing Hell*—relates to his struggle to articulate a biblical view of final judgement. Somewhat controversially Wenham became a proponent of real judgement for non-Christians leading to annihilation rather than eternal hell. This continues to be a matter of considerable discussion in Evangelical circles, and one at least appreciates Wenham's concern to wrestle biblically with this and other issues.¹¹ Packer took the more traditional view of eternal hell in the Evangelical debate in this regard.¹²

IV. Evangelicalism and Public Theology

Although Packer has taught at Regent for many years, an institution set up to relate Christianity to the whole of life, McGrath has surprisingly little to say about any concern in Packer's theology for a *public* theology, for how theology relates to the whole of life. Wenham tells how he was fired up for a time by the idea of a Christian worldview through his reading of Kuyper's *Calvinism*.¹³ However, neither book manifests a strong concern for a

comprehensive Christian worldview that relates to the whole of life. Bearing in mind the battles that this generation of Evangelicals has had to fight that is somewhat understandable, and one ought to note that other Evangelicals of this generation like John Stott¹⁴ have devoted considerable energy to Christ and culture type issues. However, emerging from the Packer-Wenham books one is still left wondering just how world transformative Evangelicalism really is.

And that is the issue central to Smith's *Transforming the World*. Smith's book is readable and vitally important in the questions it deals with. Following Wolterstorff's definition of Calvinism as world-formative Christianity,¹⁵ Smith describes Christianity with a biblical worldview as *world-transformative*, i.e. as concerned to bring a Christian perspective to bear on and thus reform/transform all of life. Smith argues that originally, i.e. in its roots in the eighteenth century revivals, Evangelicalism was world-transformative: 'I want to argue that the Evangelical movement which emerged from the "Great Awakening" in the eighteenth century constitutes a remarkable example of religion as a powerful agent for political and social change; it was *world-transformative*'.¹⁶ In this respect Smith notes Evangelicalism's roots in the theology of the Reformers and in thinkers like Jonathan Edwards.

After Evangelicalism's promising start, Smith tracks the developing divisions in Evangelicalism so that by the mid-nineteenth century Evangelicalism was no longer a unified movement, and thus less equipped to face the doubt of the growing Enlightenment forces. Smith is particularly critical of the failure of establishment Evangelicals like the Clapham sect to critique establishment and capitalist culture. An exception to this, for Smith, is Spurgeon, who is highly recommended for his popular communication and identification with the political aspirations of ordinary people. General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army is also warmly commended for his social concern.

But, generally Evangelicals were not

good at integrating evangelism and social concern in their understanding of the mission of the church and, as Smith rightly says, 'This inability to unite the personal and social aspects of religion, to see mission as embracing both the declaration of the world of God and the practice of deeds which demonstrate the love and justice of God, remained one of Evangelicalism's consistent, and most damaging, failures'.¹⁷

Christian thinkers such as Orr and Denney made valiant attempts to overcome the growing anti-intellectualism in Evangelicalism, but these attempts were not taken sufficiently seriously. Smith notes that

'as these Scottish theologians were urging the necessity of addressing modern people in intelligible terms, the Cambridge University Christian Union was relying upon an American revivalist whose evangelism was characterized by an emotional sentimentality. As a soloist sang a song with the words, "Tell Mother I'll be There", Charles Alexander asked undergraduates to stand if they wished to meet their mothers in heaven . . . The Christian Union had clearly abandoned any attempt to speak the word of God meaningfully in a university permeated by secular thought and a mission which resorted to such frankly subjectivistic techniques was bound to confirm the intelligentsia in their belief that religious faith was irrational and impossible'.¹⁸

Evangelicalism was not up to the challenge of modern scholarship and scepticism, and hence its low ebb for most of the first half of the twentieth century.

Modernity (post-Enlightenment culture) has been deeply anti-Christian and a key theme in Smith's work is Evangelicalism's reaction to modernity. Modernity allows freedom of religion but privatises it, and Smith is keen to see how Evangelicalism responds to this pressure. He discerns in Lausanne (1974) and John Stott's works a welcome recovery of world-transformative Christianity which refuses to privatise faith and insists on relating the Lordship of Christ to all of

life. However he notes the internal struggles in twentieth century Evangelicalism in this respect, referring inter alia to the ministry of Lloyd-Jones:

‘throughout the post-war period Lloyd-Jones sought to lead Evangelicals in the direction of a thorough-going anti-modernism and he opposed both Stott’s more open attitude toward contemporary thought and the efforts of people like Francis Schaeffer to communicate the Gospel in a form which was relevant to modern people. . . . Clearly this represents an emphatic “Christ-against-modern-culture” position. To Lloyd-Jones and his followers the Lausanne Congress looked like the twilight which precedes the arrival of darkness’.¹⁹

Smith sees the present ‘postmodern’ hour as a time of great opportunity for Evangelicalism if it can recover its world-transformative identity.

‘If Evangelicalism begins to take seriously the missionary task which confronts it within the western world, it will itself be converted in the process. . . . In place of comfortable and undemanding religion genuine conversion will involve the confession of Jesus as LORD and a determination to live in the light of the values of the kingdom of God revealed in his life, death and resurrection’.²⁰

V. Where to from Here?

1. The sort of historical perspective on twentieth century Evangelicalism that these books provide is very helpful. They remind us of the distance that UK Evangelicalism has come this century and alert us to the need to handle this legacy entrusted to us with care.

Part of such a reception of this legacy must, however, involve clarity about just what Evangelicalism is. It remains a moot point whether the Bebbington/Barclay sort of definition of Evangelicalism is adequate. There is a huge diversity in contemporary Evangelicalism and a short set of theological propositions or emphases fails to get at this diversity of traditions. Packer and Wenham are representatives

of Evangelicalism as Reformed Protestantism, but this is only one of the dominant traditions in Evangelicalism.

A depth probing of these traditions is crucial if constructive ways forward are to be found, and not least in answering David Smith’s question! Packer’s Reformed Evangelicalism, for example, emerges out of the Puritan and Princeton type Reformed heritage of Warfield and Hodge. This tradition has a different relationship to modernity to the Dutch Reformed tradition of Bavinck and Kuyper. In his useful book in which he too asserts the need for a far more nuanced analysis of contemporary Evangelicalism, Knight rightly notes that ‘The Dutch theology, with its recognition of multiple coherent worldviews and a more flexible approach to scripture was in many ways positioned far better than any of the nineteenth century American evangelical traditions to engage modernity’.²¹

This kind of analysis has serious implications for how Evangelicalism is/is not handling the challenge of postmodernism. It could be argued that, failure to be sufficiently critical of modernity has made Evangelicalism vulnerable to the powerful winds of postmodernism, with Evangelicals either polarizing towards rational propositionalism or towards irrationalistic subjectivism. If therefore, Evangelicalism is to find a mature path ahead, more sophisticated analyses of Evangelicalism and the traditions it contains must be high on the agenda.²² At the end of the twentieth century Evangelicalism has, in my opinion, shown a worrying tendency to be shaped by culture rather than shaping culture. We will pursue this below, but suffice it here to note that depth analysis must explore the way in which different traditions in Evangelicalism think about the Christ-culture relationship.

2. Packer’s emphasis on Evangelicalism being *theologically* grounded is, I think, very important. It is encouraging to see the greater cultural awareness of Evangelicalism in the UK at the end of the twentieth century, but one does see signs of a blurring of the biblical distinctives and sometimes an uncritical openness to

cultural trends. The Reformed Evangelicalism that Packer represents with its high view of the early catholic creeds and the Reformed confessions has an important contribution to make here against the flux and individual subjectivism of postmodernism. Barclay, likewise, is helpful in his insistence that a Christian mind/worldview must be *Christian*. As Evangelicals recover a mind, it is crucial that it is an integrally Christian one!

A vital and relevant Evangelicalism therefore requires:

- a solid stand on the authority of the Bible as God's infallible Word. Postmodernism makes any notion of an authoritative *text* very difficult, because of the prevalent view that all interpretation is relative. However, Scripture as God's authoritative Word for all of life, is foundational to any Evangelical position. In the final chapter of his autobiography Wenham expresses three wishes for Evangelicalism. The second is that Evangelicals 'will go back to the centre to check their foundations. There is always a danger among us of succumbing to anti-intellectualism in one form or another, or of drifting into liberalism. Our foundation is faith in Christ witnessed to inwardly by the Holy Spirit and outwardly by Holy Scripture. The one unchanging element in this witness of God is the Christ made known to us in the canonical gospels'.²³ This is surely right, and in today's context Evangelicals need to resist the view that makes readers all powerful and texts, especially Scripture, mere putty in readers' hands. It is here that Christian work on hermeneutics is vital,²⁴ and Evangelicals like Thiselton and Vanhoozer²⁵ have made exemplary contributions.
- a Christian mind/worldview shaped foundationally by the Bible. Biblical and theological literacy are fundamental to the development of a Christian worldview. It is imperative that Christian cultural action is in the illuminating grip of Scripture, rather than Scripture being judged by the current

Zeitgeist. Barclay rightly notes that 'Having a Christian mind is not an optional extra for the learned; it is to have our outlook transformed by the biblical revelation, and much of that is doctrine.

. . . Anti-intellectualism and an anti-doctrinal stance are emphatically not what the Bible requires of us, and their dangers are evident today, as they have been in past history when people rely on what they feel is right'.²⁶

- a commitment to *mission* embracing evangelism and the living out a Christian perspective in all areas of life. Missiology is one of the most exciting theological disciplines nowadays, and Smith is alert to the need for Evangelicalism to articulate and practice a biblical theology of mission which understands the whole church to be taking the whole gospel to the whole world.

3. It is important that the *function of Scripture* and the *nature of the church's mission* are carefully and biblically articulated. Throughout this century, as David Smith notes, Evangelicals have manifested a tendency to limit Scripture and mission to institutional church life, with little to do or say to life in its totality.²⁷ Barclay quite rightly recognises that a Christian mind is fundamentally important for Evangelicalism, and that this needs to be made flesh in all areas of life. And David Smith argues rightly that there is great hope for Evangelicalism if it can practice mission energized by a view of Christ as Lord over all.

It is interesting and encouraging to note how the concern to relate Christianity to the whole of life has been foregrounded recently under different auspices. Evangelicals have spoken of a Christian mind, Kuyperians have articulated the need for a Christian worldview, some today call for a public theology, and in missiology one finds the call for a holistic encounter of the West with the gospel.²⁸ The importance of the development of a Christian mind/ a public theology/ a holistic missiology, should not be underestimated. Culture is like the air we breathe, and it generally seems to us as

natural and right as the water in which a fish swims. But culture, as the ways in which humans shape politics, economics, leisure, education, etc., is far from neutral. Ideas have legs, and it is ideas, rooted in worldviews, that shape cultures. Consequently, if Christians do not develop critical, Christian understandings of their cultures, they will be destined to succumb to the idolatries of their cultures. The best antidote to such idolatry is the development of a Christian mind or worldview, a public theology. The capacity of Evangelicals to succumb to postmodernism suggests that we have not made as much progress in this area as we might have. There are issues here that need closer attention.

In recent decades a considerable amount of literature has been published on Christianity and worldviews. Within Evangelical circles Francis Schaeffer probably did more than anyone else to waken Evangelicals to their faith as a worldview.²⁹ The hard theoretical work of thinking through the contours of a Christian worldview has, however, been done particularly in neo-Calvinist circles, in the tradition of the Dutch Calvinism of Bavinck and Kuyper.³⁰ Surprisingly, neither Kuyper, nor Bavinck are mentioned in Smith's *Transforming the World*. Such an omission confirms the comment of a prominent Canadian New Testament scholar that the Kuyperian tradition is one of the best kept and most influential secrets around. It is highly influential but generally not well known. In developing a Christian mind and shaping up a holistic missiology, I believe that the Kuyperian tradition has much to offer Evangelicals. Thus, I will conclude this review with some comments on the Kuyperian worldview and its implications for Evangelicalism.

The best articulation of the neo-Calvinist worldview is that by Wolters in *Creation Regained*. Wolters³¹ defines a worldview as 'the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things'. 'Things' is deliberately vague so as to include all that we might hold beliefs about, such as suffering, gender, family

life, God etc. 'Beliefs' indicates that a worldview involves claims to know about the world, claims which are deep convictions (*basic*, i.e. ultimate convictions) and which one would try and defend with arguments if pushed on these issues. 'Framework' alerts us to the unifying and comprehensive nature of a worldview.

One way of seeing the distinctive element of the neo-Calvinist articulation of the Christian worldview is to use the basic definition of the Christian faith given by Herman Bavinck: 'God the Father has reconciled His created but fallen world through the death of His Son, and renews it into a Kingdom of God by His Spirit'. The neo-Calvinist worldview takes all the key terms in this ecumenical, trinitarian confession in a universal, all-encompassing sense. The terms 'reconciled', 'created', 'fallen', 'world', 'renews', and 'Kingdom of God' are held to be cosmic in scope. In principle, nothing apart from God himself falls outside the range of these foundational realities of biblical religion. All other Christian worldviews, by contrast, restrict the scope of each of these terms in one way or another.

Much of this is no longer controversial in thinking Evangelical circles. The Kuyperian tradition has had a profound influence on twentieth century Evangelicalism, and George Marsden even speaks of 'the triumph—or nearly so—of what may be loosely called Kuyperian presuppositionalism in the evangelical community'.³² Most recently, the highly influential American Evangelical, Chuck Colson, in the book he describes as his legacy, *How Now Shall We Live*,³³ acknowledges openly his debt to Abraham Kuyper, in his articulation of biblical Christianity as worldview-ish to the core.

But the reception of the Kuyperian tradition, especially in its more developed philosophical forms, has not been without its detractors. Heirs of Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd and Dirk Vollenhoven, developed the Kuyperian tradition in the area of philosophy. Barclay writes critically of the Christian philosophy of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven that it 'seemed to some, myself included, to put philosophy above

theology and thereby to avoid the necessity of going to the Bible first of all—and last of all'.³⁴ Some contemporary developments in Dooyeweerdian circles go a long way to confirm Barclay's fears, and I have written critically of these elsewhere.³⁵ However, although one shares Barclay's concern, it could equally well be argued that Evangelicalism's strong focus on theology without taking *philosophy* sufficiently seriously has made it deeply vulnerable to all sorts of alien philosophical influences as it recovered culture-wide interests.

In my opinion the attempt by Dooyeweerd to address critically the autonomy of philosophy is absolutely right.³⁶ This is a direction that too few have pursued.³⁷ However, whether Dooyeweerd makes the right moves in his repositioning of theology from queen of the sciences to one of the special sciences, and in his understanding of how Scripture informs and shapes a Christian philosophy via the law idea, are issues that cry out for careful attention and engagement by Evangelicals. High on any contemporary Evangelical agenda should, I suggest, be re-examination of the theology-philosophy relationship. Such an exploration could help Evangelicalism to become integrally Scriptural, and it could help reform the Kuyperian tradition along Scriptural lines.

In response to Barclay's criticism of Dooyeweerdian philosophy, it is also important to distinguish the work of Kuyper and Bavinck from the philosophical development of this tradition by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. The philosophy of Dooyeweerd develops out of Kuyper's worldview, but a worldview is a different thing to a developed philosophy. And, however Evangelicals evaluate Dooyeweerd's philosophy, it is crucial that we come to grips with the challenges of a Kuyperian worldview for the following reasons:

1. Kuyper understood like few others the challenge which the modern worldview presented to Christianity, and Kuyper rose to that challenge. Barclay notes, as we saw above, that a serious

weakness of pre-World War II Evangelicalism was its failure to grapple with the modern mind biblically. Books like Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* suggest that we still have a long way to go in this respect! However, as long as Evangelicals restrict Christian thinking to theology and biblical studies—vitaly important as these are—and fail to articulate the comprehensive range of Christian faith, we will not make real progress against modernity's privatisation of faith. One only has to peruse Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*³⁸ to see how the Kuyperian worldview challenges any restriction of the comprehensive range of Christian faith.

2. Packer and Wenham made important contributions to building theological seminaries. Institution building is a crucial exercise if Evangelicalism is to wield a long term influence. But, in the UK we have virtually no tradition of building Christian institutions outside of seminaries and churches. The USA, by comparison, has, for example, a number of excellent Christian higher education institutions like Calvin College and Gordon College.

Once again Kuyper was exemplary in this respect. One does not need to agree with his philosophy of society in all elements to respect his passion for an integrally Christian presence in all of life. This is essential if modernity's privatisation of religion is really to be challenged.

3. The development of a Christian worldview must be Scripturally rooted. In this respect the discipline of *biblical theology* is crucial. Barclay, as we saw above, notes how Evangelical recovery of a sense of the Bible as a whole—just what biblical theology gets at—played a key role in Evangelicalism's renaissance. And yet, there are still a paucity of courses in biblical theology available in the UK. Scholars like Dumbrell³⁹ have done great work in biblical theology in recent decades and this work needs to be 'shouted from the mountain tops!' and connected with the articulation of a Christian worldview.

At the same time, it is important to note that scholarship in the grip of such a

worldview can re-invigorate theology and biblical studies! The great example of this in recent times is Tom Wright's fascinating reworking of New Testament theology.⁴⁰ At the heart of Wright's work is a strong sense of the comprehensive range of the gospel. And in theology, post-liberals have noted the potential of the Kuyperian tradition. George Hunsinger has perceptively pointed out, that within Evangelicalism it is the tradition of Kuyper and Bavinck that embodies the most fruitful ground for dialogue with postliberalism. Hunsinger notes that Kuyper and Bavinck are less entangled in the encumbrances of modernity than many other prominent evangelical theologians.⁴¹

VI. Conclusion

At the start of a new century, there is much at stake in the state of Evangelicalism. These four books that we have looked at make an important contribution to an historical understanding of how we have arrived at where Evangelicalism is today, and also at where the work needs to be done if we are to move forward. We are where we are because giants like Lloyd-Jones and Packer and Wenham and Stott have gone before us. We owe it to them to stand on their shoulders as we craft an agenda that will take Evangelicalism forward to maturity and release its full potential.

Notes

- 1 See D. Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (IVP, Eerdmans: Leicester, Grand Rapids, 1994) and D. Carson, *The Gagging of God—Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996).
- 2 B. Walsh and R. Middleton, *Truth is Stranger Than it Used to Be. Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (London: SPCK, 1995).
- 3 W. J. Abraham, *The Coming Great Revival: Recovering the Full Evangelical Tradition* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984) 10.
- 4 D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s*

- to the 1980s (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). Barclay, *Evangelicalism* 10–12.
- 5 Barclay, *ibid.*, 15–45.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 136, 137.
- 10 McGrath, *Packer*, 280.
- 11 See Wenham, *Facing Hell*, 229–264.
- 12 See McGrath, *Packer*, 260–264.
- 13 Wenham, *Facing Hell*, 62.
- 14 See, e.g., Stott's *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Illinois: IVP, 1977), *The Contemporary Christian* (Illinois: IVP, 1992).
- 15 N. Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 11.
- 16 Smith, *Transforming*, 2.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 69.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 74.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 97.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 125.
- 21 H. H. Knight III, *A Future for Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997) 27.
- 22 See Knight, *ibid.*, 20ff, for some examples.
- 23 Wenham, *Facing Hell*, 267.
- 24 But see Barclay's cautious comments, *Evangelicalism*, 103, 104.
- 25 See most recently R. Lundin, C. Walhout and A. C. Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Carlisle: Eerdmans, Paternoster, 1999), and K. Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).
- 26 Barclay, *Evangelicalism*, 126.
- 27 As Smith rightly notes, this has been one of the negative legacies of Lloyd-Jones' otherwise remarkable ministry.
- 28 See, for example, H. Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (London: SPCK, 1963), M. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), P. S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview. Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Carlisle, Grand Rapids: Paternoster, Eerdmans, 1998), L. Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (London: SPCK, 1986). It is fascinating to see how these interests converge. See, for example, M. Goheen's 'Toward a Missiology of Western Culture' in *EJT* (1999) 8:2 155–168, and Goheen's comparison of Kuyperianism with Newbigin in M. Goheen, 'Mission and the Public Life of Western Culture: the Kuyperian Tradition', *The Gospel and Our Culture Network Newsletter*, (1999) 26 6–7.

- 29 See M. S. Hamilton, 'The Dissatisfaction of Francis Schaeffer', *Christianity Today* March 3, 1997 22–30, for a recent assessment of Schaeffer's legacy.
- 30 See, for example, P. S. Heslam, *Christian Worldview* and P. Marshall et al, eds. *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989). It is important to note that Kant first used the German expression *Weltanschauung*, from which the English 'worldview' is derived. The philosophical use of *Weltanschauung* peaked around the early 1900s, being used by Windelband, Rickert and Dilthey. Kuyper appropriated the term for Christian use. There are connotations of relativism in its original philosophical matrix, and these need to be guarded against, particularly in the context of postmodernism.
- 31 A. Wolters, *Creation Regained. Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Leicester: IVP, 1985) 2.
- 32 G. Marsden, 'The State of Evangelical Christian Scholarship'. *The Reformed Journal* 1987, 37: 12–16. 14.
- 33 1999, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Press).
- 34 Barclay, *Evangelicalism* 88.
- 35 See C. Bartholomew, 'Critical Issues in Recent Developments in Reformational Philosophy: A Perspective'. *Koers* 60(2) 1995:189–212.
- 36 For a short, useful introduction to Dooyeweerd's thought with a basic bibliography, see R. A. Russell, 'Dooyeweerd, Herman', in D. J. Atkinson and D. H. Field, eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: IVP, 1995) 317.
- 37 A rare, recent exception is J. Milbank's superb chapter, 'Knowledge: The Theological Critique of Philosophy in Hamann and Jacobi', in J. Milbank, C. Pickstock and G. Ward, eds. *Radical Orthodoxy* (London and NY: Routledge, 1999) 21–37.
- 38 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1934).
- 39 See in particular W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984).
- 40 See especially, N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).
- 41 G. Hunsinger, 'What Can Evangelicals and Postliberals Learn From Each Other? The Carl Henry—Hans Frei Exchange Reconsidered', in T. R. Phillips, & D. L. Okholm, eds. *The Nature of Confession* (Illinois: IVP, 1996) 134–150, 149.

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