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Those who know their Beatles will remember a song of that title, and some celebrated footage of the performers playing it high up on an open roof overlooking the city of London, to the bewildered consternation of the guardians of the law. The song had a curious ambience: it displayed nostalgia for return to something stable and to roots, yet it did so in a way – and as part of a pop culture – that encouraged forward-moving breaking of barriers, mores and traditions. It is doubtless impossible to characterize modern consciousness, even just something called 'Western' consciousness. But one can at least identify trends. There is evidence of nostalgia; the toys of the forties and early fifties, and the songs of the sixties and early seventies, have all witnessed recent attempts at their recapture. It may not, however, last as the tidal current of our times flows ever faster. Who knows what the psychological effects of entering the new millennium will be, if we get to it? It seems more than a mere possibility that we shall slough off the vestiges of Western-Christianity consciousness and embark on or continue with a modern socio-cultural project that will be governed much more by the clamant moods of the present than the increasingly unknown history of the past.

We should do well to avoid the seduction of an apparently new age by getting better, not less, acquainted with our past. Here we have the theological past especially in mind, historical theology. There are at least three reasons for acquiring this familiarity.

1. We save ourselves time and energy or, better, use our time and energy more productively than we otherwise might. It often enough happens that after years of hard labour, a theologian will come up with something that seems fresh and new, hard-won, well-pondered, a rewarding and worthwhile insight to be shared with greater or lesser modesty with the theological fraternity. It is rather deflating, on such an occasion, to be told casually and effortlessly that Plato had made that point in one of his dialogues. Plato, one muses to oneself darkly, was not even a Christian. It has been said that the history of philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato and Aristotle. Whether or not that is well said, it is hard to find two theological equivalents; but the point is worth bearing in mind in relation to the history of theology. It is surprising what one can mine from the past in relation to the questions and tasks of the present. Yet one will commonly find half a dozen introductions to this or that twentieth century theologian, while many a Church Father, for example, languishes for lack of a solid general introduction or at least has to be contented with a solitary offering. We are considerably the losers. And we need to guard against reinventing at least parts of the wheel.

2. We save ourselves from superficiality better than we otherwise might. There is plenty around that militates against the habit of thinking. How often do we set aside an afternoon to *think* rather than read the latest article or search the net for the latest research site? (One is almost tempted to affirm the use of the traditional old tobacco-laden pipe, if that is the only way to make sure that we think.) We are altogether too mobile. One wonders whether Nature has equipped us either for the lightning movement of images on the screen before our eyes or the rapid change of more panoramic scenes as we transport ourselves by road, rail and air from one place to another. Whatever one thinks about this, thought surely suffers and is much thinner than it used to be. The theological literature of the past is not monolithic, of course, and 'the past' covers a rather hopelessly large period of time. But one gets the distinct impression from much of the theological literature of the past that what has been said could not have been said without much thought, whereas much of what we read today could only have been said when information is substituted for thought.

3. It has been well remarked that 'if more of God's people were historians, fewer would be prophets'. Amongst the interesting challenges posed by Liberation theology in its early heady days, was the challenge to theologians to be prophets, speaking the word of God in relation to the historical events of the day. Some form of precedent was alleged in the shape of Augustine's *City of God* composed with at least one eye on the dramatic events attending the Roman Empire in the early fifth century. Whether or not the liberationists were right in this move, many a church sees (fancies?) itself as a prophetic community and many a Christian heart is strangely warmed at the thought of being possessed of prophetic insight. I am not demeaning or despising this at all; one can but pray for and rejoice in what is prophetic in a true and good sense. But let us not forget that hindsight is a rich form of insight, and the knowledge of history exceedingly enhances the discernment of the present. Here, of course, we pass beyond historical theology, but historical theology is included. We may privately wonder whether the author of *Ecclesiastes* was right in the judgement that there is nothing new under the sun (though, as ever, our reservations should be dissipated when we understand the text). Going back to the past will certainly incline us to believe that there is no *one* new under the sun, and the supreme business of understanding the times is always the business of understanding people.

The vaunted contrast between the biblical and non-biblical views of time and history is familiar enough to many. The biblical view, we are told, is linear: history progresses from novelty to novelty to its end, while contrasting religious or non-religious views from the ancient world are cyclical: history has no destiny. However sound such a characterization, we are in danger, as Wittgenstein used to put it, of being misled by a picture, for a line and a circle are not in conflict when we are thinking of dynamic motion. The wheel of a car goes round and forward simultaneously. It is quite conceivable, then, that history exhibits cyclical patterns and that historical theology will be amongst those disciplines that best alert us to that. The mature and the bold will try to extract wisdom on this matter from the texts of sacred Scripture itself; others will find its data inconclusive apart from the empirical study of history. But it is worth trying to understand what is going on in the world, past and present, though we see but a little and there is no point straining the eyes to try to see it all.

'Get back'. Will people be willing to do so after January 1, 2000 or 2001, whenever the new millennium is meant to begin? Widespread cultural atheism and post-Christianity are frightening phenomena, with some obvious novelty involved. Can these, however, be detached and understood apart from pre-Christian and early-Christian atheisms that stalked bits of the ancient world? And can we, therefore, be as effective as we might be in arming ourselves for battle unless we learn afresh how Christianity acquitted itself in its early combat and how it began to lose ground in different parts of the world? Admittedly, this way of posing the questions betray their European and Northern Hemispheric background. Still, they matter. We constantly remind ourselves of the coming great Church and the Church of saints now in heaven, one with us below. But those in heaven were once on earth and we must appreciate the labours from which they rest. Irenaeus, Melancthon and C.S. Lewis are part of the living Church through their writings and though they lack the infallibility of the inscribed word, they are more or less useful in 'teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness'. Their careful perusal will yield a lot more than our hasty half-baked notions. If we 'get back' we are doubtless in danger of never returning to the present, but if we do not we are likely to weaken intellectual resistance to the wrong and forfeit the use of some good weaponry in our offensives. It is certainly important that we make the effort.

ESCHATOLOGY AND THE CHURCH¹: SOME NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES

Craig Blomberg

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For many in the church today, eschatology seems to be one of the least relevant of the historic Christian doctrines. On the one hand, those who question the possibility of the supernatural in a scientific age find the cataclysmic irruption of God's power into human history at the end of the ages unpalatable. On the other hand, notable fundamentalists have repeatedly put forward clear-cut apocalyptic scenarios correlating current events with the signs of the end in ways which have been repeatedly disproved by subsequent history and which have tarnished all conservative Christian expectation in the process as misguided.² At the same time, a substantial amount of significant scholarship, particularly in evangelical circles, goes largely unnoticed by the church of Jesus Christ at large. This scholarship not only addresses key theological and exegetical cruxes but has direct relevance for Christian living on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

The topic is immense, so before I proceed I need to make several disclaimers and mark out the parameters of this brief study:

1. I am neither a systematic theologian nor an OT specialist, so, as my title indicates, my comments will be primarily limited to those who have grappled with key themes and texts in the NT. In this connection I have sometimes ventured an opinion on a range of questions which I know require more careful and sustained consideration.
2. Although there is a time and a place to use the term 'eschatology' broadly to refer to the goal and direction of human history under God's sovereignty at each stage of the biblical revelation,³ I will restrict my comments to issues dealing with the end of life or the end of human history as we know it.
3. My remarks are highly selective and do not reflect an exhaustive survey of the contemporary literature, although I have tried to read widely.
4. I will concentrate primarily on key trends in the last two decades of scholarly conversation and focus almost entirely on English-language material.
5. Despite my attempts to keep abreast with trends in the UK, my immediate context of teaching in a North American theological seminary will undoubtedly colour my perceptions and analyses of these trends. Hopefully this will

not be entirely inappropriate. My own experience of living in several cultures has regularly reminded me of the value of seeing things from the 'outsider's' perspective. Indeed, there are some trends in North American evangelicalism that I believe merit wider exposure, even as I confess my indebtedness to British evangelicalism for many of the formative stimuli in my own theological pilgrimage.

Key Themes in Personal Eschatology

The Annihilationist Debate

A flurry of discussion continues in response to John Stott's famous admission of a decade ago that he wondered whether the data of the NT might direct one to the annihilationist perspective. This has normally implied that the unbeliever simply ceases all conscious existence upon death, although Stott seems to allow for people to suffer temporarily in a conscious state of 'hell.'³ Four arguments have proved influential among those who have defended this perspective:

1. the repeated Scriptural language about the 'destruction' of the impenitent;
2. the metaphor of fire as implying destruction;
3. the apparent injustice of infinite punishment for finite sin; and
4. the apparent irreconcilability of the promise of eternal bliss for God's people with their consciousness of others being eternally tormented.

Despite the inherent attractiveness of annihilationism to anyone with a heart of Christian compassion, this position must be finally judged as inadequate.⁵ The Greek words for punishment and destruction (*olethros*, *kolasis*, *apollumi* and its nominative forms) can refer to 'ruin', carrying the sense of the cessation of life as we know it in this world, with the possibility of influence by good, to be replaced by a state of eternal punishment. Several texts seem to demand a bodily resurrection of the unrighteous to a conscious existence of eternal separation from God, occurring in contexts in which they directly parallel descriptions of eternal life (*cf. esp.* Dn. 12:2; Mt. 25:41, 46; and Jn 5:24-30).⁶ Several texts warn against hell by declaring that it would be better for those in danger of going there never to have been born, a statement that makes little sense if the wicked at some point merely cease to exist (*cf. esp.* Mt. 18:8-9; 26:24; and note a similar comparative logic dealing with degrees of eternal punishment in Mt. 10:15).⁷ Second, the fires of hell are said to be unquenchable (Mt. 3:12; Mk 9:43), suggesting that whatever fuels them remains for eternity. Third, the problem of infinite punishment for finite sin is not resolved by annihilationism; those who would cease to exist would still do so for an infinite period of time. Indeed, this

disparity is a problem for all perspectives on the fate of the impenitent short of full-fledged universalism, and its solution probably requires something along the lines of C.S. Lewis's famous descriptions of those who are unsaved eternally resisting any desire for salvation⁸ (cf. Rev. 9:20–21; 16:9–10). Fourth, the existence of any finally impenitent, whether conscious or destroyed, remains a datum of Scripture which apparently clashes with God's perfect happiness and victory. So, again, it is not clear that anything short of complete universalism solves this problem. And if we had a greater appreciation of divine holiness, one of the communicable attributes which we can look forward to sharing in some measure in the life to come, we probably would not sense this same tension over the destruction of the wicked that we do now.⁹

The implications for the church are potentially enormous, particularly with respect to its outreach. Wildly different definitions of evangelism in fact compete with one another for acceptance.¹⁰ There is little doubt that a proper, biblical, evangelistic zeal for reconciling men and women to God is easily quenched if one seriously believes that the worst that can happen to the non-Christian is that he or she simply ceases to exist.¹¹ I would love to find out in the next life that I am wrong and that proponents of annihilationism are right on this issue, but I wonder if the risk is worth taking, if indeed it turns out that this view is wrong and the more traditional Christian view is right, and if in the process my enthusiasm for sharing Christ with the lost has so waned that sinners are consigned to an endless agony that might otherwise not have been their plight.

The Nature of Hell

None of the above remarks, however, necessarily commits one to a particular position on a second recently much-debated issue. A discussion of four Christian views on hell itemizes the literal, the metaphorical, the purgatorial, and the conditional views.¹² The last of these, conditional immortality, is only slightly different from the annihilationist view already discussed.¹³ The third, or purgatorial view, is largely limited to Roman Catholic circles and, by the admission of its own supporters, not clearly defensible from the Protestant canon. But increasingly, interpreters are recognizing that the language of eternal destruction in the NT consistently employs a variety of metaphors, most notably fire and outer darkness which, if absolutized, contradict one another.¹⁴ 2 Thessalonians 1:9 may be one of the most literal descriptions of the fate of the wicked, as it explains, "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power."¹⁵ Much of the offense in the concept of conscious eternal punishment may be mitigated if one refuses to include literal bodily torments in one's description, seeing rather a state of profound agony and

awareness of being separated from God and all things good.¹⁶ Yet this metaphorical view does not so remove the sting of death as to quash evangelistic zeal.

A second point, less widely noted, addresses further objections. Is it not unjust that the generally kind, decent, non-Christian neighbour in our pluralist world should suffer the same fate as the Idi Amins or Pol Pots of our day? I think the answer is 'yes', but then one must immediately add that nothing in Scripture consigns us to believing that the fate of all of Hell's inhabitants should be the same. Particularly significant in this light is Luke 12:47–48, verses unique to Luke's version of the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants: 'The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows'. Given that damnation in Scripture is consistently linked with judgment according to one's works, it makes eminent sense to speak of a widespread gradation of degrees of punishment in hell.¹⁷

The Fate of the Unevangelized

Speaking of those who do not know their master's will leads us directly into a third much-debated area of personal eschatology. What about those who have never had a clear presentation of the Christian gospel? Numerous recent anthologies of essays addressing this question from a variety of perspectives have appeared in evangelical literature.¹⁸ Indeed, two triennial conferences ago, the Tyndale Fellowship addressed this question as part of its major theme of responding to the pluralism of our modern world.¹⁹ John Sanders has provided the most extensive taxonomy of historic Christian options, complete with the biblical data to which each appeals, the strengths and weaknesses of each case, and the list of key Christian writers over the centuries who have advocated each view. Sanders' categories include: (1) restrictivism (all those who have not heard are damned); (2) universal evangelization before death (subdivided into the options that (a) God will send the message to those who are genuinely seeking Him; (b) there will be a universal opportunity for salvation just before death; and (c) God's middle knowledge – His pre-understanding of what all possible beings would do in all possibly created worlds – leaves no one without excuse); (3) eschatological evangelization (*i.e.*, the possibility of repentance in a post-mortem state); and (4) universally accessible salvation apart from evangelization (God through His prevenient grace or general revelation, making it possible for all those who truly seek Him to be saved).²⁰ Perhaps the most important lesson to be derived from Sanders' study is that there is not one and only one traditional, historic Christian position on this question, despite the claims of some to the contrary. And while, on the one hand, in an age of rampant pluralism it

is clearly crucial to reassert the distinctive claims of the gospel, it is not as clear that we are required to adopt the restrictivist position. Sir Norman Anderson, arguably evangelicalism's leading spokesman of the past generation in the area of comparative religions, spoke cogently when he wrote just over two decades ago,

May this not provide us with a guideline to the solution of the burning problem of those in other religions who have never heard – or never heard with understanding – of the Saviour? It is not, of course, that they can earn salvation through their religious devotion or moral achievements, great though these sometimes are – for the NT is emphatic that no man can ever earn salvation. But what if the Spirit of God convicts them, as he alone can, of something of their sin and need; and what if he enables them, in the darkness or twilight, somehow to cast themselves on the mercy of God and cry out, as it were, for his forgiveness and salvation? Will they not then be accepted and forgiven in the one and only Saviour?²¹

Our understanding of how deeply embedded the concept of 'works-righteousness' is in the vast majority of human religions does not generate great optimism that large numbers of people would come into the kingdom by this method. But the wisdom of Anderson's position at the same time allows us to carry on with our evangelism more intelligently and perhaps more effectively. For indeed one of the biggest stumbling blocks to coming to faith in Christ for many today is the apparently unsatisfactory nature of the arguments of the restrictivist position basing universal accountability on general revelation. Anderson's cautious 'wider hope' does not require one to imagine the grotesque scenario of somebody having been saved apart from the knowledge of Christ and then refusing the gospel upon hearing it, only to find him, or herself lost. Presumably anyone already seeking a knowledge of the one, true, living God would be empowered by Him to respond positively to the Christian message. Nor is this version of the position Sanders calls 'universally accessible salvation apart from evangelization' without Scriptural support. Several recent writers have insisted that this is precisely what Romans 2:12–16 implies, even if it is never explicitly stated.²² The alternative options all fail at key points: Those who 'show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them' (Rm. 2:15) could be a merely hypothetical category, but this explanation does not work nearly as well with the parallel statements in 7–11 and 25–29 (about those who do good, are circumcised by the Spirit and receive eternal life). As J.D.G. Dunn has stressed, the culmination of this section of Romans in 3:20 does not state that no one is justified apart from having heard of Christ, but rather that no one is justified by the works of the Law.²³ But the view of C.E.B. Cranfield, that in all three of these

excerpts in Romans 2 only Christians are in view,²⁴ runs afoul of the larger narrative flow of the epistle, in which the role of the Christian gospel does not seem to be unpacked until 3:21. So, at the very least, we have precedent in Romans 2 for the faithful *Jew* under the old covenant responding by grace with faith in God's promises. But the reference to the *Gentiles* in verse 14 then most naturally raises the question if all those who have not heard might not be theologically 'B.C.,' even if they are chronologically living in the Christian dispensation.

Eternal Life for Christians

It is a little ironic that so much study has concentrated on the fate of unbelievers without a corresponding focus on the glory to which Christians can look forward.²⁵ Two areas of study to which only slight attention has been devoted deserve further exploration. First is the issue of rewards for believers. I have argued elsewhere that, contrary to one popular strand of thought, believers should not expect eternal degrees of reward in heaven. The imagery of the parable of the vineyard laborers (Mt. 20:1-16) points us away from such an expectation, as does the logic of heaven itself (how can there be degrees of perfection?). The so-called 'crown' passages (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Thes. 2:19; 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4), as well as numerous other NT texts, speak merely of eternal life in general as the reward for Christian commitment. I do not dispute for one minute that the NT teaches that each believer will have an entirely unique experience before God on Judgment Day (esp. Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:1-10). I merely dispute whether any passages commit us to seeing such unique experiences as perpetuated throughout all eternity.²⁶

The issue is a significant one, for a fair amount of motivation for living the Christian life is often based on these alleged degrees of reward, rather than, as Luther saw most clearly among the Protestant Reformers, on the motive of profound gratitude for God in Christ having already done what we could never do or merit.²⁷ Ironically, those who most emphasize rewards often also have a very broad definition of who (under the heading of the carnal Christian) can still just barely squeeze into heaven. By missing the point of the NT texts, they may be in fact including people that Scripture excludes, a point that becomes more obvious once we realize that several warning passages are about Christian entrance into the kingdom, rather than degrees of reward within it (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:10-14).²⁸ Indeed, if one couples the theme of equality in heaven with that of degrees of punishment in hell, the results fit in well with a consistent biblical asymmetry: that salvation is always entirely by grace, whereas judgment is just as consistently according to one's works. Grace leaves no room for gradation; works allow for endless degrees of differentiation. I am afraid that some popular Christian thought has entirely inverted this biblical model, promising degrees of reward in

heaven, but seeing those who suffer in hell as experiencing identical agony.

The Intermediate State

Second, more attention needs to be devoted to the classic Christian understanding of the intermediate state. An important work which goes against the grain of much recent thought in this respect is John Cooper's *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*.²⁹ We are told these days by various philosophers, psychologists and biologists that the human person must be viewed as an indivisibly monistic whole. This claim has spawned major reinterpretations of what happens to a believer upon death, prior to the general resurrection accompanying the Parousia. Either believers look forward to 'soul-sleep', whereby their next conscious moment of existence is at their resurrection,³⁰ or they receive a resurrection body immediately upon death.³¹ But the former option commands almost no exegetical support, except for the use of the common Greek euphemism 'sleep' for death. And the latter view, arguably present in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, seems to require an understanding of Pauline 'development' in which the apostle actually contradicts, or changes his mind from, his earlier views (see esp. 1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-55). The traditional exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5 remains the best.³² Paul does not desire to be absent from the body and home with the Lord as his ideal, but it is preferable to remaining in this life apart from the direct presence of God, if indeed it turns out that he will not live until Christ returns.³³ It is not clear that philosophy or science has proved that no intangible or immaterial dimension of the human person exists apart from his or her body.³⁴ Exegesis, at any rate, dare not take apparent findings of modern, non-biblical world-views as its starting point.

The issue is not an insignificant one. The classic conception of the intermediate state allows Christians to console loved ones who have lost believers to death with the assurance that they are immediately in the presence of Jesus. It enables us to continue to defend one essential part of the *imago Dei*: humans are unique among the forms of life God created in having the capacity to be in a spiritual relationship with him.³⁵ And it makes sense of the rash of near-death experiences being reported these days of individuals sensing a disembodied life beyond the grave, without forcing us to view all of these experiences either as some biologically caused illusion or as necessarily accurate descriptions of the eternal state.³⁶ The intermediate state does not necessarily correspond to the nature of resurrection life, for either a believer or an unbeliever.

At the same time, we must insist that even the glory of disembodied presence with God in Christ is not the ideal. Bodily resurrection vindicates God's initial purpose for creating men and women, just as the new heavens and the new earth

re-establish God's original intention for the rest of his creation. Again, our popular Christian mindset, not to mention the culture of recent films enamoured with life after death, does not consistently appreciate how earthy and bodily the Christian hope is for the age to come. God originally created this world as 'good' and humans as 'very good' (Gn. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). We have corrupted ourselves and creation, but he will have the last word, redeeming and demonstrating as utterly good all of the material world. Much popular Christianity, as well as alternative world-views, not least in the so-called New Age Movement, are neo-Gnostic in comparison.³⁶

Exegesis of Key New Testament Texts

The Olivet Discourse

Professor G.R. Beasley-Murray has put us in his debt with an update and restatement of his classic analysis of Jesus' eschatological discourse (Mk. 13 and pars.).³⁷ After sketching out in comprehensive detail exegetical alternatives, he again cogently defends a 'historic' or 'classic premillennialist' interpretation.³⁸ The sermon begins (vv. 5–13) with things that must happen 'but the end is still to come' (v. 7). Verses 14–23 introduce us to 'the abomination that causes desolation' (v. 14), depicting the destruction of the temple by Rome in A.D. 70. Not until verses 24–27 is the Parousia directly in view, but no sign is ever given that enables us to calculate its timing. Not even Jesus, in the human limits of his incarnation, had access to this information (v. 32). The enigmatic verse 30, with its reference to 'this generation' (*he genea hauti*) not passing away 'until all these things have happened,' must be interpreted in light of verse 29. The Greek word for 'these things' (*tauta*) in verse 30 is the identical word as its antecedent in verse 29. But verse 29 speaks of 'these things' happening so that 'you know' that 'it' (*i.e.*, Christ or his return) 'is near, right at the door.' It makes no sense therefore for 'these things' to include Christ's actual return because then the Parousia would no longer be simply near, close at hand; it would have arrived. *Tauta* must therefore refer to the preliminary events of verses 5–23, all of which were fulfilled, at least provisionally, within the first century, enabling the church to have the lively hope of an imminent return of Christ in numerous eras of its history ever since.³⁹ Indeed, the application with which Mark's version of the discourse closes (and which extends for an entire additional chapter in Matthew) stresses the practical application of Jesus' words (vv. 33–37). Far from encouraging contemporary events-watching, Jesus discourages attempts to discern when the end is at hand, mandating faithful, obedient service all the while instead. T. Geddert's fine study persuasively demonstrates that this interpretation of the Olivet Discourse matches Mark's purpose and structure more generally: to deter a theology of signs and promote humble discipleship that follows Jesus on the road to the cross.⁴⁰ Several other recent evangelical

commentators and essay writers have taken a roughly similar tack to Mark 13 and parallels, at times dubbing it a preterist – futurist approach.⁴¹ But I do not sense that it has become well-known in our churches, and certainly not as well-known as the purely preterist or purely futurist options that consign all of Jesus' teaching (and like passages elsewhere in the NT) either to the first century or to an entirely future time.

As we approach the intriguing year 2000, I'm afraid we shall again encounter a rash of date-setters, much as we have seen, particularly in North America and in Korea, over the past decade.⁴² The argument lies ready at hand. It was an ancient Jewish belief, adopted by some early Christian writers, on the basis of Psalm 90:4 ('a thousand years ... are like a day'), that the millennium would come as God's sabbath rest for human history during its seventh thousand-year period.⁴³ When a date of roughly 4,000 BC is accepted for the creation of the earth, it is a short step to concluding that we are on the verge of that seventh millennium. But the sole NT citation of this Psalm (2 Pet. 3:8–9) applies it quite differently – as a rationale for the delay of the Parousia, rather than as a basis for predicting its arrival. And the uniquely Matthean sequence of parables created by Matthew's longer ending to the Olivet Discourse depicts quite poignantly all of the options for the timing of Christ's return. In the parable of the thief in the night (Mt. 24:42–44), Christ returns entirely unexpectedly. In the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants (v. 45–51), he comes unexpectedly early. And in the story of the ten bridesmaids (25:1–13), he is unexpectedly delayed. Surely this calls Christians to prepare for all three logical possibilities⁴⁴ and rules out any attempt to imply, however cautiously, that we can ever predict a particular generation (or any period of time) in which Christ is most likely to come back.

Romans 11:25–26

An enormous amount of scholarly literature continues to address Paul's treatment of Israel in Romans 9 – 11. Particularly controversial is the climax of his discussion in 11:25–26. Is there justification here for a future hope for ethnic Israel? One's views at this point will most likely colour one's interpretation of a variety of other scattered references in the NT that impinge on the debate. We are particularly in debt to P. Walker for his recent book-length treatment of Jerusalem in the NT.⁴⁵ On this subject, Walker follows N.T. Wright's lead with respect to NT eschatology more generally, believing that the church has entirely superseded Israel as the chosen people of God.⁴⁶ This situation should not cause Christians to gloat; it led both Jesus and Paul to express great sorrow for their countrymen who were not responding to the gospel (Mt. 23:37–29 par.; Rom. 9:1–5). But there is no NT justification for seeing a final stage of eschatological blessing for literal Jews after 'the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled' (Lk. 21:24).

Walker and Wright give us, I believe, profound insights into vast sections of the NT that are directly applicable to a debate that until recently went on almost entirely outside of evangelical circles. I speak of the so-called 'two covenants' approach to salvation: Jesus is Messiah for the Gentiles but Jews may be saved by remaining faithful to the Mosaic covenant. Inasmuch as one begins to find evangelical Christians articulating this position,⁴⁷ Walker and Wright provide massive evidence that the relevant texts will simply not bear this interpretation.

To the extent that many North American Christians uncritically support the current state of Israel, seeing it even as some fulfillment of prophecy, these correctives prove crucial. No text of the NT suggests any future for a socio-political entity such as the modern nation of Israel. Even less substantiable are views that require Jewish presence in Jerusalem to rebuild a literal temple just prior to Christ's return, given that the foundational role of the temple was to be the one divinely ordained place for offering sacrifices. The epistle to the Hebrews surely dispenses with the notion that literal animal sacrifices could ever again play a part in God's plans for His people. Writers like C. Chapman and G. Burge have pursued this theme in a related direction, noting that the vast majority of all Christians currently living in Israel are Palestinian.⁴⁸ And if there is no biblical mandate for a current socio-political entity in the historic lands bequeathed to the Jews, then a certain sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians must certainly be at the forefront of any Christian's social agenda.

But I fear that at times, particularly in the evangelicalism of the British commonwealth, these points are taken for granted, and possibly balancing emphases in the NT of a future, at least for *ethnic* Jews, is too hastily dismissed. Hints appear in Matthew 23:39 (par. Lk. 13:35),⁴⁹ Luke 21:24, Acts 3:19-21, and elsewhere, but ultimately discussion must focus attention on the more detailed conclusions of Romans.

At first glance, the approach adopted by Walker and Wright makes eminent sense. Romans 11:26 begins with a 'so' or 'thus,' not a clearly temporal connective such as 'then.' In the earlier stages of salvation history Jews were God's chosen people; then came the Christian age in which Gentiles predominated (v. 25). *Thus* together 'all Israel' (that is, God's people of all ages or dispensations) 'will be saved' (v. 25a). On the other hand, the immediate, surrounding context of verses 23 and 28 promises literal Jews that they can be grafted in again to God's people if they do not persist in unbelief. And the larger narrative flow of chapters 9 - 11, speaking of a succession of ages in salvation history, makes it most natural to take the 'thus' of verse 26 as referring to a third and final stage in conjunction with the Parousia (vv. 26b-27). While it is true that Romans 9:6-13 and other passages distinguish between literal, ethnic Israel and a remnant who are the true spiritual Israel, and while Paul may even refer to the entire

Christian church as 'the Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16), it is not clear that the immediate context of Romans 11:25-26 allows any distinction in meaning between the literal Jews of 'Israel' in verse 25 and the people implied by 'all Israel' in verse 26. It is better, therefore, to follow the majority of commentators in seeing Paul as promising a large-scale outpouring of belief in Jesus as Messiah among literal, ethnic Jews, not necessarily concentrated in any piece of geography, in conjunction with events immediately leading up to Christ's return.⁵⁰

If this is so, then the church needs to rethink carefully its relationship with Jewish people. On the one hand, in a post-Holocaust age any form of dialogue that is not highly sensitive to the horrors and prejudice of anti-Semitism throughout Christian history does not deserve the title Christian and is, in any event, likely to prove counterproductive. On the other hand, engaging contemporary Jews as partners only in a religious dialogue that sidesteps the unique, salvific claims of Jesus in the NT risks ultimate irrelevancy. D. Bloesch puts it more pointedly: 'The church is betraying its evangelistic mandate if it withholds the gospel of salvation from the very people who gave us the Messiah and Saviour of the world. Such an attitude could be construed as the worst kind of anti-Semitism ...'⁵¹ It is even arguable, on the basis of the salvation-historical priority of the Christian mission to the Jews in Romans 1:16, and the pattern of early Christian preaching in the book of Acts more generally, a pattern which even the end of the Book of Acts does not seem finally to abolish,⁵² that evangelizing Jewish people might still retain a certain priority in our age.

The Book of Revelation and Apocalyptic

A huge bibliography of recent works again attaches itself to this third significant portion of Scripture. There is now widespread agreement that the book of Revelation must be seen in light of three biblical genres: apocalypse, prophecy, and epistolary literature. But the greatest of these is apocalyptic. A widely quoted and highly influential definition of apocalyptic comes from John Collins in his *Semeia* symposium

*'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which a revelation is mediated by an other worldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.*⁵⁴

A comprehensive anthology of English translations of the so-called pseudepigrapha has appeared in two volumes, one of them entirely devoted to apocalyptic and related literature, under the editorship of Princeton scholar James Charlesworth.⁵⁵ A more selective and readable collection, for one wishing to familiarize him or herself with snippets of Jewish,

Christian and Greco-Roman apocalyptic most relevant for interpreting the Bible, is now found in the volume edited by Reddish.⁵⁶ Large, even multi-volume, commentaries on Revelation have either appeared or are imminent, and, as with the interpretation of Jesus' Olivet Discourse, tend to defend the classic preterist (or amillennial) and futurist (or dispensational) option.⁵⁷ But again, a historic or classical premillennialist (and post-tribulational) view, to be sharply distinguished from the better-known and more widespread dispensational (and pre-tribulational) premillennialism, still remains best. The trio of commentaries, by Mounce, Ladd, and Beasley-Murray, all from the 1970s and, with varying nuances, all reflecting the classical premillennialist view, probably remains the best and most manageable package to hand a would-be interpreter of the final book of the NT canon.⁵⁸ The entire Revelation is written from a clear end-of-the-first-century perspective. John's visions, symbolism, and imagery would have all been more quickly understood by a first-century Christian audience in western Asia Minor than they often are today. As Fee and Stuart in their hermeneutical handbook put it so aptly, 'The primary meaning of the Revelation is what John intended it to mean, which in turn must also have been something his readers could have understood it to mean.'⁵⁹ Yet at the same time, from at least chapter 7 onward, it seems crucial to insist that the events to which John's visions point have not yet been consummated.

None of this commits us to discount the greatest strength of the non-futurist positions, namely, an appreciation that Revelation is not attempting to depict events immediately preceding the Parousia in any consistently literal fashion. Nor dare our readings lead us to dilute a healthy Christian social ethic, based on the assumption that things immediately preceding the end will merely go from bad to worse anyway. We must recognize that the primary purpose of apocalyptic is increasingly agreed to be to provide comfort for those who are experiencing persecution, oppression, or some other form of social marginalization, or who at least form part of a community who perceive themselves to be subject to such marginalization.⁶⁰ Again, with writers out of the recent African and Latin American strands of liberation theology, we must remember that Revelation, like much apocalyptic literature more generally, functions as a literature of protest, though without any clear indications that such protest may ever turn violent.⁶¹ By depicting the perfect justice of the world to come, the injustices of present socio-political realities are unmasked. Governments may be divinely ordained (Rom. 13) but they may also be demonic, requiring civil disobedience (Rev. 13).⁶²

In the final analysis, the case for historic premillennialism rests on the narrative flow of Revelation 19 – 20. It seems impossible to insert a literary seam in between Revelation 19:20-21 and 20:1 as amillennial and postmillennial perspectives are forced to do. Chapter 19 ends with the eternal punishment of

two-thirds of the unholy trinity of chapters 12 to 13: the first beast and the false prophet. But what is the fate of the dragon, i.e., Satan, the third individual and chief person of this demonic trio? This question is not answered until 20:1-3. But, given that there is no logical or chronological break before verse 4, the millennium that is described in the rest of chapter 20 must of necessity follow the return of Christ, with which chapter 19 concludes.⁶³

Nor is this merely a literary observation. Theologically, just as it is crucial to insist that human bodies will be redeemed via their resurrection, so also God's initial plans for this world, not merely in a wholly recreated heavens and earth, will be vindicated, in a millennium that falls just short of the utter perfection of the new cosmos described in Revelation 21 - 22. Far from being a disincentive to an appropriate Christian social or environmental ethic, a healthy chiliasm, akin to the dominant strand of the pre-Augustinian church in the first centuries of its history,⁶⁴ and shorn of nineteenth-century dispensationalist novelties (most notably a pre-tribulational rapture⁶⁵), flows directly from the conviction that God himself in Christ will complete with this current earth precisely what Christians through His power are unable to complete prior to the Parousia. Nevertheless, there is wisdom in the old line about the individual, who at the end of tedious debates among the various branches of millennialism, declared himself simply to be a pan-millennialist: 'I believe that it will just all pan out in the end.' Few exegetical conundra in Revelation need prove divisive, particularly in light of apocalyptic's avowed purpose of offering comfort to the oppressed (cf. also 1 Cor. 15:58). If we can agree that Christ is indeed coming back and that this is the central eschatological theme of Revelation, we can disagree amicably on almost everything else.⁶⁶

Demythologizing the Parousia?

The final significant development in recent evangelical eschatology which I wish to address nevertheless challenges even this broad conclusion. It has long been noted that certain passages in the NT, often taken to refer to the Parousia, may make better sense on a different interpretation. For example, in evangelical circles R.T. France has championed a view of Mark 13:24-27 and parallels that sees Jesus' coming on the clouds not as a reference to His return at the end of human history as we know it, but to God's coming through Jesus in judgment on the nation of Israel at the time of the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.⁶⁷ Whether or not this is the best interpretation of this passage, it is an approach that fits the text's immediate context about the destruction of the temple. But now N.T. Wright has pressed the case substantially further. In a massive and magnificent recent publication, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Wright disputes the traditional interpretations of all of the so-called Parousia passages in the Gospels, taking

them apparently in their entirety to refer to Jesus' invisible coming in judgement on Jerusalem in the first century.⁶⁸

Before placing a significant question mark in front of this perspective, I want to commend Wright's work for offering perhaps the most important contribution to the so-called third quest of the historical Jesus of any in our time.⁶⁹ Wright begins with an impressive demolition of the increasingly popular view, particularly in the United States, that sees the core of the Gospels that can be attributed to the historical Jesus as portraying a radically non-eschatological and non-apocalyptic, itinerant Cynic sage.⁷⁰ Wright's own thesis that Jesus must be placed into a thoroughly intelligible Jewish milieu that was above all grappling with the problem of the Jews' failure to experience God's promises of freedom, peace and prosperity in their land is almost certainly on target. He correctly emphasizes the corporate dimension of this plight, reading afresh many texts in the Gospels as the unique answer of Jesus and his followers to the question of what is to be done about the Romans. In short, for Wright the biggest problem for the Jews was not human oppression but satanic enslavement. The greatest distinctives of Jesus' ministry and message were his claims that the kingdom had arrived, the Messiah was present, the resurrection had begun, and the problem of Jewish exile had been solved, all despite no appearance of any outward socio-political changes in Israel. It would be a pity if evangelicals, who I suspect will widely question what Wright does with the Parousia passages, would miss in the process the immense contribution he has made to historical Jesus research more generally. Nevertheless, in the context of this brief discussion of eschatology, serious questions do need to be raised about Wright's reinterpretation of Christ's return, even as we agree that we must restore a historically plausible, Jewish, apocalyptic dimension to our reading of the Gospels.

In short, Wright's claim is that Jewish apocalyptic literature never looked forward to the end of history in terms of a changed space-time order of the universe as we know it. Instead, passages that refer to cosmic upheaval regularly stand as ciphers for socio-political transformation. Within a spectrum of seven possible definitions of eschatology, ranging from one extreme in which it refers to the end of the world, that is, the end of the space-time universe, to the opposite end in which it functions merely as a 'critique of the present socio-political scene, perhaps with proposals for adjustments,' Wright believes that the best definition of eschatology is 'the climax of Israel's history, involving events for which end-of-the-world language is the only set of metaphors adequate to express the significance of what will happen, but resulting in a new and quite different phase *within* space-time history.'⁷¹ But between the first of these definitions and Wright's preferred definition, he allows only for the alternative, 'eschatology as the climax of Israel's history, involving the end of the space-time universe.'

Granted that Israel's future hope was always grounded in restoration from exile, if not in a restored earth more broadly, it seems that Wright has left out the option that most adequately encompasses a substantial percentage of Jewish apocalyptic (including NT perspectives), namely, eschatology as the climax of Israel's history, using metaphorical language for *both* socio-political transformation *and* cosmic renewal of a kind made possible only by God's supernatural intervention into history, yet still without bringing about the end of the space-time universe.⁷²

Certainly this is the way the vast majority of scholars of eschatology and apocalyptic across all major theological traditions have read the relevant Jewish literature. Given the proper concern to situate Jesus squarely within this milieu, it is not clear why we must use certain metaphorical texts about socio-political upheavals (*e.g.*, Is. 13:9–11; 39:3–4; Ezk. 32:5–8) monolithically to label all metaphorical language in apocalyptic as no different.⁷³ Given the Christian conviction that what happened to Jesus at his resurrection happened within this space-time universe and yet involved God acting supernaturally to transform the nature of Jesus' existence into something that transcended what socio-political liberation could accomplish, and given the consistent Christian linkage between what happened at Jesus' resurrection and what will happen at the general resurrection of believers at the end of time (see esp. 1 Cor. 15:12–28), surely the most consistent view is to adopt this 'both/and' approach of *both* social transformation *and* cosmic intervention for the eschatology of the NT in general. Specific texts and exegetical details further support this suggestion. In Mark 14:62 Jesus' reply to the high priest that 'you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven' does not easily fit Jesus' *invisible* coming to God to receive authority, as some have argued.⁷⁴ Granted that Daniel 7:13–14 has the Son of Man coming on the clouds as he goes to God's heavenly throne, rather than to earth, the sequence of Jesus' wording reverses these actions here. He is *first* sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and *then* coming on the clouds of heaven. In this context, only the earth can be the destination for the Son of Man's travel.⁷⁵ This interpretation meshes with Luke's words in Acts 1:11, quoting the angels' declaration, 'This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.' But the claim that the disciples literally saw Jesus disappear from their midst suggests that his return must be a similar public, visible, and glorious event, ruling out the interpretation of the Parousia as Christ's invisible coming to earth in judgment on the temple in AD 70. Space precludes an exegesis of the various Parousia passages in Paul or of the imagery of cosmic destruction and renewal in 2 Peter 3:10–13, but it is hard to see how Wright's consistent interpretation of the Parousia motif in the Gospels could be convincingly extended to the rest of the NT.⁷⁶

For the credibility of Christian witness, Wright's reinterpretation of the classic Christian hope for Christ's visible return at the end of human history differs little from Bultmann's more well-known existentialist, demythologizing programme,⁷⁷ save that it is at least conceivable in a first-century Jewish milieu. As we focus on relevance for the church, it is important to stress that theologically Wright's reinterpretation may not grant any more hope for the future than Bultmann's. It is true that the seemingly mythological language of the NT can prove an embarrassment today, and that great edifices can be erected on the hypothesis that NT theology changed in substantial ways after early Christians perceived an apparent delay in Jesus' return. But as R. Bauckham helpfully pointed out almost two decades ago, and as C. Holman has stressed in a recent book-length treatment, the so-called delay of the Parousia was not a distinctively Christian problem.⁷⁸ Jews from the eighth century BC on had been wrestling with their prophets declaring the day of the Lord was at hand without any apparent fulfillment. Jewish and Christian use of Psalm 90:4 consistently stressed simply that God's time was not the same as human time. If God seems to delay, it is so that more will have an opportunity to repent. The church at the end of the twentieth century may be embarrassed by the seemingly mythological language of the NT with respect to Christ's return and by the apparent delay of two millennia that a waiting for a literal fulfillment of the Parousia passages appears to create. But we would do well to take a similar tack and recognize God's compassionate strategy in allowing for more time for us to fulfill the Great Commission and get His message out.

Conclusions

At the beginning of our paper we suggested that too often Christians have either neglected the theme of eschatology as irrelevant or fueled the fires of those who would stereotype and caricature us as grotesquely misinterpreting apocalyptic in terms of current events-watching. A third approach, particularly in mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic circles, has attempted to rehabilitate the relevance of apocalyptic and eschatology for the church in our day by pointing to the real horrors of worldwide wars experienced throughout this century and to the even more horrible threat of a nuclear holocaust.⁷⁹ But in its own way, this attempt to make eschatology relevant also demythologizes it. Unless we recognize a supernatural dimension to NT eschatology that goes beyond the good and evil that human structures can generate we will not do full justice to the text. Nor, paradoxically, will we prove to be as relevant, once we realize how limited the long-term changes are that human institutions can create.

The most important thing that needs to be said about the eschatology of the NT is that it shares with the message of

the kingdom, and with NT theology more generally, the same 'already-but-not-yet' framework. In the words of A. Cunningham,

*We ... the Church - are called to proclaim that the world is oriented not to catastrophe and disaster, but to final transformation, assured in the victory of a peace that is not the world's to give. That is the reason for our search to live a life worthy of the gospel: a life of hope, love, service, and transformation of suffering and evil through faith and worship.*⁸⁰

It is precisely because we understand God's plans to supernaturally transform our universe that we can function as little outposts of heaven to model his designs for the universe. We pray 'your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Mt. 6:10). A healthy understanding of the inaugurated eschatology of the NT will save us from the twin errors of a despair or defeatism that attempts to do nothing for this world but save souls from it and the currently more prominent mistake of replacing a hope for a supernaturally recreated universe with utopian socio-political programs for this world. Only God knows how much good we as Christians can bring about socially, politically, ethically, and ideologically in our world. We have seen in our time relatively peaceful revolutions in Europe and the former Soviet Union due in part at least to Christian intercession and nonviolent action. It is not a little perverse when certain North American dispensationalists continue to see European unity as a sign of the fulfillment of prophecies in the book of Revelation of satanic activity.⁸¹ But euphoria over the collapse of the Iron Curtain quickly gave way to grief over mass genocide in Rwanda, a country boasting eighty percent of its population as professing Christian! So, quickly on the heels of events seemingly influenced by the divine came the demonic again, and the tribalism that generated that African holocaust in less extreme ways tends to fragment our world on every continent at the end of this second Christian millennium, notwithstanding all attempts to create structures reflecting socio-political or even ecclesiastical unity.

Reflecting on several of the key themes of Revelation may provide an apt summary and conclusion to a survey of NT eschatology more generally. It is ultimately only eschatology which completes an adequate Christian theodicy.⁸² Christ began the decisive work of defeating sin and evil on the cross. But that process will not be completed until his return. Meanwhile we may be assured of and confidently proclaim at least four key propositions: (1) God is still sovereign, even when circumstances, personally, nationally, or even globally, suggest otherwise. (2) History has a goal and terminus, in which justice will prevail. When we ask why God does not intervene to bring about perfect justice now and destroy his enemies, a major part of our answer must be that such intervention would require destroying ourselves as well and hence history as know it,

inasmuch as we are all intricately involved in the perpetration of evil. (3) We need not avenge those who wrong us, however prophetically we may speak out in critique of injustice in our day, precisely because we have the confidence that ultimately God will right all wrongs. (4) In the words of the shortest summary of NT eschatology that I have ever heard, 'Jesus wins.'⁶³ That hope is enough – or should be – to sustain us until the day when we see it accomplished in our midst.

The scholar in whose name this lecture was originally given retitled his best-selling book *The Goodness of God*, in a revised edition, *The Enigma of Evil*.⁶⁴ Questions of theodicy were a major concern for J. Wenham in this work that has helped a large number of theological students and other Christians around the globe for many years. Among other points, Dr Wenham stressed that suffering is limited and that retribution, however beneficent, is real. If he also supported one of the doctrines that this lecture has called into question, namely, annihilationism,⁶⁵ I believe that he would have well applauded our concluding insistence that Christian eschatology continue to make room at its center for a belief in a visible, public return of Christ to initiate an age of justice that will make all of our current injustices pale in comparison.

If there is a theme that unites the disparate topics treated in this rapid survey, it may be that we ought not lightly to dismiss classic Christian options with respect to the future and the last days, even while recognizing at times the diversity of answers that historic Christianity has given to those questions. Ultimately, we can but echo the apostle Paul, who marveled, 'Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God' (Rom. 11:22, AV). We dare not jettison either attribute in our study or in our ministry. Or, to quote Dr Wenham at some length,

*It is contrary both to Scripture and to experience to believe that all will yield to gentle persuasion. It is not true even of those who are soundly converted. When we pray 'Thy kingdom come,' we pray for the overthrow of evil. We know that the answer to that prayer will be partly by grace and partly by judgment. It is not for us to choose which it shall be. We shall rejoice with the angels over the sinner that repents. And when God himself makes plain that they will not yield to his love and that the day for anguished intercession is over, we shall rejoice with all the servants of God at the destruction of those who sought to destroy God's fair earth.'*⁶⁶

Meanwhile we long for God to establish his kingdom in all its fullness and we work by the Spirit to create a colony of that kingdom in the communities of the redeemed we call his church. *Maranatha*; our Lord come!

- ¹ An initial draft of this paper was delivered as the John Wenham Lecture to the Tyndale Associates as part of the July 1997 Tyndale Fellowship conference on 'Eschatology' in Swanwick.
- ² For a mainline Protestant survey of responses to several of these, see S.L. Cook, 'Reflections on Apocalypticism at the Approach of the Year 2000', *USQR* 49 (1995), pp. 3-16.
- ³ As, in the excellent study by W.J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).
- ⁴ D.L. Edwards with J. Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder & Stoughton; Downers Grove: IVP, 1988), pp. 313-20. Cf. C.H. Pinnock, 'The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent', *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (1990), pp. 243-59. The debate, of course, has emerged in many periods of church history, and has had other modern defenders, but none has recently generated so much response as Stott (particularly in the UK) and Pinnock (particularly in the US). Stott has also stressed in response to his critics how tentatively he holds his view.
- ⁵ R.A. Peterson, 'A Traditionalist Response to John Stott's Arguments for Annihilationism' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (1994), pp. 553-68; R.L. Reymond, 'Dr John Stott on Hell,' *Presbyterion* 16 (1990), pp. 41-59; J.I. Packer, 'The Problem of Eternal Punishment', *Crux* 26.3 (1990) pp. 18-25; H.O.J. Brown, 'Will the Lost Suffer Forever?' *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (1990), pp. 261-78.
- ⁶ E.E. Ellis, 'Forum on Conditional Immortality' (Swanwick: Tyndale Conference, 1997), argues that the parallelism consists of a one-time event with eternal consequences. But the fate of the unbeliever is to depart 'into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt. 25:41), a fire that is said to torment 'day and night forever and ever' (Rev. 20:10). Cf. also Rev. 14:10-11.
- ⁷ This would seem to be true even if hell were conceived as potentially temporal, as in D. Cheetham, 'Hell as Potentially Temporal,' *Expository Times* 108 (1997), pp. 260-63.
- ⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946).
- ⁹ For a more detailed, recent presentation and analysis of the issues at stake in this debate, see T. Gray, 'Destroyed Forever: An Examination of the Debates Concerning Annihilation and Conditional Immortality,' *Themelios* 21.2 (1996), pp. 14-18.
- ¹⁰ Most notably, with respect to the question of to what extent spiritual salvation to prepare one for a life beyond this world should even still be included in the concept. Particularly significant for theological students' reflection are the diverse contributions to R. Evans et al., eds., *The Globalization of Theological Education* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993).
- ¹¹ This is not to say it will inevitably be quashed; happily some act inconsistently with their premises and continue in faithful obedience in this arena.
- ¹² *Four Views on Hell*, ed. W. Crockett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).
- ¹³ Technically, 'conditional immortality' deals only with the issue of whether humans have an innately immortal soul. Even if they do not, God might choose to raise *both* believers and unbelievers to an everlasting conscious existence. But usually proponents of conditional immortality go on to affirm the annihilation of the unbeliever.
- ¹⁴ See, e.g., G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. D.A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993; Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1994), p. 196.

- ¹⁵ All quotations in this paper follow the New International Version, Inclusive Language Edition (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996).
- ¹⁶ Cf. especially I.H. Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 178-80.
- ¹⁷ N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1951), p. 365; cf. D. Gooding, *According to Luke* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1987), pp. 246; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 2 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), p. 992, - at the level of the historical Jesus but not of Lukan redaction. Curiously, most commentators assume that Jesus is still speaking of his disciples in vv. 47-48. But vv. 45-46 depict a faithless servant who contrasts with the faithful steward of vv. 42-44 and who is assigned 'a place with the unbelievers' (v. 46). 'The servant' of v. 47, then, is taken most naturally as elaborating on the faithless servant of the immediately preceding verses. Verses 47-48 thus consider two kinds of faithless servants who take their place among unbelievers.
- ¹⁸ See esp. *What About Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, ed. J. Sanders (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995); *Through No Fault of Their Own? The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, eds. W.V. Crockett and J.G. Sigountos (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).
- ¹⁹ Many of these papers were published in *One God, One Lord in a World of Religious Pluralism*, eds. A.D. Clarke and B.W. Winter (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1991).
- ²⁰ J. Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation Into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992; London: SPCK, 1994).
- ²¹ N. Anderson, *The World's Religions* (London: InterVarsity, 1975; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 234.
- ²² See esp. G.N. Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), pp. 53-71; K. Snodgrass, 'Justification By Grace - To the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul,' *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986), pp. 72-93; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1 - 8* (Dallas: Word, 1988), p. 107.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-60.
- ²⁴ C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), pp. 151-53, pp. 155-63.
- ²⁵ Though see P. Toon, *Heaven and Hell* (Nashville: Nelson, 1986).
- ²⁶ See further C.L. Blomberg, 'Degrees of Reward in the Kingdom of Heaven?' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (1992), pp. 159-72. In fact, E. Disley ('Degrees of Glory: Protestant Doctrine and the Concept of Rewards Hereafter', *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991), pp. 77-105) notes that the development of the doctrine of differentiating degrees of reward was in part the legacy of non-Lutheran reformers trying to salvage something of the Roman Catholic notion of purgatory. The most recent attempt to argue for eternal rewards distinct from salvation (R.N. Wilkin, 'The Biblical Distinction Between Eternal Salvation and Eternal Rewards: A Key to Proper Exegesis', *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 9 (1996), pp. 15-24) is aware of my article, misleads in its summary of my views and fails entirely to address its main arguments.
- ²⁷ Cf. e.g., Luther's *Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959) 51.282-83.
- ²⁸ This misunderstanding of Scripture has been epitomized in recent years perhaps best by Z.C. Hodges in his numerous writings.

- ²⁹ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).
- ³⁰ The former is the more common recourse; the latter has become well-known via M.J. Harris, *Raised Immortal* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) pp. 98–101; following F.F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 204.
- ³¹ Cf. also I.K. Smith, 'Does 2 Corinthians 5:1–8 Refer to an Intermediate State?' *Reformed Theological Review* 55 (1996), pp. 14–23.
- ³² On the logic here, see esp. W.L. Craig, 'Paul's Dilemma in 2 Corinthians 5.1–10: A 'Catch 22'?' *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988), pp. 145–47. On the exegetical evidence for an intermediate state more generally, see J. Osei-Bonsu, 'The Intermediate State in the New Testament', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991), pp. 169–94. Osei-Bonsu also deals well with the Corinthian text in idem, 'Does 2 Cor. 5.1–10 Teach the Reception of the Resurrection Body at the Moment of Death?' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28 (1986), pp. 81–101.
- ³³ On the contrary, see the important research on the 'mind-brain' distinction by J.C. Eccles, *The Human Mystery* (Berlin and New York: Springer, 1979); idem, *The Human Psyche* (New York: Springer, 1980; London: Routledge, 1992).
- ³⁴ On which, see R.W. Wilson and C.L. Blomberg, 'The Image of God in Humanity: A Biblical-Psychological Perspective', *Themelios* 18.3 (1993), pp. 8–15.
- ³⁵ See esp. D. Groothuis, *Deceived by the Light* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995).
- ³⁶ Cf. idem, *Unmasking the New Age* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 1991).
- ³⁷ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993). Cf. idem, *Jesus and the Future* (London: Macmillan, 1954).
- ³⁸ To be differentiated from amillennialism and postmillennialism, on the one hand, and the better-known dispensational form of premillennialism, on the other hand.
- ³⁹ Alternative approaches prove less convincing. 'This generation' cannot easily be made to mean the last generation before the Parousia in view of its consistent usage elsewhere in the Gospels (cf. Mark 8:12, 38; 9:19; Matt. 11:16; 12:41–42, 45; 17:17, 23:36, etc.). Nor is the NIV marginal reading 'race' a lexically common meaning of the term.
- ⁴⁰ T.J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989).
- ⁴¹ Cf., e.g., D.A. Carson, 'Matthew,' in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F.E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), pp. 488–508; R.H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 733–800; D.E. Garland, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 487–512. The term itself is found in D.L. Turner, 'The Structure and Sequence of Matthew 24:1–21: Interaction with Evangelical Treatments', *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (1989), pp. 327, who adopts this approach as well. For an advocate of a similar position outside of explicitly evangelical circles see B.K. Blount, 'Preaching the Kingdom: Mark's Apocalyptic Call for Prophetic Engagement,' *Princeton Seminary Bulletin Supplements* 3 (1994), pp. 33–56.
- ⁴² For a survey and helpful reply to a number of these at a popular level, see B.J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994).

- ⁴³ The oldest Christian version of this belief preserved is found in the Epistle of Barnabas 15.
- ⁴⁴ So also D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 14 – 28* (Dallas: Word, 1995), p. 718.
- ⁴⁵ P.W.L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1997).
- ⁴⁶ Cf. N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), pp. 231–57.
- ⁴⁷ I am not aware of any *bona fide* scholarly defenses of this view by avowed evangelicals, but I have increasingly heard it promoted orally in both the US and the UK at the grass-roots level. A variation of this view, in which *all* Jews of all time are saved at the *Parousia* of Christ/general resurrection, by faith in Jesus in response to *his* preaching the gospel, appears in R.H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1994), pp. 134–45. For representative recent literature of all the major exegetical options surrounding vv. 25–27, see D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 713–29.
- ⁴⁸ C. Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?* (Tring: Lion, 1983); G.M. Burge, *Who Are God's People in the Middle East?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).
- ⁴⁹ On which, see esp. D.C. Allison, Jr., 'Mt. 23:39 = Lk. 13:35b As a Conditional Prophecy', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 18 (1983), pp. 75–84.
- ⁵⁰ E.g., Cranfield, *Romans*, vol. 2, pp. 574–79; Dunn, *Romans 9 – 16* (1988), pp. 690–93; Moo, *Romans*, pp. 719–26. B.W. Longenecker ('Different Answers to Different Issues: Israel, the Gentiles and Salvation History in Romans 9 – 11,' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (1989), pp. 95–123) is particularly helpful in showing how Paul's logic here develops out of thoroughly Jewish (and esp. Old Testament) eschatology.
- ⁵¹ D.G. Bloesch, 'All Israel Will Be Saved': Supersessionism and the Biblical Witness', *Interpretation* 43 (1989), pp. 140–41. Some have argued that God will save Israel through faith in Christ by extraordinary means apart from the preaching of the gospel, but cf. S. Hafemann, 'The Salvation of Israel in Romans 11:25–32: A Response to Krister Stendahl', *Ex Auditu* 4 (1988), pp. 54: 'The future salvation of ethnic Israel must correspond to the nature of the remnant's salvation in the present, since the future nature of ethnic Israel is inextricably tied to the present nature of the remnant (11:16).'
- ⁵² See esp. R.C. Tannehill, 'Israel in Luke–Acts: A Tragic Story,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985), pp. 69–85.
- ⁵³ F.D. Bruner, *The Christbook: Matthew 1 – 12* (Waco: Word, 1987), p. 372, 'Israel always has precedence'.
- ⁵⁴ J.J. Collins, 'Introduction: Morphology of a Genre', *Semeia* 14 (1979), p. 9.
- ⁵⁵ J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City: New York; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983–85).
- ⁵⁶ M.G. Reddish, ed., *Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990; subsequently reprinted by Hendrickson).
- ⁵⁷ Contrast D.E. Aune, *Revelation*, 3 vols. (Dallas: Word, 1997–); with R.L. Thomas, *Revelation*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1992–95). G.K. Beale's forthcoming NIGTC offering on Revelation will be bound as one volume but is long enough to have been easily divided in two.

- ⁵⁸ R.H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977; currently being revised); G.E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); G.R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1978, 2nd ed.).
- ⁵⁹ G.D. Fee and D. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 209.
- ⁶⁰ Cf. esp. A.Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); with E. S. Florenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). Collins has now advanced her discussion considerably in *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).
- ⁶¹ For an extreme liberation theology reading that turns Revelation into a mandate for merely socio-political change, see P. Richard, *Apocalypse: A People's Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995). For a balanced blend of evangelical historic premillennialism with a cautious liberation theology, see R. Foulkes, *El Apocalipsis de San Juan: Una lectura desde América Latina* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Buenos Aires: Nueva Creación, 1989).
- ⁶² From South Africa at the height of apartheid, cf. A.A. Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: Reflections on the Apocalypse of John of Patmos* (Philadelphia: Westminster; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987); cf. also C. Rowland, 'The Apocalypse: Hope, Resistance and the Revelation of Reality', *Ex Auditu* 6 (1990), pp. 129-44.
- ⁶³ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, pp. 283-92.
- ⁶⁴ A.W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), pp. 21-31. Wainwright's book is also an excellent, readable history of the interpretation of Revelation more broadly.
- ⁶⁵ Of particular value for laypeople now is B. Gundry's updated popular-level defense of post-tribulationism: *First the Antichrist* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).
- ⁶⁶ Recent study of Revelation has generated several helpful studies of its theology, demonstrating the rich breadth of topics, even besides eschatology, that are addressed. See esp. G. Goldsworthy, *The Gospel in Revelation* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984); D. Guthrie, *The Relevance of John's Apocalypse* (Exeter: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); R. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); idem, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993); S.S. Smalley, *Thunder and Love: John's Revelation and John's Community* (Milton Keynes: Nelson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).
- ⁶⁷ R.T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Leicester: InterVarsity; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 333-36, 343-48.
- ⁶⁸ (London: SPCK; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) esp. pp. 360-67; building on idem, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 280-338.
- ⁶⁹ A full-orbed, multi-author critique of Wright's work from a mostly evangelical perspective is in preparation for IVP in the US under the editorship of C. Newman.
- ⁷⁰ Esp. B.L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); M.J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987); J.D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991).

- ⁷¹ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 208. Wright is building especially on various brief treatments by his former doctoral supervisor, G.B. Caird.
- ⁷² Cf. esp. D.C. Allison, Jr, 'A Plea for Thoroughgoing Eschatology,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994), pp. 651-68; with idem, *The End of the Ages Has Come* (Philadelphia: Fortress; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), pp. 84-90.
- ⁷³ See the data assembled in Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, pp. 354-60.
- ⁷⁴ E.g., France, *Matthew*, p. 381.
- ⁷⁵ B. Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity; Exeter: Paternoster, 1992), p. 172 - in another enormously useful recent evangelical treatment of New Testament eschatology.
- ⁷⁶ In private conversation, P. Walker informs me that Wright, in a recent seminar, did not wish to extend this interpretation but left unanswered the subsequent question of where this new motif originated. To distinguish Jesus' pre-resurrection Parousia hope from later NT teaching is particularly difficult given the verbal allusions to Jesus' teaching on the topic in Paul and elsewhere. See esp. D. Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 305-28.
- ⁷⁷ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (London: SCM; New York: Scribner's, 1952) 4-11. Cf., too, the quite recent study by J.D.G. Dunn, 'He Will Come Again', *Int* 51 (1997), pp. 42-56, in which affirmation of Christ's return means simply that the end of human history is particularly Christ-centered and empowered.
- ⁷⁸ R. Bauckham, 'The Delay of the Parousia', *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 (1980), pp. 3-36; C.L. Holman, *Till Jesus Comes: Origins of Christian Apocalyptic Expectation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996).
- ⁷⁹ Of many possible examples, see D.S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (Minneapolis: Fortress; London: SCM, 1992), p. xx, whose work overall remains an excellent introduction to the topic.
- ⁸⁰ A. Cunningham, 'From Strangers to Citizens: Eschatology in the Patristic Era', *Ex Auditu* 6 (1990), p. 83.
- ⁸¹ Particularly balanced, in part as a response to this mentality, is F. Catherwood, *Pro-Europe?* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1991).
- ⁸² On Revelation as theodicy, see esp. G.R. Osborne, 'Theodicy in the Apocalypse', *Trinity Journal* 14 (1993), pp. 63-77.
- ⁸³ Attributed to A.Y. Collins at a conference at North Park Seminary in the early 1990s and reported to me by my former colleague and one of the conference participants, Dr T.P. Weber.
- ⁸⁴ J. Wenham, *The Enigma of Evil* (Leicester: InterVarsity; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985; orig. edition, *The Goodness of God* (Leicester and Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1974)).
- ⁸⁵ J. Wenham, *Goodness*, pp. 27-41.
- ⁸⁶ J. Wenham, *Enigma*, p. 165.

THEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE CURRENT SITUATION

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David Williams, originally from the UK, has been in Southern Africa since 1971 in association with the African Evangelical Fellowship. Since 1983 he has taught Systematic Theology at the University of Fort Hare, where many of Southern Africa's current leaders, notably Nelson Mandela, received their training.

Some time ago, the author went to the annual conference of the Theological Society of Southern Africa. This was held at what used to be a Catholic seminary some distance north of Pretoria, a complex now used for non-theological purposes by the University of Pretoria. Such a change in use is in itself some indication of what is happening in theological education in South Africa. The conference itself, as such usually do, provided an opportunity to meet colleagues, a very necessary thing in South Africa where distances are big and academics can feel quite isolated from others in the same field. It also provided opportunities to share research, views and other information. Attending it thus provided much of the necessary insight to consider the state of theology in the country.

What was striking, compared to conferences held in previous years, was, firstly, how few there were attending it. There are some twenty universities in the country, most teaching theology or religion in some form, and a large number of Bible colleges and other institutions involved in theological training. The society itself has a membership role of nearly two hundred, itself less than the total who would be eligible to belong, and yet there were only twenty who attended the full conference, with perhaps another ten on the main day. Why so few? The second thing that struck the author was the general air of gloom and depression in nearly all of those attending. Everyone seemed to have a tale of woe, and was pessimistic about his or her future in theology. Why was this? The third notable characteristic was an overall feeling of a loss of direction, uncertainty about what theology should be concerned with in the new South Africa. There was an overall theme for the conference, but the impression was that this was not selected out of a driving desire to investigate and consider that topic but really came from a feeling that the conference had to deal with something. Obviously these three are connected, and they do serve to indicate something of what is currently happening in South Africa.

The Legacy of apartheid

There is no aspect of life, theology included, which has escaped the effect of the political process in South Africa, particularly in the last few years, which has concluded half a century of dramatic political events. It is these recent changes that have most coloured the mood and situation of theology. 'Coloured' is

of course a most appropriate term. South Africa is totally connected in the minds of most of the world with the policy of 'apartheid', more euphemistically 'separate development', which tried, since the Nationalists came to power in 1948, to implement an ambitious programme of social engineering designed to keep the various races living in South Africa apart. The details of what were attempted are well-known; the country was divided into various 'white' and 'non-white' areas; there were separate amenities in many areas of life so that the races were kept, as far as possible, from contact with each other. This is not the place to evaluate what happened, except to note that the policy came under increasing criticism because it was felt that it was not in fact applied equally. Moreover, and this is coming out in the stories heard by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the chairmanship of the former Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, the policy resulted in the great suffering of countless people caused simply by the application of the policy and by countering opposition to it. Cassidy¹ graphically describes some of the practical effects of the policies.

It can hardly be surprising that for very many years almost the sole topic of interest in theology related directly to apartheid. De Gruchy² even excludes other aspects, such as traditional Western theology, despite its influence in training ministers, from his survey of South African theology. The policy was intended, looking at it from the best possible light, to reduce, even eliminate the race problem from society. In fact the race problem dominated everything, including, of course, the practice of theology. The issue of the relationship between church and state was high on the theological agenda, issuing in a variety of distinct attitudes.³ What is then noteworthy is the observation that South Africa has for a couple of decades been one of the most productive areas of the world for theology. This is for a couple of reasons, both inevitably linked with the race issue.

The first side of this is that the previous government, reflecting the ethos of its support, which was predominantly of the Afrikaans sector of the population, perceived itself to be in South Africa and in power as a result of divine favour. The essential idea was of a people, a 'volk', in covenant with God and therefore blessed and guided by him.⁴ The preamble to the previous constitution claimed that God himself had brought the settlers to South Africa.

With that background, Christianity was actively supported by the government. This was not only an aspect of the covenant, but was also a means of uniting the nation, a little similar to the way in which Constantine had sought to unite the Roman empire by accepting Christianity as a '*religio licita*' in 313 AD and by insisting on agreement in doctrine at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD when the Arian dispute threatened to destroy that unity. A key way in which this was attempted

was naturally by means of the school system, in which a policy of 'Christian National Education'⁵ was implemented. Religious Education was a supposedly compulsory subject in every school,⁶ and Biblical Studies was an optional subject which could be offered in the secondary schools and as part of the Matriculation qualification on leaving school. There were regular, often daily, school assemblies at which both Christianity and patriotism were encouraged.

Of more direct significance for theology in South Africa was the policy of supporting the establishment of departments and even faculties of theology in nearly every university and other tertiary educational institute in the country.⁷ The highly qualified staff of such departments often taught a mere handful of students. What it did mean was a large number of professional theologians in the country, who obviously engaged in academic study and research. It is hardly surprising that there was production of theological material really out of all proportion to the size of the population as a whole. This is now a major factor in the current feeling of gloom, for the new government sees no reason for its support of such a high number of departments and faculties. Currently several faculties are closing or becoming departments, and nobody in theology can feel assured that his or her job is secure.

The other side of the belief that the Afrikaans government was in power by divine favour, and that its policies were the will of God, was the necessary attempt to justify those policies theologically. It is now quite notorious that the curse that Noah uttered when he awoke from his drunkenness (Gn. 9:24), was seen to justify the inferior position of the Hamites, interpreted as the black race, even if the actual curse was applied to Canaan. A further way of justifying the apartheid system was an appeal to Deuteronomy 32:8:

*When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
when he separated the sons of men,
he fixed the bounds of the peoples...*

Acts 17:26 was also used. The justification for apartheid is outlined more fully elsewhere, such as in Cassidy⁸ and more completely in Morphew.⁹

Not surprisingly, apartheid and Naziism have often been compared for their racial attitudes; indeed many Afrikaners were deeply influenced by Germany.¹⁰ It is interesting that Hitler viewed himself as having a divine call to save Germany.¹¹ There was even resistance to entering the second World War, despite being part of the British empire at that time. Opposition to the apartheid government thus saw itself in continuity with the Confessing Church in the third Reich.¹² Even today the influence is still present. The right-wing AWF¹³ has a symbol that looks remarkably similar to a swastika, but with three not four arms. From another perspective, however, it is three sevens, again indicating a strong link between religion and politics.

The natural result of this was that opposition to apartheid was also theological. The latter part of the apartheid era, in particular, saw a proliferation of documents dealing with the issue. Perhaps the most influential was the 'Kairos' document,¹⁴ published originally in 1985. This described three sorts of theology current in South Africa at the time, a non-political 'church' theology, a 'state' theology which advocated obedience to the government, justified by texts such as Romans 13, and a 'prophetic' theology which confronted the existing order. It is perhaps significant that just a decade later, they are all but forgotten, even by the current generation of students. An enormous amount of productive energy in the form of meetings, congresses, editing and other related activities had gone into a theological opposition to apartheid. It had even been declared a heresy by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, led by Allan Boesak.¹⁵ This was a significant move, seeing that it was the closely related Dutch Reformed Church which had provided the main justification for the system. However, all of a sudden, the need for this theological effort disappeared with the change of government. It is proving difficult in some quarters to find new areas of interest in which to be involved!

The overriding political concerns have generated a focus on a number of specific areas, in which South Africans have then naturally taken a special interest. The relation between evangelism and social action, for example, has become important for many of the more traditional churches, which have in the past neglected the latter.¹⁶ Another obvious area is the nature of humanity and of sin.¹⁷ In the former case, in contrast to Western individualism, the African worldview sees the nature of the person in relationship; 'I am because we are'.¹⁸ The Western tendency to dualism is rejected; salvation affects the whole person and relationships. This may be seen as an affirmation of incarnation into the whole human situation.¹⁹ In the latter case, sin is then not so much transgression as a disruption in harmony. Particular note is also taken of what is often called 'structural' sin, where it is the organisations that are seen to be in error, while individuals themselves may not be aware of personal wrongdoing in their participation in the system. Naturally flowing out of this is a concern with creation, which was actually the topic of the conference referred to above. 'Green' issues are however not in vogue,²⁰ partly due to the geographical isolation of South Africa, from many of the problems that afflict Western Europe. It does however experience some acid rain, and increased skin cancer due to the 'ozone hole' over the Antarctic. It must also be observed that environmentalism has been described as a rich person's luxury, being of little perceived relevance to the poor, who are forced to do such things as chop trees for firewood. Some aspects, such as population limitation, are also viewed with hostility as a ploy to reduce numbers and so political power. Environmental concern may be expected to increase; issues of water, population and erosion are becoming

more noticeable.

Again the situation has resulted in a perception that theology is practically a political subject. Indeed, much theological writing could be accused of being unrelated to Christianity, and could well have emanated from other religions, or even from humanism. However, particularly with the political changes, there is a growing interest in the manifestation of Christianity in an African context.²¹ Indeed, this is seen in South Africa as essential; a 'buzz-word' is 'contextualization', although this too is often not specifically Christian. There is a need to relate specifically Christian ideas to the situation. The author, at least, sees a need to relate such topics as Christology and the salvation enacted in Christ²² to a wider context than the metaphysical and eschatological, applying them to human life.

How far such perceived needs will be met in South Africa will naturally be affected by the outworking of government policy, particularly in the funding of Universities. Current indications are that whereas in the past a government subsidy was paid for any student registered in theology as in any other subject, the government will in the future subsidize only a specific number of places in any subject. Universities, being autonomous, would be free to register more, but they would receive no state subsidy. Some universities would not be granted any places for specific subjects, so they would then most likely not offer the subjects at all. This will likely mean the restriction of theology to a few institutions only.

Secularization and Pluralism

Government support for Christianity can actually still be justified by the enormous proportion of the population that claims to be Christian (77% in the 1980 census²³). In this regard a lot of students opted for Biblical Studies as part of a degree or tertiary course, often intending to teach the course in schools, producing far more teachers with that qualification than could possibly be absorbed into the system. Nevertheless, this is a symptom of the fact that Christianity enjoyed, and still enjoys, an acceptance in the population as a whole. Insofar as theology is 'fides quarens intellectum', 'faith seeking understanding', intense theological activity might be expected in the country as a whole.

And yet it must be asked if the claim to have such a high proportion of Christians is justified by the effect on society as a whole. It just does not tally with the current explosion in crime of all sorts, the violence and corruption which currently characterizes South African society. It must be asked whether South Africa is not now in the same situation as countries such as Britain were a few decades ago, when most of the population would claim to be Christian, and church-going was the acceptable thing; all this, however, declined rapidly as the years passed. The indication must be that the faith professed was not genuine

so, as it became less fashionable to be Christian, fewer would claim to be so. In that case, the country will experience a rapid decline in at least nominal Christianity over the next few years. Not that this is necessarily a bad thing; a Church consisting of a few really committed people surely better reflects what Christ wanted than one full of nominal adherents.

Indeed the move away from the traditional churches is well under way. English speaking churches, particularly in the traditional denominations, are declining fairly rapidly, and the same is true to a lesser extent in the Afrikaans community. Particularly in the latter case, this is encouraged by a feeling that a Christian profession did not prevent the loss of a government that claimed to be Christian. God is seen to have failed, and is therefore not worthy of being followed. Thus the forces of secularisation which have been so effective in Europe have been augmented by the particular South African circumstances, specifically apartheid. Not that these are disconnected. In Europe, the forces of individualism stemming from the Enlightenment produced industrialisation, colonisation and a capitalist system which fuelled a secular world-view. It was those same forces which were behind the establishment of apartheid, the desire to better one's own group and to develop it economically. Apartheid was sometimes referred to as 'internal colonisation'.

Interestingly, the same move away from the Church is also happening in the black community, but for different, if complementary, reasons. Here the perception is that the black population had suffered greatly under a government which claimed to be Christian. In the rejection of that government and its policies came the rejection also of the faith which it had professed.

Secularisation naturally goes hand in hand with pluralism. This latter has also been encouraged by the political events of recent years. It has been important politically to gain the support of the sectors of the population which follow religions other than Christianity. The vast majority of adherents to non-Christian religions are non-white.²⁴ It has been felt that the only way in which this can be done is to accept the validity of all religions, or to render religious observance a private matter only. As in other countries, pluralism, like democracy, is 'politically correct'. It may be observed that the academic study of religion, as distinct from theology, is now more common. To give one example, by no means an isolated case, the faculty of Theology at the University of South Africa, which is a very large correspondence institution, is now the faculty of Religion and Theology, and its journal, formerly 'Theologia Evangelica', is now 'Religion and Theology'. Such moves may be politically appropriate, but they are unlikely to be financially beneficial. The government is seeking to limit funding for theology, but it is perhaps even less likely to fund religious studies as it is less use to the community as a whole. Training of ministers does

after all perform a social function, and some support by the state can be justified, even when its emphasis falls elsewhere, on economics, science and technology.

The way in which pluralism will be implemented is still a matter for debate. There is the vexed question of whether religious education should take place in state schools and other institutions, or whether what is taught should reflect the local community or the religious affiliation in the country as a whole. While some feel that religion should be excluded completely, others see its value in society as drawing it together or as a means of moral motivation.

In the former case, it is interesting to see the tendency towards a form of 'civil religion' as manifested elsewhere, notably in the United States, where there are 'saints', 'martyrs', 'holy places' and 'days', and other features of religion, the observance of which serve to cement the society together. In South Africa, Nelson Mandela is rapidly becoming a 'saint', there are plenty of 'martyrs' such as Steve Biko, there are 'holy places' such as Robben Island, and days such as June 16, the anniversary of the Soweto youth uprising in protest at the government insistence that Afrikaans be used as a medium of education in schools. It may be expected that this trend will continue.

In the latter case, it is naturally difficult to provide moral motivation in a pluralistic situation, where different sets of ethics and different motivations and sanctions exist. The traditional African moral code of '*ubuntu*', which can be loosely translated 'humanness', is under pressure with the loss of traditional society and its ancestral sanction coming under strain. Christianity also seems to be finding it hard to present a consistent moral stand when its theological base is questioned. There is no consistent Christian opinion on such topical issues as abortion and capital punishment. The divorce rate is one of the highest in the world.

As regards moral motivation, the Islamic community in particular is vocal, and suggests, with due cause, that Christianity has failed to prevent the moral problem of apartheid, the current crime wave, and also sin on a more personal level. Islam is becoming very influential in South Africa; although numerically small²⁵ and mainly in the Asian community, it now provides a disproportionate number of government ministers and officials.

A religious nation

A further strong argument for retaining religion at an official level in South Africa, and then Christianity in particular, is that religion is deeply embedded in the lives of many people, more especially the Africans. There has been some rejection of Christianity in order to revert to the old customs and beliefs, but far more typical has been a leaving of the traditional

denominations in favour of what used to be called 'African "Independent" churches', more commonly today 'Indigenous' or 'Initiated'. Many of the AIC's strongly profess Christianity, but include African culture such as dancing and music, and practise spiritual healing. More seriously, they usually include elements of traditional belief, the veneration of the ancestors, in a syncretistic mix. Such has indeed often been practised unofficially in any case by adherents of the traditional churches; in the AIC's it is done openly. Naturally the growth of these churches has not just been from a desire to practise African culture and beliefs, but has been encouraged by a desire for African leadership.²⁶ Most traditional churches have moved towards a more representative leadership, but many just could not wait. Membership of these churches is now about 40% of the population.

Leadership of these churches is often of a very low educational level, often primary school, but such leaders are accepted for a number of reasons. There is often natural leadership ability, but very often also a claim to supernatural power, of being called and endowed by a definite call of God, manifested in vision or dream, and evidenced by such a healing ability. Their poor educational system, again often a result of the apartheid system, was of course one reason why such leaders were not acceptable in the traditional churches, but it has meant that the standard of theology and discernment of unorthodox beliefs has also been at a very low level. These churches are then outside of 'normal' theological education, which in any case is often rejected as 'Western'.

This has also contributed to the lack of a feature which is present elsewhere in Africa, the desire to relate traditional belief, especially the role of ancestors and their veneration, to Christianity. The early missionaries naturally rejected traditional belief, in many cases not even perceiving that it included a belief in God. This is because God is believed to be utterly transcendent, apart from the world, and only acting, and being approached, by means of the ancestors, the 'living-dead'. This cleavage between traditional belief and Christianity was of course again exacerbated by the separation in society due to apartheid.

However, more recently, in keeping with the rest of Africa, there has been more of an acceptance of traditional belief, but also a desire to relate it to Christianity. Jesus has been seen as an ancestor, the greatest of all,²⁷ notably in one case as 'brother-ancestor' (cf. Heb. 2:11).²⁸ A further profitable line of approach is to examine the nature and role of the ancestors, and so see these as in some way fulfilled in the Person and work of Christ. Traditional belief could then perhaps be seen as a '*preparatio evangelica*', maybe not so intended by God, but still used by him.²⁹

Theological education

A perception of educational inadequacy, as in other areas of society as well, has not just been accepted. There has been a tremendous thirst for education, including theological education. Such a thirst is naturally of course partly due to the desire for the status that education gives in society. While in white South Africa, theological education has been in the hands of the universities and a number of seminaries, these have not in general been open to Africans, as the entrance qualifications have been out of reach, and the cost, even with government subsidy, has been too much. The result has been a proliferation of Bible colleges offering diplomas and other qualifications. In very recent years, some have been affiliating to the universities and offering their qualifications, a move welcomed by the latter as a means of raising their student numbers, at least on paper, and by the former as a way of giving an accredited qualification. Such proliferation has also been the result of the multiplicity of churches, each wanting its own training. As the number of denominations in South Africa, mainly the AIC's, is over 6,000, the growth of this sector has been marked.

However, in recent years, again partly due to the opening up of the universities, but mainly due to the expense of running a college at anything more than the most basic educational level, many of the colleges are closing down. Naturally it has not only been the cost of running the college itself, but fewer people are able to afford even the minimum fees, or even of being out of work for a number of years. Some have closed due to the amalgamation of previously segregated institutions; it was quite common in the apartheid years for one denomination to run separate colleges for each racial group. This was one way in which the staggering economic cost of apartheid was manifested. Also contributing to the drop in numbers has been the overall drop in the status of Christianity and so of ministers. Although still respected in the community, there have been many cases of sexual scandals, corruption and other things not really in keeping with the profession. It should perhaps be added here that in the apartheid years with its practice of job reservation, the ministry was one profession open to all races which could lead to great influence. There are many people now in political positions who were formerly in the Church. Their acceptance into such positions is not always by any means due to an insincere Christianity, far from it, but it does reflect something of the standing of Christianity in South Africa.

New movements

Proliferation of churches has not only been a feature of black society, but has occurred also among the whites. Here the main reason, which also affects the black Church, is the charismatic

movement, manifested mainly in the so-called 'third wave'. The last two decades have seen the establishment of many movements, usually imported from America, and still very influenced from the other side of the Atlantic. Most major cities now have their 'Christian centres', and groups such as the Rhema church are fairly common. These groups are almost invariably large, although the size is a little deceptive, seeing that very many people join only for a while. They are very popular, partly due to the vigorous and participatory style of worship, use of choruses, hand-clapping and raising, so much in keeping with modern culture. Phenomena such as 'slaying in the Spirit' and the 'Toronto blessing' are much in evidence. Contributing to the popularity is the practice of healing, which, as in the AIC's, naturally generates popularity. Incidentally, just as the AIC's, these groups tend to reject theology as irrelevantly intellectual. Allied to the practice of healing has been the teaching of such as Hagin and Copeland, a belief in being able to claim material prosperity. The theology has however been to a large extent discredited; it may well seem to 'work' in a rich society, but it conspicuously fails in areas where poverty rather than affluence is the order of the day. It is interesting that the Rhema church, which majored on the prosperity theme when it was established in the early 1980's, no longer teaches it so determinedly; in contrast, the church is rather making a name for itself by more conventional social action, even verging on the political.

It was actually the apolitical side which was initially one of the things that made the 'third wave' churches so popular. People were tired, and almost invariably made to feel guilty, at the repeated social and political preaching of the mainline churches. They wanted the spiritual message of the gospel and not politics, and they found this in the evangelical churches. That, with the other attractions of the 'third wave' churches, assured the latter of great popularity.

The root of this popularity could then be suggested to be the underlying materialism of South African society. It may well be suspected that the idea of selfless giving, done for no benefit to the giver, is almost absent from the South African worldview. The same tendency is of course also present in the other wing, that of political activity. Indeed, and this is particularly the case in the black community, the Church is almost totally polarized between the charismatic element on the one hand and the socio-political wing on the other. The non-charismatic evangelical emphasis seems to be minimal.

One reason for this, as well as the fact that both extremes see evangelicalism as defective according to their viewpoints, lacking, or at least not stressing, both political emphasis³⁰ and the exercise of spiritual gifts, is that the evangelical stress on eschatology is viewed as irrelevant. On the one hand, South African society has been totally absorbed in the problems of the present; a long term view has been squeezed out by immediate

concerns. On the other hand, a preaching of a future heaven is derided as 'pie in the sky when you die'. Indeed, the African worldview is not forward looking. Mbiti,³¹ a Kenyan theologian, has in fact suggested that the African view of time is, firstly, orientated to the past – hence the stress on tradition and the ancestors – and, secondly, consists of a discontinuous series of events rather than an appreciation of connected cause and effect – hence the lack of scientific development. Evangelicals have been guilty of emphasizing benefits which are not wanted, and of presenting solutions to problems which are not appreciated. Tutu in fact encapsulates the usual African view of 'white' theology, in an oft-quoted remark, that Christianity has produced answers, 'and often splendid answers', to questions which were not asked.³² A gospel meaningful to Africa has to present the immediate and material benefits of belief, or it just will not even be considered. The African view tends to be that religion, and so also Christianity, should give immediate material benefits.³³

Outside influences

'Third wave' theology is one example of an import from outside the country. One of the ways in which the international community sought to bring pressure on the apartheid system was by means of isolation, depriving the country of full participation in international life. This was not altogether a bad thing; one unexpected benefit was that because there was little trade with countries to the immediate north, AIDS was largely kept out of the country. It, or at least HIV, is now very widespread, but the onset was delayed for several years. In many areas, this isolation stimulated distinctively South African activity, such as in arms manufacture and oil from coal technology. Intellectually there was also a measure of isolation; books from overseas were often not available, although this was never a really serious problem. Actually this isolation still continues, but caused by factors other than the political; with a weakened economy and dropping value of the South African Rand, travel overseas and the price of books are often prohibitively expensive, although ways are found to overcome this problem as well, such as the proxy travel that the information revolution, such as the Internet, makes possible.

Perhaps this lack of real isolation is the reason why South African theology has not produced a distinctive brand of its own, but in general mirrors what is happening overseas. This is true in a variety of ways, reflecting the diversity of society as a whole.

Hardly surprisingly, due to the similarity of German and Afrikaans, the Afrikaans community is quite influenced by German theology, and this is reflected in what is taught in Afrikaans universities. Similarly the English speaking universities mirror Britain and the United States. Intellectually, not surprisingly with the historical links, there is more

sympathy with the former, but the sheer volume from the latter, such as in production of books, renders that side also influential. Distinct again from those influences, the 'historically black' universities (today often called 'historically disadvantaged') find intellectual roots in the liberation theologies. Obviously there is felt to be similarity with the Latin American situation, and also with the 'black theology' of such as James Cone, although it is well appreciated that neither really matches the South African experience. Morphew³⁴ helpfully distinguishes between black consciousness, which sees a positive value in black culture, black theology, the reaction of Christianity to racial issues, and liberation theology, the reaction to economic oppression. Naturally the three overlap, merge and interact.

Influenced by these movements, feminist theology has some adherents. There are some feminist theologians in South African universities, and the country is well disposed to feminine emancipation, in line with the political ethos of the equality of all. Women were often at the forefront of political protest.³⁵ There is now a deliberate attempt to see women in positions of power. In this connection, we should note that the divorce rate is one of the highest in the world, and marriage is decreasingly popular, as in Europe. This latter trend, interestingly, is particularly the case among educated black women, who often openly have boyfriends and children, but do not want to be married, due to the fact that they would then lose much of their freedom due to the very chauvinistic attitudes of black males, inherited from traditional society.

Apart from these major influences from overseas on South African theology, there are also several other factors, some of which do have a more marked effect. Firstly, there is still a large number of missionaries in the country, although less than there used to be because of the state takeover of schools and hospitals over the last few decades. In the past, these did have a major influence, and what was taught is still visible in much of church life.³⁶ Today however, the interplay between missions and colonialism is often well appreciated,³⁷ and so missionaries are often viewed negatively as contributing to the oppression of the past. It is generally believed that missionaries only came to Africa for their personal benefit. Secondly, and from a different theological perspective, the World Council of Churches, and particularly its Programme to Combat Racism, has been influential, at least recently, more in an indirect way due to its support for political and social activities. Thirdly, and very recently, overseas influence is coming into the country due, on the one hand, to the return of those who were in exile in the apartheid years, and have often gone directly into positions of great influence, often in government, and, on the other hand, to the influx of expatriate Africans. There has always been a lot of expatriates in South Africa, usually from Britain, but with the change in government there has been a flood of people from the rest of Africa into all levels of society, including the professions.

They have brought their church backgrounds with them, and so quite a few churches now reflect West Africa, Zambia or Malawi. These will no doubt exert a growing influence on theology unless, as may well happen, local sentiment, fearing loss of jobs, halts or even reverses this flow. A fourth but minor influence, is that churches and universities in Europe have been involved in the training of black South Africans, and are often still supporting that interest, such as by support of individuals and secondment of personnel. The Church of Scotland, for example, is quite active in that way, thus giving a continued, albeit mild, injection of Scottish theology.

A place to watch

Visitors to South Africa not surprisingly tend to visit just a few of the dramatic attractions that the country has to offer. Cape Town, with its world-famous Table Mountain, is always popular; many come to see the animals, and visit the Kruger National Park. There are the majestic Drakensburg mountains. Visitors with a little more time will add such things as the 'Big Hole' of Kimberley, the magnificent beaches, the Garden Route. But South Africa is a big and diverse country, and unless the visitor can stay years, much will be missed, even much of interest and value. Any quick visit to the theological scene in South Africa will also do little more than scratch the surface, touch the high points. Yet it is to be hoped that the visitor will be so captivated by what the country has to offer that a return visit becomes imperative. For the theologian as well, South Africa demands more than a token survey. For those who are interested in how the Gospel will affect the world in the next few decades, South Africa will repay much more attention. It contains the issues that will become more significant as the next millennium unfolds, the interplay of races, the contact of first and third worlds. It has the economic centre of a continent that will, if current trends continue, contain the highest proportion of Christians in the world. Prozesky³⁶ comments that apart from the interest due to the politics, South Africa is interesting due to the diversity of faiths in a small area, faiths which are, however, largely ignorant of each other due to the politics, so reflecting the situation in the world as a whole. It is not without cause that an American professor recently advised one of his graduate students to study in South Africa as one of the most significant places to do theology today. In many ways, South Africa is a microcosm of the world, the place where the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ will be demonstrated. It can be watched with unfolding interest.

- ¹ M. Cassidy, *The Passing Summer: A South African Pilgrimage in the Politics of Love* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989) p. 152f.
- ² J.W. De Gruchy, 'South African theology comes of age', *Religious Studies Review* 17.3 (1991), p. 218.
- ³ D.J. Morphew, *South Africa: The Powers Behind* (Cape Town: Struik Christian Books, 1989), p. 19f.
- ⁴ There are few better ways of understanding this very vital aspect of South African life than of reading J.A. Michener, *The Covenant*. This is fiction, but much of Michener's work is closely based on reality.
- ⁵ Morphew, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
- ⁶ In practice it was often not taught in non-white schools, the time being used for other subjects such as Maths.
- ⁷ De Gruchy, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
- ⁸ Cassidy, *op. cit.*, p. 119f.
- ⁹ Morphew, *op. cit.*, p. 107f.
- ¹⁰ Morphew, *op. cit.*, p. 61f.
- ¹¹ Morphew, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- ¹² De Gruchy, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
- ¹³ Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement).
- ¹⁴ 'The Kairos document: Challenge to the Church: a theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa' (*Braamfontein: the Kairos theologians, 1985*).
- ¹⁵ The background and justification for this is documented in J.W. de Gruchy & C. Villa-Vicencio (eds) *Apartheid is a Heresy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).
- ¹⁶ Cassidy, *op. cit.*, p. 254f. The organisation that Cassidy founded, Africa Enterprise, has consistently tried to preach the gospel in a holistic way.
- ¹⁷ Cassidy, *op. cit.*, p. 205f.
- ¹⁸ J.S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 2nd. edn 1989), p. 106.
- ¹⁹ J. Kiernan, 'African and Christian: from opposition to mutual accommodation', in M. Prozesky, *Christianity in South Africa* (Bergville: Southern, 1990), p. 25. This book was first published under the title *Christianity Amidst Apartheid* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990).
- ²⁰ Although there are some interesting projects, such as tree-planting, being done from religious motivation.
- ²¹ This can be seen, for example in the articles in journals such as the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, published by the University of Cape Town.
- ²² I have tried to do this in *The Office of Christ and its Expression in the Church: Prophet Priest King* (Lampeter: Mellen Biblical press, 1997).
- ²³ The basic figures are given by G. Lubbe, 'Religious pluralism in South Africa', in Prozesky, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
- ²⁴ Lubbe, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
- ²⁵ 1-2% in the 1980 census (Lubbe, *op. cit.*, p. 216).
- ²⁶ Kiernan, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- ²⁷ J.S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p. 94.
- ²⁸ C. Nyamiti, 'African Christologies today', in R.J. Schreiter (ed.), *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991) p. 12.
- ²⁹ Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-51.

- ³⁰ It is interesting to see that even traditionally apolitical churches, such as the Baptist Union, felt compelled to make some political statements during the closing years of the apartheid government, and to make submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- ³¹ J.S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: A Study of the Encounter Between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Concepts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 24.
- ³² D.M. Tutu, 'Whither African Theology?' in E. Fasholé-Luke *et al.*, (eds.) *Christianity in Independent Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1978), p. 366.
- ³³ Kiernan, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- ³⁴ Morphew *op. cit.*, p. 149.
- ³⁵ De Gruchy, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
- ³⁶ For example, few black Africans will go to church without at least a jacket, and probably still in a suit and tie, while most whites have long since abandoned such formal wear.
- ³⁷ Cf. B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollon, 1990).
- ³⁸ M. Prozesky, Introduction, in J.W. de Gruchy & M. Prozesky (eds) *A Southern Africa Guide to World Religions* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), p. 2.

SALVATION AS *THEOSIS*: THE TEACHING OF EASTERN ORTHODOXY

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Probably the central idea of Eastern Orthodox theology is the concept of *theosis*, and Orthodox writers use this Greek word to refer both to humanity's initial vocation (the task which God gave to Adam and Eve at creation) and to salvation. The word *theosis* is translated 'deification' in English and is thus very problematic for most Western evangelicals. However, we should recognise immediately that deification does not imply that people actually become gods in any ontological sense at all; the Orthodox affirm that God is unique and transcendent, just as evangelicals do. Rather, by *theosis* the Orthodox mean the process of acquiring godly characteristics, gaining immortality and incorruptibility, and experiencing communion with God. As a result, deification corresponds somewhat to concepts which evangelicals describe using the terms sanctification, eternal life, and fellowship or relationship with God.

The Orthodox believe that gaining these blessings was the task which God set before humanity at creation, the task which through the fall humanity lost the capacity to achieve, and the task which the incarnation and work of Christ have made possible once again. As a result, for evangelicals who are interested in Eastern Christendom, the most relevant aspect of Orthodox theology is its understanding of the means by which fallen people undergo this process of deification (or, in Western terminology, the means of salvation), and this topic will be the subject of this article.

Salvation by Grace Through the Holy Spirit's Action

The Orthodox regard deification as being, first and foremost, the result of the Holy Spirit's activity in people. Vladimir Lossky writes, 'The Son has become like us by the incarnation; we become like Him by deification, by partaking of the divinity in the Holy Spirit'. Similarly, Christophoros Stavropoulos affirms that *theosis* is offered by Christ, but realised only with the

Spirit: 'Only in the Holy Spirit will we reach the point of becoming gods, the likenesses of God'.² Thus, it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to gain the qualities which Eastern Christendom associates with deification.

This action of the Holy Spirit in granting deification to people is a function of God's grace. Leonid Ouspensky writes:

Orthodox theology insists on the uncreated character of grace and defines it as natural processions, as the energy characteristic of the common nature of the three divine persons. By these energies, man surpasses the limits of the creature and becomes a 'partaker of the divine nature'.³

To assert that the Holy Spirit deifies people by grace seems to be consistent with the way evangelicals understand God's action in people's lives. However, Ouspensky's statement reveals a somewhat different conception of the nature of grace from that which Protestants espouse. Lossky offers a further explanation: 'Grace is uncreated and by its nature divine. It is the energy or procession of the one nature: the divinity in so far as it is ineffably distinct from the essence and communicates itself to created beings, deifying them'.⁴ Eastern Orthodoxy maintains that God is unknowable in his essence (that is, unknowable as he is in himself) and distinguishes between this essence and his energies (which correspond roughly to what we might call God's actions or his operative presence in the world). Here Ouspensky's and Lossky's statements indicate that the energies (which we can know) constitute grace.

In the Eastern understanding, therefore, to assert that salvation is by grace means that people are deified as a result of God's communicating to us his energies, his giving us those aspects of himself which he chooses to share with people. This belief that grace is the energies of God which can be communicated to people and which lead to their deification contrasts with the typical Protestant understanding. When we use the word 'grace', we normally have in mind an attitude of God toward people, on the basis of which he grants salvation as a gift to those who do not deserve it. As a result, our Western understanding of grace is concerned primarily with forgiveness, whereas the Eastern concept of grace has more to do with power or energy. I will address the significance of this difference later in this article.

The Means of Deification

To the Orthodox, the primary means by which the Holy Spirit works to give grace and to deify people are the church's sacraments and human effort. Stavropoulos writes that deification takes place through Christian life and that 'the Christian life comes into being with the sacraments and with holy works, those virtuous works which are done with a pure

and holy motive in the name of Christ'.⁵ He writes further that divine grace strengthens people to walk the road to *theosis*, and that this grace is transmitted and actualised in the sacraments, especially baptism, penance, and the Eucharist.⁶ Baptism is the means by which God begins the process of deification in a believer, since it brings him or her into the life of Christ, the life which the church possesses. Penance is the continual act by which a person returns to that life after he or she has left it through sin. The Eucharist is the supreme means of *theosis*, since it is the sacrament through which people become the body of Christ, actualising their union with the Head of the church. The Orthodox emphasise the connection between Jesus' statement at the Last Supper that the eucharistic bread is his body and Paul's statements that believers are the body of Christ. They argue that through the Eucharist, by partaking of the bread which is the body of Christ, individual Christians become the body of Christ, the church. Thus through the Eucharist we undergo union with Christ or deification.

One should not take this emphasis on the sacraments as an indication that the Orthodox believe the church controls the Holy Spirit or dispenses grace itself. John Meyendorff corrects this potential misconception by writing, 'It is not the church which, through the medium of its institutions, bestows the Holy Spirit, but it is the Spirit which validates every aspect of church life, including the institutions.'⁷ This belief that the Holy Spirit validates church life grows directly out of the Orthodox understanding of the church. Eastern Christianity asserts that the church is, by definition, the activity of the Holy Spirit among people. Therefore, even though it is not the church itself which conveys grace, one can be confident that one does receive grace by means of the sacraments, precisely because it is through the church that the Holy Spirit works. Sergei Bulgakov affirms this belief when he writes that the mode of transmission of the Holy Spirit is sacraments administered by a priest of the apostolic succession.⁸

Furthermore, the Eastern stress on the sacraments as the means of deification is linked to the idea that the church is primarily a sacramental community. Humanity's purpose is to become deified, and the church exists primarily for the purpose of celebrating the sacraments. Thus it is logical that the church, through the sacraments, is the means by which the Holy Spirit conveys deification to people. Accordingly, the Orthodox concepts of the church and of deification depend closely on each other, and the Eastern emphasis on the church as the means of salvation grows out of this interconnection of ideas.

In addition to the sacraments, the other means by which the Holy Spirit deifies people is human effort. In the passage quoted above, Stavropoulos indicates that the Christian life comes into being not only through the sacraments, but also through 'holy works'. He continues by asserting that the true purpose of the

Christian life is the reception of the Holy Spirit, which divinizes people. Prayer, fasting, and other works are not the purpose of life, but they are the 'necessary means for the achievement of the purpose'.⁹ This is not to say that virtuous works enable people to earn deification; Stavropoulos stresses here that it is the Holy Spirit himself who deifies people by means of the works. Likewise, Bulgakov emphasises that good works do not merit deification: 'Good works do not constitute merit – no one merits or can merit salvation by human works. They represent man's personal participation in achieving salvation, beyond any reckoning or compensation'.¹⁰

Lossky gives the theological reason for the Orthodox emphasis on human effort in deification by asserting: 'God becomes *powerless* before human freedom; he cannot violate it since it flows from his own omnipotence. Certainly man was created by the will of God alone; but he cannot be deified by it alone'.¹¹ This statement reflects the same emphasis on human freedom which also leads Orthodox theologians to deny that people were originally in complete fellowship with God. According to Eastern theology, God's respect for human freedom led him to create Adam and Eve with only the possibility of union with him, rather than coercing them into a communion with him which they may not have desired. In the same way, Orthodoxy asserts, God lays down his power before human freedom by refusing to deify people without their active consent and participation. Georges Florovsky concurs with this emphasis on human participation in *theosis*: 'God has freely willed a synergistic path of redemption in which man must spiritually participate'.¹² (Eastern theology places much more emphasis on human freedom and less on God's sovereignty than the Reformed strands of Western theology do, although some branches of Western evangelicalism, such as Wesleyan theology, hold a view of human free will close to that of the Orthodox.)

From this discussion, it emerges that the process of deification is the result of both the Holy Spirit's action, performed by means of the church's sacraments, and of human effort to acquire virtue. For the Orthodox, there is no dichotomy between grace and works, and the question of whether salvation is by faith or works does not arise. The reason for this is that Eastern Christians see grace not as an expression of the undeserved nature of salvation, but as an energy of God, which can be communicated to people.

Theosis as a Process

It should be clear that in the Eastern understanding of salvation, the emphasis lies on the process of becoming united to God through deification. As a result, Orthodox theology places very little stress on that aspect of salvation which evangelicals most strongly emphasise: the change which takes place in a person's standing before God when he or she begins

to believe. In fact, if one were to use Western terminology, one could generalise that the Orthodox understanding of salvation consists almost exclusively of elements related to the process of sanctification (becoming Christ-like), whereas the evangelical understanding consists largely of elements related to justification (God's action of declaring a person righteous and acceptable before himself, because of the righteousness of Christ).

Maximos Aghiorgoussis explains this difference of emphasis by asserting that when Paul distinguishes in Romans 8:28-30 between predestination, calling, justification, and glorification, these are all stages in one process, that of deification or sanctification. 'In other words', he continues, 'justification is not a separate act of God but the negative aspect of salvation in Christ, which is freedom from sin, death, and the devil; whereas sanctification is the positive aspect of God's saving act, that of spiritual growth in new life in Christ communicated by God's Holy Spirit'.¹³ This explanation makes clear that the emphasis falls on the process of spiritual growth, and in fact, Aghiorgoussis' definition of justification does not even include the idea of being declared righteous at the beginning of faith, an idea which is pivotal to virtually all evangelical thought. Florovsky explains this more completely when he critiques Luther's view of justification (a view which the majority of evangelicals follow). He writes, 'For Luther "to justify" meant to declare one righteous or just, not "to make" righteous or just - it is an appeal to an extrinsic justice which in reality is a spiritual fiction'.¹⁴

From these statements, one can see how sharply different are the Eastern and Western emphases in salvation. To Westerners, the issue of a person's status before God is one of the most critical of all questions. To Easterners, this question hardly arises at all, in light of the overriding emphasis on the process of actually becoming righteous through *theosis*. As a result, the Eastern conception of Christian life is substantially different from that which is common in the West. To Western evangelicals, the most important element of salvation is acceptance before God (or being declared righteous). This is accomplished at the beginning of faith, and the process of sanctification grows out of this change in position before God. To the Orthodox, the process of sanctification or deification is the means to the ultimate goal of union with God.

Because *theosis* is a process rather than an instantaneous change, the Eastern understanding of salvation carries with it the corollary that people will not be completely deified by the time they die. Accordingly, Orthodox theology affirms the continuation of progress in deification after a person's death. Nicolas Zernov asserts that a Christian's rewards come not immediately after death but at the end of history and that as a result, further improvement is possible.¹⁵ In Orthodox thought, this idea does not lead to a fully developed concept of purgatory

like that of traditional Roman Catholicism. Bulgakov cautions that the Orthodox do not recognise a place of purgation, but they do acknowledge the possibility of a state of purification after death.¹⁶ Naturally, this conviction that continued progress is possible after death leads to the belief that prayers for believers who have died can help them to complete the process of *theosis*. Such prayers are a major part of popular Orthodox piety and occupy a significant place in the liturgy.

Justification and Sanctification

In assessing the Orthodox understanding of salvation, I must begin by asserting that it is not as foreign to the evangelical concept as one might initially think. We too see salvation as being the work of the Holy Spirit, accomplished by grace. However much we may dislike Orthodoxy's sacramental emphasis, we also assert that baptism and the Lord's supper represent forgiveness of sins, new life, and partaking of Christ (although some of us would prefer to say that the ordinances or sacraments *symbolise* spiritual reality instead of actually *conveying* that reality). The Orthodox insistence that salvation involves human effort may not be a rejection of our belief in salvation by faith alone, but may rather be analogous to our assertion (based in part on Phil. 2:12 and Jas. 2:14-26) that genuine faith results in good works. The nature of *theosis*, as the Orthodox understand it, is compatible with evangelical thought, even though the word 'deification' itself might lead one to believe that it is not.

Nevertheless, Orthodoxy's emphasis on deification or sanctification to the virtual exclusion of justification creates serious problems for Western evangelicals. From our perspective, justification (as God's declaration that a sinner is righteous) is not simply a Western idea whose origin lies in our legal way of viewing reality. We are convinced that this is a biblical idea, indeed, one of the most central of all biblical truths. Accordingly, it is appropriate to examine the relation between justification and sanctification in the NT, especially in the Book of Romans, where the two ideas receive their most extended treatment.

Justification is the theme of Romans 1 - 5. Paul emphasises that no one is able to be justified in God's sight by means of his or her own works (1:18 - 3:20) and asserts that this justification comes as a free gift through the redemption which Christ has brought about (3:21-31). Paul demonstrates by means of Abraham's example that justification comes solely by faith, not by works (ch. 4). Then in chapter five Paul declares, 'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand' (vv. 1-2). Justification is not something which believers are in the process of obtaining; it is an accomplished fact for those who trust in Christ. Paul declares that peace with God

(the ending of the hostility between people and God caused by sin) is the present possession of believers, not simply something to which they aspire.¹⁷

Paul explains the believer's status before God more fully in verses 9–11:

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

These assertions show that justification is not simply a legal transaction, not simply 'an appeal to an extrinsic justice', as Florovsky charges. Rather, it is also personal. We were enemies of God but have been reconciled to him. We who trust in Christ are now God's friends, and our relationship with him is secure enough that Paul can exclaim with confidence that we shall be saved from wrath through Christ. Justification is being declared righteous, but it is also more than this. In addition, it is God's acceptance of sinners into fellowship with him as though we were righteous.

Paul's confident assertions about this acceptance come *before* he raises the question (in 6:1) of how a believer should live as a result of his or her justification. They come before, not after, his discussion of his struggles with sin and the solution to those struggles, life in the Spirit (chs. 7 and 8). They come before the extended ethical discussions in chapters 12 through 15. These latter sections of the letter constitute Paul's discussion of sanctification, and human effort and works play an important role in these discussions. But Paul's comparisons of the believer to a slave serving a new master and a wife married to a new husband (6:19 – 7:3) show that it is precisely because believers are *already* accepted by God that they seek to live as he wants them to. Such actions are not *means* to justification, but *results* which flow from it.

Although Romans offers the most extended NT treatment of the distinction between justification and sanctification, this idea is not limited to Paul. Peter's exhortation to holy living (1 Pet. 1:13–25) follows his praise to God for the new birth into a living hope and the imperishable inheritance in heaven which believers already possess (1 Pet. 1:3–12, esp. 3–5). John marvels at the greatness of the love God has lavished on us, that we might be called children of God. Only after affirming that believers are now children of God does he declare that those who hope in God seek to be pure, as God is pure (1 Jn. 3:1–3). Jesus' words to the repentant thief on the cross show that this thief was immediately accepted into God's presence, even though he did not live to undergo any sanctification at all (Lk. 23:39–43).

In light of this distinction, it should be clear that the Orthodox understanding of salvation is emphasising only part (albeit a very important part) of the biblical picture, the process of sanctification. In fact, the phrase 'partakers of the divine nature', so crucial to the Orthodox understanding of deification, comes in a passage about sanctification. Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:3 that God's power has given believers everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Christ. In verse 4, Peter links believers' participation in the divine nature to the precious promises we have already received. Then in verses 5-9, he lists qualities which believers should seek to obtain. In this progression of thought, believers' knowledge of Christ and possession of his promises show that we are justified, and on the basis of this fact, God gives us what we need for sanctification (life and godliness) so that we are able to participate in the divine nature and to gain the qualities Peter mentions.

Orthodoxy's failure to distinguish adequately between justification and sanctification and its lack of emphasis on the former is related to its understanding of grace. We have noticed that Eastern Christendom regards grace as the energies of God which are communicated to people and which deify them. This idea accurately reflects part of Paul's teaching on grace.¹⁸ The 'grace gifts' (the Greek word translated 'gifts' is from the same root as the word for grace) of which Paul writes in I Corinthians 12 are actually 'grace powers', abilities which come from the Holy Spirit who is resident in the believer. In I Corinthians 15:10, Paul credits his apostolic achievements to 'the grace of God that was with me', perhaps indicating that God's grace is a spiritual power which works through him. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God's answer to Paul's plea that the thorn in his flesh be removed is, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'. These passages show that there is a sense in which grace is a power or energy which God gives a believer.

Nevertheless, this is not the only sense of the word 'grace' in Paul's writings. Rather, 'grace' is used primarily to indicate the givenness of salvation. God gives salvation freely to sinners who can do nothing to deserve it, and 'grace' indicates the unmerited nature of God's act. This use of the word 'grace' is perhaps clearest in Ephesians 2:1-10, in which Paul twice affirms, 'It is by grace you have been saved' (vv. 5, 8). The perfect tense of the verb in these verses indicates both that the readers' salvation is already accomplished (justification) and that its effects (Christian living and sanctification) continue. The overall context emphasises believers' unworthiness for salvation and inability to save ourselves: we were dead but God made us alive (vv. 1, 5); salvation is not from us (v. 8). Thus, to say that we have been saved by grace means that God has accepted us and made us alive even though we did not deserve this gift and could do nothing to obtain it on our own. This is also the sense in which Paul uses the word 'grace'

in Romans 5:2, Ephesians 1:5-6, Titus 2:11, and other passages dealing with salvation.

The lack of emphasis in Orthodox theology on this aspect of grace contributes to the Eastern failure to stress the nature of salvation as a free gift. This in turn leads to a failure to distinguish between justification as God's free acceptance of unworthy sinners when we begin to believe, and sanctification as the process of becoming righteous, a process which involves human effort. While the emphasis on the process of deification itself is appropriate, the lack of stress on the event which begins that process results in a significantly distorted view of Christian life.

Concluding Comments

This article has brought to light several areas of disagreement between evangelicals and the Orthodox. In fact, it is possible that some readers will wonder why I have let a number of Eastern ideas (such as the concept that God is powerless in the face of human freedom or that the sacraments convey grace) go largely without comment. However, I have attempted to show that the heart of our evangelical disagreement with Orthodoxy does not lie in these areas. In fact, these are issues on which there is disagreement within Western evangelicalism as well, not simply between Westerners and Easterners. Rather, I believe that the major difference between Eastern Orthodoxy and virtually all forms of evangelicalism lies in the relation between justification and sanctification and Orthodoxy's lack of emphasis on the distinction between the two.

Of course, most Orthodox people, especially Eastern Europeans for whom Orthodoxy is a part of their culture but who may have only very marginal involvement in the church themselves, will not have a clear understanding of the Eastern doctrine of salvation. (For example, I had been living in the former Soviet Union for several years before I ever heard an Orthodox person use the word 'deification'.) However, Orthodox doctrine is likely to impact people by giving them a sense that they need to perfect themselves in order to have complete communion with God. For many people who are only loosely affiliated with Orthodoxy, this idea may take the form of nothing stronger than a sense that taking the Eucharist and pursuing good works are desirable things to do. But for others (especially those who are not believers but who have a strong spiritual hunger), the emphasis on salvation as *theosis* can lead to a great deal of guilt and frustration over their seeming inability to perfect themselves enough to gain union and fellowship with God. (I have known several people for whom this was the case.)

Obviously, such people do not need primarily to hear that the sacraments do not convey deification or that human effort is insufficient in obtaining salvation. What they need to hear first is the message of justification. Union with God is not the

entirety of the Bible's depiction of salvation; a major part (which is likely to be unfamiliar to most Eastern Europeans or even to Westerners from Orthodox backgrounds) is God's willingness to grant people justification as a gift. When we explain this idea, we need to be careful not to express it simply in terms of a change of legal status or position before God, a declaration that one is 'not guilty', rather than 'guilty'. Such terminology is certainly accurate, but it does not express all that the Bible means by justification, and it is difficult for an Easterner, with a non-legal mindset, to grasp. Instead, we would do well to emphasise the personal aspect of justification as God's acceptance of sinners into fellowship with himself, even though we are not perfect. Such acceptance does not need to wait until the completion of a long process of deification. Instead, through his Son Jesus Christ, God has already accomplished all that he requires in order to accept people. It remains simply to receive this gift of God's acceptance by faith in Christ in order to begin experiencing now the joy of fellowship with him. This fellowship, which begins at the inception of faith, is the basis for pursuing a life of Christ-likeness, not the result of completing the process of becoming like Christ.

Recommended Reading

I list the following books in the order in which I would suggest that a person with little prior knowledge of Orthodoxy read them.

Ugolnik, Anthony. *The Illuminating Icon*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989.

Anthony Ugolnik (born in 1944) is a second-generation Russian-American who has been a life-long Russian Orthodox, but who fought in Vietnam and now teaches English literature at Franklin and Marshall College in Pennsylvania. As a result, he understands both East and West very well and is in an excellent position to explain them to each other. His major argument in this fascinating book is that the Eastern and Western (specifically, Russian and American) ways of viewing reality are both culturally conditioned and are appropriate in their own contexts. Westerners understand reality in terms of wrestling meaning from a text, whereas Easterners see the world in terms of the interrelation of visual and sensory images. While I do not agree with Ugolnik's assumption that culture is necessarily neutral and that Eastern and Western understandings of reality are equally valid, this book is extremely helpful in understanding the differing mindsets which Westerners and Easterners bring to Christian faith.

Ware, Kallistos. *The Orthodox Church*. Hammondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1963.

This book, which has been revised several times (most recently in 1993) since the publication of the first edition, is probably the first book to which Westerners turn as they begin to read Eastern Orthodox theology. Ware (born in 1934) is an Englishman who converted to Orthodoxy from Protestantism in 1958 and has since become a monk and a bishop, as well as a lecturer on Eastern theology and liturgy at Oxford. He offers a fairly detailed history of Eastern Christendom and many of the disputes which separated East and West. Because of his Western heritage, he is able to explain these disputes in ways which are comprehensible to Westerners, even if they are new to Orthodoxy.

Ouspensky, Leonid, and Vladimir Lossky. *The Meaning of Icons*. Revised Edition. Tr. G.E.H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982.

Ouspensky (1902-1987) and Lossky (1903-1958) were both members of the Parisian community which was the mainstay of twentieth-century Russian Orthodox thought after the Bolshevik Revolution forced its greatest thinkers out of Russia. Within that community, Ouspensky distinguished himself as an iconographer (an artist who actually paints the icons) and scholar of iconographic theology, and Lossky was widely regarded as the twentieth century's greatest Russian Orthodox theologian. In this book, the two offer a very readable defence of icons, as well as a theologically developed explanation of their significance in the life of the Orthodox Church. The book includes an icon-by-icon description of the layout of a typical Orthodox church building, a description that enables the reader to understand the overall impression which a knowledgeable Orthodox believer would gain through worship. It also includes detailed analyses of different types of icons in order to show the way iconographic tradition captures the qualities of those deified saints whom the images represent. For a Western reader who has difficulty seeing icons as anything but idols, this book is a needed corrective, providing an excellent statement of the theologically mature Eastern approach to icons.

Meyendorff, John. *Catholicity and the Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983.

Meyendorff (1926-1992) was also a part of the Parisian community and was educated at the theological institute of St. Sergius, a major centre of Russian Orthodox thought and scholarship since its founding in 1925. After he emigrated to America, he became professor of church history and patristics at St. Vladimir's Russian Orthodox Seminary in New York,

where he later served as dean. Meyendorff gives a good introduction to the Orthodox understanding of the church, including a significant discussion of the church as the action of the Holy Spirit. He also explains the historical basis for the organisation and structure of the Orthodox Church.

Schememann, Alexander. *Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. New York: Herder & Herder, 1965.

Schememann (1921-1983), like Meyendorff, was educated at St. Sergius' in Paris and later taught liturgical theology at St. Vladimir's in New York. He explains very clearly the sacramental nature of the church by means of a thorough discussion of the Eucharist and briefer discussions of the other sacraments. His major theme is the joy to which the church is called, a joy that is most fully realised in the Eucharist. This book has been republished under the title *For the Life of the World*.

Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Greenwood, SC: The Attic Press, Inc., 1973.

This book is somewhat difficult reading, but it is one of the most significant studies in this century on the apophaticism of Eastern theology and the mystical understanding of deification. After a person has some exposure to Orthodoxy, it will be very helpful in enabling him or her to appreciate the mysterious atmosphere which dominates Eastern Christendom.

***The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*. Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1985.**

The liturgy is, of course, the expression of Orthodox tradition which has the greatest influence on faithful Orthodox laypeople. This edition includes the Greek text and a modern English translation on parallel pages. In addition to the text of the liturgy itself, the book contains the order of worship for several special services, as well as the Scripture readings for particular days.

¹ V. Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. J.H. Erickson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), p. 109.

² C. Stavropoulos, *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, tr. S. Harakas (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Co., 1976), p. 29.

³ L. Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), p. 215.

⁴ V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Greenwood, South Carolina: Attic Press, 1973), p. 172.

⁵ C. Stavropoulos, p. 32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

- ⁷ J. Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), p. 28.
- ⁸ S.N. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Centenary Press, 1935), pp. 55-56.
- ⁹ C. Stavropoulos, p. 33 (emphasis his).
- ¹⁰ S.N. Bulgakov, p. 127.
- ¹¹ V. Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, tr. I. & I. Kasarcodi-Watson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), p. 73 (emphasis his).
- ¹² G.V. Florovsky, *Collected Works, Vol. X: The Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Fathers* (Vadez, Germany: Buechervertriesbanstalt, 1987), p. 31.
- ¹³ M. Aghiorgoussis, 'Orthodox Soteriology', in J. Meyendorff & R. Tobias, eds., *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 48-49.
- ¹⁴ G.V. Florovsky, *The Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Fathers*, p. 30.
- ¹⁵ N. Zernov, *Eastern Christendom: A Study of the Origin and Development of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961), p. 235.
- ¹⁶ S.N. Bulgakov, pp. 208-209.
- ¹⁷ There is a significant textual problem in Rom. 5:1. Many manuscripts read 'let us have peace with God' instead of 'we have peace with God'. (In Greek, the difference between these two is only one letter, and mistakes in copying the manuscripts could easily have been made.) However, the translators of the KJV, RSV, NASB, and NIV all adopt the reading 'we have peace with God', as do the editors of the latest edition of the Greek NT. Moreover, the Russian Synodal translation of the Bible also reads 'we have peace with God'. In light of this last fact, it is unlikely that Orthodox scholars would opt for the alternate reading in an attempt to find support for their understanding of justification.
- ¹⁸ Of the 152 uses of the word 'grace' in the NT, 101 are found in Paul's writings. Moreover, many of the non-Pauline uses simply reflect the secular use of the word to mean 'favour'. Thus, the bulk of the theologically significant uses of the word come in Paul's letters.

TWO BOOKS ON MISSION: REVIEW ARTICLE

Dewi Arwel Hughes

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The Recovery of Mission

Vinoth Ramachandra

Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996, xiii + 293 pp., pb. £17.99

Gods that Fail: Modern Idolatry and Christian Mission

Vinoth Ramachandra

Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996, vii + 226 pp., pb. £14.99

I will never forget a visit to Tuchin, a remote village in northern Colombia. We had travelled along a rough track for quite some time before we got there. The purpose of the visit was to meet a group of Christians to discuss a proposal for assisting the poor in their village. Since the chair of the local committee was the headmaster of the village school we met in the school. It consisted of two long thatched roofs, a small brick building for the head's office and another for storing food and kitchen equipment. The classrooms under the thatch had no walls and the floor was the earth. Both the conditions and the equipment were rudimentary to say the least. Having enjoyed an excellent meal of local produce and spent some time discussing plans we took a walk through the village to meet some of the poor for whom the local Christian committee were hoping to acquire some land so that they could improve their standard of living. There were no made up roads in the village and precious little evidence of services such as sewerage, water or power. The houses of the poor that we visited were little more than shacks. We met one family with eleven children, who were all suffering from TB, living in conditions of desperate deprivation.

At one point in the very hot and sticky afternoon, with the sweat running freely down the inside of my trousers, the Westerners in the party went in search of a drink. We were directed to the local store which was a solid looking building compared to the houses we had been visiting. There were precious few goods for sale but we were able to buy bottles of dark brown liquid to quench our raging thirst. The inscription on the bottles was very familiar – Coca-Cola!

That experience has been deeply etched on my memory as a very vivid illustration of the reality of the world in which we are called upon as Christians to love and serve God and our neighbour. The presence of Coca-Cola in the remote Colombian village is symbolic of the fact that the Western 'world' and its values is inexorably penetrating into every corner of the earth.

TWO BOOKS ON MISSION: REVIEW ARTICLE

Coca-Cola may have a nice taste but it has no nutritional value at all. Dentists, in particular, see it as a positively harmful substance. So why is it available in a remote village full of very poor people struggling to find an adequate supply of food and water to keep body and soul together? There is no simple answer to this question. A part of the answer is that we have been gullible enough in the West to be persuaded that we should consume many things that may have a nice taste but are utterly useless or positively harmful. Another part of the answer is the fact that the commercial interests that have succeeded in persuading us in the West to consume their useless products are greedy for greater profits, so they look for every opportunity to expand their markets. Since the Western controlled media has created the impression that the West is awash with milk and honey, a presumption is created that anything Western must be good. So if Western people drink Coca-Cola, it must be a good thing. The result is that money which could have been spent on something wholesome is spent on something useless in order to make Western executives and shareholders richer.

Where the villagers I visited were concerned, the coming of Coca-Cola is but a more recent chapter in a long history of exploitation by Europeans. They belong to the remnants of the people that were conquered by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Being typical of conquered peoples, they belong to the lowest strata of society and in the case of these particular villagers they have even lost their language and much of their history. Their conquerors did bring a form of Christianity which they imposed upon them, but because this method of conversion contradicts the good news of Jesus Christ, it is not surprising that it failed to ennoble the indigenous peoples of Colombia.

The presence of Coca-Cola in Tuchin symbolises the continuing ability of the West to impose its values on people everywhere even after the end of the colonial age. It is extremely depressing when travelling in the Two Thirds World to see evidence of the superficial, hedonistic and materialistic values of the West seeping in everywhere. Even so, that is not to say that everything Western is bad. My presence in the village with a delegation from Tearfund UK to share in a local evangelical Christian initiative to help the poor witnesses to another type of influence. This influence is challenging many aspects of the local culture both Catholic and traditional but there can be no doubt that it is also raising many from the dust.

My experience in Colombia sets the scene for the major themes that are discussed in the two books, published in quick succession, by Vinoth Ramachandra that are under review in this article – an analysis of Western idolatries, which is the main theme of *Gods that Fail*, and a defence of the continuing validity of the traditional evangelical view of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the main theme of *The Recovery of Mission*.

The most serious challenge to the view that people everywhere need to believe in Jesus Christ to be saved eternally comes from pluralists within various Christian traditions. Ramachandra begins *The Recovery of Mission*, therefore, with three chapters analysing the work of three pluralists who contributed to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* edited by John Hick and Paul Knitter – Stanley Samartha, an Indian Anglican, Aloysius Pieris, a Sri Lankan Roman Catholic monk and Raimundo Panikkar, the son of a Roman Catholic Spanish mother and a Hindu father. The analysis and critique of these three pluralists makes up Part 1 of the volume. Part 2 consists of two chapters headed 'Interweavings' and 'Engaging Modernity' and places pluralism in its wider context in the development of European thought since the Enlightenment. 'Interweavings' highlights the tension between the fact that pluralism is a logical development of Western European thought since Kant and the anti-Western stance of all three pluralists examined in Part 1. In 'Engaging Modernity' Ramachandra examines Lesslie Newbigin's analysis of modernity.

Part 3 focuses on the historical person of Jesus Christ and his impact upon his followers past and present. Chapter 6, entitled 'The Scandal of Jesus', deals with who Jesus understood himself to be and the meaning of his resurrection. 'A Gospel for the World' (chapter 7) deals with a fundamental problem for pluralists, viz, how can the historical particularity of the incarnation be a message of hope to all humanity'. In this context the traditional Christian idea of 'incarnation' is compared with the Hindu idea of *avatar* and the author goes on an interesting, if not entirely helpful, detour into the history of the way the Early Church dealt with *Gnosticism*. The final chapter, entitled 'Gospel Praxis', provides a fitting conclusion to the book with its fine portrayal of the type of community that Jesus has created historically and still creates even today. Each chapter is followed by notes and there is a good bibliography at the end of the book but, regrettably, there is no index.

Gods that Fail, subtitled 'Modern Idolatry and Christian Mission', begins by reworking and expanding some of the material already covered in chapters 4 and 5 of *The Recovery of Mission*. The first chapter, 'Introduction: Modernity and Idols', describes those elements out of which modernity and its child, post-modernity, have been formed. From this platform Vinoth Ramachandra sets out to examine modern forms of idolatry with the intention of challenging Christians to look honestly into their own hearts as well as to reach out with the message of Jesus into our modern world. Chapter 2, entitled 'Religion and Idols', shows that there was some justice in the critique of religion found in Marx and Freud. What they were attacking was not the God of the Bible but idols created by post-Enlightenment philosophers and theologians. They, in turn, created new idols. Chapter 3 takes us back to the God of

the Bible and particularly to the account of the creation in Genesis. The striking contrast between the Genesis account and other myths of origins is highlighted and the unjustified attack of some environmentalists on the biblical view is rebutted.

The reality of meaningless suffering in the world seems to clash with the doctrine of creation which emphasises God's sovereignty. Many faced with such circumstances conclude that the God of the Bible is a failure. In chapter 4 Ramachandra turns to the ancient book of Job to discuss this problem. Chapter 5 then looks at the way idols are formed. The three idols he concentrates on are money (mammon), nationalism and science. Together these idols have spawned the ideology of development which is becoming more and more dominant all over the world. The Genesis stories of Noah and the Tower of Babel help us to understand and combat these idols and their ideologies.

Since the author believes that it is in the domain of science that we find the most influential of these three idols, the two following chapters (6 and 7) focus on science in particular. Chapter 6 shows how science is used to foster the worship of money and nationalism in the form of violence. However, at present, science as idol is destroying itself and being reduced to the same status as astrology or witchcraft in the process. Ramachandra, as a qualified scientist, responds to this challenge by defending science from subjectivism and relativism in the latter part of chapter 6 and then going on, in chapter 7, to expound what he believes to be a sound scientific method based on the ideas of Michael Polanyi (1891–1976). The volume concludes with a chapter entitled 'The Cross and Idols' which focuses on how devotion to Jesus Christ can enable us to withstand the powerful influence of the great idols of our times. There is no bibliography attached to this volume but there is an index of names.

Ramachandra is an Asian thinker and Christian leader actively involved in evangelism and in building Christian community; he is the regional secretary for South Asia of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). He has produced two very valuable and challenging books. Like every author, he builds on the work of others and, in particular, the work of Lesslie Newbigin. The great virtue of the books is that they address issues which are of central concern to the church at the moment and that they do so from a global Christian perspective. Panikkar is probably right in his claim that the discovery of the Eastern religious traditions in the last hundred years or so is as significant for the church in our time as was the discovery of Classical thought at the time of the Renaissance. In Ramachandra we have a rare theologian who understands both the Eastern and Western intellectual traditions but who has also a strong grasp on the essentials of the Christian faith. Without attempting to be exhaustive I have

found his treatment of the following themes particularly helpful and stimulating:

1. Pluralism. His analysis and critique of Samartha, Pieris and Panikkar taken together forms one of the best assessments of pluralism from an evangelical perspective currently in print. Some of the old problems with pluralism are highlighted, such as the bias towards an impersonal view of Ultimate Reality (ROM 13-14) or its fundamental intolerance despite its claim to the contrary (ROM 33). Then there are new arguments – to the reviewer at least. The ethical dimension is now central in the pluralist position. What pluralists claim is that they are driven by the desire to build a world community of peace and hope. To this end they focus on the best in terms of moral behaviour in the world religions and argue that if religious adherents of goodwill in all the world's religious traditions could come together, they would be a great power in helping to bring about a harmonious world community and thus avoid the environmental or nuclear destruction of the earth. Since pluralists are already committed to an impersonal view of Ultimate Reality, which is more characteristic of the Eastern religious traditions, it is fair to ask whether those traditions have influenced their communities in the direction of a just social order. Ramachandra is right in claiming that there is precious little evidence of this having happened (ROM 15, 56, 67). To the contrary, societies that have been dominated by religions with an impersonal view of Ultimate Reality have been marked by their severe stratification of society into different types of human beings, the Indian class/caste system being the classical example. In the case of Buddhist/Hindu Sri Lanka, Ramachandra says that talk about poverty alleviation is welcomed but any attempt to undermine the class divisions of society which perpetuate poverty is strongly resisted. Therefore, it is right to question whether commitment to an impersonal view of ultimate reality can ever be an adequate foundation for working for peace and harmony in the world.

Every movement has its 'saints' and pluralism is no exception. Gandhi is unquestionably one of them. While not denying his greatness, Ramachandra is right in drawing attention to the fact that towards the end of his life he used to insist that his two female assistants slept with him naked in order to prove his powers of self-control. We may indeed marvel at his self-possession but Ramachandra asks about the status and feelings of the two young women who were used to prove it. For all his greatness Gandhi, through this action, was perpetuating the Hindu belief that women have a very inferior status in human community. Christianity, as a historical phenomenon, does not have a proud history in its treatment of women but theoretically, at least, it has a much better claim to a just view of women than does the Hindu tradition.

2. History. Ramachandra is correct in focusing on the centrality of history in the debate with the pluralists. In order to sustain

their position pluralists must reduce the significance of Jesus Christ to an idea rather than a divine intervention in history. By definition pluralists consider it impossible for the fullness of God to be focused in one person in one place at one time, which is precisely the claim the NT makes for Jesus. The battle over the historicity of the NT is crucial therefore. Ramachandra makes a powerful case in this context in his discussion of the resurrection and the incarnation (ROM 210–14, 238ff).

3. Praxis. In both *The Recovery of Mission* and *Gods That Fail* there is a strong emphasis on the indissoluble link between Christian belief and practice. The gospel is not just a set of ideas but God's way of creating a specific type of community on earth which foreshadows the eschatological reality of the kingdom of God. Ramachandra describes 'the logic of the cross' as 'the very act that binds me to God in grace binds me simultaneously to my neighbour in acceptance' (ROM 267). *The Recovery of Mission* ends with an encouragement to look again at evidence for the way in which the Early Church lived out its faith – at its readiness to pay the ultimate price out of faithfulness to Jesus, its love of enemies and its care for the poor both within and outside the Christian community. Nothing seems to have impressed pagans like the readiness of the early Christians to care even for the poor who were their enemies (ROM 279–82).

4. Consumerist Christianity. In *Gods That Fail* the theme of praxis is developed in what is often a trenchant critique of a form of Western Christianity which has divorced faith almost entirely from its practical expression in works of love towards the needy. A quotation from an essay which Karl Marx wrote as a schoolboy is a poignant moment in the development of this theme. 'Union with Christ,' wrote the 17 year-old Marx, 'consists in the most intimate communication with him, ..., and being so filled with the highest love for him, at the same time we turn our hearts to our brothers whom he has closely bound to us, and for whom he also sacrificed himself.' (GTF 28). What happened to Marx? He became friends with theologically liberal students at university which undermined his faith in the historical Jesus, on one hand, and, on the other hand, he realised that official Christianity in Germany was being used to bolster the unjust power relationships in society. So he turned away from the God of the NT and became the fountainhead of a movement that led to the brutal repression of Christians in many nations. The perversion of Christianity can have dreadful consequences. This alone is reason enough to reject the consumerist gospel in which the 'Good News is packaged and marketed ... as a religious product: offering 'peace of mind', 'how to get to heaven', 'health and prosperity', 'inner healing', 'the answer to all your problems', etc. ... Biblical faith, in contrast, is the radical abandonment of our whole being in grateful trust and love to the God disclosed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: so that we become his willing

agents in a costly confrontation with every form of evil and unjust suffering in the world' (*GTF* 40–42, cf. 47, 220).

5. Elitism. Ramachandra shows very clearly that the tendency to elitism is endemic in modernist and post-modernist thinking. Pluralism is a good example. What pluralists say in effect is that adherents of the world's religious traditions do not really know what they are worshipping. The person who has turned her back on the Christian tradition in order to embrace Islam, if only she knew the truth, has merely transferred allegiance from one picture of the Real to another picture of the same Real – which makes the whole exercise of conversion rather futile. All who are intimately involved in living religion are labouring under the illusion that their object of worship is the truth. It is only the elite, the pluralists, that have the higher knowledge (gnosis) of the higher synthesis of all religions (*ROM* 33). This tendency becomes very sinister when it is transferred to the public realm and often leads, for example, to the open persecution of committed Christian students in universities. In areas other than religious studies it leads to the formation of orthodoxies which can have terrible consequences. Marxist political orthodoxy is an excellent example. Because the theory came to be seen as the truth about human life, those who were committed to it, if they could grasp power in a state, had the right to impose it on everyone else for their own good (*GTF* 51). Marxism has now largely been rejected but it is not impossible that the current infatuation with what is called the free market is leading to a new form of elitist totalitarianism. The fact that the 358 billionaires in the world now own as much as 2.35 billion of the poorest 45% of the world's population seems to suggest that we are hurtling headlong towards the most awful totalitarianism yet seen in human history.

6. Development. What Ramachandra says about the sort of 'development' associated with large international agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund gives a just jolt to our Western arrogance from an Asian, or what is still often called a Third World, perspective (*GTF* section headed 'Development as Ideology' 116ff). The heart of his criticism is aimed at the idea that Western and westernised countries have achieved the exalted position of being 'developed' while Third World countries are in many cases a long way behind – they are '*developing* countries'. The problem is that the way development is assessed has been, and still is, dominated by a materialistic agenda. So even when the United Nations Development Programme talks in term of a Human Development Index, there is no real commitment to a move from quantity to quality. The fact that people are living longer is seen as a good thing while the quality of the longer life is not in focus. Ramachandra suggests that it may be better to live for 50 years and die valued and loved by one's family, which is often the case in the Third World, than live to be 80 and die neglected in some old people's home, as is often the case in the

West. With examples like this, Ramachandra unquestionably demolishes any claim to Western superiority and because the West has been wielding the power for so long his strong protest is more than justified. Yet, in a Christian context, a case needs to be made for mutual development. To return to the issue of longevity, the best option, undoubtedly, is to live to be 80+ and die cared for and loved by one's children and grandchildren or, if we are unmarried, by those who care for us with all the concern of family.

It is now very common to define 'development' in terms of 'choice'. The poor are to be asked what they want. But as Ramachandra says, 'when it comes to something as fundamental as food and drink, for instance, the rising incomes of the 'developing' poor may well mean that they now have a choice between Coca-Cola and Pepsi' (*GTF* 121). This brings us back to my experience in the village in North Colombia and to the reality of any attempt which people of goodwill from the West and the Third World may make to reach out in partnership together for a better world. There is no escape any more from the tendrils of the globalised corporations and it is probably very late in the day for governments and international organisations to think about curbing some of their power. Some are arguing that it is already too late and that governments are now nothing more than the servants of the great corporations.

In conclusion, it needs to be said that both volumes could be improved in some respects. The last word on the Enlightenment and the development of Western thinking since has not been spoken in *GTF*. The neglect of Schleiermacher in the telling of that story is puzzling. The author's view of the meaning and place of ethnic identity may not be entirely satisfactory either. One wonders whether Polanyi does provide the framework for a thoroughly biblical and Christian view of scientific methodology. The implications of the fundamental evangelical idea that in his atoning death Jesus turns away the wrath of God from sinful humanity needs to be thought through in the context of the themes of both these books. However, overall, Ramachandra has produced two very fine books which this reviewer will go back to again and again. Together they help us to understand what it means to be world Christians as the end of the second millennium approaches.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Genesis – Deuteronomy

John H. Walton and Victor H. Matthews
Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1997,
284 pp, \$19.99.

This volume provides Bible readers who have little knowledge of the ancient world an abundance of information on the socio-cultural background of texts throughout the Pentateuch. The authors present the materials in a clear, concise, straightforward manner.

For each book of the Pentateuch there is a brief introduction about the kind of comparative material that is germane for this particular book. Following are numerous notes identified by a scriptural reference and a title. These notes treat a variety of issues, including places, peoples, customs, rituals, worship practices, laws, economic matters, ceremonies, festivals, seasonal patterns, and other issues conditioned by time and place. Special attention is given to cultic and magical practices of Israel's neighbours. Tribal structures are emphasized. A valuable section is an extended glossary. When a term defined in the glossary appears in a note, it is starred, enabling the reader to find quickly that term's meaning.

The authors have a high regard for Scripture. They do not become engaged in reconstructions of the text, spend time identifying sources behind the present text, or get involved in controversial issues. Also the authors do not treat theological themes. Consequently this volume is not a substitute for good commentaries on the books of the Pentateuch. Rather it provides information on obscure words, places, and practices in order to make various texts more understandable

and also to prevent their misinterpretation.

Several limitations of this volume may be noted, some of course due to its scope. Sometimes the authors do not bring out the significance of a comment. At Leviticus 16:34, *e.g.*, they briefly describe annual Babylonian practices for purging a sanctuary, but do not show how these practices enlighten any of the rituals performed on the Day of Atonement. In a few notations there is a gap between the time of an incident or practice mentioned in a text and the material marshalled to illuminate or support it. For example, in commenting on Abraham's surprise attack against the kings of the East who had taken Lot captive (Gn. 14:15), the authors state that 'the strategy of night-time ambush' is attested as early as the Judges. If one accepts the biblical chronology for Abraham which places him in the twenty-first century BC, there is a gap of several hundred years between Abraham and the supporting evidence. While such time gaps are admittedly rare in this volume, the reader must be alert to the quality of the comparisons being made.

Another limitation is the lack of footnotes for further research. This is intentional in order to keep the volume from becoming too cumbersome. But in places it is a troubling omission. For example, Genesis 15:1-3 says that the embalming of Jacob took forty days. Some sources indicate that the Egyptians took seventy days for embalming. So a citation could help the reader to resolve this apparent discrepancy. Furthermore, the authors bypass passages where little is known about the Hebrew terms, such as the lists of birds and reptiles in Leviticus 11.

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West. With examples like this, Ramachandra unquestionably demolishes any claim to Western superiority and because the West has been wielding the power for so long his strong protest is more than justified. Yet, in a Christian context, a case needs to be made for mutual development. To return to the issue of longevity, the best option, undoubtedly, is to live to be 80+ and die cared for and loved by one's children and grandchildren or, if we are unmarried, by those who care for us with all the concern of family.

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Overall, however, this book is a splendid tool that provides ready access to the cultural background of the books of the Pentateuch.

John E Hartley

Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA

Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus, JSOTS

Mark S. Smith

Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, 355 pp., hb., £40.00.

This monograph has two primary purposes. One is to promote a positive view of *torah*, especially among Christians who in a variety of ways downplay or even denigrate that which they all too easily label as 'law'. The introductory chapter has many illuminating remarks in this context (Smith makes clear that as a practising Roman Catholic married to an observant Jew he is rooted in traditions which are in principle disposed to a positive assessment of *torah*).

The other purpose is to take seriously the book of Exodus as a canonical whole, where the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Smith in no way denies likely complexity of source and tradition-history underlying the canonical text. Indeed there are many pages arguing in detail the nature of a priestly redaction of older material which gave shape to the book as a whole. But the purpose of the analysis is to enhance, rather than detract from, an understanding and appreciation of the end product. More specifically, Smith argues that the priestly editing has been shaped by the pattern of Israel's regular pilgrimages to the temple at Jerusalem, so that the basic movement in the book of Exodus of Moses and Israel to God's holy

mountain, Sinai, is a typological portrayal of Israel's pilgrimages to encounter God in the holy mountain of Zion.

Overall it is an interesting and suggestive thesis, standing in significant ways within the wider contemporary context of moves towards 'canonical' readings of the biblical text which presuppose but seek to move beyond conventional pentateuchal criticism. In places it has a rather Ph.D-ish feel, surveying debates and sometimes repeating itself, but it is clearly written and does contribute to an understanding of the biblical text.

My main reservation is that, despite his clear concern to relate the study of the biblical text to contemporary communities of faith, Smith's actual handling of the text replicates the same positivism of method which has made so much pentateuchal criticism thin and disappointing. The numerous possible hermeneutical implications of Smith's thesis that the journey to Sinai is a type of Israel's pilgrimages to Jerusalem are only hinted at, and not substantively developed. In short, there is no memorable exegesis and interpretation. The book points in a promising direction. But the journey to encounter with God remains a long one still to be made.

Walter Moberly

Durham

Deuteronomy, New International Bible Commentary Series, Volume 4

Christopher Wright

Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson

Publishers Inc., 1996

350 pp., pb., £7.99.

Oh, that rare breed: a commentary which combines investigative biblical scholarship with engaging cultural relevance to today's world. Intellect and faith go hand-in-hand in Chris Wright's worthy contribution to the New International Biblical Commentary series.

The book is 350 pages and paperback, an ideal size for the busy student or pastor for easy reference on the go. In addition, it has a very detailed table of contents, subject index, and scripture index, enabling direct referencing. Individual chapters are divided into two parts: a hermeneutical approach on a verse-by-verse basis, followed by additional notes which delve more deeply into the Hebrew Massoretic Text, Greek Septuagint, and other sources. Wright writes the book with layman, pastor, and scholar in mind, allowing it to be used either as an aid to private devotions or as an exegetical tool for a sermon or an essay.

Wright lives up to the aim of the series' editors: 'We have sought to align this series with what has been labelled believing criticism. This approach marries probing, reflective interpretation of the text to loyal biblical devotion and warm Christian affection'. Wright draws parallels between the polytheistic world of the Israelite readers of Deuteronomy and the 'ambient cultural idolatries of our age'. He affirms that Deuteronomy challenges Israel's degree of loyalty in the midst of cultural change, and thus challenges the degree of loyalty of today's western

church in the midst of its post-modern, multi-faith society. Wright further explains the nature of Deuteronomy's steadfast adherence to monotheism in a cultural context of Canaanite polytheism: 'The reason, therefore, for the totally uncompromising attitude to all forms of idolatry was not a racist hatred of foreign religions, but a total commitment to the saving truth'.

Later in his book, Wright further expands on Deuteronomy's theme of the superiority of the God of Israel over the other gods of the surrounding peoples. Although Deuteronomy 33 may seem on the surface as simply Moses giving random blessings on the tribes of Israel, Wright points out that the agenda of the opening verses of chapter 33 is to establish the uniqueness of the God of Moses, who would be the one to grant the tribes of Israel the blessings pronounced by Moses, if they would hold steady to their devotion to God. God's uniqueness is grounded in three aspects found in these verses: (1) God's transcendent power as demonstrated in the Sinai theophany; (2) God's covenantal commitment to the people of Israel as a promise of love on the side of Yahweh and reciprocal obedience of the part of Israel; and, (3) God's kingship in the form of his 'military' power in defence of Israel and in the form of God's role as lawgiver. These qualities of power, love, and protection are the traits which make the God of Israel worthy of devotion over the false gods of the neighbouring peoples.

Finally, commenting on verse 26 ('There is no one like the God of Jeshurun'), Wright reasserts the purpose of the book of Deuteronomy: 'The challenge of Deuteronomy is not simply monotheism (the singularity of deity), but the uniqueness

specifically of God as Yahweh, revealed and known in Israel.' Students, clergy, or university Christian workers who seek a better biblical understanding for answering the challenge which post-modernism poses in our age, this commentary is for you.

David H. Jackson
Oxford

1 and 2 Kings (New International Biblical Commentary series)

Iain W. Provan
Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995,
xiv + 305 pp., £6.99.

This book is part of a commentary series which aims to steer a course between a precritical approach to the Bible and the 'desert of criticism' (x) to which so much of modern scholarship seems to have led. The series' approach has been labelled 'believing criticism', aimed at speaking to church and academy.

Provan refreshingly takes the canonical text of 1 and 2 Kings as his starting point. Nevertheless, he accepts that the books of the OT grew over time into their present form 'in dialogue with each other, each shaping the developing tradition and being shaped by it' (p. 4). Only this explains 'the high level of intertextuality' in the OT. In other words, where others might see various sources of different origin and ideology put together by scribes too naïve to realise the resultant unevenness, Provan perceives artistry. Repetitions are not a sign of scribal incompetence, but rather a device to bring to mind other passages in the OT. Ambiguities do not indicate contradiction, but show the complexity of the OT authors' understanding of God and of his relationship with his people.

Provan takes 1 and 2 Kings as a single book, to be read in the context of the whole canon of the OT, and, for Christians, the NT as well. He treats Kings primarily as a coherent piece of narrative literature which tells a story, in chronological order, linked together by certain themes.

This story has two aims. Firstly, it is historiographical. It is a book about Israel's past, and what it has to say must be taken seriously. Provan takes 'the portrait as painted' as his object of study.

Secondly, it is didactic. Four themes in the book are presented for the reader's instruction: 1) God is God, there is no other, 2) the only God demands exclusive worship, 3) God is the judge, and 4) underlying everything is God's promise.

The author(s) of Kings achieve(s) this didactic purpose mainly by patterning. Events and characters in later chapters recall those of earlier chapters. Sometimes the Hebrew vocabulary itself recalls other relevant parts of the OT. Readers are required to compare and contrast, to detect their own life in the book's pages and to understand themselves in its context.

The commentary, so Provan, is to be 'read, not raided'. That is, it is to be read through, just like the book on which it is designed to comment, since only engagement with the whole book of Kings will allow it to communicate its distinctive message.

Each chapter of the commentary has three parts: a summary, setting the context; detailed discussion in small sections, noting distinctive vocabulary, OT inter-textual allusions and NT links; and additional notes on textual difficulties, shortcomings

in the NIV (the text used in the series) and scholarly concerns. Excurses on Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah and Josiah 'in canonical context' show their typological function for the NT, and give an expository complement to the detailed commentary. The book concludes with a select bibliography (on Kings as narrative, historiography and didactic literature), a subject index and an extensive Scripture index.

Provan succeeds in tracing the four themes throughout Kings. He also notes the authors' absolute conviction that God is in control at all times, and the further theme of God working through the humble.

Provan's method is very attractive, helping the reader to see not only the unity of Kings, but also of the OT and even of the Bible as a whole. It works well for those familiar with the Bible, its characters and its overall story. Perhaps those not so familiar with the text will be encouraged to find out more for themselves.

A reading of Provan's book, taking time to explore all the references to other passages in Kings, the OT and the NT, would be very satisfying indeed.

Peggy Roberts

Rochampton Institute, London.

The Psalms of Asaph and the Pentateuch (Studies in the Psalter, III) JSOT Supplement Series 233

Michael D. Goulder

Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, 378pp, hb., £45.00.

This is the third volume in the series 'Studies in the Psalter', following *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah* (1982) and *The Prayers of David* (1990). Sensibly using the Revised Version of 1881, Goulder attempts a detailed analysis of

Psalms 50 and 78–83 based on the place and order they occupy in the Hebrew Psalter. These give us clues to the identity of the Asaphites, the development of Israelite religion and the origins of the Pentateuch.

For Goulder the Asaph psalms are a New Year Festival liturgy from eighth century Bethel, and contain the earliest form of the traditions developed in Exodus to Numbers. In seventh century Jerusalem the Asaphite E tradition and the Korahite J tradition were amalgamated, and this was further elaborated a century or so later by the Merari (priestly) clan. The northern Asaphites were heirs to a proto-Deuteronomistic style which is clearly present in these psalms while D in the Pentateuch represents a later development of their distinctive theology. They and their Korahite co-Levites had been in Jerusalem for over a century, in which they developed the Exodus-wilderness saga, prefaced it with the patriarchal and creation/Flood narratives, and terminated it with a fuller version of the law, presented as Moses' last words. So the core of our Pentateuch was already in place by 600' (p. 251). In a 'Concluding Unhistorical Postscript' (let the reader of Kierkegaard understand) Goulder even speculates on the names of the 'authors' of the Asaphite Exodus to Kings saga (Iddo, Shemaiah), Genesis (Iddo), Deuteronomy (Zerah, Jeatharai), 'J' (Shemaiah), and the completed Deuteronomist history (Mattaniah).

Undoubtedly the strongest feature of the thesis is the careful, detailed and sensible analysis of the Asaphite psalms, which Goulder mercifully allows to speak for themselves, rather than (as so often in modern studies) pressing them into the service of other *Gattungen* and genres. However, occasionally he falls into this trap

himself, as with his notion that *Selah* was a recitative interpolating into the song a summary of a well-known historical tradition of the gracious acts of God. Nor is much attention paid to the terms used in the headings of the psalms (e.g. Maschil, Psalm, Song). But his approach is to be strongly commended.

These psalms undoubtedly witness to the evolution of Israel's ancient traditions. However, Goulder moves with magisterial confidence and surprising rapidity from this to firm conclusions about their relation to the Pentateuch, citing analogies to their liturgical *Sitz im Leben* from e.g. Cromwell, Stalin, Cicero and the Bosnian Serbs (all these on p. 163). The book is characterised by a delightful admixture of cheerful panache (Ps. 83:10-13 are 'like the vacuous rhetoric of a modern politician'; or 'our Psalmist is like a frightened medicine man, repeatedly stabbing the effigy of his foe', p. 172) and by refreshingly independent and common-sense responses to the less plausible assertions of contemporary scholars, particularly in his small-print paragraphs. To this reviewer his thesis works well for the psalms, moderately well for the development of the historical traditions, and hardly at all for the huge number of over-confident surmises about the clan identity, location, period, motivation and names of the Pentateuchal editors. It is however the details that matter, and Goulder has made a case that deserves close and respectful attention. The book is beautifully presented, though the Sheffield Academic Press should know that the editor of their *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* is Clines, not Chines (p. 12)!

P.J.M. Southwell
Wycliffe Hall, Oxford

The Prophets. A Sheffield Reader

Philip R. Davies
Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996,
388 pp., pb., £14.95.

This book is for those who want to interact with OT scholarship, and consists of articles published in the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* between 1983 and 1996. It addresses the question: What is distinctive about recent writing on the prophets? This means that great attention is given to the 'hermeneutical chain': author - text - reader. Scholars lack confidence in distinguishing between author prophet and the editors who produced the books we now have. They therefore focus on the text. In many ways this has been the greatest gain for biblical studies over the past couple of decades: we can study the text as it is in the Bible, without (necessarily) being called obscurantist fundamentalists. On the other hand a subjective element has been introduced into reading the Bible which makes it difficult to claim authority for any particular interpretation.

The articles are varied and give a good introduction to scholarly debate. They are not all easy to read, particularly the first one by Auld: 'Prophets through the Looking Glass': 'prophecy is basically a creation of literary tradition'. In the responses he is supported by Robert Carroll, who argues that our main 'prophets' were originally socially aware 'poets', and opposed by Hugh Williamson. Then Overholt argued that they were genuine prophets, and Auld and Carroll oppose. Hans Barstad applauds Auld's and Carroll's methodology but concludes that biblical prophetic books contain real prophecy. Great! Did we need a big scholarly discussion to tell us that?

Israel and the Nations

F.F. Bruce, revised by David F. Payne
 Paternoster, 1997,
 x + 258 pp., pb., £14.99.

F.F. Bruce (1910–90) was probably the most significant figure in the renaissance of British evangelical scholarship since 1945. Although he is perhaps best known as a writer of NT commentaries, he also produced some substantial studies in OT and church history which continue to inform and enlighten students today.

The first edition of Bruce's history of Israel appeared in 1963 (originally as a handbook of biblical history for Religious Education teachers). The work has now been revised by one of Bruce's first Biblical Studies students, David Payne (himself the author of an OT history). The changes do not significantly affect the main body of the text. They consist mainly of the substitution of the NIV for biblical quotations, updating the bibliography, and revising the endnotes to indicate some of the disputed questions in contemporary biblical scholarship. For example, the notes indicate alternative views for the dating of the Exodus (p. 8), and Payne demurs – as would most commentators today – from Bruce's dating of Ezra's mission to Jerusalem (p. 106).

As the title suggests, the principal focus of the book is upon Israel as a nation, often in relation to its powerful neighbours. In twenty-eight manageable chapters it recounts and interprets the main events of Israel's story, from the Exodus to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Since the emphasis is chiefly on the political life of the nation, Israel's religion and literature are considered somewhat in passing and mainly as they illuminate this concern.

There are sections on: the 'Unity of Isaiah' (*i.e.* the coherence of the book is an editorial unity; there is no consideration of the possibility that one Isaiah wrote it all); 'Prophetic ideology' (*e.g.* Blenkinsopp reads Is. 40 – 66 from a social and political perspective; Daniel Smith argues that Je. 29 is a call to non-violent resistance; Bebb Wheeler Stone argues that the author of Is. 40 – 55 was a woman who experienced the political victimization of the exile and the sexual victimization of patriarchy); and 'Reading Prophecy' (concerned with 'reading strategies', literary devices, *etc.*). Even this brief summary will give many readers enough ammunition to say 'Typical scholarly rubbish', and I have considerable sympathy with this view! However, most articles have something of value and something worth reacting against.

Perhaps the most interesting and provocative article is that by Athalya Brenner, 'Pornoprophets revisited'. She argues that passages in the prophets invariably reflect female sexuality as negative and male sexuality as neutral or positive and are rightly called pornography. The article will repay study by those prepared to listen to the argument and the emotion.

Mike Butterworth

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 Course

rather than as subjects in their own right. The primary material for the period up to the beginning of the Hellenistic era is the OT itself, for Bruce certainly believed that the biblical writers were reliable as historians, for all that they had theological motives. This is in marked contrast to some more recent reconstructions of the origin and identity of 'Israel', where some writers manifest considerable scepticism about the pre-exilic period (to the point of denying the historicity of the Exodus or the existence of David). Pre-dating these contemporary debates, Bruce was much more positive, but he was not reactively conservative; he accepted a number of moderate critical views about the growth of the biblical text which are now commonplace among many evangelical scholars.

Since the book has as its terms of reference Israel in the land from c. 1300 BC to AD 70, it overlaps with most of the biblical period and material but also goes well beyond them. This has the disadvantage that there is nothing about the patriarchal period, but by way of compensation the Hellenistic period is recounted in good detail. Here, Bruce's first calling as a classicist comes into play, as about half of the book is devoted to describing the rival Greek empires and the conflict of characters and power politics that shaped the land in which Christianity was cradled. The so-called 'intertestamental period' is rather less well known to students in theology and religious studies (particularly to Protestants without an Apocrypha to hand), but it provides the essential background to the NT and features some of the most interesting (and notorious) characters from ancient history. The work is rounded off with some very useful genealogical and chronological tables of the political *dramatis personae*, but there is no scripture index.

For many generations of students this book has been a very serviceable introduction to biblical history, and this revised edition should ensure its continued usefulness into the next decade.

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Jesus and the Victory of God, Christian Origins and the Question of God

N.T. Wright

London: SPCK, 1996,
560 pp., pb., £30.

To state it at the beginning, I found N.T. Wright's book on Jesus one of the most rewarding and stimulating readings about Jesus I have recently come. A lively style offers an immense and profound scholarship. Wright uses and discusses an impressive quantity of Jewish sources to make his point. Thus, by reading this book one catches a glimpse of the first-century Judaism in which Jesus lived.

In his first volume Wright painted a picture of first-century history as far as Judaism and Christianity are concerned. With this picture as background Wright now draws a portrait of Jesus. Before he does so, he gives us an overview of the 'Jesus scholarship' of the last hundred years or so. He also comments on the whole project of the 'Jesus Seminar' at greater length. Wright openly admits on whose shoulders he stands, but also in what points he disagrees. The *Third Quest* marks the starting point for his portrait of Jesus (p. 123). It is connected with the name of Albert Schweitzer. Both Wright and Schweitzer see eschatology as a key to understanding Jesus. While they agree in their view of eschatology

as a crucial category, they fundamentally part in their understanding of first-century Jewish eschatology. According to Wright, this particular eschatology does not deal with scenarios of the end of space-time universe but with the change of the old order of this world through God's climactic intervention. Wright at this point establishes a very appealing and interesting hypothesis of first-century Jewish eschatology. Further research needs to be done in this area so that his hypothesis may become a solid piece in the puzzle of first-century history. This understanding of eschatology throws new light on our picture of Jesus.

The whole project of N.T. Wright's NT Theology is committed to history. He looks at the biblical texts with the eye of an historian. From this point of view he challenges a number of methodological presuppositions. Instead of the 'criterion of dissimilarity' for instance, Wright introduces the double criterion of similarity and dissimilarity (p. 131ff): 'When some words are credible within first-century Judaism, even though perhaps subversive; when these words make a starting point of something in later Christianity, even though it might differ from later Christian theology, then can we make a good case that it originates with Jesus himself.'

The phrase 'forgiveness of sins' looks quite different under Wright's historical investigation. He writes that 'forgiveness of sins' is another way of saying 'return from the exile' (p. 268). Wright places this familiar Christian phrase in an unfamiliar but plausible first-century setting. The Jews under Roman rule would understand 'forgiveness of sins' as the eschatological return from the exile. Some would think of freeing

themselves from the Roman yoke. Jesus proclaimed God's ultimate intervention through the coming of his kingdom. He there challenges the non-political understanding of 'forgiveness of sins'. The Prodigal Son and the sermon on the Mount undergo a very similar transformation in Wright's investigation as does the concept of 'forgiveness of sins'. The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of timeless ethical instructions but a challenge to Israel to be the true Israel (p. 288). In his parable of the Prodigal Son Jesus retells this story: now, with the coming of Jesus, the exile is over and God will shortly restore his people. Certainly a new way to this over-familiar parable.

Wright asks five basic questions within his approach: 1. How does Jesus fit into Judaism? (p. 91) 2. What was Jesus seeking to do within Judaism? (p. 99) 3. Why did Jesus die? (p. 106) 4. How and why did the early church begin? (p. 109) 5. Why are the Gospels what they are? (p. 112) A sixth question would be: how does this Jesus relate to the contemporary church and world? (p. 117) Wright has this question in mind, but does not explicitly deal with this huge issue, something that definitely needs to be done.

Wright presents Jesus as a prophet. This is one category for understanding Jesus that was popular even in Jesus' day and gives many words and deeds a very plausible framework. Jesus announced the coming judgement over the unfaithful people of God and the climax of God's action in history. This climax is arriving through Jesus himself. When we try to grasp Jesus' aims and beliefs, then do we realize that Jesus was not only a prophet, but the Messiah? The Temple cleansing and the Last Supper take a prominent place in understanding

Jesus' Messiahship. He celebrated something like a Passover with his disciples. At that moment he granted the forgiveness of sins which was normally reserved for the Day of Atonement in Israel. With the feast of Passover the Jews remember their return from Egypt; yet, in Jesus' interpretation of the last meal with his disciples it is the return from exile. Things that normally take place in the temple of Jerusalem now happen in the upper room.

Within his historical approach, N.T. Wright also opens new ways into christology. He finds the clues to christology in the return of YHWH to Zion and in the Temple-theology (p. 653). Jesus not only proclaimed the return of God to Zion, but he embodied it in person. What the temple was supposed to accomplish Jesus himself accomplished on the cross (p. 604). During the time of Jesus' earthly ministry there is no speculation about the three persons of God, but within first-century Judaism Jesus could be seen as the one sharing the throne with God.

N.T. Wright says only very little about the resurrection in this volume. Thus, the question of how Jesus thought about his resurrection remains unanswered yet. What did this dimension mean in his own understanding of vocation? Hopefully this gap will be filled in the following volumes.

Jesus and the Victory of God deserves careful study and thorough discussion. Wright's results and their meaning for the central Christian doctrines like that of atonement are a burning issue. Further, we need to ask how Wright's work will affect the discussion between Christians and Jews. After reading his book I realized that Jesus was an uncomfortable first-century Jew in the eyes of his contemporaries and to some degree he is a strange

figure to us today, for he is not the all-too-familiar Christian hero, but a real Jew who brought about the climax of God's history within the human race.

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Jesus and the Logic of History

Paul W. Barnett
Leicester, Apollos, 1997,
165 pp., pb., £12.99.

Jesus and the Logic of History is a frustrating book. It is quite impossible to place within a particular genre of scholarship. Parts of it are apologetic, portions clearly fall within the arena of NT studies. It could be a useful resource for a harassed church leader or an undergraduate wanting something basic about historical Jesus research from an evangelical perspective. However, from a perspective of scholarship, the book fails to live up to its potential.

The Rt Revd Paul Barnett is the Bishop of Sydney, and thus it is not surprising that the book is accessible yet theologically erudite. Barnett begins by surveying a variety of scholarly 'Jesuses', which are on offer at the present time, although surprisingly there is no mention of N.T. Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London, SPCK 1996). This in itself dates the book as far as NT Studies is concerned; such does Wright bestride this area of scholarship. Chapters 3-6 are clearly meant to be the 'meat' of the book. The third chapter entitled 'Jesus in Proclamation and Tradition' contains a veritable gold mine of useful references to how Jesus is portrayed consistently throughout the witnesses of the NT. Chapter 4, 'Jesus in Historical Context' cried out for some

interaction with Wright, even if only with his *New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1993). However, its dialogue with Freyne in particular will make this a useful chapter for those seeking to put Jesus of Nazareth within his immediate theological and sociological context. For this Dr Barnett is to be congratulated.

Barnett's discussion in Chapter 5 of 'Jesus in the Gospels' is perhaps the most relevant to readers of *Themelios*. In it, he asks about the nature of the term 'Christ' for 1st Century Jews. He deals with the problem of four biographies (Bios) of Christ, implicitly interacting with the work of Richard Burridge (*What are the Gospels?* Cambridge: University Press, 1992). This should be basic fodder for the undergraduate. Mention must be made of the fact that Barnett offers an excursus after each chapter, dealing with issues such as Jesus in Josephus, and how much Paul knew of Jesus of Nazareth. Barnett's work clearly presents a realistic Jesus. I am not sure whether he has been so clear about history. Where was the dialogue with A.E. Harvey or F. Watson? This is a work that you will want to read even if only to bring you up to speak with a broad sweep of biblical scholarship. Yet Barnett's work would stand a greater chance of being more influential if it had dialogued far more with Wright. Nevertheless, a work defending the Christ of Faith as the Historical Jesus by an Anglican Bishop is to be praised and cherished. It is also one that should be welcomed for its accessibility. This should mean that it will be widely read; it does deserve to be.

A final observation (if I may), I am not convinced that this work is truly representative of biblical theology. Such is the general poverty of this discipline, both in

the academy and the Church. This is a problem for us all collectively to address.

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The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting Volume 4

Richard Bauckham (ed)
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995,
£29.99

This volume is numbered four in a series of six which deal in general with the various 'settings' that furnish the backdrop to the book of Acts. Four of the volumes are collections of essays, each with a number of contributors – the literary setting (vol. 1, already published), the Graeco-Roman setting (vol. 2), this volume, and the sixth volume, which treats the theology of Acts. The other two volumes are by individuals and deal with Paul's Roman custody (by Brian Rapske) and the Diaspora setting of Acts (Irina Levinskaya). With such an ambitious undertaking, one is reminded of the 5-volume *Beginnings of Christianity* from the other end of the century. There is a major difference, however. The *Beginnings* reflected the textual and historical-critical concerns of that scholarly era. The 'Settings' reflect contemporary literary and social backgrounds concerns. This new series is perhaps most like volume 5 of the *Beginnings* – the 'Additional Notes' which is a rich mine of articles on specific topics. I always considered that the most useful volume in that series. I like this new series for the same reason. Its volumes provide careful research on a wide range of issues raised by the narrative of Acts.

The format of this book is very user-friendly. Each chapter is

provided with a brief outline in the table of contents so one can quickly determine exactly what it treats. This is helpful, since this is more a reference work than a 'read-it-through' book. Along the same lines, a summary of a paragraph or so is given at the beginning of each article. Finally, the extensive notes are presented as footnotes and not as end-notes.

The contributors are drawn from a wide range of scholarship. Some are seasoned, well-known NT scholars like Martin Hengel, Ernst Bammel, Richard Bauckham, and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. Others are well-published NT scholars who are perhaps less familiar to English-speaking students, such as Simon Legasse. Some are young scholars drawing on their dissertation research. As a whole, this volume represents a wide range of international scholarship with contributors from England, Scotland, France, Germany, Israel, Canada, and the United States. Most are biblical specialists, but several have their expertise in other related areas, such as the classics and ancient history.

There are fifteen articles in this 480 page volume. They vary in length from seven pages (Bammel) to sixty-five (Bauckham). They deal with a wide variety of Acts-related subjects. What joins them together is that all relate to first-century Palestinian Judaism or the early Palestinian Christian church. Some of the articles are quite narrowly focused, such as Margaret Williams' treatment of personal names in Acts. In examining the names, however, she challenges some old assumptions, such as that which sees all seven of the Hellenist servers in Acts 6:5 as being Diaspora Jews.

Some of the articles deal with ground which has not been

previously ploughed very extensively, such as Tessa Rajak's examination of the various ethnic groups represented in first-century Palestine and David Fiensy's treatment of the social composition of the Jerusalem church. Most of the articles take a fresh look at old issues. David Gill's contributions examines the Roman provincial organisation during the period covered by Acts, dealing with such questions as whether Pilate should be considered a prefect or a procurator. Martin Hengel deals with Luke's knowledge of Palestinian geography and concludes that he is most accurate when dealing with the coastal areas, less so for inland - exactly what one would expect of the person responsible for the 'we' passages in Acts. Steve Mason takes a fresh look at the Jewish leaders as depicted in Josephus and in Acts. Rainer Riesner challenges recent arguments that there were no synagogues in Jerusalem in NT times, basing his case on both literary and archaeological evidence. Wolfgang Reinhardt also tackles a well-treated subject - the population of Jerusalem in the first-century.

Several articles are based on archaeological evidence, such as Murphy-O'Connor's thesis that the Cenacle, the traditional site of the Lord's Supper, was the earliest meeting place of the Jerusalem church. Brian Capper examines the evidence for a community of good among the Essenes and argues that it had a double-tiered pattern, one for the monasteries and one for the towns, and that this influenced the early Christian practice.

Daniel Falk's article is based more on literary evidence, showing that the places and times of prayer as depicted in Acts are in line with the Jewish practice at that time.

Perhaps the most disappointing article is that of Ernst Bammel, being too brief to develop its subject adequately. Joshua Schwartz examines the rabbinic Ben Stada traditions in light of the Acts narrative of Peter's ministry in Lydda. His connection of the two is tantalising but failed to convince this reviewer.

The remaining two articles are primarily based on the Acts narrative itself, offering a fresh look at the text. Legasse deals with Paul's pre-Christian career and argues for a methodology which gives a critical reading of both Acts and Paul's epistles. The concluding article is by Richard Bauckham, the editor of the volume. He treats a number of issues surrounding the leadership of the Jerusalem church in the early-Christian movement, such as the form of its organization, the role of James, and the purpose of the apostolic decrees.

One can readily see the specialized nature of this volume. It is definitely a scholar's reference work, as the whole series was designed to be. Acts specialists will want this volume on their shelves. Students can seek out the library's copy.

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**The Social Ethos of the Corinthian
Correspondence, Interest and
Ideology from 1 Corinthians to
1 Clement**

D.G. Horrell

Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1996,
395pp., £27.50.

The sociological study of the Pauline corpus can be said to be one of the fastest growing trends in all of NT studies. The seminal works in the early 1980s by scholars such as G. Thiessen and W. Meeks have stimulated a wide variety of studies, some more fertile than others. Certainly the most fertile area within the Pauline corpus has proved to be 1 Corinthians, which has produced no fewer than some fifteen significant doctoral theses involving Paul, the Corinthians, and the social sciences, and a variety of commentaries, such as my own *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Paternoster, 1995). Into this already well-trod track comes the revision of the doctoral dissertation of D.G. Horrell, done at Cambridge in 1993 under the supervision of Andrew Chester.

Horrell sets out in the first two chapters, which are methodological in character, how he intends to approach the subject, namely by following the suggestions of the social theorist Anthony Giddens, and in particular Horrell seeks to use Giddens' structuration theory. For readers unfamiliar with this particular theory it involves not a particular sociological model but the investigation of a body of material over a period of time, seeking to see how certain basic resources and rules of a community are applied and then reapplied as situations change. Rather than applying a static model such as sect theory, Giddens' approach is to suggest

that there is a process of change and adaptation always going on in a living community and so one needs to see how the community's resources and rules are used in this situation of flux. This in fact leads to some significant results when Horrell examines first the canonical Corinthian letters and then the somewhat later letter of Clement to the Corinthians, usually called 1 Clement. He is able to show, I think convincingly, that while Paul himself is engaging in a social critique of some of the dominant values of the culture, trying to get his socially higher status Christians to adopt a more Christ-like model of living and relating to those less fortunate, Clement on the other hand seems to be simply endorsing the existing social values of the culture and seeking to create peace in the fragmented Corinthian community by baptizing the existing social status quo, urging quietism and good behaviour in relationship to the dominant social institutions of the Roman world including government and the traditional patriarchal household structure. Horrell is again I think quite right to conclude that while Clement's work is aptly described by Theissen's term *love patriarchy*, the work of Paul himself is not fairly described by this term. Indeed Paul is busy deconstructing some of the major assumptions of his patriarchal world, including the assumption that women should not be active participants in Christian worship and ministry.

Horrell's work however is not without its flaws. There is especially the problem that despite his desire to use Giddens' analytical approach he never does the proper background work to make such an analysis of 1 Corinthians convincing, for he does not deal with the resources

and rules that Paul is drawing on. He says nothing of consequence about Paul's use of the Jesus tradition and other early Christian traditions in 1 Corinthians, and so he does not demonstrate how and in what way Paul is appropriating and reapplying his Christian theological and ethical resources. Indeed, valuable as the analyses in chapters 3-5 are as a sort of summary of the state of sociological discussion of this Pauline material (which in itself makes the book worth reading as a précis of the subject, though there is nothing particularly new here if one is already conversant with the relevant literature), actual contact with Giddens and his theory really does not become apparent until Horrell tries to show the developments from 1 Corinthians to 2 Corinthians 10 - 13 and then to 2 Corinthians 1 - 9 (he thinks these are two separate letter fragments written in this order) and then on to 1 Clement. The analysis of 1 Corinthians suffers for not being read in light of the aforementioned background traditions. Good contextual exegesis of 1 Corinthians does not in itself constitute a social analysis à la Giddens.

Themelios readers will perhaps find it a little too convenient that Horrell argues that 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 is not Pauline, a conclusion that better facilitates his portrait of Paul as a social engineer. Yet it must be said that a proper reading of these verses in their immediate literary context could have led to the conclusion that Paul is simply correcting an abuse by some women, not laying an all-encompassing prohibition, as 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 makes clear he was not. The fact that some Western manuscripts move these verses to the end of the paragraph, is no argument for their omission, as no manuscript

of the Pauline corpus omits these verses. Transposition is an argument for lack of understanding by an editor of how verses fit a context, not a sufficient argument for interpolation. The theory of several fragments in our present 2 Corinthians is also not uncommon but it also has no textual basis, and Horrell does not deal at all with the rhetorical arguments which suggest that 2 Corinthians is a unity, nor does he adequately deal with the arguments that suggest that 2 Corinthians 10 - 13 must follow 2 Corinthians 1 - 9 to make good sense of this material, as most scholars would maintain.

Horrell's analysis of 1 Clement is telling and convincing and in itself makes the book worth reading. He shows how indeed that the more radical teachings of Paul (and behind him of Jesus) have been domesticated for the sake of peace with the world and unity within the community. The re-patriarchialization of the church is already in full swing when this document is written, and the loss of eschatological sense of how the gospel transforms the world's structures is telling.

This book is indeed a technical monograph, full of Greek and scholarly discussion, but it is also a worthwhile study, even for the student just wanting to get a taste of what the sociological study of Paul's writings is like. There is a very ample bibliography as well for further study. Horrell has made a useful contribution to the discussion of our most well-known of Pauline congregations, the church at Corinth, and he has shown something of how its social problems continued to recur, not least because once the apostle passed away, it was down to the local leadership to carry things forward. Not surprisingly they did

not always grasp the more socially radical and world-changing vision of the Apostle. I would commend this book to upper level college students and those pursuing master's degrees or divinity degrees at theological college. They will discover that this line of approach to Paul is fertile, not futile.

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The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus (Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 143).

Raymond Pickett

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997,
230 pp., hb., £40.00.

The Corinthian church had problems. These stemmed from the application of Paul's gospel of freedom in disruptive and selfish ways. Paul has to address these while preserving the very freedom for which Christ died. In this revised Sheffield PhD thesis, Dr Pickett shows through 'sociological exegesis' (p. 34) how Paul achieved his purpose. First, the cross of Christ 'deconstruct(s) those secular norms and values which are in conflict with his ideal of an egalitarian community' and, second, 'Christ's death is a death for others ... which symbolizes the other-regarding behaviour which he himself exemplifies and the Corinthians should imitate' (p. 214).

In 1 Corinthians 1-4, the culturally elite consider Paul to be socially inferior in comparison with the eloquent Apollos. 'Wisdom' leads to arrogant superiority and conduct. But Paul wants to reform their conduct. Since they have been incorporated into the body of Christ, their lives are to reflect this.

Secular status and power have a destructive effect; Paul's own weakness provides an implicit rejection of the status system of the Corinthian elite.

The critical point in 1 Corinthians 5-14 is not the cause of the aberrant conduct but its interpersonal consequences. Paul's converts accept his gospel. But it must have implications for behaviour. Individual behaviour which damages the body is a denial of 'the holy People of God, a People whose existence is defined by God's action in Christ' (p. 92).

In 2 Corinthians 4:7 - 5:19, Paul shows that the fact that Christ died for all gives the motivation to live for others. Paul's apostleship is to be judged by the same criterion, rather than ecstatic experiences (2.5:13), Israelite lineage (2.11:22) or letters of recommendation (2.3:1). Through Christ's death, all believers become the new creation which determines Christian behaviour. This new behaviour distinguishes Paul's 'realized eschatology from that of his opponents, who are concerned only with manifestation of the power associated with the advent of the new age' (p. 155).

2 Corinthians 10 - 13 begins with Paul's description of his alleged inferiority. Paul is competing with his opponents for the allegiance of the Corinthians. The section is laden with rhetorical flourishes, with parody being the most prominent form of irony employed.

Initially, Pickett's argument seems unpersuasive, partly because Pickett seems to minimise the theological significance of the cross. But by the end of the book, Pickett has made his case, illuminating not only the social significance of the death but giving it a far more comprehensive theological significance as well.

Pickett shows how important the corporate notion of salvation really is. Christian behaviour in the NT is no mere add-on to the doctrine of justification by faith. Rather, Christian behaviour which challenges the power structures of our society and requires a life of 'weakness' is rooted and grounded in the cross of Christ. The book is also a salutary reminder to modern-day Christians who may be tempted to look for manifestation of power in outward display, that support from Paul for such a search is very slender indeed.

This is a good, even important, book. Pauline students will find it particularly important in three areas: first, the identity of Paul's Corinthian opponents; second, the issue of 'spiritual gifts'; third, Paul's apostleship. No doubt Pickett will be disappointed by the unfortunate number of typographical errors which crept into the published version but he should be well satisfied with the persuasiveness of the argument.

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Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Gordon D Fee

Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995, 543 pp.

This commentary is indeed what one has come to expect from as fine a NT scholar as Gordon Fee - a first rate piece of research, painstaking attention to detail, passionate argumentation, thorough coverage of most all of the exegetical and theological issues the text raises, sensitivity to issues of how the letter fits into the larger Pauline corpus, a work written with a pastor's heart and with pastoral tasks in mind. I suspect that if Paul himself could

read this work he would be pleased with both its spirit and substance at point after point, for it often gets at the heart of the matter, and seldom fails to grasp the nettle when there is a thorny issue involved. Furthermore, the readers of *Themelios* will find it a most congenial work for it takes traditional or 'evangelical' positions on the authorship (Pauline), date (about 62), provenance (Rome), and integrity of the letter. This is not a work that will make conservative pastors or Bible students wonder or worry about what their scholarly evangelical mentors are up to. It is in most respects a good old-fashioned commentary, rightly more concerned with what is true than what is new, with what is probably than what is possible. Having said all this, a few more detailed comments, both by way of critique and of commendation are in order.

Commenting on books of the NT has changed somewhat over the last two decades, especially in response to the increasing Biblical illiteracy of both the church and the world, and the increasing lack of knowledge of or facility with the biblical languages among both seminary students and pastors. The recent formatting changes in the NICNT commentary series reflect these trends in that there has been a concentrated effort to leave technical discussion (and use of the languages) to the footnotes so the text will be more user-friendly for a wider audience. Some effort has also been made to change the design of the NICNT series so that the commentaries will lie open on one's desk while being used. The former change has been much more successfully implemented than the later *cf.* Fee's earlier volume on 1 Corinthians to this one), to judge from this writer's own copy of Fee's *Philippians* which continues to

close itself except when opened in the very middle.

Fee's basic view is that Philippians, unlike other Pauline letters except 1 Thessalonians, is an example of a hortatory friendship letter. That the letter involves exhortation to Philippians, no one would dispute, but whether it matches up well with the 'friendship' letter conventions may be doubted. As I have pointed out in my own Philippians commentary (*Friendship and Finances in Philippi*, Trinity Press, 1994, pp. 118–21), the Greek term for friends, *philia*, is lacking in this letter, and instead what we have is family language about 'brothers' 'slaves' and the like. Secondly, there are clear markers in the text that Paul does not view his relationships with the Philippians as one involving absolute parity. His call to his converts to follow the examples of himself, his co-workers, and of course Christ suggests some sort of hierarchical relationship, with Paul being the spiritual mentor or parent of the Philippians. Partnership, not absolute parity in a 'friendship' relationship, is what the letter suggests.

Fee is quite right to doubt that there are 'opponents' that are currently vexing the Philippians, if by opponents one means Judaizers such as caused trouble in Galatia, or other sorts of Jewish or Christian troublemakers. As Fee says, the general problems caused by living in a Roman colony sworn to recognise the Emperor (Nero) as Lord and Saviour can easily account for any suffering the Philippians may have encountered, without conjuring up Christian or Jewish opponents to plague the Philippians at the time this letter was written. On the other hand, Fee tends to underplay the internal tensions that existed in the Philippian congregations.

It is not to the point to stress that Paul has cordial relationships with the recipients of this letter. This is true enough, but the letter indicates that differences and rivalries of some sort existed *between* members of the Philippian congregation (cf. 4:1-2). Clearly the problems have not reached Corinthian proportions, but they are not minimal as Philippians 1 and 4 make especially clear. What Paul is doing in Philippians is presenting a deliberative argument for concord in the community, not merely writing a hortatory friendship letter. This latter genre classification does not satisfactorily account for the forms of persuasions we find in this letter, and the reason the arguments are pursued in the manner they are.

Fee's arguments for the Roman (and so later) provenances are strong ones, and his critiques of the Caesarean and Ephesian hypotheses are telling. The best explanation of the references to the whole Praetorium and Caesar's household in Philippians remain that Paul is under house arrest in Rome. Equally telling is his critique of various partition theories which fail to note the various themes and motifs and development of arguments which tie this whole letter together. Further, his exposition of Euodia and Syntyche (cf. pp. 388-92) is very helpful, for these two women were indeed Paul's co-workers, leaders in the congregation in Philippi. This is why Paul must address their disagreements directly, for they were setting the opposite sort of example to that which Paul had in mind. Rivalries and disputes must be dealt with if concord was to exist in the Philippian congregation.

Fee is never reluctant to swim up stream if he is convinced a view

is wrong-headed or misguided. He devotes a special section to the proposal that what we have in Philippians 2:6-11 is not a hymn but merely exalted prose that Paul has penned (see pp. 40-46 for a summary). What is refreshing about this argument is that Fee is right that whatever his sources, Paul owns and adapts all that he borrows, such that the material in its present form is 'Pauline' material, serving the larger purposes of his epistle. It is not some hymnic meteorite that fell from the sky landing awkwardly where we find it. What is not convincing about Fee's argument is that we may neglect the obvious parallels between this hymnic piece and other similar pieces in John 1, Hebrews 1, and Colossians 1 *all of which are indebted to what was said in early Judaism about personified Wisdom*. In particular the V pattern (pre-existence, earthly existence, return to Heaven) is clearly documented in earlier poetic Wisdom material, and in some ways Philippians 2 is the clearest example of this indebtedness (cf. my *Jesus the Sage* on the hymns). Fee urges on us an either-or (either it's a pre-Pauline hymn or it's Pauline), when in reality it is a situation of both-and: 1) yes this material was likely part of an early Christian hymn before Paul ever wrote this letter; 2) no, this does not mean that we may neglect the way Paul has adopted and adapted this material, making it his own and making it serve the larger rhetorical and ethical purposes of this letter (in particular the appeal to follow good examples).

In addition to the critiques listed above, we may add that more attention needed to be given to the rhetorical character and direction of Paul's arguments (e.g. 1. 27-30 is the basic thesis statement [*propositio*] of the whole letter, not the first of various

arguments). Fee is basically sceptical about applying the various parts of a rhetorical speech to the letter as a whole, but these surely go a good deal further in explaining the letter than the hortatory friendship model.

None of the criticisms listed about is meant to detract from my basic judgement offered earlier in this review, that this is a first rate commentary, indeed the best detailed commentary on the Greek text currently available. No one commentary can be all things to all persons, but this one should serve many persons and purposes well for a long time to come.

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Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments

Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (eds)
Downers Grove/Leicester,
Intervarsity Press, 1997,
1280 pp., \$39.95/£32.99

This is the third contribution to a series from Inter Varsity and is a welcome addition to the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, and the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. The latest *Dictionary* departs from the other dictionaries in two important respects. First, it covers all the NT documents not covered by the other two. Second the articles trace the development of NT ideas into documents that are outside the NT, including the Apostolic Fathers and early NT apocrypha. For example, as well as an article on 'Revelation, Book of,' there are essays on 'Hermas, Shepherd of,' and 'Peter, Gospel of.' The editors state that the reason for going beyond the traditional canon of the NT is to trace the development of the Christian message from Paul's letters and the

Gospels into the rest of the NT and further into early literature to about AD 150. The *Dictionary* is intended for scholars, preachers and students.

Some of the helpful features can be seen in the first article, 'Abraham'. There are references to other NT passages, including references to Abraham in Paul's letters. There are also references to the Scriptures of Israel and roughly contemporary works, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus and Philo. There are additional references to articles in the other two *Dictionaries* as well as in this dictionary itself. Also helpful are articles on related topics but not necessarily limited to one document, such as 'Women in the Early Church'. Readers of *Themelios* will doubtless be familiar with many of the contributors, such as I. Howard Marshall and Graham N. Stanton. It is impossible in this short space to do justice to the diverse topics and essays. Instead, I will comment on a few that hopefully represent adequately the high quality of the articles in general.

The *Dictionary's* articles show knowledge of recent trends in NT scholarship. The recent interest in intertextuality is seen in 'Intertextuality in Early Christian Literature' by W.B. Swartley. He begins by briefly enumerating the ways in which the Scriptures of Israel influenced the later NT and early second-century documents. Swartley lists seven ways NT and other early Christian writers used the Scriptures of Israel intertextually, though it may be noted that he does not deal with questions surrounding current debate over what intertextually signifies. Like many essays which cut across all this literature, Swartley describes the intertextual use of the Scriptures of Israel in Acts, Hebrews, each General

Epistle, Revelation and the Apostolic Fathers separately. Swartley points to trends, such as the use of 'OT personages and the stories by which they are remembered' as examples for believers. This is seen as an emerging tendency in Hebrews and the General Epistles. The essay's bibliography is quite helpful and up-to-date. This article illustrates the Dictionary's interaction with recent trends in NT studies. Besides this essay, there are separate essays on the OT in Acts, Hebrews, General Epistles, Revelation and the Apostolic fathers.

Several essays focus on the historical and cultural milieu of the later NT and beyond, such as the essay on 'Healing, Illness' by P.H. Davids. He explores accounts of healing in the ancient world, in the NT and in the Apostolic Fathers. In addition to healing and illness, Davids looks at the metaphorical use of healing language as it develops from the later NT into the post-apostolic period.

The same attention to recent trends in scholarship can be seen in essays of specific books. For example, the article on 'First Peter' by J.R. Michaels shows how social-scientific analysis can contribute to our understanding of biblical texts. Likewise, the essay on the 'Acts of the Apostles' by J.B. Green highlights the continuing debate over the genre of Acts and the enterprise of historiography in both ancient and modern times. In addition to separate essays on topics like 'Narrative Criticism' and 'Rhetoric, Rhetorical Criticism', readers will find frequent mention of these approaches in essays on NT texts such as those mentioned above. Since essays on the same methods appear in the companion volumes, it will be valuable for readers to compare them when studying a given method.

While not wanting to detract from this valuable reference tool, some will wonder about its 'Evangelical' stance in light of the denial of the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter (Richard Bauckham, '2 Peter') or James D.G. Dunn's argument in 'Pseudepigraphy', for accepting the presence of pseudepigraphy in the NT. Overall, however, all users of this reference work will find it a valuable addition to their libraries, perhaps even more so than the earlier dictionaries, for finding up-to-date material on Paul is easy, but not so the letters of Jude or James. This will also be helpful for readers who have no background in the Apostolic Fathers and other early, post-NT literature.

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Till Jesus Comes: Origins of Christian Apocalyptic Expectation

Charles L. Holman
Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 1996,
xlii+181 pp.

According to the publicity blurbs on the back of this book, it is a 'timely' and 'balanced' study, as well as a 'voice of sober and sound biblical proportions'. In it, Holman seeks to discover the Jewish roots of the NT apocalyptic tension between fulfilment and delay, especially as evidenced in three texts: 2 Thessalonians 2; the Synoptic apocalypse (Mark 13 and parallels); and the book of Revelation. In tracing the dual traditions of fulfilment and delay in the OT prophetic and apocalyptic traditions, as well as Jewish intertestamental literature, Holman, rather unsurprisingly, finds evidence of the same tension in Jewish apocalypticism as in later Christian apocalyptic, albeit with significant changes in Christian usage as a result of the Christ event.

What is difficult to understand is how this book can be described as either 'timely' or 'balanced' – the approach almost completely ignores the Greco-Roman background of either Jewish or NT apocalyptic or eschatological expectations, choosing instead to concentrate entirely on Jewish backgrounds. Although the work done on the hellenisation of Judaism over the past century by figures such as Bickerman, Tcherikover, and Hengel has made it virtually impossible to consider any aspect of either Judaism or Christianity from the Greco-Roman period without paying close attention to Hellenism and its extensive influences, Holman manages to side-step most of the crucial issues in this area (his sole concession to this research being the citation of Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism* on a few occasions). As a result, the rather unsurprising contention that the background of the tension within NT apocalypticism is Jewish apocalyptic does little to add to the ongoing discussion of either Jewish or Christian apocalyptic. Although the concentration in NT studies has swung from Hellenistic influences to Jewish backgrounds, the recent work in the area has shown that either approach is too simplistic – one cannot speak of Judaism in this period as anything but Hellenistic. When discussing the Jewish backgrounds and roots of early Christianity, one must take into account both the previous hellenisation of Judaism during the intertestamental period, and the ongoing hellenisation of the whole Greco-Roman world. Had it taken this into account, this study would have had a chance to make a significant contribution to the field.

The strangest aspect of this book, however, is its concern with the expected millenarianism of the

upcoming millennium, and the way in which it tries, somewhat unconvincingly, to relate OT apocalyptic expectations, mediated through the NT, to this phenomenon. This is likely what elicited the appellation of 'a voice of sound and biblical proportions', but it seems that, even with the shortcomings discussed above, this book would have been much stronger without discussion of this concern.

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The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics

Richard B Hays

Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996,
524 pp., pb., £17.95.

The Moral Vision of the New Testament is surely destined to be the yardstick against which future work on NT ethics will be measured. Richard Hays has succeeded in providing a set of parameters in which ethics can be discussed in a meaningful way. The goal of the book is 'to articulate as clearly as possible a framework within which we might pursue NT ethics as a normative theological discipline: the goal of the inquiry will be to clarify how the church can read Scripture in a faithful and disciplined manner so that Scripture might come to shape the life of the church' (p 3).

As a result of which Hays spends the first 185 pages systematically gleaning insights for his ethical framework from the different traditions contained within the NT (Paul, John, Matthew, Luke-Acts, the historical Jesus, and apocalyptic). This process Hays calls the descriptive task of NT Ethics, that is to say, reading

the text carefully. The other three components of this task are: the synthetic task (placing the text in its canonical context); the hermeneutical task (relating the text to our situation); and the pragmatic task (living the task). This is surely an enlightened piece of work, although it appears that in the first 185 pages, Hays successfully manages the first part of his task (reading the text) to the neglect of the second part (placing the text in its canonical context).

After reading the text, Hays attempts to interpret the NT texts as the text (i.e., as part of the canon). He does so fully aware of the perils of becoming 'a late twentieth-century Diatessaron' (p. 193). Thus he suggests that each text and consequently each contemporary situation should be looked at through three focal images (Community, Cross, and New Creation). In perhaps the most exciting section of the book, these are then applied to real ethical situations (to violence, divorce and re-marriage, homosexuality, ethnic conflict, and Abortion). However before that Hays examines the work of the following leading ethical theologians (Niebuhr, Barth, Yoder, Hauerwas, and Schussler Fiorenza).

In discussing these modern day ethical concerns, Hays shows himself to be a listener to contemporary society as well as to the ancient world of the biblical text. There will be much in this section that many evangelicals could find disturbing. This means that it is always worth a read particularly by evangelicals. His stripping away of texts such as Psalm 139 from the pro-life cause could cause anger, but all will marvel at Hays' demand that the church should provide materially for the unwanted baby and mother. And few will fail to be moved by his desire that the

Church should be seen to move from piety into real Christ-like compassion. His focal images of the new people of God, the suffering messiah, and the new age mean that all ethical situations are removed from the individualism which afflict all aspects of our late-modern society, even the Church.

Hays' book is not only a work of scholarly erudition, but one of challenge to Church. Hays recognises, as we ought to, that the laws of God are primarily meant for the people of God. In that Hays could well have begun to move beyond the scholarly into the prophetic. This would indeed make the book worth buying, and I will be surprised if all do not see this as the text book for NT ethics in the early decades of the 21st Century.

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Jesus and the Holy City, New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem

P.W.L. Walker

Grand Rapids, Eerdmans,
1996, 326 pp.

I was speaking with a group of students recently about the social upheaval and political complexities of the 1960s and how these elements gave shape to much of the theological writing that was being done in that era. Some eschatology, I argued, such as that penned by writers like Hal Lindsey, could be viewed as a by product of that upheaval, that social dislocation and despair that many of us remember so well. I happened to refer to the Vietnam War and one student remarked 'Was Vietnam in the late 60s?'

And then it dawned on me. Students who do not have a strong historical consciousness of what was happening in the 1960s can

hardly interpret the cultural forces at work in that decade. I provided a sampling of music – Eric Burdon and the Animals' 1968 song, 'Sky Pilot' – and none of them figured out that it described Southeast Asian jungle warfare. In another class I have had students watch the epoch-making film 'Apocalypse Now' and compare it with Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* in order to help them 'break in' to this era.

It is an axiom of historical study that in order to unlock the mysteries of a different time and place, the scholar must be able to read the cultural symbols at work there. In order to understand the 1960s, these scholars will have to know arcane items like: Jimmy Hendrix, The Fall of Saigon, bell bottoms, The Beatles, peace symbols, and Woodstock. Anyone interpreting the decade without at least a cursory knowledge of these things will never succeed.

Peter Walker has written a landmark book that is utterly crucial if anyone wishes to understand the first century, Jewish consciousness, and NT theology. In its pages, his volume is holding a key that many of us never knew existed. One theme was so completely embedded in the consciousness of Jew and Christian alike that it was impossible for them to think theologically without including it in their programme. The theme is Jerusalem and its temple. This glorious city was the religious and national pride of Judaism. Rebuilt by Herod the Great, it was celebrated as a marvel not simply of architecture but of spiritual confidence. It confirmed Israel's election before God and Israel's confidence in history. But then in AD 70 an unimaginable catastrophe occurred. In a prolonged war, Roman troops destroyed the city and its temple just as the Babylonians had done in 588 BC.

Did the early Christians reflect on the spiritual significance of this city and this war? Did they reinterpret Judaism's nationalistic claim over the city? *Could anyone living in the 60s and 70s not think about Jerusalem and its fate?* Walker combs the NT with painstaking detail and uncovers the countless times the NT alludes to the city and the Temple. Mark wrote his gospel in the late 60s and understood that the coming of Jesus the Messiah carried theological implications for the temple and its city. And the demise of that temple was mysteriously linked to the death of God's Son on the cross. For instance, Mark's use of the parable of the tenants and the vineyard (12:1-9) is a crucial signal to us about the fate of the city and the meaning of Jesus' death.

Walker believes that Matthew may be writing just after the war of 70 and he now must interpret the catastrophe of the first century. Jesus' rejection parallels Jeremiah's rejection – and both led to Jerusalem's destruction. As with Jeremiah, Jesus predicts how the temple will be abandoned (23:38), desecrated (24:15), and destroyed (24:2) using imagery inspired by the Babylonian captivity. The vineyard parable gains specificity now as we learn how the city will be destroyed and given to others (21.40ff). But the resolution, the hope for Judaism is not to be found in rebuilt stones or geography: Jesus has replaced Jerusalem as the locus of God's presence – Jesus is the place where God is now with us, he is the true embodiment of Israel.

Luke's two volumes exhibit the same theological drama: God has moved toward Jerusalem with redemption, Jesus' rejection spells judgement on the city, and this then has opened the way for ministry 'to the ends of the earth'. Luke records four 'oracles' of Jesus

(13:32-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-24; 23:27-31) which lay out God's political agenda for the city and echo the sentiments of Jeremiah: when Jesus came to Jerusalem it should have been the city's finest hour but it turned into the city's greatest tragedy, Jesus would have surrounded the city as a hen surrounds its young, but instead Jerusalem will be surrounded by Roman armies. Here Jesus gives his most explicit predictions of the Roman siege and sees in it a divine act of judgement. The Book of Acts underscores how Jerusalem is the place from which God moves (a missionary, centrifugal outlook) rather than a place to which he moves, which was the currency of the day (with Judaism's pilgrimages). The true function of the city – the dwelling place of God – now is fulfilled by the early church, which experiences in the Spirit the reality which Jerusalem had only hoped to attain.

Further theological details are supplied by John's Gospel (in which Jesus is presented as replacing the Temple completely and satisfying all of the requirements of the Jewish festivals) and Hebrews (where Jesus bring superior priestly functions and Christians are urged to 'leave the camp,' 13:13*f.*, no longer showing allegiance to the Temple and Jerusalem). But it is in Paul perhaps where the most thoroughgoing and sophisticated appreciation for this theological realignment takes place. Paul sees Jerusalem in captivity 'with her children' (Gal. 4:25*f.*) and feels deep within his life the two-way movement of every Jewish-Christian: both to the city (with its historic, spiritual roots) and away from the city (since this is the new movement of God). The three concentric realities of Judaism (land, Jerusalem, Temple) are completely redefined and recast in light of Christ's arrival in history.

The church is the new Israel and Christians now bear the spiritual hallmarks of the Temple (1 Cor. 3:16*ff.*; 6:9-29). Even Jerusalem is redefined in Paul and emptied of its revelatory and salvific place known in Judaism.

Perhaps the most compelling chapters come at the end of the book. Walker ties up these themes and shows that Jerusalem is not an 'accidental backdrop' for the story of the ministry and passion of Jesus. A reinterpretation of Jerusalem lies at the root of Jesus' self-consciousness. As a prophet and critic, he came to the city to announce God's expectations – and he offered a solution for its coming doom. As a prophet he suffered in his own body a foretaste of that very judgement which he had pronounced upon Jerusalem itself (p. 288). He acted out the destruction that was coming for the city so that those inside might see a way to avoid it.

The NT is thus offering a new theology of Jerusalem and the 'holy land'. And, claims Walker, this insight is absolutely basic to any biblical theology. The locus of God's work is not localized in holy land, it is localized initially in God's Son and then in the people of God who bear the Spirit of God.

If Walker's treatment has any shortcoming, it is that its final chapters need to press us to think pastorally and practically (politically perhaps?) about the implications of this theology. If it is true that the NT is rethinking critical territorial dimensions in Judaism, then we should today as well. In today's Middle East, western Christians are often confused thinking that they have a spiritual obligation to participate in political gambits by modern Israel to wrest control of Jerusalem from Palestinian Arabs. Walker has made a compelling and devastating

argument that Jesus and his followers (Paul, Matthew, Luke and others) would have nothing to do with such schemes. Jesus redefined holy space in his incarnation and he called his followers to 'go out' from the city and not see it as the theological centre of their universe.

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Cities of the Biblical World

LaMoine F. DeVries

Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997,
398 pp. hb.

The author helpfully explains the aim and readership of his book in the Preface: it is 'intended for beginning students', and is designed 'to introduce students of the Bible to the archaeology, geography, and history of several important sites of the OT and NT worlds' (p. xv). The book is divided into OT (pp. 1-238) and NT (pp. 239-385) sections, each subdivided geographically. This arrangement means that Damascus, Jerusalem, Jericho and Samaria feature in both sections, with some repetition. The list of sites is not confined to ones mentioned in the Bible: it includes (e.g.) Ebla, Mari, Ugarit and Hattusas. A total of 49 'cities' are dealt with, though the term is used loosely to include the tiny Iron Age village at et-Tell, Herod's winter palace at Jericho, the fortress of Masada and the enigmatic settlement at Qumran. Each region also has its own introductory chapter.

The 'city' chapters generally give a history of the site as revealed by excavations, a summary of biblical references where appropriate, a discussion of significant archaeological finds, and a bibliography. For some sites we are also given a brief history of

excavations, explaining who dug when, and their contribution to our knowledge of the place. The bibliographies contain works intended for the beginner; books listed are often introductory works and the most frequently cited journals are *Biblical Archaeologist* and *Biblical Archaeology Review*, but there are also references to works which will take readers a little further into the subject.

The text is always readable and helpful, but not always up-to-date. DeVries tends to give the opinion of a site's original excavator without giving weight to subsequent modifications. For example, in the case of the Iron Age village at et-Tell (assumed to be Ai), we are given Callaway's opinion that it was settled around 1220 BC, with a 'wave of newcomers' beginning a second phase of settlement around 1125 BC; this second phase is supposed to mark the arrival of the Israelites (Joshua 7 - 8). No mention is made of Finkelstein's 1988 revision of this view; namely, that the village was not settled until c. 1150 BC (after centuries without any occupation of the site), and that there is no good reason to attribute the second phase to newcomers. Finkelstein's discussion does appear in the bibliography, but there is no hint in DeVries's text that Callaway's dates have ever been questioned.

But the book's greatest weakness is its illustrations - or lack of them. Apart from the maps there are only black-and-white photos. The distribution of these is patchy (e.g. three for Qumran; only one for NT Jerusalem - and mostly showing the city of David!), and they are often small, dark and uninformative. There are no plans or reconstructions (e.g. of the olive-oil complex at Ekron, or of the city gate at Lachish, or of the massive arched stairway leading to the Temple Mount in Herod's

Jerusalem, or of the simple houses of Capernaum), nothing, in short, to give us a feel for what it was like to be an inhabitant of these ancient cities. With the wealth of illustrative techniques now available, this is as a lost opportunity to be lamented.

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Reading the Apostolic Fathers

Clayton N Jefford,
Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996,
192 pp., pb.

'How should churches conduct their worship services? What should new converts be taught about Christian ethics and their duty within the fledgling community? Who has the authority to speak for the resurrected Christ in each community? Who makes the final decision when disputes arise between communities? Should Christians preserve the teachings and customs of Judaism, or should such traditions be avoided? What should a community do about Christians who have strayed from the gospel faith, but who now wish to return to the fold? Which images from the OT are most acceptable as prophecy for the new Christian faith? What does it mean to be a Christian?' (p. 6) With these questions Clayton Jefford aims to show what the early Christian texts, known today as 'the Apostolic Fathers', were about.

A good attempt is made in each chapter to set out and answer the introductory issues (genre, authorship, date, location, audience, reason for being written, primary traits of the text, special images, the use of Scripture and then an outline of contents) of nine texts: the Letter of Barnabas, the

Didache, the Letters of Ignatius, the Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, both letters of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Letter to Diognetus. The requirement of answering each of these points makes for clarity but also (at times) dullness. The author supplies useful background details and some judicious judgements: (e.g.) the oldest complete copy of 'Barnabas' is in the *Codex Sinaiticus* along with Hermas. This association tells us something about how each of these writings was regarded. Connections are also made, e.g., the Jewish 'two ways' tradition is present in the Epistle of Barnabas 18 - 20 as in Didache 1 - 6; Clement of Alexandria quoted *Barnabas* seven times and maybe wrote a commentary on it. (The content of *Barnabas* seemed authentic: all that seems to exclude it from the NT canon was the fact that it was not written by an apostle.) All this shows us *that* the ancient text was found interesting and in *what* its writer was interested, but does not really show us *how* it is interesting.

Jefford gives the theology of the writings rather a minor role; even when, as notably in the case of Ignatius of Antioch (d. 110), there are some very interesting developments. Originally (since the NT does not go into detail), 'the purpose of the baptism of Jesus was 'to purify the water' (Ignatius, *Ephesians* 18:2; although Lightfoot in his edition of the text with translation has (p. 92): 'He was born and was baptised in order that *by his suffering* he might cleanse the water'.) The Eucharist must be directed by the bishop or one with his approval and is to be regarded as the actual flesh. (*Smyrneans* 7.1/6:2; Lightfoot, 112.)

Lastly, the bibliography, not only in the sense of 'further reading' but also in the sense of 'works consulted', seems strictly Anglophone and not always up to date. Overall, such a 'literary' approach to these texts, quite apart from involving a treatment of the texts according to the ancient canons of literary criticism – suffers in a way that many such collections of ancient/early church 'documents' do, from being put together without any real explanation of why they belong together. Nor are we told why they are called 'the Apostolic Fathers' other than mention made that J.B. Cotelier (in 1672) thought they all shared a common feature of having authors who *knew* the apostles. The concentration on the links between the texts themselves means that, without much reference to history and life of the Church at that time (admittedly hard to reconstruct), one is left far from a sense that it is at all important to let these writings speak to us as the record of once-living voices.

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Biblical Interpretation Past and Present

G.L. Bray
Leicester, Apollos, 1996,
608 pp., hb., £24.99

A quotation on the dustcover of this book has a reviewer claiming that Gerald Bray's survey of two thousand years of biblical interpretation has no obvious rival. Don't be put off – the claim is not an exaggeration. One would have to trawl very far out indeed to find anything in the subject area to match this impressive and readable work. The author is best known for his ease in Christian doctrine, but this work shows him

to be perfectly comfortable and erudite in OT and NT studies as well as hermeneutical issues which straddle both. Don't use the book for just one purpose! It is an excellent primer into the historical background and main issues of OT and NT studies in general. But primarily it uses such background to chart the twists and turns of biblical interpretation from the earliest writers up to more recent time.

The method of the book could be a disaster in less able hands, but here it is a triumph. Each section opens with a summary in advance, indicating its significance. Then follows a crisp presentation of the essential facts for the period in mind, cameos of key figures and a round-up of the key issues arising. Each section rounds off with a case-study for the period, focusing upon a key biblical book. The beauty of the scheme is that the reader can dip independently into any one of these sections without having to read all of them. We'll overlook the fact that it is a gift to the lazy student mugging up for exams! It is a clever idea, well executed, separating out different kinds of material for different purposes, and it seems to work without undue repetition.

There are many merits, and all of them substantial. Even the highly informed reader will find stimulating insights, bonus details (in the cameos especially), a strong faith and an application to Christian life and witness. The style is easy, and a feeling of enthusiasm runs through every section. No period phases the author. He takes on, with consistent competence, the patristic, medieval, renaissance, reformation and modern periods. He stays with each just long enough to maintain interest and capture key issues before moving on.

There are flaws. But not many. Although there are some gracious, and needed, clarifications out of fairness to feminist theologies, Gerald Bray sometimes seems too dismissive of alternative, less traditional, readings of vexed passages on gender equality. Surely a tiny hint of suspicion of two thousand years of male interpretation could be tolerated without shaking any foundations! Again, Biblical Studies is now a discipline of fast-changing literature, and the bibliographies sometimes betray a slight datedness by just a few years – perhaps the time it can take to progress a manuscript through several readers to publication.

But no-one should be put off by these cavils. We have here a first-class work, just the thing to put into the hands of someone approaching the subject for the first time. But it is also a valuable resource book to keep. You will be dipping into it for a long time. And it is worth every penny.

Roy Kearsley

Glasgow Bible College

Calvin: The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought 2

A.N.S. Lane (ed.) translated by G.I. Davies
Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker/Paternoster, 1996,
£19.99.

This is a clear and lively translation (with good, full notes) of a full-blooded and occasionally long-winded Calvinist response to Albert Pighius' *Ten Books on Human Free Choice and Divine Grace* (1542). As the editor informs us Pighius, far from being consistently doctrinaire as a Catholic, held to 'a novel theory of

original sin according to which the only effects of the fall of Adam were the introduction of death and the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to all humanity. There was not talk of the corruption of human nature as a result of the fall. The lust that human beings experience derives from nature as created and was experienced by Adam before the fall' (p. xvii).

Roman Catholic writers like Pighius often tried to escape the charge of 'Pelagianism' by showing how much 'grace alone' meant to them; this however did not exclude an insistence on free will such as found in the earlier (and, Pighius implied, better) Augustine. Calvin counters by showing that even the earlier Augustine wanted to preserve free will as having originally existed in Adam before the fall, *only* so that humans would not be able to blame God or the devil for their sinning. As for the various Greek fathers, their views are often idiosyncratic. Anyway, Calvin like a good ecumenist, insists that a Church Council, especially Orange (p. 529) is of more weight than the opinions of individual fathers. As Orange held: 'it is by the work of the Holy Spirit in us that we are caused to want cleansing'.

With Luther, Calvin contends that the sole function of the law is to point to our need for grace. Yet, modifying Luther (to whose debate with Erasmus surprisingly little account is made), Calvin acknowledges that good works are valuable and please God, but only because God has deigned to be pleased with them, not because of any actual worth inhering in them.

Calvin does make reference to his reforming predecessor at the beginning of Book Two. He loves to employ the same beloved image from the prophets: Isaiah 10 – 'Why does the axe boast?' So, God is in control not only of the natural

world 'but also governs the hearts of men, bends their wills this way and that in accordance with his choice, and is the director of their actions, so that they in the end do nothing which he has not decreed, whatever they might try to do' (p. 38). This teaching has the purpose of making the believer rest free from anxiety in the omnipotence of God. God is a wonderful craftsman who uses bad tools well (p. 40).

The humanist training gave Calvin the confidence to discount the authenticity of the Ps-Clementine *Recognitions*: they are the 'imaginings of some stupid monk'. Most fathers, he argues (tendentiously!) refer to the *pre-fall* capacity when they wrote that humans were created with free will, in the sense of a will that could have chosen not to sin. If someone is, like Paul of Romans 7, only *half-free*, he could hardly have been free *before* his conversion. Calvin regretfully admits that the early church, at least in part, did indeed over-exalt free will; yet this was because God had not yet brought the Church to exercise its collective mind on the matter. A spur to focus on the issue came through the writings of Augustine, who Calvin is sure is on his side. Our powerlessness against sin is part of the punishment for freely and deliberately sinning in *Adam*. However, although our sinning is necessary, it is also *voluntary* because we enjoy it and use that volitional part of us to do it: it is not, as Pighius thinks, only a problem of the flesh; naturally, argues Calvin, we *want* to sin; Pighius is closer to the Platonic idea that everyone desires 'the good'. The 'label' Manichean which Pighius uses against him is exactly what Augustine himself was accused of by the Pelagians. Pighius is thus an enemy of grace hiding behind the praise of

nature (as Augustine had said in his *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianas* 2.1.1.)

The editor helpfully directs us to Calvin's shrewd use of Aristotle, such as the notion of humanity's 'weakness of will' (*akrasia*). Evil is, to speak technically, an 'accident', like 'happiness' or sadness - our humanity is not removed when we cease to be good. This can be seen also in Calvin's employment of the Thomist *habitus*-concept which the editor explains: 'What is changed in conversion is not the faculty or substance of willing, nor merely the actions of the will. It is, rather, something in between, the quality of "habit" (Latin, *habitus*) of the will'. Sometimes we might think that Calvin in speaking of the Fall was thinking in terms of choices earlier in each person's life, by analogy with a *sick person* (who *may have brought* illness on himself by lifestyle, or, following Aristotle: 'Just as when someone has thrown a stone, he can no longer take it back, but it was in his power either to hold on to it or to throw it' (*Nic. Ethics* 3.5). This is not Calvin's strongest analogy: surely (one might protest) something of Adam threw/made us throw. Calvin does not really come close to resolving the antimony; rather, he reinforces its tension.

Yet it seems clear that Calvin was on strong ground when interpreting Paul's 'flesh' concept as more 'a deliberate desire which is opposed to the Spirit' than as a synonym for 'the body' (p. 180). He sees the 'freedom of God' as tied to the notion of preventent grace which make it possible for obedience - for this happens by God's effecting conversion, followed by continuing of it. (Calvinists were always more realistic about the paucity of the saved - not that many showed interest in God because they did not receive a turn-around

experience.) 'But God does not want to be extolled as generous (i.e., in giving the possibility of salvation to all) in such a way that it ceases to be free. Moreover its freedom resides in the fact that he bestows it on those whom he will'. He argues that Pighius' attempt to hold both divine grace and human freedom in tension is self-contradictory. Simply, the whole of Scripture '(w)hen it urges us to devotion, to the fear of God, and to holiness of life, it teaches us that we can attain all those things only if it has been granted to us by God' (p. 200).

The editor, translator, commissioning editor (R. Muller) and publisher are to be congratulated for making available at reasonable cost this important part of the Church's collective mind.

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John Locke and the Eighteenth Century Divines

Alan Sell
University of Wales Press, Cardiff,
1997, 444 pp., hb.

Locke's big idea was that no-one is born with innate ideas about the world – let alone those which might supply knowledge of God. This epistemology was critiqued by those coming in his wake on the grounds that there are (as Locke admitted) *some* principles which are innate – e.g. the idea of pleasure and pain and that Locke's was the high road to scepticism. 'Locke appeared to rest morality on nothing more than custom and the praise and blame apportioned in the light of it' (p. 19). By way of reaction, Tyrrell wanted to know how anyone could come to know God through the information we gather through the senses; could

the spiritual really come forth from the material? In fact Norris thought that through mental images things in the world did not cause but stimulated ideas in the mind. Locke had a lot to answer for in getting people to think that even ordinary people lived 'inside their heads'. What has come to be known as 'foundationalism' means that in getting to know God we have faith in the resurrection of Jesus built on top of the knowledge ideas of existence, duration, knowledge, power, pleasure and happiness, enlarged to God-sized infinity. This is not Thomist (reason's knowledge superseded by faith's grasp of revelation) but rather revelation is new data for Reason to assess: 'natural Reason enlarged by a new set of Discoveries communicated by GOD immediately, which Reason vouchsafes the truth of.' We use reason to decide what could count as revelation; whereas according to Jonathan Edwards, reason is only to defend and explain revelation, not to judge it. Locke's point seems to have been that it is spiritual suicide to partition off a bit of our knowledge which is revealed and spiritual from the common sense which governs the rest of our life.

Locke was of course, pre-Romantic; knowledge as personal encounter was not considered. Thus faith was, for Locke, an intellectual assent to propositions our reason could not arrive at. Locke with his alarming tendency to paraphrase Scripture, saw Scriptural support for natural theology providing a certain amount of what can be known about God from Romans 1:17 ('for God's righteous character has been revealed'). However, 'Locke's insistence on the place of revelation ... which places him at a distance from all who contended that Christianity was simply a republication of the religion of

nature' (p. 207); especially in ethics – the gospel, not Natural, Law was looked to.

Sell has a tendency to overplay Locke's Calvinist inheritance; there is perhaps a lapsed Calvinism as there was in Grotius (and there would be markedly in Hume). The fact that we are born like blank sheets meant for Locke that we are not represented by Adam in the sense that what he did fixes our destiny (there was a dislike of believing in such a thing as 'human substance' anyway); Locke softened the consequences of the noetic fall – Romans 1:28 read as 'given over to an unsearching and unjudicious (not 'reprobate') mind'; education is heavily relied on as a *panacea*, to the extent that Sell concludes that Locke was ignorant of the role of the Holy Spirit. The problem lies not in our reason or will but in our appetites (our reason should overwhelm our appetites when it is given the chance to consider whether a certain course of action will be reckoned punishable or meritorious at the Last Judgement). One can draw the Trinity from the Bible (Locke not wholly Arian) but it is not explicitly there (not wholly orthodox).

Perhaps Locke is best known for his belief in toleration of belief and worship unless there was harm such as treason lurking behind these: 'in view of the limitations of human knowledge' and the consequent impossibility of attaining absolute certainty, the toleration of differing views is right and necessary' (quoted, p. 154). It is however the buzz-words like toleration and a minimal account of Christian belief ('Jesus is the Messiah') which encouraged the likes of Toland and Tindal who went further down the slippery slope of 'rational, non-mysterious religion' in the generation following

Locke's death. For evangelicals in an age of pluralism these are issues worth pondering and debating.

To be a little critical, there is not as much interaction with the morass of Locke scholarship as one might have hoped. This can be excused of course: – it is a book about the reception of Locke (e.g. Stillingfleet in his own time, Edwards afterwards), not about Locke himself. Yet one senses a lack of depth; there are too many characters adduced as indebted to Locke for any one of them to be treated in any detailed way. Nor is there very much on how Locke is relevant for the questions and theologies of today: perhaps that is to come in Sell's next book, although some attempt is made here. One would do better to look at Wolterstorff's *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief*, or even at the early part of Stephen Williams' *Reason and Reconciliation: a window on modernity*.

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British Quaker Theology Since 1895

Martin Davie

Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997,
300 pp., hb.

This interesting book started life as a doctoral dissertation supervised by Dr Jan Womer and Dr Alister McGrath, the latter of whom provides a brief foreword. It is a clearly written piece of work which traces the development of Quaker theology from the Manchester Conference of 1895 through to the present day. The author's thesis is that liberalising elements were introduced into Quaker theology at the end of the nineteenth century which led to a slow but sure erosion of doctrinal orthodoxy. This process has culminated in the current theological diversity

('anarchy' is perhaps a more accurate, if less charitable word) which characterises the contemporary Quaker scene, where both more conservative and highly radical theologies are espoused by different members of the group.

Davie's case starts from the premise that the original theology of the Quakers was essentially orthodox, holding to what he characterises as 'core of conviction': they regarded Christ as God's supreme revelation and the Bible as the primary theological authority; they believed in Christ's divinity; they held humanity to be fallen and depraved; and they saw salvation as being through Christ alone. In the hundred years since the Manchester Conference, every single one of these five points has been subjected to vigorous criticism to the point where the once dominant conservative and evangelical voice of Quakerism is now virtually drowned out by that of the liberals.

Davie's discussion of the period is exhaustive, and his knowledge of the sources very impressive. He is stronger on description than analysis, but one of the strengths of the work is the fact that, for those unfamiliar with the territory, there is a large amount of citation from primary sources which allows readers to gain their own impression of the material being discussed.

The most interesting aspect of the account is the manner in which developments in Quakerism parallel the tendencies within mainstream Christian theology during the same timespan. This is not surprising, as Quaker theologians clearly borrowed heavily from mainstream liberal thinking. In the early days this involved the absorption of biblical criticism; in more recent times, the

views of Lampe, Macquarrie, and, most importantly, Tillich (mediated to an extent via John Robinson) have impacted upon Quaker thought with the inevitable results in terms of the undermining of traditional orthodoxy. The pattern of the change is depressingly familiar as well: the collapse of scriptural authority; the abandonment of orthodox understandings of Christ's person; the replacement of penal understandings of atonement with exemplar models; and, ultimately, rejection of the uniqueness and finality of the claims of Christianity.

My one major query concerns the essential orthodoxy of early Quakerism. The discussion of early Quakerism left me wondering why, if the Quakers were so orthodox, they had been so violently opposed at a theological level by the more mainstream Christian groups of the seventeenth century. Was it all a terrible misunderstanding? I suspect not. There are two problems with Davie's discussion: first, while he acknowledges that the 'core of conviction' is to be understood in Quakerism in a fundamentally Pelagian way which radically limited the impact of sin upon post-Fall humanity, he fails either to emphasise this fact or to bring out its implications for the development of Quaker theology; and, secondly, he highlights the fact that Quakers did not regard the Bible as God's revelation, but again fails to bring out the importance of this both in separating the early Quakers from their mainstream contemporaries and in shaping subsequent theological developments.

In fact, these two aspects of Quaker theology provide the basis for an alternative reading of the developments he outlines. In limiting the impact of sin, the Quakers started out with a

The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust: A Christian Interpretation

David P. Gushee

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994,
pb., £12.50/\$19.99.

Nearly every aspect of that horrifying and systematic attempt at obliterating the Jewish people, known as *the Holocaust*, has been studied from numerous angles. In the fifty years since then there has been some profound wrestling by Christian theologians on the implications of some active participation in this genocide by professing Christians, and of the fact that the vast majority simply stood by and permitted it. (Vast groups within Christianity, however, including most Baptists, have yet to consider the implications of the Holocaust for Christian faith and life.) About that tiny minority (far less than one percent) of Christians and other Gentiles who actively worked to rescue Jews from the Holocaust, however, almost nothing has been written from a specifically Christian viewpoint. Many Jewish scholars, who call these figures 'the righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust', have studied them and have been very puzzled by the omission of such study by Christians.

David P. Gushee fills this gap in Holocaust studies nicely with *The Righteous Gentiles of the Holocaust: A Christian Interpretation*. Gushee is all too aware of the dangers of a Christian examination of the 'righteous Gentiles', many of whom were persons of faith. It would be far too easy to identify with and celebrate these courageous souls as 'Christian heroes' without ever wrestling with the question of why there were so few of them or why so many Holocaust perpetrators believed that they were doing 'their Christian duty' in persecuting

theological framework which, in terms of epistemology, was inevitably going to be less critical of autonomous human reason and thus more open to the appropriation of secular thought. In addition, this view of human sinfulness was always going to make orthodox notions of atonement, theodicy *etc.* problematic. Then, in dividing the Bible from revelation, they set up a theology which always had a dangerously subjective foundation, as exemplified and reinforced by the 'inner light' teaching. It is thus arguable that the later developments were, if not inevitable, then highly likely on the grounds that Quaker theology really provided little ammunition for any convincing counter-attack against the assaults of modern thought. One could thus perhaps argue for a greater degree of continuity at a certain level between classic Quaker theology and its modern descendant.

There are lessons to be learned from this history which has many obvious parallels with developments within modern evangelicalism to allow for any complacency. The diversity of modern Quaker thought is clearly thought of by some (though not, I suspect, by Dr Davie) as a sign of healthy tolerance. The closing words of the book are thus a sobering reminder of what is at stake: 'The issue which British Quakers might want to consider is whether this lack of clarity is a sign of healthy open-minded pluralism, or simply of theological confusion?'

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Jews. Gushee not only avoids such moral evasion for himself, but writes in such a way as to make such evasion very difficult for his readers as well.

Gushee begins by describing the state of Holocaust studies and locating his own work within the growing body of literature on 'rescuers', the righteous Gentiles. Most of the other literature on the rescuers has been either anecdotal narratives (e.g., the stories of Corrie ten Boom and of the village of Le Chambon), or sociological or psychological studies. Gushee's study does not ignore these other sources, but seeks to be a specifically Christian interpretation. He asks what the data on the rescuers should mean for the reconstruction of Christian theology, ethics, and education.

He divides non-Jewish Europeans during the Nazi era into four separate categories: *perpetrators*, who actively committed crimes against Jews, up to and including participating in their murder; *collaborators*, who actively aided the perpetrators in their work; *bystanders* (the great majority) who allowed the collaborators and perpetrators to do their work without attempting to stop them; and *rescuers*, that tiny minority who worked to save Jewish lives at great risk to themselves and their families. Gushee disabuses Christians of the notion that the rescuers were more likely to be 'real' Christians, while those in other categories were more often unbelievers or nominal Christians. Using all available data, Gushee demonstrates that by all observable criteria, perpetrators, collaborators, and bystanders were just as likely to be 'good Christians' (active churchgoers, fervent in faith, etc.) as were rescuers. Further, many rescuers were either nonreligious or drew on nonreligious moral resources in

rescuing Jews, many even having to go *against* the teachings of their church leaders in doing so. Other rescuers, like Oskar Schindler, had fairly low moral character in other aspects of their lives, while bystanders, collaborators, and even some perpetrators were described almost universally as highly moral persons.

Given the ambiguity of this record, Gushee proceeds to ask what made the rescuers different. He examines their socialisation and family life, as well as cultural and other contextual factors. Further, from those who were active Christians and cited specifically Christian moral sources as aiding their rescue work, Gushee investigates *which* biblical and theological sources were used. With this as his background, Gushee draws conclusions for reconstructing a Christianity that might produce more potential rescuers and fewer persons who could act in the other types of categories. He also emphasizes the need for Christian work in producing just societal structures: By the time one needs to rely on the moral heroism of the few, it is already too late to avoid horrors like genocide.

This is an excellent book that should become a textbook in college and seminary ethics courses, courses on the Holocaust, and courses on Jewish and Christian dialogue. I further recommend it for use in local churches on any of the above topics. It is not an easy work, nor one that will make many Christians happy. Yet, it is a necessary work for the concrete work of repentance, leading to the theological and moral reconstruction necessary for a healthier Christianity. In light of the current genocidal conflict in the Balkans and in Africa, such a

work as this is long overdue. I hope that *Righteous Gentiles* finds a wide circulation and that readers engage in the same profound moral and theological wrestling with grim realities that the author has already displayed.

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Evangelicalism in Britain 1935 – 1995 A Personal Sketch

Oliver Barclay
Leicester, IVP, 1997,
159 pp., pb., £8.99.

Dr Oliver Barclay, Cambridge zoologist, General Secretary of IVF-UCCF from 1964 to 1980, and now, Evangelical elder statesman, has left us in his debt with this 'personal sketch' of Evangelicalism in Britain over the last sixty years. It is important to realize that the book does not claim to be a formal history like *Whatever Happened to the Jesus Lane Lot?*, his history of CICCU. It is therefore not a criticism of this book to say that it is impressionistic and does not give the kind of comprehensive and analytical treatment which a formal history would require.

The initial chapter asks, 'Who is an Evangelical?' To David Bebbington's four characteristics (conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism) Oliver Barclay wisely adds Christ-centredness, quoting John Wesley: 'I offered them Christ.' He briefly distinguishes conservative or classical Evangelicalism (CE), embodied in IVF-UCCF, from liberal Evangelicalism (LE), embodied in SCM. The focus thereafter is on CE tradition which is traced through six stages in the six succeeding chapters: Pre-war Doldrums, the Crucible of War, New beginnings, (1945-55),

Consolidation (1955-70), More Adventure, Less Unity (1970-80), and Adjusting to a Changing Society (1980-95).

Dr Barclay identifies the weaknesses of pre-war Evangelicalism: defensiveness, legalism, anti-intellectualism. He traces the crucial influence of Martyn Lloyd-Jones and (behind the scenes) the first General Secretary of IVF, Douglas Johnson, in beginning to change this ghetto mentality. The new beginnings in the decade after the war are marked by the emergence of new voices (John Stott, William Still, Herbert Carson, Leith Samuel, Norman Anderson, Donald Mackay), the Billy Graham campaigns, and theological gains led by R.V.G. Tasker, F.F. Bruce, J.I. Packer, Donald Wiseman. The fifteen years from 1955-70 (confusingly headed 1995-1997 at the top of each page!) saw opposition ably answered by J.I. Packer, and the beginning of division between the free church Evangelicals led by Lloyd-Jones and Anglican Evangelicals with a new loyalty to the Church of England from the Keele Congress of 1967. A strong Reformed school, a new social concern, and the first appearance of a charismatic wing also marked this period. The latter two were to grow in influence in the decade of the 1970s, which also saw the emergence of hermeneutics as an issue in the theological scene. In the final fifteen year period, 1980-95, Dr Barclay identifies five major changes: an increasing number of Evangelicals, an alarming deficit of biblical knowledge among younger CEs, a growth in Pentecostal and charismatic churches, a lack of long-term commitment in the 1990s generation, and the infiltration of church life by postmodernism.

The value of this book is that it is a personal sketch by someone who was not only at the heart of the Evangelical movement of this period, but also whose sympathies are with Conservative Evangelicalism as a whole and not exclusively with any of its component traditions. From his viewpoint in IVF-UCCF, he was at the heart of the Evangelical renaissance, and yet that does not mean he saw everything! Despite the attempt to review the whole church scene and the inclusion of regular sections on Scotland, Wales and Ireland, the viewpoint is from the universities and from the south of England. That leads to some omissions – the work of the Salvation Army, the significant evangelistic influence of J.W. Meiklejohn and the SU camps in Scotland, the preaching of Campbell Morgan and W.E. Sangster, and the influence of Spring Harvest to name a few. The work of the city missions and working class Evangelicalism in general are only mentioned. The evaluation of Evangelical theological education in the final fifteen year period is also rather generalised and impressionistic. Certainly, if the Evangelical colleges have simply adopted the rationalistic reductionism of much university teaching of theology, and have allowed theology to become divorced from ministry and spiritual life ('Lectures are very rarely heart-warming'), that would be very worrying.

But we must not demand that a 'personal sketch' be an academic and analytical history. Dr Barclay has provided us with a valuable account which future historians of Evangelicalism will treasure and which every theological student should read.

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Christ and the Spirit. The Doctrine of the Incarnation according to Edward Irving

Graham W P McFarlane

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996,
204 pp., pb., £14.99.

Knowledge of Edward Irving in theological courses is most probably limited to a passing reference to either his charismatic views, or his controversial christological development – the sinful nature of Christ's humanity. McFarlane's study, based on his doctoral thesis, presents a much needed and detailed study of the second issue.

The fruit of much detailed research, using illustrations drawn from numerous sermons and talks, McFarlane introduces a three-fold methodology which avoids any over-hasty conclusions, and hence misunderstandings, of Irving's position. Firstly, McFarlane fleshes out Irving's doctrine of divine being, illustrating how Irving's theology is driven by his soteriology, giving priority to Christ as Son instead of Word, and so establishing the eternal relationship in which the Spirit takes a fundamental part. It is the Spirit who communicates the will of the Father to the Son, and the Spirit who communicates the obedience of the Son to the Father. Secondly, Irving's doctrine of human being is expounded, whereby he attempts to avoid the anthropocentric interpretations of human being given by Kant and Schleiermacher. The nature of human being is in its becoming, within the context of paradise lost and paradise gained. That is, for Irving human being is always to be understood in its relationship to the Trinity, for in all the discussion anthropology is understood in its relationship to the Father, Son, and the Spirit. Thirdly, McFarlane

examines the central issue – Irving's doctrine of Christ. Irving, like Schleiermacher, wished to make Christ relevant. Whilst Schleiermacher went the route of the economic Trinity, Irving, driven by his soteriological concerns, strove to maintain an eternal Triune God. As McFarlane observes, Irving wrestles with this issue: 'If God remains concealed we are in darkness concerning his true identity. If Christ does not struggle with our very nature as human beings we have no assurance of being able to overcome ourselves.' (p.134) The question then is what it means to be fallen, and for Christ to have a fallen human nature. McFarlane's contention is that central to Irving's attempt to answer this question is his understanding of the Spirit's role in both the Son's eternal relationship to the Father, and in his saving work. It is this aspect which many other commentators have missed.

As a study in the theology of Irving, this is an excellent work. Those new to Irving would have been well served by some historical and contextual setting, although there are snippets of this at various stages throughout the work (the influence of Coleridge on Irving being most interesting). In addition, students new to discussions of Christology may do well to look elsewhere. However, not only is this a helpful work on Irving, but a fascinating contribution to the ongoing debates within Christology. In particular, the role of pneumatology, and indeed the difficulties facing overly binitarian understandings of the Godhead (and in addition a Christology which over-stresses divinity at the expense of humanity), are explored in depth. It is hoped that as a result of this work Irving will now become a more widely

used dialogue partner in Christological debates.

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The Heart of Reformed Theology

R.C. Sproul
London, Hodder and Stoughton,
1997, pb., 233 pp., £8.99.

Whereas elsewhere Sproul has written on the particulars of Reformed theology, he attempts in this volume to provide a single coherent introduction to the subject. Sproul's aim throughout is not to provide a textbook but a shorthand account of the essence of Reformed theology, covering the fundamental doctrines, key theologians and historic deposit of the Westminster Confession. The main body of the text is prefaced by a chapter on Reformed theology as a *theology* not a religion, because it has to do with God's revelation of himself in nature and Scripture (the latter alone being sufficient for knowledge of salvation) and not anthropology. Even though Sproul says that Reformed theology is a *theology* he does not mean that it is one among many, but rather that it is the best theology. The book neatly divides into two sections of five chapters, the first covers the foundations of Reformed theology, Centred on God, Based on God's Word Alone, Committed to Faith Alone, Prophet, Priest and King, and Covenant Theology; these are followed by the five points, not in the acrostic form, but as: humanity's radical corruption, God's sovereign choice, Christ's purposeful atonement, the Spirit's effective call, God's preservation of the saints.

The insistence on God's sovereignty and our need of humility before him is healthy and

is furnished with some impressive quotations from Calvin. Sproul carefully defines the meanings of infallibility and inerrancy and is not afraid to criticize the reluctance of evangelical scholars in using the latter as semantic shuffling for respectability. Sproul concedes that inerrancy is not a label derived from the historic Reformers, but from Luther's writings he shows that the concept was not alien to them. The chapter on justification is a paring down of his book on the subject, and is intended to show what is involved in forensic justification, imputation and saving faith. Sproul points out the dissimilarities between Rome and the Reformers and is careful to accurately represent the Catholic teaching, ending with Luther's caution on justification, 'I greatly fear that after we have laid our head to rest it will soon be forgotten' (p. 78). The three-fold office of Christ, in chapter four, is strangely begun with the Christology of Nicea and Chalcedon and the implications of these for Luther and Calvin's disagreement over the presence of Christ at the communion. I hoped that this episode would find a place in the book and although it seems to interrupt the structure it is useful reading. The explanation of covenant theology is a weak point, and Sproul castigates but does not responsibly engage with Dispensationalism. Three major covenants are outlined: between the Persons of the Trinity in eternity, God and Adam, and the post-fall covenant of grace. Although the mechanics of a covenant are shown, more should have been said from Scripture, particularly since with Noah, at Sinai, with David, and through Jeremiah, the stream has diversity in unity.

The second half of the book is an articulation and defence,

particularly from popular evangelical assumptions, of the so-called five points of Calvinism. Throughout Sproul consistently seeks to demonstrate from Scripture human inability, election and reprobation, the definite atonement, regeneration and perseverance. Objections to these doctrines are anticipated and dealt with, leaving readers to wrestle with, and submit to, Scripture (particularly good for the reader new to the subject). I was slightly disappointed with the chapter on 'Christ's Purposeful Atonement' where Sproul relies heavily on John Owen and does not free the doctrine from the accusation of being a product of Puritan logic.

With the exception of one or two generalisations and a need for better referencing the book does achieve its aims and should provoke and promote a response in the academic and spiritual lives of those it is intended for.

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Jesus Christ, Saviour and Lord

Donald G. Bloesch
Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity,
1997, 304 pp.

The well-known author seeks a centrist position on Christology between fundamentalism and liberalism (pp. 11, 12), but presents a relationship theology more characteristic of neo-orthodoxy than of conservative evangelicalism. Bloesch presupposes with Kierkegaard, Barth and Bultmann, an '*infinite qualitative difference*' between God and us (p. 176). Because God's 'reason' (if we can call it that) is infinitely distinct from ours, our likeness to God is relational or reflectional (p. 26). Revelation happens only in contentless encounters and we

witness to these mysterious events in parabolic narratives.

Bloesch's God is so different from his image bearers that the incarnation must be interpreted with a yes and no, dialectically or paradoxically (p. 70). Was Jesus God? No, if understood propositionally, literally or univocally; 'yes' if interpreted analogically, figuratively and analogically. But Bloesch should not need to view the incarnation as an irresolvable 'paradox', for Christ's two natures are not contradictories, but subcontraries (see G. Lewis and B. Demarest, *Integrative Theology 2*: 347-351).

Assuming God's infinite, qualitative removal from logical statements, Bloesch exclaims, *'Too long we have made the mistake of identifying God's revelation with the propositional content of the Bible'* (p. 249). A proposition is the basic unit of a person's logical thought. One asserts a true or false proposition in a sentence with (1) a subject, (2) a form of the verb 'to be' and (3) a predicate (S is P). Peter's great confession was propositional, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'. Jesus replied to him, 'Blessed are you, ... for this (proposition) was revealed to you by my Father in heaven' (Mt. 16:16-18). If Bloesch is correct, Jesus's identification of a proposition as revelation from God was a mistake. God forbid! Paul also summed up the gospel in propositions (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Jesus is the One who (1) was eternal and became flesh (an ontological truth), (2) died and rose (historical truths) and (3) died 'for our sins' (a theological truth with changeless univocal meaning, the same for God and Paul). 'I want you to know', Paul insisted, 'that the gospel, I preached is not something that man made up ... I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ' (Gal. 1:11-12). Since Jesus

and Paul strongly endorsed propositional revelation, and knowledge is embalmed in the *imago* (Col. 3:10), the 'mistake' would more appropriately be attributed to Bloesch's existentialist presupposition.

Christ's resurrection? Bloesch claims, 'Yes, it "really happened"'. No it was not recorded 'in the language of historical precision, but *only* in dramatic parabolic language' (p. 128). It is hard to find figures of speech and parables in the lists of witnesses who recognized the face, voice, scars and empty tomb. Even when parabolic speech is used, it is chosen to illustrate a nonfigurative (cognitive, T or F) point. Although 'affirmed by credible human witnesses', Bloesch thinks Christ's resurrection 'is finally persuasive only to the eyes of faith' (p. 107). Did not the Holy Spirit use it to persuade the disillusioned apostles (notably Thomas) and Saul an opponent of the faith? In pagan Athens, Paul appealed to the fact as conclusive evidence for 'all' (Acts 17:31-34).

Biblical language, according to Bloesch's dialectical hermeneutic, was *'preserved as a vehicle for mysteries that cannot be fully contained in ordinary straightforward language'* (p. 131). Agreed, humans do not fully comprehend the many biblical affirmations. But reducing assertions concerning who Jesus was, is and will be to nothing but figurative witnesses to noncognitive encounters degrades Jesus Christ's teaching and the Holy Spirit's ministries in all revelation and inspiration.

The same neo-orthodox presupposition that renders impossible the objective validity of inscripturated revelation makes impossible a coherent view of the incarnation. If God is so infinitely Other as to be unable to assert

propositional truth about reality in straightforward language (a capacity distinctive of persons), how does Bloesch know that the totally Other is personal?

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The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence

Davis A. Young

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995,
327 pp., hb./pb., £15.99/£8.99

The subtitle of this book gives us a good description of the author's intention. His motivation is the critical response he often gets from evangelical audiences when he speaks to them about geology and the Bible. 'Why should science dictate how we interpret the Bible?' This problem is much more acute in North America than in Britain. In the USA the creationist movement is very strong and dominates evangelicalism; in Britain it is relatively weak. Nevertheless the book will be of interest on both sides of the Atlantic, and I can thoroughly recommend it to those who are concerned about these issues.

Young traces the history of interpretation of the Biblical flood in parallel with discoveries and developments in other fields, mainly geology (his own discipline), and to a lesser extent archaeology. It would seem that the Church has nearly always taken account of knowledge gleaned from extrabiblical fields in its interpretation of the Bible, though of course this knowledge has changed dramatically over time.

Through most of its history the Church has apparently believed in a literal flood event. Although allegorical readings of scripture were important in the patristic era,

theologians like Origen and Augustine nevertheless believed in an historical, as well as symbolically meaningful, flood. Extrabiblical evidence was invoked, including the fact of neighbouring flood traditions and (unsubstantiated) reports of sightings of the ark on Mount Ararat.

Problems for a literal universal flood were present from the beginning, *e.g.* the capacity of the ark, and these were tackled in various ways. These problems became exacerbated beyond resolution with increasing knowledge of the vast numbers of species scattered across the globe, and the consequent impossibility of migration to and from the ark; and with increased geological understanding of rock stratification, of the fossil content of the rocks, and of radiometric dating of the strata.

With a few honourable exceptions, notably Hugh Miller in the nineteenth century, evangelicals do not come out of Young's analysis well. Many are concerned to defend a universal flood in the teeth of the evidence. Young notes correctly that many who write at the interface of science and theology are not qualified in the relevant scientific discipline. Moreover, they are either not familiar with the latest developments, or they deliberately use outdated theories to support their claims. There is a two-fold, contradictory strategy: to assert that science supports a universal deluge, and to assert that science, *e.g.* radiometric dating, is wrong. Often evangelical writing exhibits a fundamental dishonesty, and a breathtaking arrogance, unworthy of Christians.

Young tells us tantalisingly little about his own view, though he does say this has changed substantially since he wrote

Genesis and the Flood in 1977. How, at the end of the day, should we interpret the flood narrative? Should we take the story more or less literally, though accepting that it was of limited extent? There remain problems even with the limited deluge hypothesis, e.g. we still have to be choosy about what to take literally and what not. No evangelical I know accepts the Biblical cosmology literally: a dome in the sky with windows in it. Did the animals enter the ark in pairs or were there seven pairs of clean animals and one of unclean? The latter problem may be resolved by source analysis but Young is critical of this. Gordon Wenham, mentioned as a lone voice by Young, regards the early chapters of Genesis as reworked Mesopotamian myths imbued with a deep theological message, and this I find the most satisfying recent evangelical contribution to the subject.

Rodney D. Holder

Long Compton-Wolford Group of Churches

The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts, Then and Now

Max Turner

Carlisle, Paternoster Press 1996,
xiii + 374 pp., pb., £17.99.

As the title indicates, this book covers a lot of ground, perhaps too much for one volume. It is a study both of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of 'spiritual gifts'; it relates to both then (the NT period) and now; and it is an exercise in both biblical and systematic theology (including also a valuable brief discussion how the two are related [pp. 137-149]). These various subjects matters would have justified at least two books of this length, but then the coherence of the subjects would have been

lost. The result is a demanding but enriching read.

The approach is scholarly, cautious, and carefully argued in detail, with an eye equally to NT Scholarship and to the debates among evangelical and charismatic Christians. The author is at home in the realities of the charismatic scene today, though not uncritical of some aspects of it. It is thus an ideal guide for believing Christians who want to be guided in their church life by responsible and rigorous biblical study.

Part I (NT pneumatology) covers relatively well-trodden ground with a sure touch. It includes in chapter 6 an excellent discussion of the relation between Acts 2 and the 'Johannine Pentecost' (20:22). Turner comes down firmly in favour of a one-stage 'conversion-initiation' reception of the Spirit, over against both classic Pentecostalism and some sacramentalist views of confirmation.

Part II, on 'Spiritual Gifts', is more of a pioneering work, and likely to attract more attention. A useful discussion of the meaning of *charisma* (pp. 262-267) contributes to a general demystification of some esoteric charismatic terminology, and a recognition that God is not bound by 'gift-lists'. Most of the space is given to prophecy, tongues and healing, in each case offering a sane and well-grounded biblical analysis (which tends to maximise agreement rather than divergence between the biblical writers), followed more briefly by appropriate comments on the current charismatic scene. Non-charismatics will find here a useful guide to what actually goes on in such circles, while charismatics will feel that they have been understood and taken seriously, even where Turner has critical comments to offer.

He demolishes without difficulty the dogmatic cessationism of Warfield and his followers, and concludes that 'the present-day phenomena, while weaker than some of the NT manifestations, are nevertheless in real (theological and functional) continuity with them' (p. 348).

This is a major work in an area too often afflicted by superficial studies, a rich resource for careful biblical study and for informed debate. It is carefully researched and meticulously documented (though there is an unfinished footnote on p. 136; and I did enjoy the reference to 'millinerian' [hat-making?] prophets on p. 199). It is eirenic and painstakingly fair, not afraid to enter into critical debate where necessary, but aiming to promote mutual understanding and appreciation. Part II, at least, is unlikely to be quickly superseded as the key work for the study of spiritual gifts.

R.T. France

Bishops Castle

Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?

David E. Holwerda

Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995,
193pp., £12.99.

David Holwerda has written a very timely volume. The relation of Israel to the church has seen considerable debate during the past century. With Christendom currently standing on the brink of a new millennium, a renewal of interest in Bible prophecy and the role of the Jewish people in the plan of God is presently surfacing in various segments of the church.

In 1897, after the first world Zionist gathering in Basel, Switzerland, many around the world laughed at what was reported from that conference.

On that occasion at Basel, the man known today as the father of modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl, made his famous prediction that in fifty years the world would see a Jewish state. The modern State of Israel was voted upon in 1947 by the League of Nations, and born in 1948. Amid remarkable circumstances, this fledgling State emerged shortly after the Holocaust, an indescribable event that had claimed six million Jewish lives.

Currently, church and synagogue are again giving special reflection to their own histories and theologies, and especially to their relation one to the other. During the last decade, several major catalysts have contributed to this renewal if interest. They are the 3,000th anniversary of Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people (1996), the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel (1998), and various statements on the Jewish people, Israel and the Holocaust by major Christian denominations. Accordingly, Holwerda devotes much of his study in biblical theology to such themes as covenant, land, temple and the future of Israel.

Holwerda has given us a lucidly written work on promise and fulfilment. In that the author is professor of NT studies at Calvin Theological Seminary, it will not come as a surprise to Holwerda's readers that his conclusions fall within the Reformed covenantal tradition. Holwerda's aim is to establish firmly from Scripture that the OT promises to ethnic Israel are universalized or spiritualized in the church, a body which embraces the nations of the world. Promises related to a temple of stone in Jerusalem find fulfilment in a universal temple, the world wide body of Christian believers. In Holwerda's view, 'Historical Jerusalem has lost its

significance as the promised Holy City, the city of salvation'. Consequently, he argues that the earthly Jerusalem no longer embodies hope but the heavenly Jerusalem does. The particular OT promises concerning earthly Jerusalem are not to be fulfilled by ethnic Israel on this earth for, in Holwerda's words, 'The NT locates Jerusalem where Jesus is. Jesus is in Heaven and so is Jerusalem.'

The author's conclusions will be unacceptable to dispensationalists, most premillennialists and other segments of the Christian community who argue that Scripture makes some form of distinction in the plan of God between Israel and the church. In this reviewer's view, the author could have presented a more even-handed and fuller treatment of the biblical data had he followed a different methodology. Holwerda's starting point should have taken more seriously the exegetical method of the earliest church: that earliest Jewish church began with the OT, its only Scriptures. Holwerda, however, largely follows the spiritualizing and allegorizing approach of many of the Church Fathers who tended to read the OT through the starting point of the NT, thus tending to avoid hearing the full weight of the OT teachings. Until today's church fully hears the Hebrew Scriptures of Jesus and the apostolic church in their own rich this-worldly Jewish context prior to launching into the NT's use of these texts, the church's exegetical conclusions may be lacking in sound biblical foundation. In particular, Holwerda would have brought more balance to this study if he had given more extensive detailed exegetical analysis to those texts dealing with the unconditional nature of God's covenant with Israel and those prophecies concerning Israel's permanent restoration to the land.

But in the end - especially for those concerned about world Jewry today and the prospects for a future for literal Israel - all is not lost. Indeed, readers will appreciate how Holwerda opens his discussion in chapter one, titled, 'Jesus and Israel in the Twentieth Century'. Unlike many works on Israel and the church, in this chapter (and throughout the book) Holwerda is refreshingly non-polemical. Accordingly, the author's opening discussion sensitively deals with Christian-Jewish relations, post-Holocaust theology, and the biblical concept of covenant. In this regard, Holwerda holds firmly that there is one covenant, not two. In addition, though Holwerda holds throughout his work that the church is Israel, he does believe God can still be 'using the recent political history of Jewish Israel to contribute to the fulfilment of his promises of salvation' (p. 182).

Indeed, Holwerda affirms that God has 'already used the establishment of the state of Israel to ignite messianic hopes after the Holocaust'. Furthermore, while Holwerda rightly holds that in the deepest spiritual sense there is one people of God, not two, he is open as to how God will use history to bring about the fullness of Jewish Israel with the fullness of Gentile believers. Says Holwerda, 'How all this will be achieved in terms of visible events, or how many OT particulars God will rerun or allow to reoccur, I do not know'. While hardly going far enough for those opposing replacement theology, such openness and candour accompanied by a lack of dogmatism should be commended by readers of all theological stripes.

Jesus and Israel is well worth serious study. It is a provocative work and its aim is to be biblical. It is usefully outlined and has an index of Scriptures and authors.

The fact that Holwerda writes clearly makes this volume readily accessible to lay people; its theological meatiness, on the other hand, will especially peak the interest of scholars. Holwerda is to be commended for taking a controversial topic and addressing it in an irenic and engaging style. Hopefully, his non-threatening approach will allow even the most ardent of Christian Zionists to be enlightened through his pen and even find some enjoyment in the process.

Marvin R. Wilson

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Uniqueness of Jesus (Thinking Clearly Series)

Chris Wright

Crowborough: Monarch/Evangelical Alliance, 1997,
186 pp., pb., £5.99.

Those familiar with Chris Wright's little booklet *What's So Unique About Jesus?* (1990) will welcome this revised, expanded and updated version. As part of the Thinking Clearly series edited by Clive Calver it is 'written from a mainstream Christian standpoint' and 'combines clear biblical teaching with up-to-date scholarship.' Commendably, although Wright has gone out of his way to avoid technical jargon, where he has found its use necessary it has been carefully and accurately explained. For example, even though the term 'ontology' is adequately defined (p. 29), when he uses it again later in the book (p. 82) he makes a point of reminding the reader of its meaning. Along with this concern for clarity, the layout of the book will make it very difficult for the reader to lose the thread of the argument. Firstly, at the beginning of each chapter there is a short paragraph explaining what is

about to be discussed and indicating how it fits in with the overall argument of the book. Secondly, the chapters are concise and have plenty of subheadings. Finally, there are frequent indicators in the margins as to the main points being addressed. All in all this is a model of clear, disciplined and very accessible theological writing at an introductory level which, without being overly technical, avoids superficiality.

Along with a short introduction and conclusion, there are six main chapters. The first of these, 'Surveying the Scene', introduces the reader to the issues raised for Christians by religious plurality and the increased knowledge of other faiths as well as to some of the ways thinkers have responded to these issues. Adopting the now common (but questionable) categorisation of 'exclusivism', 'inclusivism' and 'pluralism', the following three chapters critically discuss each of these approaches in turn. Although Wright incorrectly understands Clark Pinnock and John Sanders to be exclusivist (p. 48) rather than inclusivist, he provides a clear and accurate introduction to these three broad approaches.

Having said that, I was struck by the book's slightly unfair bias towards exclusivism. Whereas it would be hard to give a positive assessment of pluralism in a book defending the uniqueness of Jesus, this is not the case with inclusivism. Although Wright clearly has some sympathy with the inclusivist approach, and expresses this several times, his argument is very much that of an exclusivist. For example, it was made clear that, regardless of the merits of inclusivism, if readers want to be consistently biblical and evangelical then exclusivism is their only option. Certainly, along

with the very worthwhile seventeen pages unpacking the varieties of exclusivism, the book would have benefited from a little more than just over ten pages expounding inclusivism. Indeed, not only does much of this short discussion focus on the perceived problem areas, but he makes the rather dubious claim that inclusivism is the beginning of 'a slippery slope that lands up in pluralism' (p. 65). Yet, concerning this latter claim, (and Wright seems to recognise this) whereas exclusivism and inclusivism exist side by side as theologies of religions, there is a large chasm between inclusivism and pluralism. This chasm is principally determined by the respective understandings of the significance of Jesus. For the inclusivist, as for the exclusivist, the finality of Christ is a non-negotiable theological axiom which bars the way to pluralism. Nevertheless, even if Wright had a point, surely a thesis should not be dismissed simply because it is capable of unbiblical development. As the history of Christian thought demonstrates, many of the fundamental tenets of orthodoxy have been interpreted in unorthodox ways.

Again, although the 'anonymous Christianity' of the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner is the obvious and popular choice when it comes to critiquing inclusivism, it would perhaps have been more helpful for the principally evangelical readership of this book to have had an exposition of the evangelical inclusivism of such as Sanders and Pinnock.

The final two chapters of the book very helpfully focus on the Bible, with particular reference to the OT. The first of these chapters, 'Jesus and the Bible', examines 'how the OT prepares us for Jesus, by helping us to grasp the seriousness of sin and the need for a 'big'

salvation, by showing us the unique way God worked through Israel, and by showing us the uniqueness of God himself, as Yahweh' (p. 87). The final, largest and best chapter, 'The Bible and Human Religions', is a helpful and interesting introductory discussion of the biblical understanding of religious plurality. Of particular interest are his comments regarding interfaith dialogue, the prologue of John's Gospel and Cornelius (Acts 10).

Throughout the book one is subtly made aware of the fact that its author is a gifted biblical scholar and teacher. As such, many readers familiar with theology of religions literature will find particularly the final chapters stimulating and refreshing. Having said that, although this is an introductory book for Christians, and although it would therefore have been inappropriate to enter into some of the more philosophical debates, those who have done some reading in the area or who are dealing with the issues at university level, may find it a little frustrating that Wright does not discuss (in his very accessible style) more about, for example, Hick's mature work in *An Interpretation of Religion*, or theories developed in the tradition of George Lindbeck and J. A. DiNoia, or the arguably more consistent pluralism of postmodernity.

That said, this is not meant to be a university textbook or an academic monograph, but rather a basic introduction for biblical Christians wanting to understand and defend the uniqueness of Jesus in a religiously plural society. As such, and as a cogent example of evangelical exclusivism, it is to be recommended. However, I suggest that Christians concerned to construct a biblical theology of religions also consider the

arguments developed in the following three books (taken from Wright's selection of books for further reading): P. Cotterell, *Mission and Meaninglessness* (London: SPCK, 1990); C. Pinnoch, *A Wideness in God's Mercy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); and J. Sanders (not, as listed, J. O. Sanders who would certainly concur with Wright), *No Other Name* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

Chris Partridge

University College, Chester.

Down to Earth: A New Vision for the Church

Donald Reeves
Mowbray, London, 1997;
117 pp, pb.

The author is Rector of St. James', Piccadilly. On the face of it his is a remarkable success story. When he went to the church in 1980 it was threatened with closure, while today it is well filled every Sunday, and in this respect one is reminded of the late David Watson, although theologically the two men have little in common. He says of his book that it is 'in part, autobiography, part reflection on a city-centre ministry, but mostly a plea to the churches ... to move out of the shadows and to join those who are actively working for a safer world for their children and future generations.' He wears his heart on his sleeve and is quite frank in what he says both about himself and others, so that the reader feels she (the author will approve of that!) has got to know the man during his journey though his book.

I read it just after completing for another journal a review of Oliver Barclay's book, *Evangelicalism in Britain: 1935 - 1995*, and was struck by the great contrast

between them.

Donald Reeves is certainly not an evangelical. In fact, he would regard such a description as anything but complimentary. His church would fit the old 'Broad Church' designation and find itself distinctly to the left even of that, for it has a 'New Age' reputation. Yet, for all that, despite many things that I could profoundly disagree with, I am thankful I have read this book.

Donald Reeves begins by telling the story of his life and his spiritual pilgrimage. Then he deals successively with knowing God, with the need for a 'public' society in which the church is prepared to participate, the inner life as the key to effective leadership, the proper function of ritual and of the Bible, the male/female issue, and the creation of ecologically active communities.

He had quite a turbulent spiritual pilgrimage, from a totally unreligious background through an unhelpful early encounter with Evangelicalism and an atheistic phase to a position not easy to classify, except perhaps as 'open', certainly Pluralist and with some tendencies towards a type of nature mysticism with New Age overtones.

He does have some things to say, however, that evangelicals need to hear. He says that the church should be concerned about the dispossessed, the mentally ill who are homeless, and threats to the environment; it must not confuse management with leadership and must give the supreme place to the inner life of the leader; it needs to give the Decalogue serious attention, to learn from the Jewish tradition and the Holocaust and to find a place for the Biblical passages of lamentation in its worship and its spirituality.

His chapter on Scripture is the

most helpful, for he stresses the great importance of imaginative reading and listening that allows the text to penetrate us to the core of our being. He bemoans the fact that so few preachers have a real dedication, passion and love for the Bible. For years it had little place in his life and was most unattractive to him, but now, he says, 'I have come to love the Bible'.

Geoffrey Grogan
Glasgow

An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics

Donald W. Shriver
Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995,
340pp., £20.00/\$27.50

Donald Shriver, President and Professor of Applied Christianity at Union Theological Seminary in New York, has written one of the most profound and challenging works in political ethics to appear in many years. Shriver is one of those rare scholars trained in both theological ethics and sociology of religion and this work utilises a cross-disciplinary approach with the skill of one who knows several fields intimately.

Although forgiveness is a moral and theological concept often relegated to private and interpersonal spheres, Shriver's thesis is that forgiveness is both possible and necessary in politics. He uses a careful socio-historical reading of ancient histories, biblical traditions from both Testaments, the history of Christian thought, and major events in twentieth-century history to support this audacious claim. He demonstrates that the failure to practise political forgiveness (even in cases of war and/or great crimes against another people) leads

to a perpetual cycle of revenge, either in an ongoing cycle of escalating violence or smouldering resentments held for centuries that later erupts horribly. Revenge, Shriver contends, is the end of politics, while justice, including restitutive justice, makes politics possible. Shriver knows that a facile mentality of 'forgive and forget' is neither possible nor desirable, but works instead to elaborate political ethics as 'moral remembering', that demands that crimes be acknowledged and repented of, but allows political enemies, including those that have been at war, begin their relationship from a new place.

Although Shriver is a 'mainline liberal' Christian, evangelicals should find this book equally profitable. While some more conservatives evangelicals may be uncomfortable with Shriver's apparently complete acceptance of standard liberal approaches to historical-critical matters, this actually has little effect on his overall reading of the biblical materials. For example, Shriver's treatment of the Cain and Abel story under the category of 'cultural myth' (p. 22) should not lead any conservative reader to disagree with his actual reading of the narrative. All of the biblical materials are handled with respect and a close and careful reading that should not be obscured by differences over dating, authorships, or amount of historical reliability.

Shriver's twentieth-century studies of the successes and failures of political forgiveness are drawn from the experience of the United States. Nevertheless, those in other contexts should quickly be able to find analogues in their own history, and Shriver writes with a global audience in mind. Readers from many other contexts should

find his warnings to the American political culture in the concluding chapter resonating with the hopes and fears they also confront. Likewise, although this is an openly Christian essay in political ethics, it is non-sectarian in the sense that Shriver makes connections for readers from other faiths or no faith. 'Political forgiveness' is a practice that Christians may have special reasons to cultivate, but Shriver clearly expects it to be a possibility for all humans.

I highly recommend this book for all those who seek a realistically moral approach to politics. By describing the complex and difficult practices of repentance and forgiveness within and between nations, Shriver neither ignores the realities of sin nor abandons politics to clashes of raw power. This is a challenging and hopeful work.

Michael L. Westmoreland-White
Simmons College, Louisville, KY

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