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REVIEWS

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It is always a tragedy when Christians find themselves so controlled by sin that they fall in the most public and disastrous of manners, bringing shame on themselves and upon the name of Christ. Years of faithful service can be destroyed in an instant and Christian testimonies permanently compromised. We all know of such cases. In a world increasingly obsessed with money, sex and power, it is clear that these modern-day Baals have been the cause of the downfall of far too many Christians, from members of local churches to leaders known around the world. When we hear of yet another such tragedy, maybe some of us are tempted, as the pharisee was in the parable, to thank God that we are not such as they. On the contrary, we are good, upright citizens of the kingdom who bring nothing but praise and honour to the name of Christ; we would never take drugs, commit adultery or use pornography. And yet the fall of others should not be a cause for complacent self-congratulation or finger-pointing. When the English Reformer, John Bradford, saw a man going to execution, he is said to have commented to those with him at the time, 'There but for the grace of God goes John Bradford.' Such an attitude indicates a heart that truly knows the meaning of God's unconditional, unmerited grace in Christ. And, if we are honest, sometimes it is not even the grace of God which separates us from the fallen brother or sister - it's simply the fact that our own sins are more private, or perhaps that we have not been caught and exposed in such a public manner. Let him who hath no sin...

The public fall of a Christian is, of course, rarely, if ever, a spontaneous or instant occurrence. Nobody ever embezzled money who did not first covet something. Nobody ever committed murder who was not first angry. And nobody ever committed adultery who did not first nurture adulterous and lustful thoughts. The point is simple: sin is something which grows and festers as it is fuelled by our thought life, by our patterns of behaviour, by the books we read, by the company we keep, and by our failure to deal with the sin at the outset, at the very first moment it tries to get a foothold in our lives. When a man or woman is caught with their hand in the till, we can be certain that the actual criminal act was merely the culmination and outworking of a series of moral decisions taken by the individual in the hours, days, weeks, months or even years prior to the crime.

The first thing these tragedies should do, therefore, is warn us that not even Christians are immune from the sins and temptations of the world. I don't like Christian bumper stickers - too twee for my tastes. But occasionally they do touch on real truths. Indeed, the one which declares that 'Christians aren't perfect, just saved' does actually hit the nail on the head, albeit in a rather flippant manner. Christians are as capable of stealing, cheating, murdering and fornicating as their non-Christian counterparts do. For example, statistics for premarital sex among teenagers show how little difference there is between the behaviour of Christians and those outside the church. High-profile cases over the last few years also indicate that theft, adultery and homosexuality have regularly claimed high-profile Christians as captives. What separates those who have publicly fallen from grace from those of us who have not? In a word, God's grace. Let us be clear about one thing: those who fall publicly may have offended the church on earth in a more dramatic way than the rest of us; but, before God, we are all enclosed under sin; not one of us in our sinful, self-sufficient selves is any better than anybody else when it comes to standing before the holy, righteous and jealous God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Second, the worst thing about the tragic fall of a friend is knowing that they have been slowly sucked into the world of sin over a period of time, maybe even years,

years in which you knew them, talked theology with them, prayed with them, and shared the same visions with them – and yet you, their friend, never saw what was going on. They probably did not tell you because we live in a kind of simplistic evangelical culture where people are not meant to have certain problems. We pay lip service to all being sinners, but we cannot imagine that any Christian would actually be involved in any serious public sin, such as embezzlement or adultery. The result is a church culture where we are all too frightened to tell anyone about some of the things with which we struggle. We need to think hard about how to change this culture, about how to cultivate friendships where such honesty is possible on the basis that we all know we are saved merely by grace. Then we will know that we have no grounds for looking down on another brother or sister, no matter how awful we might see their crime as being. But, further, we also need to remember to tell each other the gospel. The gospel is, after all, for sinners, and we Christians are, at the end of the day, all still sinners. We still need to hear the gospel because repentance is an ongoing reality which involves the whole of our lives, and which is fuelled by knowledge of what God in Christ has done. When I think of friends who have fallen, I feel guilty, not just because they did not feel able to ask me for help, but also because I failed to tell them the gospel as often as I should have done.

I think Luther's modification of the medieval notion of sacramental confession is extremely useful in this context: Luther recommended that Christians should confess their sins to each other in order to create opportunities of being reminded by friends of what God in Christ has done for them. In other words, you confess your sin to me, and I tell you that Christ has died for you – and vice versa. Now, it would obviously be counter-productive for everyone to go around willy-nilly confessing their sins in public to everyone else; but in my own experience it has been good over the years to have one Christian friend with whom I can talk about anything, confess anything, and pray about anything. Such a person is worth their weight in gold, a wonderful gift from God. If you don't have one already, pray that the Lord will guide you to such a friend.

Finally, such tragedies should warn us that, just as the longest journey begins with the smallest step, so the long road to hell starts always with an apparently trivial but sinful thought. As I said above, the murderer first starts by losing his or her temper; the thief starts by coveting the property of another; and the adulterer starts by indulging in sexual fantasies about another's spouse. Let us therefore guard our hearts and minds as if our lives depended upon it – as indeed they do. It is very fashionable in certain so-called Christian circles to try to make Christians appear as similar to their non-Christian counterparts as possible. We go to the same places, watch the same films, use the same language, and behave in just the same way. This is not simply nonsense; it is highly dangerous. The Christian is one of God's covenant people, called to be holy, separated to God, and required to be unconditionally loving to both God and neighbour. Whatever else these things imply, they certainly do not involve assimilation to the world's standards in terms of attitudes to spare time or family or material possessions or sexual mores or whatever. Great leaders, from Elijah and Amos in the Old Testament, calling Israel back to covenant fidelity, to men such as the heroic Klaas Schilder, standing against the Nazis in the occupied Netherlands (upon whom I shall have more to say in the next editorial), have always, without exception, emphasised the antithesis, the absolute opposition, that exists between the standards demanded by loyalty to Christ and the way of the world. Unfashionable, outmoded, pietistic (Shock! Horror!) and fogeyish it may sound, but it is no more than the Bible demands. Thus, if it is watching the television that causes you to sin, do not watch the television; if it is going to certain places that causes you to sin, do not go to those places; if it is the internet which leads you to sin, don't log-on; and if it is certain

people who cause you to sin, then shun their company. On one level, it really is that simple. You can get to heaven without a television, without going to nightclubs, without surfing the web, and without being the life and soul of the party; but you cannot get to heaven as someone committed to a lifestyle involving pornography, drunkenness and blasphemy. Toying with anything that causes you to sin, however trivial such sin might seem to you, is like tightrope-walking over the fires of hell: only something an idiot or a madman would even contemplate.

Sounds over the top, you might say. Maybe you would rather I used my editorial to bat around the latest scholarly ideas. Well, over recent years I've seen too many friends destroyed and too many ministries permanently crippled by just the kind of failures I've outlined above for me to want to waste time today on trivia such as the latest ephemeral thoughts emerging from Oxbridge or Yale or Duke. They might be thrilling today, but they'll almost certainly be out-of-date this time next year. I leave such things to those who think evangelicalism's current problems are the result of not being invited to the right academic cocktail parties. I know I have said it before, but I say it again, and I will keep on saying it time after time after time until somebody starts to take notice: the problem with evangelicalism in the West is not its lack of intellectual credibility; rather, it is its frequent lack of moral integrity, its tendency towards materialism, and its lip-service to a doctrinal tradition and a code of ethics, sexual and social, which it often despises and ignores in practice – and this lack of honesty and integrity is the responsibility of each and every one of us. The church needs men and women, boys and girls, who are distinctively different from the world, who live for Christ, not for self, who maintain the absolute moral antithesis between the worship of the triune God and the crass idolatry of all that is not Christianity; and who will not only flee such things themselves but will call upon God's people as a whole to flee them. We need our Elijahs, our Amoses and our Schilders far more than ever we need our cultural commentators, our savvy media consultants and our postmodern pundits. The battles we fight with sin are battles in which we cannot afford to surrender, and which require moral backbone, not technical brilliance, to win. And the first qualification of such people is an uncompromising attitude to their own morality, public and private, born out of a knowledge of their own sinfulness and God's glorious holiness and unmerited grace in Christ. For God's sake, then, for our own, and for that of our brothers and sisters in Christ, let us strive with the Spirit's help to keep ourselves pure in all areas of our lives.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF THE WRATH OF GOD

R.V.G. Tasker

This is the first part of a lecture that was given in Cambridge for the Tyndale Fellowship in 1951. At that time R.V.G. Tasker was Professor of New Testament Exegesis in the University of London. Part two will be published in Themelios 26.3.

Preface

In this lecture I have endeavoured to draw attention to some of the Biblical evidence, present in both the Old and New Testaments, which reveals God as a God of wrath as well as a God of love. It is an axiom of the Bible that there is no incompatibility between these two attributes of the divine nature; indeed for the most part the great Christian theologians and preachers of the past have endeavoured to be loyal to both sides of the divine self-disclosure. In more recent years, however, there has been widespread neglect and indeed denial of the doctrine of the divine wrath; and emphasis has been placed almost exclusively upon the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. In consequence the severity of Biblical Christianity has largely been lost sight of, with far-reaching and disastrous results in many spheres of life, as Dr D.M. Lloyd Jones in his book *The Plight of Men and the Power of God* has clearly shown. It is surely time that the balance was redressed, and that a generation which has little or no fear of God should be faced with the reality of his wrath as well as with his loving-kindness.

The so-called 'moral' objection to the doctrine of the divine wrath has no substance when it is realised that the Bible, containing as it does a revelation of God to *man*, must use the language of the human emotions in speaking of God; but that, just because God is God and not man, divine love transcends human love, and divine wrath transcends human wrath. There is in the love of God none of the fickleness, the waywardness, and the weakness of human love; and these features are also absent from his wrath. But just as human love is deficient if the element of anger is entirely lacking (for as Lactantius wrote in the third century, *qui non odit diligit*), so too is anger an essential element of divine love. God's love is inseparably connected with his holiness and his justice. He must therefore manifest anger when confronted with sin and evil.

The doctrine of the wrath of God safeguards the essential distinction between Creator and creature, which sin is ever seeking to minimise or obliterate. Without a realisation of this wrath we are unlikely to have that 'fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom'. It is with a consciousness of this truth, and with a desire to be faithful to the biblical revelation as a whole, that I offer this study as a contribution to the series of Tyndale Lectures.

Introduction

Our investigation into the Biblical doctrine of the wrath of God should, I suggest, begin with a careful exegesis of Romans 1:18. In this verse the apostle writes, 'for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness'.¹ The main points at issue in the interpretation of these words are, first, whether the sentence is co-ordinate with the previous sentence; and, secondly, what is the exact significance of the present tense 'is revealed'. On the supposition that the two sentences are co-ordinate, verse 18 would supply another reason why Paul is 'not ashamed of the gospel'. He is unashamed, because in it a revelation is made not only of the righteousness but also of the wrath of God. In favour of this view, it has been suggested that the form of the two sentences suggests parallelism; and that, on the assumption that it is in the gospel alone that God's wrath is adequately revealed, there is no contradiction between 1:18 and the further statement of the apostle in 3:25 that 'God set forth [Jesus] to be a propitiation, ... because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God'. The revisers were almost certainly right in translating *dia tēn paresin* in this verse, 'because of passing over of sins' and not, as the AV (following the Vulgate *propter remissionem*) translated, 'for the remission of sins', i.e. 'in order to bring about the remission of sins'; for although the word *paresis* is used once in secular literature for the remission of debts, there is no evidence that it is a synonym for *aphesis*. In the light of the RV translation of Romans 3:25, it is accordingly urged that in Romans 1:18 also the apostle is saying that before the redemptive activity of Christ there was no full expression of God's wrath. In other words the peculiar characteristic of the whole pre-Christian era was that God in his forbearance tended to overlook the transgressions of men and not to inflict on them the full punishment that they merited. But because he is absolutely righteous such a *paresis hamartēmatēn* could not be permanent. Sooner or later it was inevitable that he should manifest to the full his divine wrath, particularly as many were misunderstanding the nature and purpose of his forbearance, and were fondly supposing that 'such a one as themselves' (Ps. 1:21), – an easy-going God, who would forget their offences and so remit them. Hence it was necessary, 'because God had passed over the sins done aforetime', to show his righteousness by 'setting forth Jesus to be a propitiation': and it is this truth, so it is alleged, which is also presented in the apostle's words in 1:18.

Such an interpretation of 1:18 is also said to be consistent with two statements found in addresses delivered by Paul before pagan audiences; the first at Lystra, in Acts 14:16, that God 'in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways'; and the second at Athens, in Acts 17: 30, that 'the times of ignorance therefore God overlooked'. It is also said that in

¹ All quotations are from the Revised Version unless otherwise stated.

accordance with the Septuagint version of Jeremiah 31:32 quoted in Hebrews 8:9, where God says, 'They continued not in my covenant, and I disregarded them *emēlēsa autōn*'. But while this is certainly the right exegesis of Romans 3:25, where the apostle is obviously drawing attention to the necessity for the full satisfaction of the divine justice in the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus, just because that justice had in fact never been fully satisfied before (for God had to use the language of the prophets, never 'made a full end' in the infliction of punishment on his people), I would suggest that such an interpretation of Romans 1:18 does not really fit the context. The RV is surely right in regarding this verse as beginning a new paragraph. Paul is in effect here laying down the essential foundation for the doctrine of grace by a general statement of God's *permanent* attitude to sin; for it is only when men are fully conscious of this attitude that they are inclined to, or indeed are able to accept the good news of the revelation of God's righteousness revealed in the saving death of Christ. To realise that we are under God's wrath and in disgrace is the essential preliminary to the experience of his love and his grace. In this respect the Christian gospel is bad news before it is good news. And this revelation of the divine wrath has been made in varying degrees and in various ways and at various times ever since the fall of Adam. I would therefore interpret *apokalypsetai* in Romans 1:18 not as a prophetic present, 'is going to be revealed', with reference to the final and perfect manifestation of the divine wrath on what is called in Romans 2:5 'the day of wrath'; nor as a strict present, 'is at this moment being revealed', with sole reference to the conditions prevalent in the Roman Empire of Paul's own day. Nor would I confine it to the revelation of the divine wrath in the passion of Christ when he drank to the dregs on behalf of sinners the cup of God's wrath. Rather would I construe it as a frequentative present, 'is continually being revealed', covering in its sweep the whole field of human experience, especially that delineated in the OT Scriptures. We may note in passing that this *permanent* element in the divine wrath is a characteristic which differentiates it from sinful human wrath. The latter is fitful, wayward, and spasmodic; while the former is stable, unswerving, and of set purpose. 'Man is a creature of time', wrote Lactantius, 'and his emotions are related to the passing moment. His anger, therefore, ought to be curbed because he is often angry and angry unjustly. But God is eternal and perfect. His anger is no passing emotion but is always of set purpose and design.'² A perfect example of this aspect of *human* anger is given by the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:28). He was angry with the wrong people, at the wrong time, and for the wrong reasons.

Paul adds in Romans 1:18 that this revelation of the divine wrath is made 'from heaven'. He does so perhaps not merely to emphasise

² Lactantius: *De Ira Dei* (ch., 22): *Possem dicere quod ira hominis refrænanda fuerit, quia in iuste saepe trascitur, et praesens habet motum, quia temporalis est ... deus autem non ad praesens trascitur quia aeternus est prerectusque virtutis et nunquam nisi merito trascitur.*

still more strongly that this wrath is divine in origin and in character; but also, as Calvin suggested, because it is universal in its scope, for 'so far and wide as are the heavens, is the wrath of God poured out on the whole world'. C. Hodge, in his commentary on Romans, also pertinently suggested that Paul added these words, 'because like the lightning from heaven God's wrath forces itself on the most reluctant vision'. Men may be deaf to the divine voice speaking within them in conscience, but they find it difficult to escape that same voice when it calls to them through the providential 'chances and changes' of their experience.

Paul also adds that this revelation is 'against all impiety and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness'. The words translated 'impiety' and 'unrighteousness' *asebeia* and *adikia*, are not synonyms. Rather does the apostle show, by the choice of these particular words and by the order in which he places them, that *adikia*, human injustice, man's inhumanity to man, and the unnatural and worse than bestial behaviour to which he often sinks has its deepest roots in *asebeia*, in his failure to give to God the honour and the reverence which the all-sovereign Creator has the right to demand from his creatures. The sin which permanently evokes God's wrath, because it is the root of all other sins, is the wilful suppression of such truth about himself as he has been pleased to reveal to men, and of which they can never plead ignorance.

The truth about the divine nature, which is available to *all* men through the evidence of God's created works, is necessarily more limited and circumscribed than the special revelation which he has chosen to make through the particular people whom he called to receive it. It is a revelation of his sovereignty and his creative power rather than of his mercy and his saving grace. We may therefore find it helpful as an aid to handling in a necessarily limited way the large amount of Biblical material relevant to our subject, to consider first the manifestation of the divine wrath to those who are outside the covenant relationship, which God established with his people Israel; then to notice the particular forms which such manifestation took, and the causes which gave rise to them, when God directed his anger to his chosen people; and finally to consider how the divine wrath is revealed in Jesus Christ; under the new covenant which he inaugurated; and on the final Day of Wrath.

The Manifestation of the Divine Wrath to Those Outside the Covenant

The *locus classicus* in Scripture for the manifestation of the divine wrath to the heathen world is Romans 1:19-32. Here Paul insists that the non-Jewish world cannot offer the excuse that it has no knowledge of God because it has not been favoured with the special revelation granted to Israel, and that therefore it is quite undeservedly the object of his wrath. For, though invisible to the eye of man, God has manifested through his created works 'his everlasting power and divinity'. It is evident, in other words, that the power which made the sun, the moon and the stars is an *eternal* power possessing the qualities of perfection and deity. In a real

sense, therefore, the pagan world had knowledge of God; but the sin, which is inherent in every child of Adam, led men to fail to deduce from this knowledge the obligation which was laid upon them to glorify and render praise and thanksgiving to the Creator. Their knowledge of God became, as a result, so perverted that in Ephesians 2:12 Paul can describe them as being without God altogether, *atheoi en tōi kosmōi*, though in that *kosmos*, God's everlasting power and divinity were visible. For, when men exchange such truth about God as has been manifested to them for a false conception of his character, they lose the sense of the fundamental difference between creature and Creator; and thereby fall into the cardinal sin of idolatry and give the creature the worship that should be given only to the Creator. They 'turn his glory into the similitude of a calf that eateth hay' (see Ps. 106:20). And to be an idolater, whatever form the idolatry may take, is to be under the wrath of God.

Because the entry of sin into the world was due to the unwillingness of Adam to accept his creaturely estate, and to his desire to become as God, the wrath of God has been directed against mankind ever since. 'He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men' (Lam. 3:33); but so and only so can his sovereignty be vindicated. One of the primary purposes therefore of the opening chapters of Genesis, even though the actual expression 'the wrath of God' does not occur in them, is to record the divine judgements and punishments which God was impelled to inflict upon men in order that his absolute sovereignty and justice might be demonstrated. The pronouncement of the sentence of death upon Adam, the cursing of the earth for his sake, and the banishment of Adam and Eve from the earthly paradise are all manifestations in word and deed of the divine wrath; and, it is important to notice, *they are recognised as such by other writers of Scripture*. The Psalmist for example, when he meditates on the inescapable fact of death, says 'We are consumed in thine anger, and in thy wrath are we troubled.' (Ps. 90:7). It is 'in Adam', Paul says, 'that all die'. 'Death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression', *i.e.* over those who had not disobeyed specific commandments as Adam did, but whose heart was nevertheless as a result of Adam's fall desperately wicked (Rom. 5:14). The effects of the curse laid upon the earth for Adam's sake are destined, Paul points out, to remain till the final manifestation of the sons of God: for the groaning and travelling creation, with its marks of frustration, change, and decay, is what it is because it has been deliberately subjected to vanity by its Creator (Rom. 8:20). As R. Haldane commented, 'The same creation which declares that there is a God and publishes his glory, also proves that he is the enemy of sin and the avenger of the crimes of men, so that the revelation of wrath is universal throughout the world and none can plead ignorance of it'.³

³ *The Epistle to the Romans*, 55.

The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the earthly Paradise led directly, in the Genesis story, to that succession of evils which, Paul enumerates as characteristic of human life in Romans 1:29 and 30. Special attention is drawn in this record of the earliest days of human existence to the destructive nature of sin in the murder of Abel by Cain, the first of many Biblical illustrations of the truth that 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God' (Jas. 1:2); to the inherent restlessness of man as he becomes 'a fugitive and a wanderer over the face of the earth; and to the incestuous marriage of 'the sons of God and the daughters of men', a violation of the order of creation which God had established which resulted in wickedness so great that 'God repented that he had made man upon the earth', and was moved to destroy by water the whole race of men with the exception of Noah and seven others. In the Biblical perspective this is the most significant example of the divine wrath in the pre-Christian era; it is a manifestation of the judgement of God so outstanding that it has no parallel except the judgement which God will pass upon sinners on the final 'day of his wrath'. Not merely does the second Epistle of Peter draw attention to this parallel in the words 'the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished; but the heavens that now are, and the earth ... have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men' (2 Pet. 3:6,7), but the Son of God himself places these two judgements side by side when he says: 'As were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man' (Matt. 24:37).

In the mercy of God a new beginning seemed possible for mankind after the salvation of Noah and his family; and it is probable that Scripture implies that Noah made known to his contemporaries a fresh revelation of the sovereign justice of God, for he is described in 2 Peter 2:5 as 'a preacher of righteousness'. But the inherent pride of man led him once again to forget his creaturely estate and to seek to obliterate the distance between heaven and earth, *i.e.* between God and himself, by the erection of the tower of Babel. Trading upon the mercy of God revealed in the salvation from the flood, men succeeded only in evoking a fresh expression of the divine wrath, which resulted in the confusion of human speech and in the rise of the numerous languages which have caused so much misunderstanding and been such a divisive factor in human life.

It is clear from these opening chapters of Genesis not only that the wrath of God manifests itself especially in the confounding of human pride whenever it asserts itself, and in the inflicting of suffering and death as just punishments; but also that man by sinning is plunged into further sin and into all the misery and distress which sin brings in its train. This is the truth to which Paul gives explicit utterance in the last section of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, to which we must now return.

The various acts of uncleanness mentioned by the apostle in Romans 1:24-27, some of them the very acts which led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, 'which the Lord overthrew in his anger and his wrath' (Deut. 29:23), are the effects both of the

idolatry which brings down upon mankind the wrath of God, and of the essential corruption of the human heart. Paul speaks in these verses of God giving men up to 'uncleanness' and to 'vile passions'. God is therefore directly operative in this process of moral decline, though he is not responsible for moral evil. We should do well to bear in mind the comment of Haldane on this difficult passage. 'We must distinguish', he wrote, 'between man's abandonment by God and the awful effects of the abandonment. The abandonment proceeded from divine justice but the effect from the corruption of man, in which God had no part. The abandonment is a negative act of God, or rather negation of acting, of which God is absolutely master, since being under no obligation to confer grace upon any man, he is free to withhold it as he sees good, so that in this withholding there is no injustice'. There comes a point at which 'God ceases to strive with man any longer' (see Gen. 6:3).

The reason why sins of moral uncleanness are given such prominence in this section of Romans is probably not merely because they were especially prevalent in the Roman world at the time when the Epistle was written, but because they are the sins which are so often directly associated with idolatry. The truth thus becomes apparent that when man degrades God he also degrades himself beneath the level of the beasts. The apostle accordingly states in verse 28, 'Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do the things which are not fitting'; which Hodge well paraphrased, bringing out the play on the Greek words: 'As they did not approve of God, he gave them over to a mind which no one could approve'.

In the light of the language used in this first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans it is unsatisfactory to limit the meaning of the 'wrath of God' in the NT solely to the effects which follow upon sinful actions. We feel, therefore, the inadequacy of such a statement as that of Professor C.H. Dodd that 'Paul retains the concept of "the wrath of God" not to describe the attitude of God to man but to describe the inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe'.⁴ 'The wrath of God', as has been well said, 'is an *affectus* as well as an *effectus*, a quality of the nature of God, an attitude of the mind of God towards evil'.

Throughout this section of Romans emphasis is laid upon the essential justice of God's dealings with the heathen. The exhibitions of his wrath are not arbitrary, for God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11), nor are they made for any other purpose except to vindicate his sovereign rights as Creator. Men have fully merited the misery which their sin has brought upon them. 'Knowing', Paul states in 1:32, 'the ordinance of God, that they which practise such things are worthy of death, [they] not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them'. Their conscience, as is made clear in 2:14, though dulled by the moral corruption into which they have sunk, has not obliterated the

⁴ *The Epistle to the Romans*, 23.

knowledge that they are moral beings with a moral sense; for they pass moral judgements upon one another, 'their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them'. This is evidence that, though they have no special revelation of a moral law such as has been revealed to Israel, they possess by nature a knowledge of the difference between right and wrong. They are in a real sense 'a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law [the moral law] written in their hearts', however much they may fail to act in accordance with its dictates.

The essential truth of the matter therefore is that though men possess by nature a moral sense they have in fact not only failed to glorify God and to act in a manner pleasing to him, but have become incapable of doing so because of the sin resident in their members. They are therefore, to use the language of Romans 9:22, 'vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction'. To this truth witness is again borne by the apostle in Ephesians 2:3 where he states that he himself and his fellow-Jewish Christians were, apart from the grace of God received at their conversion, *tekna physei orgēs* by their very nature the objects of God's wrath, as were the rest of mankind. There has been a manifest reluctance on the part of modern commentators to give this expression its obvious positive meaning. Some indeed, because of the absence of the word *theou* after *orgēs* have supposed that Paul is saying no more than that the Gentiles were liable to violent bursts of *human* anger. Such an interpretation would not only strip the passage of its obvious solemnity, but the words would add little to the previous clause; and there are several places in the NT where the word *orgē* seems to refer to God's wrath even though the word 'God' is not mentioned. Other commentators, who recognise that the reference is to the divine anger, seem anxious to tone down as much as possible the meaning of *physei*. Thus Armitage Robinson interprets the expression negatively and paraphrases it by words 'in ourselves', *i.e.* because we lacked divine grace. But the word *physis* should refer to what is innate or ingrained and not to something which is due to a defect caused by particular conditions or circumstances. In this passage therefore it draws attention to the essential constitution of fallen man, which is both the cause of the evil practices into which he has sunk, and the means by which they are persistently maintained. Just as by virtue of the original creation in the image of God men are endowed with moral sense and the gift of conscience, as Paul has stated in 2:14; so too because of their fallen nature they are inevitably involved in behaviour which renders them the objects of the divine wrath. The conclusion therefore is that, apart from the gospel, all mankind that is engendered of the seed of Adam is *tekna physei orgēs*. 'God's displeasure', as Knox translates Ephesians 2:3, 'is their birthright'.

The Manifestation of the Wrath of God Under the Old Covenant

In the last half of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans Paul is concerned to show that the children of Abraham, who in virtue of their privileges as the chosen people of God were apt to assume that they had a right to pass judgement on the rest of

mankind, so far from being exempt from the wrath of God which is the birthright of every child of Adam, were especially the objects of it. Bearing the name of Jew, resting his confidence upon the Mosaic law and the superior knowledge which it gave him of divine things, conscious that his vocation was to be a guide of the morally unenlightened and the ethically immature, 'an instructor of the foolish and a teacher of babes', the Israelite was in fact the victim of that self-deception which blunts a man's sense of the reality and the gravity of his own sin. The apostle, it would appear, is thinking in Romans 2:16-19 not merely of the Israelites of his own day, but of the Israelites throughout the whole of their past history, which has shown them to be guilty of the very sins which they condemn in others. Paul here specifies some of these sins which can be illustrated in detail in the OT.

For all his alleged horror of stealing, the Israelite had often been guilty of such things as dishonest trading, which is a violation of the eighth commandment, 'making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit' (Rom. 2:21; Amos 8:5). For all their professed abhorrence of adultery, the sin of David with Bathsheba stood as a standing record of the fact that the best of Israelites had committed the sin which was recognised as a characteristic sin of heathendom; and because he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, David had inevitably incurred his wrath (2 Sam. 12:14). Moreover, God had protested through the mouth of Jeremiah that the response of his people to his goodness had been to turn the very prosperity which he had given them into an instrument for the committal of this particular sin. 'When I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery, and assembled themselves in troops at the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things' saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?' (Rom. 2:21; Jer. 5:7-9).

For all his detestation of idolatry the Israelite was guilty, Paul assents, of 'robbing temples',⁵ even, it would seem, the temple of his own God! For had not God through Malachi denounced the laxity with which the Israelites performed the sacrifices demanded by the ritual laws of the old covenant in the words 'Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation' (Rom. 2:22; Mal. 3:8, 9)? For all his glorying in the law, the Israelite, by transgressing it, had dishonoured the God who gave it, particularly in the eyes of the surrounding nations, amongst whom his lot had been cast (Rom. 2:23; Ezek. 36:20, 23). And for all his pride in being circumcised the Israelite had tended to forget that there was no inherent security in circumcision against God's wrath.

⁵ Paul does not accuse the Jew of 'idolatry' because since the exile idolatry had become increasingly abhorrent to Israel. In the OT, however, idolatry, particularly in the form of Baal-worship, had again and again provoked the Holy One of Israel 'to anger'. (See Deut. 32:16, 21, 29:24-28.)

Circumcision was a sign or seal of the covenant; but, if the moral obligations imposed by the covenant were disregarded, circumcision was as unavailing as uncircumcision (Rom. 2:25). Nor did membership of the visible congregation of Israel necessarily carry with it membership of the true Israel, in which something more was required from the worshipper than the punctilious observance of the letter of the law. God demanded an inner worship of the heart such as he alone could recognise and appraise (Rom. 2:28, 29).

Throughout the series of dramatic rhetorical questions in the closing verses of Romans 2 Paul is, in effect, drawing attention to the truth that those who prided themselves on being the people of God, were even more subject to the divine wrath than those who were outside the privileges of the divine covenant. For 'to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more' (Luke 12:48). The judgement which 'begins at the house of God' (1 Pet. 4:17) is for that very reason more searching and severe. The tragedy was that the Israelite had never really recognised his sin and was too ready to class the rest of mankind as sinners. The pathetic trust which in Paul's day he had come to place in the outward and visible signs of his religion, was the climax of the continuous spiritual decline depicted in the OT.

As he surveys the story of Israel Paul is led, it would seem, to ask why this moral decline was not, and indeed could not be, arrested in spite of the punishments which God in his wrath had again and again inflicted upon his people, and in spite of the fact that in the law of Moses (that unique gift of God to Israel) a great revelation of the wrath of God against sin had been made; for, as Paul says in Romans 4:15, 'the law worketh wrath'. Just because it requires perfect obedience to its commands, it must at the same time, by the very penalties it exacts for disobedience, render the offender more subject to the divine wrath. Paul concludes that the main reason for the failure of Israel to arrest this process of moral decline lay in its wrong reaction to the forbearance of God, when so often he refrained from punishing them to the extent they deserved. When God, in the words of Psalm 1:21, had 'kept silence' after the covenant had been violated by wickedness in Israel (and the sins which the Psalmist mentions in the previous verses of this Psalm are precisely those enumerated by Paul in this passage of Romans), the Israelites fondly supposed, as we have already noticed, that God was 'even such a one as themselves', easy-going and tolerant of evil. Failing to understand that his goodness in delaying to inflict full punishment and to execute his wrath to the uttermost was designed solely to give further opportunity for repentance (Rom. 2:4⁹), they despised 'the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering', and concluded that he was never going to 'make a full end'. How often, as soon as he turned away his anger, remembering that they were but flesh, had they proceeded to 'turn again and tempt God and provoke the Holy

⁹ *aget* in the expression *ets metanotan se aget* should be interpreted as a conative present. 'The goodness of God is intended to lead thee to repentance.'

One of Israel' (Ps. 78:38–40)! They had disregarded the prophets who assured them that just because God was 'gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repented him of the evil' (i.e. refused to display at present his wrath to the uttermost) they should 'rend their hearts ... and turn unto the Lord their God' (Joel 2:13). And because 'they mocked God's messengers, and despised his words and scoffed at his prophets' the wrath of God arose against his people till 'there was no remedy' (2 Chr. 36:16).

Paul also insists, in the same way as the chronicler of old, that this abuse of God's mercies, so far from staying the avenging hand of God, must result in an accumulation of offences which will finally receive in full the punishment they deserve. If men fail to use the opportunities for repentance; if they persist hardening their hearts as Pharaoh hardened his heart; and if, in spite of the fact that God has 'stretched out his hand all the day long' to them (Is. 65:2) they remain a rebellious people, then their hard and impenitent hearts are treasuring up for themselves wrath in the final day of wrath and of the righteous judgement of God (see Rom. 2:5). This is the only *abiding* wealth that the wicked possess. It is not because God has laid aside his wrath, but because he has willed to show his wrath and make his power known on the great 'day of wrath' that he has 'endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction' (Rom. 9:22⁷). In that final display of wrath his righteousness will be vindicated and his name glorified. The goodness of God can never therefore secure impunity to sinners; and their abuse of it must of necessity aggravate their guilt and their punishment.

Both the evidence then of the OT and the state of the Jews in Paul's own day bore witness to the truth that Jews as well as Gentiles were the object of the divine wrath, from which nothing but the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ could rescue them; for 'none was righteous, no not a single one' (Rom. 3:10). Those who receive special knowledge of God and are the peculiar objects of his love must also, as the prophets insisted, be the special objects of his wrath if they disregard that knowledge and despise that love. 'You only', says God through Amos, 'have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities' (Amos 3:2). And Amos proceeds to describe in chapter four some of the ways in which God would 'visit the transgressions of Israel upon him'. Moreover once God has decided to execute his wrath upon his people nothing that they can do can withstand it. So Ezekiel prophesies the futility of any defence by the inhabitants of Jerusalem against the Babylonians; for the downfall of the city has been decreed by God. The inhabitants of Jerusalem have indeed made preparations for defence, but they lack courage to face the enemy just because the wrath of God has predetermined their defeat. 'They have blown the trumpet, and have made all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof' (Ezek. 7:14). 'Who',

⁷ The participle *thelōn* in this verb I assume to be causative and not concessive.

asked the Psalmist 'may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry?' (Ps. 76:7).

It was not however to be inferred from this long story of a disobedient and backsliding people that God's election of Israel to be a chosen instrument of his purpose had failed. If there was no ground for any boastful sense of superiority on the part of the Jew, so too there was no ground for any boasting on the part of the Gentile. God's plan for the salvation of his elect could not be rendered void either by the disobedience of the chosen people; or by the arrogance of their oppressors; or by those whom God had called to be the instruments of his avenging wrath, but who had boasted of their own strength and assumed glory for themselves. If his anger is kindled against his own people, it is also kindled against those who sought to prevent the execution of his will for Israel. An outstanding instance of such an attempt to thwart the purposes of God is the stubbornness of Pharaoh. Yet the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and the subsequent punishment inflicted upon him were the means by which God's power was shown and his name published abroad in the earth (see Rom. 9:17; Exod. 4:16). Similarly because 'Amalek set himself against Israel in the way when he came out of Egypt' Saul is bidden to be the minister of God's avenging wrath by smiting Amalek and utterly destroying 'all that they have' (1 Sam. 15:2, 3). And when Saul disobeys this command by sparing Agag and the best of the spoils he learns that he himself has become hostile to the Lord because 'he did not execute the fierce wrath upon Amalek' (1 Sam. 28:18). 'The kings of the earth who take counsel together against the Lord', said the Psalmist, 'shall be had in derision by the Lord, who will speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure' (see Ps. 2:1-5).

As for those whom God had summoned to inflict punishment upon Israel, such as the Assyrians, God speaks to them through Isaiah in this fashion: 'Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets'; but the prophecy continues: 'I will punish ... the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he hath said, By the strength of my hand have I done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent' (Is. 20:5, 6, 12, 13).

The prophecy of Nahum, which predicts the destruction of Nineveh the Assyrian capital, whose crimes have merited its downfall, is prefaced by a remarkable introductory poem descriptive of the manifestation of God's wrath in the convulsions of nature. 'The Lord is a jealous God and avengeth; the Lord avengeth and is full of wrath; the Lord taketh vengeance on his adversaries ... the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers ... The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at his presence ... Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?' (Nah. 1:2-6). This wrath is soon to be turned against Nineveh 'the

bloody city ... all full of lies and rapine'. Because 'the prey departeth not' and Nineveh is always plundering, it will itself be the prey of the plunderer. Because 'through the glamour of its power and the speciousness of its statecraft it has seduced to their ruin the peoples that entered into relations with it ... it will undergo degradation parallel to that inflicted upon an unchaste woman'.⁸ Similarly, when Habakkuk complained to God that the Chaldeans whom God had raised up to punish his people were themselves a wicked people, he was told that, because the soul of the Chaldean was puffed up and not upright in him (see Hab. 2:4); and because he had used his victories as occasions for evil gain and tyrannous oppression, he too would become the object of the divine wrath. The third chapter of Habakkuk contains a poem descriptive of God marching forth to execute his wrath 'against all peoples who thwart his purposes'. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the nations in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people. for the salvation of thine anointed' (Hab. 3:12, 13). Another very vivid description of God's vengeance upon the enemies of Israel is to be found in Isaiah 63:1-6. The prophet sees God coming 'from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah' stained with the blood of his enemies; and God tells him that he alone 'in the greatness of his strength' could so succour his people in their distress. 'I have trodden the winepress alone; ... yea, I trod them in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments ... For the day of vengeance was in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come'.

These last two passages remind us that, though God's people deserve and receive in part punishment at the hands of God, who is angry when faced with sin, and who must give expression through his anger to his sovereignty and his justice, nevertheless in his dealings with Israel under the covenant relationship he is concerned to make ready the way (if need be by the extermination of his enemies) for the execution of his plan for the salvation of his elect. The love of God does not eliminate his wrath, but it prevents him from giving *full* expression to it in his dealings with Israel. In his loving mercy he has chosen Israel to be a peculiar people, the people of the covenant; and that covenant relationship can never be abandoned till a new covenant has been established. However much Israel may sin, it was called out of Egypt to be the son of God's love (Hos. 11:1). Samaria, the city where Israel dwelt, could never therefore become as Sodom or as one of the cities of the Plain. Such is the burden of God's tender pleadings in Hosea 11:8 *ff.*: 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man'.

⁸ G.W. Wade's paraphrase of Nahum 3:4, 5 in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 592.

But the most tender, perhaps, of all such expressions of God's love for Israel, which leads him to refuse to abandon the covenant relationship with his chosen people, and necessitates a limitation of his anger, is that contained in Isaiah 54:8, 10: 'In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee *for a moment*; but with *everlasting* kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer ... For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.' Or, as the same truth is expressed in Micah 7:18, 'He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.'

We can sum up this part of our study by saying that under the old covenant the nature of sin was made clear; and men were forced by the destructive manifestations of God's power to recognise that his attitude towards sin can only be one of wrath. The old covenant could not, however, save men from sin, nor put them right with God. But when through the revelation given in the law and the prophets, and through the unmistakable signs of the divine wrath in the providential ordering of human affairs, God had revealed himself in his absolute sovereignty, his perfect holiness, and his unfailing justice, – then the old covenant had done its work, and the way was open for the establishment of the new. In other words, when the truth had at least partially been learned, as Job eventually learned it, in the bitter school of suffering, that man must not contend with God his Maker; that all human pride must be crushed before him who reveals himself in the whirlwind; and that the sinner must be humiliated and 'abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes' (Job 42:6), – then the infinite pity and mercy of God, of which the OT so often speaks, could break through into human history in the person of his incarnate Son. In Jesus the loving purposes of God set forth in the OT, come finally to fulfilment; but not, let us notice, by any abandonment of the reality of his wrath or by any refusal to display it. The God revealed in Jesus Christ is the same God who challenged Job to pour forth, if he could, the overflowings of his anger, and look upon every one that is proud and abase him and bring him low (see Job 40:11,12). To manifest anger effectively against the pride which constitutes human sin is still, and must always be, the sole prerogative of almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our next task therefore must be to see how in Jesus Christ we have a revelation from heaven not only of the goodness, but also of the severity of God.

LAST SUPPER/LORD'S SUPPER: MORE THAN A PARABLE IN ACTION?

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The Lord's Supper as parable and prophetic drama

In a highly suggestive essay,¹ a former General Editor of *Themelios*, David Wenham, argues a cogent case for the Last Supper to be understood parabolically, indeed that it was an *acted* parable. He writes: 'On the night of his arrest Jesus did not just gather the disciples and say: let me explain what is going to happen when I die. Instead he took bread and wine and said, 'This is my body ... this is my blood' and gave it to them. Why? We have already seen how Jesus' parables were verbal dramas that involved and challenged people in a very personal way. The Last Supper was the same: in it Jesus symbolically acted out what he was about to do on the cross before his gathered disciples. And he did not just act it out before them: he involved them personally, in a terribly vivid way.'²

More recently, another contributor to this journal, Tom Wright, has also drawn attention to the significance of the dramatic and highly symbolic nature of the Last Supper:³ 'Jesus' last meal with his followers was a deliberate double drama. As a Passover meal (of sorts), it told the story of Jewish history in terms of divine deliverance from tyranny, looking back to the exodus from Egypt and on to the great new exodus, the return from exile, that was still eagerly awaited. But Jesus' meal fused this great story together with another one: the story of Jesus' own life, and his coming death. It somehow involved him in the god-given drama, not as a spectator, or as one participant among many, but as the central character.'⁴ Wright then goes on to argue that the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper 'must be seen in the same way as the symbolic actions of certain prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jeremiah smashes a pot; Ezekiel makes a model of Jerusalem under siege. So far one might adduce that this hardly differs from the parabolic paradigm of Wenham, but Wright adds: 'The actions carry prophetic power, effecting the events (mostly acts of judgement) which are then to

¹ D. Wenham, 'How Jesus understood the Last Supper: a parable in action', *Themelios*, Vol. 20.2 (1995), 11-16.

² Wenham, 'Last Supper', 14.

³ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 554-63.

⁴ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 554.

occur. They are at once explained in terms of those events, or rather of YHWH's operating through them.⁵

Both writers make much of the view that what is involved in the event of the Last Supper is more than the communication of the theological truth, so Wenham states: 'We have got so used to the eucharistic words and actions that they hardly move us: but for those first disciples to be given the bread and the wine, to be told 'This is my body ... this is my blood', and to be invited to eat and drink must have been a bewildering and shocking thing. We can imagine them questioning in their minds:

'Your body? Your blood? eat it, drink it?' What was Jesus doing? Not simply giving them theological information, but rather giving them a theological experience. In the Last Supper they experienced for themselves what the cross was all about – about the body and blood of Jesus being given up, broken, poured out for them, and about the need to take that death to themselves ('eat ... drink').⁶

Interestingly, although Wright draws attention to the prophetic action represented by the deeds and words of the Last Supper, the focus is still very much on the referential aspect relating to Jesus' mission – as conveying information about his role in God's redemptive act on behalf of Israel. Little, if any, attention is given as to how symbolic actions operate and what effect they were intended to have at any level other than the purely informative: 'Jesus' symbolic action deliberately evoked the whole exodus tradition and gave it a new direction.⁷

Both writers seem to want to claim that the Last Supper was more than (although certainly no less than) Jesus communicating a new truth, or rather an old truth in a new way – the climax of God's saving action being fulfilled in himself. Accordingly, Wenham writes,

In this case we are dealing not just with a 'language event' ... but with something more powerful. Marriage counsellors explain to couples that communication between people happens in all sorts of ways – through words ('I love you') visually (through our eyes, through how we dress, etc.), through touch (the handshake or the kiss), or even through smell (e.g. perfume!). The Lord's Supper is a multi-media communication; it speaks to us of the death of Christ and of the love of God in words, but also visually and through touch – we see and take the bread and wine – and even through taste – we eat and drink.⁸

But even here, the other 'ways' listed by Wenham (touch, smell etc.) only appear to be operating as sensory words which are informative – hence, 'speaks to us of the death of Christ and the love of God'. May not the symbolic action and the words which accompany them

⁵ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 558.

⁶ Wenham, 'Last Supper', 14–15.

⁷ Wright, *Jesus and Victory of God*, 562.

⁸ Wenham, 'Last Supper', 15

function at more than one level and in such a way which will result in them having the sort of effect that Jesus' parables and the actions of the prophets had in going beyond the simple imparting of information to actually bringing about a change in perception, attitude and action on the part of the receptor audience?

One productive way forward is inadvertently suggested by Wright in his treatment of the subject. Stressing the need for scholars to pay much closer attention to the place of symbolic actions in ancient Near Eastern culture than hitherto, he chides:

Modern westerners, who live in a world that has rid itself of many of its ancient symbols, and mocks and marginalises those that are left, have to make a huge effort of historical imagination to enter a world where a single action can actually say something (it is ironic that philosophers within our words-and-ideas culture have had to struggle to reclaim this notion, by means of such concepts as 'speech-acts').⁹

There may be more than a hint of derision in the way Wright states his case (and not without some justification) but it is the idea of speech-acts which might come to our aid to enrich and fill out what both Wenham and Wright are straining towards regarding the symbolic nature of the Lord's Supper.

Speech-act theory helps us not only to recognise that, in the words of Wright, 'a single action can actually say something' but it also enables us to conceive how words and actions can actually *do* something. This paper will seek to explore how this is so in relation to the Lord's Supper and the Last Supper from which it is derived.

Last Supper and Passover

Before we consider in more detail the insights afforded by speech-act theory in our understanding of the Lord's Supper, it is necessary briefly to relate what the Last Supper was, that is, to grasp something of its historical context in order to tease out its theological significance.

The work of Jeremiah is still basic to this subject¹⁰ and, as Wright maintains, it is 'virtually certain that the meal in question was *some kind of Passover meal*'.¹¹ But what kind?

Two actions figure in the synoptic accounts of the Last Supper and the Lord's reinterpretation of the Passover in relation to his own impending death: the giving of bread (together with the accompanying explanatory words, 'this is my body given for you') and the giving of the cup after the supper (and accompanying words of interpretation, 'the blood of the new covenant'). Since the copula 'is' would have been absent from the Aramaic or Hebrew utterance, it is taken that the actions are meant as significations; but of what?

⁹ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 554.

¹⁰ J. Jeremiah, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966).

¹¹ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 555.

E. Schweizer suggests that the 'I' refers to the totality of the person – the giving of the complete self.¹² The phrase 'given for you' certainly appears to reflect OT sacrificial terminology relating either to the making of a sacrifice or the death of a martyr on behalf of others. Jeremias posits the reference to Jesus as the eschatological Passover Lamb.¹³ Marshall draws attention to the close similarity in language between the 'For many/you' in the cup saying of Mark, and Isaiah 53:11ff. as being seminal to Jesus' self-understanding of his death and its subsequent reflection in his reinterpretation of the Passover meal. However, he goes on to point out that it is possible to combine all of the above suggestions which would mean that Jesus saw himself as fulfilling several strands of OT types simultaneously.¹⁴

Whatever the divergence over details between the Synoptists, there is unanimity that at the most significant moment the actions of Christ were in the following order: (a) he took bread (or cup) into his hands; (b) he gave thanks; (c) he said 'This is my body', or (in some form) 'This is my blood of the covenant'.

In recent years some scholars have attempted to unpack the significance of the phrase *Eis anamnesin* (in remembrance).¹⁵ Whilst taking cognisance of Thiselton's warning that 'ideas about *anamnesis*, or remembering, in terms of tangible re-enactment are precarious grounds on which to base a whole doctrine and practice of the eucharist',¹⁶ one thing is unmistakable, the phrase focuses the manward aspect of the meal, it is not that the meal is a reminder to God, but an opportunity for his people to be reminded of what he has achieved for them. The words of Alan Stibbs are still timely on this point, 'the Greek word *anamnesis* expresses the idea of calling to mind, a recalling or recollection, exactly similar to the way in which the Jews at the celebration of the Passover recalled their deliverance from Egypt. To the Semitic mind thus to commemorate a past event was personally to realise and experience its present operative significance as one event with abiding consequences.'¹⁷

As well as the backward remembering aspect, the institution of the Lord's Supper has a future anticipatory dimension too. As Marshall writes: 'the Lord's Supper is linked to the Passover in that the Passover is a type of the heavenly banquet while the Lord's Supper is an anticipation of the heavenly banquet.'¹⁸ This is particularly focused in Luke's account of the Last Supper with the idea of fulfilment in the Kingdom of God and Christ's followers 'eating and drinking at my table in the kingdom' (Luke 22:14–30). So the Lord's Supper is 'an ordinance for those who live between the cross and the

¹² E. Schweizer, *The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament*.

¹³ J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words* 220–25.

¹⁴ I.H. Marshall, *The Last Supper and the Lord's Supper* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1980) 89.

¹⁵ E.g. D. Gregg, *Anamnesis in the Eucharist* (Grove Liturgical Study No. 5)

¹⁶ A. Thiselton, *Language, Liturgy and Meaning* (Grove Liturgical Study No. 2), 30.

¹⁷ A.M. Stibbs, *Sacrament, Sacrifice and Eucharist* (Tyndale Press, 1961), 45.

¹⁸ Marshall, *Last Supper, Lord's Supper*, 80.

End. It looks back to what Jesus did and said "on the night when he was betrayed" (1 Cor. 11:23) and recalls his death on behalf of all men. But it looks forward to the *Parousia*.¹⁹

Wenham²⁰ helpfully sums up the point about the Last Supper being set against the context of the Passover schematically as follows:

The Passover

*In the old age of law and the prophets
Was the great festival meal of people.*

They remembered the Passover sacrifice, the exodus from Egypt, the new beginning for covenant people.

By participating, Jews associated themselves with this salvation and covenant.

Looking back to the exodus and forward to God's salvation.

The Lord's Supper

In the new age of the kingdom

Is to be the new celebratory God's meal of God's people.

To remember the sacrificial of Jesus, bringing freedom from sin, the new covenant of the Spirit

By participating, Jesus' followers associate with his redemption and covenant.

Looking back to the cross and forward to the Kingdom.

Having established the historical context and theological significance of the Last Supper centring on Jesus' person and cross-work, we are now in a position to consider how the words and symbols used achieve operational effect, both in terms of the original disciples at the Last Supper and all Christian believers as they participate in the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper – just a brilliant act of communication?

Referring back to the article by Wenham, this is how he perceives the nature and function of the Lord's Supper: 'The Lord's Supper is brilliant communication. We cannot see God (though in his ministry his followers did), but God has given us a multi-media sign, bringing home to us the reality and meaning of our Lord's death. The Lord's Supper is not magic, not a trick of converting bread and wine into something else; but it is a brilliantly acted parable that communicates the love of God demonstrated on the cross in a way that involves us and challenges us.'²¹ We would agree. However, Dr Wenham does not say *how* this might take place. One is still left with the impression that both the symbols of the bread and the wine and their accompanying interpretative words operate solely at the informational level while, no doubt, having some emotive as well as

¹⁹ A. and R. Hanson, *Reasonable Belief* (Oxford: Oxford, 1981), 231.

²⁰ Wenham, 'Last Supper', 14.

²¹ Wenham, 'Last Supper', 15.

cognitive effect. It is precisely at this point speech-act theory comes to assist and enlarge our comprehension.

We begin by considering how language actually functions, that is, what are the intended effects of speech utterances.

A useful classification has been provided by G.B. Caird²² who groups them under four headings. Words are used (a) to talk to people, things and ideas (informative); (b) to think (cognitive); (c) to do things and get things done (performative and causative); (d) to display and elicit attitudes and feelings (expressive and evocative); (e) to provide means of communal solidarity (cohesive).

Of prime importance is the idea of performatives as fathered by J.L. Austin²³ and brought to maturity by John Searle.²⁴ As the term implies, performatives *perform* rather than *inform*. Here the speaker is '*doing* something rather than merely *saying* something'.²⁵ 'The utterance is the performing of an action.'²⁶ Many statements set out in the indicative mood are not strictly true or false, but are designed to bring about a state of affairs. For example, in the wedding service the officiating minister asks: 'Will you take x to be your lawful wedded wife?' and the response made (hopefully!) is 'I will'. This is not a description of marriage, but part of the act of *getting* married. This type of speech-act was distinguished from others which were mainly referential (about things) and called 'constatives'.

Later, Austin was to consider *all* utterances as speech-acts to be performatives. Within his general theory there are two other specifications which are relevant to our discussion.

First, a distinction has to be made between speech-acts in the narrow sense - making referential statements, proclaiming forgiveness, making promises *etc.*, *i.e.* what we *do* with statements- and the *effect* of such utterances on people-persuading, amusing or annoying them. The former is termed the *illocutionary act* and the latter the *perlocutionary act*. Secondly, within the illocutionary act a further distinction is to be made between the propositional content (referred to as the *locutionary act* which is equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense) and the type of speech-act, termed the *illocutionary force* (*e.g.* a command, an invitation, a warning). Therefore, one could have several illocutionary acts, all with the same propositional content (locution), but differing in force. Take the following statements - 'Do you believe in God?' (question); 'Believe in God' (plea); 'You will believe in God' (prediction). In each case the propositional content is the same, but what one is doing and what one hopes to achieve will differ. Thus in relation to an illocutionary

²² G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Duckworth, 1980), 7-36.

²³ J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

²⁴ John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: CUP, 1969)

²⁵ J.L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) 222.

²⁶ J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, 6.

act, when one asks, 'What is meant by it?' one may mean: (a) What type of speech-act is it? or (b) What is its propositional content?

In relation to both the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper it is important to stress the functional view of language in order to guard against the common tendency to conceive them as being solely referential, which could lead in two opposite directions. The first would be to think of the elements in terms of identity (this bread is the body of Christ – the error of classical Roman Catholicism) or purely in terms of referring to Christ's death on the cross as a mere memorial. But as shall be argued below, words and symbolic actions can have a function which is more varied than referential, they can be vehicles whereby something is *imparted* to the recipient and certain states of affairs established, without having to resort to some quasi-magical or mystical view of the sacraments. Indeed, a way of conceiving the Lord's Supper can be developed on this basis which is wholly consistent with the evangelical belief in the primacy and efficacy of God's Word.

At this juncture it is necessary to draw attention to two other points made by Austin in connection with performatives. First, this type of language only functions if certain conventions hold; the shaking of hands by two businessmen to conclude a financial deal is only meaningful in a culture where this functions as sign of agreement and trust. This point is akin to Wittgenstein's 'language games', where he states that language functions within particular life settings. The meanings and concepts are in part derived from the game itself. Thus the function and sense of the speech-acts performed in the context of the Lord's Supper are determined by their place within the life setting of the Christian community and the revelation given in Scripture upon which that community is based. Secondly, as Austin claims, 'for a certain performative utterance to be happy, certain statements must be true'. 'In other words, performatives in the narrow sense can only function within the wider context of the referential understanding of reality – that language is also *about* things, states of affairs which are said to exist.

This second point is vital to our discussion about the nature of the Lord's Supper. The claim that the body of Christ was 'given for you' makes no sense at all unless it is related to the Son of God who in history gave his body as an atoning sacrifice on the cross. This will obviously set limits to eucharistic interpretation, so that a 'planetary mass' becomes something else with only a passing superficial similarity to the Lord's Supper as instituted by Jesus. What is more, it must be anchored within the wider web of Christian doctrine as revealed in Scripture. Thus, the clear and repeated assertion that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was final and once and for all (Heb. 9:25f; 1:3; 8:1; 12:2) rules out entirely in any form the notion that Christ's sacrifice is recapitulated or offered with him to God in the eucharist.²⁷

²⁷ For example, the ARCLC statement on the Eucharist 'we enter into the movement of Christ's self offering' (pp. 14, 20) or Rowan Williams, 'our ▶

The Lord's Supper: Speech-act and Symbol-act

It is proposed that the Last Supper, and the derivative Lord's Supper, can be conceived of in the same way as Austin and Searle's speech-acts.

First, the Lord's Supper in its entirety is also an *illocutionary act*, the Lord by his Spirit *does* things. In the giving of the bread and the wine and through the accompanying words, the correlated aspects of divine love, forgiveness and eschatological hope are not merely attested to, but imparted. Just as the physical act of embracing or kissing someone is capable of *conveying* forgiveness and acceptance (as in the story of the Prodigal son in Luke 15:20), so the physical act of giving the bread and the wine conveys forgiveness and gracious acceptance by God by virtue of Christ's finished work on the cross.

As with any speech-act, for both the meaning and illocutionary force to operate, certain conventions have to be true (in this case, the symbolic convention established by Jesus himself that the bread and the wine symbolise his body and blood). Similarly, we may think of the illustration of the giving of a wedding ring. This does not simply 'speak' of love and commitment (as a non-verbal conveyer of information, informing people of his intentions), its giving in part *brings it about*, establishing the wedding covenant. Cannot the same be said of the sacramental act of the giving and receiving of the bread and the wine? There is the commissive act of God committing himself to the believer established at Calvary and the response of the believer to this commitment by God.

Secondly, we may also consider the perlocutionary act of the Lord's Supper, that is, what is achieved through it. This is largely dependent upon the apprehension not only of the meaning of the sacramental action (what the giving of the bread and the wine represent) but the illocutionary force. For the promise to be grasped, assurance attained, unity between believers achieved, loving obedience elicited, as Austin says, 'illocutionary uptake' must be secured. What is required is not only an understanding of the meaning of the statement 'My body which is given for you, take and eat this in remembrance of me', but the force with which the symbols and statements are taken – that they *count* as promise, persuasion, assurance and unification.

Searle²⁸ distinguishes the meaning (propositional content) and that which the act counts as, by the formula F(p). F = the illocutionary force (whether it is a command, promise, binding agreement *etc.*) and p = the meaning. What is argued here is that the sacramental act enhances the F dimension, thus conveying through the giving of the bread and the wine together with the interpretative words, something more than would be achieved by the mere saying of the words 'Jesus loves you and died for you'.

being offered in and by Christ is the basic fact of the Eucharist' (in *Essays on Eucharistic Sacrifice*, ed. Colin Buchanan, 34.

²⁸ J.R. Searle, *Speech Acts* 25ff.

As with a particular Bible passage, so the illocutionary force of the Lord's Supper results from a combination of the meaning and intentions of God and the form he 'incarnates' his authoritative voice and presence.²⁹

As Vanhoozer claims 'while the proponents of propositional revelation have cherished the (p) of the speech-act F(p)³⁰ so we maintain that the reduction of the Lord's Supper to a mere memorial underplays the F aspect of the sacramental action.³¹

John Searle proposed that we do five basic things with language: 'We tell people how things are, we try to get them to do things, we commit ourselves to doing things, we express our feelings and attitudes and we bring about changes through our utterances. Often we do more than one of these at once in the same utterance.'³² We would contend *mutatis mutandis* the same applies to the Lord's Supper, with God himself achieving these five 'illocutionary points' in relation to believers. Thus, truth is communicated regarding the atoning death of Christ and its benefits; God seeks to get us to do things to respond in loving Christian service and heartfelt praise; he conveys his feelings and attitudes towards us as well as bringing about the changes he seeks in terms of Christian holiness and Christian fellowship.

The question then arises: How is the 'illocutionary uptake achieved?' The answer is twofold.

First, there is the divine aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. The same principle of action holds vis-à-vis the 'visible gospel' of the Lord's Supper as with the 'audible' gospel of the Word proclaimed or read. In relation to understanding and appropriating Scripture, Vanhoozer writes: 'The Spirit's agency consists, then in bringing the illocutionary point home to the reader and in achieving the corresponding perlocutionary effect-belief, obedience, praise and so on. The Word is the indispensable instrument of the Spirit's persuasive (perlocutionary) power. On the one hand, the Spirit is "mute" without the Word; and on the other hand, the Word is "inactive" without the Spirit. Word and Spirit together make up God's speech (speech-act).'³³ We would argue the same principle applies to the 'visible Word' (which would also include the words of institution and call for self-examination) of the Lord's Supper. Just as the Word of Scripture does not work *ex opere operato*, neither does the 'word' of the sacrament. It achieves its effect through the Spirit taking up and applying the words and symbols in the hearts and minds of believers.

²⁹ Cf K.J. Vanhoozer 'The Semantics of Biblical Literature', *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*, D.A. Carson and J.D. Woodbridge Eds (Leicester: IVP, 1986)

³⁰ K.J. Vanhoozer, *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*, 91.

³¹ Cf Melvin Tinker, 'Language, Symbols and Sacraments. Was Calvin's View of the Lord's Supper Right?', *Churchman* Vol. 112, No. 2, 1998, 131-49.

³² J.R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), 29.

³³ K.J. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in the Text?* (Apollon, 1998), 428-29.

Secondly, there is the human aspect of faith. Granted this too is a divine gift, it is still something which has to be exercised in response to the movement of God towards us. This involves an element of *assensus*, recognising certain things to be true regarding the person and work of Christ and the meaning of the Lord's Supper. But it also embraces *fiducia*, that personal trusting in the one who conveys his promises and his love through the sacramental act.

In a less technical way, the same ideas were well understood and propounded by the late and well loved evangelical scholar, Alan Stibbs. Using the illustration of a telephone conversation with a far away friend, such that through the conversation the friend's 'presence' is experienced for a few minutes, Stibbs goes on to write:

In ways like this, but far more wonderfully and with no make-believe, when I attend an administration of the Lord's Supper, and see and hear the sacramental movement begun, and realise that it is personally and imperatively addressed to me, and to all there present with me, and that it demands corresponding action and response; then it is right to believe that in this movement Christ himself is present and active and offering afresh to give me, through his death for men, his indwelling presence by his Spirit, and the outworked experience of all the benefits of his passion to speak of answering a telephone call is indeed an illustration utterly inadequate and unworthy. For this movement is like the approach of a bridegroom to the bride. Its proper consummation like the giving and receiving a the ring in marriage. Indeed, it is like the crowning intercourse of love itself.³⁴

Stibbs has grasped that the Lord's Supper is more than the communication in a variety of forms, tangible and audible, gospel doctrines, just as an embrace or a kiss is more than saying 'I love you', they can be the vehicles whereby that love is imparted and experienced.

Wenham concludes: 'The sacraments are multi-media parables – speaking to us not just through words (though those are centrally important), but also through touch and sight and taste as well. We miss out on something of their power if we shut our eyes during Communion and ignore touch and taste; we need to allow Jesus' acted parables to function as they were designed-in all their multi-dimensional power.'³⁵ What has been argued here is that by paying due attention to the performative nature of the Lord's Supper, Wenham's point is actually strengthened.

A personal example of the performative power of the Lord's Supper is given by the late evangelical hymn writer, Michael Perry:

I recall one Sunday returning home from a distance, none too pleased with myself, and wanting to hear the words of assurance of God's forgiveness with which many Anglican

³⁴ A.M. Stibbs, *Sacrament, Sacrifice and Eucharist*, 75.

³⁵ Wenham, 'Last Supper', 15.

services begin. I was too late – I had missed the 'absolution'. I crept into the back of the congregation feeling that I should not go forward to receive the bread and the wine – for that was the form of service that evening. However, I did go – and held out my open hands. It was as the bread touched me that I knew I was forgiven. What words had not been able to do the physical consciousness of the bread, the token and reality of God's love for me in Christ, was able to achieve. I think it is like that for many more people than we realise – to whom sacrament or symbol conveys most effectively the assurance of Christ's saving work upon the cross.³⁶

Like the kiss of the father in our Lord's parable perhaps?

³⁶ Michael Perry, *Preparing for Worship*, (Marshall Pickering, 1995), pp. 7–8.

THE BIBLE AND EDUCATION: WAYS OF CONSTRUING THE RELATIONSHIP

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Introduction

It is a basic assumption of most Christian educational discussion that it is possible to relate the Bible fruitfully to education. Indeed, in the world of Christian schooling this assumption is presented frequently as a badge of honour, with phrases such as 'biblical Christian education' used to indicate the superior scriptural faithfulness of some particular set of proposals. The commendable zeal of such appeals is not always matched by clarity regarding how we are to relate the Scriptures to particular educational practices – in fact at times the devout conviction that there must be such a relationship seems to lead Christian educators to spy it in the most peculiar places. Some Australian teachers working through an MA module on the Bible and education have reported various examples to me. These include an instance of a policy requiring children to wear hats before playing outside in the sun being justified by biblical references to activities occurring 'in the cool of the day'. There are also instances of scriptural references to the fire of God being brought into a unit on temperature, and even of Jesus' reference to Peter as a rock being inserted into work on geology.¹ In the light of such curious attempts to relate biblical phrases (with little regard to their canonical meaning) to educational practices which are easily justified on more mundane grounds, it is hardly surprising that the idea that education should or even could be 'biblical' has not gone unchallenged.

A prominent and pertinent challenge was mounted by Paul Hirst in his 1971 article 'Christian Education: A Contradiction in Terms?'² Parts of Hirst's argument now seem quite dated. The rationalism which enabled him to claim that education must be based solely on the foundation of autonomous reason, and not on the more

¹ My thanks to Maryanne Frisken, Dean Spalding and Hilary Woodley for these examples.

² Paul H. Hirst, 'Christian education: A contradiction in terms?' *Faith and Thought*, 1971, Vol. 99, No. 1, 43–54.

contingent basis of tradition or belief, has more recently been repudiated to a significant degree by Hirst himself.³ However, while this appeal to reason formed the basis of Hirst's claim that we *should* not appeal to the Bible as an educational authority, there was another strand to his argument. He also maintained that even if we wanted to relate the Bible to modern education, we would be facing an impossible task. He observed that we cannot simply transfer practices from the Bible to the present day – there seems, after all, to be very little in the Bible which is very directly concerned with present day educational structures and practices, and nothing at all about schooling. Should biblical Christian educators wear sandals and teach on mountainsides, or teach learners in groups of twelve? This difficulty, Hirst suggested, is what leads Christians to be so concerned with 'biblical principles', that is, more generalised and predominantly ethical statements which can bridge the gap between the Bible and present day education. Yet it is precisely this strategy which, according to Hirst, has little prospect of success.

The problem with general principles, as Hirst saw it, is that they tend to be compatible with a wide range of specific actions, depending on the contextual factors which we take into account. Does the call to love children as image-bearers mean that we should abandon examinations because of their social divisiveness, narrow focus and tendencies to induce stress, or that we should keep them because of the need to help students to make their way in a society that places high value on examination-based qualifications?⁴ Such decisions seem to rest more on our reading of various aspects of present-day educational reality than on the 'biblical principle', which may really be playing the role of mythic re-description, rendering policies 'biblical' which were in fact arrived at on other grounds.⁵ This raises the suspicion that appeals to the Bible may fulfil largely rhetorical roles, a suspicion voiced in more sweeping terms by Alasdair MacIntyre in the year preceding Hirst's article. MacIntyre argued that:

Injunctions to repent, to be responsible, even to be generous, do not actually tell us what to do ... Christians behave like everyone else but use a different vocabulary in characterising their behaviour, and so conceal their lack of distinctiveness ... All those in our society who self-consciously embrace beliefs which appear to confer importance and righteousness upon the

³ Paul H. Hirst, 'Education, Knowledge and Practices' in Robin Barrow & Patricia White (Eds.), *Beyond Liberal Education: Essays in Honour of Paul H. Hirst*, (London: Routledge, 1993) 184–99.

⁴ The former position was taken by Jay Adams in his *Back to the Blackboard: Design for a Biblical Christian School*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1982); the latter can be elicited fairly easily by putting the issue to most Christian teachers.

⁵ Cf. John Hedley Brooke, 'Religious Belief and the Natural Sciences: Mapping the historical landscape' in Jitse M. van der Meer (Ed.), *Facets of Faith and Science, Vol. 1: Historiography and modes of interaction*, (Lanham: University Press of America/The Pascal Centre for Advanced Studies in Faith and Science, 1996) 1–26.

holder become involved in the same strategies. The fact that their beliefs make so little difference either to them or to others leads to the same concern with being right-minded rather than effective.⁶

Hirst's argument runs parallel to MacIntyre's. To be sure, the Bible might spark off ideas – just as a walk through the forest might do the same – but this is only an accidental relationship.⁷ What Hirst did not think viable was that attending to the Bible could lead more systematically to a distinctive shaping of educational practice. He looked for, and failed to see, a way in which the Bible might be shown to lead to specific educational consequences.

While I consider even this side of Hirst's argument (and MacIntyre's accusation) to be quite limited, I think that it still cuts close enough to some Christian practice to cause us to wince. It reminds us that placing 'biblical' and 'education' in the same sentence does little to establish any substantial relationship between the two terms. In the remainder of this paper I will present a brief overview of a research project being carried out at the Stapleford Centre in Nottingham. This project is concerned with the question raised by Hirst, that of how the Bible can be fruitfully related to education. The work is still in progress, but has thus far identified six emphases in accounts of the relationship of the Bible to education which can be found in Christian educational literature. In what follows, I will not have space for a lengthy discussion of any of the six, but will briefly characterise each one and indicate some of the questions which it raises before concluding with some reflections on their inter-relationship. They are not intended to be seen as mutually exclusive approaches – in practice a number are likely to be simultaneously operative. Rather, throughout the discussion they should be seen as various facets of a complex whole.

The Bible as educational content

I will begin with two ways of understanding the relationship which are quite familiar, though not for that reason without their complexities.

First, an obvious way in which the Bible comes into relationship with education is when it becomes an object of study. In ways ranging from programmes of theological education through Bible classes to study of scriptural themes in English literature, the Bible regularly shows up as part of the curriculum in various educational settings. In certain curriculum materials designed for Christian school settings, biblical texts can even be found as a regular accompaniment to worksheets dealing with, say, mathematics or grammar.

While this is one of the most familiar ways in which the Bible

⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1971) 24.

⁷ Paul H. Hirst, 'Religious Beliefs and Educational Principles' *Learning for Living*, 1976, Vol. 15, 155-57.

impinges upon education, it leads to a restatement rather than a resolution of the question before us. The juxtaposition of Bible texts with other material does not necessarily imply an educational process which has been made in any significant sense 'biblical'. Although the presence of biblical texts as part of the curriculum does signal that some kind of value is placed on those texts, and the educational results may well be very valuable, the simple insertion of such texts into teaching materials is quite compatible with a doctrine of the autonomy of education in relation to the Bible. Insects are also a common element of educational content, and I suppose that the committed entomologist could design materials liberally sprinkled with pictures of our six-legged friends, but it hardly follows that insects have authoritatively shaped education.

In fact, at a more sophisticated level, the argument has been advanced that when the Bible becomes part of the content of education, then it passes into the jurisdiction of the educator and the learner. It is claimed that the *educational* use of a biblical text is not the same as the use of that text in the church context, and that the hermeneutic of the believing community should not hold sway in the classroom where the central concern should be what the learner can gain from the text to further his or her learning. If a biblical text fires a learner's imagination and leads to a piece of creative writing which would be regarded as entirely heretical by the believing community, this could nevertheless, on this view, represent a highly successful educational outcome.⁹ In this way also, then, the presence of the Bible as educational content is quite compatible with a rejection of the idea that the Bible should shape educational processes.⁹ I consider such a rejection to be a mistake, but anyone who is uncomfortable with it is still left not only with the task of defining the relationship between educational and devotional uses of the Bible, but also with the question of what a *biblical* use of the Bible as educational content would look like. If we wish to draw those biblical texts used in educational contexts into a further meaningful relationship with the rest of our educational content, then from this angle too we are faced with the task of establishing that relationship. In both of these ways, we arrive in effect at a restatement of the original question.

'Incarnational' emphases

A second approach focuses on the life and character of the educator or the educating community as mediating between the Bible and the

⁹ See e.g. Trevor Cooling, 'Education is the Point of RE - not religion? Theological reflections on the SCAA model syllabuses' in Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis (Eds.), *Christian Theology and Religious Education*, (London: SPCK, 1996) 165-83; Michael Grimmitt, *Religious Education and Human Development: The Relationship between studying religions and personal, social and moral education*, (Great Wakering: McCrimmons, 1987).

⁹ For examples of the use of the Bible in various areas of modern culture in ways which have little regard to any authoritatively 'biblical' framework, see David J.A. Clines, *The Bible and the Modern World*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

educational context. The focus here is not so much on a distinctive process of applying the Bible as on a particular idea of the scope of such applications, one which focuses on personal transformation. Put simply, parents, teachers and learners read the Bible, and hear it preached and are thereby changed in ways which are relevant to the relationships and processes of the educational setting. One version of this emphasis is common in popular evangelical writing on education, which emphasises that qualities such as patience, humility and love may be fostered specifically through meditation on Scripture and will in turn shape the character of educational exchanges.¹⁰ The strengths of such an emphasis should be clear, though its potential defects are also reasonably straightforward to identify. It has become commonplace to berate forms of pietism which reduce response to the gospel to matters of individual character, forms which can cheerfully co-exist with obliviousness with regard to ideological influences on educational content or method. Here again there may be little intrinsic resistance to a view of educational theories and practices as autonomous in relation to Scripture.¹¹

Such criticisms may often be justified, although anyone concerned for children's well-being will surely regard them as a call for something more, rather than a rejection of the importance of the educator's character qualities. One way of deepening this approach is to inquire into the relationship between particular qualities of character and the structuring of educational processes. Mark Schwehn has argued for a connection between spiritual virtues such as justice and humility and the nature of learning, pointing out that lack of humility, for instance, can block our ability to learn from a demanding text. Of interest here is his comment that 'to teach these virtues means first to exemplify them, second to order life in the classroom ... in such a way that their exercise is seen and felt as an essential aspect of inquiry'.¹² This extension of focus beyond exemplification to the structuring of learning moves a virtues-oriented approach beyond the kind of ethical add-on criticised above. Inasmuch as there is an attempt to relate the ethical teachings of the Bible to an understanding of learning processes, we can also see here continuity between an incarnational emphasis and more belief-oriented approaches discussed in the next section.

Schwehn also emphasises that these virtues grow out of particular communal contexts, highlighting the fact that an incarnational way of relating the Bible to education need not be thought of in individualistic terms. The basic idea here is that the focus of attention is not upon working out the connections between particular

¹⁰ E.g. Philip May, *Confidence in the Classroom: Realistic Encouragement for Teachers*, (Leicester: IVP, 1988).

¹¹ Cf. Ken Badley, 'Two 'Cop-outs' in Faith-learning Integration: Incarnational Integration and Worldviewish Integration' *Spectrum*, 1996, Vol. 28, No. 2, 105-118.

¹² Mark Schwehn, *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 60.

biblical texts and doctrines and educational practices, but rather upon a particular quality of life which is fostered by interaction with the Scriptures and which impacts the practice of education. This may be extended beyond an emphasis on the virtues of an individual to include the basic ethos of a community.¹³

What the Bible teaches about the world

A third approach looks for relationships between what the Bible teaches about the world and educational ideas and theories. I am including under this heading any approach which attempts to argue along the lines of 'the Bible says or teaches X and as a consequence we should think or do Y in the area of education', where 'as a consequence' can be construed in a variety of ways.

One way of construing this relationship is in straightforward linear fashion, where the consequence follows deductively from the biblical premise. This is apparently the construal assumed by Hirst in his criticisms. R.T. Allen, seeking to counter Hirst's pessimistic conclusion, offered in a more recent article an expanded set of possibilities, pointing out that requirement is not the only possible relationship between biblical statements and educational conclusions.¹⁴ Other possibilities suggested by Allen are debarment, commendation (whereby it is required that some of a set of practices be adopted but it is left to choice which ones) and permission (where practices are neither debarred nor required but allowed). He offers various examples, including, for instance, the suggestion that the Bible's anthropology affirms the body and so we should make provision for physical education, with its precise form left to choice.¹⁵

Another approach is to focus not so much on the kinds of logical relationship which might hold between individual biblical or biblically derived statements and educational conclusions, as on patterns of belief and practice. The many more cognitively oriented discussions of a biblical worldview seem to suggest a particular patterning of belief which confronts education and other practices more as a whole. It is also possible to construe the relationship between beliefs and consequences in less formal and more creative terms – this I take to be a significant feature of Wolterstorff's theory of control beliefs, in which the theories which we devise do

¹³ Some uses of the term 'worldview' which emphasise communal ways of life rather than cognitive networks of beliefs overlap with the emphasis outlined here, while others see 'worldview' more as a collection of beliefs or doctrines and relate to the following section. It should be noted that terms such as 'worldview' which have been prominent in recent discussions of faith-learning integration, are often used in ways which, since they attempt to describe the whole process, embrace more than one of the facets discussed here. This is part of the reason why the various emphases should be understood as facets of a complex relationship rather than alternative paths to follow.

¹⁴ R.T. Allen, 'Christian thinking about education', *Spectrum*, 1993, Vol. 25, No. 1, 17-24.

¹⁵ Allen, 'Christian Thinking', 21.

not follow rigidly from our control beliefs but should 'comport well' with them.¹⁶

It will be evident from even this partial listing of varying construals of how biblically derived beliefs are to be related to educational conclusions that there is a great deal here to discuss, but space will only allow a few brief comments. First, both Hirstian proponents of educational autonomy and those Christians who think in terms of discovering *the* biblical teaching method, despite their mutual opposition, share the assumption that a defensible account of the relationship of the Bible to education would involve tracing lines of deduction from individual biblical statements to individual educational conclusions and practices, such that the educational conclusion follows necessarily from the biblical premise. Much of the response to Hirst has tended to argue that this is an unnecessarily narrow assumption.¹⁷ As well as missing the wider range of relationships outlined by Allen, it also fails to take into account the effects of rearrangement. By this I mean the fact that the same educational facts and techniques can be arranged differently in the light of different convictions, and can thereby come to convey quite different messages.¹⁸ This is linked to the point that acting in the light of biblical claims involves a great deal of responsible creativity, and neither the variability of the results nor our inability to demonstrate in many cases that only one result was conceivable show that the biblical premise did not play a shaping role in the process.

Scripture and education as narratives

One particular form of patterning to which education is subject is narrative. The widespread resurgence of narrative as a topic of discussion in a variety of fields has impacted both general educational discussion and discussions of Christian education in particular. Understanding education as the enactment and provision of a particular narrative about the world shifts attention away from individual pieces of information or elements of the curriculum and towards their narrative pattern. Meanwhile, similar developments have been underway in theology. N.T. Wright succinctly expresses the significance of narrative context for interpretation, and his point

¹⁶ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984, 2nd ed.); 'On Christian learning' in Paul A. Marshall, Sander Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw (Eds.), *Stained glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989) 56–80; 'Can scholarship and Christian conviction mix? A new look at the integration of knowledge' *Journal of Education and Christian Belief*, 1999, Vol. 3, No. 1, 33–49.

¹⁷ E.g. Elmer J. Thiessen, 'A Defence of a Distinctively Christian Curriculum' in Leslie J. Francis and Adrian Thatcher (Eds.), *Christian Perspectives for Education*, (Leominster: Gracewing, 1990) 83–92.

¹⁸ See further David Smith, 'Spirituality and teaching methods: uneasy bedfellows?' in Ron Best (Ed.), *Education for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development*, (London: Continuum, 2000) 52–67.

would seem to apply just as well to interpretation of a school curriculum:

'It's going to rain.' This is a fairly clear statement, but its meaning varies with the context. The context supplies an implicit narrative, and the force of the statement depends on the role that it plays within those different potential narratives. If we are about to have a picnic, the statement forms part of an implicit story which is about to become a minor tragedy instead of (as we had hoped) a minor comedy. If we are in East Africa, fearing another drought and consequent crop failure, the statement forms part of an implicit story in which imminent tragedy will give way to jubilation. If I told you three days ago that it would rain today, and you disbelieved me, the statement forms part of an implicit story in which my ability as a meteorologist is about to be vindicated, and your scepticism proves groundless. If we are Elijah and his servant on Mount Carmel, the sentence invokes a whole theological story: YHWH is the true god, and Elijah is his prophet. In each case, the single statement demands to be 'heard' within the context of a full implicit plot, a complete implicit narrative.¹⁹

The stories told by curriculum materials are, moreover, contentious. In his *Teaching as Storytelling*, discussing a unit of work on the local community, Kieran Egan sketches a possible approach designed to enable children to see the prosaic detail of everyday life in their community as 'one of the greatest achievements of human ingenuity and planning'.²⁰ Egan suggests as a possible opening to the unit an imagined scenario in which we wake up to find that our town has been cut off from the outside world by a huge steel wall. This is designed to provoke discussion of how we would survive without all of the basic services which would be lost to us in such a situation. The unit could move on to look at such things as threats to our food supply and the ways in which we defend it (e.g. pesticides), or how we would manage if our machines broke down and there was no-one with the skill necessary to fix them. The aim is to make the familiar strange, so that learners no longer see (e.g.) a supermarket as just part of the environment, but as 'a small miracle'.²¹

Having sketched this possible approach, Egan then points out that 'so far, it is clear that we are seeing the community as positively valuable without any qualifications. We could organise the content quite differently to give quite a different view'.²² Thus, instead of telling the heroic story of the community's survival against the odds, we could picture the community as a small creature settled by a river:

As the years went by it grew by drinking the pure water and dirtying it as it passed through, and by eating away at the

¹⁹ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, (London: SPCK, 1996) 198.

²⁰ Kieran Egan, *Teaching as Storytelling*, (London: Routledge, 1988) 44.

²¹ Egan, *Teaching as Storytelling*, 50.

²² Egan, *Teaching as Storytelling*, 50.

surrounding land. It became bigger and fatter and more monstrous, and grew faster and faster. It sent tentacles (roads) deep into the countryside to get food from more and more distant places to satisfy its ever-growing appetite, destroying the natural woods and meadows. Some tentacles ripped up the land to get minerals and fuels which it ate in its factories, dirtying further the land, air and water.²³

Such educational narratives help to shape our sense of who we are and what is going on in our world. Given that the Bible also offers a narrative which bids to shape our identity, exploration of the relationships between biblical narrative and narrative theology on the one hand and implicit or explicit curricular narratives on the other seems to be invited, and some Christian educators have undertaken work along these lines.²⁴ Narrative, they suggest, engages more of our selfhood than merely the cognitive, and this makes it a promising vehicle for Christian education.

This approach raises a number of interesting questions: how do we obey a narrative? (As Wright puts it: 'It is one thing to go to your commanding officer first thing in the morning and have a string of commands barked at you. But what would you do if, instead, he began "Once upon a time?"'²⁵ How do we address the concern that narratives all too often 'dream a world in accordance with their own wishes or resentments'²⁶ How can one narrative critique or suggest another – how do we get from the narrative which runs through the pages of the Bible to the narrative implied in a unit of work on late nineteenth century England or the invention of space travel? Does a narrative approach at this point hand back to us the question which it sought to answer, that of how we get from the Bible to contemporary education? These are the kinds of question which a narrative approach needs to answer.

Metaphor in Scripture and education

Fifthly, teaching as storytelling is, of course, a metaphor. The role of metaphor in our theorising and acting in general, and in education in particular has been widely discussed in recent years.²⁷ Here I will

²³ Egan, *Teaching as Storytelling*, 51.

²⁴ See John Bolt, *The Christian Story and the Christian School*, (Grand Rapids: Christian Schools International, 1993); Harry Fernhout, 'Christian schooling: Telling a worldview story' in Ian Lambert and Suzanne Mitchell (Eds.), *The Crumbling Walls of Certainty: Towards a Christian Critique of Postmodernity and Education*, (Sydney: CSAC, 1997) 75–98.

²⁵ N.T. Wright, 'How can the Bible be authoritative?' *Vox Evangelica*, 1991, Vol. 21, 7–32, 10.

²⁶ Amos N. Wilder, 'Story and Story-World' *Interpretation*, 1983, Vol. 37, 353–64, 364.

²⁷ For general discussion see e.g., George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Andrew Ortony, (Ed.), *Metaphor and Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed., 1993); Sheldon Sacks, (Ed.), *On Metaphor*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). For educational discussions ▶

restrict myself to three brief observations concerning the importance of this for the present topic.

First, in recent accounts metaphor has shifted from its empiricist niche as a decorative element of poetic language to a much more substantial role in shaping our living. To take Lakoff and Johnson's well-known example, viewing argument as warfare (winning, losing, defending, destroying or shooting down arguments) yields different perspectives and behavioural emphases from a view of argument as dance (co-operation, turn-taking, rhythm, etc.). Our metaphors are closely inter-related with our practices.

Second, this shift has impacted discussions in the field of education, where particularly fruitful metaphors can also generate particular emphases in theory and practice. Minds as computers, learners as plants or buckets, teachers as coaches, schools as market-places or factories – these and many more metaphors inhabit educational discussion. Once education is viewed as a market-place, then viewing parents and children as consumers, the curriculum as a product which we deliver, and factory-like quality control as a central emphasis follow all too naturally. The process here is not a matter of working from premises to conclusions, of working out the consequences of consciously formulated beliefs. It is rather a more imaginative elaboration of parallels between two complexes of meaning, an elaboration which can draw us unsuspectingly into particular ways of seeing and being.

Third, the Bible is rich in metaphorical language. Given these recent perceptions of a more pervasive and substantial role for metaphor in shaping our praxis, there would seem to be a case for asking whether biblical metaphors might shape education precisely as metaphors, rather than as masked propositions from which inferences can be made. Talk of pastoral care in schools seems to represent a residual biblical metaphor in educational discourse, that of the teacher as shepherd. Talk of the school as a garden has not been the sole preserve of the Romantic tradition deriving from Rousseau – Comenius' use of the same metaphor can be plausibly connected with Genesis 1–3, and focuses on our responsibility for cultivating the garden rather than leaving it to grow 'naturally'.²⁸ Parker Palmer's proposal that the dominant western notion of 'knowing as power' should be replaced by an understanding of 'knowing as loving' can be helpfully read as functioning as an alternative root metaphor for our educational thinking, one which

see e.g. Allan K. Beavis and A. Ross Thomas, 'Metaphors as Storehouses of Expectation: Stabilising the Structures of Organisational Life in Independent Schools' *Educational Management and Administration*, 1996, Vol. 24, No. 1, 93–106; H. Munby, 'Metaphor in the Thinking of Teachers: An Exploratory Study' *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1986, Vol. 18, No. 2, 197–209; William Taylor, (Ed.), *Metaphors of Education*, (London: Heinemann, 1984).

²⁸ See M. W. Keatinge, *The Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius*, (New York: Russell and Russell, 2nd ed., 1967).

must be delimited by a biblical conception of love if it is to reflect Palmer's intent.

Naturally this approach raises a host of questions: what is meant by a 'biblical metaphor'? One found in the Bible or one merely consistent with the Bible or something else? Given the open-ended polyvalence of metaphor, how does this approach relate to notions of biblical authority? In what ways might biblical metaphors conceal as well as reveal when explored in relation to learning? What happens if we go beyond individual metaphors and ask how the structure of complexes of biblical metaphors might map onto educational metaphor? These and other questions are raised if we focus our attention on metaphor.

The Role of the canon

Sixthly, another approach to relating the Bible to education draws upon the results of canonical criticism as developed by biblical scholars such as James Sanders and Brevard Childs. This not entirely uniform movement sought to redress the imbalances of historical criticism by refocusing on the canonical text in its final form or on the process by which the canonical text was established. This might, for instance, involve asking why Matthew is placed first of the four Gospels in the canon rather than, say, arguing the chronological priority of Mark, let alone a reconstructed Q.

This emphasis on canonical shape and process provides further ways of attending to the relationship of the Bible to education. Looking at canonical process involves looking at what the community found worthy of being passed on to succeeding generations and at how they went about doing so, both basic educational questions. In this way the very process of the formation of Scripture comes into focus as an educational issue. A consideration of canonical shape may seem of less immediate educational relevance, but its implications have been developed in relation to education by writers such as Brueggemann and Spina.²⁹ The argument which they present, based on the assumption that canonical shape tells us much about 'the community's self-understanding and its intent for the coming generations',³⁰ can be summarised briefly but elaborated quite extensively.

Both focus on the basic divisions of the OT, its inclusion of Torah, Prophets and Writings.³¹ Each kind of writing is explored for its basic pedagogical mode. Thus, to give an outrageously brief summary, Torah offers instruction in what is authoritatively known, in the

²⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982; Frank Anthony Spina, 'Revelation, Reformation, Re-creation: Canon and the theological foundation of the Christian university' *Christian Scholar's Review*, 1989, Vol. 18, No. 4, 315-32.

³⁰ Brueggemann, *The Creative Word*, 3.

³¹ Brueggemann goes on to consider Psalms as a separate category.

narratives which ground the community's identity. The Prophets, while grounded in and constantly appealing to Torah, bring a disruptive poetic challenge to see and hear anew, to embrace radical reformation. The Writings are more exploratory and ambiguous – instead of 'Thus says the Lord' we have 'consider the ant' – we are invited to find meaning in experience and in creation and to embrace the mystery at the heart of both.

Thus far we might in the main be engaged in the kinds of activities to which our other five facets might point – examining biblical statements, narratives and metaphors and exploring their educational implications. Where the canonical model makes a more distinctive contribution is in its appeal to overall canonical shape, yielding the suggestion that a truly biblical education will maintain the balance or tension between Torah, Prophets and Writings, or between what we might fairly loosely think of as traditional, critical and experiential approaches. This approach gives us a further question to ask ourselves even after we have engaged in the kinds of exploration described so far – assuming that we have made some genuine connections using biblical teaching, narrative or metaphor, will we still find that we are imbalanced if we fail to take the wider shape of the canon into account?

Other, more critical questions seem to be invited by this approach. If the investigation of canonical process is applied to contemporary education, do we inevitably fall back into the difficulty raised at the outset of applying features of the particular culture of Bible times to our own educational settings? What are we to do with the NT? Interestingly so far, the canonical approach has only been explored to any great extent in relation to education using OT categories. This raises the obvious question of whether the NT adds anything. How does the big picture offered by these canonical accounts relate to that offered by talk of the Bible's overall story or by talk of a biblical worldview? There has also been a marked clustering of interest around the wisdom literature in recent publications, which invites the kind of question of balance addressed above.

General questions

So far I have sketched all too briefly six emphases which each offer particular ways of exploring the relationship of the Bible to education. These concerned themselves with the Bible as a part of the content of education, with the character of the teacher as mediating between the Bible and education, with exploration of the implications of biblically derived beliefs about the world, with the role of contentious narratives in teaching, with the capacity of metaphor to reframe praxis, and with the wider framework suggested by canonical considerations. Having outlined each, I will conclude with some general comments.

Such a survey necessarily invites further questions. Are the categories meaningfully distinct? Are they all necessary? Are there enough of them?

Concerning the first point, I would wish to emphasise that the above account is more a survey than a systematisation. Some of the facets surveyed differ along different lines. Many examples of an incarnational emphasis, for instance, are characterised by a particular idea of the *scope* of the Bible's application (*i.e.* personal character transformation rather than educational theories or structures), while the interest of metaphor lies in the *processes* involved. This broad survey does, however, suggest that there are a number of distinct processes which can form part of the Bible's interaction with education. Working out the implications of a particular claim is not the same process as seeking to read the world in terms of a particular narrative or see some practice through the lens of a certain metaphor. Making inferences from particular statements which the Bible makes differs from examining the overall canonical shape within which such statements find their place.

It also seems to me that these various emphases are not happily reducible to one or two. Each seems to me to be potentially fruitful in distinct ways. In this connection it is interesting to note that it is possible to find arguments for the basicity of several if not all of them. The view that everything that's very important boils down to propositional knowledge is familiar not least because of the vigour with which it has been attacked from various quarters. In its place, narrative and metaphor have both been put forward as ultimate categories to which virtually every aspect of our thinking can be reduced. That all of this is a waste of time without a life of personal holiness is a familiar evangelical complaint, while the canonical approach offers a framework which bids to order the results of all of the other approaches.

At the same time, it is important to note that the various facets outlined here are deeply intertwined. Teaching as storytelling is a metaphor, offered by Egan on the basis of assertions about how children learn. It has become commonplace to argue that literal, factual discourse draws upon metaphor and that its individual statements draw their meaning from their place in wider narratives, yet it can also be pointed out that a metaphor such as 'knowing is loving' can only be given a specifically biblical sense through further doctrinal elaboration of what is meant by loving, and that relating two narratives to one another is likely to involve considering what assertions about the world can be inferred from them. Again, I am not sure that questions of priority are the most important or fruitful questions. For practical purposes what is most pertinent is to see the approaches surveyed as both partial and interdependent – pursuing any one of them in isolation is likely to lead to distortion of one kind or another. What each offers is perhaps best seen as a particular way of attending to the Scriptures which brings some particular aspect of them into focus while continuing to draw tacitly upon the others. Exploring them together, with an eye both to their harmonies and to their mutual critique, may help us get a little closer to a fully rounded application of the Bible to education.

The third question was whether there are enough of them. Here I remain open to suggestions. Are there other distinct ways of relating

the Bible to education which do not boil down to some combination of the ways surveyed above? Thus far, while it is clear that some of the categories offered here are open to various kinds of subdivision and greater systematisation, they seem to me to account in broad terms for the range of approaches to applying the Bible to education which can be found in Christian educational literature.

Finally, I would like to make a few comments concerning the value of getting clearer about the range of possibilities which are in play when people make claims to be offering a 'biblical' approach to education. There seem to me to be some important benefits.

First, any Christian educator discomfited by the criticisms of the very idea of such a relationship mentioned at the outset, or struggling to identify the relevance of the Bible to their work should be encouraged by the existence of a substantial range of avenues for exploration - applying the Bible to education begins to seem more like exploring a forest than walking a tightrope. Once it is accepted that moving by logical deduction from individual biblical presuppositions to individual educational conclusions is not the only or even always the most fruitful approach, the possibilities begin to seem very rich. Parallel developments in related disciplines offer obvious starting points for investigation - what, for instance, do metaphorical or narrative theology have to say to educational discussions of metaphor and narrative? Having worked with the issues surveyed here with Christian teachers I can report that few are consciously aware of more than a couple of the facets surveyed here, and most are encouraged and invigorated by the expanded sense of possibility which comes with discovering further options.

Second, becoming clearer about the various processes which can underlie educational appeals to Scripture might help to improve communication not only in terms of articulating further what we mean by the loaded term 'biblical', but also in terms of avoiding mutual accusations of inadequate respect for Scripture which may be fuelled in part by tacit reliance on different processes when applying Scripture.

Third, and finally, if we believe the Bible's contribution to education to be life-giving, then surely the more ways we can identify of exploring its relevance the better.

WARRANTED CHRISTIAN BELIEF – A REVIEW ARTICLE

ALVIN PLANTINGA, NEW YORK AND OXFORD:

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The central question in the philosophical field of religious epistemology is 'In virtue of why is religious belief intellectually acceptable, if it is?'. The traditional answer to this, going all the way back to Aquinas and beyond, was that one had to produce *arguments* or *evidence* for one's religious (and other) convictions, and the intellectual acceptability of one's religious beliefs would stand or fall according to the strength or weakness of one's arguments or evidence. About 20 years ago a startling new idea was aired by some philosophers associated with the Centre for Christian Studies at Calvin College, Michigan (the college of the Christian Reformed Church in the USA). The leaders of this group were Alvin Plantinga, then Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, now Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana; Nicholas Wolterstorff then also Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, now Professor of Philosophical Theology at Yale University; and William Alston, who has recently retired as Professor of Philosophy at Syracuse University, New York. The new idea was that there was no need for a believer to base his or her religious beliefs on reasons or arguments in order for them to be intellectually acceptable; in the jargon, religious belief may be 'properly basic'. It was a commonplace of philosophy that it was not required that one have reasons for every belief one holds, or else one would be faced with a vicious circle or an infinite regress. So one must, to be rational, hold some of one's beliefs without reasons, *i.e.*, as properly basic beliefs. Plantinga, Wolterstorff and Alston claimed that belief in God and Christian belief could legitimately count amongst these basic beliefs. Their view became known as 'Reformed epistemology', picking up on what Nicholas Wolterstorff characterises as 'one of the characteristic differences between the Reformed and the Anglo-American Evangelical traditions of Christendom', *viz.* that 'Reformed persons have no taste at all for undergirding the Christian faith with evidences. Yet they are deeply committed to expressing their faith by way of theorising. Evangelicals have little taste for expressing the faith by way of theorising. Yet they are profoundly committed to assembling evidences to undergird the faith.' (*The Reformed Journal* 31, April 1981).

Now, 20 years later, Reformed epistemology has reached its apogee in the publication of Alvin Plantinga's *magnum opus*, *Warranted*

Christian Belief (hereafter *WCB*). This is the final volume of his trilogy on warrant, which he defines as that 'quality or quantity, (perhaps it comes in degrees), whatever precisely it may be, enough of which distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief' (*WCB*, 153), following *Warrant: The Current Debate* (OUP, Oxford, 1993), hereafter *WCD*, and *Warrant and Proper Function* (OUP, Oxford, 1993), hereafter *WPF*. *WCB*, as its title suggests, is devoted to the application of Plantinga's views on warrant to the consideration of the epistemic status of Christian belief. It approaches this topic from two distinct angles: first, Plantinga argues against every objection he can find to the epistemic acceptability of Christian belief, even Christian belief that is not based on reasons or arguments, arguing for the conclusion that there is no viable objection to its epistemic respectability which is not also an objection to its truth. Here Plantinga presupposes nothing about the truth of Christianity, rather, this is a project in negative apologetics. Secondly, Plantinga discusses a particular way in which a Christian could think of his or her beliefs as having positive epistemic status, even if they are not based on reasons or arguments; this project *does* presuppose the truth of Christian belief, it is an essay in Christian philosophy. The rigorous and detailed discussion (extending to two type faces: standard for the rigorous, and small for the *really* rigorous) of the 508 pages of this massive book is enlivened by Plantinga's ready wit and refreshing choice of examples – those familiar with Plantinga's previous works will be pleased to see more examples taken from the author's hobby of mountain-climbing and from his (distant) relative Feike, the Frisian..

Plantinga begins by distinguishing two objections someone might have to theistic or Christian belief – the *de facto* objection that the belief is false and the *de jure* objection that the belief is intellectually unacceptable. In *WCB* Plantinga deals with the *de jure* objection, seeking to show that the sort of person who says 'Well, I don't know whether Christian belief is true (after all, who could know a thing like that?), but I do know that it is not intellectually acceptable' himself or herself holds a rationally untenable view. After spending Part I of the book clearing the decks of the objection that there is no such thing as belief in God, showing that both Kant and, more recently, John Hick and Gordon Kaufman have given us no reason to believe that theistic or Christian belief is impossible, Plantinga turns his attention to the elucidation of the objection: in virtue of what could theistic or Christian belief be rationally unacceptable? He distinguishes three candidates for reconstructing the objection: that theistic or Christian belief is unjustified, that it is irrational internally or externally, and that it is unwarranted.

Plantinga deals first with the complaint that theistic or Christian belief is *unjustified*, which he interprets as the objection that theists or Christians are not conforming to their intellectual duties in believing in God or Christianity. Plantinga doesn't say in *WCB* what our intellectual duties are, since he has briefly discussed this in *WCD*, but he thinks that it is just *obvious* that a theist or Christian is not contravening any intellectual duty in believing in God or

Christianity, even if he or she holds these beliefs as basic, *i.e.*, without any (propositional) evidence.

Plantinga thinks that the *de jure* objection to theistic or Christian belief based on justification is much too easy to rebut, and so he turns his attention to another candidate in his search for a viable *de jure* objection, *viz.* the objection that belief in God or Christianity is *irrational*. Here he discusses various concepts of rationality, fastening on the concept of rationality as proper function, on which concept 'irrationality' means malfunction or dysfunction of the rational faculties. He then distinguishes internal rationality from external rationality. He defines (110) *internal* rationality as being a matter of proper function of all belief-producing processes 'downstream' from experience, including forming or holding the appropriate beliefs in response to experience, holding a coherent set of beliefs, drawing the right inferences when the occasion arises, making the right decisions with respect to courses of action, preferring to believe what is true, and looking for further evidence when appropriate. Plantinga argues that the *de jure* objection couched in terms of internal rationality is also too easy to rebut. If somebody's experience includes it strongly seeming to him or her that theism or Christianity is true then obviously, he says, he or she is internally rational in believing in God or Christianity, indeed, he or she would be internally irrational not to believe in Christianity.

Searching for a more challenging objection, Plantinga turns to *external* rationality, which he defines (246) as proper function of the cognitive faculties 'upstream' from experience, *i.e.*, with respect to formation of the right kind of experience (112). Plantinga concedes that there is a *prima facie* plausible objection to theistic or Christian belief if one interprets the *de jure* objection as alleging that theistic or Christian belief is externally irrational. But, Plantinga says, warrant includes external rationality, so he considers the *de jure* question in terms of warrant, and thereby also disposes of the question in terms of external rationality.

For this reason Plantinga turns to *warrant*, which, as mentioned above, he has defined as that thing enough of which turns a true belief into knowledge. Plantinga's central claim here is that a belief has warrant or is *warranted* if and only if (roughly) it is produced by cognitive faculties that are functioning properly in an appropriate environment according to a design plan successfully aimed at the production of true beliefs. Here he builds on *WCD* and *WPF*. Plantinga then claims that the *de jure* objection, and, in particular, Freud's and Marx's complaints about theistic or Christian belief are best interpreted as versions of the *de jure* complaint that theistic or Christian belief is *unwarranted*. Freud, he says, alleges that theistic belief is produced by wishful thinking – a cognitive process which is not aimed at truth, though it is working properly. For Marx theistic belief is produced by cognitive processes aimed at truth, but which are not functioning properly, because they are perverted by the unjust social structure in which they are situated. Plantinga points out that neither Freud nor Marx offers much in the way of an *argument* for either of these claims, and each seems to presuppose the falsehood of theism.

Plantinga then makes his major claim of the book: that the *de jure* objection to theistic or Christian belief is not independent of the *de facto* objection to theistic or Christian belief. Hence the view that theistic or Christian belief is *unwarranted* presupposes that theism or Christianity is *false*. Plantinga argues for his position by claiming that if theism or Christianity is *true* then very likely theistic or Christian belief is *warranted*, and argues for *this* by giving a possible explanation or 'model' of how it could be that theistic or Christian belief is warranted. This explanation presupposes the truth of theism or Christianity, but Plantinga's point is that an attempt by the objector to show that theistic or Christian belief is *unwarranted* has to show that the explanation he gives is *false*, and, he claims, this can't be done. Plantinga doesn't try to show that his explanation is *true*, merely that it is *true for all we know*, in particular, that the objector can't show that it isn't true, and can't give any cogent objections to it which aren't also cogent objections to the truth of theism or Christianity. Plantinga also says that if theism or Christianity is true then something very like his explanation is true. He then concludes that there is no version of the *de jure* objection which is independent of the *de facto* objection, and hence the person, described above, who says 'Well, I don't know whether Christian belief is true (after all, who could know a thing like that?), but I do know that it is not intellectually acceptable' does not have a rationally tenable position. Plantinga then says (191) that 'a successful atheological objection will have to be to the *truth* of theism, not to its rationality'.

Plantinga then gives his explanation or model, which is, for theistic belief, that God has created each of us with a natural faculty, the *sensus divinitatis*, similar to our other natural faculties (perception, memory, reason) which in appropriate circumstances directly creates theistic belief in us without those beliefs resting on any propositional evidence. Plantinga calls this 'the Aquinas/Calvin, or A/C, model', claiming to derive it from Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* and Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. On the A/C model theistic belief is produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly (as their designer, God, intended) in an appropriate environment (that for which they were designed – life on Earth) according to a design plan successfully aimed at truth (we can presume that God does not make mistakes and wants us to form true beliefs about him). Hence theistic belief has warrant, and, if held with sufficient strength and is true, constitutes knowledge. Where does this leave *atheistic* belief? Plantinga says on page 186: 'Failure to believe can be due to a sort of blindness or deafness, to improper function of the *sensus divinitatis*. On the present model, such failure to believe is irrational, and such withholdings lack the analogue of warrant.' So atheistic belief and even lack of theistic belief appear to be universally irrational (since the *sensus divinitatis* is universal, and, presumably, because the universal design plan would never prescribe withholding theistic belief). Where does this leave *non-basic theistic* belief, *i.e.* belief in God which is based on arguments or propositional reasons? The *sensus divinitatis* produces theistic belief as a basic belief, so if one believes in God only non-basically,

it looks as if the *sensus divinitatis* is not functioning properly, and that therefore one's failure to believe in the basic way is also externally irrational and lacks the analogue of warrant.

Plantinga then turns to the defence of Christian belief. This the reviewer found more ambiguous. The centrepiece is the 'internal instigation of the Holy Spirit' or 'IHS', which 'reveals to our minds and seals on our hearts' basic beliefs (*i.e.*, beliefs which are not based on (propositional) arguments or reasons) in 'the great things of the gospel', that is 'trinity, incarnation, Christ's resurrection, atonement, forgiveness of sins, salvation, regeneration, eternal life' (241). This set of basic beliefs is identified with faith by Plantinga, though he unhelpfully uses the term 'faith' to denote both Christian belief and the process of forming that belief. The idea seems to be that the Holy Spirit acts when (and only when?) one hears the biblical testimony either directly from reading the Bible or indirectly (*e.g.*, through preaching). What is ambiguous is the source of the warrant for the Christian belief in question: is it Scripture, the IHS, testimony, or some combination of these? In any case, questions similar to those concerning theism arise here concerning the epistemic status of belief that theism is true yet Christianity is false on the one hand, and *non-basic* Christian belief on the other, with one crucial difference: the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit is not universal.

Plantinga claims that Christian belief is produced by cognitive processes (at least the IHS) functioning properly (since it is the direct action of the Holy Spirit it can't fail to function properly, (246, fn. 10)) in an appropriate environment (the Holy Spirit would not choose an inappropriate one) according to a design plan successfully aimed at the production of true belief (the Holy Spirit does not make mistakes and wants us to form true beliefs). Christian belief is therefore warranted, and, if held sufficiently strongly, warranted sufficiently to constitute, if true, knowledge. One disanalogy between the *sensus divinitatis* and the IHS is that, since the first but not the second is universal (at least to start with) a failure to believe the deliverances of the first renders the atheist irrational, but the theistic non-Christian need not be irrational if he or she has not had the IHS.

In the final part of the book, Plantinga turns his attention to defeaters for theism or Christianity. A defeater for a belief is another belief such that when one comes to believe the defeater one may not rationally continue to hold the first ('defeated') belief. One of the first complaints Plantinga considers is the complaint of Historical Biblical Criticism that we cannot deduce from Scripture in the accepted scientific-historic manner Christian beliefs. The response is that deduction from Scripture *in the accepted scientific-historic manner* is not the source of warrant for the believer, and so the purported defeater is irrelevant.

Plantinga then considers and rejects alleged defeaters from postmodernism, before turning to pluralism, arguing that the objection that, given the plurality of religions, Christianity's probability is low, is irrelevant since the Christian does not believe and derive his or her warrant from the balance of probabilities. Plantinga then considers the idea that one is not warranted if one

holds basically a belief with which others disagree, replying that such an idea is unwarranted by its own lights, and that we have no reason to believe it. Plantinga argues that there is no duty to withhold basic belief in the face of disagreement, and although it might be warranted for the *objector* to withhold Christian belief, the *Christian* knows that he or she has a source of warrant the objector lacks, the IHS. Finally Plantinga turns to the alleged defeater of suffering and evil. Here, since the objection that God and evil are logically inconsistent has been largely abandoned by philosophers, he considers only the claim that the existence of evil and suffering is much more probable with respect to atheism than theism and so our belief in the existence of evil and suffering gives us a reason to give up theism. Plantinga replies that this principle applies only to beliefs which derive their warrant probabilistically from other propositions, which is not so for theism or Christianity.

Finally, Plantinga considers the view that *atheism* is properly basic when one sees the existence of evil. His response seems to be that the warrant for theism for the Christian is much greater than that for atheism – in particular, that the *sensus divinitatis* renewed by the activity of the Holy Spirit affords a much stronger impulse to believe in God than the perception of evil does to disbelieve, since a Christian 'has such a defeater only if it is part of our cognitive plan to give up theistic belief in those circumstances; and we have no reason to think that it is' (491). But if this were a good answer to the objection, then surely it would thereby rebut every possible defeater against theism or Christianity? Shouldn't one rather be looking at under what *general* conditions the design plan legislates for the giving up of *any* sort of basic belief?

WCB is rich in incidental detail. Plantinga gives in passing an extremely interesting argument that atheism is self-defeating. He claims that one who doesn't believe in God has no reason to believe that his or her belief-producing faculties are reliable, and so has a defeater for every belief he or she holds. Plantinga dismisses the evolutionist's reply arguing that 'the fact that my behaviour (or that of my ancestors) has been adaptive [...] is at best a third-rate reason for thinking my beliefs mostly true and my cognitive faculties reliable' (235). But the reviewer is not convinced that this response is sufficient to silence the evolutionist: surely those who have true beliefs about the best way to survive are more likely to survive than those who have false beliefs, assuming (plausibly) that all parties want to survive?

Although Plantinga's work is massive in scope and size and thorough in its treatment and attention to detail, one is left with some questions. Some people may think Plantinga's thesis is *too weak*. Plantinga admits that parallel models to the one he has devised for Christianity could be constructed for 'Judaism, Islam, some forms of Hinduism, some forms of Buddhism, some forms of American Indian religion' (350). Now it seems to the reviewer that adherents of these religions, except possibly Jews, will be unwarranted, on Plantinga's definition, since their beliefs that go beyond theism and Christianity will not be formed according to a

design plan successfully aimed at truth. Nevertheless, they will be able to mimic Plantinga's defensive strategy in almost every detail, and so will be able to resist any evangelistic attempts to *show* them that their beliefs are unwarranted. In disposing of the traditional model of giving *arguments* or *evidence* for all one's religious beliefs, Plantinga may have disposed also of an inter-subjectively agreed standard which allowed us to debate, argue, and evangelise. In creating an impregnable fortress for the rationality of Christianity, Plantinga may have done the same favour for the other theistic religions too.

Furthermore, what about those who are bare theists, *i.e.*, those who believe in God but have no further religious beliefs? If they have never received the IHS (which Plantinga seems to admit is not universal), then they are not unwarranted in their failure to produce Christian belief. So the Christian should not evangelise such people by trying to demonstrate their irrationality, for they are not irrational. It seems that all the Christian can do is to pray that the Holy Spirit should work in them. But then may the bare theist be blamed and justly damned for failing to believe if he or she has not experienced the IHS?

On the other hand, some may think that Plantinga's thesis is *too strong*. In particular, it looks as if those who believe in God or Christianity only non-basically, *i.e.*, only on the basis of reasons or arguments, are treated too harshly. Granted that *atheists* are irrational, for Plantinga, because of their failure to produce beliefs based on the *sensus divinitatis*, is it right to account also those who do believe, but do so only on the basis of arguments, irrational because they fail to believe basically? Plantinga says (186) that those who do not believe on the prompting of the *sensus divinitatis* are irrational, this includes, presumably, even those Christians who do not do so, preferring to believe instead on the basis of arguments, yet in footnote number 15 on page 179 he writes: 'Of course it doesn't follow that theistic belief can't get warrant by way of argument from other beliefs'. This implies that those who do believe on the basis of arguments and (propositional) reasons would be warranted in believing non-basically and simultaneously unwarranted in their failure to believe basically. As for specifically Christian belief, Plantinga claims on page 255 that, given the experiences that go with the testimony of the Holy Spirit, it would be dysfunctional not to form Christian beliefs, and presumably dysfunctional not to form them in the basic way, *i.e.*, without (propositional) evidence or argument. He also says that arguments for the 'full panoply of Christian belief' would be 'vastly too tenuous and speculative', and beliefs formed on the basis of arguments should be 'equally halting and tentative' (267). On the other hand, on page 250 Plantinga says:

In the model, the beliefs constituting faith [i.e., Christian beliefs] are typically taken as basic [...]. Of course they could be accepted on the basis of other propositions, and perhaps in some cases are. [...] A believer could reason in this way, and perhaps some believers do in fact reason this way. But in the model it goes differently.

But doesn't it seem a bit harsh if these same people are to be counted irrational in virtue of the fact that they do not believe on the basis of the IHS, but rather in a non-basic way?

1 Peter 3:15 says 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have'. If one believes basically, one can't truthfully give the reason on account of which one believes because there isn't one. One may, of course, give reasons for one's belief, but why does the apostle ask us to do this if it is in fact better to believe without reasons, *i.e.*, basically? Because that way we may convert those who don't believe at all? But if people are converted on the basis of reasons, then, according to Plantinga, their faith will be 'halting and tentative' (267). Granted they *could* come to believe on the basis of reasons and *then* graduate to believing basically – but why should the apostle commend such a scheme?

These are very difficult and involved questions, and it should be repeated that Plantinga has done the Christian community an invaluable service by giving an explanation or model of how Christian belief could be unassailably rational, and by rebutting almost every conceivable objection to it. WCB will consolidate Plantinga's reputation as the world's foremost Christian philosopher, and it has already been acclaimed as a classic of philosophy of religion.

THE LAST WORD

Robbie Castleman, Consulting Editor

The year 2001 promises to be a good one for the growing partnership in the gospel between RTSF in North America, the RTSF in the UK and IFES theological student work 'on the continent'. One manifestation of this is my contribution to the journal as the national co-ordinator of RTSF in the US. This comes at the generous invitation of Carl Trueman whom I met at the IFES European Theological Students' conference at Schloss Mittersill last August and Daniel Strange, my counterpart and mentor in the UCCF/UK work. We hope that our work together will be good for *Themelios* on both sides of the 'puddle'.

I hope to get to know many *Themelios* readers in the years ahead, so I thought it would be good to introduce myself to you in this first editorial 'Last Word'. When people ask me what I do, my usual response is, 'I'm a Bible teacher'. As a theological thinker, it is the Scriptures that ground me. As a person who prays, it is often the Scriptures that provide God's answers. As a long time staffworker for IFES in the United States, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship it is the Bible that shapes, informs and corrects my work and witness. As a writer, it is always the Word of God that is the bedrock of what I try to say in a new way.

And, the Word of God continues to define the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Only as we are empowered by the Spirit to be *his* witnesses in this world do we ever have anything worth saying. I want to use this editorial space in *Themelios* to reflect on current trends in Biblical, theological, and religious studies scholarship in North America and how they influence, for good or for ill, our calling to be Spirit-empowered witnesses in academy, culture and church. To this end, I offer three grounding ideas:

One, the *particularity of the incarnation* gives us an immovable fulcrum by which we can witness truly in a world of religious plurality. God became a particular man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. This fact is inherently anti-relativist. Because Jesus the Son has fully and perfectly represented the Father, creating God in any other image is not possible. 'He who has seen me, has seen the Father' (John 14:9). This challenges us to be *full of Truth* in our witness. We know who God is through the person, life, work, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Jesus. That fact that all this is resting firmly on ineffable paradox confronts us with the need to be equally *full of grace* in our witness.

This leads to my second grounding idea. The *paradox of the incarnation* reminds us to be patient, humble and prayerful as we bear witness to Jesus. Remember, even with all the help of Nicea and Chalcedon, church fathers, great saints, dependable manuscripts,

original language studies, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the certainty of our own minds and the transformation of our own hearts, we have come to believe something central to our faith that we cannot adequately explain. And, we ask others to believe it, too. The mystery of the incarnation is an illustration of God's ways and thoughts not being our ways and thoughts (Is. 55:8). That is, of course, what makes it dependable Truth as well as dependent on Grace.

Thirdly, if 'all good theology ends in doxology' (Karl Barth), the incarnation is our most compelling call to worship. I actually believe all good theology *begins* with doxology, too. In the incarnation of the Word made flesh we behold 'God's glory, glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth' (John 1:14). Worship reminds us that the truth is God's truth and we must depend on his grace to bear it well in our work and witness. Worship is a demonstration that our work and witness depend on God and not our own gifts, resources or efforts. Worship is the antidote for weariness as well as waywardness.

I will end this brief introduction to my life, mind, and work with a quotation from one of my favourite 'Brits', G.K. Chesterton. 'Paradox is the whole principle of courage', wrote this lover of the paradoxical statement. Maybe he understood why so often the Lord meets us in the Scriptures with the words, 'Be not afraid!'. It takes courage to have faith, to rest in the security of God's paradox, to be pastorally honest about the 'whys' we can't answer and scholastically honest about things we don't yet understand. And, despite all of our domesticating efforts, it takes courage to worship!

Book Reviews

Old Testament

Christ in the Old Testament: Old Testament appearances of Christ in Human Form (2nd edition, revised and expanded)

James A. Borland

Fearn, Rosshire: Christian Focus Publications, 1999,
184 pp., £9.99/\$15.99

The author's own summary of the book's purpose is 'to clarify and classify the biblical data relating to God's human-form theophanies in the Old Testament' (119). The main thesis of the book is that these human-form theophanies are pre-incarnate appearances of the second person of the Trinity.

In the first chapter, Borland's use of the term *theophany* is carefully defined and distinguished from other manifestations of God in the OT, such as dreams and visions. From the outset he presupposes that these appearances of God can be termed Christophanies, which he defines as 'unsought, intermittent and temporary, visible and audible manifestations of God the Son in human form, by which God communicated something to certain conscious human beings on earth prior to the birth of Jesus Christ' (17). Borland distinguishes between 'temporary, visible manifestations ... in a human form' and 'the incarnation, which is indeed a permanent union with *human nature*' (20f.).

In the second and third chapters, Borland argues that, even where the text appears to distinguish between

Jehovah (*sic*) and the Angel or Messenger of Jehovah, the latter are nonetheless to be regarded as appearances of God, but as denoting the second rather than the first person of the Trinity. Even in cases such as Joshua 5:13 (where the text states that Joshua saw 'a man'), Borland insists that these were still appearances of Jehovah. He makes the somewhat curious claim that, whereas the Hebrew word '*adam*' would have implied partaking of human *nature*, the use of the word '*ish*' in these passages implies only human *form* or appearance.

Borland specifically rejects any suggestion that some or all of the theophanies are appearances of God the Father. He also rejects the view that the *angel* or *messenger* figure is a finite creature speaking on behalf of God. His fourth chapter spells out some implications of his thesis for various aspects of both Systematic and Biblical Theology.

The main problem with Borland's approach is that he presupposes a full-blown Trinitarian theology which he then superimposes on the OT text. Categories such as the 'second person of the Trinity' are not OT categories. Consequently, his interpretation often runs counter to the plain meaning of the text; and his exegesis depends on presuppositions which are external to it. Furthermore, Borland is not totally convincing in dealing with NT texts which appear to contradict his thesis, such as John 1:18 and Hebrews 1:1.

Ironically, the most useful sections of the book may be the three appendices. The first gives an excellent historical outline of the

treatment of the Christophanies, from the early Church through to the present day. The second (rightly) refutes the view that the appearance of Melchizedek in Genesis 12 is to be regarded as a Christophany. The final appendix discusses some 'practical lessons' to be learned from the theophanies. These are undoubtedly of homiletical value, whether or not the reader is in agreement with Borland's overall thesis.

The book is clearly argued given its presuppositions, relevant texts are examined in detail, and opposing views are acknowledged and discussed. There is a comprehensive bibliography. This is a subject on which little has been written – and Borland makes a significant contribution to the debate. Nevertheless, he failed to convince me that the only possible conservative-evangelical interpretation is to regard OT theophanies as pre-incarnate appearances of Christ – for in the end this is not the plain meaning of the text.

J.P. Taylor

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Ecclesiastes, Interpretation, a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching

William P. Brown

Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000,
143 pp., h/b., £18.99/\$

Over recent years a number of new commentaries have been published on Ecclesiastes, but few have been able to bridge the gap between academic study and the needs of the preacher as successfully as Brown. His style is lively and engaging, and his passion for the pulpit comes across at various points in a way that many preachers will find helpful and inspiring (e.g. 20, 70).

Unfortunately, Brown's regard for the preacher means that he occasionally avoids important issues of interpretation. For example, he

devotes very little attention to addressing the apparently contradictory statements that occur throughout *Qoheleth* and to the various explanations offered for them. Thus in discussing 3:16–22, he ignores the tension between 3:17 and the rest of the passage. Similarly, his desire to present over-arching themes often results in his exegesis of individual passages becoming significantly muted. Thus he places 5:1–7 in a larger section concerned with advocating simplicity in speech and conduct, and underplays its immediate concern with hypocrisy in cultic worship.

It is in its treatment of the larger thematic aspects of Ecclesiastes that the strength of the commentary lies. Brown offers a concise yet useful definition of *hebel*, which he presents as *Qoheleth's* 'global thesis' upon which the rest of the book is an expansion (21–22). He includes useful treatments of other themes such as creation (23–25), work (51–52; 95), death (72–75), and human power (85–88). There are also helpful remarks relating to *Qoheleth's* insistence on the mystery of God (90) and his recommendation to fear God as an appropriate response (118). Some readers may find the discussion of *Qoheleth's* comments concerning women (84) to be rather difficult to accept, nevertheless the view which Brown puts forward is one which merits close consideration.

Given the aims of the commentary, there is only one major objection that can be raised against it, which relates to the emphasis Brown places on the parallels between Ecclesiastes and the Epic of Gilgamesh. He claims that the 'journey of Ecclesiastes begins with the so-called Epic of Gilgamesh' (2) and throughout the book draws comparisons with Gilgamesh. While such parallels undoubtedly exist, they do not warrant this emphasis.

Where Brown makes his greatest contribution is in interpreting

Ecclesiastes from a Christian perspective. This concern is evident throughout the book, with repeated reference to the NT. The commentary also ends with an extensive Epilogue examining the significance of Ecclesiastes for Christian faith and practice (121–37). Preachers will find a wealth of material here, enabling them to access a biblical book that is often seen as obscure and impenetrable. Perhaps for this reason, Brown's commentary is to be highly commended.

Cecil Grant

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**On the Way to the Postmodern:
Old Testament Essays, 1967–1998,
Volume II (JSOTSup. 293)**

David J.A. Clines

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998,
450 pp., h/b., £58.00

At my age, this collection of essays classifies as the cult of nostalgia and deserves viewing time alongside the TV documentaries that chronicle the Woodstock generation and what came next. The difference is that biblical studies has taken a little longer than the Swinging Sixties for dressing up in ever more colourful and trendy gear, but as *The Full Monty* recently demonstrated, good things may come from Galilee, or in this case Sheffield, and I for one have inhaled and had my head expanded by these essays, either previously or as topped up now. On the other hand, my pleasure may be because this collection majors on close readings of the text or matters etymological in rather an undeconstructed and 'on the way' mode than representing the contemporary Clines at work. Compare, for instance, 'Universal Dominion in Psalm 2?', which is a non-earth shaking semantic study with the contemporary concerns of 'Psalm 2 and the MLF (Moabite Liberation Front)' in the 1995

Rogerson Festschrift, *The Bible in Human Society*. The MLF piece is incisive in a closer-to-the-bone manner, and more stimulating for that.

I'm sure there's an inside story that should accompany this volume. It only peeps through between places of original publication such as *The Christian Brethren Research Fellowship* and *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*. The 1998 volume from the Department of Sheffield's Jubilee, *Auguries*, fills a few gaps. A much better introduction to Clines at the turn of the century is the 1997 slim and roistering volume *The Bible and the Modern World* which deals with the Bible and the academy, culture, the public and the church. Biblical scholarship is still teetering between the myth of objectivity and the endorsement of subjectivity; between academic anonymity and personal disclosure. These days we know that we should pay attention to the social location of the author and to the power relations and implicit ideologies in everything, so it's really not enough to go on to have these essays collected in a book. It's the work; but what of the man? Clines' body of work would certainly have come out differently if he had spent the last thirty years in South Africa instead of Sheffield, or if he himself had taken a different ecclesiastical and spiritual journey. The issues of market place and consumer, and of legitimating faith community are ones that Clines himself rightly raises, but elsewhere. Wherever one stands, though, or whatever one's tastes, the essays in this volume are authentically butter not margarine. Your library should have it. When it does, then the very useful complete Bibliography of Clines' writings given at the back will enable you to trace material of his that you might have missed and that is not included here. Clines is someone to learn from and interact with – whether readers make meaning or not.

The articles are organised under five headings: Theology (6 items), Language (6), Psalms (5), Job (9), plus two fun pieces on Little Bo Peep and Winnie the Pooh. Each year I refer my students to a number of favourites from among this collection – for instance, 'Humanity as the Image of God', 'The Theology of the Flood Story', and 'The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh' (Ps. 19). These have not dated, and seem as sharp as ever.

Is there something here for everyone? Almost. If you don't have Hebrew at your fingertips, but use a Hebrew dictionary, then you could vicariously enjoy the bloodletting over Hebrew and semitic cognates involving Godfrey Driver, Winton Thomas, James Barr, Emerton and Dahood. If you don't already own the Word volume on *Job 1–20*, the nine essays here may convince you to buy it.

Deryck Sheriffs

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Hannah's Desire, God's Design: Early Interpretations of the Story of Hannah (JSOTSSup. 282)

Joan E. Cook

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
134 pp., £27.95

In this book, Joan Cook analyses the story of Hannah as 'a literary entity', and illustrates its position in Israelite tradition by noting the common themes of the barren mother and of divine guidance.

Chapter 2 presents a detailed analysis of the Hannah story in 1 Samuel, based on Cook's 1989 Vanderbilt dissertation. Chapter 3 examines the story in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*. In this 'rewritten' Bible with additional legendary material, Hannah is given the new role of a teacher of wisdom as 'the mother of the "light to the peoples" (51.6), whose milk nourishes with wisdom her son and all people' (74).

Chapter 4, on the Aramaic Targum of the Prophets', deals only with Hannah's Song, since the narrative part is identical to the Hebrew version. The song is classified as an apocalypse, not a hymn as in the Hebrew text, and like other targumim contains some lengthy expansions. It consists of two parts: 'retrospective predictions about the history of Israel' (vv. 1–5), and the 'divine eschatological activity' with the aspects of 'reward and punishment' (vv. 6–10). Chapter 5 discusses the infancy narrative in Luke 1–2. Both the Magnificat and the narrative are replete with allusions and direct references not only to 1 Sam. 1–2 but also to various other parts of the OT (e.g. Hab. 3:18, Deut. 26:7, Exod. 1:1 – 2:10). These references link the story of Jesus' birth with those of Israel's earlier leaders, and highlight the historical continuity and divine guidance the people had enjoyed since the time of Abraham. ... Luke recounts the birth story of Jesus who is God like YHWH' (112–13).

Cook summarises: 'the literary theme of the barren mother type scene ... illustrates the sometimes subtle changes in Hannah's actions and characterisation in the different versions', resulting from 'resignifying the stories according to contemporary concerns' (119). Within this scene, 'the theological theme of divine guidance and human initiative is expressed'. While in Luke's infancy narrative the birth of the son is attributed entirely to God, 1 Samuel takes Samuel's birth as initiated by the mother's request, *etc.* In Pseudo-Philo's narrative both divine and human causes are presented.

Cook is not primarily concerned with the meaning of the Hannah's story in Samuel as such, but with how the story has been adapted by later authors to their readers' community interest. This is well demonstrated. However, one might feel uneasy about claiming to see the barren mother

type in Elizabeth and Mary as in the Hannah stories. For one thing, 'the barren mother type' is not unique to the Hannah story, though Hannah's song certainly became the prototype of the Magnificat (see 102-107). Cook seems to go too far in saying that Luke's account is an 'interpretation' of Hannah's story. Occasionally Cook makes unnecessary emendation (e.g. 1 Sam 2:2; see 41, n. 37).

In summary, Cook's study is useful and helpful for understanding how the story and song of Hannah were interpreted and adapted to later readers' community interest.

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The Genesis of Justice

Alan M. Dershowitz
New York: Warner, 2000,
273 pp., h/b, £18.99

Dershowitz claims that ten stories of 'injustice' in Genesis led to the Ten Commandments. These are: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Flood, Abraham and Sodom, Lot's daughters, the sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob's deception, the rape of Dinah, Judah and Tamar, and the framing of Joseph.

The book is broadly welcomed for its endorsement of the value of Biblical narrative in thinking about contemporary issues of justice. Dershowitz makes lively connections with the modern day (e.g. Cain is enrolled in 'God's witness protection program' p. 51) even though not all are persuasive (how does Ex. 23:7 protect against double jeopardy?). He grapples with often difficult texts and his individual case studies make a number of good points. Highlights include the Cain and Abel chapter, the binding of Isaac, and the running theme of poetic justice in the lives of Jacob and his descendants. Dershowitz excels at engaging modern readers, and assembles his

information in a highly accessible way. Chapter 13 (Is there justice in this world or the next?) is possibly the best, in part because the problem of injustice in this life favours the author's critical stance.

Billed as a look at Genesis from a 'modern legal perspective', the book begs the question as to why this should be an appropriate way of reading Biblical law. It makes two main claims: first, that the genesis of our sense of justice is the 'injustice' recorded in Genesis; and secondly, that there is a direct link between these stories and the Ten Commandments. Neither claim convinces. Dershowitz controversially labels God's actions and judgements in Genesis as 'unjust', but for all the bluster his thesis is nothing more than a caricature. For example, the charge that God is unjust because he gives Adam and Eve a 'disproportionate' punishment is made by soft-peddalling questions of harm and culpability. Dershowitz should engage more seriously with those who regard the God of Genesis as just. But he cuts himself off from such a debate, describing this view as 'the first step on the road to fundamentalism' (74).

Elsewhere, big claims hang on slender threads. The assertion that 'the text of Genesis supports the view of an imperfect, learning God' (40) turns out to rely on God's observations that his creations are 'good'. This apparently shows God's imperfection insofar as creation 'might have turned out otherwise' (40)! The complaint that 'the way of the Lord is not just' perhaps receives its answer in Ezekiel 18:25: '... Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?'

The second major claim of the book - that these narratives 'led' to the Ten Commandments - is just as questionable. Dershowitz claims that 'these laws are a reaction to the anarchy of the narratives' (245), as if Genesis had a monopoly on this

theme. What makes the anarchy of Genesis special? Granted the close similarities between, say, Genesis 19 and Judges 19, on Dershowitz' reasoning we could equally tie the Ten Commandments to Gibeah. What he really needs is evidence that his chosen texts predate the Ten Commandments (an ironically fundamentalist position). Dershowitz insists that he doesn't want to write a book about who wrote the Bible (14) but his argument depends upon answering this question.

Instead of attempting the more modest task of finding literary connections (in either direction) between the Genesis narratives and the Law, Dershowitz opts for bald statement, for instance that the Fifth Commandment is rooted 'in the stories of dishonour cast upon parents in Genesis' (249). Why not, say, the story of Eli and his sons in 1 Samuel? Other claims that the Ninth Commandment derive 'directly from Potiphar's wife bearing false witness against Joseph ...' (250) lack any kind of textual support. Provocative, but not kosher!

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The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture (JSOTSup. 263)

M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie (Eds)
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
422 pp., h/b., £58.00/\$84.00

Although *The Chronicler as Author* is a sequel to *The Chronicler as Historian*, its subtitle gives the title an important spin, and a number of the essays later in the volume adopt reading techniques that preclude examination of authorial intent or method.

Kai Peltonen's mammoth opening essay examines the three main approaches taken historically to whether the Chronicler had sources: only unknown sources; both known

and unknown sources; effectively only known sources. Now, apparently, we know less than ever about the Chronicler's extra-biblical sources. Steven McKenzie advances strong reasons for supposing that 1 Esdras was composed with the prior knowledge of Ezra-Nehemiah. He then offers a robust critique of Graeme Auld's view that common material in Samuel-Kings and in Chronicles results from the use of a common source in both. To this Auld gives an equally robust reply, modifying some of his earlier published positions. Rodney Duke examines the rhetorical means by which the Chronicler sought to motivate his audience to follow Yahweh through the legitimate cult at Jerusalem. John Wright looks at the underlying structure of the story (fabula) of Chronicles. William Schniedewind argues that the Chronicler (not the author of 1 Chronicles 1-9) produced his work when not only was the Pentateuch considered authoritative, but also there was a 'significant body of oral traditions and legal precedents' (178) around it, which the Chronicler developed further. Gary Knoppers watches wealth go in and out of the treasury, contrasting the pictures in Chronicles and Kings. The Chronicler portrays the delving of a monarch into temple treasuries to ward off a foreign invasion as 'a sign of abject weakness and moral turpitude' (201), a loser's strategy. Ehud Ben Zvi looks at the words of Hiram, the Queen of Sheba, Sennacherib, Neco, and Cyrus, the five foreigners given voice in Chronicles. All but Sennacherib, who is there to promote his opposite, are presented positively and are somewhat 'Israelized'. Armin Siedlecki considers the unclear boundary between Israel and the nations. Howard Wallace argues that when treating psalms the Chronicler manages to give them a new meaning with relatively small changes. James Trotter looks at how readers in the Persian period might have understood 1 Chronicles 10, seeming to think

that it is easier to reconstruct how an ancient reader might have read than how an ancient author might have intended a text to be read. Christine Mitchell follows techniques of reading developed by Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman and looks at 1 Chronicles 10:1 – 11:9 in terms of its literary logic both with and without reference to the parallel text in Samuel. Kirsten Nielsen argues that the psalm in 1 Chronicles 16 is possessed in a way precluding exclusive ownership by David, by the Levites who sang it, and by the reader. Noel Bailey examines and finds moral fault with 1 Chronicles 21. Roland Boer maintains that 2 Chronicles 10–13 represent a utopian view of space and politics. Magnar Kartveit's is the most historical of all the essays, arguing that 2 Chronicles 36:21 is a later insertion to the text.

Not all the essays will help undergraduates seeking overviews of issues to do with Chronicles or contemporary reading methods. However, for more advanced work on particular texts, topics, or reading methods some of the essays will prove invaluable.

P.J. Williams

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Isaiah, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries

Alec Motyer

Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999,
408 pp., £9.99

In 1964 the Tyndale OT Commentaries series commenced with *Proverbs* by Derek Kidner. Thirty-five years later the valued and much praised series is complete. To write on the whole book of Isaiah is a great challenge, worthily fulfilled twice now by Alec Motyer. His first and larger commentary, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (IVP, 1993) was reviewed in *Themelios* 20.2 (1995). Comments made there are applicable to the present volume,

so the focus here is on their comparison.

Motyer notes that 'the majority of the explanatory and expository work in this commentary is certainly new in expression and quite considerably new in content' (9). The work has indeed been freshly written, with only limited repetition of wording from the first volume. To that extent it is 'new in content'. However, in sampling several key chapters in class this semester I have found little that is new in substance other than occasional nuances. But surely that is to be expected after a lifetime of detailed study.

That the structure is retained is of note. Motyer's division into sections (especially chs. 28–37, 38–55) and his identification of a third messianic figure, 'the conqueror', have been criticised, but after re-examination he has not seen fit to change his views. A feature of the first work was frequent literary analyses of passages as a pointer to theological emphases. Unfortunately in the current volume much of that analysis is omitted or presented in compressed form, so the reader may overlook it in the midst of other detail. Also retained is careful attention to detail and word meanings in the verse by verse commentary (a characteristic of the series).

In two areas readers will need to go elsewhere for help. In addition to major commentaries, the 1980s and 1990s have seen a proliferation of studies across the theological spectrum on the book's 'unity', intertextuality, theological emphases, and Christian use. Motyer's introduction has one footnote alluding to the 1991 SBL Seminar papers, and a brief overview of a small selection of recent studies (27–28; but no mention of Goldingay, Williamson, Sweeney, Seitz, or Brueggemann). However, as in the first volume, there is no evidence of interaction with these studies. Other than Oswald and Miscall, the writer's main dialogue partners predate these discussions.

Secondly, given Motyer's commendable concern to see reference to Christ, it is disappointing that the introductory section, 'Isaiah and the New Testament' (34-35), only uses NT references to argue for unity of authorship. So much of the book's theology could have been discussed, including Pauline use relating to the 'nations'. Similarly, the commentary proper could have noted much NT use of specific passages.

Libraries should have both volumes, but individuals will choose. Many will be glad of the less expensive Tyndale volume, which fits a lot of value into a small space (as with others in the series). The editor and publishers are to be commended for this. The larger volume, with its luxury of more space, is easier to read and contains more discussion and documentation. Whichever is used, Motyer's comment on earlier Tyndale commentaries will be said of both his works, 'God has been pleased to use [them] to his own glory in helping many readers to a fuller and deeper knowledge of his precious Word' (10).

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Defining the Sacred Songs: Genre, Tradition and the Post-Critical Interpretation of the Psalms, (JSOTSup. 218)

Harry P. Nasuti

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
231 pp., h/b., £46.00/\$73.00

Harry Nasuti's recent publication provides not only a helpful overview of recent trends in Psalms research, but also a laboratory for observing recent shifts in hermeneutics. Using the category of genre, he traces how biblical scholarship has used the definition of the psalms to interpret the psalms not only as individual compositions, but also more recently as an overall collection.

Nasuti introduces us to the modern study of genre through the towering figure of Gunkel who grouped the psalms using literary and sociological categories (basic literary elements, basic setting in the life of the people). He notes, however, that the more recent efforts of Westermann and Brueggemann reveal a shift to more universal and theological categorisations of the psalms, a trend discernible in genre analysis prior to Gunkel. This shift to a pre-Gunkel approach to the psalms highlights an important point about the history of genre analysis: changes in the theological understanding result in changes in genre groupings. This key observation informs and undergirds the remainder of the book. For Nasuti, genre analysis is a perspectival exercise, a way of describing the reality of the text from the perspective of a particular individual or community. He does provide some constraints on this exercise; canon (set books), tradition (history of interpretation), and community (present interpretive community).

In the latter half of the book, Nasuti focuses more attention on recent canonical approaches to the Psalms. First, in these David has re-emerged as the key for the interpretation of the Psalms, not because he wrote the psalms, but that he is presented as the ideal author in canon. This connection to David shapes the reading of the psalms, providing insights into the function of the psalms in the lives of present day readers. Secondly, Nasuti traces recent study of the Psalter as a collection, those studies which investigate the message of the Psalms as a completed book. Since such research relies heavily on genre analysis which is perspectival in nature, Nasuti concludes that assessments of the final shape of the Psalter do not unearth the intention of the collection, but rather are 'proper to our own time' (199).

Nasuti's book is a helpful introduction to many new trends in the study of the Psalms, but is also a superb testimony to the hermeneutical shifts within biblical studies over the past few decades. His exploration of genre highlights its function within the lives of individuals and communities of faith: it is not only expressive (through them we express our situation), but also creative (through them a world is created) and transformative/sacramental (through them one inhabits the newly created world).

But there is a worrisome trend in Nasuti's work. Hermeneutical suspicion becomes hermeneutical despair as he catalogues variety in genre definition throughout the history of interpretation. His embrace of the post-critical hermeneutical agenda loosens the text from its historical moorings, and, although he offers some safeguards for interpretation (canon, tradition, community), in the end these only encourage educated creativity in the reader.

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Daniel (New Century Bible Commentary)

Paul L. Redditt

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
211 pp., £14.95

This commentary, by the Professor of Old Testament, Georgetown College, Kentucky, marks the revival of the New Century Bible Commentaries. Apparently the plan is to fill the gaps in the series rather than replace existing volumes.

Redditt provides a fairly full Introduction, dealing with the usual issues of authorship, date, unity, and so on. He takes the standard critical view that the book of Daniel, in its extant form, originates from Judea at the time of the Maccabean crisis.

However, he interacts more fully with the works of scholars who hold to a sixth-century Babylonian origin of the book than do most recent commentators who take this position. Given this openness to those whom he calls 'traditional scholars', it is surprising that when discussing one of the most thorny problems of the book, the identity of 'Darius the Mede', he does not mention the suggestion of D.J. Wiseman (in Wiseman *et al.*, *Notes on ... Daniel*, London: Tyndale Press, 1965) that the *waw* in Daniel 6:28 should be read as a *waw explicativum*, so identifying Darius the Mede as Cyrus the Persian. This is quite acceptable grammatically, and a similar use occurs in Aramaic in Daniel 4:10. This view is supported from a literary stand-point by Colless (*JSOT* 56, 1982, 113-26), and at present seems the best solution to the problem.

Because he recognises that the stories make most sense in an exilic setting, and that there is continuity between them and the visions, Redditt concludes that the book of Daniel derives from a group of *diaspora* Jews who moved from Babylon to Jerusalem after Antiochus III gained control of Palestine. He regards Jerusalem as the final provenance of the book because of the interest in the fate of the city and its temple shown in the visions. However, there is no reason why Babylonian Jews should not have had such an interest, as Psalm 137 and Nehemiah 1 show. A strong argument can be made for a Babylonian provenance for the visions as well as the stories (*cf.* Lucas, 'Daniel: Resolving the Enigma', *VT* 50, 2000, 66-80).

The commentary proper proceeds chapter by chapter, except for 10:1 - 12:4 and 12:5-13. Each chapter has an introduction and is then divided into sections, with general and verse-by-verse comment. There is helpful and usually judicious discussion of the views of a range of scholars, including 'traditional'

ones, before Redditt gives his own conclusions. He has his own theory of a three-stage redaction, presented in the Introduction. This intrudes in several places in the commentary, without really providing much exegetical illumination. The commentary is rather weak in the area of recognising literary structure and artistry. The discussion of Daniel 10:21 – 11:45 provides an example of how these two features of the commentary sometimes interact unhelpfully. A concern to uncover possible redactional stages in the production of this survey of history seems to blind Redditt to the 'patterning' that exists in it so that the careers of earlier rulers foreshadow that of Antiochus IV, and provide support for the prophecy of his sudden downfall.

A new feature for the series is a concluding comment on the theology of each chapter. Here there is helpful material for the preacher and teacher, and it is a pity that the comments are quite brief. This is a helpful commentary, written from a moderate critical standpoint, for students and pastors who want a not-too-detailed, yet quite substantial way in to the study of the book of Daniel. It is a good bridge to the more technical commentaries by Goldingay (Word) and Collins (Hermeneia).

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Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch (The Biblical Seminar 58)

Alexander Rofé

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
152 pp., £12.95

Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch (The Biblical Seminar 59)

James W. Watts

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999,
189 pp. £14.95

Despite appearing as successive contributions to the *Biblical Seminar* series, these books could hardly be more different. Rofé's introduction is a highly unsatisfactory and rather tired volume, whereas Watt's contribution is fresh and challenging.

From his opening demand that the reader is open to the critical method and 'sets aside *excuses and homiletics*' (italics mine), Rofé goes about his task in a somewhat doctrinaire manner. He consistently ignores recent literary studies on the Pentateuch, especially when dealing with narrative, preferring instead to restate critical orthodoxies of a generation ago. Throughout he casually dismisses every perspective on the text other than his own (for instance see pp. 18–22, 112), and steadfastly refuses to engage with *any* attempt to read texts holistically, whether conservative or not.

Much of the book takes the form of a historical overview of Pentateuchal studies, but even here Rofé's approach is rather quirky. Too much space is given to the work of his teacher Cassuto, and occasionally his assessment of earlier work is out of step with the current consensus (see for instance his comments on von Rad's treatment of Deut. 26 on p. 96). Overall, I found the volume to be extremely unsatisfactory. It is too patchy to be of use as background reading for those doing courses on the

Pentateuch (and many other books do the job much better). It is too quirky to be of use as a basic text on Pentateuchal criticism. In addition, it is littered with unhelpful asides and unwarranted side-swipes, which make it an infuriating read for anyone with a more conservative view of the Bible. I would not recommend this book to anyone!

Watt's discussion of law and rhetoric, however, is an entirely different matter. He begins by arguing that biblical laws were originally composed with public reading in mind, and then suggests that this shaped not only the framing of the laws in the Pentateuch but also the narrative sections. He then defends this view in a carefully nuanced discussion of the nature of the 'rhetoric' of the Pentateuch, which despite being *sui generis* displays the same basic pattern of *story, list and sanction* as other ancient literature. This 'rhetoric of persuasion' shapes both the large-scale structures of this part of the Bible and the wording of individual legal sentences.

This concept is investigated under the rubrics of 'Instruction', 'Commandment' and 'Law'. It would be impossible to do justice to Watt's careful and persuasive discussion in a short review. Suffice to say that this is a 'must read' for anyone doing advanced study in this area, or particularly interested in the nature of biblical law. At times, there is a hint of circularity in Watt's discussion, but this scarcely detracts from the value of his careful and suggestive analysis. This really is an excellent book, which I can recommend wholeheartedly.

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Zemah and Zerubbabel. Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period (JSOTSup. 304)

Wolter H. Rose
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000,
285 pages, h/b., £50.00

The majority critical consensus holds that Zechariah and Haggai expected Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah and a Davidic prince, to restore the dynasty and occupy the throne as the legitimate heir. This view holds that Zerubbabel is to be identified with 'Zemah' (usually translated 'Branch'), the figure who is the subject of oracles in Zech. 3.8; 6.12. It is also usually held that Zechariah expected some kind of dyarchic polity for the postexilic period embracing Zerubbabel as king and Joshua as high priest.

Rose's book marks a radical departure from the established interpretation of these passages. Using some very detailed grammatical, semantic and literary-critical arguments, he proposes instead that Zemah denotes a future royal figure modelled on David and sent by God to bring salvation and peace to God's people and the world.

Rose argues that the traditional translation of *zemah* as 'branch' or 'shoot' is mistaken, and is conditioned by erroneous association with Is. 11.1 (where the word does not appear). This has misled interpreters to identify this figure as the natural continuation of the Davidic dynasty contributing to its own future. The real meaning of the word is 'vegetation' or 'growth' (i.e. plants as a whole); and Jer. 23.5 (where the word does appear) provides the traditio-historical background and an analogous context for understanding Zechariah's usage: it is not the historical process but only Yahweh's personal intervention which will bring in the promised rule of 'Zemah'. Although the word *mashiah* does not appear in any of these texts, Zemah

can be properly described as a 'messianic' figure in view of the character of his rule.

Moreover, none of the texts usually cited supports the dyarchic view of supposed prophetic expectation. The crowning of Joshua alone in Zech. 6.11 does not indicate exaltation of the high priesthood to political power but is in symbolic token of Zemah's future rule, to which the priesthood will serve as a guarantee. The vision of the lampstand and the two olive trees in Zech. 4.11-14 should be taken as symbolic references, not to Zerubbabel and Joshua as human leaders on earth, but more probably to heavenly beings in the divine council. Finally, Hag. 2:20-23 should not be understood as implying the imminent restoration of the monarchy or the inauguration of the messianic age, but as God's promise of protection to Zerubbabel in a time of political upheaval.

The style of this book is sometimes rather laboured and repetitive; tighter editing and more careful phrasing in places would have helped. The concluding chapter does not really follow through the implications of the findings, which is a pity, given the considerable space devoted throughout to reviewing scholarly positions.

In swimming against the stream, Rose makes a strong and generally persuasive case, though I wondered at times if too diverse a range of linguistic and grammatical arguments was being deployed. His interpretation of these texts is broadly congenial to an older type of Christological reading of the OT (see p. 207), which may not commend it to some readers. It could be usefully read in conjunction with recent works which challenge the critical view that there was a 'messianological vacuum' (J. Becker) in periods of OT history, or even that the real locus of messianism is to be found outside the OT or lying in a *relecture* of the texts.

Horbury's *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (reviewed in *Themelios* 25.3) and the Tyndale Fellowship's own symposium *The Lord's Anointed* cover this question on a broader canvas, and this book is a good, detailed complement to this trend.

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**Those Elusive Deuteronomists:
The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism
(JSOTSup. 268)**

Linda S. Scheearing & Steven L. McKenzie (Eds.)
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999,
288 pp., h/b., £50/\$80

In the last decades the phenomenon of pan-deuteronomism has swept through OT scholarship. The deuteronomistic movement has been credited with the formation of almost the entire OT, and the activity of the Deuteronomists has been claimed even in the Maccabean period. However, the recurrent problem has been the lack of well-defined criteria for putting the label 'deuteronomistic' on a given text or phrase. And almost no one has reflected upon the proper basis for assuming a sociologically distinct movement or 'school'. The summary of Judges 17:6, 'everyone did what was right in his own eyes', in many ways describes the attitude among scholars. Or, as Lohfink (37) notes, 'today, a self-respecting doctoral student has to find the hand of a Deuteronomist somewhere in the Bible. This is the only way into the guild'.

In this book thirteen authors discuss the scope of deuteronomism within the OT, and several call for a reconsideration of the criteria for claiming deuteronomistic redaction. The book contains three major sections. The first part deals with methodology and nomenclature. R. Coggins provides a useful overview of the considerable scholarly diversity in the use of the label

'deuteronomistic', and calls for greater caution. N. Lohfink considers the proper criteria for calling a text 'deuteronomistic' and for speaking about a movement. Only the occurrence of phrases that are distinctive to Deuteronomy or the Deuteronomistic History indicate deuteronomistic influence. Lohfink finds traces of various movements in pre-exilic and post-exilic Judah, but this is insufficient for them to be named 'deuteronomistic'. R.R. Wilson provides a good overview of possible deuteronomistic modification of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. He points to inherent problems with both the linguistic and the thematic criteria, and ponders whether the very diverse use of the term 'deuteronomistic' today actually suggests that there was no Deuteronomist at all.

The next section focuses on the phenomenon of pan-deuteronomism in major parts of the OT. While J. Blenkinsopp (Tetrateuch) opts for a visible deuteronomistic redaction, both R.A. Kugler (Latter Prophets) and J.L. Crenshaw (Writings) expressly deny that the possible linguistic affinity with Deuteronomy indicates a deuteronomistic redaction. Auld (Former Prophets) here as elsewhere goes against the stream with his idea that Deuteronomy has been influenced by the Former Prophets and not vice versa.

The six essays in the last section deal with case studies of some of the texts where deuteronomistic redaction has often been maintained: J. Van Seters (Exod. 19-24, 32-34), M.C. Brettler (Deut. 30:1-10), Th.C. Römer (Jeremiah), C.L. Patton (Ezekiel), S.L. Cook (Micah) and E. Ben Zvi (Micah, Obadiah and Zephaniah). As editors, L.S. Shearing introduces and S.L. McKenzie sums up the whole discussion.

Needless to say, there are huge differences between the essays in method and approach. Some authors claim without much methodological

reflection one or several deuteronomistic redactions (e.g., Blenkinsopp, Römer, Cook). Others put the concept of deuteronomistic redaction of certain books to a serious test and find the result unconvincing (e.g., Lohfink, Kugler, Ben Zvi). The anthology also displays the grave problems of method and criteria within many studies in deuteronomism. Some assert evidence of deuteronomistic (or other) redaction without any consideration of the difference between random verbal parallels due to a common theme and parallels indicating actual linguistic connection. They never question whether a shared expression is peculiar to the deuteronomistic corpus, or is found elsewhere (e.g., Römer, Patton). Here the studies of Lohfink, Kugler and Ben Zvi represent a most welcome leap forward in methodological clarity. Most of the articles are cautious about the notion of a deuteronomistic movement: deuteronomistic *influence* is not the same as *redaction* by a *group*.

The book contains several useful essays. Those of Lohfink, Wilson, Kugler and Ben Zvi are especially helpful for setting the current scholarly idea of deuteronomism in proper perspective. Some crucial problems in pan-deuteronomism are not dealt with, however. Martin Noth's hypothesis of a comprehensive Deuteronomistic History is never discussed, and the widespread notion of a deuteronomistic redaction of Deuteronomy is simply assumed.

Several questions arise in reading this book. All authors assume without discussion that *Ur-Deuteronomy* was written in Josiah's time, and that the book's covenant structure betrays influence from Assyrian vassal treaties. This flaw (in my opinion) means that circumstances are read into Deuteronomy which in reality are absent (e.g., Zion as the spiritual centre), and that passages in Deuteronomy are designated as exilic and therefore utopian.

The identification of a given passage as exilic or post-exilic is often proposed on very shaky premises. Despite these reservations, some of the essays offer good contributions to a more proper evaluation of the relation between Deuteronomy and the rest of the OT.

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The Search for Quotation (JSOTSup. 180)

Richard L. Schultz

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
395 pp., h/b., £50/\$85.00

Phrases and even entire verses whose wording is strikingly similar occur frequently in the prophetic literature, yet their function is often left unexplained in commentaries. Based on a 1989 Yale dissertation written under the guidance of Brevard Childs, this monograph attempts to elucidate the existence of such 'verbal parallels' and suggests new avenues for their study. The book is developed in three parts. Part I analyses scholarly literature discussing the phenomenon of verbal parallels. Part II places the issue of prophetic quotation in a larger context, devoting a chapter each to quotation in: ancient Near Eastern literature, early Judaism (focusing on Sirach and the Qumran *Hodayoth*), in the OT (quotations of proverbial sayings and other speakers), and Western literature. Part III develops 'a new approach to prophetic quotation'. There are indexes of references and authors, and an appendix of internal verbal parallels in Isaiah.

One of numerous metaphors used by the author to enliven the discussion characterises well his own work: a bee gathering pollen from a variety of blossoms transforms it into honey. Thus Schultz takes up various methodological insights and suggestions in Part I, although his primary aim is to draw attention to

unproven assumptions and to note the lack of agreed criteria for identifying quotations and for establishing dependence. His survey reveals that verbal parallels 'have been viewed as pointing to deficient creativity, textual fluidity, prophetic schools, waning authority, proto-midrashic exegesis, redactional shaping and incipient canonicity' (109), yet often without much methodological reflection.

Part II continues the pollen-gathering exercise. Among other things, verbal parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature bring to the foreground the issue of distinguishing quotations from formulaic and stereotypical phrases. Sirach and the *Hodayoth* show that the selection of citations is influenced primarily by the author's themes and theology, and that there can be a great variety in the frequency, sources and uses made of biblical citations even by the same author. Non-prophetic OT texts reveal that literary quotation is part of the larger phenomenon of 'foreign voices' which are incorporated into the biblical text and may fulfil a wide range of functions. The excursion into modern comparative literature studies heightens the sense of complexity of assessing verbal parallels and demonstrates the importance of both the original and the new context. All in all, more or less the same issues seem to arise in all these areas of research. One that Schultz refers to repeatedly is that a verbatim repetition may mean something quite different in a different context, while conversely an inexact repetition may well have the same meaning.

Part III develops a model for 'quotation criticism' which is then applied to selected passages in Isaiah. For Schultz, verbal and syntactical correspondence must be analysed diachronically (determining the direction of borrowing, paying attention to setting) and synchronically (determining the

function of the passage in the canonical books), and the multi-functionality of quotation must be acknowledged. The examples (Is. 11:6-9/65:25; 8:15/28:13; 40:3, 10; 57:14/62:10-11, Is. 2:2-4/Mic. 4:1-3; Is. 15-16/Jer. 48) demonstrate how attention to these issues can deepen our appreciation of the texts in question, although it also emerges that dating the texts remains as difficult as ever. The book offers much that is worth reflecting on. It is to be hoped that in due course it will inform commentaries and introductory texts and thus be of use to a wider audience.

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God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology (JSOTSup. 305)

Jo Bailey Wells

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000,

297 pp., h/b., £50

This book addresses two questions. The first and major question is: What does "holiness" mean, according to its presentation in various parts of Scripture? The second, subsidiary question is: What do the varying dynamics in the presentation of holiness say about a Christian reading of Scripture, and vice versa? (13). These opening questions overarch this study, a published version of a thesis supervised by Walter Moberly in Durham. Since these issues are of vital importance to Christians, and Moberly is attempting to break new ground in Biblical Theology, the book's content and methodology are of wider interest than many a published thesis.

The starting-point is the call to Israel at Sinai in Exodus 19:6 to be YHWH's treasured possession, a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. Chapter 1 examines this foundational text, while Chapters 2 and 3 probe the concepts of holiness and priesthood in

the Torah more deeply. Chapters 4 and 5 take the reader into the prophets who deal most explicitly with holiness, *i.e.* Isaiah and Ezekiel. Chapter 6 steps back to Genesis to examine Abram as the prototype of Israel. Chapter 7 then considers the way in which 1 Peter 2 re-interprets election, priesthood and holiness in the light of Christ. And a slim concluding chapter 8 re-examines holiness in general and Exodus 19:6 in particular.

What is attempted is neither a systematic theology of holiness nor a biblical survey of the historical development of holiness. This sets out its stall to be a Biblical Theology. The starting-point methodologically is the lexical occurrence of the Hebrew word for holiness, *qodesh*, in the Scriptures. The rival etymologies often touted for this word-group, 'separateness' or 'brightness', are ignored in favour of study of their usage in context. In light of James Barr's strictures against the older Biblical Theology movement, this is to be commended. The other shaping influence in operation here is the canonical approach associated with Brevard Childs. This entails a couple of significant elements. Firstly, particular attention is paid to the final form of the canonical text. Secondly, the history of the tradition of interpretation within the faith-community is important, because it gives a depth dimension to the final form. The specific challenge of Biblical Theology is to listen to the OT 'as a discrete Jewish voice' (22), to listen to the NT with particular attention to its dependence on the Septuagint, and then 'to re-read the parts in the light of the whole' (22). The challenge of holding together different voices in an integrated canon is expressed thus: 'The differing parts of the canon have to be heard together, and to be held in creative tension' (23). Childs has sometimes been criticised for failing to deliver the exegetical goods to match up to his theories. Wells sets out less to defend the theories than to test

them exegetically in search of a Biblical Theology of holiness. How well does she succeed?

Each chapter contains careful exegesis which takes account of context, grammar, genre, poetics and such like. Sometimes a personal opinion is ventured which bucks the main trends of critical scholarship. Thus, for example, in Exodus 19 an interpretation is offered which depends on punctuating v. 5 differently from the Massoretic Text. Helpfully, each chapter ends with a summary of the theological gains won by the exegesis. The theological first fruits of Exodus 19:6 are presented simply and clearly in support of statements such as 'Israel is unique', 'Israel belongs to God', 'Israel must live for God', and 'Israel must live for others'.

I was interested and somewhat surprised to see a consistent pattern emerge throughout the OT exegesis, which, perhaps counter-intuitively, minimises the missionary thrust of Israel's calling to be a priestly kingdom and holy nation. This is confirmed retrospectively by the reflexive interpretation of Genesis 12:3b, that the nations will wish themselves to be as blessed as Abraham was, rather than that they will all be blessed through him. 1 Peter 2 is then portrayed as taking up the concepts of election, priesthood and holiness and imbuing them with a fresh new missionary purpose. The concluding step in the whole enterprise permits one to go back to the more exclusivistic OT texts and discover that because of the openness within their language and imagery they are in fact amenable to a Christian re-reading. This is no abuse of OT texts, because 'the new meaning is evident within the old meaning' (245).

If I have any reservations, they are as follows:

One, many narrative approaches build on Childs' preference for the final form of the biblical text by elaborating ways in which texts and stories create an imaginative world and draw the reader into it. Not so here. The persistent reminders throughout this book of the history of the tradition of interpretation place a series of redactors between the text and the world it evokes. My ideal Biblical Theology would probably require a slight reining in of the analytical faculty in order to facilitate a little more imagination, creativity and spiritual application than finds expression here.

Two, the choice to make holiness-vocabulary a determining factor in selection of texts revealed a disconcerting consequence. It virtually excluded consideration of the gospels, since, as was freely admitted, such vocabulary hardly exists in the gospels. But surely a methodology which marginalises the gospels and thereby the primary witness to Jesus Christ is open to serious question. I should have thought that for both hermeneutics and Biblical Theology Christ is the ultimate touchstone for revealed truth.

Three, I am not sure that at the end of such painstaking labour the contemporary church has anything new to get its teeth into with respect to the call to holiness.

While in certain respects this is not how I personally approach the task of Biblical Theology, I commend it to others for serious consideration. And I wholly endorse the sentiments expressed in the preface about holiness being both God's gift and God's challenge to a community and about the Church's need for both.

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Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark

Edwin K. Broadhead

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
192 pp., h/b., £35/\$57.50

When asked to review Edwin K. Broadhead's *Naming Jesus*, I readily agreed. However when the review copy arrived and I saw the subtitle, *Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark*, I wanted to renege on the commitment. Two decades ago, in the midst of my doctoral studies, I grew weary of the many attempts by NT scholars to analyse the titles used for Jesus in Mark's Gospel, without reference to the role they play in the narrative. I could only envision wading through a Heitmueller or Bultmann-like initiative to show how the titles ascribed to Jesus somehow separate the Jesus of history from the Christ of the Church. I was even less enthusiastic about an updated attempt along the lines of Weeden or Perrin to identify competing Christologies in the early church through titular analysis. During my many years in parish ministry it became clear to me that, except for the rather narrow perspectives of some scholars, the Gospels have always presented themselves to the reader as narrative, particularly historical narrative literature and that the titular characterisation can only be understood properly through narrative analysis.

What a pleasant surprise it was actually to read Broadhead's book and see that his main emphasis is to trace the development of the titles used to name and identify Jesus within the larger narrative strategy. The entry point in discussing each title is a review of the historic background of the specific title but the main focus of each chapter is not the historic background but what Broadhead calls the literary foreground. Broadhead

refuses to isolate the titles from the narrative flow. As he states, 'While external factors remain relevant, the titles receive their most decisive imprint from the literary strategy and the literary world which host them. The outcome of such a process is not a systematic Christology, but a narrative presentation or performance' (29).

There is much to be commended in the book. First, the taxonomy in chapter 1, Introduction, is a good synopsis of the kind of titular studies of Jesus that have been undertaken in the history of higher criticism (and that I hoped would not characterise this book). This is organised with some innovation, concisely written, and, in my estimation, is generally accurate in its brief descriptions of scholarly positions. Second, Broadhead demonstrates a consistent ability to synthesise and summarise rather vast amounts of secondary material throughout the book. This occurs in the Introduction and also in the sections entitled 'historical background' for each title discussed. In fact, this ability is further demonstrated by the conclusions at the end of each chapter which actually provide abstracts of the chapter's contents and by the final chapter, Conclusion, which is a summary of the summaries. The first six pages of that concluding chapter provide Broadhead's own abstract of his earlier discussions.

Thirdly, Broadhead has clearly done his homework. The book is marked by a thorough familiarity with both source and secondary material. Fourthly, as indicated above, the analysis of each title take place with an understanding and appreciation of the narrative form of literature. This, in my estimation, is one of the strengths of the book. Fifthly, several of the chapters are especially insightful; e.g., Jesus the Nazarene (ch. 2), the Holy One of God (ch. 9), the Son of David (ch. 11), Son of God (ch. 12), Son of Man (ch. 13), and the Crucified One (ch. 17).

This is not to say that I find the book to be completely unflawed. The first shortcoming is that a number of the chapters do not deal with titles of Jesus at all but only with descriptions. Thus, the emphasis of the book often does not seem to be titular Christology at all but a descriptive Christology. Discussions of prophet, the greater one, priest (in which only priestly activity by Jesus is provided as justification for including this in titular Christology), shepherd, the suffering servant of God, lord, and the risen one hardly seem central to a study focusing on titles. Of course, without these chapters, the book would have been quite short and, with a price established at UK £35 and US \$57.50, exorbitantly expensive if so brief. The second complaint I have is that Broadhead sometimes seems to make too much of little evidence. For example, the discussion of the very broadly used *kurios* in chapter 14 leads Broadhead to conclude that there is an intentional development of this title along four lines in Mark's Gospel (140). He sees this as a narrative strategy that has a profound effect upon the discussion of Christology. However, to see this common designation as providing 'an important bridge within the christological developments of early Christianity' seems to me to be a major overstatement. Similar points might be made about a number of the chapters that deal not with titles but with descriptions of Jesus in the whole of Mark's Gospel.

Still, this is a book that I recommend to the diligent student of the Gospels. In his preface, Broadhead writes, 'May this work in some way aid the Church'. I have asked whether this work will indeed be of service to the Church and, indeed, I believe it will. The pastor and church leader who is committed to serious biblical exposition and preaching will find real help in understanding both the background of the descriptions of Jesus as well as insight into how

Jesus is portrayed in the whole of Mark's Gospel.

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Restoring Presence: The Spirit in Matthew's Gospel (JPTSSup. 18)

Blaine Charette

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000,
160 pp., £10.95/\$13.95

This is a well written and enjoyable book which starts from the observation that Matthew's Pneumatology has been neglected. Charette's stated purpose is not to argue that Matthew's contribution to Pneumatology is as significant as that of Luke or John, but to demonstrate that there is in Matthew a thoughtful and carefully nuanced description of the Spirit's activity. Thus he notes that although Matthew's Gospel pays less attention to the Spirit than does John's, yet it goes beyond Mark and compares favourably with the contribution to Pneumatology found in Luke's Gospel.

Charette's thesis is that Matthew tells the story of God's eschatological redemption in which Spirit plays a decisive role. Matthew's perspective is shaped by that of the OT.

Three main chapters each discuss one of three themes which Charette identifies as programmatic in Matthew 1:21. These are christology (Spirit and Messiah); soteriology (Spirit and redemption); ecclesiology (church and messiah).

Chapter one concerns the relationship between Matthew's christology and pneumatology. It demonstrates that it is the Spirit of God who gives both impetus and direction to the messianic mission, and that this can be seen clearly in the activity of the Spirit at key moments in the life of Christ, such as his conception (1:18, 20), baptism (3:16) and temptation (4:1).

So too Charette argues in chapter two that when at 27:50 Jesus is said to give up his spirit, that this is in fact a reference to the Spirit. He finds here a proleptic reference to Pentecost: just as John and Luke both show that Jesus gave the Spirit to be God's presence among his people for the period after the risen Christ was exalted to heaven, so too Matthew describes a similar progression.

Chapter three takes this further. God's Spirit has not only gone from the dying Jesus to those who would follow him, but so too it has left the temple through the torn veil. Whereas once the Jerusalem temple was the place of God's presence, now the eschatological community replaces the temple by becoming the eschatological temple. This means that Christian disciples carry on the prophetic and charismatic ministry of Jesus, empowered by the same spirit through whom he worked, enabled by that Spirit to reflect the practice, righteousness and integrity of Christ.

Whether all Charette's arguments can bear the weight put upon them is uncertain. It seems difficult to see Matthew 28:19 as a reference to baptism in the Spirit, for example (at least in the way that the phrase is usually understood in Evangelical/Charismatic/Pentecostal usage). His reference to the Spirit as having departed from Israel relies on Jeremias, and Charette does not include in his bibliography an influential article by Levenson (NTS 43) which makes this position difficult to defend. Also absent is any reference to an article by Keck (FS Meeks, 1995) which argues strongly against Charette's emphasis on the Spirit as present in place of Christ. Keck suggests that it is precisely the continuing presence of a Jesus who does not leave his disciples, which means that he neither promises nor imparts the Spirit (28:20) and Charette (to this reviewer) does not overturn this exegesis.

Overall therefore Charette's thesis does not always convince – yet this remains a gripping book which warms the heart as well as challenges and feeds the mind. Theologically speaking, it seems impossible to deny that God was and is at work by his Spirit in the ways that Charette suggests. Yet it is not clear that all his exegetical decisions are of equal value, nor that all of his theology can be constructed from an exegetical reading of Matthew.

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Philippians (NTCS)

Gordon D. Fee

Leicester: IVP, 1999,
204 pp., h/b., £9.99

A new commentary by Professor Gordon Fee, one of the most widely respected of New Testament scholars, is always a cause for rejoicing. Fee displays a freshness of approach, an assured weighing of different opinions and an incisiveness in picking out the key issues, all combined with a warm, engaging style reminiscent of Paul's in this letter. One might say that he is the ideal commentator for such a book.

Those familiar with Fee's NIC commentary on Philippians will be interested in its relation to the present work. Fee acknowledges that in many ways the work is a smaller version of his previous commentary, but says he has 'lightened up' the exposition for readers of this series.

Fee begins by saying that though many love the book because of the warmly personal view of Paul it reflects, or for the wonderfully memorable passages it contains, actually very few readers can trace the flow of thought. This he helps us to do, interpreting the book as a 'Christian hortatory letter of friendship'. While reciprocal friendship is at the heart of the letter (making it

unique in this respect in the Pauline literature), Paul throughout presents himself as a model for the Philippians' thinking and behaviour. At the same time Paul's overarching concern is with the gospel: 'it is Christ who is the centre and focus of everything, Paul's and their friendship is predicated on their mutual participation/partnership in the gospel' (21). The main theological concern of the letter, 'God's essential character on display in Christ, who redeems us to share that likeness', Fee sees as underlining the other key themes: 'suffering, joy, unity, pressing on toward the prize' (36).

Fee accepts the traditional view that the letter was written in Rome between AD 60 and 62. As regards *harpagmos* in Philippians 2:6, he tends to the view that it should be exegeted as 'something grasped for one's own personal advantage' (94). The phrase 'emptied himself' he regards as 'metaphor, pure and simple' (95). As for the 'enemies of the cross' in 3:18f., his verdict is that Paul is 'probably describing some itinerants whose view of the faith allows them a great deal of undisciplined self-indulgence' (164).

In a touching personal note, Fee shares frankly how Philippians 4:4-7 took on a new meaning when the news came that his wife had breast cancer. He was reminded afresh that God's Word is not merely a source for scholarly study, but a message that addresses and comforts us in our deepest existential problems.

In summary, those who already have his NIC commentary will find little that is new here, but others will be well advised to beg, borrow, or purchase this accessible, engaging and scholarly exposition of one of Paul's most beautiful letters. It will benefit your soul as well as satisfying your mind.

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Between Two Horizons. Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology

Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Eds)
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000,
x + 246 pp., £12.99

It has long been a tacit assumption that biblical studies and systematic theology should be kept well away from each other. The most famous admission of this was by G.E. Lessing, the eighteenth century German polymath, who talked of the 'ugly ditch' between historical study into the NT and the study of Christian dogmatics. N.T. Wright offers a statement in his essay in *Between Two Horizons* that actually functions as a nice summary of the whole book: 'This task is not to be thought of as one element in the wider project of bridging Lessing's Ugly Ditch. Such a project presupposes that which ought to be challenged – namely, the existence of such a ditch in the first place' (206).

This book is in part a trailer and introduction to a new NT commentary series, with the distinctive contribution of showing how NT exegesis impacts on contemporary theological thinking: a refreshing change from the purely historical emphasis that has dominated for so long. *Between Two Horizons* consists of eleven essays, chiefly by contributors to the commentary series, outlining creative ways of thinking about traditional concepts such as the unity of biblical studies and systematics (Joel Green and Max Turner), and the canon and the rule of faith (Robert W. Wall). There is a case-study in the role of Pentecostal tradition in interpretation (John C. Thomas) and a case-study in the interpretation of a biblical book (Galatians, by N.T. Wright). Stephen Fowl has a chapter on authorial intent, John Goldingay on narrative, Steve Motyer on the unity of the testaments and Trevor Hart provides a very interesting piece on tradition

and authority. The authors share some key assumptions that give this book a common aim: suspicion about 'the existence of such a ditch' (see especially the important essay by Joel Green), a concern (in varying degrees) with the recovery of authorial intent as a part of meaning, a concern (again, in varying degrees) with a high view of Scripture, and a commitment to the unity of Old and New Testaments. However, there are also differences: Max Turner (whose essay is the best in the collection) has more confidence in speech-act theory (47) than Stephen Fowl (76-77); Steve Motyer sees trajectories (which in the Bible 'have a point of origin, a high point, and a point of touchdown'; 159) as superior to 'typology' (which is fundamental to Wall's essay; 178). There are also various positions taken on the relationship between authorial intent and meaning. This is one case where the plurality of views becomes quite bewildering, and the repetition of the subject matter somewhat frustrating.

The importance of this book certainly lies in the challenge it lays down to most historical-critical NT scholarship in terms of its relationship to systematic theology. Unfortunately however there is surprisingly little discussion about actual systematic-theological method. The essays by Hart, Wright and Goldingay do deal with this issue, though Goldingay almost seems to solve the problem of Lessing's ditch by doing away with systematics. His comments, such as 'for all its truth and fruitfulness, the doctrine of the Trinity seriously skews our theological reading of Scripture' (131) and his attribution of so much of traditional orthodoxy to Greek or Enlightenment thought is depressing. What is sadder is his pessimism about whether 'Christian doctrine and lifestyles might be shaped by Scripture ... I do not have great expectation that this will ever happen'. And worst of all is his solution: 'If it is to do so, however, of

key importance will be not the reading of scriptural narrative in the light of what we know already and how we live already, but the reading of scriptural narrative through the eyes of people such as Jack Miles and Jon Levenson who do not believe what we believe or do not practise what we practise'. Not only does this confer enormous importance on the role of unbelieving interpreters, but it also creates (or validates) a scholarly guild that has the time to read sceptical interpreters as the only ones who will be able to really understand and obey the Bible. Fortunately this kind of reflection is not widely distributed in *Between Two Horizons*. There are, however, occasional hints of unevenness in the attitudes to Scripture: with some authors, the OT is in danger of sounding like it is not primarily about Jesus (for instance 178). Or again, in some places, the theological diversity within Scripture is exaggerated: for example, the Pauline and Catholic epistles (especially James) are 'better focused not in agreement, but in disagreement' (Wall, 181).

Despite numerous problems, however, the editors are to be commended for their courageous overtures in attacking the validity of the 'Ugly Ditch', or as Joel Green (32) puts it, in tearing down 'the architectural and engineering ventures whose product is the "iron curtain" separating biblical studies and theological studies'.

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Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters (ETS Studies 1)

John D. Harvey
Leicester: Apollis, 1998,
xviii + 357 pp., £16.99

This is a useful reference book on the patterns of words and ideas in the seven 'undisputed' letters of Paul. Harvey's interest is in patterns that

would guide hearers of the letters through the points that were being made. As he points out, normal considerations of letter structure only really give much help for the beginnings and endings. In Paul's letters there is usually a great deal of middle. Harvey demonstrates that there are many 'oral patterns' that help the hearer keep track of what is going on.

Both the strength and the weakness of the book is that it covers seven letters and covers all the examples of patterns that Harvey can see as well as many that other scholars see but which Harvey questions. The compendious nature of the resulting volume is made worse by the inclusion of a history of scholarship at the beginning. After this and a chapter on oral culture and literary culture, then two chapters on Graeco-Roman and OT examples, then one defining his method, Harvey has to rush through his dozens of patterns in Paul's letters. He often gives only a few lines to patterns whose discussion would have merited several pages.

Having said that, all the material is very clearly set out and helpfully arranged. One does need to read Greek to understand Harvey's arguments but if one does, one is shown clearly the ABAs, the word-chains and the instances of *chiasmus*, inversion, alternation, inclusion, ring-composition, refrain and concentric symmetry!

Harvey's list of types of pattern seems over-long and the distinctions between them over-subtle. This is suggested particularly by some of the cases in which a passage could fit more than one type. However, all the patterns are interesting and worth looking at, irrespective of how accurately we can classify them. The crunch is: how useful are the patterns for exegesis? They can be very significant. Harvey reads 1 Corinthians 5-6 as an ABA pattern centred on 6:1-11, the passage on

law-courts. He infers that the 'judging' topic there is central to understanding each of the flanking passages about sexual immorality. Less directly, he argues that similarities between 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 and 7:5-6 suggest that these form a 'ring-composition'. This means interpreting 2:14 - 7:4 as part of the same original letter as the surrounding passages, contrary to theories advanced by some scholars.

Both of these are interesting suggestions and many more could be drawn from patterns observed by Harvey. However, one is generally left to do all the exegesis for oneself. Of 357 pages, only eight focus on exegesis. This is not a good balance! Hopefully, Harvey will follow his book up with some more exegetical articles.

Harvey has provided observational raw material for a wealth of further study. His book gathers in one place a range of material that would otherwise be hard to access, compare and consider. Of course, he also engaged in claiming territory on behalf of oral studies of Paul. Most of the types of pattern that he looks at are ones already recognised by scholars: but they are usually viewed as literary patterns rather than oral ones. In principle, Harvey is probably right. In practice, since the models that literary critics draw on are ones such as Homer, which Harvey cites as oral poetry, the disciplines of literary and oral criticism of ancient texts are going to be very difficult to prize apart.

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Jonathan Knight

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
183 pp., h/b, and p/b, £37.50/£12.95 \$57.50/\$19.50

The book of Revelation is best encountered, in the initial instance at least, at a brisk pace. It is all too easy to get bogged down in difficult detail at an early stage and in doing so to lose the dramatic impression created by the whole text. It is a strength of Jonathan Knight's Reading, therefore, that it does not become engrossed in abstruse detail but instead charts a brisk course through the whole text. The particular co-ordinates of that course are set by Knight's belief, building on the influential work of L.L. Thompson, that Revelation was not addressed to a situation where the seven churches were directly experiencing persecution. With this setting in mind, Knight portrays John as a prophet who seeks to create and/or reveal a crisis in his hearers' situation and to offer an approved response to it. John's crisis, as Knight perceives it, was the predominance of pagan Roman culture and attendant moral laxity in the society surrounding John's churches. The approved response to this situation, Knight proposes, was a retreat into sectarianism and adherence to a strict code of ethics.

Knight makes, it seems to me, an important point when he argues that John sought to encourage his Christian hearers to carefully distinguish themselves from opposing groups. However, I became confused when it came to identifying who John's opponents were and why they were so objectionable to him. Having taken some trouble to show that Roman persecution was not an immediate feature of the situation faced by the seven churches, I was puzzled at Knight's particular emphasis on John's demonisation of Rome. Thus (following Ramsay's dubiously accurate assertion), Knight claims that Pergamum was described

as 'where Satan has his throne' because it was the seat of Roman government in Asia (46). In this vein the ten horns of the dragon (Rev. 12) are identified with Roman emperors (91), the dragon as a whole is also said to symbolise Rome (93). In addition, and more in keeping with majority opinion, the first beast is said to be a clear symbol of Rome (97). Knight also regards the whore who rides the beast as representing Rome (115). At the same time, however, he refuses to allow that John's opposition to Rome was due to its insistence on worship of the emperor. Thus, when describing the second beast, Knight claims (convincingly in my view) that its activities do not necessarily mean that it was concerned with the imperial cult (99). All this raises the question: why did John consider Rome to be the very devil himself? Knight's answer would be, I suspect, that John saw Rome as the epitome of moral decay and that it was consequently ripe for judgement. John thus used his revelation to urge his hearers to escape that punishment by entirely separating themselves from the taint of Roman society. If Knight is correct, then John has a stark message for today's churches. However, the particularity of the opponents mentioned in the messages to the seven churches may mean that John had more specific battles to fight than the blanket condemnation of 'Rome' in all its parts.

A further strength of this study is its references to extra-canonical literature. Knight is an acknowledged authority on the Ascension of Isaiah and the current work provides plenty of inspiration to consult that text further in relation to the study of Revelation.

The reading provides a distinctive and potentially fruitful approach to Revelation. However, it cannot, and does not claim to, provide the reader with a comprehensive commentary in which various points of view are balanced and evaluated. This text is

therefore one to be read alongside others.

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St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course

Christ in the Early Christian Hymns

Daniel Liederbach

Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999,
153 pp., \$14.95

From New Testament times the Christian church has expressed its faith not only in proclamation and creeds, but also in its worship, particularly its hymnody. As Professor James Torrance has recently expressed it 'true theology is a theology that sings'. This is the conviction that lies behind Liederbach's investigation of the Christology of the early hymns of the Church. These hymns expressed a Christology that confessed Jesus Christ to be both human and divine. Central to the author's argument is his understanding of the Rule of Faith, which he defines as 'the church's ancient tradition that the Spirit indicates genuine doctrine by directing the faithful community to believe as doctrine what is expressed in its worship' (9). From this definition doctrine is understood as that teaching which emerges from the faith community and is the acknowledged intellectual confession of its covenant. But it is here that the evangelical Christian, committed to an understanding of the finality and supremacy of the Scripture, has a problem with this hermeneutic. While it is freely acknowledged that the believing community is indeed indwelt by the Spirit and that the Spirit does teach the faithful people of God, is there not the danger of subjective experience replacing the once-for-all revelation found in holy Scripture? Should not the christological teaching found in canonical Scripture be the touchstone by which doctrine is determined? After all the early communities of groups like the

Montanists, the Arians and the Donatists could likewise lay claim that the Spirit had instructed them in teaching which Catholic Christians, committed to the finality of Scriptural authority, could not accept? It is not surprising that Liederbach censures Martin Luther for insisting on *sola scriptura*, and in thus returning to the source of Christian doctrine, he 'chose to turn aside from the principal source of doctrine, the Holy Spirit' (25). We can well imagine that to this major criticism Luther would have responded by asserting that no supposed 'revelation' of the Spirit of truth should be preferred to what the Spirit had already given in Scripture.

Liederbach is at his best when exegeting the christological hymns of the NT. He identifies these as Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Peter 2:22-25, 1 Timothy 3:16, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:3 and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel, John 1:1-14 which, against the fairly unanimous opinion of contemporary Johannine scholarship, he dates from the early second century. These hymns, with varying degrees of emphasis, express the faith of the church in a Christ who is both divine and human. Somewhat surprisingly the author concludes that Colossians 1:15-20 'leaves ambiguous the judgement that he is God, that his substance is the divine substance, or that his self is the divine self' (47, 48). But surely the expression 'in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell' is convincingly expressive of a full divinity, and to ask for statements about his 'substance' and his 'self' is to expect from first-century Pauline Christology the technical term that emerged only in the fourth and fifth centuries' christological debates.

After the completion of the NT canon, other christological hymns appeared, in the Odes of Solomon, from Bishop Ambrose of Milan (348-413), and Anatolius (?-458) among others. Liederbach does some very fine work in demonstrating that the post-Nicene

hymns, and the post-Chalcedonian hymns were influenced by these great christological debates and credal formulations. In spite of the persistence of Arian influences long after the emergence of the Nicene Creed, the Christian Church was always sure that the Lord was both fully divine and fully human. Even when there were difficulties in expressing this conviction in precise theological terms, the worship and liturgy of orthodox Christians continued to express the church's faith in Christ as God manifested in the flesh. In spite of the reservations expressed in this review, altogether Liderbach's work is characterised by careful scholarship and this book makes a most valuable contribution to the study of early church Christology.

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New Wine into Fresh Wineskins: Contextualising the Early Christian Confessions

Richard N. Longenecker

Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999,
x + 207 pp., £9.99/\$14.95

This volume is a fine introduction to the scope and the importance of the early Christian confessions found in the NT and to their significance for today. In the first section (5–44), entitled 'In the Beginning was the Confession', Longenecker sets out the criteria for identifying these early Christian confessions and surveys their content. He contends that several such confessions, whether in whole or in part, were incorporated by the NT authors into their writing, that form-critical analysis can identify many of these confessional portions and that the study of such materials shows the central features of authentic Christian thought and practice.

The second part, 'The Contextualisation of the Confessions in the New

Testament' (45–131) suggests that by observing how the NT authors used these confessions in addressing the various issues of their day, we can understand how the gospel was contextualised in early Christianity and can gain insight for contextualising the same gospel today. Yet unfortunately we only know of these confessions through the NT. Therefore it is a delicate undertaking to discover how its authors employed them. There is the danger of circular reasoning!

The third part, 'The Contextualisation of the Confessions Today' (132–76), outlines a philosophy and programme for contextualising the gospel today. According to Longenecker, such valid contextualisation has to be rooted in the confessions found in the NT and has to be guided by the contextualisations of these materials by the NT authors themselves. In addition it has to be aware of and sensitive to differences between various regions, cultures, sub-cultures and the world-views of our contemporary world. Such attempts need to be 'true to both the "new wine" of the gospel and the "fresh wineskins" of the day' (176).

This is a well-argued and presented book. It should be of interest not only to those interested in the NT, its origin and content, but also to those interested in cross-cultural mission and in communicating the gospel in their own context. Its weakness lies in the first part, with its assumptions about the extent of the presence of early Christian confessions on its pages and about their use made.

While scholars agree that some texts most likely are or reflect texts used in early Christian worship or similar 'confessional' contexts, not all students of the NT would agree with the considerable size of Longenecker's selection. The NT authors certainly need to be seen and appreciated in close connection with the early Christian communities of which they are a part and which they address.

They certainly provide ample evidence of argumentative and literary skills in addressing their audiences ('Paul used early confessional materials in his letters as a basis for his arguments and to structure his presentations', p. ix). But other scholars would conclude that the NT writers were less dependent on already existing and fixed 'confessional' material, but rather dependent on common tradition shared by all Christians (some of which was later summarised and shaped into confessional statements) and, in addition, themselves creative authors and inspired proponents of confessional material. Those emphasising such confessions run the risk of reading too much of the development of later centuries into early Christianity. In addition, one might ask whether not every book of the NT is a particular contextualisation of the gospel – whether or not it cites confessional material.

However, despite this criticism, the texts that Longenecker adduces no doubt indicate vital concerns and basic convictions which the early believers shared. It is therefore instructive to discover when and why they appear in certain contexts and what may be learnt from this for their re-application in today's world and to today's needs and questions. One wholeheartedly agrees with Longenecker that such contextualisation has to be 'The faithful, responsible and relevant application of the gospel in differing cultural, societal and ideological situations' (3). For this endeavour of bridging the gap between early Christianity and the concerns of contemporary Christianity Longenecker provides a useful, stimulating and much needed guide to demonstrating afresh the relevance of what was said then and there for the here and now.

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The Old Testament in the New Testament Essays in Honour of J.L. North (JSNTSup. 189)

Steve Moyise (Ed.)

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000,
304 pp., h/b., £53.50/\$84.00

This collection of essays appears marking the retirement of J. Lionel North from Hull University in 1999 where he served as Barmby Senior Lecturer in New Testament Studies, and especially in honour of his impressive seventeen-year leadership of 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament Seminar'. As North explains in a brief epilogue to this volume, the seminar traces its origins to the earlier work of the British Seminar from 1963 when 'seminar groups' were first introduced. North provides an overview of the development from Matthew Black's leadership of 'The Christological Use of Old Testament in the New Testament' seminar in the mid-seventies to his work as chair of the seminar through most of the eighties and nineties. The preface, provided by the editor of the volume and current seminar secretary Steve Moyise, commends North for 'his lexical and text-critical expertise' and the irenic manner in which he 'ensured debate was always constructive and conducted with courtesy'. The list of scholars whom North lists as seminar participants in the epilogue as well as the contributors to this volume are evidence that this seminar embodies and also provides the benefits of scholarship emerging from a plurality of interpretative strategies and methodological assumptions.

There are two introductory essays provided by Moyise and Maurice Casey, respectively. The second section, Gospels and Acts, includes seven essays on OT/NT intertextuality concerning the first five books of the NT. Michael Goulder, David Instone-Brewer, Maarten J.J. Menken, Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, Judith Lieu, Wendy Sproston North, and Peter

Doble all contribute. In the final section, 'Epistles and Revelation', J.C. O'Neill, Morna D. Hooker, Ivor H. Jones, and Ian Paul add four essays addressing themes or textual issues from the rest of the NT. Obviously, it is impossible to do justice to any of these essays in a brief review. What little can be said may alert readers to essays where particular interests might be piqued.

Moyise's chapter introduces the complexities associated with 'intertextuality'. He appreciates the openness the term suggests, evoked by the multiple layers of texts provided by both authors and readers. Noting that the word itself suffers from ambiguous usage, he provides sub-categories that will help scholarly dialogue by discussing three particular kinds of inter-textual discourse. 'Intertextual Echo' weighs the possibility and significance of intertextual subtleties. 'Dialogical Intertextuality' attends to 'the interaction between text and subtext' in a manner where the interaction 'is seen to operate in both directions'. 'Postmodern Intertextuality' pays close attention to the reader's ability to distort the text and forces contemporary readers to consider the effect their presuppositions will have upon the interpretative enterprise.

Maurice Casey's introductory article about Christological exegesis of the OT and Michael Goulder's contribution about Jesus' conception of his own vocation overlap in providing critiques of traditional Christological formulations. Casey is particularly critical of Larry Hurtado's arguments for the deity of Christ based on interpretations of the early church's worship of Jesus. Against Hurtado, Casey argues that 'cultic veneration of Jesus was seriously lacking' because sacrificial cultus, a physical temple, and prayers directed to him were all missing. One wonders where one might begin in responding to such an argument.

Brewer and Menken both provide studies that detail some aspect of an NT author's use of prior texts. Their articles raise good questions and posit helpful solutions for in light of Matthew's particular concerns and techniques.

Morna Hooker's chapter, a response to Markus Bockmuehl's 1997 article 'The Form of God' (*Journal of Theological Studies*, 48, pp. 1-23), is a bright spot. Unwilling to treat individual terms like islands unto themselves, she boldly synthesises Paul's thought on incarnation, image, Adam, and his 'Son of God' language, drawing insight from virtually all of his undisputed letters. In so doing, she ably defends an Adamic interpretation of Philippians 2 and Christ's status as the Son of God in true humanity.

The major strength of the book is that, like the seminar itself, it reflects a broad range of scholarship. It makes one long for another book from the same seminar where each scholar lays his or her presuppositions on the table, argues for them and engages in critical dialogue with those who adhere to different perspectives.

Robbie Holt

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New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives. Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel (JSNTSSup. 182)

Johannes Nissen; Sigfred Pedersen (Eds.)
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
269 pp., h/b., £50

As the title says, the book is a collection of essays that originated from the indicated conference. I shall summarise all twelve contributions briefly before highlighting some important aspects of the volume as a whole.

Helge Kjær Nielsen, *Johannine Research*, gives an overview of recent

research, taking into account some 75 monographs and articles. He focuses on major studies from the 1990s while also referring to important earlier work. The emphasis is on the main movements in Johannine research and succeeds in giving a good introduction to the field.

Geert Hallbäck, *The Gospel of John as Literature: Literary Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, describes five literary approaches (by Aage Henriksen, Frank Kermode, R. Alan Culpepper, Jeffrey Staley, Mark Stibbe). His own view of John's Gospel as a presentation of two unpolemical stories (story one: Jesus as healer, transforming Judaism; story two: Jesus as revealer of glory) does not seem to be too convincing in the light of the clear instances of polemic noticed by many Johannine scholars.

René Kieffer, *The Implied Reader in John's Gospel*, presents evidence from the overall structure of the Gospel and from various authorial narrative strategies that shows that the implied readers are invited to become ideal readers. (Kieffer uses the categories of P.J. Rabinowitz). The ideal reader is the one who accepts the implied author's ideology, which means in the case of John's Gospel to accept the author's ideology about Jesus' uniqueness.

Kirsten Nielsen, *Old Testament Imagery in John*, uses a restricted notion of intertextuality that leads him to look at 'those texts which in John are clearly employed as intertexts'. He takes the image of the vine and of the shepherd as examples of a three-step approach consisting of (1) 'an examination of the non-image meaning'; (2) the discovery of particular traditions or stories linked to the image; and (3) the interpretation of the image 'both in its immediate context and in its New Testament intertextuality'.

Trond Skard Dokka, *Irony and Sectarianism in the Gospel of John*, selects these two related topics of

Johannine research in order to point out some problems inherent in the majority views on them and gives a sketch of his alternative view, which includes observations of the different ways Johannine language functions for initiated and non-initiated readers and reflections on the theological significance.

Ismo Dunderberg, *Johannine Anomalies and the Synoptics*, looks at some difficulties in John 1-6 in order to find out whether they make it likely (a) that John knew the Synoptics, and/or (b) that John expected his readers to read the text in light of the Synoptics. He confirms the former and rejects the latter.

Aage Pilgaard, *The Qumran Scrolls and John's Gospel*, does not think that there is any direct influence of the Qumran literature on John's Gospel (he favours the idea of indirect influence through former disciples of John the Baptist), but he picks out the themes of dualism and predestination and the temple metaphor to show how comparisons with Qumran texts can illuminate reading John.

Birger Olsson, *Deus semper maior? On God in the Johannine Writings*, explores four prominent statements about God in 1 John and John's Gospel (the true God, God is light, spirit, love) and draws conclusions with respect to theological topics like incarnation, monotheism, dualism, and new covenant. He shows both how John's theology is rooted in the OT world of thought and how this world is transcended.

Sigfred Pedersen, *Anti-Judaism in John's Gospel: John 8*, shows how John's universalism, rooted in creation theology, impacts the presentation of 'the Jews' in John 8: 'The power of the creation language thus lies in its placing all as equal in relation to God as Creator - and thus implicitly all as equal in relation to Satan as his opponent and slanderer. Jesus' adversaries in John 8 are

therefore not called "Children of the devil" because of their ethnic origin as Jews, but because they represent a false understanding of what it means existentially as God's children to be the seed of Abraham.'

Johannes Nissen, *Community and Ethics in the Gospel of John*, paints a balanced picture of the Johannine community and its moral vision by not restricting ethics to moral exhortations (some insights of R.B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, are used). He takes into account the historical situation of alienation and threat from the synagogue which he sees as an influential factor in the vision of mutual love within the community of believers. However, he emphasises that this love does not exclude a concern for those outside the community, since the community of love is meant to function counter-culturally as a witness to the world.

Johannes Nissen, *Mission in the Fourth Gospel: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives*, emphasises the close connection between incarnation, resurrection, and mission in John's Gospel. He sees sending and gathering as dual aspects of mission. He further acknowledges John's universalism as an important factor of his concept of mission and makes some interesting suggestions how this concept may inform contemporary missiology.

Helge Kjær Nielsen, *John's Understanding of the Death of Jesus*, argues against those who deny that the death of Jesus is important in John's Gospel. It has soteriological significance especially in the sense of establishing fellowship with Jesus and consequently fellowship with other believers. He remains cautious, however, when it comes to labeling this significance in terms of a vicarious and expiatory death.

The essays give good insights into current Johannine scholarship. They show awareness of recent

methodological trends and their problems (for instance the concept of intertextuality as used by Kirsten Nielsen and Ismo Dunderberg). They are generally critical of some one-sided approaches to John (for instance Dokka's remarks on irony and sectarianism, emphasising that dualism does not necessarily entail sectarianism), and give examples of how to address theological questions and even their contemporary relevance without neglecting historical and literary problems (particularly the contributions by Johannes Nissen). It is also interesting that in several articles ecclesiological questions are addressed which go beyond the limits of the quest for the 'Johannine community' (see the contributions of Kirsten Nielsen, Trond Dokka, Sigfred Pedersen, and again especially Johannes Nissen). The reader is also rewarded by getting valuable and comprehensive bibliographical information. I would recommend the volume as a whole as being most useful.

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The Letter to the Ephesians

Peter T. O'Brien
Leicester: Apollos, 1999,
xxxiii + 536 pp., £26.99

On a topic that is already so heavily written on that a book-length bibliography can be published, to attempt some categorisation of the literature on it, the question might be put, 'what is the value of another commentary on the book of Ephesians?' In the case of Peter O'Brien's recent work there is much value, especially for evangelicals. From the start, O'Brien's commentary proves itself a valuable tool both for scholars and those seriously interested in working through the issues Ephesians poses. With a substantial select bibliography of over 360 of the most important and helpful

works on the subject, to an extensive set of indexes (Subject, Author, Scripture, Extrabiblical), O'Brien's commentary is organised and structured for maximum utility by serious students of the text. However, O'Brien's entire approach to the interpretation and exegesis of the book makes it accessible to those who do not feel the need to interact with the academic discussions behind the text as well. O'Brien's sympathetic posture allows for a genuine 'spirituality of the text' to be grasped, without alienating those more interested in the more refined aspects and arguments posed by biblical criticism. This makes O'Brien's commentary an especially useful tool both for pastors who are concerned to delve into the important theological and pastoral themes raised in Ephesians, as well as for theologians who are looking for a commentary that is more sympathetic to evangelical perspectives.

Beginning with the thorny question of authorship, O'Brien commits the first half of his introduction (over 40 pages) to an evaluation of the arguments that have been posed by scholars on both sides of the debate as to whether or not Paul is the author of the book. O'Brien addresses each of the important arguments made against Pauline authorship, such as the impersonal character of Ephesians, the author's language and style, the literary relationship between Ephesians and Colossians, the theological emphases of Ephesians, the picture of Paul presented in the book, and relates them to the whole question of authorship and pseudonymity in the NT (1-46). While he isn't always able to offer a positive alternative to the views he is critiquing, O'Brien engages in the much neglected task of challenging the consensus, and reminds evangelicals and liberals alike of the dangers inherent in simply passing over the difficult issues involved in the question of Pauline authorship for a pat answer. By challenging the more

liberal suggestion that a non-Pauline authorship is the 'assured result of New Testament criticism', O'Brien brings the discussion back into open debate with intelligent and critical evaluations of the most important questions posed in this debate (46).

O'Brien next addresses the other debated issue regarding Ephesians: the destination of the letter. Settling on the consensus opinion that Ephesians was likely not destined to Ephesus in particular, but was a circular letter to the various churches in Asia Minor, O'Brien sides with those who see the key phrase, 'in Ephesus', which is missing in our most reliable documents, as decisive for determining this question. By viewing Ephesians as a circular letter destined to the churches in Asia Minor, O'Brien, with others, is able to explain the 'impersonal character' of the letter. In doing so, he suggests a provenance for the letter around AD 61-62 from the apostle Paul during his imprisonment in Rome, very near the end of the apostle's career. Perhaps this explains the grand and far-reaching visions of the letter to the Ephesians, and the cosmic scale of its central themes.

The central theme of the letter, O'Brien proposes, is in fact cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ. While the letter is divided into two halves, one more doctrinal (chs 1-3) and the latter more ethical (chs 4-6). It is held together in 4:1-6 by the exhortation to unity, which is the underlying theme that consistently resurfaces throughout the letter (64). This is not only a unity established between God and man, but one that finds its most immediate expression in the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (2:11-22). Central to this work of reconciliation that makes unity conceivable, is the death and sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This is a unity and peace that is only possible through the work of Christ, and so is not dependent on human effort. However, this unity is created by the

Spirit, and spirit-filled believers are exhorted to maintain that unity through their actions and behaviours (4:1-4).

O'Brien's exegesis of the text of the letter is critical, cautious and more generally conservative. Over the next 400 pages he deals specifically with the themes and sub-themes that this rich text offer to those who probe into its intricate arguments and who are willing to work through the symbols and metaphors Paul uses to try and express the 'unsearchable riches in Christ'. However, those familiar with O'Brien's lucid style will be happy to know that he maintains this through even the most meticulous sections making the commentary both readable and enlightening throughout. O'Brien divides the letter theologically into two sections which he classifies as 'the New Humanity a Divine Creation', encompassing chapters 1:3 - 3:21, and 'The New Humanity in Earthly Life' encompassing chapters 4:1 - 6:20. In the first half he addresses the important theological themes, such as the supremacy of Christ, the role of the universal Church in God's mystery, the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles, and the individual transformation of believer's lives. These grand ideas are put in the context of God's plan to 'gather all things up in Christ' (1:9-10). This 'summing up' along with the underlying concept of cosmic reconciliation and unity are the substance of God's great and mysterious plan to gather all things together in Christ, and the very message Paul himself has been entrusted to reveal and proclaim to the Gentiles (3:1-13). In the second half, he discusses the functional and ethical out-workings of this great and mysterious work of cosmic reconciliation in Christ. Believers are exhorted to maintain this unity not in rational beliefs alone, but through practical attitudes and behaviours that are conditioned by a spirit-controlled life, characterised by

'putting on Christ'. Chapters 4-6 explain Paul's theological insights in practical admonitions and in stirring exhortations to 'put on the armour of Christ' (6:10-20).

Peter O'Brien's five-year commitment to this letter and its interpretation has resulted in an authoritative study and evaluation of a letter that has in recent times been marginalised and misused. By doing the difficult work of aching through the vast literature on the subject, and by engaging thoughtfully and spiritually with the themes of the letter, Peter O'Brien has provided scholars and serious students of the Bible an up-to-date and comprehensive assessment of one of Paul's most important and influential letters.

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**The Criteria for Authenticity in
Historical-Jesus Research:
Previous Discussion and New Proposals
(JSNTSup. 191)**

Stanley E. Porter
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000,
299 pp., h/b., £53/\$84

Stanley Porter, Professor in the University of Surrey, Roehampton, has established himself as one of the most prolific New Testament scholars in the world today. This book, his first extended foray into historical Jesus research, is divided into two quite different parts, one offering a detailed survey of the debate and the second presenting Porter's own contribution. Both parts sub-divide into three chapters.

Chapter 1 thoroughly reviews the 'three quests' of the historical Jesus, including the period that Tom Wright dubbed 'no quest'. Porter argues that there is more continuity than discontinuity among all these periods and that it is better to speak of one single, multi-faceted quest throughout. Chapter 2 diachronically

surveys the development of the criteria of authenticity, again stressing the continuities among the contributions, especially with respect to 'double dissimilarity'. Chapter 3 treats 'recent developments' in the criteria, specifically, John Meier's more 'maximalist' use of the criteria of embarrassment and of a necessary cause for Jesus' rejection and execution and Gerd Theissen's four-part criterion of historical plausibility.

The second half of Porter's book begins with a chapter on his newly proposed criterion of Greek language and context. Here Porter reviews recent research, including his own, that makes it probable that Jesus knew and occasionally spoke in Greek. He identifies seven passages in particular where this proves likely (Matt. 8:5-13 par.; Mark 2:13-14 pars; 7:25-30 pars; 8:22-30 pars; 12:13-17 pars; 15:2-5 pars; and John 4: 4-26). He concedes that this criterion is not so much one of authenticity as of background, and in an excursus he engages Maurice Casey's critique of his earlier work on Jesus' probable use of Greek. The second new criterion, presented in chapter 5, is labelled 'textual variance'. Here Porter argues that of the passages in which Jesus probably spoke Greek, those that show the fewest textual variants are the most likely to be authentic. A final chapter introduces the criterion of discourse features: if words of Jesus significantly differ from the surrounding Gospel contexts in consistent patterns, authenticity becomes probable. Porter illustrates with an extended treatment of Mark 13 in the light of the standard studies of Markan style.

Part One of this volume provides a very helpful overview and synthesis of a massive amount of scholarship, with lengthy footnotes of documentation. It is certainly true that previous historians of the quests have overly schematised the phases of research, as historians of any broad topic

invariably must. But it is not clear that Porter has recognised several significant differences between most of the second and third 'quests' - particularly the dramatic shifts from a latent anti-Semitism to strong 'political correctness' and from a preoccupation with the words of Jesus to a discussion of his deeds, aims and intentions in more holistic analyses. Certainly the dissimilarity criterion remained a constant throughout the twentieth-century thought, while Theissen *has* broken fresh ground with what Tom Wright has called the criterion of double similarity and dissimilarity. In fact, Wright's development of this criterion seems even more significant than Theissen's, though, curiously, Porter does not discuss it.

It is unclear how far Porter's three new criteria will take us. The first, by his own admission, is not really a criterion of authenticity; the second, only applicable to the tiny handful of passages where Jesus likely spoke in Greek. Nor do I see any necessary correlation between the authenticity of an oral saying and the carefulness of its preservation in written transmission. I agree that the final criterion proves the most promising, but since space prohibits Paul from supplying all but one initial application, it is hard to determine just how promising it is. Perhaps his next book in this area (and he does promise us more writing on the topic) could focus solely on the criterion of discourse features with a broad cross-section of applications from the Gospels.

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Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee

Mark Allan Powell

Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998,
238 pp.

'Life-of-Jesus Research' (LJ) in the twentieth century ran the gamut from Wrede's thoroughgoing scepticism and Bultmann's 'we can now know almost nothing about Jesus' to the far more positive results from the ongoing 'Third Quest'. Professor Powell of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, has given us a valuable critical appraisal of the methods and results achieved by some important recent participants in LJ. Although Powell readily confesses, 'I trust my life and destiny to what I call "the Jesus of story"' (8), he thinks the historical enterprise is very important. Powell's assessment combines judicious interaction with the critiques offered by other scholars with his own weighing of the strengths and weaknesses of these assessments. This gives the reader a conspectus of the debate as well as seeing Powell's own contribution.

Powell begins with an orientation to LJ from Strauss, Schweitzer, Käsemann, and Bornkamm, to Perrin before introducing the 'Third Quest'. He then asks the interesting question, 'How did Jesus get lost?' Here we meet Wrede as well as Mack and Fiorenza. Powell offers appreciation and telling critique of each in turn.

Before examining some contemporary images of Jesus in chapter three (Social Prophet, Charismatic Jew, Magician, Jewish Sage, Cynic Philosopher), Powell sets out the sources and criteria for Jesus research in helpful summary form (ch. 2). He then devotes a chapter each to 'The Jesus Seminar': John Dominic Crossan; Marcus Borg; E.P. Sanders; J.P. Meier; and N.T. Wright. These are scholars whom Powell considers important in the

current debate, selected from across the spectrum of historical views, from those who are most sceptical to those who are confident that our sources will allow us to say a great deal about the historical Jesus. His even-handed treatment is seen especially in these chapters. For example, despite trenchant criticism, he offers a charitable conclusion to the work of the Jesus Seminar: 'a group of like-minded scholars testing a set of hypotheses regarding Jesus as a figure in history' (81). But, like Crossan's, their Jesus 'is *very* dissimilar from the Jesus in whom many early Christians believed ...' (99). At the other end of the spectrum, Wright's work raises questions about eschatology and Jewish responsibility for Jesus' death.

In the final chapter, Powell identifies continuing issues and concerns. First is method: sources available, criteria for use and approaches to be taken. Second is the relationship of Jesus to Judaism: is he a Hellenistic Jew, Charismatic Jew or Jewish Prophet? The third is the return to the question of Jesus and eschatology: is a non-eschatological Jesus credible? Or did Jesus have 'a powerful future orientation with specific ideas about what God was going to do soon' (174). And what about Jesus and Politics? Was he interested in social renewal or only spiritual? The continuing problems of the supernatural and Jesus' intentions cannot be ignored either.

This is an excellent book, deceptively simple in its sophisticated discussion because it is written in such a readable style. It is refreshing in its balanced critique as well as its ready acknowledgement that the work of the historian is important to Christian faith but that belief is not dependent upon historical results. This is no retreat to obscurantism or *fideism*, however. For Powell, the Jesus of history is a subset of the Jesus of story; they overlap, but it is 'the witness of the Spirit, in the

testimonies of saints and martyrs, and in my own life experience' (9) which sustains the story of Jesus and continues to give it power. Highly recommended.

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Christ Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification (NSBT 9)

Mark A. Seifrid

Leicester: Apollos, 2000,
222 pp., £12.99

This is a profound, contemporary and faithful contribution to what is one of the hottest topics in NT studies. Mark Seifrid, an Associate Professor in NT at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the US has been frequently involved in the debate around justification by faith and the 'New Perspective' on Paul, but this is his best contribution yet. *Christ Our Righteousness* is rich theologically, though not stodgy, and is probably most suitable for final year undergraduates, theological college students, post-graduates and scholars. It presents a coherent view of the Law and justification in Paul's thought and needs to be grasped as a whole, rather than dipped into.

The first chapter concerns the conversion of Paul, in which Seifrid ably challenges the view put forward by Krister-Stendahl and argued forcefully by James Dunn. The Stendahl-Dunn view argues that Paul's Damascus Road experience was not a 'conversion', but a 'call' specifically to abandon his previously held nationalism to preach to the Gentiles. Seifrid brings forward the evidence from the Epistles and Acts that Paul's pre-Christian life was not a life of pious, if misguided, faith: rather Paul was blind, needing light (2 Cor. 4:1-6), a persecutor of the church (Gal. 1:23-24), 'out of his mind' (Acts 26:11), and the 'chief of sinners' (1 Tim. 1:16). Chapters 2 and

6 are devoted to exegesis of Romans: first, justification in Romans, and secondly (ch. 6) the place of Israel in God's purposes in Romans 9-11. Chapters 3 and 7 treat the doctrine of justification in the other Pauline letters (including the disputed Paulines) and the rest of the NT respectively. This latter chapter also contains some useful reflections on the Protestant-Catholic disputes on justification: Seifrid acknowledges that justification has a present and a future aspect, but opposes the Roman Catholic view that it is thereby a 'process'. Similarly, Seifrid comes down firmly on the side of Luther in affirming the importance of a *simul iustus et peccator* theology, where the Christian is 'at the same time righteous, yet a sinner'. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the themes of the Law in Paul's thought and faith.

Perhaps the main point that strikes the reader is Seifrid's 'big' view of justification and the righteousness of God. It is by no means merely the way one 'becomes a Christian' (although it does encompass that). Rather, it encompasses the whole relationship between God and humanity (183). It concerns what Seifrid calls 'God's contention with humanity', whereby God establishes his claim that all are liars and thereby justifies himself as he justifies the ungodly. This is a very interesting point which could have done with more explanation. Paul's doctrine also extends beyond the human sphere, to God's establishment of his order and dominion over the whole of his creation, the cosmos: "Righteousness" ... signifies a state of affairs which holds sway in the world' (74). As such, justification is a 'bigger' concept for Paul than salvation and reconciliation. In contrast to salvation, 'justification for Paul comprehends the new creation and resurrection from the dead' (92) and reconciliation 'describes the present reality of a right relationship with God, but does not carry the overtones of eschatological redemption that "justification" does.

Nor does it convey the understanding that God himself has been justified in the justification of the believer' (70). The justifying work of God takes place on the cosmic stage in the death and resurrection of Christ; within the individual, it consists in faith in Christ (147).

This is a vital contribution to the debate on the nature of Paul's doctrine of justification. Seifrid has avoided the old caricatures of Judaism that have often been a feature of traditional portrayals between the Apostle and his contemporaries. He misses the opportunity in some areas to address the key issues addressed by the 'New Perspective', such as the contention that the doctrine of justification apart from works emerged at Antioch. But Seifrid has moved the debate forward in taking seriously Paul's theology of final judgement according to works (though again, this could have done with more explanation) and thus showing the harmony between Paul and James. (Other important contributions here can be found in D.J. Moo's *Pillar Series Commentary on James* and T.R. Schreiner's *Baker Exegetical Commentary on Romans*). This book is undoubtedly worth reading by anyone whose mind is not yet completely closed on Paul's view of justification!

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Systematics

The Concept of Biblical Theology: an Old Testament Perspective

James Barr
London: SCM, 1999,
xvii + 715, £25

James Barr confesses that he believes that there is such a thing as biblical theology. However this is quite distinct from a (German or

perhaps an evangelical, if one thinks, e.g., of David Baker's work, or the premise of the *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*) pan-biblical theology. Such an enterprise ignores 'two sets of times and cultures'. Partly on the basis that most of the OT was written between 650 and 450 BCE) Barr does not see there existing sufficient continuity between the two testaments. So biblical theology is NT theology plus OT theology, a discovering what one of these two things might be is a hard enough task. But the division is convenient for Barr who is much more at home with OT ('Hebrew biblical') theology, which, one senses, is in turn the combination of all the strands of ideology which expressed themselves in script and ended up in the canonised Hebrew Bible.

Biblical theology is thus an 'enlightened' project which pays attention to the detail of texts, opened up by the modern historical-critical method and which challenges, corrects and even subverts the claims of dogmatics to be speaking from or for the Bible. (Thus Barth and Calvin, and Childs were not sufficiently informed by the Bible.) Biblical theology is the theology or religious ideology which finds expression in the Bible. 'The more we insist that the Bible is 'theological' in character, the more that same affirmation leads us to look for the theology that motivated it and lived within it in ancient times'. (8) He accepts the distinction made long ago by Gabler: Biblical Theology is the theology of the Bible, while dogmatic/doctrinal is the church's faith spelled out in its creeds and conciliar statements, or even its church dogmatics, with a normative edge. He confesses that there are three reasons why biblical theology has become popular amongst conservatives: one, as a way to combat the over-technical side of biblical studies, by concentrating on the message, the connections, the convictions; two, as a way of showing how against a ('history of) other

religions' background, the faith of Israel and the Church was distinctive; or, three as a more 'churchy' corrective to natural theology.

Barr believes that we see in the Bible that which we are disposed to see:

... unquestionably, preferences within modern theology or proposals for religious answers to modern problems have been allowed to influence perceptions of what is 'there' in the Bible (16).

Barr then reviews the attempts in the twentieth century, including Eichrodt's structuring around the theme of covenant and kingdom (which formed a link with the NT) and von Rad's view that since OT theology includes retelling the history of Israelite faith, it has to have historical shape. For example, a few credal statements are the basis/seed corn of whole of Hexateuch. Rendtorff's view that the latest block of Revelation is highest is criticised for its Whiggish false consciousness, and for a Hegelian Christianity smuggled in under the guise of 'progressive revelation'. A passing respectful nod is made to Catholic Biblical theology as practised by W. Harrington. He is condescending towards W. Brueggemann, approving of his sensitivity to ideology in the Bible which needs the clothing of imagination and rhetoric; though he chides him for seeing the Enlightenment as a bogey. He makes the astute comment that nothing ever happens in Brueggemann's theology.

There is a lot, too much, of the personal animus and arch anecdote. Childs is particularly singled out for his arrogance. Childs is interested in the theology of total text as it stands. The historical context for understanding passages is played down. H. Frei whom Barr sees as having moved in Barthian circles, told Barr that he was glad that the Biblical Theology Movement of the late 50s (which Barr too closely identifies Childs with) failed. To which one can only retort: 'so what?'. Frei was never

one for whom the Bible's fiction was at the heart of his own theology. One of Barr's long-laboured theses, dusted down for display here, is that behind Childs stands Barth for whom biblical studies was just about making a collection of exegeses, in order that dogmatics was built on the word of church and proclamation founded on that testimony. Yet for Barth the Bible pointed to Christ, not a Christian biblical view of things, as Childs prefers. Barr has not got out of the old habit of misreading Barth, if not Childs. Of course there must be encouragement for natural theology. The Hebrew Bible is full of it, and, as Hollaz and Schleiermacher observed long ago, the Scripture canon is a means of grace rather than a *principium cognoscendi*.

In most of the Bible, the theology is not explicit, and when it is, it is 'theology for its own time' only, nothing timelessly authoritative (250). Doctrinal theology escapes canon and is largely historical theology: it looks for the spirit not letter of text (so, David Brown, who emerges as the Great White Hope of English liberal theology), or to re-word Ebeling, church history as the history of *eisegesis*. Childs' biblical theology, in its aim to affirm *sola scripture*, mistakenly tried to freeze revelation at one point in history – the point when the Bible stopped having any material change to it. Through imaginative interpretation, the Bible is made to serve each time.

Barr's familiarity of the best in German as well as Anglo-Saxon is where the book is most useful. He introduces the work of F. Mildenberger who tends to be selective of passages, but who at least tries to build a bridge between biblical and dogmatic theology. Assuming that *theologia* means 'God', Trinity, rational creatures, providence, the beatific vision, and *oikonomia* means 'the restoration of reality by God' [in creation and re-creation] 'the basic questions of dogmatic *theologia*

should find their answers in the biblical *oikonomia* (the restoration of), while conversely the questions of dogmatic *oikonomia* must find their answer in the biblical *theologia*.

Despite some notable omissions (e.g., the works of H-D Preuss, N. Lohfink and H. Hübner) we have in this thick volume a full and rich annotated bibliography. Its purpose? To show that biblical theology is not various things others claim it to be. There is very little constructive here. The reviewer is left with the impression that, for Barr, it is not all that worth getting excited about.

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Systematic Theology Vol. II, The Works of God

Robert W. Jenson

New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999,
viii + 380 pp., £42.00/\$55.00 (cloth)

Robert Jenson, Senior Scholar for Research at the Centre of Theological Inquiry, Princeton; Associate Director of the Centre for Catholic and Evangelical Theology and former Professor of Religion at St. Olaf College has produced an extremely readable and stimulating systematics. Many things may be said of Jenson's work, and some will be mentioned here, but boring is certainly not one of them. Jenson forces his readers to think and makes it a pleasure to do so.

Jenson covers a great deal of landscape in *The Works of God* and though his breadth of learning is everywhere present it is not pretentious. The central issues are presented and discussed without the need for lengthy footnotes or meandering asides. Jenson moves between ecclesial traditions and academic disciplines with both ease and clarity and does so in such a way that the issue under consideration is illumined rather than obscured.

Though a Lutheran by confession, his work here both draws from and is directed toward the church as a whole.

The level of integration between the two volumes is impressive. Conclusions fought for and established in *The Triune God* serve as the basis for the shape and development of those taken up in *The Works of God* making this a thoroughly Trinitarian work. However, such tight integration also mean that mistakes made in the former volume appear again in the latter, albeit in different and perhaps more obvious forms.

As for content, *The Works of God* is concerned particularly with God's activity *ad extra*; those works directed toward a reality other than himself, and as such the doctrines of creation, the creatures, the church and the final Kingdom.

In a review of this length it will be impossible to do justice to most, if not all of Jenson's arguments, due to the strengths mentioned above. Longer and more critical reviews are available for those interested and the two volumes, in this reviewer's opinion, are worth the rather lofty price tag simply as an example of how theology should be written. But there are many other things we have to learn from Robert Jenson. I highlight two areas in particular for special attention and even concern.

In the former category would be Jenson's overall treatment in Part V of 'The Creatures' with three chapters devoted to human persons in particular, one to 'The Other Creatures' (a discussion of heaven, angels and the Devil), one to sin and a closing discussion of 'God's Speech in Creation'. Jenson's linking of human sexuality, politics and social ethics in chapter nineteen (entitled 'Politics and Sex') is a fine example of the way in which Jenson grounds the creaturely and social aspects of our created being in the triune life of God

– a great strength of his work and perhaps its most valuable quality.

However, Jenson's strength in this regard also gives rise to concern, for the overall manner in which he construes God's relationship to the world seems to soften the distinction between Creator and creature, perhaps binding the former to the latter in a way that would compromise the freedom of each. As mentioned earlier, this may be traceable back to Jenson's understanding of the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity; a distinction which Jenson feels is necessary as a witness to the freedom of God, but is nevertheless hypothetical and provisional in nature. Jenson's conclusions here necessarily exert influence upon his development of the doctrines of creation, the church and the final Kingdom in particular.

Those who invest time in these two volumes will walk away pleasantly challenged and perhaps even persuaded, for in Robert Jenson the church has a most creative and thoughtful advocate.

Eric G. Flett

London

The Tripersonal God, Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity

Gerald O'Collins SJ

London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000,
ix + 234 pp., £14.99

Gerald O'Collins SJ is a professor at the Gregorian University in Rome. He is a gifted scholar and teacher who writes extremely well. Many books on the trinity are complex, impenetrable and inaccessible but this one is different.

In the first section of the book (chs 1–4) Professor O'Collins explores the biblical basis of trinitarian theology. Evangelical readers will, of course, be unhappy with his inclusion of the Deuterocanonical books in this

survey but his exegesis of the main biblical passages is generally conservative.

The second section of the book (chs 5–8) is given over to the historical development of the orthodox doctrine of the trinity. These are superb chapters and help the reader through difficult and controversial debates (especially the early church debates) with an ease and simplicity that is a delight. In the course of this he does not avoid the hard questions and he does not easily accept stereotypes. A classic example is his dismissal of the oft-quoted view that western theologians like Augustine began with the unity of the divine being and then moved to the persons whereas the eastern theologians (especially the Cappadocians) began with the persons and moved to the divine being, this being traditionally cited as the reason for much confusion.

The final section of the book (chs 9–12) is entitled 'Contemporary Thinking'. Perhaps the most stimulating area of discussion in this part of the book is his exposition of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the way in which the Spirit and the Son relate to one another, ontologically, and to the Father. He does not explicitly deny the *filioque* clause but certainly prefers to speak of the Spirit proceeding from the Father 'through' the Son, perhaps reflecting recent Roman Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. Given his detailed exploration of the inter-Trinitarian relationships, however, this reviewer was surprised to see no mention in the bibliography of a book by another Roman Catholic scholar, Thomas Weinandy entitled *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* in which a number of similar issues are discussed.

Given the abandonment by many protestant theologians of even the semblance of biblical theology, it should probably not surprise us that, as evangelicals, we find ourselves side by side with a Roman Catholic scholar

in defending the orthodox doctrine of the trinity.

A.T.B. McGowan

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Dingwall

In Him We Move: Creative Dancing in Worship

Janet Randell

Carlisle: Paternoster/Solway, 1999,
xiv + 249 pp., £19.99

Volumes 1 and 2 of *In Him We Move* represent what is likely to be the most comprehensive practical guidance for dance in worship to date, based on the author's immense experience as a free-lance choreographer and director of the Cedar Dance Theatre Company. Volume 1, reviewed here, opens with some biblical background to dance in worship. Next in the first chapter is a historical survey of dancing in church, packed with information one is unlikely to come across in other historical surveys of liturgical dance. Important issues are raised in seed form: the relationship of the spiritual to the physical, the effect of neo-platonic dualism on the theology of the early church and its effect on our attitudes to the human body.

The second chapter gives practical advice on getting people moving in worship. Sensible warm-up exercises, complete with biblical imagery, are given for beginners. The basics of dance technique are presented with clear diagrams geared to the non-dancer, although these will be most fruitful in the hands of those with some prior dance training. Ideas for tailoring movement to people in wheelchairs or with other disabilities bring a truly inclusive dimension to this volume on dance in worship. The message of the book is clear: everyone can use their body in worship. The message is backed up with practical and scholarly advice for producing already choreographed dances on major Christian themes, along with

preparatory improvisations. The choreography is geared to a range of levels of dance experience: beginners, intermediate, advanced, and those with special needs. Notes are given on the music for the dance, the spiritual and biblical inspiration behind the dance is described, and even a historical background for the various dance steps is provided. Those who want to go on to produce these dances will need to purchase Volume two: *Manual of Creative Dances of Worship*, with its clear diagrams and unique dance notation system for 25 dances on major Christian themes choreographed by Janet Randall.

In Volume 1, the generous array of photographs of the Cedar dances will inspire the reader with their simplicity and purity of line. These images give a sense of the timeless aesthetic of Cedar dances, while other aspects of the volume may come across as a bit more dated. Some readers may feel that the worship dances are located firmly in the 1970s and 80s, and seem best suited for mainly evangelical or charismatic churches. However, it would be possible to glean the underlying artistic and spiritual principles from both the advanced and beginners' dances in order to creatively apply them to worship in our postmodern era.

While Volume 1 gives helpful advice for dance in worship at different levels of expertise, the author does not explicitly address the issue of proficiency: is just any level of dance training appropriate for public performance, including church services? There are different views on this issue. It is helpful, in my opinion, for a clear distinction to be made between congregational dance in worship, (which is inclusive and democratic, but is not necessarily a public event to be watched), and dance in worship as a *publicly* performed art. The latter calls for intensive dance training as well as theologically and spiritually inspired choreography. Janet's

advanced dances cater for this arena. While the two volumes provide almost everything that a person needs to get started in dance in worship at a beginner's level, I would want to see these volumes used as a *springboard* rather than as a cloning device. There is no shortcut to producing socially relevant, spiritually inspired, original dance works which have the power to lift performers and congregations into worship. While years of training and hard work are required for those called to public performance, these manuals are an ideal place to start.

Sara B. Savage
Cambridge

God and Modernity. A new and better way to do theology

Andrew Shanks
London: Routledge, 2000,
xii + 186 pp., £15.99

Andrew Shanks has given us an elegant monograph dedicated to the finding of a theology which breaks out from confinement within the university (liberal) or the church (neo-orthodox) (ix). Inspired by the late twentieth century phenomenon of New Social Movements (NSMs), Shanks seeks to elaborate a properly pluralistic and 'trans-confessional' (and therefore not reductionist) theology that can address the concerns of civil movements to engage in conversation under the banner of solidarity. A theology prepared for the advent of a Third Modernity.

Shanks is a thorough going disciple of Hegel, and bases his search on an idealist reading of history. Indebted to Karl Jaspers in hoping to see a second Axial Period in the development of religion, (*n.b.* not religions) the author believes that a sectarianism fostered by the reaction of First Modernity (Christendom – Augustine) to Second Modernity (Enlightenment – Kant/Hegel) should be 'worked through' in 'shaken thoughtfulness' achieving a peaceable, civil

conversation between groups of different traditions – the terminology in the book is a little laboured but is handled consistently – which unfortunately meant, at times, consistently compounding vagueness.

Christian theology is obviously Shanks' starting point but he also includes a chapter devoted to Islam precisely because it has been affected, although differently, by First and Second Modernity. NSMs pose the 'most urgent particular challenge' to traditional theology in undertaking 'de-confessionalising', which 'development marks a major step forward, towards the true fulfilment of historically-minded religion'. Never mind that Shanks writes lucidly, with mostly judicious appropriation of sometimes unwieldy sources (e.g. Hegel, Jaspers, Kierkegaard, Milbank, Habermas), the question that lies at the heart of any assessment of this work is that of history: precisely which history?

Whilst disavowing the liberal project of watering down a tradition's confession to please adherents of another, it is not immediately clear that Shanks does not, nevertheless, fall into that same trap. Whilst any division of history into periods and phases may have some heuristic merit, it does seem that his prior decisions here dictate the possibilities and demands, to which he accedes, in reading the present and desiring the future. Are his moves warranted? Is his project any less 'enthusiastic' in judgement than that of twelfth century Joachim of Fiore and followers to whom the author introduces us (121 *ff.*)? Well, according to Shanks this question of warrant is unimportant, or at least fails to properly understand him, and so it is not surprising that he has so much difficulty with Oliver O'Donovan, to whom he applies the label 'recoil-theologian'. Shanks clearly states that 'Christian theology cannot find any decisive precedents in the Bible to guide it, one way or the other, in its response to other traditions' (of

'religion', 63) because of the way he chooses to read the beginning of the Axial period of 'religion' emerging from 'magic'. Whereas, for O'Donovan, 'salvation-history' is the authoritative framework for any political or civil theology, Shanks does not accept that 'authority' is the prime category to focus theology for Third Modernity. But it seems that this relativising is actually methodological evasion *tout court* of Christ's authority. So, for example, his desire to facilitate conversation has nothing to learn from Pentecost, despite claiming to be properly trinitarian (125).

We come, then, to question: for whom Shanks has produced his theology? It is clear it is for the 'shaken', with whom he stands in thoughtful solidarity; an apologetic for NSMs and an idealist-progressivist reading of history wherein Christ is a symbol but little else. New, maybe, but not better, for better would be a theology that faithfully responded, trusted and obeyed God and his word, and so worse, for seeking novelty in bondage to human wisdom.

Andy Draycott
Canterbury

The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality

F. LeRon Shults
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999,
xvi + 275 pp., £15.99

This book has a twin interest. On the one hand, it is a philosophical theological proposal for what Shults calls postfoundationalism, and on the other it is an analysis of Wolfhart Pannenberg's theological method, and the book can be read with profit even if one is interested in only one or other of these two foci. Indeed for such a technical subject matter it is remarkably well written – how many other philosophical theologians can handle words such as 'segue' and 'bugaboo' with such aplomb?

Although the two are not so sharply differentiated in the book, I shall look at the two aspects in turn. First, the proposal for postfoundationalism. Put simply the aim of postfoundationalism is to avoid the dichotomy of demanding that theology be based on some pre-agreed foundations of whatever sort, or that it should eschew all talk of foundations, and is an attempt to redirect discussions of theological method, especially in the US. In their place postfoundationalism is a 'middle way' – the rhetoric does sound remarkably Blairite at times – which brings together the concerns of both epistemology and hermeneutics, as the four couplets of the second chapter ('The Emerging Postfoundational Model of Theological Rationality') illustrate. If this is meant to keep talk of God from the straitjacket of philosophical structures of modernity whether accepted or repudiated *a priori* this is to be welcomed. However, I would have preferred more theological argumentation for why this particular '-ism' is more suited to the gospel, but for significant portions of the book I searched for these in vain. Indeed more explicitly theological methodologies such as that of Barth are put in the foundationalist camp because they appeal to the foundation of the Word of God, a point where Schults is not at his most convincing and his use of concepts tends to obfuscate rather than clarify the theological landscape. And does not the church indeed have a foundation – and a very unfoundationalist one at that – in Jesus Christ her Lord? It's not that postfoundationalism is not a good idea, but it will only succeed if put in a proper theological context (which I think might well be possible) next to which Schults' reasoning seems a little trivial.

Perhaps the most enduring contributions of the book, however, are Schults' remarks on Pannenberg. Whatever the originality of postfoundationalism the searching

critique of the language Pannenberg's mainly Anglo-Saxon reviewers have used to summarise and criticise his Systematic Theology is genuinely enlightening, and we hear as much from the horse's mouth in the preface. Rather than serving as a foundation for God-talk Pannenberg's procedure sublates (in a non-Hegelian manner) fundamental-theological data into a systematically enriched theological synthesis. Schults illustrates this structure with specific reference to Pannenberg's work on anthropology but would work without much reconstruction for the sweep of his corpus. Schults finds the key to Pannenberg's theology not in the concepts of reason, history or anticipation but in seeing all reality *sub ratione Dei*, which is the key methodological marker that this is not a foundationalist starting-point, as would be the other three options. Whether this reading finally wins the day we will probably not know for several years as the works by Pannenberg come to an end, and the works about him increase, but within its remit Schults' reading is persuasive.

All in all this was an enjoyable and rewarding book, always clear, fair and interesting – though not fully convincing – and teaches the lesson in theological geography that Munich, like Princeton, lies between Yale and Chicago.

Iain Taylor
Oxford

The Power of the Cross. Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal

Graham Tomlin
Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999,
xiv + 343 pp., £24.99

Once in a while you pick up a book and you cannot put it down. It captures your imagination and puts everything on hold. Inevitably, such tomes are of a literary genre, a popularist such as Susan Howatch or Steven Saylor or the hyped but equally readable Harry Potter. More rarely is such a tome theological. Therefore, it behoves the reader to mark the reviewer's words well when he says, 'I couldn't put this down!' – and neither I could! Graham Tomlin's, *The Power of the Cross. Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal* is a worthy title in the Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monograph Series.

I must admit that I did not warm to the book: wasn't this just another weighty and wordy PhD thesis best left to those few worthies interested in the subject? Definitely not! Tomlin takes a central and strategic element of the Christian faith – the cross – and shows how it has been understood by three key thinkers. This he does in two ways: firstly, he shows what the cross meant for each thinker within his own specific context. Hence, for Paul, the cross reveals God's way of revealing himself and therefore how followers of Jesus should live in the world. The foil for this, from Paul's interaction with the Corinthian church, is Paul's defence of his apostolic gospel. Over and against the sleek and successful wisdom of his Epicurean opponents, Paul represents a power that clothes itself in weakness thus subverting any human pretensions to power. Luther, in turn, picks up this subverting notion of power in order to expose the misuse of power within the medieval church. For him, humility is the precondition to elevation. For Luther,

Holy Saturday Faith. Rediscovering the Legacy of Jesus

Ian Wallis
London: SPCK 2000,
viii + 214 pp., h/b., £17.50

the cross is the very means by which God reveals himself and how he deals with sinners. Pascal illustrates a catholic appreciation of the cross and its power to subvert contemporary notions of power within the church: the cross is understood as a sign of foolishness, obscuring God from unbelievers. In turn, God is shown to be revealed in the cross, not reason or creation. And Pascal understands a personal dimension to any theology of the cross: it demands a moral and spiritual reorientation that evidences God's activity in one's life.

Secondly, Tomlin applies this robust theology of the cross to the contemporary scene. In particular, he engages with the postmodernist thinker Michel Foucault. This is where Tomlin's thesis goes into turbo-drive and offers the reader a mine of points of contacts with any contemporary thinker. Of course power is the key issue in contemporary thought. Thus the meteoric rise in postmodern thinking. And of course this could also be the *shibboleth* that brings down the modern church. However, Tomlin helpfully shows major points of contact and differences between postmodern critiques of power and the theologies of the cross presented from Paul, Luther and Pascal. Here is a veritable arsenal of information for the thinking Christian. Power is a key issue - it always has been - from Eden following. The postmodern turn we experience today only frees contemporary Christianity from its own epistemological prison when it married itself off to modernity. What Tomlin does is to offer the contemporary thinking Christian the content with which to engage both with the ersatz and even downright false notions of power operating within the church and with the confusion of political and economic voices outside it. Buy this book and read it until its content grabs your own mind and heart and soul - and then you'll make a difference.

Graham McFarlane
London Bible College

Ian Wallis is an Anglican vicar in County Durham who has written what is basically a meditation on the time when Jesus lay in the tomb. It is accompanied by a liturgical service for worship on Holy Saturday, which gives the reader a clear picture of what his intentions are. The author starts off by admitting that there is not much material to go on, especially if one assumes that the Gospels are basically factual accounts of what really happened that first Easter weekend. In so far as the church has ever thought about it, the period of Jesus' death has been discussed in connection with his descent into hell, a subject that Mr Wallis never mentions. His approach is one that can only be described as bereavement counselling, and he examines the disciples' reaction to the crucifixion in that light.

Mr Wallis does not actually deny the historicity of the resurrection but he regards it as secondary, and possibly even irrelevant to the disciples' understanding of Jesus. To his mind, the early Christians were coping with bereavement as much as anything else, and the resurrection must be understood as one part of their response to this. Admittedly, it did become a very important part of it, but its success was due to the way in which it managed to embrace all the factors at work in the grieving process, which picked up the sayings of Jesus of Nazareth and transfigured them in a new experience of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. In support of this thesis, Mr Wallis gives us a great deal of information about Jewish laments, and the ways in which Jesus' contemporaries were taught to grieve. He then applies this information to the NT and regards it

as a satisfactory explanation of the kind of testimony to Jesus which we read in its pages.

It is an interesting theory, but is it true? Is it even plausible? The answer to these questions, as Mr Wallis recognises, all depends on what we think about the resurrection's historicity. If we believe that it occurred thirty-six hours or so after the crucifixion, then the main thesis of this book is impossible – there would have been no time for the things Mr Wallis is talking about to have taken place. Only those who are prepared to take a longer view of the resurrection, and see it as a theological development rather than as a historical event, will find much sympathy with his arguments. That excludes evangelicals, of course, though we should not discount Mr Wallis' abilities as a bereavement counsellor. He is almost certainly a good pastor, even if his theology leaves something to be desired. But those interested in what happened between Good Friday and Easter would be better off thinking about Jesus' descent into hell than about the disciples' emotions at that difficult time. Too little is known about that subject to make speculation either wise or profitable, and we ought to conclude that divine silence on the matter is a clear sign of the most prudent course for us to adopt.

Gerald Bray

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Religious Studies

Guide to the Study of Religion

Willi Braun and Russel T. McCutcheon (Eds)
London: Cassell, 1999,
xii + 560 pp., p/b. £22.95; h/b. £65.00

In the last few years Cassell have published several worthwhile volumes on the study of religion. *Guide to the*

Study of Religion is no exception. This large collection of essays on the conceptual and theoretical problems faced by scholars of religion includes valuable contributions by some of the most important and well-known contemporary theorists. Although the volume is, as one might expect in a work of this size, a rather mixed bag of essays of varying quality and level, overall the quality is high and the essays stimulating and important.

Whilst there is much useful material here for students writing essays, some undergraduates will find the work hard going: it is not a 'dummy's guide' to the study of religion, many of the essays require some knowledge of the issues discussed. A better volume for the undergraduate seeking an initial introduction to the study of religion would be the far more user-friendly text edited by Peter Connelly, *Approaches to the Study of Religion* (also published by Cassell). However, for postgraduates and for busy academics bogged down with administration and struggling to keep up with contemporary issues and debates (are there any who are not?), this volume is an extremely helpful and wide-ranging collection.

After an introductory chapter by Willi Braun, thirty subsequent essays explore a whole range of subjects including (just to give you an indication of the comprehensiveness of the work) classification (Smith), interpretation (Penner), secularisation (Stark), gender (Warne), colonialism (Chidester), structuralist theory (Jensen), discourse (Murphy), Romanticism and the study of religion (McCalla), social formation (Mack), theories of ritual (Grimes), paradigms of 'the sacred' (Anttonen), concepts of culture (Lincoln), modernism (Wiebe), postmodernism (Wolfart), and myth (McCutcheon). The essays are grouped into three parts. The first part, entitled 'Description', addresses a variety of theoretical and methodological issues concerned with the definition and description of

religion. The second part, entitled 'Explanation', provides evaluative discussions of theories and concepts used to explain religious belief and practice. In this, the most important and comprehensive part of the volume, there are critical discussions of theoretical systems such as structuralism, and analytical categories such as ritual, myth, gender, and the sacred. The third set of essays, grouped under the heading 'Location', discusses a variety of issues surrounding the development of the academic study of religion in the West: e.g. colonialism, relativism, modernism, and postmodernism.

Most of the essays provide helpful overviews of important issues, debates, and themes in the study of religion, past and present, and some are also small, but important contributions in themselves. Of particular note are the following essays: 'Interpretation' by Hans Penner, 'Rationality' by Rodney Stark, 'Manifestation' by Thomas Ryba, 'Romanticism' by Arthur McCalla, 'Myth' by Russell McCutcheon, and, at the end of the volume, a thought provoking, if idiosyncratic little epilogue entitled 'Play' by Sam Gill.

Perhaps the principal advantages of this volume are (a) the breadth of material dealt with, (b) the contribution several of its essays make to current thinking, and (c) its demonstration of the value of a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of religion. Instead of dealing with approaches individually (anthropological, sociological, psychological etc.), as, for example, Connelly's volume does, each essay selects a concept or a theory and explores the way light is shed on it from several disciplinary perspectives. Having said that, a weakness of the volume (certainly from the perspective of *Themelios* readers) is that there is no significant discussion of current theological approaches to the study of religion. (Again, this is not the case in the volume edited by Connelly that

contains a good chapter by Frank Whaling.) Indeed, strictly speaking this is a guide to the social scientific study of religion, its focus being social scientific ideas and theses. That said, it is a wonderful volume that I am glad to have on my shelf. It is certainly a volume that serious students of religion would be wise to invest in.

Chris Partridge

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Messianic Judaism

Dan Cohn-Sherbok

London and New York: Cassell, 2000,
xii + 234 pp., £17.99

It is both an unusual and a welcome development to find a constructive study of Messianic Jews from a leading Jewish academic rabbi. Up to now the Jewish community has given an almost uniformly negative response to those who have claimed that it is possible to be both Jewish and a believer in Yeshua (Jesus) as Messiah.

Cohn-Sherbok, however, argues this negative reaction is quite inconsistent with the current state of the Jewish community which accords Jewish status to a wide range of people who from the Orthodox viewpoint are heretics or apostates, including those who subscribe to eastern religions and those who do not believe in God at all. Cohn-Sherbok describes himself as a Jewish pluralist who sees the future harmony of the Jewish community as dependent on the recognition of the multi-faceted character of modern Judaism. In this Messianic Jews would find a place because they are committed to communal Jewish values.

This work is divided into three sections. The first is historical, tracing the emergence of the Messianic Jewish movement. The second section details the ways in which the

movement has handled the liturgy for the various Jewish festivals; while the final section evaluates key issues raised by the movement – especially whether it can be considered authentically Jewish. The last section is naturally written, first and foremost, for the Jewish community. Thus, the chapter on Messianic Judaism and its critics deals exclusively with Jewish critics. There is no exploration of the reservations Christians might raise about aspects of the movement, though some of these do emerge in the first part of the book in the context of the split between Hebrew Christians and Messianic Jews.

In short, this book provides important materials for Christians to gauge the implications of Messianic Judaism for the wider church, but it is not itself a comprehensive assessment of this important movement from a Christian perspective. Another limitation of the book is the strongly North American slant. Undoubtedly this reflects the hub of the Messianic movement, but it would have been of value to know how it functions, away from American soil, especially in Israel where being authentically Jewish has different implications from in the *Diaspora*.

Given Jewish antipathy to Christian missions, Cohn-Sherbok writes with commendable sympathy and perceptiveness of earlier Christian missions to the Jews. His grasp of the theological background of Messianic Judaism (in North American Fundamentalism and Dispensationalism) is sure. His generosity of spirit, as well as his scholarly analysis, will be welcome across the Christian-Jewish divide. I am convinced by his arguments that it is illogical to exclude Messianic Jews from the Jewish community. But I also share some of the deep-rooted Jewish reservations about a plural society to which he alludes in his final chapter. Pluralism, after all, implies a certain relativism, or at least the readiness not to challenge other

members of society with one's own views. Yet, Messianic Jews have a strong missionary interest in other Jews. Inevitably, this will cause strains in Jewish society – and the same might be said if it was (say) a traditional Orthodox group which embarked on such a mission. As it is unlikely that Messianic Jews will lay aside their missionary thrust, I fear that Cohn-Sherbok's plea for their recognition will largely go unheeded, though I would love to be proved wrong with this prognosis.

Graham Keith

Ayr

The Globalisation of Pentecostalism A Religion Made to Travel

*Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus,
Douglas Peterson (Eds)*
Carlisle: Regnum, 1999,
xvii + 406 pp., £14.99

This is a compilation of sixteen chapters, most more than 20 pages long, including generous helpful endnotes, analysing characteristics and developments within and relating to Pentecostalism on the world scene. As such, it is another landmark in the critical assessment of Pentecostalism mainly by scholars from within its ranks, though, given the title of the volume, it was surprising that only five are not working in North and Central America whilst only one of the respondents is based in Britain. One suspects that the reliance on North American contributors will rapidly change, given the globalisation of Pentecostalism, especially in its concentration in the two thirds world.

The book is split equally into three sections. It covers the era of Azusa Street and also discusses the Toronto phenomenon; discusses missiological issues and ecclesiological concerns; questions features precious to Pentecostals whilst also tenaciously holding to others; provides academic

analysis whilst, via Harvey Cox, reminds Pentecostals to maintain their spiritual heritage and moral integrity by not allowing the modern world to detach them from their roots.

The first section concentrates on changing paradigms in Pentecostal scholarly reflection. The first chapter, written by Frank Maachia, surveys the development of critical thinking among Pentecostals within the areas of theological and biblical reflection, Spirit baptism, divine healing and eschatology. Given the fundamental nature of these issues to Pentecostalism and noting the paradigm shifts being entertained and initiated by Pentecostals with regard to these and other topics, the chapter acts as a market for that which follows in the chapters to come.

Pentecostalism is global because it is diverse and because Pentecostals are recognising that a doctrinaire approach to integral subjects is not healthy and less authentic than a self-assessment that incorporates an awareness of its multi-culturality as noted in Everett Wilson's chapter in which he explores the Pentecostal identity. Wonsuk Ma's bibliographical resource chapter concerning the theological development of Pentecostalism demonstrates the self-analysis and transparency of contemporary Pentecostalism that is resulting in changing paradigms. As long as Pentecostals stimulate the agenda, these paradigms will not be forced upon them but be of their own making.

This book illustrates the process that is currently taking place, at least in the more scholarly environs of the movement. The challenge ahead is how to transfer and translate this development into mainstream Pentecostalism which is increasingly being located in the two-thirds world, where the theological agenda is set by social, pragmatic and practical concerns, as explored especially in section two.

The second section provides an overview of Pentecostalism as a global culture while the third explores issues facing Pentecostalism in a postmodern world, reflecting on hermeneutics, church leadership, prophecy, the role of women, ecumenism and religious experience.

Given the number of Pentecostals (450 million) and the diversity of beliefs and praxis within Pentecostal culture, the editors are to be commended for seeking to offer specific insights into contemporary Pentecostalism despite its being such a heterogeneous phenomenon. As an insight into a movement that, at least in its academic echelons, is talking to itself in the language of academic reflection whilst still tenaciously holding to a Spirit theology close to its centre, this will be a fascinating journey for any reader who has the time to read it, a chapter at a time.

Keith Warrington

Nantwich

Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion

Gavin Flood

London: Cassell, 1999,

viii + 311 pp., p/b., £17.99, h/b., £45.00

Those who have appreciated Gavin Flood's work, as I have, particularly his excellent *An Introduction to Hinduism*, will not be surprised to learn that this is a thorough and constructive analysis of key ideas within contemporary academic religious studies. There are excellent discussions of, for example, the relationship between theology and religious studies, definitions of religion, reductionism, and concepts of truth. However, the principal aim of the book is to show the limitations of the phenomenological method in religious studies and to suggest a way forward. Making use of theories developed within the social sciences and humanities, and

clearly influenced by the shift in contemporary theoretical discourse from a philosophy of consciousness to a philosophy of the sign which recognises that all knowledge is tradition-specific and embodied within particular cultural narratives, Flood argues one: that religions should not be abstracted and studied apart from the historical, political, cultural, linguistic, and social contexts: and two, that scholars (who are likewise shaped by their own particular contexts) always bring conceptual baggage to the study of religion. Hence, whether we think of, for example, the effect research has on the community being studied, or the scholar's own, the prejudices, preconceptions, instincts, emotions, and personal characteristics which significantly influence that research, the academic study of religion can never be neutral and purely objective.

Bearing the above concerns in mind, Flood seeks to develop 'a rigorous metatheoretical discourse', metatheory being the critical analysis of theory and practice. The metatheorist aims to 'unravel the underlying assumptions inherent in any research programme and to critically comment on them'. Unhappy that older paradigms, methodologies, and definitions of religion are still used (often unquestioningly) in religious studies, Flood encourages suspicion and critical reflection in order to lay bare the assumptions, the presuppositions, and the theories which inform the various interpretations and anatomies of religion; 'metatheory is important because it questions the contexts of inquiry, the nature of inquiry, and the kinds of interests represented in inquiry'. However, although metatheoretical analysis is crucial, and although it is being enthusiastically developed in other disciplines, it has, according to Flood, hardly begun in religious studies. Indeed, if its conspicuous absence in the massive new *Guide to the Study of Religion* edited by Braun and

McCutcheon is anything to go by, Flood has a point.

As to how metatheory might be developed in the study of religions, drawing on the work of particularly Paul Ricoeur and Mikhail Bakhtin, Flood argues for a dialogical approach. Rather than claiming objectivity (as phenomenology does), 'dialogism', which focuses on language and culture, welcomes a variety of voices (feminist, black, gay etc.) to contribute to an ongoing process of critical interpretation which is sensitive to contexts and power relations.

This is, it seems to me, a healthy corrective to much scholarship in religious studies, in that not only does it recognise that we all research from particular perspectives, perspectives which need to be continually scrutinised, but it also recognises the value of these perspectives, rather than insisting that they should be 'bracketed' (as if one ever could simply shelve one's worldview) in the service of a naïve quest for objectivity. Rather, scholars should, for example, fully acknowledge where they are coming from, what their agendas are, and then critically reflect on the implications of all this for their research. The argument is simply that such 'reflexive discourse' should be fundamental to religious studies research. Hence, arguably, metatheory should not have a particular 'anti-baggage' agenda (if I can put it that way), but should rather be baggage-friendly. Put simply, the aim is not to remove interpretative frameworks but simply to identify and analyse influences and presuppositions in order to aid critical reflection.

Having said that, although Flood persuasively criticises both the claim to neutrality in religious studies and the naïve demand that beliefs should be shelved in the pursuance of objectivity, he is clearly unhappy with the idea that explicit faith positions should have legitimacy within secular

higher education. This is, it seems to me, a little odd. Whilst on the one hand, for example, he seems to recognise the force of George Marsden's thesis that there should be Christian scholarship in all areas of the academy, on the other hand, the legitimacy of faith commitment in research is questioned. From my own Christian perspective, two of the book's important contributions are that it finally nails down the myth of phenomenological objectivity and neutrality, and, that it indicates ways in which particular positions, including faith positions, might legitimately operate within religious studies. Although this requires much more discussion, my point is simply that his nervousness about the legitimacy of faith is reminiscent of the attitudes produced by the phenomenology that Flood critiques and seeks to go beyond.

Finally, bearing in mind the predominantly student readership of *Themelios*, I should say that I suspect that undergraduates will not find this to be a particularly accessible book. Although, there are helpful summaries at the end of each chapter, and good overviews of the theories he critiques, utilises, and promotes, this is not an introductory text, in that there is a level of technical detail which will deter casual readers or those unfamiliar with the jargon he employs and the disciplines discussed. Nevertheless, this is an important and stimulating book, which should be read by all with a serious interest in the academic study of religions. Certainly, academics and doctoral students working in the field should set aside time to read it.

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A Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy

Oliver Leaman

Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999,
xi + 199 pp, £14.99

This is not Leaman's first effort at producing an introduction to Islamic philosophy, as he points out in the preface. However, in this latest work the author's thinking has developed to the point where he no longer sees the Peripatetic/Greek tradition of Islamic philosophy as being singularly normative. He is now committed to giving a significant proportion of his attention to the other two great streams within Islamic philosophy: the mystical/Sufi tradition and the illuminationist/Ishraqi tradition.

This work engages with wide ranging themes that bear on the main topic. Leaman does not ignore any of the big issues, tackling subjects as diverse as the nature of the source of authority; the debate regarding the respective places of reason and revelation; the creation versus emanation debate; and the nature of time, in terms of divergent approaches to ordinary time (since creation) and supernatural time (eternity). His commitment to dealing with diverse topics is mirrored by a determination to summarise the thoughts of diverse but key philosophical writers within the Islamic tradition. He considers such prominent names as al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina/Avicenna, al-Ghazali, Mulla Sadra, and the great Ibn Rushd/Averroes, who has received considerable attention from Western philosophers. Nor does Leaman restrict himself to classical writers, for he takes the time to consider such modern Muslim thinkers as Muhammad Iqbal. Leaman is thus committed to engaging with the diversity of Islam, which is a necessary approach given the tendency to stereotype Islam in monolithic terms in more popular writing.

Leaman selects a range of writing techniques which are very appropriate to an introductory text, and which ease the reader into what at times is a very difficult and mind-bending subject. He often introduces a key theme by asking questions, such as 'what can be known according to Islam?' (57); 'what is knowledge for?' (59); 'how important are symbols in pursuit of knowledge?' (61); 'what is the highest level of knowledge which we can achieve?' (62); and 'what enables us to say that one person is different from another person?' Such a question-answer approach is effective in providing signposts to the novice reader.

Another useful technique which Leaman uses to similar effect is to ground rarified discussion in modern-day events. Thus in addressing the question 'what can God know?', Leaman relates the arguments to questions regarding government and corporate management in contemporary Britain. Elsewhere, in presenting the notion that rulers who are more concerned with theoretical concepts become ideal rulers, the author compares this with arguments regarding gun control in Britain in 1996. This technique serves well to keep those readers on board who might otherwise slip off the edge of discussion which is too esoteric.

Some of Leaman's assumption bear further thought. He comments in the preface that '... one does not need to be committed to any particular religion, or indeed any religion at all, to understand Islamic philosophy' (ix). Though this is perhaps true, Leaman seems to imply that an a-religious position is somehow more objective, ignoring that such a perspective is no less value-laden than a perspective from within a particular religious stream.

In considering the imperial expansion of Islam in the century following the death of Muhammad in 732 AD, Leaman suggests that Muslims

consciously chose to take on board non-Muslim ideas and systems. He seems to ignore the fact that Islam itself was in such a state of flux during its first 150 years that it was not a matter of consciously choosing to use non-Islamic knowledge. Rather it just happened as a response to need, reflecting gaps in the system of Islam at that time.

Leaman makes a number of fascinating observations that many contemporary Muslim scholars might challenge. For example, he rejects the often-heard claim that Islam is more compatible with science than other faiths (53), saying that such a claim implies that the present state of the natural sciences is final. Furthermore, he comments that '... the first effect of Islamic philosophy on Western thought was that it paved the way for the strict separation of religion and the secular'. (145) In the climate of widespread contemporary Muslim criticism of Christianity's retreat from the public arena, such a statement would bring howls of protest from some Muslim polemicists.

This is a valuable work and would be well suited to survey courses on Islam at the undergraduate level. Leaman has clearly envisaged this, as he has included a copious bibliography and suggestions for further reading. It is to be hoped that this book will be used in this way in universities and colleges that have programmes in Islamic Studies and/or Religious Studies.

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Ethics

Homosexuality, Science and 'The Plain Sense of Scripture'

David L Balch (Ed.)

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000,

318 pp., £14.99

This symposium arises from a meeting of pastors and theologians in Washington DC in 1993, at which we are told in the introduction, a vigorous discussion took place. The discussions resulted in these essays which contain a mixture of opinion and of expertise.

Mark Toulouse, a minister of the Church of the Disciples of Christ, makes a plea that the confrontational nature of the debate about homosexuality among Christians be modified. He thinks that the churches can but 'muddle along' as they are, and that there is in fact a 'muddled middle' in terms of church opinion.

This pastoral contribution is followed by some seeking to follow a scientific path. William Schoedel takes a look at the history of medicine in the Greco-Roman era. His conclusion includes the comment that 'we need to recognise that the Jewish and early Christian rejection of same-sex eros was but one aspect of a new conception of the family. The male could not now express his authority by penetrating at will not only a wife but also his male and female slaves or a young male favourite. Sexual politics were undergoing a deep sea-change. And a good deal can still be said in favour of the new model of the family that was emerging'. Schoedel finally calls for a recognition of gay couples having the status of families, without however any argumentation to justify the remark.

The one truly scientific essay in the collection, despite the title's promise, comes from Stanton Jones and Mark Yarhouse who present a wealth of relevant research and seek to

appraise it in the context the church debates. They show the immense complexity and inconclusiveness of the evidence, the politicised nature of the research process. They do not think that science can be said to support the 'essentialist' thesis, 'it rather presumes it in the same way that political surveys assume that Republicans and Democrats are real categorisations.' Hence science cannot validate ethical conclusions resting on the essentialist assumption, nor can it establish the ethical neutrality of homosexuality. Christine E. Gudorf, however, then disagrees with these authors. She offers much less evidence scientifically and moves on to consider biblical texts. She concludes that both homosexuals and heterosexuals sin, hence there is no difference between the two categories. Again the question whether this way of setting up the issue is begged, that is to say, 'heterosexuals' and 'homosexuals' are categorised as essentialist people groups, as might be blacks and caucasians, vital reading here is Edward Stein's new book *The Mismeasure of Desire*.

The rest of the book wrestles with biblical texts, Old and New Testaments. It is hard going for biblical scholars to persuade readers that either Testament endorses homosexual practice, and this comes through most of the contributions. Those favouring a liberal view depend upon the assumption made above, for example Nancy J. Duff's questions: 'If this is true for heterosexual couples, why can it not be true for homosexuals?', that is, not refraining from sexual penetration. This very categorisation has in effect foreclosed the discussion. But other essayists contest the liberal opinion, notably Christopher Seitz who keeps the question on the table.

Readers in the UK will miss any reference to contributions to this debate over here. No O'Donovan, no Stuart nor Vasey, no reference to the Lambeth Conference resolutions.

Thiselton's review of the biblical and hermeneutical debate leads the field, but is not mentioned. The fact that the symposium was in 1993 may explain this. This debate moves fast, however, and the reader feels that the liberal shells are aiming at a target that has moved on. We might do well to refer to the cautionary note struck by the St Andrew's Day Statement: 'Our sexual affections can no more define who we are than can our class, race or nationality. At the deepest ontological level, therefore, there is no such thing as 'a' homosexual or 'a' heterosexual: there are human beings, male and female, called to redeemed humanity in Christ, endowed with a complex variety of forms of alienation'. That helps to set the contested issue of categorisation in theological context, and prevents it foreclosing discussion as many seem to assume it can.

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Putting Asunder: Divorce and Remarriage in biblical and pastoral perspective

Stephen Clark

Bridgend, Wales: Bryntirion Press, 1999,
312 pp., £9.99

Stephen Clark is a lawyer who attempts to make sense of the seeming contradictions in the NT teaching on divorce. A straightforward reading of Mark 10 suggests that Jesus disallows divorce for 'any matter', while Matthew 19 allows the single exception of 'indecency'. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 also has a single exception, which is desertion by an unbelieving partner. The most common ways of harmonising these

texts is to combine them, so that there are two exceptions. This is the approach of both the Catholic and most Protestant churches. Some evangelicals (Heth and Wenham¹, followed by Cornes²) say that these exceptions no longer apply. A Jew was forced to divorce an adulterous partner and a Gentile was divorced against their will by the act of desertion. Therefore, they say, the 'exceptions' simply recognised the fact that the marriage was forced to end in these circumstances in the society of the NT.

Clark is in the camp of more recent interpreters who attempt to show that there are other grounds for divorce, such as physical and emotional abuse. Some have done this by broadening the definition of 'indecency' while others have argued that 'surely a God of love would allow divorce in these cases'. Clark has instead used the ingenious argument of Adams³ that a believer who abuses their partner can be disciplined by their church, and if they rebel they can be regarded as an unbeliever (as in Matt. 18:17). If the abusing partner has abandoned them, the believer can now divorce them using Paul's exception. Clark develops this argument further by suggesting that 1 Corinthians 7:12 f. means a believer can divorce anyone who no longer *wishes* to remain in the marriage. This even means, he says, that a Christian can divorce someone for behaviour that is not conducive to a good marriage, because it indicates that they wish the marriage to end.

One of his case studies involves a man who was discovered watching pornographic videos that included acts of bestiality. After this, his wife found him repugnant and feared

- ¹ Heth, William A. and Wenham, Gordon J. *Jesus and Divorce* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1984)
- ² Cornes, Andrew *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical principles and pastoral practice* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1993)
- ³ Adams, Jay E. *Marriage Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, Philipsburg, New Jersey, 1980)

that their children might accidentally view the videos. Clark concludes that she could divorce him because 'he is hardly consenting to live with her as a husband' (188). Clark is aware that this might 'open the floodgates to a new latitudinarianism' (185) and counsels that the church leaders should be involved at every stage.

What about remarriage? The established churches teach that those 'whom God has joined' remain married in God's eyes until one of them dies, even if they are divorced. This means they cannot remarry. Clark, like many non-conformists, does not hold to this 'ontological' view of marriage. He points out that Jesus' command 'whom God has joined, let no-one separate' is like the command 'do not kill'. Both are forbidden but both are possible. If it were impossible, it would not be a command. The sin consists in breaking up the marriage, not in the divorce. He therefore says that remarriage is possible after divorce.

There is much to commend in this book. The conclusion that God allows divorce in the case of abuse is self-evidently true, but the means by which he arrives at this conclusion is weak. It is not safe to say that abusive or offensive behaviour by one partner indicates that they want to end the marriage. Clark puts it more subtly, saying that such behaviour makes it 'manifest that he or she is not content to live with the believer, even though remaining under the same roof' (182). This is mere casuistry, and the creation of a legal loophole. However, it should be noted that I have a personal bias, as the author of a competing viewpoint which Clark interacts with throughout his work.

Where this book shines is in the details of UK law. Clark unravels the complexities and changes of UK divorce law and indicates the practical implications for Christians. His legal training has produced by far the best Christian summary of divorce legislation in print, as well as

finding a new, though dubious, loophole in biblical legislation.

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Euthanasia

Andrew Dunnett

London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999,
207 pp., £6.99

This book is a collection of interviews with ten key people, both Christians and non-Christians, medics and non-medics, who have contributed to the euthanasia debate. Andrew Dunnett uses a journalistic, rather than academic, style to address the debate surrounding euthanasia.

Through these interviews, different legal and ethical positions on euthanasia in the United Kingdom, Holland and Australia are explored. Dunnett also draws out the personal views of people including Dr Pieter Admiraal, Ludovic Kennedy, Dame Cicely Saunders and Andrew Fergusson.

The significance of terminology, *i.e.* voluntary, non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia, is evident throughout the interviews. The interviewees not only appeal to different definitions of such terms, but also place on them varying degrees of significance. Other common issues include, the moral significance of withholding or withdrawing treatment, whether there is moral difference between actions and omissions, the principle of double effect the role of individual autonomy in the debate and advanced directives.

The collection is easily accessible to a wide range of readers, whether in health care, politics, public policy or anyone concerned about the issues. The organisation of the book makes it easy to pick up and put down. The views of each person are presented in a way that enables the reader to gain insight into the reasons

for holding that view, as well as the key issues. Often the juxtaposition of these views from chapter to chapter is quite striking.

The structure of each chapter is clear, with a brief biographical summary of the interviewee, a précis of the person's views and the interview itself. Dunnett makes no comment on the interviews, but simply relays them. This is useful up to a point, but there are no transitions from chapter to chapter and the book does not flow as well as it could. It is also not clear how much of the original interview was used and how each was edited.

Furthermore, at the end of the book there are no concluding comments. After exploring such a range of views on a hotly debated topic, the book needs some comment or observations from the author. It would have been helpful to have some of the common themes and issues highlighted and drawn together. Without wishing to weight the volume too heavily on one side of the debate or another, some analysis of the material would have been welcome.

The positive side of the lack of editorial analysis or comment is that readers are left to draw their own conclusions. Ultimately, the collection is interesting and is likely to draw readers from a wide spectrum.

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**The Healing Promise:
Is it always God's will to heal?**

Richard Mayhue

Tain: Mentor, 1999,

288 pp., £10.99/\$17.99

Richard Mayhue sets out to give an overview of Scriptural teaching regarding healing, as well as to evaluate current healing ministries. He has studied the claims of those engaged in such ministries for over twenty years, and met and interacted with many of them.

The book opens with an examination of God's healing promise. Mayhue argues that the context of the oft-quoted 1 Peter 2:24 'actually validates the divine purpose in human suffering rather than eliminates it' (1 Pet. 2:18-25, p. 20). Christians still get sick, suffer and die - in this life. The full benefits of salvation are reserved for when our bodies have been raised. Certainly in some cases God does wonderfully heal, and very often God heals through medical treatment and/or through the healing capacity of the human body. But is it always his will to heal?

A section follows on the contemporary situation, the claims of faith healers, their teachings, and how we are to evaluate reported healings. This section is scrupulously researched, and Mayhue gives especially detailed attention to the teaching of Benny Hinn. One chapter in this section is contributed by Andre Kole who, as a professional illusionist, has studied the techniques used by faith healers and personally met with many of them over thirty five years. Often they promised to provide him with documentation of their healings, but not once was this forthcoming.

The next section is biblical, dealing with God's healing ministry: in the OT, in the ministry of Jesus, and in the ministry of the Apostles. There is a chapter on the question of whether there is healing in the atonement; a chapter on James 5; and a chapter on demons and sickness. Mayhue concludes that God can and does heal, but that there is no biblical basis for a ministry of divine healing directly through a human healer. 'Alleged contemporary faith-healing ministries fall embarrassingly short of the biblical pattern in time, scope, and intensity' (196).

The concluding section is pastoral, dealing with the Christian's response to sickness. This includes a testimony by Joni Eareckson Tada. After a terrible accident she prayed

fervently to be healed and raised from her wheel chair but she has experienced God's goodness in and through her disability. There is also a testimony from John and Patricia MacArthur concerning their testimony of God's sovereignty and healing when Patricia was involved in a serious car accident, as well as the author's own account of his reactions when struck down with a debilitating illness while he was writing the book. All these would heartily agree that God can instantly and totally heal any illness or disability. But from Scripture, from their own experience, and from their study of the so-called faith healers they all maintain that instant and total healing is not the norm for today.

The book ends with how the reader can have a genuine healing ministry – sharing God's compassion, serving the sick in practical ministries of mercy as well as in prayer ministries, but above all by extending the hope of salvation by sharing the gospel – thus offering healing from eternal death and sin's bondage.

The Healing Promise is warmly recommended – it is carefully researched, closely argued, charitable in tone, and pastoral in intent. The author aims to equip Christians to cope with illness in their own lives and in the lives of those they love.

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The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible

Gerald O. West
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
182 pp., £10.95

This book deals with an issue that should be the concern of everyone who is privileged to study the Bible academically, *viz.*, how to relate what is learnt in the academy to ordinary Bible readers. Gerald West is an Associate Professor of theology in the

University of Natal, South Africa and Director of the Institute for the study of the Bible, a joint project of the School of Theology and communities of the poor and marginalised. He narrows down the biblical scholars to be engaged in dialogue to what he calls 'socially engaged biblical scholars' by which he means those committed to some form of Liberation Theology.

He begins by discussing the difference it makes to Bible study when the poor are part of the discussion, by comparing an exposition of John Paul II of the story of the Rich Young Ruler and the same story as understood in the context of poverty (ch. 1). He then looks at the South African context and argues that biblical scholars need a profound understanding of where the poor are coming from to engage in dialogue with them. There is some helpful sociological material on how the poor cope with oppression in this second chapter. In the third chapter he deals with what socially engaged biblical scholars do, which is to overtly trace 'lines of connection between biblical texts and contexts and the texts and contexts of present communities of the poor and marginalised' (77). The following chapter deals with what ordinary readers do with the Bible that emphasises oral tradition, imagination and collective interpretation. The fifth chapter looks at the place of the scholar in the process of what the author calls contextual Bible study with the poor. Chapters seven and eight give examples of contextual Bible study – firstly by way of a reflection by the author on a study of Mark 5:21 – 6:1, (Jairus' daughter and the woman subject to bleeding), and secondly by a simple report of a study of the 'Nazareth Manifesto' (Luke 4:16–22). The final chapter is a conclusion, drawing the various threads of the volume together by focusing on the character and actions of Rizpah in 2 Samuel 21:1–14.

For me this volume really comes to life where there is engagement with the

biblical text. The stories of the 'Rich Young Ruler' and 'Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Subject to Bleeding' are brought to life in a new way - and Rizpah, who has considered the significance of this minor OT character before? There is also a lot of helpful sociological material on the way in which the poor and marginalised deal with oppression and handle the Bible although what is said about the missionary movement is far too negative. The book's greatest weakness is the way in which it sinks, in the central chapters, into what D.A. Carson calls the postmodern hermeneutical morass with its convoluted arguments and ugly vocabulary which leaves one wondering if there is any point in reading the Bible with the poor except as a cynical exercise to manipulate them in the direction of the creed of Liberation Theology. I don't think that this is the author's theoretical end-point but I'm not entirely certain.

In the 'Introduction' he quotes the following South African anecdote: 'When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said "let us pray". After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible.' According to the author, Desmond Tutu's response to this statement is, 'And we had the better deal'. I'm not sure whether West is as convinced as Tutu.

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Lost Icons

Rowan Williams

Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2000,
199 pp., £12.50

This book may be described as an attempt to offer a critical analysis of modern, Western cultures (or what the author tends to call 'North American cultures'). It is of course written from a Christian perspective,

yet it is clearly intended to contribute to a dialogue with concerned intellectuals who may not share Rowan Williams' faith but like him are alarmed at the way in which language has become dominated by 'the marketing of slogans'.

Williams uses the term 'icon' to refer to patterns of understanding that, prior to the dawn of modernity, functioned as basic constraints 'on what human beings can reasonably do and say together if they are going to remain within a recognisably human conversation'. That is to say, certain fundamental values, beliefs and assumptions have traditionally been found at the core of human cultures and thus can be described as iconic. Modernity challenged precisely such assumptions, seeking to separate out those inherited values which were now seen to have served oppressive interest, from those which might be classified as 'natural' and so could claim to contribute to human welfare. However, this project has resulted in a situation in which moral and ethical discourse becomes increasingly laboured and 'more and more inaccessible to our culture'. The practical consequences, Williams argues, are tragic and potentially disastrous.

For example, a major aspect of this discussion focuses upon the meaning of 'childhood' in Western culture and the manner in which our understanding of this affects educational philosophy and practice. It is impossible to do justice to the complexity and richness of this discussion within the limited space available here. In summary: childhood provides an opportunity for the development and nurturing of a sense of personhood, yet this requires space for play, for experiment, for fantasy, in other words, children must be allowed to be children. However the loss of traditional concepts of initiation which guaranteed the integrity of such a nurturing space, has led to a culture

in which 'the education of children is essentially about pressing the child into adult or pseudo-adult roles as fast as possible'. Williams' discussion of the ramifications of all this, including his perceptive comments on the comments on the modern concept of 'choice' in education, strikes me as extraordinarily important and should be read by Christian teachers and educationalists - not to mention parents.

Subsequent explorations of the loss of a sense of 'charity', of the difficulties of expressing remorse and finally of what theology intends by talking of the human 'soul' are stimulating and filled with fresh and thought-provoking insights. For example, in the space of a few pages I discovered highly original comments on subjects as apparently diverse as football violence, the British monarch, the death of Princess Diana and the rave phenomenon! However a word of warning is in order: first, this book is certainly not an easy read. The author's own confession, in relation to his discussion of the nature of the soul, 'the complexities of all this are intimidating' can be applied to a good deal of the book as a whole. The fact is that Christian apologetics done at this level inevitably takes for granted some acquaintance with philosophy, sociology and psychology.

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Philosophy

Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against The Challenges of Postmodernism

Douglas Groothuis
Leicester/Downers Grove: IVP, 2000,
303 pp., £ 8.99

Truth Decay is a book which repays a careful read. It is an excellent

Christian primer on postmodernism and is very helpful for developing Christian thinking and responses to contemporary theory and culture. It is ideally suited for the thoughtful student of theology but would also be of great value to university students in the Arts and Humanities as well as church leaders and Bible teachers keen to understand the theoretical issues underlying the spirit of the age.

The book divides into three broad sections thematically.

In the first section Groothuis explains in four chapters why biblical concepts of truth are in jeopardy; how we have moved from modernism to postmodernism as broad categories for understanding Western culture; sets out a Christian view of truth based on correspondence with reality; and finally compares Christian and popular concepts of truth, noting the contemporary tendency to redefine truth according to use value.

In the second section the book moves to consider the dangers of a postmodern view of truth when it is allowed to shape our theological and apologetic agenda. One of the main concerns of this section is to demonstrate that truth is 'irreducibly propositional'. Even when presented as narrative, poetry or parable, Groothuis understands all genre to be dependent on underlying proposition to communicate anything truthful. Propositional revelation is essential to obedience. Without it we are left with little other than vague mysticism. The book engages with Christian thinkers Groothuis believes to be in danger of dismissing propositional revelation and of submitting their thinking to relativistic postmodern assumption. The work of Alister McGrath, Stanley Grenz, Lesslie Newbiggin and William Willimon is evaluated at some length.

It is the third section that raises *Truth Decay* above the level of much recent writing on postmodernism. Here Groothuis examines the relationship

between contemporary theory and several key academic and social disciplines: ethics, race, gender and art. The chapter on ethics is one of the best short introductions to the complex area of postmodern ethical theory I have read. His argument based on authoritative propositional revelation concludes powerfully that relativist ethics is fundamentally flawed because it cannot speak authoritatively across the boundaries between individuals and those between communities. Community and ethics can only rightly be founded on revelation: 'only if ethics were something transcendent could law be based on more than human arrangements and therefore be authoritative'.

The chapter on race and gender deals well with these subsets of current ethical discussion. As in the chapter on ethics Groothuis demonstrates that it is impossible to value other races and the other gender without truth. Far from valuing race and gender he shows that, by insisting that each community only ever speaks contextually to that community, postmodern theory marginalises the very people it is seeking to empower. He deals well with the fashionable argument that while sex is biological gender is a social and political construct. The Church seems to oscillate on issues of race and gender between being way behind the times and being so keen to be up to date that we swallow the agenda of the world. Groothuis treads a careful biblical path between the two.

In the chapter on art the book suggests that evangelicals have traditionally evaluated art simply on the grounds of whether it is moral or immoral. This, Groothuis claims, is inadequate. He sets out an approach to art that starts with God having aesthetic sensibilities. – He has things to say about truth and beauty, falsehood and ugliness – as well as moral ones and uses this framework

to conclude that art is open to objective evaluation.

Any criticisms of the book are minor. At times Groothuis puts a little too much stress on the philosophical enterprise as the best way to counter postmodernism. For example while maintaining that final truth is only available through revelation he in no way develops this as much as he does a philosophical reliance on correspondence. I would have liked more on how revelation is true because it is based in the character of God, and the implications for Christian engagement with culture of not holding the Bible to be authoritative. At times too there could have been more engagement with contemporary theorists. I felt this particularly in the chapter on ethics where the book fails to distinguish between ethics and morality – a distinction close to the heart of all postmodern theory on the subject.

I thoroughly commend *Truth Decay*. The knowledgeable reader will find nothing new in the first half but much to provoke thought in the second. Everyone else will find Groothuis' description and evaluation of postmodernism and truth illuminating.

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Science and its Limits: The Natural Sciences in Christian Perspective. Second Edition

Del Ratzsch.
Leicester : IVP, 2000,
191 pp., £9.99

For a thinking Christian looking for an introduction to the central questions of Philosophy, the IVP 'Contours of Christian Philosophy' series took a lot of beating. They summarised, in a comprehensive, accessible, theologically sensitive manner, the core debates going on in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, ethics and philosophy of

religion. The series is now over ten years old, but it is a most encouraging sign to see that Del Ratzsch, Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, has re-worked his most lucid introduction to the Philosophy of Science, adding material concerning the content and style of the heated debate about evolutionary theory.

The book provides sensible, clear discussions of the central topics in the discipline. The discussion of Popper, Kuhn, positivism, as well as the 'big themes' of rationality and objectivity is consistently excellent. The reader is led carefully from traditional conceptions of the philosophy of science, through the crucial changes of the 60s and 70s, up to a picture of the contemporary situation. For an introduction to this material that is exegetically sensitive, as well as moderate in outlook, this sketch is hard to beat.

It also features a sensitive discussion of the vexed issues surrounding the question of design in nature. Del Ratzsch takes an irenic stance, describing in a sympathetic manner the concerns that have motivated the so-called 'Intelligent Design' movement to argue, against methodological naturalism, that the concept of design is a legitimate one in science. This is surely a debate urgently in need of the moderating voice of the philosophers of science, and Ratzsch's comments, encompassing both the central arguments for methodological naturalism and possible lines of reply, are welcome.

Ratzsch addresses the current creationist fashion for appealing to particular instances of 'design' such as the E. coli motor. Such intricate mechanisms, the argument runs, are hard to account for evolutionarily. The difficulty with this line of reasoning is that it is open to an obvious *tu quoque*. The evolutionist can turn round and ask the intelligent design theist to account for an abundant number of observed phenomena

(namely, particular evils in the world) which are hardly well explained by the postulation of a benevolent creator.

The position on evolution which has been common amongst British evangelicals in recent years, namely of allowing the complementarity of Biblical and evolutionary accounts of origins, deserves more credence than Ratzsch gives it. The conceptual distinction between reason and cause creates the space, it would seem, for an intelligible account of theistic evolution. The opening chapters of Genesis inform us about the divine purposes in creation. The picture of evolutionary biology – sketchy, tentative, yet undoubtedly closer to empirical confirmation than anything creationists have proposed – tells us about the material causes which led to the observed diversity of species of life.

Ratzsch points to difficulties in the idea of complementarity. Yet it is arguably the case that one of the goals of a Christian philosophy of science is the drawing of the distinction between evolutionary theory itself and the reductionist interpretations of that theory popularised by Dawkins and his followers. One way of doing this is by demonstrating the plausibility of a theistic interpretation of evolution. It is a matter of slight regret that Del Ratzsch does not go further down this particular road.

Overall, though, this book sets a high watermark for what we can but hope is a re-print of the entire *Contours* series.

John Taylor
Rugby

BOOK NOTES

In Search of True Wisdom Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements

Edward Ball ed.
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
£50.00

Many will find this volume more interesting than the usual *Festschriften*, since most essays deal with theology and interpretation. After a warm appreciation of R.E. Clements, some five essays cover general issues and another eleven examine specific issues or books. The first group summarise material presented at length elsewhere, e.g. Auld on history, Barton on canon, and Brueggemann on theology. The second group add further insights from adept interpreters, e.g. Provan on 2 Samuel and 1 Kings, Williamson on glory in Isaiah, and Whybray on suffering in Job. A useful addition to any library.

Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible

Xuan Huang Thi Pham
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
£35.00

This published thesis gives a brief introduction to mourning in Israel and the ANE, and then examines three texts more closely (Lam 1 & 2, Is 51:9-52:2). It argues that at least the first two reflect a mourning ceremony, with mourners and comforters interacting. It is a good study of specific texts, though the narrow focus excludes a wider engagement, e.g. on Lamentations as a whole. The author has obvious empathy for her subject, having lived through the end of the Vietnam war and enforced family separation.

Psalms, NIBC

Craig C. Broyles
Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1999,
xvi + 539 pp., £8.99

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, NIBC

R. Murphy, E. Huwiler
Peabody, Massachusetts: 1999,
xii + 312 pp., £8.99

These commentaries follow the now familiar NIBC pattern, already established for Deuteronomy, Kings and many NT books. For the Psalms, Craig Broyles gives a good 40-page introduction to the psalms, covering all the usual topics and wearing his learning lightly. He then bravely tackles each psalm in 2-3 pages, focusing on their original use as liturgy. He usually gives an introduction, sectional comments, and concluding reflections, though sometimes varies the pattern. There is much of value in the limited space available.

Roland Murphy brings his expertise to Proverbs. After a brief introduction to sapiential thought, he comments on chapters 1-9 by sections and on chapters 10-31 mostly verse-by-verse. Hence some verses receive scant comment, though important themes are developed when first encountered. Elizabeth Huwiler gives slightly longer and more satisfying introductions to the other two books, with correspondingly less space for comment. She notes the relevance of Ecclesiastes to our materialist and pluralist age, and more briefly of the Song to current discussion of sexuality. Both volumes are excellent additions to the NIBC series.

The SBL Handbook of Style

Patrick Alexander et al.

Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1999,
xiv + 280 pp.

The first quarter of this elegant volume builds on the *Chicago Manual of Style* and the *JBL* Instructions for Contributors. It gives advice on general matters of manuscript presentation, punctuation and bibliography, and on specific issues such as transliteration and transcription from all relevant ancient languages. The remainder consists of extremely useful, comprehensive lists of ancient and modern sources. Here two sections dominate: Secondary Sources (alphabetised by both name and abbreviation), and Texts from the Judean Desert (with every individual column or fragment listed). An important reference work for scholars, though perhaps for many a library copy will be sufficient.

History of Israel, Mercer Commentary on the Bible Vol. 2

Watson E. Mills and Richard F. Wilson (Eds)
Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1998,
xxxvii + 274 pp., \$19.95

This follows a similar pattern to volume 1 (reviewed in *Themelios* 25.1), reprinting articles from the Mercer Dictionary (1990) and Commentary (1994) dealing with Joshua to Esther. Thirty introductory pages reproduce seven dictionary articles: Chronology, Conquest, Deuteronomist, Israel, Judah, Kingship, Succession Narrative; the main part presents the relevant commentary articles. The book reflects mainstream critical approaches.

Several features are disappointing. The title is 'somewhat misleading', as the preface wryly admits – this is certainly not a discussion of Israel's history and historiography. The dictionary articles are too brief to cover their issues adequately,

e.g. two paragraphs on patriarchal numerology are far too compressed to be transparent, perhaps like the numerology itself! (They also contain contradictory figures for Isaac.) 'Chronology' and 'Conquest' both state that an early exodus implies 600 years for the judges, which is unsubstantiated as well as plainly wrong. The introduction articles seem dated even when first published, e.g. 'Conquest' ignores the new archaeology championed by Finkelstein and others, while 'Deuteronomist' ignores the Göttingen school. Bibliographical dates are omitted, and there is no key to abbreviations.

The commentary section fares a little better, though regularly suffers from lack of space: the whole of Kings gets only 31 pages, though Samuel strangely gets twice as many. Important points are therefore ignored: Ezra and Nehemiah are ascribed to the Chronicler without discussion, and the redating of Ezra suggested in 'Chronology' is ignored. Unlike the back cover, I wouldn't recommend either the original reference works or these extracts to undergraduates.

Society for Old Testament Study Book List 1999

Lester L. Grabbe

Sheffield: Society for Old Testament Study, 1999,
£14.95

As usual, succinct reviews of over 400 scholarly books relating to OT study, an indispensable guide for scholars and students alike. As last year, well produced by Sheffield, though SOTS members who get JSOT end up with an unnecessary second copy!

Philip Johnston

Book Reviews

- Borland, James A.* **Christ in the Old Testament: Old Testament appearances of Christ in Human Form** J.P. Taylor
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