

themelios

Rolfing Memorial Library

DEC 25 1985

September 1986

In this issue

Editorial: Miracles then and now 1

**Paul and the law: observations on
some recent debates** 5

John M. G. Barclay

**Process theology: a survey and
an appraisal** 15

Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins

Asking God 22

Paul Helm

Book reviews 25

An international journal for theological students
75p

Vol. 12 No. 1

themelios

Vol. 12 No. 1

An international journal for theological students, expounding and defending the historic Christian faith. It is published three times a year jointly by the British Theological Students Fellowship, a constituent part of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. It seeks to address itself to questions being faced by theological students in their studies and to help readers to think out a clear biblical faith.

Editors

General editor

David Wenham, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford OX2 6PW, England

Consulting editors

Jim Stamoolis (IFES Theological Students' Secretary), Paul Woodbridge (TSF Secretary)

Associate editors

John Gladwin, Martin Goldsmith, Donald Macleod, Martin Selman, John Webster, David Wright

International editors

Kwame Bediako (Ghana), Samuel Escobar (America), Hans Kvalbein (Norway),
Gerhard Maier (Germany), Masao Uenuma (Japan), Chris Wright (India)

Committee

David Wenham, Jim Stamoolis, Paul Woodbridge. IFES representatives: Karl Leung,
Marc Schachtler, Geoff Wood, Jacob Thomas. TSF representatives: Andrew Hodder-Williams,
Andrew Barker, Jared Hay.
Corresponding members: Fabrice Lengronne, Bill Mangrum.

Contributors

While contributors express their own views, it is expected that they are in agreement with the theological position of the TSF and IFES. Articles should be submitted to the general editor or (in case of North America) to Dr Jim Stamoolis, 154 Frothingham Ave., Jeanette, Pennsylvania 15644, USA

Reviews

Books for review should be sent to Mr A N S Lane, London Bible College, Green Lane, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2UW, or (North American books) to Dr Jim Stamoolis (address as above).

Orders

Great Britain & Ireland (also overseas subscribers to *Christian Arena*)

Themelios, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP

North America and Canada

TSF, 233 Langdon, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, USA

All other

IFES, 10 College Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1BE, England (subscriptions payable with order forms available from IFES)

Subscription rates

(including postage)

British Isles £3.20

Subscribers in the Republic of Ireland please pay in sterling. (Payments can be made to our National Giro Account Number 5038316, marked for *Themelios*.)

Elsewhere (surface mail, including bank charges) for orders through the appropriate address shown above

1 year £3.20

US \$9.00

2 years £6.40

US \$17.00

3 years £9.60

US \$25.00

(If air mail required, please add for each year's subscription £2.75/\$5.00.)

Back Numbers

Each issue of *Themelios* can only contain a few articles; but there is a wealth of useful material in back issues. Information about the contents and availability of back issues may be obtained from TSF, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP, England.

Editorial: Miracles then and now

Miracles and the supernatural are very much on the Christian agenda at the present time. There is the historical question of Jesus' miracles, including his exorcisms; there is the contemporary question of 'signs and wonders' in the church today; and bearing on the discussion of both these issues are questions about philosophy, psychology and medicine.

Some recent books

Recent literature on the subject includes Colin Brown's *That You May Believe: Miracles and Faith Then and Now* (Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1985), which presents in a helpful and quite popular form some of the ideas worked out in his earlier *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (1984), though his new book explores not only the biblical and philosophical issues but also questions such as 'Can we expect miracles today?'. Michael Harper's *The Healings of Jesus* (Hodder, 1986) is primarily a biblical study, but the author writes out of the conviction that the signs and wonders of Jesus' ministry 'are necessary today as much as then'. The same concern is reflected in John Wimber's and Kevin Springer's *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today* (Hodder, 1985); this book is more a tract advocating the sort of charismatic healing ministry for which John Wimber has become famous in the last ten years than an historical or exegetical study, but as well as striking stories of modern miracles it includes stimulating discussion of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom and about the way our world view can affect our expectations about, and experience of, God's work in the world.

Graham Twelftree's *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (Hodder, 1985) is a narrower study than the others mentioned, and combines critical-exegetical study of the New Testament account of Jesus' exorcisms with reflection on contemporary attitudes to exorcism. Twelftree also contributes to *Gospel Perspectives 6: The Miracles of Jesus* (ed. D. Wenham and C. Blomberg, JSOT Press, 1986). This collection of scholarly essays addresses the historical and philosophical issues rather than the issue of miracles today. Finally, mention may be made of one particularly valuable article and one particularly valuable book: the article on 'Principalities and Powers Opponents of the Church' by P. T. O'Brien (in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, ed. D. A. Carson, Paternoster, 1984, pp. 110-150) considers various interpretations of the New Testament teaching on principalities and powers, among other things questioning the simple identification of the 'powers' with political structures; the book *Signs and Wonders Today* by Donald Bridge (IVP, 1985) must be one of the most balanced discussions of the subject available.

What, if anything, comes out of this small sample of recent writing on the subject of miracles? One of the most obvious things to emerge is that there is a wide divergence of opinion

among Christian thinkers about the subject, both about its historical and its contemporary dimensions.

Historical questions

Historically, all of the authors mentioned are relatively conservative in their approach to the gospels. Graham Twelftree is the author who has most reservations about the historicity of parts of the gospel tradition, tending to accept the questionable scholarly opinion that 'redactional' material in the gospels is unhistorical; but even he has no doubt that exorcism was a significant part of Jesus' ministry, as the gospels suggest. Twelftree compares Jesus with other exorcists of the ancient world, and reminds us that Jesus and his followers were not the only miracle-workers at that time. The New Testament itself makes that clear (e.g. Mt. 12:27), though it also makes it clear that Jesus' miraculous authority was extraordinary and unprecedentedly great, hence the evangelists' interest in it.

Demythologization?

Given that the miracles of Jesus have a firm place in history, as argued particularly in *Gospel Perspectives 6*, many questions remain about the interpretation of the gospel traditions in question. Is it possible, for example, that what the evangelists describe as miraculous, we today would explain in other terms? This is the contention of those who advocate the demythologizing of the New Testament (and indeed of the Old Testament). It is argued that the supernatural features of the New Testament, including stories of miracles and demons, were part of the first-century way of thinking — part of their mental furniture — whereas we think in different, more scientific categories. Thus, for example, we might identify as mental illness what they called demon possession, and what they saw as miraculous healing we might explain as auto-suggestion or in some other psychological terms.

Twelftree cautions us against dismissing this approach too quickly. It is important to recognize that effective translation from one language and culture to another requires a sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic differences between biblical and modern times, and must involve not just the replacement of the words in one language with the equivalent words in another — this may sometimes be quite misleading — but the re-expressing of the original idea in terms which convey that idea in the new context and culture.

Is it then the case that the language of the supernatural in the New Testament is simply a first-century way of expressing something that we would explain differently? Twelftree believes that *some* of what the New Testament refers to as demonic we would explain in other terms; but he does not believe that *all* New Testament demonology is so explicable. Some of the accounts of Jesus' exorcisms cannot easily be translated into modern psychological terms (the same is even

more true of many of the miracle stories), and indeed (as Twelftree and others argue) there is a strong case for saying that in our world today there is such a thing as demon possession which is to be distinguished from normal mental illness and to which the gospel exorcisms correspond.

Those who indulge in wholesale demythologizing tend to work from the Western, secular presupposition which explains everything in terms of natural cause and effect and excludes the supernatural — a view that has a long history, but which is philosophically and experientially inadequate (on the philosophy behind it see Brown and a number of the articles in *Gospel Perspectives* 6). They also tend to assume that people in the first century were credulous about the supernatural and unable to distinguish between it and the natural. This is, however, to exaggerate the differences between biblical and modern times. There were, of course, credulous people then; but so there are in our world today. There were also many highly sophisticated thinkers, some of them quite sceptical about the supernatural (e.g. the Jewish Sadducees and various of the Greek philosophical schools). It is false to assume that supernatural explanations of things were inevitable or easily accepted in the first-century world. So far as disease is concerned, the evangelists do not regard it all as directly demonic. So far as the miracles are concerned, the evangelists are quite specifically concerned to assert that unlikely, supernatural and so exciting things happened in Jesus' ministry. This was good news for an unbelieving world, and it still is.

As Christians in the modern world we should not be credulous or naïve about the subject of miracles, nor should we feel obliged to defend or preserve fanciful ideas from the past, such as traditional notions about demons with horns, pitchforks and the like; such pictorial ideas may well have had their value at one time, but today they are liable to trivialize our view of evil. We cannot, however, dispense with Jesus' miracles, which were an essential feature of the kingdom which he proclaimed and inaugurated.

Miracles today?

But what about the supernatural in the world today? One reputable Christian opinion is that the supernatural phenomena which accompanied Jesus' ministry were exclusively or almost exclusively confined to the biblical period of divine revelation, and that we should not expect them today. This view offers a convenient way of explaining the absence of New Testament-style miracles in much of the history of the church and contemporary Christian experience. It can also claim some exegetical support, insofar as the Bible itself suggests that God's miraculous interventions in our world have taken place more at some times than at others, e.g. at the time of the Exodus, in the days of Elijah and Elisha, and supremely in Jesus' ministry. At other times miracles are much less in evidence, even apparently absent. It has been inferred from this that God gives miracles at times of particular revelation and that we therefore cannot necessarily expect the sort of miracles that accompanied Jesus' ministry to be seen today.

A quite different Christian opinion is that the supernatural phenomena that accompanied Jesus' ministry can, should be, and often are, seen now. It is argued in favour of this view that miracles are experienced in parts of the church today, and

that the church's frequent failure to experience God's miracles reflects its capitulation (especially in the West) to secular, anti-supernatural thinking and a failure to obey the commands and appropriate the promises of the New Testament.

What is to be made of this divergence of opinion which is represented in the authors we have mentioned, with Colin Brown appearing to come close to the first opinion and John Wimber and Michael Harper opting for the second? It is not possible here to do more than make a number of observations.

1. *One of the most perplexing differences between the writers concerned has to do with their estimate of modern claims to miraculous healing.* To put the matter bluntly: Wimber and Harper see undoubted miracles frequently; Brown, on the other hand, though he and Wimber have worked in the same city and institution, is aware only of 'minor' and 'trivial' cases of effective faith healing, but of nothing that constitutes an unmistakable revelation of the power of God at work. This difference could be taken by some to prove uncritical naïveté on the part of Wimber and Harper and by others to show an unbiblical scepticism on the part of Brown. An alternative, and probably preferable, conclusion is that Wimber and Harper have indeed experienced many remarkable things in the context of prayer for healing, but that few of them, if any, can be unequivocally described as miraculous in the sense that Brown proposes, i.e. in the sense that God has overruled the normal order of the world he created.

Brown is concerned that Christians should not overstate their claims. He notes that faith healing is not an exclusively Christian activity and that spontaneous remission of certain medical conditions is a well-known phenomenon. To claim, then, that a given healing necessarily proves special divine intervention may be to go too far: it may be in some cases that the Christian faith healer is employing the same powerful psychological techniques as the non-Christian faith healer. There is nothing necessarily wrong in this, and there is nothing wrong in seeing such healing as a gift of God in response to prayer. But that also applies to the use of aspirin and other medicines: the Christian can and should use such medicines in the context of prayer, and can and should see the gracious hand of God in their effectiveness. But to call such cures miraculous is to use the word in a potentially misleading way, and may be to invest the 'miracles' with a significance that is not justified.

To make this important point is not to pass judgment on the experiences of John Wimber and others, let alone to suggest that they are all explicable in natural terms: they do not read that way at all. It is to suggest that Brown is right to alert us against the dangers of a naïve assessment of the claims of *any* faith healers, Christian or non-Christian.

2. *If one danger is that we may read more of the supernatural into some experiences than we should, another is certainly that many Christians are inclined to discount the supernatural and so fail to reckon with the possibility of God's miraculous action in practice.* John Wimber is right in believing that many Western Christians have absorbed the unbelief of their contemporaries; and so, while believing in theory in God's rule in the world, we fail to take seriously the biblical view of a God who is in day-to-day control of nations and governments, of

the weather, of life and death and disease. We effectively fall into deism, not expecting God to intervene in the world he set going (like a wound-up clock) but now leaves alone. The exception to this is that evangelical Christians at least reckon on God's miraculous activity in converting, sanctifying and guiding people. One of the reasons that we allow for such miracles, but not for more 'physical' miracles, may be that we experience the one sort of miracle much more than the other. But another reason may be that we have allowed the secular outlook to push God out of the physical world into a purely spiritual sphere. It is right that this limited view of God should be challenged and that we should reckon with a God who is really at work in all aspects of our world.

3. *But what does the New Testament evidence lead us to expect in terms of miracles in the church?* The view that miracles were limited to Jesus and the apostles or were only intended for the apostolic era is hard to justify from the New Testament. Paul includes gifts of healing and miracle-working, as well as other gifts such as 'tongues', in his list of gifts to the church in 1 Corinthians 12:9-10, though admittedly not in his gift-lists in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4; James gives instructions for the elders to pray for the sick in James 5 and, despite Brown's different opinion, it seems on balance probable that James thought of the sick person being literally healed; and the synoptic evangelists, when describing Jesus' sending out of the twelve and the seventy-two, probably saw their commission, which included healing, as paradigmatic for the church as a whole. We may therefore accept the view that healing is part of the church's ongoing missionary commission.¹

The early church obeyed that commission. Acts describes a good number of miracles, and Paul refers to his own powerful miracle-working ministry (e.g. in Rom. 15:18, 19). On the other hand there is some reason to think that miracles were a less prominent aspect of the early church's life than either they had been in the context of Jesus' ministry (particularly in the first part of his ministry) or than some modern writers would wish them to be today. There are miracles in Acts, but the impression given is more of the occasional striking healing or series of healings rather than of remarkable healings all the time. The same impression is given by Paul's own letters, in which miracles are mentioned but not frequently referred to.²

To argue in this way is to argue to some extent from silence; more significant is Paul's specific teaching about miracles and healings. In 1 Corinthians 12 gifts of healing and the working of miracles are described as being given to some but not to all, according to the Spirit's choosing. It may not be significant that he does not mention these gifts in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, but it is probable that Paul was aware not only that the Spirit gives sovereignly as he wills to different individuals, but also in different measure to different churches.

In 2 Corinthians 10-12 Paul defends himself against those who see him as inferior to other apostles, and he insists that he performed 'signs' among them (12:12). But Paul is reluctant to refer to such accomplishments, which the Corinthians evidently overvalued, and prefers to boast of his weaknesses. For Paul, the supreme mark of the Christian is not his miraculous power but his conformity to Christ's death. There is a striking similarity between this teaching and that of Mark's gospel. The first half of the gospel describes Jesus'

power in miraculous deed and word, but the second and climactic half describes Jesus going to the cross. It is as though both Mark and Paul recognize the importance of the miraculous works, but see in the suffering of the cross the greatest work of all. It is the teaching of the New Testament that the greatest grace is seen not in the miraculous removal of suffering, but in a Christ-like endurance of suffering.

Paul's famous 'thorn in the flesh' of 2 Corinthians 12:7 fits in at this point. The view that Paul is here referring to a physical ailment remains quite the most plausible, and it is instructive that his request that the trying condition be removed is refused; he is told that God's grace is sufficient for him and that God's power is made perfect in weakness. This makes it clear that it is not necessarily God's will to free us of satanic thorns in this life: he always gives his grace, but sometimes it is the grace to endure suffering with patience and courage, as Christ endured, rather than grace to escape from suffering.

We are reminded of Hebrews chapter 11, where the heroes of faith in some cases 'conquered kingdoms . . . received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire . . .', etc, but in other cases 'suffered . . . were stoned . . . were sawn in two . . . were killed with the sword . . . destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, of whom the world was not worthy' (11:33-38). The grace and power of God is manifested both in acts of supernatural power and in the experience of humiliating suffering. Paul would explain that all is the work of 'the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills' (1 Cor. 12:11). In this context, the observation that God gives miracles at certain times and places in history and not at others may make sense: the Spirit has given special manifestations of his power at some times more than at others. Sometimes, not least in difficult missionary contexts, he has called his church to be faithful in weakness and in the absence of obvious works of power.

What may be concluded from this look at the New Testament evidence? First, it is correct to see that the church has a commission to heal in the name of Jesus and to expect God's power to work miraculously. It is good to be challenged to such expectancy.

Second, it is not the case that there is guaranteed healing for every sickness — such universal healing belongs to the future, when the kingdom which Jesus inaugurated will be consummated (Rev. 21:4) — or that God's miraculous gifts will be seen in every church and time in the measure they were in Jesus' ministry.

Third, the miraculous workings of the Spirit are wonderful, but they are by no means the most important work of the Spirit. The Spirit's major work is converting sinful people to Christ and then making them increasingly like him, producing in them the fruit of the Spirit, notably love, and helping them in suffering, not necessarily by removing it but often by giving the grace to endure.

Some of the same conclusions may be applicable also to the question of demons and supernatural evil. It is right to recognize the existence of demons, but there is a danger of making too much of them and of seeing demons behind every problem, sickness or trouble. There is a good side to this attitude in that it takes evil and Satan seriously in a way that the New Testament encourages: we live in a world of conflict

between God and Satan, and we need to be more aware of this than we often are. However, there is a difference between recognizing the reality and power of evil and seeing demons round every corner in a semi-animistic way. The Bible recognizes the existence of demons and the reality of demon possession, but these things are a relatively small (though often noisy and noticeable) part of Satan's activity and of the evil in our world. Satanic activity in the Bible includes all sorts of evil. 'Ordinary' sickness is a work of Satan — see the paralysed woman bound by Satan in Luke 13:16. False theological teaching is a work of Satan, as Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 11:13, writing about false apostles who are servants of Satan disguised as angels of light. Temptation to sin is, of course, Satan's work, and commonplace sins like immorality and crude talk are works of darkness (see Eph. 2 and 4). Most important, and worst of all, the world's unbelief is satanic in origin (e.g. 2 Cor. 4:4). All these sorts of things are Satan's work, much less spectacular and much more respectable than demon possession, yet arguably much more pervasive and perhaps even more deadly through being less obvious.

The importance of these conclusions, both about miracles and about demons, is not just theoretical but personal and pastoral. On the one hand, if we fail to reckon with the reality of divine intervention in our world, we and those we minister to miss out on one of the most exciting things in the world that should affect our outlook enormously, not least when faced by some of the mountainous problems of life (cf. Mt. 21:21). On the other hand, if we have an exaggerated interest in the miraculous we may be in danger of wrong priorities, of putting power before love and obedience (see Mt. 7; 1 Cor. 13:2) and of misleading and hurting those who suffer by speaking too much of the grace of healing (which *may* not be given to them) and too little of the grace of suffering and enduring with Christ. Similarly the danger with the 'demon-round-every-corner' mentality is that it may be extremely damaging pastorally if we try to exorcise things and people when their problem is not possession but something like mental illness.³ In addition, too much attention to the spectacular manifestations of evil may distract us from the other, more subtle, activities of Satan.⁴ The main dangers we and our churches face are not demons, but rather satanically inspired apathy, false doctrine and lack of love.

A reference to the need for love is an appropriate note on which to end. Differences between Christians on matters such as healing can be perplexing and divisive. Paul faced such problems in Corinth and, as well as maintaining a brilliantly balanced position on the issues himself, he stressed

more than anything else the need for Christians to avoid being divided over such issues and to keep their love at full strength.

¹ It may, however, be of interest that none of the evangelists gives special emphasis to the ministry of healing when they summarize the risen Christ's missionary commission (i.e. in Mt. 28, Lk. 24, Jn. 20, 21; Mk. 16:9-20 is usually regarded as an addition to the original text of Mark). It has been argued that the words 'teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Mt. 28:19) includes the command to heal, but it is likely that the *primary* emphasis is on obedience to ethical teaching such as is found in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. 7:21-27).

² It has been suggested that the different levels of success that Paul seems to have had in Athens and Corinth were because he relied on philosophy in Athens (and so failed) and on 'power evangelism' in Corinth (and so succeeded). This interpretation presupposes the improbable, though not uncommon, view that in 1 Cor. 2:1-5 Paul is implying that he changed his evangelistic strategy when he came from Athens to Corinth, abandoning the apologetic approach described in Acts 17:22-31. But 1 Thes. (a letter written from Corinth after Paul's arrival from Athens) makes it clear (a) that Paul had an effective ministry in Thessalonica with apparently 'charismatic' effects (cf. 5:19, 20), and (b) that his evangelistic approach there was as in Athens — note the similarity of 1 Thes. 1:9, 10 to Acts 17:22-31 (a confirmation of the historicity of the Acts speech). If there is anything to be deduced from Paul's apparent lack of great success in Athens, it is probably that there is no guaranteed formula for evangelistic success. It is likely that his evangelistic approach was similar in Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth, but that he found some people, notably the poor and 'unsophisticated', to be more responsive than others (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-31), an experience not without parallels today.

³ The dangers of dabbling in exorcism, demonology and the like are real and well documented (e.g. by Twelftree). There is danger both when we imagine specifically demonic activity where there is none, and also when there is real demonic activity, since demons are powers, not indeed to be feared by Christians going in the name of Christ, but not to be played with or underestimated.

⁴ It has been plausibly suggested that the devil's strategy is sometimes to encourage such interest in the demonic as will distract attention from his subtler works and at other times to conceal himself and his demonic forces so as to foster secular unbelief. But it may be that the recent rise in the West of interest in the occult and the demonic has a lot to do with the decline of orthodox Christian faith.

Editorial notes

Dr John Webster has been appointed professor at Wycliffe College, Toronto, and so is stepping down as British Reviews Editor of *Themelios*. We are very grateful for all he has done for *Themelios*, and our best wishes go to him in his new position. We are glad to welcome as his successor Mr Tony Lane of the London Bible College.

Paul and the law: observations on some recent debates

John M. G. Barclay

The author, who recently completed his PhD on Galatians for Cambridge University, is lecturer in New Testament at the University of Glasgow.

1. The problem

Paul's statements on the law have always been a source of confusion and controversy. Even his own churches were confused by his insistence on freedom from the law (see 1 Cor. 6:12 with Rom. 3:8 and 6:15), and Christians in other parts of the early church were incensed by what they understood of his proclamation of a law-free gospel (see Acts 21:21, 28; Jas. 2:14-26). Small wonder, then, that ever since his letters became accepted as Christian scriptures, Paul's remarks about the law have sometimes been hailed as the essence of the gospel, sometimes rejected as incoherent and idiosyncratic, and frequently misunderstood.

If one gathers together Paul's chief statements on the law and related issues they present a bewildering appearance. Sometimes the Greek term *nomos* clearly refers to the Mosaic Torah (e.g. Rom. 2:17; 1 Cor. 9:9; Gal. 3:17), but sometimes it seems to have the generalized sense of 'rule' or 'principle' (e.g. Rom. 3:27?; 7:21; 8:2?). On many occasions Paul declares categorically that Christians have died to the law and are free from it (e.g. Rom. 6:14; 7:1-6; Gal. 2:19; 5:1), while in some instances he is confident that they uphold and fulfil it (Rom. 3:31; 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). In several extended passages he contrasts the law with faith or with Christ (Rom. 2-4; 2 Cor. 3; Gal. 3-4), but on one occasion he refers to a *nomos* of faith (Rom. 3:27) and on two occasions alludes to a *nomos* of Christ (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). Moreover, in what seems to be intended as a summary statement about the relationship between Christ and the law (Rom. 10:4) it is unclear whether the crucial Greek noun *telos* is to be understood as 'end/termination' or 'goal/fulfilment'. How can Paul insist that there is no justification by works of the law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; 5:4) and yet talk of judgment by works (Rom. 2:1-16; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:4-8)? When circumcision is one of the commands of God in the Old Testament, how can Paul tell the Corinthians that it does not matter if they are not circumcised so long as they keep the commands of God (1 Cor. 7:19)? Did Paul think that it was impossible to be justified by works of the law because no-one can keep the law (Rom. 3:9-23; 7:7-25; Gal. 3:10), or because even keeping the law would not be the proper path to justification (Gal. 3:11-12, 21; Phil. 3:2-11)? And, most fundamentally of all, if the law is the holy law of God (Rom. 7:10-14; 9:4) how could Paul regard it as responsible for sin, curse and death (Rom. 7:5; 2 Cor. 3:6-9; Gal. 3:10-13), and how could he play down its significance because it was 'ordained by angels through an intermediary' (Gal. 3:19)?

These are only some of the most important questions raised by Paul's remarks about the law. But they will suffice to

indicate the complexity of the problem and how it is intimately bound up with many other themes in Paul's theology and ethics. Not surprisingly, such questions have spawned an enormous volume of literature even in the last few decades. It would not be possible to tackle all these questions in any one article like this and it would not be either practical or useful to attempt to survey all the relevant material written about them. In order to confine the discussion within reasonable limits I will focus on two main areas: (i) the meaning of the contrast between works of the law and faith in Christ, and the reason why justification by faith in Christ excludes submitting to the yoke of the law; and (ii) the question how Paul could hold together such negative and positive remarks about the Christian's relationship to the law, and what parts or aspects of the law he considered to be still relevant for Christians. These (among other) issues have been discussed in a particularly interesting way in three recent monographs on Paul and the law: H. Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*;¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*;² and H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*.³ But before we examine these books we will need to put them in context by briefly outlining other widely-held views on our subject.

2. Long-established interpretations

We have already noted the ambiguity of the term *nomos* and the wide range of meanings Paul can give it. Many scholars have concluded that there is an implicit distinction in Paul's mind between 'the law as the revelation of God's will' and 'the law as misused by man to establish his own merit', i.e. 'legalism'. Burton, in his influential ICC commentary on Galatians, sought to establish this distinction through a detailed categorization of all Paul's uses of *nomos*;⁴ and the same point has been widely disseminated through important articles by Moule, Ladd and Cranfield.⁵ Thus Cranfield writes: 'it will be well to bear in mind the fact . . . that the Greek language used by Paul had no word-group to denote "legalism", "legalist", and "legalistic". . . . In view of this, we should, I think, be ready to reckon with the possibility that sometimes, when he appears to be disparaging the law, what he really has in mind may be not the law itself but the misunderstanding and misuse of it for which we have a convenient term.'⁶

While other scholars like W. D. Davies would urge us to tread cautiously in this matter,⁷ there has been a long-established and almost universal consensus that the chief object of Paul's criticism of the law is the Jewish legalistic perversion which treats the law as a means of accumulating good works and earning one's own salvation. There are powerful theological presuppositions behind such an interpretation, the most important of which is the radical distinction between 'work' and 'faith' which became, through Luther, a central theme of the Reformation.⁸ Since most of the influential interpreters of Paul in this century have sprung

from the German Lutheran tradition (e.g. Bultmann, Bornkamm, Kümmel, Käsemann, Stuhlmacher), it is not surprising to find them describing Paul's conflict with Judaism in these terms. To take just one example, Bultmann describes Judaism of the first century as 'inevitably conceived in legalistic terms', with an important place given to good works, even works of supererogation, as a basis for merit,⁹ and Paul's critique of Judaism and justification by works of the law demonstrates that 'it is not evil works or transgressions of the law that first make the Jews objectionable to God; rather the intention to become righteous before him by fulfilling the law is their real sin'.¹⁰ When one realizes that this was written in such terms in Germany in 1932, its potential anti-Semitism becomes terrifyingly clear. And it is not surprising that Jewish scholars like C. G. Montefiore and H. J. Schoeps have objected to Paul's attack on Jewish legalism as directed against a debased form of Judaism or as a complete misunderstanding of the role of the law within the covenant structure of Judaism.¹¹ Nonetheless, it has become common currency in scholarship of all confessional backgrounds to maintain that Paul's antithesis between justification by faith and justification by works of the law expresses the distinction between trusting in God for one's own salvation and earning it by one's own efforts.¹²

By contrast, there has been a much greater range of opinion on our second main topic, the explanation for Paul's mixture of negative and positive remarks about the Christian's relationship to the law. While some scholars would put great emphasis on the *continuity* between the law and Christian ethics, stressing the work of the Spirit in enabling the Christian to fulfil the law, others emphasize the *discontinuity*, underlining Paul's antithesis between the slavery of the law and the freedom of grace.¹³ Once again, theological presuppositions have a part to play here. The Lutheran tradition has always emphasized the distinction between the law and the gospel and insisted that the power and motivation for Christian behaviour come from faith and love, not from an externally imposed code of behaviour. If it is necessary to talk about a 'third use of the law' (*tertius usus legis*) for Christians, that is only inasmuch as they are still sinners and 'fleshly' rather than 'spiritual'.¹⁴ In the Reformed tradition, on the other hand, gospel and law are not seen to be sharply opposed to one another; the law is not in any sense abrogated by Christ, but reaches its full realization in him. The 'third use of the law' is the *principal* use because the law itself is 'spiritual' and through the Spirit Christians are enabled to fulfil it.¹⁵

Such different emphases have an obvious impact on one's interpretation of the Pauline texts, as is well illustrated by two influential British scholars. F. F. Bruce is very close to the Lutheran tradition when he writes that 'it is plain that Paul believed and taught that the law had been in a major sense abrogated by Christ'. Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4) in the sense of its 'goal' and 'terminus' so 'there is no more place for law in man's approach to God'. The new age of the Spirit and liberty has replaced the age of the law (Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 5:1) so that 'according to Paul, the believer is *not* under law as a rule of life — unless one thinks of the law of love, and that is a completely different kind of law, fulfilled not by obedience to a code but by the outworking of an inward power'. Verses like Romans 8:2 and Galatians 6:2 should be taken in this sense as a 'law of love' rather than

'prudential rules and regulations', even if some people would consider this dangerously close to antinomianism.¹⁶ On the other hand, C. E. B. Cranfield is an able exponent of the Reformed tradition. He lays greatest emphasis on the fact that Paul describes the law as God's law, good, holy and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14, 16, 22). Romans 10:4 should be understood in the sense that Christ is the 'goal' (not 'end') and innermost meaning of the law. He himself fulfilled the law (Rom. 10:5) and the giving of the Spirit is the establishment of the law (Rom. 3:31; 8:2, 4), in the sense that 'the Spirit enables us to recognize in God's law the gracious revelation of his fatherly will for his children, and therefore to accept it willingly and gladly as a guide to the expression of the gratitude we want to show him'. The law is not abrogated in Christ because 'God's word in Scripture is one; . . . gospel and law are essentially one'.¹⁷

There are, of course, other ways of explaining Paul's paradoxical statements about the Christian's relationship to the law. One popular approach is to distinguish between the moral parts of the law and its ceremonial or ritual regulations. Could this explain why Paul rejects the relevance of circumcision (Gal. 5:2-4) but accepts some of the basic moral rules in the Decalogue (Rom. 13:8-10)?¹⁸ Others, however, point out that no such neat division existed in the law or is ever acknowledged by Paul; and Paul treats even one of the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath law, as unhelpful (Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16) or, at best, a matter of individual choice (Rom. 14:5-12).¹⁹ We may also note that W. D. Davies found the key to Paul's statements on the law and the law of Christ in the rabbinic notion of 'the Messianic Torah';²⁰ but, given the uncertain evidence for such a notion, few scholars have supported this thesis.²¹

3. Important new perspectives

During the past few years a stream of articles and monographs on various aspects of our problem has flowed from academic presses. Several of these have taken the form of a new investigation of an old exegetical crux. P. von der Osten-Sacken wrote an important book on Romans 8 in the course of which he argued that *ho nomos tou pneumatos* (in 8:2) does not mean 'the rule of the Spirit' but 'the law as rightly understood and interpreted by the Spirit'.²² C. T. Rhyne's monograph on Romans 3:31 ('we establish the law' — *nomon histanomen*) argues that faith establishes the law inasmuch as 'the law in its role as witness to righteousness by faith is established in the apostolic preaching of justification by faith'.²³ In his recent and extremely thorough study of the famous phrase in Romans 10:4 (*telos gar nomou Christos*) R. Badenäs amasses philological and exegetical evidence to argue that *telos* should be interpreted in 'teleological terms' (Christ is the 'goal', 'purpose', 'fulfilment' of the law) rather than in a temporal/terminal sense (Christ is the 'end' or 'abrogation' of the law).²⁴ However, the most important progress in New Testament studies usually takes place when a scholar or group of scholars opens up a whole new angle of approach to an old topic and challenges the consensus interpretation. With regard to Paul and the law, we should note here three contributions which have opened up the debate in a fresh and provocative way.

(a) Back in 1963 Krister Stendahl published an article entitled 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West'.²⁵ Although a Lutheran himself, in this article

Stendahl launched a frontal attack on the way Luther, Lutherans and Western scholars in general interpreted Paul. Paul 'has been hailed as a hero of the introspective conscience',²⁶ wrestling with his personal awareness of sin under the condemnation of the law until he found the answer in Christ through 'justification by faith'. But, argues Stendahl, this whole picture of Paul has far more to do with Luther's struggle with his conscience in the sixteenth century than with Paul's real interest in the first. In fact Paul had an extremely robust conscience both before and after his Damascus Road experience.²⁷ And the proper context for understanding Paul's battle for justification by faith *versus* justification by works of the law is not the individual's quest for forgiveness but the relationship of Jews and Gentiles — in particular whether Gentiles need to take on the yoke of the law (that is the Mosaic Torah, not law in general) in order to be proper members of the people of God. While it is quite understandable that this specific Jew-Gentile context should be forgotten or misunderstood in later centuries, Stendahl insists that we should make the attempt to understand Paul on his own terms.²⁸ In this way, while he left many important questions unanswered, Stendahl signalled his dissatisfaction with much in the consensus interpretation of Paul and pointed the way to a fruitful re-examination of the actual historical problems which occasioned Paul's letters.

(b) Several other important questions on this subject have been raised by **Hans Hübner** in his major study *The Law in Paul's Thought*.²⁹ Hübner's purpose is to revive earlier suggestions about a process of development in Paul's thought about the law, and to establish this thesis by an historical reconstruction of Paul's dealings with Galatia and Jerusalem and a careful exegetical analysis of Paul's different statements on the law in Galatians and Romans. Hübner proposes that 'between the time when Galatians was written and the writing of Romans, there lies a far from trivial process of reflection and development in Paul the theologian' involving a radical reworking of his view of the law.³⁰ When he wrote Galatians Paul had an unreservedly negative view of the law and even described it as given by angels in order to lead men into transgressions (3:19); such a demonic origin, together with its impossible demands (3:10; 5:3), meant that the Christian should have nothing to do with the law. Verses in Galatians like 5:14 and 6:2, which appear to indicate a more positive Christian relationship to the law, Hübner takes in a different sense, arguing that they do not in fact refer to the Mosaic law at all. However, Paul received such a violent reaction to his letter both from Galatia and from the Jerusalem church that he was forced to reconsider his opinions and iron out some of their inconsistencies. The results of this reconsideration are seen in his letter to the Romans. Here circumcision and law are seen in a much more positive light, and it is possible to talk of Christians fulfilling the Mosaic law (13:8-10) and submitting to the law of faith (3:27). Hübner concludes that, while in Galatians Christ is the end of the law *simpliciter*, in Romans he is only the end of the legalistic misuse of the law.³¹ On this view, then, it is impossible to harmonize all the different statements about the law in Paul's letters: one must allow for a substantial development in Paul's thinking on the matter.³²

(c) Perhaps the most important book in challenging standard interpretations of Paul is **E. P. Sanders' Paul and Palestinian Judaism**.³³ This is a massive book, running to over

550 pages, and its length understandably daunts most students.³⁴ But its size reflects the huge job Sanders hopes to achieve: to demolish entirely the prevailing consensus on the legalistic nature of Palestinian Judaism and to provide a more accurate understanding of Paul's relationship to (and critique of) Judaism. Sanders aims to give a 'holistic comparison' of the pattern of religion in Judaism and Paul, and from the start he declares his strong disagreement with the long line of Christian interpreters of Judaism who have taken Paul's contemporaries to be nit-picking legalists, concerned only with the outward observance of the law and desperately seeking to amass credit before God by their good works. Building on the work of G. F. Moore,³⁵ Sanders runs through a long list of influential Protestant scholars in the last hundred years who have repeatedly caricatured Judaism as a legalistic religion seeking to appease an inaccessible God: Weber, Bousset, Schürer, Billerbeck and Bultmann all come in for devastating criticism on this score.³⁶ By a careful analysis of the relevant Rabbinic literature, Sanders shows that the common assumption that Rabbinic religion was a religion of legalistic works-righteousness 'is completely wrong: it proceeds from theological presuppositions and is supported by systematically misunderstanding and misconstruing passages in Rabbinic literature'.³⁷ In fact, he shows, everything in Rabbinic literature depends on the covenant — God's election of his people, his provision of atonement for their sin and his promise of salvation for all faithful Israelites. Such a religion may be termed 'covenantal nomism': 'The conception is that God acts, that Israel accepts the action as being for them, that God gives commandments, that Israel agrees to obey the commandments, and that continuing to accept the commandments demonstrates that one is "in", while refusing to obey indicates that one is "out"'.³⁸ In fact, a very similar pattern of religion can be found in other examples of Palestinian Judaism, for example the Dead Sea Scrolls and many of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (IV Ezra is an exception to this). In each case 'the "pattern" or "structure" of covenantal nomism is this: (1) God has chosen Israel and (2) given the law. The law implies both (3) God's promise to maintain the election and (4) the requirement to obey. (5) God rewards obedience and punishes transgression. (6) The law provides for means of atonement, and atonement results in (7) maintenance or re-establishment of the covenantal relationship. (8) All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedience, atonement and God's mercy belong to the group which will be saved. An important interpretation of the first and last points is that election and ultimately salvation are considered to be by God's mercy rather than human achievement'.³⁹

Having established this analysis of the structure of Palestinian Judaism, Sanders proceeds to discuss Paul's pattern of religion. He discerns in Paul's letters two streams of thought: one is 'juridical', envisaging salvation as acquittal from judgment, justification and atonement for transgressions; the other is 'mystical' or 'participatory', where salvation is conceived as union with Christ, possessing the Spirit, freedom from the power of sin and belonging to the realm of Christ's lordship. For Sanders, it is the participatory categories which are 'the heart of Paul's theology'.⁴⁰ And this means that Paul's pattern of religion is really wholly different from the covenantal nomism of Palestinian Judaism.⁴¹ What is more, Sanders maintains that Paul's theology was not

worked out by means of analysing man's plight and then discerning in Christ the solution to that plight. Although in Romans Paul can conduct an argument along these lines, his theology actually worked the other way round: *first* he grasped the salvation provided by Christ for Jew and Gentile alike and *then* he worked out that all men must need that salvation, Jew as well as Gentile, so that it must be impossible for a Jew to be justified by his covenant election and obedience. Thus Paul did not attack Judaism because it was legalistic (which it never was anyway) or misunderstand it as such. Rather, his new understanding that salvation came only by participation in Christ, and his work as apostle to the Gentiles, made him gain a new perspective in which the law's role was now seen to be unnecessary and insufficient. 'It is the Gentile question and the exclusivism of Paul's soteriology which dethrone the law, not a misunderstanding of it or a view predetermined by his background.'⁴² Thus Sanders' book signals a massive challenge to a whole line of interpretation of Paul. In Sanders' view, to interpret Paul's critique of justification by works of the law as an attack on 'legalism' or man's attempt to earn his salvation by good works is a complete misunderstanding both of Judaism and of Paul.⁴³

4. The present state of the debate

(a) I have focused attention in the last section on Stendahl, Hübner and Sanders because in their different ways they have opened up important new perspectives on Paul and the law and have sparked off most of the present lively debates on the matter. I have also spent longest describing Sanders' thesis because it has proved provocative enough to raise a plethora of important responses. On the whole, his analysis of the structure of thought in Palestinian Judaism has been widely acknowledged as accurate and convincing. The only Jewish scholar to raise serious objections has done so not because he thinks Sanders' analysis is incorrect, but because it emphasizes a covenantal structure which the rabbis took for granted and does not penetrate to their real concerns.⁴⁴ Some scholars have questioned whether Sanders is right to draw such sweeping conclusions from the *literature* of Palestinian Judaism: the way the religion *worked in practice* and *was perceived* by its adherents could have been much more 'legalistic' than its official theology suggests; and in any case all the emphasis in the literature is on law, obedience and works, while grace, election and covenant are mentioned much less frequently.⁴⁵ But it will take a major new analysis of first-century Judaism to overturn Sanders' description of it; and since none is so far forthcoming, we will have to continue to take seriously his claim that Paul (or, for that matter, Jesus) could have had no good grounds for imagining Jews to be anxiously seeking to achieve salvation by their good works.

If this is so, we are left with two options in considering Paul's attack on those who urged justification by works of the law: either he was deliberately misrepresenting the Judaism he knew so well, in making it out to be legalistic, or the point of his criticism is not legalism but something else.⁴⁶ The first option, that Paul misrepresents Judaism as if obedience to the law was regarded as earning salvation, is chosen by H. Räisänen (on whom see further below).⁴⁷ As we have seen, Sanders chooses the second option, and concludes that Paul does not criticize Judaism for being legalistic but because he now sees that salvation is only available in Christ. It is this aspect of Sanders' book that has come in for the heaviest

criticism. Many voices have been raised complaining that Sanders' analysis of Judaism is much more convincing than his analysis of Paul, that he has misconstrued the centre of Paul's theology, and that he has failed to grasp the real reasons for Paul's critique of Judaism.⁴⁸ It is therefore fortunate that Sanders has now published another book to explain and develop his views, and answer his critics.

(b) In *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*⁴⁹ Sanders examines all the most important passages about the law in Paul's letters and presents some distinctive theses about them. One of the points he develops in the course of the book is that Paul is on the whole a 'coherent thinker', holding consistently to certain basic convictions — that God gave the law, that salvation is available for all in Christ, that faith in Christ is the only means of entry into the body of the saved, and that Christians should keep or fulfil the law. On the other hand, Paul is not a 'systematic thinker': he does not always relate his various conclusions to one another, and he gives many diverse and inconsistent explanations of the function of the law.⁵⁰ In fact Sanders suggests one should distinguish between the *reasons* why Paul holds a particular view of the law (his basic and coherent theological convictions) and the *arguments* he uses to support that position (which may be less than logical and may vary enormously from one text to another).⁵¹ Thus, for instance, in discussing the purpose of the law Paul is trapped by his two basic convictions that God gave the law (and must have done so for a purpose) and that salvation/justification comes through Christ not the law. Paul's answer to this dilemma was to give the law a negative role in God's plan of salvation, but he describes this negative role in a great variety of ways (to restrain us — Gal. 3; to condemn our sin — Rom. 1-3; to increase our sin — Rom. 5:20; to be exploited by sin — Rom. 7:7-13; to set the standard which sin and flesh cannot match — Rom. 7:14-25) which are not self-consistent or harmonious.⁵²

In discussing why Paul held that justification is not by works of the law, Sanders spends considerable time refuting Hübner's analysis of Galatians (that the problem with works of the law was the impossibility of keeping them all) and conducts a running polemic against the (Lutheran) consensus that Paul was advocating believing/trusting as over against doing/earning. 'The supposed conflict between "doing" as such and "faith" as such is simply not present in Galatians. What was at stake was not a way of life summarized by the word "trust" versus a mode of life summarized by "requirements", but whether or not the requirement for membership into the Israel of God would result in there being "neither Jew nor Greek". . . . The dispute was about whether or not one had to be Jewish.'⁵³ Thus when Paul criticizes those who 'boast in the law' or establish 'their own righteousness' he is not attacking individuals who boast in their own performance or self-righteousness, but Jews who boast in the special status of Israel and establish their own limited Jewish righteousness as opposed to the true righteousness of God available to Gentiles as well as Jews by faith in Christ.⁵⁴ Thus Paul's theology is based on Christology (salvation only by faith in Christ) and the status of the Gentiles (who do not need to take on the yoke of the law); and this involves 'an attack on the traditional understanding of the covenant and election, according to which accepting the law signified acceptance of the covenant'.⁵⁵

But what about those passages where Paul does talk about

Christians fulfilling the law? Here Sanders insists that there is an important distinction between *the condition of entry into the people of God* (by faith not by works of the law) and *the type of behaviour required of those once established in the group* (keeping or fulfilling the law). To these two different questions Paul gives two different answers; the relationship between faith and law changes when the topic addressed changes: 'when Paul opposed "faith" to "law", the question was what is required to be a member of the group that would be saved . . . when the topic was how people in that group should behave, he saw no opposition between faith and law.'⁵⁶ This, for Sanders, explains why Paul is sometimes so negative about the law (Christians are dead to the law as a means of entry) and sometimes so positive (Christians fulfil the law as a pattern of behaviour). In both cases the whole law is under discussion, not one part of it or the law in one of its functions. The only exceptions to this are the law's requirements concerning circumcision, Sabbath and food: these are not an obligatory part of the Christian's behaviour, not because they are 'ritual', but because they are characteristically *Jewish*; 'they created a social distinction between Jews and other races in the Greco-Roman world'.⁵⁷

(c) Although Sanders' second book has not answered all his critics, it has helped to spell out some of the implications of his theses on Paul and Judaism, and it is no exaggeration to say that his work in this area could cause something of a revolution in the interpretation of Paul.⁵⁸ All sorts of new possibilities are emerging as scholars take up various aspects of Pauline theology and see them afresh in this light. For instance, N. T. Wright has re-examined the structure of thought in Paul's letter to the Romans, combining a better appreciation of its specific Jew-Gentile context with some interesting theories on the role of the Messiah as the representative of Israel.⁵⁹ As well as reinstating Romans 9-11 to a central place in Paul's argument (as Stendahl had argued), Wright demonstrates that Paul's critique of Israel is not directed against her legalism but her nationalism.⁶⁰ Similarly J. D. G. Dunn has focused on a few key texts in Galatians (2:16 and 3:10-14) and has argued that 'by "works of the law" Paul intended his readers to think of particular observances of the law like circumcision and the food laws' which 'were widely regarded as characteristically and distinctively Jewish'.⁶¹ The problem with works of the law, then, is not that they are 'works', nor that they are 'of the law' (Dunn maintains that Paul has nothing against the law as such). The works Paul has in mind are the observance of circumcision, food laws and Sabbath and 'he has them in mind precisely because they had become the expression of a too narrowly nationalistic and racial conception of the covenant, because they had become a badge not of Abraham's faith but of Israel's boast'.⁶² Thus Dunn maintains that Paul can describe the law both negatively and positively according to how it is being understood and applied: Paul attacks the law 'as fixing a particular social identity, as encouraging a sense of national superiority and presumption of divine favour'; but 'divorced from that perspective, as the law understood in terms of faith rather than in terms of works, it can continue to serve in a positive role'.⁶³

In both of these writers one can see the emphasis shifting from the issue of 'legalism' to the question of Jewish nationalism and the exclusion of Gentiles. This obviously fits very well with Paul's sense of mission to Gentiles and it has

been taken up in a radical way by F. Watson.⁶⁴ Watson argues that the root cause of Paul's critique of the law is *sociological* rather than *theological*: it was because the prospect of taking on the burden of the law was so unattractive to the Gentiles who heard Paul's preaching that Paul decided to abandon its most difficult and distinctively Jewish demands. Subsequent to this very pragmatic decision, Paul built up a whole battery of theological arguments to justify his abrogation of the law. But what really determines his thought is not abstract theological consideration of law, faith and promise, but the practical problem of enabling Gentiles to accept the gospel.

(d) The final book on our topic with which we must conclude our survey is also the fullest and most provocative treatment of the subject — Heikki Räisänen's *Paul and the Law*.⁶⁵ This is a hefty book, interacting in great detail with a vast range of scholarly works, but its basic thesis can be summed up very simply: Paul's discussion of the law is wholly inconsistent and self-contradictory.⁶⁶ In his introduction Räisänen dismisses those like Hübner who argue for a substantial development in Paul's thought between Galatians and Romans, and others like Conzelmann who make a virtue of Paul's 'dialectical' and 'paradoxical' modes of expression. As far as Räisänen is concerned, glaring inconsistencies occur *within each* of Paul's letters and are so serious that they reduce many of Paul's arguments to logical absurdity: 'contradictions and tensions have to be accepted as constant features of Paul's theology of the law. They are not simply of an accidental or peripheral nature'.⁶⁷

Räisänen then proceeds to support this bold thesis with a detailed analysis of many central features of Paul's theology of the law. He argues that it is often unclear what precisely Paul means by *nomos* and whether it concerns only Jews or Gentiles as well; although Paul makes no clear distinctions within the law, he sometimes seems to mean only the moral law, and it is only by such ambiguity and looseness of speech that he is able to assert for instance that he 'upholds the law' (Rom. 3:31). In the same way, there are irreconcilable tensions between statements that Christians have died to the law and others that urge them to love by emphasizing that love fulfils the law. Such tensions cannot be resolved: Paul 'wants to have his cake and eat it'.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Paul maintains that no-one can keep the law and that Jews and Gentiles alike are hopelessly and *without exception* guilty of transgression; on the other hand, he refers to himself as once blameless under the law (Phil. 3:6), describes Gentiles who keep the law (Rom. 2:14-15, 26-27) and assumes that Christians can and do fulfil it (Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 5:16; etc.). The utter pessimism concerning the guilt of all men in Romans 1-3 is strangely exaggerated: 'there is something strained and artificial in Paul's theory that nobody can fulfil (or has fulfilled) the law'.⁶⁹ It demonstrates for Räisänen (as also for Sanders) that Paul's mind worked 'backwards', from the solution to the plight: 'His point of departure is the conviction that the law *must not* be fulfilled outside of the Christian community, for otherwise Christ would have died in vain'.⁷⁰ When it comes to the origin and purpose of the law, Galatians 3:19 is at variance with other Pauline passages; and Paul seems to hold sometimes that the law is meant to lead to life (but could not because of sin), and at other times that God intended it to lead to death by inciting sin: 'clearly these two lines contradict each other'.⁷¹

At the end of each chapter in this book Räisänen compares

Paul's perspective on the law with other first-century Christian and Jewish writers; and in each case the comparison highlights the peculiarity of Paul's position. Thus the final chapters investigate the special causes of Paul's theological problems with the law. Over against a range of other alternatives, Räisänen concludes that Paul shared the Hellenists' laxity concerning the law, and it was only when he was directly challenged by Judaizers in Jerusalem and Galatia that he was forced to work out a theological defence for his failure to impose the yoke of the law on Gentiles. But in the effort to provide such a defence Paul found himself trapped in an impossible theological dilemma: as a Jew he believed that God gave the law, but as a Christian apostle to Gentiles he was convinced it had been abrogated by Christ. 'We find Paul struggling with the problem that a *divine* institution has been *abolished* through what God has done in Christ. Most of Paul's troubles can be reduced to this simple formula. Paul tries to hush up the abolition; he never admits that he has actually rejected large parts of the law. Instead, he has recourse to the arbitrary assertion that it is *his* teaching that really fulfils or "upholds" the law.'⁷²

As a (Lutheran) theologian, Räisänen is fully aware of the implications of such a thesis. Since, as was mentioned earlier, he considers that Paul has conveyed a distorted picture of Judaism (as if obedience to the law was a way to salvation), he concludes that this picture 'has . . . had a share in the tragic history of the Jews at the mercy of Christians'.⁷³ More fundamentally, while we may admire Paul's intuition and missionary achievement, his continual self-contradictions show that 'it is a fundamental mistake of much Pauline exegesis in this century to have portrayed Paul as the "prince of thinkers" and the Christian "theologian par excellence".'⁷⁴

5. Observations and conclusions

I have deliberately restricted myself thus far to describing, as fairly as possible, some of the most important current literature on our topic. In this final section I wish to make a few observations interacting with some of the most significant issues raised, although I am aware that the brevity of my remarks will hardly do justice either to the scholars involved or to the topic discussed.⁷⁵ I will return shortly to the two main areas of interest outlined at the beginning of this article; but first something needs to be said on the subject of Paul's consistency.

Logic and consistency

Räisänen's thesis about Paul's self-contradictory theology of the law represents an important swing of the scholarly pendulum back to the radical criticism of Paul which was so common in the last decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries: it is no accident that he so often quotes W. Wrede and P. Wernle with approval. The movement known as 'dialectical theology', associated with men like Barth and Bultmann, was a reaction against this sort of logical dissection of the New Testament and sought to penetrate beneath the real or imagined contradictions to find the theological heart of the New Testament message. But Räisänen obviously regards his work as calling the bluff of any such theological endeavour, since he considers that Paul lacks any real theological depth. It is good to have this sort of provocative thesis laid on the table, especially as it has been so carefully researched and lucidly argued. The following,

however, represent just some of the points I would like to raise in reply to Räisänen.

(i) One must ask what standards of theological logic it is right to expect from Paul's writings. Räisänen is in fact aware that his detailed logical analysis of Paul's arguments has 'a certain anachronistic touch' and may appear 'unduly pedantic'.⁷⁶ Indeed, at many points the power of Paul's statements lies more in their rhetorical force and vivid expression than in their consistent or logical progression. This may mean that it is dangerous to treat Paul as a systematic theologian or to base one's own theological system on the 'logic' of his arguments. But it does not demolish all claims that he is a profound theologian; it only goes to show that he had a different sort of theological mind from what most scholars would feel proud to possess (or expect to find in their colleagues). Räisänen acknowledges that 'should Paul turn out to be a less consistent theologian than many have imagined, this need not *a priori* diminish his grandeur as a teacher in his own time and milieu'.⁷⁷ I would submit that it also need not diminish his theological importance as a witness to the truth of the gospel, so long as his arguments are not accorded more *logical* value than they deserve.

(ii) One also sometimes feels that Räisänen does not allow Paul a fair defence. Often, apparently absurd statements by the apostle make good sense in their particular setting; and Räisänen's way of discussing Paul's remarks on the law occasionally fails to give due regard to their literary and theological contexts. For instance, Räisänen marvels at Paul's extreme optimism in Galatians in expecting that Christians will fulfil the law and will not fulfil the desires of the flesh (5:14, 16 — although he notes that 5:15 hints at internal strife among the Galatian Christians). He accuses Paul of painting an ideal picture of the Christian life against the background of a caricature of Jewish life. But this is hardly fair to the line of argument in Galatians 5–6: Paul does not assert there that all Christians will automatically fulfil the law, but only that, *if they walk by the Spirit*, they can. I cannot avoid the impression that here (and elsewhere) Räisänen has exaggerated Paul's point for the sake of his thesis.

(iii) I am not convinced that Paul's theology landed him in a blatant theological contradiction, as Räisänen thinks. On the premise that 'if something is truly divine, it is hardly capable of being abrogated',⁷⁸ Räisänen concludes, as we have seen, that Paul struggled unsuccessfully to understand the place of the law. But did Paul consider the law to be abrogated? (Surely only some parts of it in any absolute sense.) And even if he did, is the premise correct? Even the rabbis came to terms with the fact that the divinely ordained temple had been abolished, at least temporarily, in accordance with God's will; and some contemplated the abolition of parts of the law in 'the Age to Come'. It does not seem to be a logical impossibility for Paul to argue that the God-given food laws were no longer applicable to Gentiles in Christ.

(iv) Räisänen is on stronger ground in claiming that Paul is least convincing and consistent when explaining the function of the law in relation to sin and death. There are certainly theological problems here which Hübner and Sanders have also helped to spell out. But Paul's different explanations are not always mutually contradictory: to say that the law cannot be kept because of the problem of sin and that God did not intend there to be righteousness by the law, do not seem to

me to be *incompatible* explanations of the failure of the law to provide justification.

(v) In a similar vein, Räisänen could have made more allowance for the *development* of Paul's thought between the different letters, especially Galatians and Romans. Although Hübner has undoubtedly overlapped his hand in this respect, and although not all Paul's logical inconsistencies can be explained in this way, Hübner's arguments cannot be entirely overlooked. We should also make some allowance for the possibility that Paul uses different arguments to answer different needs or critics; his rather desperate tone and artificial use of Scripture in Galatians, for instance, is not reproduced in Romans because in the former letter he has to fight with his back to the wall and counter his opponents' use of Scripture. While this does not remove the problems Räisänen has highlighted, it does enable us to understand and to evaluate better the types of arguments Paul uses.

In conclusion we may be grateful to Räisänen for raising difficult questions so forcefully in a book which will be a standard treatment of the problem for a long time to come. We may agree with him that Paul's arguments are sometimes logically defective, and that they often exploit the ambiguity of the terms he uses. But for the reasons outlined above (among others) we may conclude that he has exaggerated his case and that Sanders is probably nearer the truth in talking of Paul as basically coherent but unsystematic. Paul is still worth listening to, not only as a teacher of early Christians but as a theologian of some profundity.

The meaning of the contrast between works of the law and faith in Christ

Sanders has argued his case about the character of Palestinian Judaism so effectively that it will be extremely difficult for anyone to reinstate the old consensus opinion that Jesus' and Paul's contemporaries were merit-earning legalists. I am also convinced by Sanders and Stendahl that the proper context for understanding Paul's arguments about works of the law is not on the generalized level of working for one's salvation (as opposed to trusting), but in the specific area of the necessary requirements of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. In other words, Paul is less concerned about theological issues of the sixteenth century (whether the individual is saved by faith alone or by the co-operation of faith and works) and more concerned with the theological battles of the first (whether Gentile believers in Christ need to live like Jews in doing the works of the law). Over against 'Judaizers' in Galatia and elsewhere Paul insisted that becoming a Jewish proselyte and living like a Jew was not a *necessary* requirement for Christian believers; and over against Jews in Rome and elsewhere he argued that simply being a Torah-observant Jew was not a *sufficient* condition for salvation either. His arguments were less about *legalism* and more about (Jewish) *cultural imperialism*. And this means that Paul's doctrine of justification by faith has all kinds of important social implications for the church today which have hardly been explored as yet.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Sanders' treatment of Paul is still open to criticism at a number of points, as is also Räisänen's charge that Paul misrepresents Judaism.

(i) Sanders has failed, in my view, to detect an important line of development in Paul's thought whereby the issue of

'works' and 'grace' becomes increasingly generalized in Paul's letters. In *Galatians*, the discussion of 'law' and 'works of the law' is wholly restricted to the question of Gentile observance of the Mosaic Torah; passages like 2:15-21, which appear more generalized, are in fact wholly determined by the sort of Jew-Gentile issues involved in the Antioch dispute (2:11-14). In *Philippians 3* Jewish national pride is still the primary focus of Paul's discussion of 'boasting', though the contrast of 'my own righteousness' with 'the righteousness of God through faith in Christ' indicates that Judaism has gone astray not only by excluding Gentiles but also by setting herself up in some way over against 'God in Christ'. In *Romans* the discussion broadens out still further. While the primary context in chapters 1-4 is the relation of the gospel to Jews and Gentiles, and the main critique of Judaism concerns its national pride in the Torah (2:17ff.; 3:27-31), there are some points when 'the law' is discussed in such general terms as to include all rules (2:14; 4:14-15; even more so in chapter 7) and where 'works' are contrasted with 'faith' and 'grace' as if by some general theological principle (4:1-4). Similarly, in chapters 9-11 the primary topic of discussion is the failure of most Jews to believe the gospel and the contrast between their national view of election and God's inclusion of the Gentiles in Christ; but in some verses Paul seems to appeal to a general principle which sets 'works' in contrast to 'faith', 'calling' and 'grace' (9:10-13, 30-32; 11:6). Even here Paul's critique of Judaism does not concern its 'legalism' but the tragic fact that by refusing to believe in Christ many Jews have been cut off from their covenant roots; they only have their 'works' of Torah disobedience which cannot make up for the disobedience of unbelief. Paul does not suggest that all Jews are typically unbelieving and works-orientated; in fact his anguish is heightened by the fact that their failure to believe in Christ is so unnatural since grace, faith and election are integral parts of the true Jewish tradition. But it seems to me hard to deny that in passages like these Paul begins to discuss works, law and faith in abstract terms which give some basis for later Western, and even Lutheran, theological traditions.⁸⁰

(ii) These remarks already go some way to answering Räisänen's charge that Paul misrepresents Judaism as if it regarded law observance as earning salvation. Although Paul's critique of Judaism has so often been taken this way (and such an interpretation has undoubtedly helped to fuel anti-Semitic sentiments), I would insist that Paul never accuses Jews of being legalists in this sense. If many Jews have 'fallen', this is not because Judaism is inherently legalistic but because they have failed to believe in Christ in whom God's covenant purposes and promises find their fulfilment. When Paul criticizes those who seek 'justification by works of the law' he is not discussing how to be a *Jew* but how to be a *Christian* and insisting that Torah observance is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition.⁸¹ In this sense Sanders is right that all Paul's soteriology, including his critique of Judaism, is determined by his prior conviction that faith in Christ is essential for Jew and Gentile alike.

(iii) But why is it that faith in Christ and full commitment to the Torah are mutually exclusive? Here Sanders is not fully convincing; for to appeal to Paul's 'exclusive Christology' and to argue that 'God intended that salvation be by faith; thus by definition it is not by law'⁸² leaves one wondering what sort of

'definition' is implicit in such a theology. Dunn understandably objects to Paul being made to appear so 'arbitrary', but his own exposition of 'the logic' of justification by faith is no more helpful.⁸³ It is the failure to discover any satisfactory theological reasoning at this point in Paul's argument that has led Räisänen to accuse Paul of being arbitrarily dogmatic and Watson to conclude that all Paul's theology is a subsequent rationalization of a practical problem. One should by no means minimize the significance of the practical considerations in Paul's mission to the Gentiles; but these need not exclude good theological reasoning. What is too often forgotten is that Paul appreciated the contrast between the Torah and faith in Christ even before his Damascus Road experience: why else would a Pharisee *persecute* Christians unless he believed that their faith and behaviour in some way flouted the Torah? What is also too often neglected is the number of times Paul associates the Christian's break with the law with *the cross* (see e.g. Rom. 7:1-6; 1 Cor. 1:22-24; Gal. 2:16-21; 3:1, 13-14; 5:11; 6:12-14). Without going into detail here, I would suggest that these two factors indicate (a) that Paul appreciated the contrast between faith in Christ and the law well before the 'Judaizer' crisis (*pace* Räisänen); (b) that his theology of the cross concerns a complete break with the old aeon including the law; and (c) that the curse of the law on Christ crucified was probably an important factor in his theological reasoning (*pace* Sanders and Räisänen).⁸⁴ Christians cannot take on the yoke of the 'works of the law' because God's Spirit has fallen on Gentiles without their becoming proselytes, because Christians have died to the law by being crucified with Christ, and because the law's curse-verdict on Christ is incompatible with their faith in him as Lord.

The Christian's relationship to the law – Paul's ambiguous verdict

It seems to me that scholars have so far been least successful in explaining this puzzling aspect of Paul's theology of the law – that is, how he can talk of Christians being removed from the sphere of the law while also sometimes quoting it with approval as the law they fulfil. It has at least become clear that many of the commonly accepted explanations do not hold up under close scrutiny. To say that Paul was working with an implicit distinction between ceremonial, civil and moral parts of the law is to impose an artificial distinction not only on the Old Testament law (is Sabbath law 'ceremonial' or 'moral?') but also on Paul (in what category is food offered to idols?). To talk of a distinction between the law misused in legalism and the law rightly used as the will of God is, as Sanders has shown, wholly misleading. Both the Lutheran and Reformed approaches to this problem appear to reach a solution only by oversimplifying it and ignoring some of the awkward evidence: in Pauline ethics the law is not simply ignored and abrogated (see 1 Cor. 9:8-10), but nor are all its dictates fully obeyed (see Rom. 14). Hübner's neat solution of a development in Paul from a negative attitude in Galatians to a more positive one in Romans runs aground in Galatians 5:14 where 'the whole law fulfilled' *must be* the Mosaic law. And Sanders' suggestion that the two different verdicts are given in answer to two different questions does not fare much better: surely the whole thrust of Paul's argument in Galatians is that Gentiles do not need to take on the yoke of the law *either* as a means of entry into God's people *or* as a pattern for their subsequent behaviour.

It begins to look as if Räisänen is nearest the truth here when he concludes that Paul's statements on this matter are inconsistent: Paul cannot bring himself to acknowledge that any part of the law is abrogated and so uses language like 'upholding' and 'fulfilling' the law while actually ignoring some important parts of it. But before we settle for such a solution we ought to bear in mind the following factors:

(i) One feature of Paul's language which has been almost universally ignored is that he uses a specialized vocabulary of 'fulfil' and 'fulfilment' when describing the Christian's relationship to the law (Rom. 8:4; 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14; 6:2). Paul never uses such vocabulary of Jews and he almost never talks of Christians simply keeping, doing or observing the law (except in 1 Cor. 7:19). Such a peculiar terminology may be significant (it is not found in other Jewish literature, but cf. Mt. 5:17); it indicates that Paul is aware that the Christian's relationship to the law is different from that of the Jew, and that the 'fulfilment' of God's promises in Christ is matched by the fulfilment of his demands in the lives of those directed by the Spirit. By using this language Paul may be reaching towards some expression of the notion that the law's basic requirements can be achieved without necessarily observing all its rules; and such terms are rich and ambiguous enough to hold together both the reality of 'dying to the law' and the ultimate goal of doing what is pleasing to God. In any case Paul's consistent use of these unusual terms goes some way to correct Räisänen's thesis of mere inconsistency.

(ii) Paul's ambiguous approach to the law owes much to his work as the (Jewish) apostle to the Gentiles. As a Jew he could not conceive of morality except by reference to the law (or at least, the will) of God; but in his cross-cultural mission he was determined not to impose on Gentiles the features of the law which were distinctively and uniquely Jewish. As Sanders and Dunn point out, this is why Paul refuses to impose on Gentiles the Jewish food, festival and circumcision laws (not because they are *ritual* as such; so is baptism!). One could draw an interesting parallel here with the presentation of ethics in some Hellenistic Jewish literature (e.g. The Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs; Pseudo-Phocylides; The Letter of Aristeas; Josephus' *Against Apion*): there points of similarity between the law and the best in Hellenistic morality are highlighted, while distinctively Jewish practices are omitted, downplayed, or reinterpreted in Hellenistic terms. In a similar way Paul emphasizes the moral virtues which could have been drawn from either Jewish or Hellenistic traditions (e.g. his virtue and vice lists); and the features of Diaspora Jewish morality which were most distinctive and least acceptable in a Hellenistic environment he abandons altogether. It is this cultural sensitivity and flexibility which make Pauline ethics so hard to categorize – and indeed made him feel that he was breaking out of both Jewish and Gentile categories to end up 'in the law of Christ' (1 Cor. 9:21: neither 'under the law' nor 'without law towards God').

(iii) Thus, to ask which parts of the law Paul considered to be relevant to Christians is to ask a question which he never consciously raised and never fully answered. We will have to be content to let Paul remain unsystematic and incomplete if we are to be fair in our representation of him. What we can say is that he usually attempted to approach each moral question from the standpoint of 'the truth of the gospel'; and it was the new reality of the Spirit and of Christ which deter-

mined what he understood to be the abiding features of the law of God (see again 1 Cor. 9:21). Indeed, such was the impact of the Spirit that he could define and enjoin Christian behaviour in terms of being led by the Spirit without any reference to the commands or law of God; but he could also assure his converts that such behaviour was the proper fulfilment of the law. Although we are apt to feel dissatisfied with Paul's lack of definition in this area, it may be that his very flexibility is our greatest aid: it points the way for each Christian generation to re-read the law of God in the Spirit of Christ and so work out afresh what it means to 'fulfil the just requirement of the law' (Rom. 8:4).

¹Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1984; this is an ET of *Das Gesetz bei Paulus: Ein Beitrag zum Werden der paulinischen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978).

²Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983; now also published by SCM.

³Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1983.

⁴E. de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1921), esp. pp. 443-460. He also makes a fine distinction in Paul's use of *nomos* with and without the article: but this variation has been shown to be, in most cases, unimportant (see P. Bläser, *Das Gesetz bei Paulus* [Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1941], pp. 1-30).

⁵C. F. D. Moule, 'Obligation in the Ethic of Paul' in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, eds. W. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: CUP, 1967), pp. 389-406, reprinted in *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), pp. 261-277. G. E. Ladd, 'Paul and the Law' in *Soli Deo Gloria: New Testament Studies in Honor of W. C. Robinson*, ed. J. M. Richards (Richmond, Virginia: J. Knox Press, 1968), pp. 50-67. C. E. B. Cranfield, 'St. Paul and the Law', *SJT* 17 (1964), pp. 43-68, reprinted in *New Testament Issues*, ed. R. Batey (London: SCM, 1970), pp. 148-172.

⁶'St. Paul and the Law', p. 55 (reprint p. 157).

⁷See esp. Davies' essay 'Paul and the Law. Reflections on Pitfalls in Interpretation' in *Paul and Paulinism. Festschrift for C. K. Barrett*, eds. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 4-16, reprinted in an expanded version in *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (London: SPCK, 1984), pp. 91-122.

⁸The importance of this antithesis of 'work' and 'faith' for Luther's interpretation of Paul can be seen most clearly in his fascinating commentary on Galatians. A revised translation is available, based on the 1575 'Middleton' edition, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge: J. Clarke & Co., 1953).

⁹R. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), pp. 68-69.

¹⁰'Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul' in *Existence and Faith. Shorter Writings of R. Bultmann*, ed. S. M. Ogden (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), p. 149. See also Bultmann's important essay 'Christ the End of the Law' in *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (London: SCM, 1955), pp. 36-66, and sections 23, 27 and 39 in his *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (London: SCM, 1952).

¹¹C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul. Two Essays* (London: Max Goschen Ltd, 1914) concludes that Paul's Jewish background must have been a 'particular sort of cheap and poor Hellenistic Judaism'. H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Thought* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961) talks of Paul's 'fundamental misapprehension' and concludes: 'Because Paul had lost all understanding of the character of the Hebraic *berith* as a partnership involving mutual obligation, he failed to grasp the inner meaning of the Mosaic law, namely, that it is an instrument by which the covenant is realized' (p. 218).

¹²Catholic scholars are as prone to this assumption as Protestant ones: see e.g. J. A. Fitzmyer, 'Saint Paul and the Law', *The Jurist* 27 (1967), pp. 18-36, reprinted in *To Advance the Gospel. New Testament Studies* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 186-201.

¹³There is a useful survey of the varied opinions on this matter in C. T. Rhyne, *Faith Establishes the Law* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), pp. 5-24.

¹⁴For an introduction to Luther's thought see G. Ebeling, *Luther* (London: Collins, 1970). Luther himself was only prepared to talk of two uses of the law: the political use (the role of law in regulating civic society) and the theological or pedagogic use (the role of law in terrifying and condemning sinners, leading them to repent and to seek grace in Christ). The Lutheran Formula of Concord added a third normative use, the role of the law instructing Christians in their behaviour. For a comparison of Lutheran and Reformed doctrine on this matter see W. Niesel, *Reformed Symbolics: A Comparison of Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), pp. 211-224.

¹⁵For a powerful presentation of this Reformed perspective see K. Barth, 'Gospel and Law' in *God, Grace and the Gospel* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959). The tradition is maintained by his son M. Barth in e.g. 'Die Stellung des Paulus zu Gesetz und Ordnung', *Evangelische Theologie* 33 (1973), pp. 496-526.

¹⁶F. F. Bruce, 'Paul and the Law of Moses', *BJRL* 57 (1975), pp. 259-279 (quotations from pp. 262, 264, 266, 278); this essay is reprinted as chapter 18 of *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1977). Lutheran perspectives are also given classic expression in Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* (where existentialism dovetails neatly with radical Lutheranism) and E. Käsemann's *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1980).

¹⁷C. E. B. Cranfield, 'St. Paul and the Law' reprint, pp. 167, 169. This essay has now been reworked as part of 'Essay II. Concluding remarks on some Aspects of the Theology of Romans' at the end of the second volume of Cranfield's *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1979). For other Reformed interpretations of the Pauline texts see D. P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) and R. Bring, *Christus und das Gesetz* (Leiden: Brill, 1969).

¹⁸See e.g. C. Haufe, 'Die Stellung des Paulus zum Gesetz', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 91 (1966), pp. 171-178.

¹⁹See D. A. Carson (ed.), *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), especially the essay in it by D. R. de Lacey, pp. 159-195.

²⁰W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964), pp. 109-190; *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism. Some Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 4th edition 1980), pp. 71-72, 136-146. R. N. Longenecker makes use of this idea also in *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 128-132.

²¹For criticism of Davies see E. Bammel, 'Nomos Christou', in *Studia Evangelica III*, ed. F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1964), pp. 120-128 and R. Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975), pp. 65-81.

²²P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer 8 als Beispiel paulinischer Soteriologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1975), esp. pp. 258-259.

²³Rhyne, *Faith Establishes the Law* (see n.13), pp. 117-118.

²⁴R. Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985). This is an impressive piece of work which includes a history of the interpretation of Rom. 10:4, an exhaustive study of the use of *telos* in the NT and contemporary Greek literature, and a careful attempt to place this verse in its proper context in Rom. 9 - 11. Although Badenas acknowledges that *telos* can take on a wide range of meanings, he has cogent reasons for concluding that its normal usage and the thrust of Paul's argument in these chapters indicate that Christ is here thought of as the goal or purpose of the law (in the sense of 'the Old Testament' or Scripture). This still leaves some exegetical problems (especially the apparent contrast between 10:5 and 10:6); and it begs the wider question whether this is consistent with what Paul says in 6:1-15, 7:1-6 and 14:1-6, and what it means, in other than purely abstract terms, to call Christ the 'goal of Scripture'.

²⁵This was first published in English in *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963), pp. 199-215; it is now reprinted in Stendahl's book *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (London: SCM, 1977), pp. 78-96 (from which all citations are drawn).

²⁶'The Apostle Paul', p. 78.

²⁷Romans 7 has usually been taken as prime evidence for Paul's struggle with his conscience either before his conversion or afterwards as a Christian. The majority opinion has now swung away from regarding Romans 7 as autobiographical in any sense (see esp. W. G.

Kümmel, *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament. Zwei Studien* [München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1974]. Stendahl considers that the purpose of the chapter is to exonerate the law by putting the blame on the power of sin: 'Paul is deeply aware of the precarious situation of man in this world... but there is no indication that this awareness is related to a subjective conscience struggle' ('The Apostle Paul', p. 94).

²⁸ Of course, ever since historical-critical study of the NT got under way 150 years ago it has been recognized that the specific issue of Gentiles' inclusion among the sons of Abraham was the chief bone of contention in the early church. Thus scholars like F. C. Baur and W. Wrede rightly related Paul's discussion of the law to the problems of Jews and Gentiles (see Baur, *Paul, The Apostle of Jesus Christ*, vol. II (London: Williams and Norgate, 1875), pp. 182-211, and Wrede, *Paul* (London: P. Green, 1907), pp. 124-128). But the pervasive influence of the Lutheran theological tradition has ensured that this specific issue was treated as no more than an example of the general theological question of man earning his salvation or receiving it as a gift. See, for instance, G. Ebeling's essay 'Reflexions on the Doctrine of the Law' in *Word and Faith* (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 247-281. Ebeling acknowledges that almost every time Paul uses the word 'law' he means 'the Mosaic Torah', but he still concludes that 'the special thing about the Mosaic law is only that in the light of the Gospel it has illustrated with fundamental and universal clarity the nature of the law in its antithesis to faith' (p. 279). Similarly, E. Käsemann generalizes Paul's discussion about Israel in Romans 9 - 11: 'in and with Israel he strikes at the hidden Jew in all of us, at the man who invalidates rights and demands over against God on the basis of God's past dealings with him and to this extent is serving not God but an illusion' ('Paul and Israel' in *New Testament Questions of Today* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969], p. 186). See also Käsemann's direct reply to Stendahl in 'Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans', *Perspectives on Paul* (London: SCM, 1971), pp. 60-78.

²⁹ See above, n. 1.

³⁰ *Law in Paul's Thought*, p. 54.

³¹ *Law in Paul's Thought*, p. 149. There are many other interesting points of detail in Hübner's book which it is impossible to dwell on here. For a fuller discussion see reviews by D. de Lacey in *JNT* 1(1978) and S. Westerholm in *SEA* 44(1979), and my review of the English translation in *JTS* 37(1986).

³² In his introduction, Hübner points out how nineteenth-century scholars such as Ritschl and Sieffert noted the inconsistencies between Galatians and Romans and he welcomes the work by J. Drane which suggests similar lines of development in Paul's thought (see J. Drane, *Paul: Libertine or Legalist? A Study in the Theology of the Major Pauline Epistles* [London: SPCK, 1975]). For another perspective on the development of Paul's mind in relation to the law see U. Wilckens, 'Zur Entwicklung des paulinischen Gesetzesverständnis', *NTS* 28(1982), pp. 154-190. (There is an abridged English version of this article called 'Statements on the Development of Paul's View of the Law' in *Paul and Paulinism. Festschrift for C. K. Barrett*, eds. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson [London: SPCK, 1982] pp. 17-26.)

³³ London: SCM, 1977.

³⁴ In fact more than three-quarters of it is taken up with Palestinian Judaism; the gist of Sanders' very important argument in this section can be gleaned by reading the first 60 pages, the Conclusion to Chapter I and Chapter IV.

³⁵ G. F. Moore, 'Christian Writers on Judaism', *HTR* 14(1921), pp. 197-254. Moore's fullest answer to those who misunderstood Judaism was to come in his own brilliant analysis of it: *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927-30).

³⁶ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, pp. 33-59. Sanders even suggests that 'we have here the retrojection of the Protestant-Catholic debate into ancient history with Judaism taking the role of Catholicism and Christianity the role of Lutheranism' (p. 57).

³⁷ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 233.

³⁸ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 237.

³⁹ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 422.

⁴⁰ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 502.

⁴¹ See further esp. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, pp. 511-515, in reaction to W. D. Davies' interpretation of Paul on covenantal lines. In a later article entitled 'Jesus, Paul and Judaism' (in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 25:1, eds. H. Temporini and W. Haase [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982], pp. 390-450) Sanders discusses the two strains of Paul's theology as 'covenantal' and 'participatory'. He still maintains that the second constitutes the real centre of Paul's thought, although he does admit that 'there are appreciable and significant elements of the general structure of covenantal nomism in Paul' (p. 439).

⁴² *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 497. This is probably a better summary of Sanders' position than the statement later in the book which has often been taken to be the essence of Sanders' thesis (and heavily criticized): 'In short, this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity' (p. 552).

⁴³ In fact he suggests that, on the relation between God's grace and man's deeds, Paul and Judaism are *wholly in agreement* (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, p. 517). It is worth commenting on the ambiguity of the term 'legalism'. If this is taken to mean a concern for the exact definition and observance of laws then the rabbis may be called 'legalistic' (as may all lawyers). But if it is given a more pejorative meaning, the attempt to earn favour with God by one's good deeds, then, as Sanders has shown, this is a quite inappropriate term to use of rabbinic religion. Similar comments can be made about the repeated references in German literature to the Jewish notion of the law as a *Heilsweg* (way of salvation).

⁴⁴ See J. Neusner, 'The Use of the Later Rabbinic Evidence for the Study of Paul' in B. Green (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, vol. II (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1980), pp. 43-64; see Sanders' reply in the same volume, pp. 65-80.

⁴⁵ See esp. R. H. Gundry, 'Grace, Works, and Staying Saved in Paul', *Biblica* 66(1985), pp. 1-38. Gundry goes on to argue that Paul's attack on justification by works of the law is an attack on an attitude of self-dependence, self-righteousness and legalism; and since Paul was closer to the Judaism and Judaistic Christians he attacked than Sanders is, we must conclude that Judaism really was defective in those respects.

⁴⁶ For a slightly different analysis of the options see J. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), pp. 99-103.

⁴⁷ One may refer here to Räisänen's article 'Legalism and Salvation by the Law' in *Die paulinische Literatur und Theologie*, ed. S. Pedersen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980), pp. 63-83; and *Paul and the Law*, pp. 177-191. See e.g. p. 188: 'I cannot avoid the strong impression that Paul actually does give his readers a distorted picture of Judaism. He comes to misrepresent Judaism by suggesting that, within it, salvation is by works and the Torah plays a role analogous to that of Christ in Paulinism.'

⁴⁸ See esp. the reviews of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* by G. B. Caird in *JTS* 29(1978), pp. 538-543; by N. A. Dahl in *Religious Studies Review* 4(1978), pp. 153-158; by J. Murphy-O'Connor in *Revue Biblique* 22(1978), pp. 122-126; and the comments by W. D. Davies in the 4th edn of his *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (see above, n. 20), pp. xxix-xxxviii. The following articles are also important: H. Hübner, 'Pauli Theologiae Proprium', *NTS* 26(1979-80), pp. 445-473 (arguing that Sanders has wrongly identified the centre of Paul's theology); M. D. Hooker, 'Paul and "Covenantal Nomism"' in *Paul and Paulinism* see n. 7), pp. 47-56 (arguing that the covenant is more important than Sanders had allowed); J. D. G. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', *BJRL* 65:2 (1983), pp. 95-122 (criticizing Sanders' failure to explain Paul's critique of Judaism).

⁴⁹ See n. 2.

⁵⁰ See esp. *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, pp. 143-148. Here Sanders is partly reacting against Räisänen's more 'extreme' arguments about Paul's complete inconsistency. Whether one can distinguish so neatly between 'coherence' and 'system' is a question usefully raised by T. Deidun's review of this book in *Heythrop Journal* 17 (1986), pp. 43-52.

⁵¹ See esp. *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, p. 4; but Sanders acknowledges that 'reason and argument are not always easy to distinguish'.

⁵² *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, pp. 65-91, esp. p. 81. Thus Sanders attributes the passionate expression in Rom. 7 not to Paul's personal *Angst* or existential plight but to the massive theological problems raised by his Christian convictions, that God's principal

redemptive activities in the past — the election and the law — could not count for salvation (pp. 78-79).

⁵³ *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, p. 159. Thus Sanders can insist that 'the supposed objection to Jewish self-righteousness is as absent from Paul's letters as self-righteousness itself is from Jewish literature' (p. 156).

⁵⁴ *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, pp. 29-45, discussing Rom. 3 - 4, 9 - 11 and Phil. 3.

⁵⁵ *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, p. 46.

⁵⁶ *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, p. 114.

⁵⁷ *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, p. 102.

⁵⁸ I am aware that it is possible to overestimate the personal contribution of Sanders in this matter. In one sense his books say no more about Judaism than was said by G. F. Moore and has always been said by Jewish scholars; and his work on Paul spells out the implications of previous work by K. Stendahl, N. A. Dahl and others. But in another sense his contribution has been uniquely significant in that he has presented his ideas with such force and conviction that NT scholars have been compelled to take notice and react with them. His latest book on Jesus, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985) will almost certainly have the same effect on that topic.

⁵⁹ The argument is worked out in his 1980 unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis *The Messiah and the People of God*.

⁶⁰ See his provocative essay 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith', *Tyndale Bulletin* 29(1978), pp. 61-88.

⁶¹ 'The New Perspective on Paul' (see n. 48), p. 107. This article by Dunn has been heavily criticized by H. Räisänen in *NTS* 31(1985), pp. 543-553. But Dunn pursues a similar interpretation of Paul in his article on 'Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10-14)' in the same *NTS* issue, pp. 523-542.

⁶² 'The New Perspective on Paul', p. 120.

⁶³ 'Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law', p. 531.

⁶⁴ In an Oxford D.Phil. thesis, published by CUP in 1986 in the SNTS series under the title *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*. My knowledge of this work at the time of writing this article was only partial, dependent in the main on a paper presented by Dr Watson in a recent NT conference and subsequent personal discussions.

⁶⁵ See n. 3. This was published about the same time as Sanders' *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (i.e. in 1983) and the value of both books is enhanced by the fact that they were able to consult each other's manuscripts in the course of writing.

⁶⁶ The main lines of Räisänen's argument can be seen in an earlier article on 'Paul's Theological Difficulties with the Law' in *Studia Biblica III*, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), pp. 301-320. Räisänen has also helpfully summarized his conclusions in ch. VI of *Paul and the Law*, pp. 199-202; cf. also the article-review by A. J. M. Wedderburn in *SJT* 38(1985), pp. 613-622.

⁶⁷ *Paul and the Law*, p. 11, italics his.

⁶⁸ *Paul and the Law*, p. 82.

⁶⁹ *Paul and the Law*, p. 107.

⁷⁰ *Paul and the Law*, p. 118, italics his.

⁷¹ *Paul and the Law*, p. 152.

⁷² *Paul and the Law*, pp. 264-265, italics his.

⁷³ *Paul and the Law*, p. 268.

⁷⁴ *Paul and the Law*, pp. 266-267.

⁷⁵ I have tried to address some of the issues more fully in the course of my Cambridge Ph.D. thesis 'Obeying the Truth. A Study of Paul's Exhortation in Galatians 5 - 6' (1985).

⁷⁶ *Paul and the Law*, p. 14.

⁷⁷ *Paul and the Law*, p. 15; it is only fair to point out that Räisänen also admires Paul's 'seminal insights' and 'intuitions' (pp. 268-269).

⁷⁸ *Paul and the Law*, p. 265.

⁷⁹ There have been two recent books on justification by faith from an evangelical stable: *The Great Acquittal*, ed. G. Reid (London: Collins, 1980) and *Here We Stand*, ed. J. I. Packer (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986). Although both contain a number of stimulating essays, none of these explores the social implications of the doctrine which was originally aimed at those who set up social and cultural pre-conditions for acceptance into the Christian community. N. T. Wright comes closest to this in his essay in *The Great Acquittal*. See also N. A. Dahl's essay 'The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications' in *Studies in Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977, pp. 95-120). Dahl asks: 'To what extent does the current practice of the church deny *de facto* the doctrine of justification, because it excludes certain groups of people from free access to God's grace in his church?'

⁸⁰ One could follow this line of development into the literature now commonly regarded as Deutero-Pauline. In Eph. 2:5-10, 2 Tim. 1:9 and Titus 3:4-7 'grace' and 'works' are contrasted without any reference to the original Jew-Gentile context. 1 Tim. 1:8ff. discuss the law in terms quite unlike the rest of the Pauline corpus.

⁸¹ I am aware that it is anachronistic to make this distinction between 'a Jew' and 'a Christian' for Paul, who always considered himself to be a Jew. But Paul is aware that faith in Christ has set an important distinction between 'believing' and 'ordinary' Jews; and in his doctrine of justification, Paul is not describing how ordinary Judaism works but how one can (or cannot) be a member of the believing community.

⁸² *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, p. 47; elsewhere Sanders appeals to Paul's tendency to 'think in black and white terms' (pp. 44, 70).

⁸³ See 'The New Perspective on Paul', p. 113: 'Paul followed a different logic — the logic of justification by faith; what is of grace through faith cannot depend in any sense, in any degree on a particular ritual response.'

⁸⁴ See S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 44-50.

Process theology: a survey and an appraisal

Norman L Geisler and William D Watkins

Norman Geisler is professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and well-known author of books and articles on philosophical theology; William Watkins is Director of Insight for Living, a religious broadcasting ministry, and also a part-time faculty member of the Talbot School of Theology in the USA.

In recent decades, few philosophical or theological movements have influenced liberal and conservative forms of Christian thought more effectively than process theism. Theologian R. C. Sproul concurs when he says, 'The main-

line churches have been heavily influenced by the impact of [process philosophy] as it has emerged into a major, if not *the* major, school of influence in our day.¹ Evangelical Paul Mickey, himself an advocate of process thought, is convinced that 'American theology in general, and this includes contemporary evangelicalism, is influenced by process modes of thought'.² As a result of its growth in popularity in Anglo-American circles, Michael L. Peterson states, 'One of the most important questions facing educated Christians today concerns the relationship of Christian orthodoxy to "process philosophy".³

What is process theism? What are some of its historical roots? Who are its main advocates, and what do they believe? What are some responses that can be made to process thought? Are evangelical Christianity and process theology compatible with one another? These are the questions we would like to address in this introductory article.

The nature of process theism

Process theism is expressed under many names. Sometimes it is called panentheism, meaning all-in-God. It has also been labelled bipolar or dipolar theism (since its proponents believe that God has two poles) as well as organistic philosophy (since reality is viewed as a gigantic organism). But perhaps its two most common names are 'neoclassical theism' and 'process theology', the former because its adherents contend that God is finite and temporal, in contrast to the God of classical theism, the latter because process theists view God as a changing being.

Regardless of the descriptive label one applies to process theism, the movement's leaders and followers are agreed that the monopolar God of Augustine, Anselm and Thomas Aquinas must be replaced with the bipolar God of Whitehead and Hartshorne. In other words, panentheists desire to discard the conception of God as completely absolute and independent of the universe and replace it with the view of God as potentially absolute, actually relative, and ontologically dependent on the universe. Process theists stress God's becoming and his relativity over his mere being or absoluteness. In doing so, they embrace a God who is absolutely relative and immutably mutable — a deity who is the supreme exemplification of change.

The historical background of process theism

The origins of process philosophy date back at least to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (c. 500 BC). He taught that the world is a constantly changing process. Some years later Plato (c. 400 BC) speculated that there was a Demiurgos who eternally struggled with the chaos to form it into the cosmos. He also maintained that God is to the world as the soul is to the body. This platonic viewpoint provides the dualistic background for panentheism's doctrine of a bipolar God.

In more modern history, G. W. F. Hegel's developmental pantheism provided a significant step to contemporary process theology. Hegel (d. AD 1831) presented a God who progressively unfolds himself in the historical process. In the late nineteenth century Herbert Spencer expanded Charles Darwin's biological evolutionary theory into a philosophy of cosmic evolution. Following this development, Henri Bergson proposed (1907) that the evolutionary process was driven forward in 'leaps' by a Life Force, whom Bergson eventually identified as God. Around the same time (1920) Samuel Alexander pioneered a process view of God's relationship to the temporal universe.⁴

Some major process theists and their beliefs

1. Alfred North Whitehead

The father of process philosophy is Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). He was the first person to develop a systematic process metaphysics. He presented his perspective most fully in his now classic book *Process and Reality* (1929). Here he

combined a cosmic evolutionary model and relativity theory into a process philosophy of reality. Because Whitehead's thought is so central in the process movement, it will be our point of departure in explaining the major tenets of panentheism.

Whitehead maintains that there are three major concepts of God. First, the 'Eastern Asiatic concept' views God as 'an impersonal order to which the world conforms. This order is the self-ordering of the world; it is not the world obeying an imposed rule. The concept expresses the extreme doctrine of immanence.'⁵ Second, the 'Semitic concept' depicts God as 'a definite personal individual entity, whose existence is the one ultimate metaphysical fact, absolute and underivative, and who decreed and ordered the derivative existence which we call the actual world. . . . It expresses the extreme doctrine of transcendence' (*RM*, pp. 66-67). The third view of God is pantheistic. It is 'described in the terms of the Semitic concept, except that the actual world is a phase within the complete fact which is this ultimate individual entity. The actual world, conceived apart from God, is unreal. Its only reality is God's reality. . . . This is the extreme doctrine of monism' (*RM*, p. 67).

Whitehead rejects all three of these concepts of God. But he primarily aims his philosophical guns at the Semitic view, which he recognizes was adopted by the Christian church early in its history (*RM*, p. 72). Whitehead sees two main difficulties with this concept of God. One is that 'it leaves God completely outside metaphysical rationalization. We know, according to it, that he is such a being as to design and create this universe, and there our knowledge stops' (*RM*, p. 68). The other problem is that the Semitic concept needs to be proved. But 'the only possible proof would appear to be the "ontological proof" devised by Anselm, and revived by Descartes. According to this proof, the mere concept of such an entity allows us to infer its existence. Most philosophers and theologians reject this proof' (*RM*, pp. 68-69).

In addition to these problems, Whitehead poses several objections to the Semitic view of God. For example, he contends that 'the notion of immanence must be discriminated from that of omniscience. The Semitic God is omniscient; but, in addition to that, the Christian God is a factor in the universe' (*RM*, p. 71). Therefore, God must be in the universe, not just beyond it. Furthermore, the theistic doctrine of divine aseity should be rejected because 'there is no entity, not even God, "which requires nothing but itself in order to exist".' Instead, 'every entity is in its essence social and requires the society in order to exist.' And 'the society for each entity, actual or ideal, is the all-inclusive universe' (*RM*, p. 104). Likewise, divine necessity and divine independence from the universe are denied. As Whitehead states, 'Apart from God, there would be no actual world; and apart from the actual world with its creativity, there would be no rational explanation of the ideal vision which constitutes God' (*RM*, pp. 150-151). Moreover, Whitehead dismisses the idea of God as infinite and all good: 'The limitation of God is his goodness. He gains his depth of actuality by his harmony of valuation. It is not true that God is in all respects infinite. If he were, he would be evil as well as good. Also this unlimited fusion of evil with good would mean mere nothingness. He is something decided and is thereby limited' (*RM*, p. 147).

What, then, is Whitehead's view of God? He tells us: 'God is that function in the world by reason of which our purposes are directed to ends which in our own consciousness are impartial as to our own interests' (*RM*, p. 151). Furthermore, since 'the temporal world and its formative elements constitute for us the all-inclusive universe', God is actually nothing more than the order and value of the actual world. As Whitehead states, '[God] is not the world, but the valuation of the world' (*RM*, p. 152). Indeed, 'there is nothing actual which could be actual without some measure of order.' And the creativity and forms exhibited by the world 'are together important to achieve actuality apart from the completed ideal harmony, which is God' (*RM*, p. 115). In short, God's consequent or actual nature is the existing universe.

This understanding leads to the view that God is constantly changing. For Whitehead maintains that the universe is an atomistic series of events, otherwise called 'drops of experience' or 'actual occasions'.⁶ These actual occasions come to be and cease to be very quickly. In fact, they pass in and out of existence so fast that 'the ancient doctrine that "no one crosses the same river twice" [must be] extended. No thinker thinks twice; and, to put the matter more generally, no subject experiences twice' (*PR*, p. 43). All is becoming, including God. There are no unchanging beings (*PR*, pp. 53, 71, 122, 317).

In addition, because God and the universe are mutually dependent on one another for their continued becoming, God 'is not *before* all creation, but *with* all creation' (*PR*, p. 521). He did not bring the universe into existence; he merely directs its ongoing progress. He does this by organizing the potentials of his primordial nature and urging them into the world process as various aspects of actual entities. In other words, he shapes the universe by luring the eternal potentials of his primordial, or potential, pole into the temporal realm of his consequential, or actual pole. In this way, the creation of the universe is both *ex materia* (out of pre-existing stuff) and *ex Deo* (out of God). This actualization of divine potentials is prompted by creativity, 'the principle of novelty' that grounds 'every actual entity, including God' (*PR*, pp. 31, 135).

Lastly, since God is constantly becoming and his potential is infinite, he will never completely realize all he could ever be. God will forever achieve more value and thereby enrich himself. However, 'neither God, nor the world, [ever] reaches static completion' (*PR*, p. 295). Consequently, evil — that which is incompatible with God's efforts of self-realization at any given moment — will never be controlled or defeated. As Whitehead notes, 'In our cosmological construction we are therefore left with the final opposites, joy and sorrow, good and evil, disjunction and conjunction — that is to say, the many in the one — flux and permanence, greatness and triviality, freedom and necessity, God and the World' (*PR*, p. 518).

2. Charles Hartshorne

Charles Hartshorne is close to Whitehead in importance and influence. Lewis S. Ford, himself a process theologian and relentless apologist, states as much when he writes, 'Hartshorne's clarity of presentation and arguments, coupled with a freedom from Whitehead's neologisms, has made him a most influential exponent of process thought, and many

read their Whitehead through Hartshorne's spectacles.'⁷ As we did with Whitehead's empirical approach to process thought, so we will briefly survey Hartshorne's rationalistic approach.

Like Whitehead, Hartshorne rejects the Augustinian-Thomistic view of God. Hartshorne even charges that the theologians who propounded this concept were involved in two forms of idolatry: ontolatry, the worship of being (God as pure act); and etiolatry, the worship of causality (God as the uncaused Cause).⁸ God, Hartshorne claims, is not 'merely infinite or merely finite, merely absolute or merely relative, merely cause or merely effect, merely agent or merely patient, merely actual or merely potential, *but in all cases both*, each in suitable respects or aspects of his living reality, and in such a manner as to make him unsurpassable by another. He is even both joy and sorrow, both happiness and sympathetic participation in our grief.'⁹ God is both sides of the metaphysical contraries at the same time but not in the same pole. That is, he is timeless, absolute and infinite in his abstract pole, yet temporal, relative and finite in his concrete pole.¹⁰

Hartshorne's concept of the divine poles is critical to his metaphysical system. He maintains that the concrete pole is God as he exists at any given moment in his ever-changing experience. The abstract pole is that which is common and constant in God's character given any possible or actual world. For example, when a human being suffers pain, God experiences that pain in his concrete pole by sympathetic participation. However, God's abstract pole experiences nothing in particular. It simply represents God's ability to experience anything that becomes in any world. Put another way, God as concrete is God as he actually is now. God as abstract is God as he must always be. Hence the divine abstract pole is an abstraction of the divine concrete pole.¹¹ From this premise Hartshorne concludes that all of reality is characterized by becoming and relativity, not by being and absoluteness. Only potentiality — pure possibility — can be considered being and absolute. In fact, "becoming is reality itself", while being is 'an empty universal, the common property of all becoming whatsoever'.¹²

God is also personal, but he is not, as Whitehead thinks, an actual entity. For Hartshorne, God is 'an enduring society of actual entities'.¹³ But unlike other societies, God endures no matter what world or world-state exists. Moreover, like other individuals, God is partially new each moment. God in his present concrete state is not identical to what he was in his previous concrete state. Thus the God one may serve now is not the God one may have served yesterday nor the God one may serve tomorrow.¹⁴

Concerning God's relationship to the world, Hartshorne believes that the divine concrete pole and the universe are one. As he puts it, 'God is the wholeness of the world.'¹⁵ However, this does not mean that God is identical to the world, as in pantheism. Instead, it means that God literally permeates the world in his concrete pole without destroying the individuality of his creatures. God accomplishes this by including within himself the 'totality of all ordinary causes and effects' without becoming identical to them. Therefore, the universe is in God but he is distinguishable, though not separable from, the universe (*MVG*, p. 348; *DR*, pp. 89-90).

As one might suspect, Hartshorne rejects the traditional theistic view of creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). Instead, he contends that God creates the world *ex materia* (out of pre-existing matter). That is, God makes 'new actualities' from 'past events'.¹⁶ Consequently he is the cosmic shaper and orderer of each world that has existed in the infinite past and that will exist in the infinite future (*MVG*, pp. 230-232). But God is not the sole 'creator', for the materials he transforms 'are prior acts of self-creation' which either himself or his creatures performed (*DCD*, p. 280). In other words, God partially creates himself, and the creatures that compose his world-body partially create him as well. As Hartshorne states it: 'God in his concrete de facto state is in one sense simply self-made, like every creature spontaneously springing into being as something more than any causal antecedents could definitely imply. In another sense, or causally speaking, God, in his latest concrete state, is jointly "made" or produced by God and the world in the prior states of each. We are not simply co-creators, with God, of the world, but in the last analysis co-creators, with him, of himself (*NTOT*, p. 113).

It follows from the foregoing that human beings can either (1) contribute to God's happiness by creating value that he can absorb, or (2) bring him sorrow by committing evil acts that cause discord and ugliness in his cosmic memory. Of course, God desires that his experience of joy be enriched. But he cannot guarantee that this desire will always be fulfilled, since he cannot fully control the activities of his free creatures without destroying them and thereby destroying himself, which is impossible. Therefore, evil will always exist, and God will never become completely perfect. Such are the inevitable and logical risks of genuine freedom (*DCD*, p.285; *NTOT*, pp. 112-113).

3. Schubert M. Ogden

The last major advocate of process theism we will deal with here is Schubert M. Ogden. He is a theologian who adopted, though not uncritically, the process philosophy of Hartshorne and supplemented it with Rudolph Bultmann's existentialism.¹⁷ Ogden gives a comprehensive presentation of his process perspective in his book *The Reality of God and Other Essays* (1963).

Ogden joins other process theists in abandoning the classical view of God. He gives three arguments against classical theism that are common among other process thinkers. The first one is the antinomy of creation. Classical theists believe that God freely created the world and therefore was under no necessity to create. They also maintain that 'God's act of creation is one with his own eternal essence, which is in every respect necessary'. Ogden argues that these two beliefs result 'in the hopeless contradiction of a wholly necessary creation of a wholly contingent [*i.e.* freely created] world'.¹⁸

The second argument is the antinomy of service. Classical theists think that 'the end of man is to serve or glorify God through obedience to his will and commandments'. They also believe that the divine being man is to serve is a 'statically complete perfection incapable in any respect of further self-realization. God can be neither increased nor diminished by what we do.' From these two tenets Ogden concludes that whatever man does cannot truly be *for* God since man's service cannot make any difference *in* God (*RG*, pp. 17-18).

The third objection Ogden gives is from 'existential repugnance' (*RG*, p. 18). He states it this way: 'If what we do and suffer as men in the world is from God's perspective wholly indifferent, that perspective is at most irrelevant to our actual existence. It can provide no motive for action, no cause to serve, and no comfort in our distress beyond the motives, causes, and comforts already supplied by our various secular undertakings. But, more than that, to involve ourselves in these undertakings and to affirm their ultimate significance is implicitly to deny the God [of classical theism] who is himself finally conceived as the denial of our life with the world.' It will do no good to refer to this wholly indifferent God as 'the loving heavenly Father revealed in Jesus, who freely creates the world and guides it toward its fulfilments with loving care'. This will only entrap one in the antinomies already cited. Hence, once it is understood that classical theism undercuts man's belief in 'the importance of the secular' — his affirmation 'that man and the world are themselves of ultimate significance' — classical theism should be rejected as existentially repugnant (*RG*, p. 18).

Ogden replaces the monopolar deity of classical theism with the bipolar God of Charles Hartshorne (*RG*, p. 141). Ogden does this, however, with a liberal Christian emphasis. For example, he talks about the neoclassical God creating the world *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), but he does not understand this to mean that God brought the entire universe into existence from no pre-existent material. Rather, he maintains that God has always existed with 'some actual world of creatures'. Therefore, each one of these worlds was 'created "out of nothing", in the sense that there once was when [each of them] was not'. In other words, each new world did not actually exist before God co-created it, but it was potentially 'existent' in the 'conjoint actuality of God and of the creatures constituting the precedent actual world (or worlds)' (*RG*, pp. 62-63).

Ogden also affirms that God has been a co-creator with others throughout the infinite temporal past. He claims that this understanding conflicts with a literal interpretation of Genesis 1-2. However, he contends that a literal approach to these chapters displays a misunderstanding of the nature of myth, which is 'to illumine the essential structure and meaning of our life in the present'. And since Genesis 1-2 are mythological, they need to be demythologized and their existential meaning for contemporary man determined. Once this is done, one can see that 'the myth and doctrine of creation affirm primarily that the one essential *cause* of each moment is God's boundless love for it' (*RG*, p. 214).¹⁹

Ogden traces moral evil to creatures' misuse of their freedom. One way in which we human beings abuse our freedom is when we reject 'ourselves as the creatures we know ourselves to be'. At the root of our self-rejection is 'our rejection of God's acceptance of our lives and of all lives'.²⁰ This act is what Ogden calls sin.

Furthermore, Ogden affirms that God redeems all by accepting 'all things into his life', including 'unrepentant sinners — those 'who have rejected his [God's] acceptance in rejecting themselves as the creatures they inevitably are'. However, unrepentant sinners cannot be saved from sin, only repentant sinners can. This is so because salvation is the 'process that includes not only the redeeming action of God

himself but also the faithful response to this action on the part of the individual sinner' (*FF*, pp. 86-87). Consequently, all sinners are redeemed — accepted — into God's all-embracing life, but only those sinners who faithfully accept God's acceptance of them will be saved.

Ogden also contends that 'God acts in history' but not through miraculous intervention. He understands God's action in history in two ways. One is that since every creature is partly created by God, each creature's 'freedom has definite limits ultimately grounded in God's own free decisions'. The other way God may be said to act in history is to the degree that man represents through his speech or conduct both 'his own understanding of God's action [and] the reality of God's action itself' (*RG*, pp. 180-181).

Moreover, Ogden denies the existence of an actual heaven and hell. Once a human being dies, he or she ceases to exist except as a loving memory in the mind of God (*RG*, pp. 36, 226-230).²¹ But this should not discourage us, since the value we contribute to God's experience before our death can 'advance the real good' in the world. That is, the good deeds we perform can add to 'God's ever-growing perfection, which is, indeed, "the true life of all"' (*TNT*, p. 186).

Finally, Ogden admits that there are passages in the Bible which support the orthodox understanding of the Bible as God's inspired, infallible Word to man. However, he adds, 'Scripture does not characteristically appeal to revelation as providing special knowledge of God's existence and nature.' For 'what Christian revelation reveals to man is nothing new, since such truths as it makes explicit must already be known to him implicitly in every moment of existence'.²² Furthermore, like many process theologians, Ogden maintains that the Bible must be reconstructed via a Bultmannian demythologization method so as to recover the true canon of Scripture — the canon within the canon. In regard to the New Testament, this process involves discovering 'the apostolic witness to Jesus the Christ, which is historically prior to the [writing of the] New Testament' yet embedded in the New Testament.²³

Some responses to process theism

Although many Protestants and Catholics have adopted in part or in whole a process or process-like view of God, others have challenged this perspective. We will point out some of the more penetrating criticisms.

Many critics have found the panentheistic arguments against classical theism to be unwarranted. For example, Ogden's antinomy of creation is answerable on a classical metaphysical of being. Thomas Aquinas argued that the only thing God must will necessarily is his own being. Therefore, anything else that he wills must be willed freely. Thus, even if God's will is viewed as one with his unchangeable nature, nevertheless it is of the nature of God that creation flow from him freely, not by necessity. Given this, there is no contradiction in the classical belief that God as a necessary being freely created a contingent universe.²⁴

Similarly, Ogden's antinomy of service is resolvable. Ogden assumes that nothing can be done *for* God unless one's service adds to the nature or perfection of God. But this assumption begs the question in favour of a process deity. On

the classical view, God is an absolutely perfect being and therefore in need of nothing to enrich his nature (Acts 17:24-25). However, this understanding does not entail that nothing can be done *for* God. For example, God may desire that man serves him by carrying out some of his purposes for creation. As man does this, he magnifies God's glory, which is the outward manifestation of God's internal character. As a magnifying glass enhances an object in the viewer's eyes without changing the object's nature, so man's service for God exalts God's character without altering his immutably perfect essence.

Moreover, Ogden's argument from existential repugnance assumes a view of divine independence that classical theists need not accept. Divine independence does not necessarily entail that God is indifferent to the needs and pain of his creatures. Rather, divine independence means that God does not depend on his creation to fulfil anything in his nature or character. And since he is wholly perfect, he is free to respond to his creatures out of his superabundance. Put another way, God does not need our love but he desires it. And because he is love, he 'has sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God [or that he needed us to love him], but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 Jn. 4:8b-10).

Although these are not the only objections process theists have raised against classical theism, the fact that these three common arguments can be answered without abandoning any central tenets of classical theism indicates that the panentheistic case is not as strong as some people may think. Besides, process theism appears to have some problems of its own.

First, the bipolar concept of God seems to be contradictory. A contradiction results when opposites are affirmed of the same thing at the same time and in the same manner or respect. Process theists claim that God is both infinite and finite, necessary and contingent, and absolute and relative, at the same time. This appears to be contradictory. However, Hartshorne is quick to point out that the metaphysical opposites are not applied to the same divine pole. Attributes such as infinity and necessity characterize God's abstract pole, while attributes like finity and contingency apply to his concrete pole. Therefore, metaphysical opposites are not being attributed in the same respect to God. Consequently, he claims the bipolar view of God is not contradictory (*AW*, pp. 22-24; *MVG*, p. 322). This response, however, does not adequately answer the charge of logical incoherence. For Hartshorne fails to bring up the fact that there is no real distinction between the two divine poles. God's abstract pole has no concrete, or actual, existence. It is simply a mere idea that has no extra-mental reality (*NTOT*, pp. 76-77; *MVG*, p. 218). Therefore, God must not be really infinite, necessary, and so on, but only finite and contingent. Or, God must be the metaphysical opposites at the same time and in the same pole. The first option corresponds to finite monopolar godism, not panentheism. The second alternative manifests a contradiction at the heart of process theism. Either way one takes it, there seems to be a serious problem of logical coherence in the bipolar concept of God.

Second, the panentheistic claim that all of reality is in process poses a critical problem. For the statement 'All of

reality is in process' is itself either in process or not in process. If the statement is changing, then its truth value and meaning are also changing. That is, the statement may be true one moment and false the next, or meaningful one second and meaningless the next. Indeed, the statement may even be true and meaningful in some places of the universe at some moments and false and meaningless in other places of the universe during the same moments. In short, if the statement 'All of reality is in process' is itself in process, then no-one could know from one occasion to the next if it were actually true or meaningful, which is self-defeating. On the other hand, if 'All of reality is in process' is itself not in process, then there is one aspect about reality that is not changing, which is self-defeating. Furthermore, if it were held that all of reality is in process except the truth and meaning of the statement 'All of reality is in process', then one would be engaged in special pleading. There seems to be no way for a panentheist to offer a sound case for the belief that everything in reality is changing.

Third, the process view of God's relationship to the world seems incoherent. Panentheists contend that God depends on the universe, and the universe depends on him. This concept of mutual ontological dependence raises some serious questions. How can God be dependent on that which depends on him? How can God be the cause of that which is causing his own existence? A process theist might say that God is not the cause of the universe in the same sense in which the universe is causing him. But if that is the case, then there must be some sense in which God is completely independent of the world, which is a denial of process theism. We can pose the same problem this way. If the entire universe — God's concrete pole — were to cease to exist, would there be any reality left to God? If the answer is no, then God is actually totally contingent and dependent on the universe. But if this is so, then God and the universe must be caused to exist by another being, which itself is necessary. In other words, the panentheistic God must be caused to exist by the theistic God! However, if the answer to the question is yes — that something of God would be left if the whole universe were to perish — then neoclassical theism is really classical theism in disguise. For process theists would then be holding that there is a necessary, unchanging, timeless being who is ontologically independent of the contingent, changing universe. It seems, therefore, that the only way to make process theism coherent is to transform it into classical theism.

Fourth, panentheists' belief in an infinite regress of causes is incoherent. That is, it is logically impossible that God and the universe could have been co-creating each other for an unlimited duration. An infinite regress of causes means that A causes B to exist, and B causes C to exist, and so on *ad infinitum*. Put another way, A could not exist unless B did first, B could not exist unless C did first, and so on. Hence every cause in the causal chain is dependent on another cause in the chain for its existence. We might illustrate it this way: suppose person A wanted to borrow ten dollars from person B. In an infinite regress, however, person B could not loan person A ten dollars unless person C had loaned that amount to person B. Of course, person C would not have ten dollars to loan unless person D had first loaned it to person C. And so the regress goes. Now it is clear from this illustration that if no-one is found who simply had ten dollars to loan — that is,

one who did not need to borrow the ten dollars from someone else — then person A would never get to borrow the money. However, if someone is found who has ten dollars to loan, then the regress stops, in which case the causal chain is not infinite. When applied to the question of existence, this reasoning demonstrates the incoherence of an infinite regress of causes. For if no cause in the causal chain ever just has existence to give — that is, it did not get its existence from another cause — then nothing exists, which is patently absurd. On the other hand, if some cause in the chain has existence that it did not get from another cause, then the regress comes to a halt, in which case there exists an uncaused Cause that has caused the existence of all other existents. In short, the concept of an infinite regress of causes leads either to an absurd conclusion or to an uncaused Cause, both of which are contrary to the claims of panentheism.²⁵

Fifth, the neoclassical concept of personhood destroys self-identity and contradicts human experience. Most people think of themselves as personal beings who endure change to some degree. However, few believe that they become new persons each moment of their existence. In fact, to say 'I become a new person each moment I exist' assumes that there is something that endures through the changes — namely, the 'I'. Otherwise, what changes? If nothing endures from moment to moment, on what grounds can it be claimed that anything changes? If there is no sense in which the self is a continuous identity, it appears that one can only speak of an I - I - I series of unrelated actual occasions. And in that series of 'I's', the only thing that can be said to change is the series itself, not each individual 'I' in the series. What happens to each 'I'? It would seem that each successive 'I' pops in and out of existence. Hartshorne appears to confirm this when he states that a sleeping or unconscious individual ceases to exist as a person (*LP*, pp. 220-221). This means that a parent awakening a child from sleep is actually calling a new young one into existence!²⁶

Sixth, many sharp criticisms have been made of the common panentheistic viewpoint of the Bible as containing legends and therefore requiring demythologization. It has been pointed out by experts in mythology that the Bible does not read as a book laden with myth.²⁷ In fact, its historical reliability is widely accepted by most historians and archaeologists of antiquity.²⁸ Moreover, it is doubtful if the time gap between the composition of the New Testament documents and the events they describe is sufficient to allow for significant accumulation of fictitious elements around the core of historical facts.²⁹

Seventh, the biblical interpretation of many process theologians is unsound. For instance, panentheists often understand the Bible texts that depict God repenting or changing his mind as indicating real change in God's nature (Gn. 6:5-7; Ex. 32:14; Jon. 3:10). But if these passages are to be interpreted literally, then it would also seem reasonable to interpret literally those references to God as having arms, eyes and wings (Ex. 15:16; Pss. 11:4; 89:13; 91:4), an exegetical option that practically no Bible scholar takes seriously. In addition, there are many passages which contradict the notion that God can change in his being (Ps. 102:25-27; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8; Jas. 1:17). It seems, therefore, that the exegetically most satisfactory interpretation is to understand all passages that ascribe change in God's nature as figurative,

or anthropopathic. This conclusion does not imply that God is unable *personally* to respond to his creatures. But it does entail that his personal interaction with creatures does not effect any change in his immutable essence.³⁰

Although many other objections have been raised against process theism, these demonstrate that the movement's most fundamental tenets are plagued with severe problems that appear to be insurmountable.³¹

Process theism and evangelicalism

Process theology has had wide influence, even among those who reject its cardinal tenets, including among evangelicals.³² This fact raises the question: Is process theism compatible with evangelical theology? The answer must be no, if evangelical theology is grounded on a classical theistic understanding of God and the world. For example, a process evangelical could not accept creation *ex nihilo* since creation is necessarily *ex materia* in panentheism. Neither could a process evangelical adhere to infallibly predictive divine prophecy, since God is not omniscient and the future is open and indeterminate according to neoclassical theism. Furthermore, a process evangelical would have to give up the biblical hope of God's final triumph over evil (Rev. 20-22). A consistent process evangelical would even have to reject the idea that God performs miracles, that is, supernatural events. This is so because panentheism views God as a cosmic Sympathiser and Director, not a cosmic Activist and sovereign King. Therefore, miraculous intervention is not possible for a divine passive recipient of creaturely activity, even though it is perfectly compatible with a God who created the universe from nothing, sustains it in existence by his power, and loves human beings so much that he sent his Son into the human arena to die in man's place for sin.

It appears, then, that panentheism as such and evangelicalism cannot be philosophical or theological bedfellows. Those who try to wed these diametrically opposed views are engaged in an impossible task. This is not to say that we cannot gain some positive value from process thought. For example, while traditional theism is right in maintaining that God does not change in his *essence*, certainly God engages in changing *relations* with his changing world. And while the biblical God is by nature *beyond* time, yet he surely acts *in* time. However, evangelicals should be careful not to sacrifice the fundamentals of the theistic God on the pantheistic altar. The cost is too great.

¹R. C. Sproul, 'The Relativity Blitz and Process Theology', *Christianity Today* (23 April 1982), p. 50.

²Paul Mickey, 'A Process Perspective as an Option for Theology of Inspiration', a paper available through Theological Students Fellowship, n.d., p. 1.

³Michael L. Peterson, 'Orthodox Christianity, Wesleyanism, and Process Theology', *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15:2 (Fall 1980), p. 45.

⁴More information on the contemporary development of process theism can be found in the essay 'The Development of Process Theology' by Gene Reeves and Delwin Brown, in *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought*, ed. Delwin Brown, Ralph E. James and Gene Reeves (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1971), pp. 21-64.

⁵Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, rp (New York: A Meridian Book, New American Library, 1974; first pub. 1926), p. 66. Hereafter referred to as *RM* in the text.

⁶Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969; first pub. 1929), p. 95. Hereafter referred to as *PR* in the text.

⁷Lewis S. Ford, 'Hartshorne's Encounter with Whitehead: Introductory Remarks', in *Two Process Philosophers: Hartshorne's Encounter with Whitehead*, AAR Studies in Religion 5 (Tallahassee: American Academy of Religion, 1973), p. 1.

⁸Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, rp (Chicago: The University Press, 1976; first pub. 1953), p. 24.

⁹Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (LaSalle: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 74-75, italics ours. Hereafter referred to as *NTOT* in the text.

¹⁰Charles Hartshorne, *Aquinas to Whitehead: Seven Centuries of Metaphysics of Religion* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Publications, 1976), pp. 22-24. Hereafter referred to as *AW* in the text.

¹¹Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 79-81. Hereafter referred to as *DR* in the text.

¹²Charles Hartshorne, 'Personal Identity from A to Z', in *Process Studies* 2 (Fall 1972), p. 209.

¹³Charles Hartshorne, 'The Dipolar Conception of Deity', in *The Review of Metaphysics* 21 (December 1967), p. 287. Hereafter referred to as *DCD* in the text.

¹⁴Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1964; first pub. 1941), p. 211. Hereafter referred to as *MVG* in the text. See also *NTOT*, p. 104.

¹⁵Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1962), p. 126. Hereafter referred to as *LP* in the text.

¹⁶Charles Hartshorne, *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays, 1935-1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), p. 195.

¹⁷Schubert M. Ogden, 'Bultmann's Demythologizing and Hartshorne's Dipolar Theism', in *Process and Divinity: Philosophical Essays Presented to Charles Hartshorne* (LaSalle: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 495, 498, 506, 510, 511.

¹⁸Schubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God and Other Essays* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977; first pub. 1963), p. 17. Hereafter referred to as *RG* in the text.

¹⁹Cf. Ogden's essay 'Toward a New Theism', in *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought*, p. 177. Hereafter referred to as *TNT* in the text.

²⁰Schubert M. Ogden, *Faith and Freedom: Toward a Theology of Liberation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 86. Hereafter referred to as *FF* in the text. See also Schubert M. Ogden, *Theology in Crisis: A Colloquium on the Credibility of 'God'* (New Concord: Muskingum College, 20-21 March 1967), p. 55.

²¹See also Schubert M. Ogden's 'The Meaning of Christian Hope', in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 30 (Winter-Summer 1975), pp. 160-163.

²²Schubert M. Ogden, 'On Revelation', in *Our Common History as Christians* (New York: OUP, 1975), pp. 272, 287.

²³Schubert M. Ogden, 'The Authority of Scripture for Theology', in *Interpretation* 30 (July 1976), p. 256.

²⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I.19.3.

²⁵This argument against an infinite regress of causes comes from Richard Purtill's book, *Reason to Believe* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 83-87.

²⁶Cf. Peter A. Bertocci, 'Hartshorne on Personal Identity: A Personalistic Critique', in *Process Studies* (Fall 1972), pp. 216-221; Rem B. Edwards, 'The Human Self: An Actual Entity or a Society?', in *Process Studies* (Fall 1975), pp. 195-203; Royce Gordon Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God: Biblical Faith and the Challenge of Process Theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), chaps. 2-3.

²⁷For example, see C. S. Lewis's 'Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism', in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967).

²⁸See Clifford A. Wilson, *Rocks, Relics and Biblical Reliability* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977); K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1966); Edwin Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1972); A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, rp (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978).

²⁹It is generally accepted that the NT was completed by about AD 100, only 70 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Some

scholars, like John A. T. Robinson (*Redating the New Testament* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976]), argue that the composition of the NT was completed before AD 70, making the accumulation of mythical elements to its pages virtually impossible.

³⁰ See Norman L. Geisler, 'Process Theology', in *Contemporary Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Alan F. Johnson, rev. edn (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), pp. 271-272.

³¹ Other objections against process theism can be found in these sources: Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God*; Bruce A. Demarest, 'Process Theology and the Pauline Doctrine of the Incarnation', in *Pauline Studies*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980), pp. 122-142; Norman L. Geisler, 'Process Theology', in *Tensions in Contemporary Theology*, rev. edn, pp. 237-284; Norman L. Geisler, 'Process Theology and Inerrancy', in *Challenges to Inerrancy*, ed. Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 247-284; Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Perspectives: Understanding and Evaluating Today's World Views* (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1984), chap. 5.

³² Some evangelical or conservative theologians who are sympathetic to certain aspects of process thought include Mark Lau Braunsen, 'Evangelism and Social Ethics: Some Practical Implications', *Perkins Journal* 35 (Winter/Spring 1982), p. 18; Paul

Mickey, 'A Process Perspective as an Option for Theology of Inspiration' (see above, n.2); Merold Westphal, 'Temporality and Finitism in Hartshorne's Theism', in *The Review of Metaphysics* 19 (March 1966), pp. 550-564; Clark Pinnock, 'The Need for a Scriptural, and Therefore a Neoclassical Theism', in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); Brian L. Hebblethwaite, 'Some Reflections on Predestination, Providence and Divine Foreknowledge', in *Religious Studies* 15 (December 1979), pp. 433-448; Hendrikus Berkhof, 'The (Un)Changeability of God', in *Grace Upon Grace*, ed. James I. Cook (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 21-29; Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 2 vols (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 1:27-30, 45; Reginald S. Luhman, 'The Concept of God: Some Philosophical Considerations', in *Evangelical Quarterly* 54 (April-June 1982), pp. 88-104; Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Letter to a Young Theologian', in *Reformed Journal* 26 (September 1976), pp. 16-17, and 'God Everlasting', in *God and the Good*, ed. Clifton Orlebeke and Lewis Smedes, pp. 181-203; Stephen T. Davis, *Logic and the Nature of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); Ronald H. Nash, *The Concept of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983); James Daane, 'Can a Man Bless God?' in *God and the Good*, pp. 165-173; Jim Garrison, *The Darkness of God: Theology after Hiroshima* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

Asking God

Paul Helm

The question of intercessory prayer and how it 'works' is one that bothers theologians and ordinary Christians alike. We are grateful to the author, who is lecturer in philosophy at Liverpool University, for his help with the question.

Christians are convinced that they ought to pray to God and that God brings about certain events *because* people ask him to, even to the extent of doing what he has previously said he will not do, and so (apparently) changing his mind. The 'because' is puzzling, for it seems to follow from

God performed X because A asked him for X
that

If A had not asked for X God would not have performed X
and even

A forced God to perform X.

There are many other puzzles raised by petitionary prayer. Many have been worried because it seems that petitionary prayer is grasping and selfish and presupposes an inappropriate idea of God as a sugar-daddy. Others worry about why, if God could perform X without A asking him to (as he undoubtedly could), he sees fit to suspend the performing of X upon A's request. That is, they are concerned about petitionary prayer as it relates to questions of theodicy. And there is also the more familiar question of how it is possible to know that a particular event that occurs is an 'answer to prayer'. But we shall have quite sufficient to do to think about the 'because' and some of the problems that it raises, about what might be called the metaphysics of prayer.

The general approach to the metaphysics of petitionary prayer that I wish to suggest is that such praying is no more or less problematical as regards the relation between human action and divine action than any other action which a person

may perform. Problems arise only because 'prayer' and other factors such as 'science' and 'the will of God' are thought about in too abstract a fashion.

Suppose A waters the newly planted seeds in his greenhouse and they spring to life. Then it is possible to say

God made the seeds sprout because A watered them
and

If A had not watered the seeds God would not have made them sprout.

(Here, of course, we are ruling out miracles, and the possibility of someone other than A watering the seeds, or of them receiving water accidentally, simply in order to concentrate on the relation between A's action and God's.)

This may seem to be a straightforward case. But suppose you are in the crowd cheering United to victory. Could you say

If I had not cheered, United would not have won?
and

God made United win because I cheered?

Or suppose you are driving on the motorway at a time when a crash occurs nearby, though you are not directly involved in it. Could you say

If I had not been on the motorway the crash would not have occurred?
and

God made the crash to occur because I was driving nearby?

I

What is the difference between the 'because' of prayer to God and of these other cases? Suppose, to begin with, that we take the view that the relation between the divine and the human

wills is such that God ordains all that comes to pass including the free actions of human beings. And let us assume that the prayer in the example was a free human action. Then we can say that God has ordained the praying, and the answer to the prayer, just as he has ordained the action of watering the seed, and the sprouting of the seed.

In each case it is tempting to separate one event or action in the matrix of events and actions that we have described from all the others, and to speculate about it thus: 'If A had not . . . , then God would not have . . .'. Such a temptation is particularly acute in the case of petitionary prayer. Suppose a person prays for success in his examinations, works hard at his revision, and passes. It is very tempting to suppose that the so-called petitionary prayer could not have had any real efficacy in that the person's revision was itself causally sufficient for success. Perhaps the most we care to concede is that the effect of the praying is on the prayer, making him redouble his efforts. Or perhaps that his praying is a sign that he *has* redoubled his efforts.

Why are such attempts at prising apart one or another action or event from the matrix of events and actions to be resisted? Because if it is supposed that A had not prayed to God or watered the plants then the total matrix of events and actions is thereby changed, and a different matrix is introduced since the original situation *did* involve A praying or A watering. Whether the conditionals 'If A had not prayed . . .' (when in fact he did), or 'If A had not watered . . .' (when in fact he did), or 'If A had not cheered . . .' (when in fact he did) are worth discussing depends very largely upon how much *general* information there is about such cases and therefore how warranted we are in making generalizations about them. For instance, in the case of the watering of the seeds there is good inductive evidence for the proposition that seeds will not germinate without moisture, and so the conditional 'If A had not watered the seeds they would not have germinated' is pretty safe (assuming no miracles, and the intervention of no other waterers). But can the same be said about the examples of cheering United and driving on the motorway? And do we have enough general information about prayer to justify us saying, in each particular case, 'If A had not prayed . . .'? Is it even proper to raise the question, proper not in the moral or spiritual sense but in the intellectual sense?

Moreover, to form a true estimate of the efficacy of Christian prayer, of its metaphysical difficulties and their solution, it is unwise to consider 'prayer' in the abstract, but to consider in the first place under what conditions petitionary prayer is *warranted*. This, for the Christian, can only be answered by a careful induction of the biblical data, but the results of that induction are vital. For if they show that there are certain prayers which, if asked sincerely, will always be answered, or sometimes be answered, or never be answered, then this is obviously relevant to resolving such questions as 'Did God answer because I prayed?'. If there are situations in which prayer is both necessary and sufficient for the gaining of what is prayed for, then the answer must be 'yes'. If prayer is neither necessary nor sufficient the answer must be 'maybe'.

One important difference between praying to God and watering the seeds is that the prayer is a *request* whereas the watering is not. How otherwise similar the cases are depends

upon how much is known about the request. Suppose, for example, that it is known that God will invariably grant such a request. Then the 'because' that follows the request and the 'because' that follows the watering approximate, for what the 'because' signals in each case is that given certain conditions — a uniform determination to make the request in the case of the prayer, and certain uniformities about plant growth in the other — the human action in each case (praying, watering) is *sufficient* for bringing about the result. When, on the other hand, it is not known that God will invariably grant the request, what the 'because' signals is that the request is causally necessary for bringing about the result, and only together with God's (optional) answer are the two causally sufficient.

There is another kind of case. Besides the case where God has promised uniformly to answer certain prayers and the case where he has not, but has reserved to himself the right to answer or not as he sees fit, there may be cases where *only* prayer is efficacious, where God indicates that certain events will take place *only if* people pray.

Thus it is important not to split apart unwarrantably the matrix of events and actions within which petitionary prayer is set. The results of some splittings apart are clear. On the one hand if the prayer had not been offered what happened would not have happened. On the other extreme if the prayer had not been offered the 'answer' would have taken place anyway. But in the middle there is a class of cases which are not clear one way or the other.

So one ought to resist the temptation to compare the investigation of praying to investigation in the natural sciences. The natural sciences are so because of the repeatability of experimental situations and the possibility of establishing generalizations of timeless regularity. But in the case of prayer we are not dealing with one physical factor among many others in a set of physical equations, but with human actions and their significance in the one history of the universe, a history that by definition is *not* repeatable. In this history each matrix of events and actions that we choose to isolate for discussion is unique, and hence to ask what would have been the case if that unique matrix had been different is to ask a question that is unanswerable. God who ordained certain ends ordained also the means to accomplish those ends, and in some cases, in his wisdom, the means include people asking him to do certain things. He has so ordered the total matrix that he does some things because people ask him to, and if they had not asked, the conditions which are otherwise sufficient for the production of what is asked for would not have been provided.

In the words of the hymn writer Joseph Hart

Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give.

In Augustine's words, 'prayers are powerful to attain those things which He foreknows that He will give to such as pray for them'.

Summing up, assuming that all events, including prayers, are ordained by God, in those cases (if there are any) where there is no quasi-scientific regularity about prayer and the promised answer, where prayer is sufficient to secure what is prayed for, then the efficacy of petitionary prayer cannot be

considered in abstraction from the total matrix of which the prayer forms a part and which is itself a segment of the unique history of the universe. And in this, praying is no different from many other human actions such as watering seeds or driving in traffic.

II

On the other hand, suppose one takes an 'interventionist' view of prayer. Then God has no plans whose outcome is fixed, or only some such plans. The rest of what happens is to be 'filled in' by the results of free human decisions, the outcome of which (perhaps) not even God knows before the events in question are due to take place. (Such a God would, presumably, have to exist in time since it is necessary that he be able to react to certain events, including petitionary prayers, upon learning about them.) Then perhaps God will react favourably or otherwise to such praying depending upon the cogency, persistence and sincerity of the praying. If people pray intelligently, fervently and long, then the 'gap' left in the future in order to allow for the functioning of autonomous human purposes will, as time goes on, increasingly take the shape that is required for such requests to be answered (allowing, as well, for the shape of *other* requests being made at the same time). If prayer is made with less intelligence, fervency and strength then the gap will come to have a shape which more or less corresponds to their requests, while if defective prayer or no prayer at all is offered the gap will come to have an altogether different shape, one that is incompatible with anything that could reasonably be said to correspond to their wishes.

On such a view of prayer, an extreme one no doubt but one which corresponds closely to some forms of popular piety, God's stance towards human prayer is essentially a reactive one and prayer is more or less a *force*. Reactions to prayer are determined not even in part by purposes (declared or otherwise) which God might be supposed to have but solely by the nature and strength of the request being made (and all other requests). It is hard to see how such a view could be worked out consistently if God is required to determine the action of A in order to answer B's prayer to God about A, but perhaps it could be. On this view God functions like a good-natured, old-fashioned switchboard operator who puts through calls or not depending upon which lines are engaged, and which are open, and how frequently and persistently attempts are made to call a particular extension number.

Given such a view, how is persistence in petitionary prayer different from persistence in any other activity where the outcome, the filling in of the gaps of an 'open future', is a function of the skill, determination and persistence of the agent?

Such an extreme case has been constructed not in order to recommend it but solely for the purposes of argument. In my view such an idea of prayer is more magical than biblical, denying as it does any purposes to God other than those of a mere prayer-answerer. But God clearly has other purposes, some at least of which lead him to deny answers to prayer.

III

It may be said that the views so far expressed do not properly take into account natural science and the modern under-

standing of physical nature. Take, for example, the familiar idea of praying for fine weather, or for rain during a drought. Suppose that on Thursday we pray for rain and it rains. Is it naïve, on either the 'all things decreed' or the 'interventionist' view, to suppose that it rains because rain has been prayed for, and that the prayer has been answered? Surely today's atmospheric conditions were the outcome of yesterday's (together with certain fixed laws) and so have come about in a way which can be satisfactorily explained in purely meteorological terms?

If one accepted this general picture of science and one were an 'interventionist' in one's view of prayer then one would have to say that the only way in which prayer can be answered in such circumstances is by the occurrence of a miracle or miracles. If prayer had not been offered (and therefore not answered) it would not have rained. The rain was due to the direct intervention of God in physical nature brought about as a result of the petition. Such a view is certainly consistent but it has as one of its consequences that the number of miracles is much greater than is commonly thought, even by those who take this view of prayer. It is the implausibility of such a view that led Pope to write

Think we, like some weak prince, the Eternal Cause
Prone for his favourites to reverse his laws!
Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires,
Forget to thunder, and recall its fires?
On air and sea new motions be impressed,
O blameless Bethel, to relieve thy breast?
Should the loose mountain tremble from on high?
Shall gravitation cease if you go by?

Suppose, alternatively, that one took the 'all-decreeing' view of petitionary prayer. In the case of the prayer for rain one would have to say that God did not only ordain 'from the beginning' the meteorological sequence that included rain on Thursday, but that he also ordained that at least one phase of the sequence (the 'rain on Thursday' phase) was to follow prayer for rain on Thursday, and also that he ordained the rain *because of* the prayers.

So, it is inadvisable to consider the metaphysics of prayer in the abstract. For a theist who takes the 'all things decreed' view or an 'interventionist' view, natural science (considered as what explains what happens in terms of physical laws and conditions) is also an abstraction. From God's standpoint nothing happens *simply* because science says it will (given the laws and conditions) but only because he says it will, and he uses physical regularities (which, because they are regular, can be usefully codified in terms of laws of nature) together with other factors including 'the prayers of the saints' in order to bring certain things about in answer to prayer. It is important to realize, therefore, that while it is perfectly possible to talk of 'science' and to discuss what makes good science, what the character of scientific laws is, and what constitutes a good experiment, nevertheless from the standpoint of the total flow of events viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*, 'scientific facts' or 'scientific events' represent abstractions which it is impossible to give an account of on their own but which we are able to consider in abstraction because, due to God's faithfulness as expressed in nature, we are able to set up laboratories and to conduct controlled experiments.

Book reviews

Claus Westermann, **Genesis 1-11: A Commentary** (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), xii + 636 pp., \$29.95.

The translation of a book such as this into English is like the arrival of a long unseen friend. You can now introduce him to your friends who have not had the privilege of encountering him before. They can also experience the fruit of his wisdom.

This volume, which first appeared in its entirety in 1974, is now able to be appreciated by those to whom it was inaccessible in German. The next volume, on the patriarchal narratives, appeared in English in 1985 and the last volume, on the Joseph story, will soon follow. Their arrival is most welcome.

While not quite 'all you wanted to know about Genesis 1-11 but were afraid to ask', Westermann's work is probably the most comprehensive on these chapters to date. This was illustrated by the excitement of one reader at Tyndale House at finding an article on a relevant passage which Westermann had not cited. The bibliographic scope in the book is so vast that such an event is remarkable. For example, the list of literature appended to the book's introduction runs to four pages and some 200 entries, and is immediately followed by a listing of 114 items on Gn. 1:1 - 2:4a and, more specifically, 1:1-3. Reference is made to research from across the theological spectrum as well as in a number of different languages.

It is in the bibliographies, however, that one notices that, as for the long unseen friend, time has passed and one is getting older. Not only is there a gap of ten years between the German and English publications, but the original fascicles of the German edition were even earlier. The most recent reference in the earlier part of the book is to a 1967 publication, while there is reference later only up to 1975. The latter shows that the translator made some minor additions, but it is a great pity that more was not done. While the book is a masterpiece and will remain a necessary tool for some time to come, it would have been even more valuable if a completely new edition could have brought it up to date. After all, two decades, or even one, is a long period of time in biblical interpretation, especially concerning such key passages as those discussed here.

Following a table of contents which is expanded over the German original, thus making the book more accessible, and two forewords, the author introduces the 'Story of the Primeval Events'. He points out the equal importance in this passage of both narrative and genealogy and gives a detailed introduction to each, including a comparison with similar genres inside and outside the Bible, closing with a brief discussion of the theological significance of the passage. Following the main commentary, a final chapter discusses 'the formation and theological meaning of the story', reviewing Pentateuchal research, showing lacks in the Documentary hypothesis and the need and contribution of tradition history. Due to the date of completion of the original, no use could be made of the important recent works of Rendtorff and Schmidt. The book closes with a list of abbreviations and indices of Hebrew words, biblical references, subjects, and names and authors.

The commentary proper follows a set format for each subsection. We will look at 1:1 - 2:4b, 'The Creation of the World'. This opens with a bibliography on the passage as a whole and also on 1:1-3, listed in chronological order. Then comes a translation by the commentator with following notes on textual questions. A major form-critical section discusses literary form and tradition history, the structure of the passage and its setting in life. A verse-by-verse commentary proceeds through each word or clause, at times with its own bibliography. It discusses grammatical (e.g. syntax of 1:1), theological (e.g. *creatio ex nihilo*; doctrine of God), cultural (e.g. 'heaven and earth' in Egyptian), semantic (e.g. the meaning of *tôhû*) and other similar matters. Here the Hebrew is untransliterated and untranslated, so some knowledge of it is necessary, though its lack can be somewhat overcome by careful study of the comments. There are excursions on 'blessing' and the history of exegesis of 1:26-27. The section closes with a discussion of the passage's purpose and thrust.

Westermann approaches the text from a strongly historical critical perspective and is especially interested in the history of tradition. Most readers of this review will have presuppositional and methodological questions to ask of the approach, but this book still needs to be consulted for any serious understanding of Genesis 1-11. Due to the date of its composition, questions of canon criticism or rhetorical criticism do not play a significant role, since they are more recent methodologies. Therefore the book needs to be supplemented, but it certainly cannot be replaced or ignored. We look forward with anticipation to the next two volumes.

David W. Baker, Ashland Theological Seminary, Ohio.

J. G. McConville, **Law and Theology in Deuteronomy** (JSOTS 33; Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1985), x + 240 pp., £18.50 hb, £8.95 pb.

Those who are familiar with modern critical study of the OT will be aware of the central importance of the book of Deuteronomy to all reconstructions of the history and religion of Israel. The dating of Deuteronomy to the seventh century BC in close proximity to Josiah's reform has become (despite occasional dissent) a virtual axiom of mainstream scholarship. Nonetheless, at a time when almost every other aspect of pentateuchal criticism is back in the melting-pot, it may well be that the date of Deuteronomy should be thrown into the pot too. That, at any rate, is the thesis of this stimulating monograph by Gordon McConville.

McConville argues that much modern study of Deuteronomy has been methodologically faulty. That is, scholars have too readily assumed that the laws in Deuteronomy can be interpreted and dated through comparison with other pentateuchal laws and the situation of seventh-century Judah, their basic assumption being that the distinctive features of deuteronomical laws are determined by changing historical circumstances. McConville argues, however, that the distinctive features of deuteronomical laws can be consistently explained when they are seen to exemplify the distinctive theological emphases of Deuteronomy as a whole. That is, the laws are less practical legislation than they are theological norms shaped by theological principles. Therefore they simply do not provide the sort of evidence upon which an historian can reconstruct the development and date of Deuteronomy. Insofar as any historical context can be deduced, the laws are consistent with Deuteronomy's self-presentation as speeches on the verge of the promised land.

McConville's careful analysis of all the laws that have traditionally been problematic mounts a much more serious assault on critical orthodoxy than have the various appeals to structural parallels between Deuteronomy and Hittite suzerainty treaties (which have usually lacked exegetical detail, and cannot in any case account for the last few chapters of the book). McConville's demonstration of the theological links between the laws in chapters 12-26 and the preceding chapters 1-11 is generally convincing as a whole. McConville is perhaps less convincing in his arguments about the history and religion of Israel outside Deuteronomy. Although he sharply points out many weaknesses in widely held historical reconstructions, he sometimes moves too quickly from showing that a position is not proven to asserting that it is unfounded or mistaken. Moreover, debatable positions that are congenial to McConville, such as Gordon Wenham's arguments for the originality of Dt. 27 to the book, are simply adopted without being subjected to the same scrutiny as debatable positions that are uncongenial.

This simply means, however, that there is more work to be done if a new assessment of Deuteronomy is to receive a firm place on the scholarly agenda. In the meantime McConville's arguments should be required reading for all who are interested in the critical problems of Deuteronomy. And even those who aren't particularly interested in the critical problems will still find McConville's exposition of the theology of Deuteronomy well worth while.

R. W. L. Moberly, University of Durham.

G. H. Jones, **1 and 2 Kings**, vols I and II (New Century Bible Commentary; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 606 pp., \$8.95 per volume.

This set is a worthy addition to a good, middle-level commentary series aimed toward both the scholar and the layman. The book starts with a fairly comprehensive bibliography spanning 39 pages divided into literary introduction, history, commentaries, and special studies up to 1982. If for nothing else, the book will be worth consulting just for this section alone. In spite of the length of the bibliography it is not exhaustive, especially as regards evangelical journals. A quick survey of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* and *Tyndale Bulletin* shows at least seven articles which would have been directly relevant for the commentary. Reference is made to evangelicals who publish in wider circulation journals. The benefits of the book do not stop here, however, for there follows an 84-page introduction. Here several of the notorious nettles of the background and introduction of Kings are grasped and the difficulties well presented so the problems can be understood, even though a final answer might not be available.

Firstly, Jones introduces the problems caused by a comparison of the Hebrew and Greek versions of Kings. Jones espouses the local text types of Cross, with four stages of development of the Greek text. Of these, the Lucianic, according to Jones, witnesses to a tradition which is at times to be preferred to the Hebrew text.

Jones next explores the extremely complex problem of the chronology of Kings, which is complicated by such matters as synchronisms both internal and external, various dating systems, the time of the New Year and possible co-regencies. He sees a reconstruction based on the MT alone as an impossibility, although he uses it most heavily. He adopts the chronology of K. T. Anderson published in 1967 in *Studia Theologia* 23.

The book as a 'deuteronomistic compilation' is then discussed, with Jones accepting, without demonstration, 'one of the universally accepted tenets of Old Testament literary criticism', namely, the deuteronomistic production of Joshua-Kings. Such a hermeneutical starting-point does provide interesting conclusions concerning Kings, but it should be first shown to be valid rather than merely accepted, since currently a number of 'universally accepted tenets' such as the Documentary Hypothesis and the form of the Servant Songs are being seriously questioned (see e.g. K. Kitchen in J. B. Payne, *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, 1970, pp. 1-24). This section does, however, provide a useful introduction to this area of putative editorial activity.

In the final two introductory sections the historical sources, which were combined into an historical work of merit in its own right rather than simply an amalgam of disjointed sources, and the theology are explored. Jones follows Noth and Von Rad in seeing the centrality of 'covenant' and worship of God. Deviations in each rightly lead to punishment, but an ultimate return and restoration is envisaged.

The commentary itself stretches over 561 pages with discussion of sections of from one to six verses. Good comment is provided on textual, historical and compositional problems though theology and present-day application receive little attention. The discussions, while technical, are understandable to the average university or seminary level reader. While discussion of Hebrew words is included, the Hebrew and Greek are transliterated and their meaning is usually clear from the context. Sometimes, however, technical terms such as *keitib* and *qere* are left unexplained, so some general knowledge is presupposed.

The volumes are a model of historical-critical scholarship, and will be indispensable to any, students or scholars, who deal with the books of Kings. After a lacuna of a decade in English commentaries on these books, within two years we are blessed with, in addition to the volumes under review, substantial works by B. O. Long (Eerdmans), S. J. de Vries (Word), and the anticipated appearance of the study by D. J. Wiseman (Intervarsity). Now it is incumbent upon us all to use the insights gained not as an end in themselves, but as a means of extending and enriching the Kingdom of God.

D. W. Baker, Ashland Theological Seminary, Ohio.

P. R. Davies, **Daniel** (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1985), 133 pp., £2.95.

A. D. H. Mayes, **Judges** (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1985), 98 pp., £2.95. Both vols in the series *Old Testament Guides*, General Editor R. N. Whybray.

A teacher of the OT rapidly discovers that for most of his students (with a few delightful exceptions) the OT is the least attractive and most forbidding part of a theological course. The major difficulty is that the OT is unknown territory; apart from a few famous passages, people simply have not read it. This difficulty is then compounded by the confrontation with a vast amount of scholarly literature which contains an astonishing diversity of interpretations. How can the poor student find his way in this strange land?

Although the major problem of unfamiliarity with the OT cannot be resolved without a change of attitude within the church at large, the lesser problem of coping with scholarly interpretations can be, and is being, met. A particularly important contribution towards this is the appearance of a new series of Old Testament Guides from the indefatigable JSOT Press. This series has been designed 'with the student's needs in mind'. Each volume aims to provide, within the compass of 100 pages or so, everything the student needs so as to familiarize himself with the major issues of interpretation in a book of the OT. Each volume is meant to provide

- * introduction to the contents of the biblical book
- * balanced survey of the important critical issues
- * concentration on theological perspectives
- * assessment of the most recent scholarship
- * cross-references to standard works on OT history and theology
- * annotated bibliographies.

Such a series should be indispensable to both student and preacher. Given, however, that it is easier to set high targets than it is to reach them, do these two early volumes live up to the general editor's claims? The short answer is that one does and one doesn't.

The one that does is P. R. Davies on *Daniel*, which is consistently stimulating and helpful. The careful literary and historical analysis is generally convincing, and Davies is particularly good in his fresh theological analysis which brings the text to life in a new way. The survey of current debate and the bibliographies are indeed just what the student needs. The concentration on current debate does of course mean that issues which are not part of mainstream debate, such as a sixth century date for the book, receive little attention, which may disappoint some *Themelios* readers. Nonetheless, if one wishes to understand the view that *Daniel* is a second-century composition incorporating some older material (parts of which may even go back to the sixth century), and that this need impugn neither the plain meaning nor the authority of the book, Davies' exposition would be hard to better.

Mayes on *Judges* is less rewarding. In general, Mayes' book is a useful guide to a strictly historical approach to the book and period of the *Judges*, which is clearly Mayes' own particular interest. He offers a clear and interesting account of scholarly developments since the work of Noth in which, although he shares the perspective of most recent scholarship that the historical worth of the traditions in *Judges* is limited, a valuable understanding of the period of the *Judges* nonetheless emerges.

It is the omissions in the book that are the problem. Sadly, for Mayes literary criticism means source-criticism and redaction criticism. The important current debate about a truly literary and holistic reading of biblical narrative is ignored. Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* is at least mentioned in a sectional bibliography, but an important work such as J. L. Crenshaw's *Samson* is ignored altogether. Even more disappointing is the total lack of any theological discussion at all. Theological issues are simply ignored. Moreover, the literary and historical discussion frequently reveals an implicitly reductionistic approach to theology, as in a comment on Jdg. 5:20f: 'This was not a war of Yahweh; it was by the stars of heaven and the torrent Kishon that the tribes were supported.' Could that ever have been a genuine alternative for a man of faith?

Such ignoring of literary and theological issues is all the more

unfortunate because it is an approach to Judges along such lines that can often best bring this otherwise rather difficult book alive to the modern reader. And clearly in terms of the aims of the series such omission is serious because it means that the student is not given that balanced and comprehensive approach to the book that he is promised.

Nonetheless, the series will be the best thing on the market for helping the non-specialist into the world of current OT interpretation. Every volume is likely to be of use to the student, though if one is concerned to build up a library that will still be helpful when essays and exams are past, some discrimination between the different volumes in the series may be appropriate.

R. W. L. Moberly, University of Durham.

W. C. Kaiser Jnr, *Malachi: God's Unchanging Love* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 171 pp., \$6.95.

In this book the author, who is the Vice President of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, offers what he calls a 'prototype of what we trust will be a whole new breed of commentary writing'. He believes that the majority of traditional commentaries fail to bridge the gap between the 'then' of the period of the message of the Bible and the 'now' of contemporary readers and hearers of the Word of God. They stop short after exegeting what the text meant to the writer and do not go on to say how this meaning yields legitimate principles applicable today. On the other hand homiletical notes and printed sermons usually do not reveal a detailed exegetical basis. Hence Dr Kaiser seeks to provide a 'homentary' which is a cross between the two genres. He hopes that it will serve both layman and pastor/scholar, providing for both the spiritual and technical needs of teachers of the Word.

Dr Kaiser's aim is a praiseworthy one, but even if achieved it will not make traditional exegetical commentaries unnecessary. History shows that good exegetical commentaries retain their value for decades, even centuries, just because they do not bury themselves in the concerns of a particular age or culture which are bound to pass away. However, there is a pressing need for works which, having laid an adequate basis of solid exegesis, move on to expound the meaning of the text in terms of its application to current situations. The present book seeks to do this, but with less success than one is led to expect by the publisher's claims and the author's Preface.

The exegesis is carefully and well done, without becoming too detailed or technical for the layman whom the author has in mind. There is adequate and helpful discussion of the well-known problem texts Mal. 1:11 and 2:15. The book of Malachi is very much a dialogue between God and the people, and Dr Kaiser is very good at making the reader aware of the dynamics of this dialogue and the flow of its logic. The weakness of the book is, however, just where one would have hoped it to be strong — in application for today. Here the tendency is to remain at the level of generalities. Principles are laid bare and usually their transposition from the Israel of Malachi's day to the church is convincingly carried out, but only in general terms. Maybe if Dr Kaiser had gone further he would have limited the readership of the book to American evangelicals, with whose particular concerns and needs he would have engaged in detail. As it is he has provided a book that is a useful tool to a much wider circle, but its readers still have some hard work to do if they wish to apply Malachi's message to their own situation. Preachers and study group leaders will find it a valuable guide to a rather neglected book of the Bible.

About one-third of the book is taken up by two appendices. The longer of them is a 'suggested outline and worksheet for a syntactical-theological analysis' of Malachi. It is a demonstration and application of the principles advocated in Dr Kaiser's *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981). This appendix is a useful guide to the task of exegesis, but to get full value from it one needs to read the author's earlier book which explains the approach in detail. Blessed indeed is the full-time minister, let alone the lay preacher, who has the time to follow Dr Kaiser's method fully when faced with the need to prepare two or three sermons and Bible studies a week!

The shorter appendix discusses the usefulness of biblical commentaries, and has some sane things to say. Included is the challenge of that prince of preachers C. H. Spurgeon to his ministerial students: 'A man to comment well should be able to read the Bible in the original. Every minister should aim at a tolerable proficiency both in Hebrew and Greek. These two languages will give him a library at small expense, an inexhaustible thesaurus, a mine of spiritual wealth.' Amen.

E. C. Lucas.

John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), xv + 256 pp., \$12.95 (paper).

John Barton is Lecturer in Old Testament Theology at Oxford University. The scholar to whom he seems most in debt is James Barr. Apart from Brevard Childs, whose canonical criticisms fall under special attack, Barr is the most frequently cited author, and he is always cited favourably.

As Barton twice states, in the introduction and in the conclusion, the aim of the book is

to survey the methods currently used in the study of the Old Testament in such a way that it becomes clear how they are interrelated, and what goals they are meant to achieve; to set Old Testament study against a wider background of literary criticism; and to argue a case against the pursuit of 'correct' methods (p. 198).

The first four chapters are a fine introduction to the various 'criticisms' that one hears thrown around. For the beginner he begins slowly. Chapter 1 deals with genre recognition and is very helpful in outlining this whole idea to those for whom it might be new or mysterious. The second chapter takes up 'Literary Criticism', or what is often called 'source criticism'. Not only are these methods treated lucidly with illustrations but their connection or evolution is made clear.

The third chapter moves on to 'Form Criticism'. Again Barton is helpful in outlining its meaning and use in reading the OT. The next chapter is devoted to 'Redaction Criticism', and once more it becomes plain how this further step developed in scholars' quest to read the OT with understanding.

Chapter 5 is devoted to an illustration of how these methods work in a simple book, Ecclesiastes. If one only read the book this far, one would have got one's money's worth. An entertaining summary of these methods illustrates the kind of interesting style the author can have.

Source critics like nothing better than a narrative that is repetitious, inconsistent and rambling; form critics thrive on gentlemanly, incoherent collections of unrelated sayings . . . and delight in stereotyped formulas and conventional phrases. With redaction criticism we find that even the genealogies, stock-in-trade of bad jokes about the unedifying quality of the Old Testament, have become interesting and theologically significant (p. 47).

Chapters 6-9 take up the two latest tracks in OT study, the Canonical Approach of B. S. Childs and Structuralist Criticism represented by various authors. Childs receives the most unsympathetic, albeit gentlemanly, treatment. He is even compared to the most unparadigmatic and unenlightened variety of approaches, fundamentalism! (pp. 98f.)

As Barton suggests on p. 7, chapters 10-12 might be skipped in the first reading.

This review cannot go into these views in any detail except to say that Childs' system as a 'text-immanent' interpretation is concerned primarily, if not exclusively, with a given text as it now stands in the canon. The structuralist focuses his attention on 'shape, genre and conventions of the text', refusing to ask questions about authorial intent.

The main point Barton has to make is that none of these systems can answer all the questions. Anyone who thinks so will sooner or

later meet with frustration and contradiction. It would be the part of wisdom to take what is usable in each for a given text and continue the pursuit of what the author likes to call 'literary competence' (pp. 199 *et al*).

Robert L. Alden, Denver Seminary, USA.

Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (eds.), **The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press and Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), 516 pp., \$22.50.

This comprehensive book is the first to appear in a three-volume series. Parallel to the projected volumes (*Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* and *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*), this book uses 1945 as an approximate *terminus a quo* for the scholarship assessed. The editorial decision to evaluate research since that time appears to be judicious since the post-Second World War period has seen extraordinary activity in biblical studies.

This is a massive volume covering a wide range of subjects. A survey of the contents indicates the scope: 'Israelite History' by J. Maxwell Miller; 'Syro-Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology' by William G. Dever; 'The Ancient Near Eastern Environment' by J. J. M. Roberts; 'Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition, and Redaction' by Rolf Knierim; 'Exploring New Directions' by Robert Culley; 'Israelite Religion' by Patrick Miller; 'Theology of the Hebrew Bible' by George Coats; 'The Pentateuch' by Douglas Knight; 'The Historical Literature' by Peter Ackroyd; 'Prophecy and Prophetic Literature' by Gene Tucker; 'Wisdom Literature' by James Crenshaw; 'Lyrical Literature' by Erhard Gerstenberger; 'Legends of Wise Heroes and Heroines' by Susan Niditch; 'Apocalyptic Literature' by Paul Hanson; and 'The Hebrew Bible and Modern Culture' by Walter Harrelson.

Each chapter contains a review and critique of scholarly developments in the respective areas. Most of the essays also highlight specific problems and areas that future scholarship needs to address. Generally, the articles are critically written; the authors seldom hesitate to show where the discipline has taken wrong turns. For example, J. J. M. Roberts pleads for a more self-critical methodology in the area of research on the ancient Near Eastern environment.

The major weakness of the book concerns the *terminus ad quem*. While the jacket cover promises 'up-to-date analysis and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible', the articles show almost no signs of research since 1979, a surprising feature for a book that first appeared in 1985. This weakness is problematic in several places. Robert Culley's discussion on exploring new directions in biblical studies deals extensively with Norman Gottwald's *The Tribes of Yahweh*. He states that this book will receive 'vigorous reactions'. The book which Culley is referring to first appeared *ten* years ago; since that time Gottwald has written another significant book, one which Culley is unable to comment on. If this collection of essays is reprinted — and the present reviewer hopes that it will be — a special effort should be made to update Culley's chapter on new directions since this area has seen much change in the last few years.

While there is little material that would appear to be of immediate interest to evangelicals, students, professors and ministers should be aware of this research. The scholarship is responsible and the treatment edifying. The extensive bibliographies will help researchers explore particular subjects in a thorough fashion.

Keuneth M. Craig, Jr., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

dissertation for the University of Cambridge. Instead of being an abridgment or adaptation of that work, the book is actually longer, with two additional sections. Grudem's purpose is to examine the nature of prophecy; his outline and progression of argument are superb.

Chapter One deals with the question of the authority of prophecy. It is the longest (with 112 pp.) of the four chapters in the book, but over two-thirds of the chapter is given over to discussing the nature of prophetic authority apart from 1 Corinthians, including the OT. One particular point of importance is the distinction Grudem notes between a divine authority which encompasses the exact words of the prophecy or one which is authoritative in general content only. In the former, the prophet speaks God's words; in the latter he uses his own words to convey God's intent. Presumably, according to Grudem, the hearers would allow for a lesser degree of accuracy on the details in the case of the prophet using his own words since it would be the general import of the message that would be of greatest consequence. This is actually the key concept in the book since it allows for prophecy whose inspiration is from God but which is not dictated to the prophet by God. This is the type of prophecy Grudem understands to be occurring in Corinth, and he exegetes the instructions for church order during the giving of these prophecies. Grudem finds other examples of this type of prophecy in Acts 19:6; 21:4,10-11. This reviewer found the extended exegetical discussion on what the *themelios* of Eph. 2:20 referred to interesting. Grudem comes to the conclusion that the text means 'built upon the foundation of the apostles who are also prophets', which of course preserves the distinction and non-authoritative stance of the use of prophecy for those who are not apostles.

Chapter Two discusses the psychological state of the prophet. The discussion of 1 Cor. 14:30-33 is helpful. Reading in 14:32 the 'spirits of the prophets', Grudem sees the control of the meeting in the hands of those speaking. Therefore, the prophets cannot use the excuse that they were forced to speak or could not control their utterances. Similarly, surveying other portions of the NT, Grudem comes to the conclusion that in the NT church prophets did not seem to have ecstatic experiences.

But how does this prophecy affect the church? What is its purpose? This is the subject of the third chapter. Basically the role of prophecy is to help those who hear it. Therefore, it is seen as an edifying function in the church. Grudem argues strongly that this helpful type of Christian upbringing will continue until the Lord returns. The arguments against this interpretation are dealt with, including the fact that prophecy ceased in the early church. Grudem cites Calvin to explain the lack of prophetic utterance residing in the church's diminished capacity to receive, and not God's inability to give.

The qualifications of the prophet are discussed in the last chapter. Grudem sees no particular office attached to the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians. Every believer is a potential prophet though not all prophesy. In fact, given the revelatory nature of prophecy, the prophets do not speak when they want to exercise the gift, only when they receive something to pass on. Thus prophecy is different from some of the other spiritual gifts in that the other gifts could presumably be put to use at any time. In Grudem's discussion of the role of women, he concludes that it is proper for them to prophesy, but not to speak in evaluation of the prophecies. His reasoning is that the evaluation of prophecies indicates an exercise of ruling authority, seemingly forbidden in the text, while it is also clear from the text that they have the right to edify the congregation with prayers and prophecies.

The main thrust of the entire work is to evaluate the secondary type of prophecy with diminished authority. Grudem mentioned in his introduction that he sees it as a midway position between charismatics and anti-charismatics. Whether or not he has managed to convince diehards on either side, he has certainly done a fine piece of exegetical study and opened some possible solutions.

James J. Stamoolis.

Wayne A. Grudem, **The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians** (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), xxiii + 333 pp., \$13.25.

Dr Grudem's well researched work was first produced as a doctoral

James A. Davis, **Wisdom and Spirit. An Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1:18 - 3:20 Against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Graeco-Roman Period** (Lanham, New York and London: University Press of America, 1984), 258 pp.

Why does the contrast between wisdom and folly play so large a role in 1 Corinthians? A number of studies have appeared which attempt to answer this question, among others from Wilckens and Pearson. It is generally recognized that the different attitudes on the part of Paul and the church at Corinth are due to something far more fundamental than varying evaluations of human eloquence or reason. Indeed chapters 8-14 underline his own positive view of rational appeal. Neither do appeals to some early form of gnosticism at Corinth provide a convincing answer. James A. Davis takes as his starting-point the role of wisdom as this was understood in the tradition of Torah-wisdom in first-century Judaism.

The author is Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, and this work represents his doctoral thesis at the University of Nottingham under the supervision of Dr James Dunn. The beginning of the argument takes up the Book of Sirach: 'If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will supply it for you' (Sir. 1:26). Devotion to the law means being 'filled with the spirit of understanding' (39:6). Davis argues that Sirach 'equates' *sophia* and *nomos*. 'By equating *sophia* and *nomos* ben Sira united the content and locus of wisdom to the law' (p. 22). This perspective is compared with that of the Qumran community. Here wisdom is equated less with the law as such than with a particular interpretation of the law. But this is also linked with an ethos of achievement: wisdom is 'acquired' and 'possessed' by following a particular path. This in turn is thought to relate to a higher spirituality. This set of connections, it is argued, can also be found in Philo.

All this forms a decisive background for the particular understanding of wisdom to which Paul addresses himself at Corinth. It is, in Paul's view, a wisdom of the world in contrast to that of the cross. The kind of 'power' and 'wisdom' which characterizes the cross is not that of human achievement. This is the theme not only of 1:18-25, but also of 1:26-31: 'Let him who glories, glory in the Lord.' In the same way, in 1 Cor. 2 the contrast is between 'the wisdom of men' and 'the power of God'. This brings the whole issue into close relationship with questions about the Holy Spirit: 'The Corinthian pneumatists claimed to have come into the possession of such wisdom. . . . They thought of themselves accordingly as persons living on a higher spiritual plane' (p. 124). Paul rejects this notion of levels of attainment.

This is an excellent, well researched study which adds to our understanding of 1 Corinthians. In days when it is urgent to compare some strands of modern charismatic theology not only with Paul but also with Corinth, this study benefits the pastor no less than the scholar or research student. I commend it to a wide readership most warmly.

Anthony C. Thiselton, St John's College, Nottingham.

Christopher Rowland, **Christian Origins** (London: SPCK, 1985), xx + 428 pp., £12.50 (pb).

There has long been a large gap in the literature on early Christianity: an introduction to the background and birth of the Christian church, at a level suitable for undergraduate study of theology. This volume adequately fills it. The two major sections provide firstly a comprehensive account of the life and faith of first-century Judaism; and then within this context a discussion of the emergence of that messianic sect which we now know as Christianity. In doing so, Rowland manages to cover an immense amount of ground. Whatever NT essay you are currently working on, I warrant that you will find something pertinent and helpful here.

Yet in providing such a wide coverage, Rowland has managed to do more than just give a 'state of the game' report of contemporary scholarship. The scholars are there, well represented where they belong, in the notes; but the text is also seeking to argue a thesis. Rowland does not pretend to take the impossible stance of disinterested observer, but feels that from his own perspective light can be shed on the admittedly obscure origins of the faith. Those who have read his earlier book, *The Open Heaven*, will quickly guess what that perspective is. For those of you to whom the words apocalyptic and eschatology are foreign or frightening, here is a golden opportunity to discover their rightful place in the development of early Christian thought and belief. The major strength of this approach (which Rowland would be the first to admit is by no means unique to him) is that it integrates into a united whole a wide range of concepts which otherwise strike the reader as unrelated and incoherent. Rowland is also concerned to present a picture of Judaism (largely following E. P. Sanders) at once more sympathetic to and more consonant with its own self-portrait in the extant literature. This is surely right.

So in the section on Judaism, as well as chapters on the obvious items such as the various sects, the synagogue, the festivals and so forth, there are also less immediately obvious areas such as the interpretations of scripture, apocalyptic, eschatology, the roles of angels and, perhaps most significant, the uneasy tension between pragmatism and utopianism within first-century Jewish thought and expectation. These themes appear to reappear in the next section, too, though there the layout is different. After an important introductory discussion focusing on the significance of eschatology to both Jesus and his followers, there are three parts: Jesus, Paul, and From Messianic Sect to Christian Religion. Within each of the first two, issues of both 'introduction' and 'theology' (to use the misleading categories to which the examination system of many university courses conditions us) are taken up and not only separately examined but also integrated to provide a coherent picture. The final part discusses the practices and faith of the church, and then takes up again the issue of the tension between pragmatism and utopianism. Rowland sees within the beliefs of the early church a constant struggle between these two born of the conviction that in Jesus the New Age had already dawned, a conviction yet coupled with the realization that the Old Age is still a present reality. The struggle led to internal contradictions within, e.g., the writings of Paul; contradictions which we resolve at the peril of aetiolating Paul's own faith.

I have already indicated that I am wholeheartedly in agreement with his chosen method and broadly with the picture which he presents. If I were to take issue with him, it would be only on minor points. One inevitable problem of such wide coverage is the lack of space to defend a particular interpretation or position: so for instance we are left with no clear idea of the situation behind, or the relationships between, the johannine literature; though these clearly influence the discussion on pp. 259ff. And a little later (p. 272) when the question is raised as to whether community or property was compulsory for the Jerusalem community or not, the reader is referred to Capper (who thinks it was); yet the following discussion suggests that it was not. Hurd and Schmithals are probably not the most useful sources to be sent to if you are exploring the background of 1 Corinthians (p. 276f.), particularly since Rowland's own position seems to be significantly closer to the one I offered in the article 'Corinthians' in *IBD*. No doubt such instances could be multiplied, but they should not detract from the value of the book as a whole.

One particularly strong point of this book is its handling of the related questions of religious experience and authority. Rowland usefully underscores the difficulties felt within the early church by those who wanted to assert their right to be authoritative interpreters of the Christian experience and doctrine: supremely Paul, of course, but one must also include in this category many of Paul's opponents and those whom the later church was to deem heresiarchs. In a sense the problem goes right back to Jesus, whose own claims to authority were one cause of hostility against him. It was the struggle with just this issue which led to many of the disputes within the church, and therefore to the development of much of its doctrine and practice. There are many suggestive comments here; though ultimately I wonder if even Rowland does not distinguish too easily between 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy'.

A fifteen-page Appendix discusses the literary sources for the period. Potentially this could have been one of the most useful parts of the book, yet I found it a disappointment. Certainly the job is not an easy one. Even working out how to classify the literature involves hard choices. But it seems strange to classify Daniel under 'The Pseudepigrapha/Non-Rabbinic Writings' while the Apocrypha is dealt with as a unit. And the two sections of the Rabbinic material could surely have been better co-ordinated. The selection is admittedly and inevitably limited, but the book of Jubilees seems an unfortunate absentee.

This is not always an easy book to read. In part this is because of the compact nature of the material; in part due to a plethora of commas which the compositor appears to have spilled over the text. It is not so much a book to read at a sitting as a source-book; a *vade mecum* for your journey of exploration into the birth of the church. It will certainly make that journey more interesting and more firmly based.

Douglas de Lacey, Ridley Hall, Cambridge.

Paul Helm, *The Divine Revelation* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott; Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Book, 1982), 129 pp., £5.25.

This helpful volume in the *Foundations for Faith* series is modestly sub-titled 'The Basic Issues', and consists of a series of discussions on such questions as 'Natural Revelation', 'Special Revelation', 'Infallibility', and so forth. As we might expect in a book by this author, its strength is in its analysis and ground-clearing, and in a general area in which much has been published in recent years this lends *The Divine Revelation* a distinctive quality.

Those who are familiar with books written by philosophers will know the kind of approach to expect, although others may be surprised by such as the following (which opens the second chapter): 'Are there mammoths? The readiness of most people who are reading this book to say "No" to the question rests partly on the ability to use the concept of a mammoth and so distinguish mammoths from unicorns and giraffes.' The author's point here is to introduce a discussion of what kind of thing a special revelation would be, such that we would know how to answer if asked whether there had been one or not.

If that kind of discussion seems aridly philosophical it is also exceedingly helpful in the clarity with which it sets up the 'basic issues' facing the student as he comes to address the question of revelation. Discussion has been bedevilled by the failure to give time to the kind of clarification exercises of which this book is made up. Paul Helm's approach, having discussed what it is he is talking about, is then to bring biblical and theological material into play. This is not in any sense *mere* philosophy of religion.

Each chapter is helpfully supplied with a selection of material for further reading.

Nigel M. de S. Cameron, Rutherford House, Edinburgh.

Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: an ecological doctrine of creation: The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985*, tr. M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), 365 pp., £10.50.

Here at last is Moltmann's response to one of the outstanding problems facing contemporary systematic theology, namely the problem of creation. This is, in fact, a two-sided problem covering as it does both the relevance of theology to nature and the relevance of the material creation to our understanding of God. The problem has been exacerbated by two features of contemporary theology — its Christocentrism and its concordat with nineteenth-century science.

In this work Moltmann adds his weight to the increasing number of calls for an expansion of the horizons of theology. Only by regaining its cosmic breadth can Christian theology make a positive response to the present crisis in man's relationship with nature.

Moltmann has chosen to make this work part of his projected *Messianic Theology*. As such it is organically related to the social understanding of the Trinity developed in the first volume of this project: *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*. This is shown clearly by the guiding principles laid out in his opening chapter. His starting-point is the assumption that knowledge of the world as creation must be participatory knowledge, i.e. holistic rather than analytic. This is because he understands life in terms of relationships on the model of the perichoretic life of the social trinity. The trinitarian approach further requires that creation itself be understood in trinitarian terms rather than in the monotheistic way of traditional theology. Because of past overemphasis on the Father's role in creation, Moltmann chooses to emphasize the role of the Spirit. This is consistent with his stress on participation as it leads him to focus on God's immanence in the world. However he also wants his doctrine of creation to be distinctively Christian in line with its location within a *Messianic* theology. To achieve this he emphasizes the divine purpose of creation and the corresponding movement of the world towards God's eschatological goal.

Two more introductory chapters deal with the present ecological crisis (and the complicity of classical Christian theology) and the problem of the knowledge of nature as creation. Moltmann maintains the German dislike of natural theology: only revealed theology is possible in the history of sinful humanity. Revelation is the only means by which we can come to know nature as creation.

The rest of the book concentrates on major themes from the creation narrative of Gen. 1. He begins by turning his attention to the subject of Gen. 1:1, namely God the Creator, and he attempts to answer the question of the significance of creation for our understanding of God. Moltmann attempts to hold together the two main traditions about the meaning of 'Creator'. For Reformed theology it signifies that God the absolute subject eternally resolves to create, whereas in Christian Platonism it refers to the essential creativity of God which is disclosed by its overflow into material creation. Moltmann proposes to mix oil and water by speaking of the voluntary overflow of the infinite divine love.

At times Moltmann's theological speculation verges on the mythological. This comes out most clearly in his discussion of *ex nihilo* and the traditional theological treatment of creation as somehow external to God. In order to avoid postulating a co-eternal (and therefore divine) space he adopts the Kabbalistic doctrine of *zimsum* that prior to creation God somehow contracts or withdraws into himself, calling into being a literally God-forsaken space in which he can create. This space is both a divine womb and Barth's *Das Nichtige* (the threat to creation which is overcome by God's redemptive activity).

His starting-point for the study of creation itself is the temporal structure of creation. This is followed by two chapters in which the work of the first three days, the creation of habitats and the duality of creation, is discussed. A transitional chapter on the evolution of creation allows him to move rapidly to a Christian anthropology based on his social analogy for the Trinity. In order to refute the anthropocentrism implicit in treating man as the end of creation, he concludes with a doctrine of the Sabbath as the eschatological rest of *all* creation.

It has to be said that the points at which Moltmann tries to draw together theology and science are the weakest parts of the book. An attempt to do so is necessitated by his assessment of the relationship between these disciplines. He believes that the era of demarcation between theology and science is drawing to a close. The ecological crisis demands that a new partnership be developed. Having said that, his discussion of time dismisses the mechanistic concept of time and completely ignores contemporary scientific developments. Similarly his treatment of space focuses on the seventeenth-century debate about absolute space and ignores the dramatic revision in our understanding forced on us by Einstein.

His treatment of evolution is a little more satisfactory. Perhaps this is because he sees evolution as having theological implications which are consistent with his general position. For Moltmann its value consists in reminding us that man is an integral part of creation and that creation itself did not cease with the appearance of man.

Unfortunately his attempt to formulate a 'hermeneutical' theory of evolution falls completely flat. His intention was to synthesize cosmogenesis, biogenesis and noogenesis in order to show the universe to be a self-transcending open system. However he lacks the scientific expertise to be able to do this successfully. On the whole he is at his best when he confines himself to the theological issues.

Moltmann repeatedly insists on the importance of understanding creation in trinitarian terms. However, in practice his doctrine of creation is pneumatological. This is to be expected given his desire to correct past overemphases. Unfortunately he does no more than hint at how a fully trinitarian doctrine might be developed.

This is quintessential Moltmann. There is much in it that is thought-provoking juxtaposed with elements that are less satisfactory. Like many of his works in translation it is relatively easy to read but at the same time it forces the reader to re-think cherished assumptions. Whatever the lasting value of his theology there is no doubt that this book will join his other major works as a theological best-seller.

Laurence Osborn, King's College, London.

Vernon White, *The Fall of a Sparrow: a concept of special divine action* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1985), 208 pp., £7.50.

This book began life as a thesis on the debate about special divine action which has been going on in Anglo-Saxon philosophical theology for some years. However in the process of editing it for publication the author has sought to make it more accessible to a general readership. Most of the time this has been successful but there are several points in the book where one gets the impression that an argument has been considerably summarized. Given that White's concern is merely to establish the rational possibility of special divine action one wonders just who his general readership might consist of. The topic is of some academic interest, but a general reader would probably want something of a more practical nature.

The structure of the work is simple. Two chapters present the experiential and biblical contexts for talk of special divine action. A third chapter reviews the current state of the academic debate and the author's perceptions of its shortcomings. The remaining five chapters outline the author's alternative to the views criticized in the third chapter.

The experiential context is that of the tension between our intuition of a pattern in some events and the seeming meaninglessness of others. In the light of Christian theism this tension contributes to the problem of evil. Against this ambivalence he sets a 'phenomenological' account of the Bible's testimony to divine action. This may be summarized by saying that God is a personal agent with a purpose which is fulfilled through both universal and particular activity. Apparent failures at the level of particular events are in fact instrumental in bringing about divine victory on a larger scale.

White's critical account of the contemporary debate concentrates on two very different theologians: Maurice Wiles and Schubert Ogden. He gives useful summaries of their respective positions and raises a number of problems facing each. The common failing of such contemporary accounts is their insistence on the vulnerability of divine love. White sees this as a threat to the biblical notion of divine sovereignty since it makes the efficacy of divine action dependent on creaturely response.

It is White's contention that an alternative account of special divine action which maintains the Bible's dual emphasis on love and sovereignty is rationally possible. The proposed alternative is based largely on the work of Austin Farrer. White develops this alternative by responding to a number of possible criticisms of Farrer.

There is one very important point at which White differs from Farrer. White insists that every event is in some sense part of the divine intention. But this sharpens the problem of evil to an intolerable extent and White only escapes the consequences by insisting that no event is intrinsically evil. Evil is a judgment made when an event is seen in a particular context. Farrer on the other hand was very clear that there were events not intended by God but which come to

have meaning by being transformed into the means to achieve divine intentions.

In conclusion, this book does not represent a major contribution to the current debate. For the most part White is an able advocate of Farrer but he does not add anything of significance to his position. Where the book will certainly be welcome is amongst beleaguered undergraduates seeking raw material for essays on the concept of divine action.

Laurence Osborn, King's College, London.

Aylward Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness* (London: Geoffrey Chapman/Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), x + 258 pp., \$10.95.

Emmanuel Milingo, *The World in Between: Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival*, ed. Mona Macmillan (London: C. Hurst & Co./Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 135pp., £3.95/\$5.95.

The question of salvation as holistic healing is sometimes raised in Western theology. However, with few exceptions theologians tend to limit salvation primarily to spiritual areas, discussing the healing miracles of Jesus and the apostles as unique to their period. Hand in hand with the concept of salvation as only the transformation of the mind and spirit is the downplaying, or even denial, of the effect of evil spirits. It is a prevalent Western world-view that these manifestations are in the mind of the person suffering from them and the person needs to be cured of these delusions.

The problem arises when the gospel is proclaimed in a non-Western cultural situation where the reality of the world of the spirits is a common cultural belief. What should the response of the church be? The books by Shorter and Milingo attempt to answer this question, albeit in different ways. There are points of agreement, for instance, in the use of the spiritual resources of the church, but the main difference focuses on their quite different perceptions of the problem.

Shorter's book has a wealth of illustrative stories that make fascinating reading and reveal the cultural mindset of the people he writes about. All of his stories are from the so-called Third World, most from Africa. For example, he tells of an upper-class Ugandan Catholic woman who wanted Shorter to come and 'bless' her garden to neutralize an evil spell she believed had been put on it. Shorter describes the dialogue his good angel had with his bad angel as he tried to decide whether or not to accede to this request. The good angel, by the way, was against his going to the garden because it would be 'pandering' to the woman's belief about witchcraft.

That discussion highlights Shorter's dilemma. He is a Western man, looking for rational explanations for dissociation (multiple personalities associated with possession by evil spirits) and refusing to acquiesce to the belief in witchcraft and sorcery. Yet he has seen the power that such beliefs have and knows that the problem must be dealt with in some form. His answer lies in the use of education and community development so that the cultural elements which are connected with these delusions of evil spirits will be broken. He also advocates a more thorough-going application of the power for healing in the sacraments of the church.

It is to Shorter's credit that he identifies the problems faced by these non-Western societies. As noted above, the stories and illustrations he relates are well chosen to illustrate the basic philosophical system of belief that is found in these societies, especially with regard to the human sources of evil and misfortune. However, his emphasis on the need for a rational approach, defined by the non-acceptance of the world-view of the non-Western culture, mars the solution. Indeed, it also colours the dialogue, since most of the fear of evil spirits is seen as social paranoia. While we can welcome Shorter's book as a much-needed introduction to the problem of making the gospel relevant in non-Western cultural settings, this reviewer felt Shorter's guidelines would not solve the philosophical and practical

problems raised by traditional beliefs. It is not enough to say that these evil forces do not exist. What is needed is the proclamation that Jesus has power over them.

It is therefore with a sense of relief that one turns to Milingo's book. Emmanuel Milingo was for fourteen years the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lusaka. In 1973 he discovered he had the power of healing and proceeded to minister to his large flock. The exercise of this charismatic gift led to conflicts with the priests in his diocese. Since there was a shortage of African priests, most of the clergy were Western missionaries who did not understand nor believe in the phenomenon of evil spirits. To them it was unscientific delusion that the people needed to be educated out of. The matter was ultimately referred to Rome, which first curtailed Milingo's healing meetings and finally recalled him in 1982 from his post.

While the book can be read as a clash between the church's desire to maintain the status quo and the need to express an African form of Christianity, to do so is to see only part of the story. The real issue is the nature of the phenomenon of evil spirits and their effect on the Africans. Do they exist? Can Africans, even African Christians, be in bondage to them? But more importantly, does the church have anything to say to this situation? Milingo's contention is that the European missionaries were unable to deal with the phenomenon of possession by evil spirits because they had no experience of them in their world-view. But even if it did not fit into the missionaries' own world-view, they had a duty to try to enter the mindset of the people to whom they had come to minister. For many, this should be the real value of the book. Readers of *Themelios*, who have no connection and perhaps little interest in the affairs of a particular Roman Catholic diocese in Africa, all need to hear clearly the call to understand fully the culture of the people to whom they minister. While this ignorance has been the particular sin of missionaries (of which I could give several examples), it also is a problem of ministers and even professors of theology (of which I could give more examples).

Milingo speaks of the two religions of the African Christians: the Sunday religion when they brought their Christian selves to church, and their traditional African beliefs to which they resorted when they had real problems and difficulties. The traditional African beliefs involved the world of the spirits, 'the world in between' earth and heaven. The description of the spirit world may produce the same reaction in Western Protestants as it did in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, but people who have experienced this phenomenon will find Milingo's account understandable. However, the crucial issue is the power that Jesus Christ has over these oppressive spirits. And further, the point is made that Jesus came to bring life and wholeness (salvation) to mankind. The bondage to which Satan subjects people must be destroyed fully in Jesus' name as a result of Jesus' already accomplished victory on the cross.

At issue in both these books is the question of culture. Does one need to adopt a Western cultural orientation to be fully a Christian? Is it possible for an African to have his cultural orientation in some sense preserved and even enhanced by his Christian faith, a faith which speaks to all aspects of his life? The answer given by Shorter would appear to be that a Western orientation is needed, while Milingo tries to find in Christ the answers to his people's deepest needs while confirming them in their own culture. One particular point of interest is that Shorter seems to give more credence to and acceptance of African spirit healers than he does Christian healers. This seems to be the case from the approving way he speaks of the former and the criticism he levels at the latter. Those looking for a theology of spirits will not find it in either book; the emphasis in both is on the necessity of an holistic approach to life. That in itself is valuable for all cultural situations.

Anyone preparing for missionary service should read at least Milingo's book. But those who claim to be thinking Christian theologians also must read Milingo's book to help them come to terms with the need to present the Christian faith in a way that is intelligible and meets the real problems of their people.

James J. Stamoilis.

Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom — The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 303 pp., £5.95.

This important new book is the fruit of research carried out by Dr Walker for a BBC Documentary on the house church movement. The book is a very readable yet serious study of the origins and significance of the movement. Dr Walker raises many major questions about the theology and practice of the movement; yet his prologue reveals him to be a sympathetic observer, deeply impressed by its radical Christianity.

The casual observer is aware of great diversity within the house church phenomenon, and Dr Walker helps clarify different groupings (classified for the purposes of his book as Restoration 1: R1, and Restoration 2: R2).

Part 1 gives a detailed study of the rise of the house church movement from the mid-1960s until 1985; we are introduced to key figures, enabled to explore the links with the house church movement in America, observe the influence of men like Ortiz and Watchman Nee, and understand the division between Restoration 1 and 2 in 1976 and their respective development since. This part is carefully researched, enabling the reader to plot historical developments, with valuable footnotes for further research. My main criticism is that the wealth of detail sometimes obscures the overall pattern.

Part 2 examines the distinctive teaching and lifestyle of the movement, and reflects sociologically on its status as a denomination or sect. There are two excellent chapters tracing the origins of the movement from within Brethrenism, the Catholic Apostolic Church (descended from Edward Irving), and the mainline Pentecostal denominations. The complex relationship between the Restoration movement and the broader charismatic renewal is also explored. Dr Walker includes a fair examination of four charges commonly brought against the house church movement.

The book raises in passing a range of theological issues especially focused in the restoration movement: Baptism — is infant baptism valid? Are Christians so baptised to be encouraged to be rebaptised by immersion as an issue of obedience? Conversion and its relationship to the gift of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. Legalism and perfectionism — issues involved in the split of Restoration 1 and 2 in 1976. Discipling — does this reflect NT teaching and practice, or is it open to serious abuse? Is Restorationism in danger of identifying kingdom and church too closely? How do the contemporary and first-century church relate? What is the character of that first-century church?

The house church movement's reading of church history and the NT is in danger of being simplistic. They see the church soon plummeting from the NT ideal, reaching an all-time low ebb at the end of the sixth century. The Reformation is seen as the dawn of a new era, with some recovering true baptism. The twentieth-century witnesses the recovery of spiritual gifts and apostolic ministries, so that the glory of the NT church is being restored. This is God's work through a fresh outpouring of his Spirit, preparing his church for his Son's return. It seems foolhardy in this way to ignore 2,000 years of church history. Such a view also fails to recognize diversity and development even within the life of the NT church concerning church order. The search for the perfect, pure church has fascinated different groups again and again within church history, but has been met by failure and disillusionment.

Dr Walker helps us explore critically many of the theological issues raised by the teaching of the Restoration movement; at the same time he helps us recognize within the movement a clear work of God, challenging the complacency and half-heartedness of the established churches, calling them to a rediscovery of spiritual life to meet the challenges and opportunities of the present time. This is an important book, enabling the reader to think through one of the most significant church movements of recent times.

John S. Went, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

James J. Stamooolis, **Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today** (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 194 pp., \$18.95.

It is true that Western Christianity tends to be ignorant about the Eastern Orthodox churches, considering them to be closely related in theology and worship to the Roman Catholic Church. This scholarly but readable work will play a part in undermining this ignorance. Dr Stamooolis with his Greek background shows a fundamental empathy with the Orthodox churches. Although his subject is the Orthodox theory and practice of mission, he also reveals a heart understanding of the inner life and theology of the Orthodox. Having myself worshipped with the Russian Orthodox church in former years and owing a deep spiritual debt to that church, I rejoice to find a fellow evangelical with such an approach.

Sadly Dr Stamooolis is compelled to confess that the Orthodox churches have often failed to fulfil their own basic understanding of their calling to mission, but he underlines that such a failure is a denial of their theology. But ingrown failure to engage in mission is by no means the whole story. Both the Greek and Russian churches have fascinating and inspiring histories in mission, even though the Western church may never have heard of some of the great Orthodox heroes of mission history. A sad insularity afflicts us all: missionary heroes well known in Britain tend to be British; in Germany it is Germans like Zinzendorf and Nommensen who are the key missionary figures; in Holland Warneck, Kraemer or Neumann hit the headlines. In our Western churches generally such pioneers as Veniaminov of the Aleutians and Alaska may be unknown. Nicholas Kassatkin of Japan, Innocent Figourovsky of China or Archimandrite Chrysanthos Scetkovski of Korea may be even less well known. Few Western church history courses are likely even to mention them!

Today the Orthodox churches are rediscovering their call to mission. In the diaspora in America and West Europe they are recovering their confidence, for they have always believed that Orthodoxy is the true Christian faith and therefore they have a duty to share that apostolic faith with others. In fact in Britain the Orthodox church grows with a steady flow of converts from amongst the native British population. Also in East Africa there is a developing mission work and the Orthodox church in lands like Kenya is a significant feature. When visiting Kenya I had the joy of observing a Coptic Orthodox bishop working amongst the Independency Churches in Nairobi slums.

Dr Stamooolis rightly underlines the vital significance of the liturgy as a missionary factor in Orthodox theology; he also shows how Orthodox missiology is closely related to ecclesiology, for it is the church (not individuals or para-church independent groups) which is called to mission. I also appreciated his emphasis on God's glory as the goal of Orthodox mission and theology, as also theosis/deification rather than atonement as the heart of salvation theology. Clearly this book is introductory on the subject of Orthodox missiology, for much work remains to be done on the missiological significance of the Orthodox doctrines of the Trinity, Christology, ecclesiology, the Hesychastic Mount Tabor experience of the Transfiguration, etc. More work also needs to be done concerning mission and monasticism. But this book will surely stimulate further work by others and has laid a sound and interesting foundation for the development of Orthodox missiology.

Martin Goldsmith, All Nations Christian College, Ware.

Mortimer Arias, **Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 155 pp., \$8.95.

It is sad but true that, until recently, those interested in the theme of the kingdom of God generally have not been interested in the evangelistic task of the church. And it is equally true that those interested in evangelization have not been taken with the theme of

the kingdom. Books on evangelism are generally how-to-do-it manuals, reducing their object to a method rather than a message. Books on the kingdom are why-to-do-it academic exercises, reducing their object to a message and not also a mission.

This volume by the current Professor of Hispanic Studies and Evangelization at the School of Theology, Claremont, California joins that small but growing collection of works that seek to combine the best of both worlds and eliminate the worst. It is an exciting effort to develop an holistic concept of evangelism using the kingdom of God theme as its frame of reference.

The bulk of the book leans heavily to the theological side of the debate. The first five chapters of the work are a rich balance of scholarship, drawing from such disparate sources as George Ladd and Jürgen Moltmann, Herman Ridderbos and Jon Sobrino, yet pulling them together in a fine use of the biblical theological method. The focus never loses its vision of Christ as the presence of the kingdom and its future. Evangelism regains its eschatological dimension as the confrontation of the old age through the in-breaking of the new in Christ. Such traditional topics as the forgiveness of sins, repentance and conversion are not slighted. They are rather illuminated as part of the call of the imminent reign of God in Christ.

In the last three chapters Arias draws closer to the evangelism side of the debate, in his exposition of the announcement of the kingdom as gift (ch. 6), as hope (ch. 7) and as challenge (ch. 8).

Little of what I have said conveys the stimulation of the book. And not a small part of that is provided by the examples Arias draws from his background as a bishop of the Methodist Church in Latin America and the cost of kingdom discipleship he has seen in others and experienced himself in prison. Motivational is too psychological a term to describe the style, confrontational too frightening. He succeeds in making the kingdom what it is at heart — challenge.

I hope it will not be seen as detracting from the overall value of the book if I offer a few frustrations. I would have liked to have seen more linking of kingdom evangelism with those traditional concerns of the evangelical for the need for a personal relationship with Christ. Arias' concern to underline the holistic side of evangelism draws him toward such issues as social justice and human rights violations. As evangelicals we need to hear this. But we need to hear it in close collaboration with those personal dimensions often minimized in current discussions of 'holistic evangelism'. I am convinced Arias is deeply committed to that dimension. But it needs to be stated a bit louder to be more reassuring to the community that needs to hear Arias.

I would have liked to have seen his biblical exposition expanded in two areas. One of those directions is toward the OT background of the reign of God that furnishes the backdrop and promise of Jesus' fulfilling ministry. Especially here the holistic element so important to Arias could have been given more exegetical support. The concentration of the book is deeply toward the synoptic gospels.

A lesser lack is his attention to the rest of the NT and the minimization of 'kingdom' language. Arias, I think unwisely, calls his chapter on this material 'the eclipse of the kingdom' (ch. 5). Though he pays full attention to the shift from Jesus as Proclaimer to Jesus as Proclaimed, he did not leave me satisfied fully with his exposition of the difference. And it is this change in language which leaves me sceptical about the wisdom of using one biblical image (the reign of God) as an overall rubric for the entire NT. It is most certainly the direction being taken by missiologists like Johannes Verkuyl. But whether it fully captures all the nuances of the history of special revelation is questionable to me at this point. It seems, unless carefully explained, a step back from the use of biblical theology as a disciplined approach to the study of evangelism to the theological temptation of ontologizing. Arias is pressing in this new direction. Does he press carefully enough?

Let none of this detract from Arias' effort to help us rediscover the theme of the reign of God as 'the subversive memory of Jesus'. His work goes a long way in 'calling us to the fullness of the biblical gospel of the kingdom to be announced to our generation' (p. 67).

Harvie M. Conn, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

BOOK REVIEWS

- Claus Westermann* **Genesis 1-11: A Commentary** (David W. Baker)
- J. G. McConville* **Law and Theology in Deuteronomy** (R. W. L. Moberly)
- G. H. Jones* **1 and 2 Kings, vols I and II** (D. W. Baker)
- P. R. Davies* **Daniel** (R. W. L. Moberly)
- A. D. H. Mayes* **Judges** (R. W. L. Moberly)
- W. C. Kaiser* **Malachi: God's Unchanging Love** (E. C. Lucas)
- John Barton* **Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study** (Robert L. Alden)
- Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker* **The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters**
(Kenneth M. Craig, Jr.)
- Wayne A. Grudem* **The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians** (James J. Stamoolis)
- James A. Davis* **Wisdom and Spirit. An Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1:18 – 3:20
Against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Graeco-Roman Period**
(Anthony C. Thiselton)
- Christopher Rowland* **Christian Origins** (Douglas de Lacey)
- Paul Helm* **The Divine Revelation** (Nigel M. de S. Cameron)
- Jürgen Moltmann* **God in Creation: an ecological doctrine of creation** (Laurence Osborn)
- Vernon White* **The Fall of a Sparrow: a concept of special divine action** (Laurence Osborn)
- Alward Shorter* **Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness**
(James J. Stamoolis)
- Emmanuel Milingo* **The World in Between: Christian Healing and the
Struggle for Spiritual Survival** (James J. Stamoolis)
- Andrew Walker* **Restoring the Kingdom – The Radical Christianity of the
House Church Movement** (John S. Went)
- James J. Stamoolis* **Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today** (Martin Goldsmith)
- Mortimer Arias* **Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the
Subversive Memory of Jesus** (Harvie M. Conn)



TSF

ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ
προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.