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1 Editorial: What has Boxing to do with Jerusalem?

5 Mistakes of the New Perspective on Paul
Paul F.M. Za

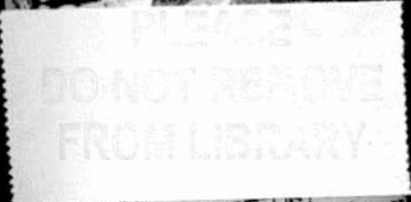


12 The Father with Two Sons:
A Modern Reading of Luke 15
Douglas J.W. Milr

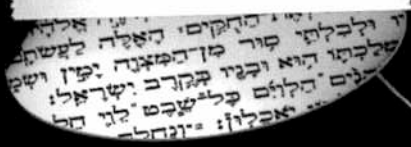
22 New Testament Literature Survey - 2000
Alistair I. Wilsc



32 The Secret Diaries of Jonathan Edwards Aged 54:
A Reconstruction (and Deconstruction?) of the
New England Theologian - A Review Article
Daniel S. Strang



44 The Last Word
Robbie Castlema



46 Book Reviews

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EDITORS

GENERAL EDITOR Carl Trueman, Westminster Theological Seminary, Chestnut Hill, PO Box 27009, Philadelphia, PA19118, USA.

MANAGING EDITOR Daniel Strange (RTSF) ROLFING MEMORIAL LIBRARY

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Elizabeth Fraser DEC 11 2001

REVIEW EDITORS Philip Johnston (OT), Thorsten Moritz (NT), Elizabeth Clark (Missiology), Daniel Strange (Systematics and other).

CONTRIBUTORS

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REVIEWS

Books for review should be sent to *Themelios*, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP.

Editorial: What has Boxing to do with Jerusalem?

The world of boxing has been one of my passions from childhood onwards and I guess, over the years, I have acquired a fairly decent knowledge of its history and its personalities, along with a modest library of classic boxing writing. Of course, in these days of rampant political correctness, I have found myself frequently challenged about my interest by those somewhat less enamoured of the sport. In such circumstances, I usually reply, with at least part of my tongue in my cheek, that boxing is nothing more than sport at its most honest – after all, the purpose of all sport is to defeat the opposition in an emphatic and decisive manner, and boxing simply does this in a more direct and open way than one finds in, say golf. Cut away the superficial politeness and protocols of golf, and one has the same basic struggle for physical and mental superiority which one finds in boxing.

While many today will be familiar with the names of Ali and Tyson as men who, for good or for ill, have cast long shadows over the heavyweight division, those with a deeper knowledge of boxing history will know that neither boasts the most impressive record in the division. It is a perennial fault in many boxers that they retire too late and too frequently, and Ali was no exception. He fought on too long and took too many beatings. Tyson, meanwhile, is a deeply flawed and troubled personality who simply did not have the self-discipline to be truly great. In fact, in the history of boxing only one man retired undefeated as heavyweight champion: Rocky Marciano. Indeed, when Marciano quit the ring in 1956, his professional record was 49 bouts, 49 wins, 43 within the distance. Nobody has ever come close to the score sheet generated by the man they called 'The Rock'.

Of course, I am too young to have seen 'The Rock' in action but I have seen him on video and his technique was, to put it mildly, awesome. Lacking the charisma of an Ali or the precision of a Hagler, he was rather something almost primeval: overwhelming, devastating, and totally destructive. Graceful he wasn't; but fearsomely effective he most certainly was. He entered the ring to win, and was prepared to do whatever he had to do to achieve that result.

What has all this got to do with theology, you ask? Well, it seems to me that theological controversy, at least in the way most of us conduct it, is like boxing in that it is often more about winning by beating up the opposition than about anything else; and that it is in fact less honest and reputable than boxing because we hide our brutality under a veneer of virtuous rhetoric, and justify the human damage it causes by specious appeals to the moral high ground of God's honour.

What, I hear you say, has Trueman gone soft? Is he arguing that we should abandon theological controversy, sit down in a meadow somewhere and make daisy chains together? By no means! I am in fact more convinced than ever that theological controversy is essential to the well-being of the church. The willingness of Christian brothers and sisters in Christ to defend the faith and to articulate clear and strong positions on doctrine is crucial. If history teaches us anything, it teaches us the need for vigilance and the need to combat heresy and heterodoxy

whenever and wherever we come across it. Do not, therefore, misread me as saying that controversy is, in itself, wrong or unnecessary. What I am saying is that we need to make sure that the controversies in which we are engaged are conducted in a manner likely to achieve the desired goal; and, furthermore, that the desired goal is a biblical one.

What is the desired goal of theological controversy? Well, surely it is twofold: that of glorifying the name of Christ; and that of persuading those with whom we disagree that there is a better way, that their theology is less than biblical and that they need to subject their thinking to the searching criticism of the Word of God. Controversy therefore should be part of a mutual quest for the establishment and articulation of the truth, a quest in which we listen to what our opponents have to say and then seek to respond to them. Our responses should put down error in a firm and decisive manner and yet not compromise our love for them as brethren or our desire to see them – and, of course, ourselves – come to a fuller knowledge of the truth. The aim of theological conflict among Christians is not to win, not to beat one's opponent mercilessly into a bloodied wreck, but to establish the nature of truth and to convince as many as possible of the truth. This requires a personal openness on our part which is driven by a love and concern for those with whom we disagree, not a sneering contempt for anyone who disagrees with us.

This should immediately shape the way we approach controversy. First, we should always strive to place the most charitable interpretation on the views and the motives of our opponents. Attacking straw men achieves little more than a few cheap laughs for those who agree with us anyway; and knocking out a first-round patsy does not make one a great champion. If we wish to refute a position, we have to deal with the position accurately and not in some distorted or false manner. Second, we should deal with them in a manner that is courteous. Being rude or abusive is a great temptation in the heat of controversy, but it serves merely to muddy the waters and to increase resistance to our position rather than opening the way for constructive discussion. Third, and following on from the second, we should make sure that, as much as we possibly can, we go for the ideas, not the personalities involved. I'm old fashioned enough to believe that the truth is the truth even when spoken from the mouth of Balaam's ass, and simply deriding his ass as an ass doesn't really tell me much about the quality of the ideas. In summary, we should deal with our opponents as we expect them to deal with us. We should also acknowledge our common status as sinners saved merely by the grace of God. This is the ultimate point of reference for preserving our own modesty and understanding our relationship both to God as source of all truth and our fellow creatures as joint seekers after truth.

Now, as I said above, I am not saying this because I think controversy and hard-talking is not important. In fact, I am saying it for precisely the opposite reason. Too many have been put off controversy and taking a firm stand for the truth precisely because too many controversies have been conducted in vicious, personal, and vindictive fashions – and that is dangerous. It means that too many theological arguments now never happen and too many heresies now enter the theological world by default because many decent Christians have an understandable revulsion for the kind of vitriol that marks so many controversial encounters.

It is sad, but there are those who live only for theological controversy. They may use the pious rhetoric of God's kingdom but it is very significant that they can only ever write in a polemical fashion. They do this simply because they have absolutely nothing positive to contribute. Their only claim to fame is the manner in which they conduct ruthless witch-hunts against individuals and institutions. Sadly, the advent of vanity presses and crank internet sites, lacking the usual editorial/accountability structures which real scholars and church leaders take for granted, has made this type of mediocrity much more common. Such tragic characters are often perversely parasitic on the very things they despise: take away the person or object of scorn, and their lives would become empty shells because they have no positive contribution of their own to make. Asked recently what I thought of such people as theologians, my answer was that I simply did not think of them as theologians at all: being a theologian, after all, implies some larger, positive goal and some level of love and integrity which they seem to lack. For these people, theology is not ultimately about glorifying God: it is about winning, about beating their chosen opponent, regardless of the human cost. Take their 'enemies' away, and they are as ridiculous and as tragic as a deluded pug throwing wild punches at a non-existent opponent. Kierkegaard had a wonderful phrase for them: 'substantial mediocrities' - those who have themselves never achieved anything and only feel good about themselves when they are undermining those who have actually achieved something. We all need to pray that, when we stand for the truth, we do it for God's glory and out of love for his church, not out of self-importance and any tendency towards 'substantial mediocrity'.

We must not, however, allow this theological job culture and the personalised attacks launched by cranks and crazies to blind us to the need for open, frank discussion and for principled defence of the gospel. We must repudiate their hatred and their hang-ups, yet not throw out the baby with the bathwater and play into the hands of those who would have us see all truth as negotiable and indifferent. The Bible makes it quite clear that the truth is important and we must take an uncompromising stand on this; but the Bible also makes quite clear that love is equally important and we must take an uncompromising stand on this too. Many of us are good at one or the other; very few of us seem to be able to achieve an uncompromising attitude on both counts; and yet nothing less is demanded by the Lord from those who claim to be his disciples, to love his truth, and to love his church.

Physician, heal thyself! I hear some readers cry. It is true, and I confess it: I have found an uncompromising attitude to truth to be easier to manage over the years than an uncompromising attitude to love. Every unsanctified bone in my body wants to take Rocky Marciano as my theological role model. I want to beat my theological opponents to a pulp, to win every time I enter the theological ring, to do so within the distance rather than on points, and I want to retire as undefeated champ. I want to be remembered as an awesome destroyer of the opposition. I want to be feared by friend and foe alike. But all that is wrong, unbelievably, terribly wrong - as wrong as the attitude of those who would exalt love to the exclusion of truth and all doctrinal claims to the level of matters indifferent rather than risk any hint of controversy. Both approaches

bring nothing but disgrace to the name of Christ and are things of which we all need daily to repent and seek God's strength to overcome. Boxing, much as I dearly love it as a sport, should have nothing to do with Jerusalem, even by analogy. It is simply not God's way. Marciano was without doubt the greatest heavyweight fighter in the history of the ring but he is not an appropriate role model in the church. In fact, there is another historical character who also had the nickname 'The Rock' whose advice is far more pertinent in the context of standing for the truth:

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing ... Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

1 Peter 3: 8-9 and 15-16

MISTAKES OF THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL

Paul F.M. Zahl

The Very Rev. Dr. Paul F.M. Zahl is Dean of the Cathedral Church of the Advent (Episcopal), Birmingham, Alabama.

This article was presented as the John Wenham Lecture at the Tyndale Fellowship Associates Conference in June 2001.

Opening Prayer

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Collect for The Fourth Sunday after Easter, Book of Common Prayer)

This article concerns and criticises the New Perspective on Paul. The criticisms are offered in the light of historical theology and in the light of insights from pastoral care. The history of Christian theology and the reality of parish ministry – the reality of *human existence* in the perception of its plight and its hunger for a solution – reveal mistakes in the New Perspective that are terminal for its credibility. They reveal a kind of specialist knowledge which is not knowledge at all because it is not broad knowledge. The larger context of Christian history and human experience undoes the truth-claiming of the New Perspective.

What is the New Perspective On Paul?

There are four catch-phrases which the proponents of the New Perspective use to summarise their system. The first is:

Covenantal nomism

Covenantal nomism is the idea that Second Temple Judaism taught that you are in the Covenant from birth, or better, from circumcision. After that, you are in until your failure to observe the Law, on any given point, places you out. But it is easy to get back in. If you repent of your sin and return to the Lord, he is merciful to forgive. Once you do whatever restitution is required for the wrong to be righted, you are back in. Second Temple Judaism was gracious, not legalistic. It was flexible, not harsh. It was forgiving, not inexorable. Judaism in the time of Paul was a religion not of law, but of grace.

Solution to plight

The proponents of the New Perspective¹ believe that Paul underwent an experience on the road to Damascus which took place apart from any supposed inner struggle that we expect he might have been having beforehand. Because the character of Judaism as a benign covenantal nomism did not require a solution like Christ, the appearance of Christ to Paul must have come to him as a solution before there ever was a plight. The New Perspective thinks that the old model in Christianity, by which people move from the plight of failed law-keeping to the solution of the grace of God in Christ, is untrue to the experience of Paul. They say that what happened to Paul, and therefore what is central in early Christianity, is the move from solution to plight, not from plight to 'solution'. So the New Perspective calls for a paradigm-shift in our thinking about Paul and thus, by consequence, about the essence of Christian experience, the essence of the Christian life.

Boundary markers

If Christianity was not about the law in any fundamental sense, insofar as Judaism presented the law in more benign terms than Christians have thought prior to our time, then it was about the law in a penultimate and less deep-reaching way. The real issue in early Christianity was not the relation between Jews and Christians, but rather the relation between Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians. This means that the heat which is to be found within the letters of Paul comes from the boundary markers which separate Jewish-Christians from Gentile-Christians, and specifically three things: Sabbath observance, the dietary rules, and circumcision. These boundary markers are what the letters of Paul, especially Galatians and Romans, are all about, not the Law in some larger or more essential sense. It is no wonder that the New Perspective on Paul gives the impression, as Ernst Kaesemann pointed out in 1991, that Christianity is just a variant of Judaism.

Reformation spectacles

The proponents of the New Perspective believe that the wrong interpretation of Paul, which has affected and afflicted Christian thought for so many years, is the direct result of Martin Luther's 'Reformation spectacles', through which Luther projected onto Judaism as Paul related to it in the NT, Luther's own conception of late medieval Roman Catholicism. Luther thought Paul's adversary

¹ The best known scholars of this school of thought are Krister Stendahl, E.P. Sanders and James Dunn. The key reference works are Stendahl's 1968 essay, 'Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', originally published in the *Harvard Theological Review* and now to be found in his *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*; Sanders' 1977 book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*; and Dunn's 1983 essay entitled 'The New Perspective on Paul', originally published in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* and now to be found in *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*.

of Judaism was the same thing that Luther was fighting against in Roman Catholicism: legalism pure and crippling as over against the liberating 'free grace' of Jesus Christ. So even if Luther was right about the Catholic Church, he was wrong about Judaism in the time of Paul.

The frequent use of the term 'Reformation spectacles' to say what is wrong with traditional 'Protestant' understandings of Paul fits well with the context of theology in the late twentieth century, and today. This is the *post-Holocaust* context. It is the context in which the old Protestant view of Paul, which wants to oppose the old covenant of the Jewish Torah to the Christian New covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20), is now understood to be anti-Jewish, even anti-Semitic *in nuce*. Rejection of the Reformation, which is a big plank of the New Perspective, is appropriate to the context in which we live. It is both sensitive to the Jewish-Christian dialogue and also required in the over-all Western culture of today.

These four catch-phrases, covenantal nomism, solution to plight, boundary markers and Reformation spectacles, sum up the New Perspective on Paul.

Mistakes of the New Perspective

Mistaking one heresy for another

E.P. Sanders mistakes the 'semi-Pelagianism' of Second Temple Judaism for 'Pelagianism' and thus misunderstands Luther's critique of the Roman Catholic Church as well as Luther's grasp of Paul. Sanders is in reaction to something that doesn't exist. He has therefore founded a movement with an illusory *raison d'être*!

In other words: Sanders thinks that Luther's struggle with Roman Catholicism was a struggle against Pelagianism, therefore Luther projected the 'straw man' of Pelagianism onto Judaism. This is untrue. Luther's objection to the scholastic theology of the Roman Catholic Church was never to its Pelagianism. The Church was never Pelagian. It neither believed that salvation was according to works of the Law nor that the human being had to 'work' in order to gain the gracious favour of God. Medieval catholicism was *semi-Pelagian*. This is to say, the Church taught that man and God were co-operators in salvation, that grace could complement and supplement human nature, and that 'I can get by with a little help from my friends' (The Beatles, *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*). Luther and the Church of Rome agreed that salvation was by faith. The difference was that Luther said it was by faith *alone*. We are not participants with God, we are not co-creators with him, we are not in any kind of relationship that involves mutuality or co-dependence. Salvation is a one way street! The *sola in sola fide* is the thing.

When you read most accounts of Judaism, both 'then' (i.e., in Jesus' and Paul's time) and now, you see very quickly that Judaism operates in what Christian theologians recognise as semi-Pelagian categories. Judaism, then and now, understands the will of human

beings to be free, more or less. With support of the community, considerable leeway from the standpoint of the gracious God, and the extensive possibilities of repentance, forgiveness and restoration, the human being can *fly right*. Judaism receives the Christian idea of original sin as overly pessimistic. Judaism shares with Christianity the hope of God's grace to sinners, as Sanders rightly pointed out. However the NT understands the human condition as less tractable, less subject to effort and amelioration, than Judaism generally does. Luther understood from Paul that Judaism did not go far enough in its analysis of the human problem. Luther's inherited religion had been semi-Pelagian, as Judaism was and still is.

Sanders and his partners in the New Perspective have missed completely the distinction between Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. Therefore they understand neither Luther nor Paul, nor are they aware of the vital difference in anthropology that distinguishes rabbinic Judaism from Pauline Christianity.

'Solution to Plight' is untrue to life

A mark of wisdom and truth is when it is unconditionally true. A mark of truth is when it is true across the board, across the disciplines and across the compartments in which people conduct their lives. Thus the new paradigm created by the New Perspective, which understands Paul's line of thought, and thus the whole logic of Christian origins, to be a journey from solution to plight, rather than from plight to solution, cannot be wise or true. That is because it is obviously untrue to life!

The idea that human beings from any real world we know of actually go from solution to plight is impossible to sustain. It is impossible to sustain if you have had any experience of medicine, psychological counselling, parish ministry, nursing, work with addicts, *any* of the helping professions. As a person who has been in the practice of parish ministry for over 25 years, I can write that I have never met a single person who, from their own account of reality, was going or ever had gone in the direction of solution to plight.

What the New Perspective people will do is quote Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian, who taught something a little like solution to plight. Barth compared the Christian faith as experienced in life to a person who is recovering in hospital from a terrible car crash. Only gradually, as the patient begins to find out where he or she is and what exactly has happened to him, does the extent of the disaster become apparent. It takes the cure for him or her to see the danger he was in.

Now that is a possible scenario. All those reading this article will have seen it, or something like it, in trauma wards, among accident victims, and sometimes with stroke victims. But it is the exception, because the overwhelming majority of people are those with a problem in search of a cure. True, a person may not know what the real problem is. He or she may not see the extent of it, the

consequences of it, the origins of it; but the person comes, initially, with a perceived need. The person comes to you seeking help!

This is what everyday English now calls a *no brainer*. In the initial situation of life, human beings go from plight to solution and not the other way around.

Because Sanders has misunderstood Second Temple Judaism in its location on the spectrum of classical Christian thought, he has misunderstood Paul's plight; it doesn't make sense to him. Sanders has therefore had to improvise the 'plight to solution' scenario. Because it has little contact with reality, with the way people *work* in everyday life, this scenario cannot stand up. I predict it will be discredited.

An old idea

When I was studying in Tübingen I began to hear about the supposedly new insight that the letters of Paul were really about boundary markers. This was the claim that Galatians and Romans are not about issues that separate Judaism and Christianity, but rather concern issues that separate Jewish-Christians from Gentile-Christians. For Paul, the issues that separate Jewish-Christians from Gentile-Christians are the three boundary markers of circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance. Paul is not worried about the Law in some ideological or *meta*-sense, but only about the surface aspects of it that are worrisome to Gentiles.

I do not believe that this is true. It is a sort of 'Christianity-Lite' view of the Pauline letters. Common sense sweeps right in and asks, 'Is that all that it's about? How could Paul have become so worked up and written in such exalted and large theological language about boundary markers?' That would be like saying that the problems of young people today are a matter of tattoos and body-piercing. Would Paul have crossed and criss-crossed the Roman world, would he have agonised and *hurt* as he did, for a mess of pottage such as diet, seventh-day customs, and an act of ... body-piercing? Again, this cannot possibly be true, for it fails to convince in the forum of a broad understanding of life and human motives. It simply fails to make sense that it all could have been about boundary markers.

What is worse, in the scholarship, is that E.P. Sanders and others who follow this line seem completely unaware, so far as I have read their works, that they are talking about an issue that Christian theologians have been looking at for centuries and centuries. This is the issue of the 'ceremonial' law versus the 'moral' law.

I was only in Form V when my teacher of religion told the class that the big issue during the time of Paul was the relative weight of the ceremonial law versus the moral law. He said that some Christians argued that Christ abrogated the whole law, or the law in a moral sense; while other Christians argued that Christ had abrogated only the ceremonial law, which was those things like circumcision that separated Jews from Gentiles. Little did I know in 1966 that I was

hearing what it would take me ten years of university-level work to find out about again.

I argue that Pauline theology sees the moral law as altered by Christ, in its dynamic within the human situation, just as powerfully as the ceremonial law has been altered, or set aside. But to pronounce that this is some new insight, which takes the 'heaviness' away from post-Holocaust NT studies, is wholly false.

The problem with un-cross-fertilised research

I have tried to show in a very shortened way that the New Perspective on Paul has made three mistakes that are fundamental. It has failed to understand what historical theologians know from the start, that Luther's problem with Roman Catholicism was the problem of *semi-Pelagianism*, not of Pelagianism. Sanders is projecting his own misunderstanding of Luther onto the supposed Reformation (mis)understanding of Paul. Sanders and others of the New Perspective are reacting against a straw man.

I have also looked to the helping professions and to pastoral ministry for help in understanding the scheme of solution to plight, which is a linchpin of the New Perspective. It is simply not true to reality to believe that any person moves, in his or her own mind, from solution to plight. As the saying goes, 'that dog won't hunt!' The opposite is what really happens. The New Perspective has failed to look around at life. I wish that these writers could spend some time in a hospital, or at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, or in the ministerial study of an everyday parson.

Finally, the supposed discovery that Paul is really thinking principally about boundary markers is a very old and familiar idea, that there is a distinction between Law as the regnant dynamic in religious ceremony and Law as regnant within the moral life of the human species. It has been a point of contention from the very beginning: the meaning and extent of Paul's words in Romans 10:1-4. The issue has never been resolved to everyone's satisfaction, but it always blows over the minds and hearts of those who study Paul. It is a perennial thing, not a new thing.

It is possible to say that the main trouble with the New Perspective on Paul is its proponents not having looked *widely* and *broadly* enough in their work. They do not know their theology in historical context. They do not seem to realise that Paul is writing to real people and that human interactions have not fundamentally altered with the passage of time since the first century. How else can we explain that Paul's letters still speak to people today? People come up to me time and time again to say what the Book of Romans, for example, means to them in their actual lives. Thus it is that the experience of working with people must be factored in if we are to understand what Paul is really saying.

I believe that E.P. Sanders and others in his train of thought know a great deal about one thing (i.e., Second Temple Judaism), but not enough about other things that relate to their one thing. We might say that their knowledge is deep but not broad. It is certainly not broad enough. Because the New Perspective is not rooted in reality, the reality of human experience and the long Christian tradition of engaging with that reality, the New Perspective will probably suffer the fate of the Soviet Union's famous 'five-year plans'. They came to nothing, finally, because they had disconnected from the reality of real people.

THE FATHER WITH TWO SONS: A MODERN READING OF LUKE 15

Douglas J.W. Milne

*Douglas Milne lectures in theology and ethics in the
Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne
where he is the Vice-Principal.*

The parables of Jesus are an important part of his teaching, and Luke has preserved a number of these popular and profound stories that are absent from the other Gospels. This is true of the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), a misnomer since the parable is about a father with two sons, both of whom are prodigal in their own ways. The parable might just as well be called, therefore, the parable of the Father with Two Sons. This is the perspective that we have chosen to follow in this presentation.

From the introductory words of Luke 15 (1-3) it is clear that Jesus intended to represent, through the various figures of the story, a number of different groups within the society of his day. The parable lends itself to a fresh interpretation within the cultural and spiritual space of the late 20th and early 21st century in the Western world, since God's way of saving and the needs of human beings never change. Specifically, we argue that the story of the father and his two sons sums up and illumines in a remarkable way the ethos of postmodernism through the character, actions and ambitions of the younger son during the years of his prodigality; the state of the mainline churches through the character and attitudes of the older son; and the joy and celebration of the evangelical faith in community, through the actions and words of the father upon the return and transformation of the younger son.

The Younger Son in his Prodigality – the Postmodern Condition

Debate continues about defining postmodernity – the prevailing mood and ethos of the third millenium – whether it is a culture or a philosophy, when it began, its relation to modernity, and so on. Here we may simply observe that behind and within every culture there lies, concealed, a number of spiritual and moral assumptions and values that shape the cultural milieu and make it what it is and becomes. In the person and actions of the younger son we gain an insight into the postmodern condition.

First: When the younger son addresses his father and says, 'Give me my share of the inheritance!' (12), he is acting from *a thoroughly selfish motive*, reminiscent of the relativist temper that inspires the postmodern spirit. 'Relativism – choosing our own individual values without much reference to others – is a current philosophy. Unfortunately, it is a philosophy often marked by intense

selfishness." Life becomes an open road inviting us to travel it as we choose, with whom we choose, and where we choose, for whatever reason we choose. Life is free, life is good.

Second: The younger son sets out to travel to a far country *in quest of personal freedom and fulfilment*. In his mind and imagination the far country symbolises his youthful desires and hopes for a life lived without the restraints of his father's home, its responsibilities and family loyalties.

The relationship of postmodernity to modernity is hotly disputed, whether the former is a complete break from the latter, or actually only a continuity of it. At any rate, postmodernity could not exist without the previous culture of modernity with which to define itself. So, in spite of its often strident discourse about the inconsistencies and evils of modernity and its scientific, social and religious utopias, postmodernity lives nowhere more clearly off the capital of modernity, than its own commitment to the absolute freedom of the individual. In this way the children of postmodernity, no less than their parents and grandparents under modernity, believe in an incontestable principle of personal liberty.

Third: The enjoyment of personal freedom could only be attained in fleeing from the father's house with all that it stood for in terms of tradition, authority, objective values and socio-moral responsibilities to his father and his brother. So the younger son's drive for freedom meant *a deliberate renunciation of a set of values*, endemic to his existence until that time.

Postmodernism is the most recent movement of radical change in the western world, dominating the latter part of the 20th century and spilling over into the 21st. Its evolution continues to take new forms and find new outlets in media, the entertainment world, social and moral engineering, as a culture founded on modern technology and the new capitalism. Above all, postmodernism is a critical renunciation of traditional authorities like Christianity, classical literature, objective reason and morality. In place of these failed and faded idols, the far country of postmodernity is a land of private experimentation, subjective preferences, a deconstructive approach to rational discourse, a hermeneutic of suspicion, ending in a non-commitment to anything, except one's own chosen options and desires. There are no absolutes in the far country of postmodernity, except the absolute of postmodern beliefs and values, claimed as relative and beyond criticism, but by a subtle sleight of hand, actually operating with all the authority and finality of modernity's axiom of ultimate freedom.

Fourth: In the far country the younger son finds the opportunity to indulge his passions in *a lifestyle of prodigality and promiscuity*. Luke explicitly tells us that this was so (13), but even without this piece of narrative information, we hear the same evidence from the older brother later in the story (30). Without the secure surroundings of

¹ *The Weekend Australian*, December 23-24, 2000, 14.

his father's house, embodied every day in the father's living presence, the younger son knew no restraint and burned out his life, resources and opportunities in carefree living.

It should come as no surprise that the period of the rise and hegemony of postmodernity has also become one of unprecedented lawlessness, crime in all forms, human brutality, sexual promiscuity, and the breaking down of human, social relationships at every level. With the loss of Christian beliefs and values from the public square, the restraining firewalls of belief in a moral universe, objective moral authorities, conscience and the judgements of history, have disappeared as well, leaving behind a dangerous vacuum that other forces, of a destructive tendency, are already filling. The effects of this moral and spiritual collapse even impact on those of a postmodern persuasion who delight in the liberties of the postmodern world on the one hand, yet suffer the consequences of the nihilistic lifestyle of their own choosing.

Fifth: The far country, that promised so much in the beginning and beckoned so seductively at the outset of the journey, turns out to be *a land of faded dreams and spiritual hunger*. Times change and the land of plenty becomes the land of want. Famine strikes, wealth plummets, jobs became scarce. Days of abundant living and socialising turn into nights of loneliness and personal bankruptcy. The only employment the younger son could find was looking after pigs, unclean animals in Jewish dietary and social law. That he fulfilled this work on minimal wages is evidenced by his hunger for the food that the pigs were eating. In the context of the parable the hunger of the younger son's body is symbolical of his inner hunger for spirit for something to sustain his human being and to rescue his life from its downward spiral into oblivion and destruction.

Postmodernity represents the nadir of the western cultural experiment, inherited from the Enlightenment of the 18th century, developed in turn from the Renaissance of the 14th, itself a rediscovery of the classical pagan culture of Greece and Rome. In every one of these movements there is a flourishing of the human spirit with a remarkable display of its capabilities in the arts, science, and world conquest, yet always ending in the inevitable human tragedy of a communal loss of direction, a deepened sense of the ephemeral nature of all human achievements, and a fresh outcry for meaning and purpose beyond the temporal and physical. Morris West, the Australian Roman Catholic novelist, depicts this end condition of the human spirit, in a soliloquy of one of his backslidden characters.

I was lost a long time, without knowing it. Without the Faith, one is free, and that is a pleasant feeling at first. There are no questions of conscience, no constraints, except the constraints of custom, convention, and the law, and these are flexible enough for most purposes. It is only later that the terror comes. One is free – but free in chaos, in an unexplained and unexplainable world. One is free in a desert, from which there is no retreat but inward, towards the hollow core of oneself.

*There is nothing to build on but the small rock of one's own pride, and this is nothing, based on nothing ... I think, therefore I am. But what am I? An accident of disorder, going nowhere ...*²

Such is the ultimate destiny of postmodernity.

The Older Son – the Harvest of Liberalism

The second son only appears in the second half of the parable where he takes over from his younger brother as the leading figure. He appears immediately after his brother's homecoming and his father's generous welcome to his erring son. Like his brother the elder son appears in a negative light, though for very different reasons, and fails to redeem himself through personal repentance and reconciliation with his father and brother. At least, there is no account of a later conversion. Although his personal circumstances differ from those of his brother, his story is more tragic just because he fails to see his plight and to face up to it. There is much here that resonates with the attitudes and beliefs of members and adherents of the mainline churches throughout the 20th century, the high noon of theological Liberalism across Western Christendom.

First: The older son was *in the field working*, as he had been doing for the whole time of his brother's absence (25). He later relates this to his father as a point of criticism and complaint against his father (29). He was extremely self-conscious of his personal loyalty to his father in performing the same duties day after day, a proud record of faithfulness in service over many years.

Many in the mainline churches grew up under the theology of Liberalism which, influenced by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant with its centre in the autonomous self and the moral will, desacralised the Gospel of the New Testament and historic orthodoxy by stripping it of its inherent supernaturalism, and presented Christianity rather as a life of goodwill and practical helpfulness to others, than as a personal change of heart and a life rooted in communion with the triune God through Christ and the cross. As a result many in the ranks of the mainline churches have embraced a counterfeit of the one true Gospel of God's grace, replacing it with a commitment to self-improvement and good works.

A great deal of faithful service has been conducted by many of the older generations in the various mainline denominations during their lifetime of membership in the churches, a proud chronicle of service taking many forms, from looking after the grounds of the church, teaching in the Sunday School, performing the duties of the eldership, being actively involved in the women's meeting, to providing catering for church functions. Compared with that record many of the younger generation of Christian believers could not compete, and from it they could also learn much. On the other hand, in many cases, this service record seems to have been done out of a

² Morris West, *The Devil's Advocate*, (Fontana Books, 1977), 262.

sense of duty or loyalty to the Church rather than to Christ, that is, from a sense of the rightness of service for its own sake, rather than as the heart-felt expression of a personal relationship to the triune God.

Second: The elder brother was *angry and non-cooperative* on hearing of the return of his younger brother (28). Given his pedestrian approach to serving his father, and the many years that he was conscious of labouring for him, the older boy was naturally displeased with the generosity of his father towards a prodigal son. He could not understand why his father would enthuse over his brother's return, while he had served with him so loyally all those years, without a similar jubilation. He refused to join in the festivities, choosing rather to remain stubbornly outside in his field, in sullen mood.

In the same way, many of those who have served in the mainline churches over the years have shown themselves to be actively antagonistic to changes in the life and habits of the churches, wherever these have been due to an evangelical faith and evangelistic fervour. The gospel celebrates the goodness and generosity of God, beyond all expectation and human deserving, towards the world in its selfishness, waywardness and unthankfulness towards him as rightful Creator and Lord. Whereas the arrival of this message and its messengers ought to have been the occasion for joyful celebration, instead it has become, in many places, a point of friction and division, leading in some cases to the termination of the work. Like the elder son, people become entrenched in their opposition to new measures and the whole evangelical programme that underpins them. They would rather die in their ecclesiastical traditions than embrace the changes that the Gospel brings.

Third: The older son was suffering from *a mixture of self-righteousness and self-pity* (29). When pressed, he fell back in defence of his record of years of loyal service, his impeccable conduct towards his father, and his father's failure to favour him in the way he was now doing towards a son who had broken all the rules and brought him nothing but pain and shame. From this reply, we can see into the heart of the older son, and come to the conclusion that through all his years of service he has related to his father on the basis of authority and law, not of love and liberty. He had the mind of a slave and not a son. He nurtured a grudge against his father, which he now articulates after all these years. He has been silently critical of his father while pretending to serve him and obey him. His service has been a matter of duty, never a joy.

Duty lay at the heart of Kant's legalistic morality and the religion that it generated in European Protestantism, from around the middle of the 19th century and well into the 20th. Liberalism was a system of salvation by moral character and good works, the very kind of religious faith and practice that Paul exposes in his letter to the Galatians and that called forth the Reformation and every genuine religious revival since. Within the mainline denominations

the harvest of Liberalism continues to be reaped in an entrenched spirit of self-justification among the many who have embraced its tenets from childhood, from Sunday school teaching and a lifetime of humanistic preaching, without being conscious of the religious toxins they were imbibing into their spiritual lives. This self-righteous spirit still displays itself in outrage when confronted with the message of God's sovereign grace in Christ, that deprives us of all good works leading to salvation, and calls us to trust in him alone for our full acceptance with God, both now and forever.

Fourth: The elder son *lacked the generosity and large-heartedness of his father* though he had lived and worked with him all his life (28, 30). Instead of rejoicing with the family he withheld himself in self-righteous anger. It was only the father who looked for his brother's return, being moved with profound pity for the penniless penitent, and ran to greet him (20). The elder brother knew nothing of this all-embracing and all-forgiving love. He was shut up in himself and closed to the needs and remorse of others. His whole existence was as thoroughly self-absorbed as had been his brother's in the darkest days of his prodigality.

In the same way theological Liberalism has generated little or no interest in outreach evangelism, to try to win the lost generations outside the churches, at home and overseas. Traditionally there was a good deal of talk in these church circles about the gospel of the love of God for all mankind, but a total breakdown at the point where we might have looked for a translation of that theology into action, in the way of caring evangelism or earnest prayer for the revival of apostolic Christianity in our communities and across the nations. On the contrary, on receipt of the news of conversions of people out of secular paganism or of efforts to reach those in our communities, lost in a web of sinful living, the reaction is frequently one of indifference, disapproval or deep suspicion.

Fifth: The elder son *disowned his brother*, holding him in relationship only to the father (30). He refers to him to his father as 'this son of yours' rather than as 'this brother of mine'. He refused to be associated with his brother's life of lawlessness and rebellion, choosing to see himself as belonging to those who keep the law and live respectably. He claimed to have never broken any of his father's orders (29), and so despised his brother and disowned him.

Liberalism has produced a similar set of mental and spiritual blocks in its time. In place of a generous welcome to those individuals who have returned to their Father's house, a disapproving attitude has often sprung up, askance at the idea of visitors or non-denominational people disrupting the even tenor of their ways. It is as though there are two kinds of people, sinners in need of God's forgiveness because they have failed life's test, and the respectable who have lived a moral life and so enjoy a natural claim on God's love and a place in the heavenly kingdom. But this is the mindset of Pharisaism that Jesus was so anxious to expose and explode (Luke 16:15), and against which this part of the parable was told (Luke 15:1-3).

Sixth: The elder son *failed to avail himself of the father's presence and presents* though he lived within reach of these all his life (32). This is the final word of the parable and the final judgement on the elder brother. Living surrounded by untold wealth in the form of the father's company and all his possessions, the elder brother had never translated his opportunities into realities. Though potentially wealthy he was actually a pauper through his own prejudices and disbelief in his father's love. So near and yet so far, he had created a far country in his own mind where he lived out his life, spiritually removed from any real enjoyment of his father's company. He was as far away from his father, as he was from his brother.

In the same way, many have grown up and lived out their lives religiously and physically near to the churches of Christendom, yet remained strangers in their hearts to the saving love of God in Christ, the risen and living head of the churches. Religion may be a form without real substance in the heart and conscience. Such was the religion of the Pharisees who took pride in the externals of their ritual and ceremonies but did not know God for themselves as a reconciled Father and friend, according to the terms of the new covenant of his grace (Heb. 8:11). Only an evangelical encounter with the Father of mercies and the God of all grace, rooted in a deeply felt sense of personal unworthiness and sinfulness, can rectify this state of affairs, by exchanging externals for internals and giving priority to the religion of the heart (Luke 11:39-41). People may be close to the kingdom of heaven without ever taking possession. Theirs is the most tragic story of all, more than those who were far away from God through many years of their lives, before they found the entrance point. Heaven rejoices over any sinner who repents, no matter who that sinner may be (Luke 15:7, 10), but grieves and weeps over sinners who think they are righteous and have no need of repentance.

The Younger Son Restored – the Future of Evangelicalism

First: The younger son *experienced a crisis of self-identity that led to a radical change* (17). In a moment of self-revelation the son came to himself, which means that for the first time since he had left his father's house, he began to examine himself critically for the decisions he had made and the way he had been living. Out of a cycle of suffering and reversal of fortunes he was constrained to conduct this inner review, resulting in the major turning-point of his life.

'Know thyself' was the summation of Socratic wisdom in the ancient world, but only the word of God in the gospel of his Son can penetrate the barricades of pride and self-deception that all of us erect against the truth about ourselves. The gospel is good news only after having delivered us the bad news about ourselves as the ones who have erred, rebelled and persisted in a style of life away from our only God and King. Confronting ourselves honestly in the full light of God's justice and truth in the law and in Jesus is the first step back to spiritual health and moral recovery.

Second: The younger son *remembered his father, his home and conditions there* (17). In the crisis of his life the younger son cast his mind back to his beginnings, to childhood years, to happy memories and good times with his father and his household. Now he could see what a fool he had been to leave his father and his home at all. That was the point where his life had gone wrong, and that was the point to which he must return. Thoughts of his father's house brought back images of wellbeing, love, security, in fact all the experiences and pleasures that he had forfeited for the far country. Even the hired servants were contented and happy in the father's house, yet he was a son with nothing to eat and nowhere to go.

As Augustine found and taught in the 5th century, the human being finds its true resting place and home in God, the God who has made us in his image, and who, even in our fallenness and estrangement, preserves and nurtures our sense of belonging in him. When the time of his grace arrives the Lord awakens within us, like a memory long suppressed but now retrieved, a sure belief in God, as our beginning and our ending. This conviction may arise from the early years of religious upbringing in church or home, or it may arise as a part of that natural religion with which all of us are equipped and from which none of us can ever escape (Rom. 1:19, 20; 2:14-15).

Third: The younger son *resolved to go back to his father and speak with him* (18). Finally he had come to accept that he had offended against God and against his father. In fact his sin against God was seen in his rebellion against his father, since his father was given him in God's place to make known to him God's wisdom, goodness and justice. The prodigal even rehearses the speech that he will make when he meets with his father again. He is quite willing now to incriminate himself with the self-inditing words, 'I have sinned'.

Awareness of personal irresponsibility in the conduct of one's life in particular ways, and an inner bias against God and his commands, lies at the heart of religious conversion. Many are the excuses that we invent to cover our sinful behaviour against God and others, but the litmus test of authentic faith is a readiness to take responsibility for our own past choices and failures. Conversion means an honest dealing with God as our primary Relation, our personal Creator, Judge and Father.

Fourth: The younger son *declares his unworthiness to remain a son*, asking instead to be received as a servant of his father (19). In an ironic twist to his life story the younger son repeats his renunciation of sonship, though this time for the worthy reasons of remorse and reconciliation.

The true believer in God is marked by a deeply contrite spirit, not in unhealthy self-hating as Freud would have it, but in a healthy realism about our own real failures and accountability. We can blame not our stars, nor our genes, but ourselves for the mess of our wayward lives. Yet along with this new self-realism there runs a belief in God's mercies, that he is the kind of God who receives those who are realistic and humbled about themselves and entrust themselves to his grace alone to rescue them. Like the returning son, we can

believe in the goodness of God, who, though he may reject us as a son, may yet receive us as a servant. But the outcome that follows is far in excess of such minimalist believing in hope.

Fifth: The younger son was *reconciled with his father in a lavish display of love* (20). To crown his personal remorse for former wrongs an emotional reunion with his father takes place on the open road to home. Through all the years of his son's silence and neglect the father kept watching for his son's return. When the day he had dreamt of came, the father spotted his son as he crested the horizon and ran to embrace him and receive him home.

The gospel proclaims a definitive act of reconciliation effected by God towards the world, in the personal sufferings, obedience and death of his Son, Jesus Christ, when he offered himself as the penal sacrifice for the sins of his people, that we might freely inherit the blessings of the Father's kingdom of grace and glory (2 Cor. 5:18-21). The gospel message consists of information of this singular act of God in time-space, along with the summons to every person who hears it to make their own peace with God on the strength of Jesus' life and death for our sins.

*The chief and foremost desire of every one who professes to have any religion, should be to obtain reconciliation. Till this is done, nothing is done. We have got nothing worth having in Christianity, until we have peace with God.*¹³

Sixth: The younger son is reinstated *as the father's son* and made the centre of his affection and attention (23). In fact, his homecoming is the occasion for rediscovering his relationship to his father, and enjoying it in a wholly new way. It was as if he was getting to know his father for the very first time, and enjoying what it meant to be his son.

Paul's writings make much of the filial status and relationship that believers in God, through Christ, attain to the moment they believe (Rom. 8:14-17, Gal. 4:4-6). Not only are we pardoned at law, through the representative obedience and suffering of Christ, but through our union with him by faith, we are received as extra children at the Father's hearth and home, the brothers and sisters of Jesus, whom he loves like his only Son (Rom. 8:28 - 30). He lavishes his love and care on us, because we are precious to him as those he has predestined for adoption.

Seventh: The younger son celebrated *with his father, his relations and his friends* (23, 24). He became part of a community of love, mutuality and service around the father and his generous love. No longer was he friendless and alone, but surrounded now by kindred hearts and loyal friends. His return was the occasion for a family gathering, the past was erased and forgiven, and the future was bright with the prospect of his father's presence and gifts.

¹³ J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Luke*, volume two. (Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 104.

The evangelical tradition has always emphasised the church as a community of kindred persons whose stories are entwined in the shared experience and enjoyment of God's fatherly kindness through Jesus Christ and his Spirit. The local church is the primary locale of joyful faith and genuine *koinonia* with God and his people, of communal worship and caring relationships, sacrificial service, hospitality and outreach. The evangelical churches should be like family centres for all God's children, whether the prodigals of postmodernity finding their way out of their selfishness and subjectivities, or the legalistic moralists of religious Liberalism fleeing their erstwhile fallacies and delusions of importance. Only as evangelicalism preserves its historical focus on the living God of abounding grace in Jesus Christ, and lives the gospel in moral transparency and spiritual vitality, will it realise its calling to be the light and salt the secular world, a haven and a home for all God's erring and penitent children. Only then will its future be assured in the rapidly changing and complex world of the 21st century.

In a perceptive essay C.S. Lewis observes that there are three kinds of people.⁴ There are 'those who live simply for their own sake and pleasure', like the earlier prodigal son. In the second class are 'those who acknowledge some other claim upon them'. This is the largest group to which most people belong, but also the most unhappy and restless, because like the elder son, they are living by conscience or by some other self-imposed moral imperative which can never be fulfilled. Thirdly, there are 'those who can say like St Paul that for them "to live is Christ"'. Like the reformed and reborn prodigal '[T]he old egoistic will has been turned round, reconditioned, and made into a new thing'. To which class do we belong?

⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Present Concerns*, (Fount Paperbacks, 1986), 21-22.

NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE SURVEY – 2000

Alistair I. Wilson

*Lecturer in New Testament,
Highland Theological College, Dingwall.*

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Introduction

The year 1999/2000 saw some excellent material published in the field of New Testament studies. I will make some brief comments on a selection of the material in this article. As with all reading, I urge readers to read any and all of the following works critically.

Commentaries

After a pause in the publication schedule, the 'Pillar' series of commentaries from IVP has seen three new additions.¹ P.T. O'Brien has written on Ephesians, D. Moo on James and C. Kruse on the Johannine epistles. O'Brien's commentary is notable in several respects. Firstly it completes a trilogy of commentaries by the author on the the 'prison epistles', O'Brien's previous commentaries on Colossians and Philemon (Word Biblical Commentary) and Philipians (New International Greek Testament Commentary) already having been warmly received. Secondly, it provides a contemporary and informed defence of Pauline authorship of Ephesians written by an able scholar who has maintained a consistent commitment to informed conservative exegesis in his scholarship. Moo has already written on James in the Tyndale series. In this new commentary he has been allowed to devote twice the amount of space to his exegesis, which has allowed him to argue clearly for his decisions and to update his engagement with secondary literature so that he now interacts with the important recent commentaries by Johnson and Martin. The commentary is non-technical and includes some brief but helpful comments on application. Kruse's introduction is notable for his extensive use of the early church fathers to reconstruct the historical context of the letters and to establish Johannine authorship of the letters. All three commentaries provide clear and helpful discussion of the biblical text from a position of confidence in its authority as Scripture.

¹ Published by Eerdmans in the USA and IVP in the UK.

The IVP Commentary series is further enhanced with a volume on *John* by R. Whitacre. This series is generally pitched at a somewhat more academic level than the Bible Speaks Today series, but with more practical application than is usually found in the Tyndale commentaries. This particular volume is a substantial exposition of *John*, acquainted with recent secondary literature, but focussed on the theological message of the document. It will prove useful to preachers, though students will need to augment it with other more detailed commentaries.

Also on *John*, and essentially an extended introduction to *John's Gospel*, is the revised edition of S. Smalley's, *John – Evangelist and Interpreter*.² Smalley has enhanced his already valuable survey from 1978 with a heightened emphasis on the literary qualities of *John's* work. This book offers a helpful balance of discussion of the contemporary debates and discussion of the features of *John's* text. It will continue to aid interpreters in its new form.

Crossway continues to publish volumes in their 'Crossway Classic Commentaries' series. *Calvin on 1 and 2 Thessalonians* will need no additional commendation to readers of this journal. It is to be hoped that this new edition will introduce new readers to Calvin's fine exegetical work, but at £9.99 for a slim paperback of 110 pages, it is rather expensive, and so those who do not possess the excellent series of hardback volumes published by Eerdmans may be well advised to look out for secondhand copies. For the same price, you can have twice the number of pages in *Jude* by Thomas Manton. This commentary is much more appropriate for devotional reading than for exegetical work, but will no doubt serve a valuable purpose in that role.

The 'Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture' series is a valuable new venture intended to bring the voice of the early church fathers into contemporary exegesis of Scripture. My experience of this fledgling series has been with the volume on *Mark*,³ although several other volumes, including one on the Corinthian letters, have been published more recently. Each verse of the Scriptural document is glossed with selected quotations from a variety of ancient authors. These volumes will not replace the fundamental tools of exegesis, but they offer a rich resource for adding theological depth to exegetical study, and may prove to be an ideal entry point to the writings of the church fathers for those who are as yet unfamiliar with them. However, since many of the citations are brief, there is a real risk of an author's words being read out of context. The reader will gain most from this series if he or she bears in mind its limitations, and perhaps seeks some engagement with the full text of some of the Fathers. An alternative route into an appreciation of the early church Fathers is offered by a devotional volume, *Day By Day With the Early Church Fathers*.⁴ While the readings in this volume are even more

² Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998

³ Edited by T.C. Oden and C.A. Hall, Downers Grove: IVP-USA, 1998.

⁴ Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000

detached from their context, they may still introduce readers to the theological riches in these writings. A much more intensive engagement with one of the Fathers, Augustine, is offered by my colleague Nick Needham in his recent volume, *The Triumph of Grace*.⁵

The new commentary on Hebrews in Sheffield Academic Press' 'Readings' series has a true claim to distinctiveness.⁶ Its author is not a Professor of Hebrews but a Professor of *Hebrew* - the Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Cambridge, Robert P. Gordon. Gordon writes concisely and with theological sensitivity. The result is a brief commentary which is non-technical (though there are occasional awkward technical terms) and readable, written by one who appreciates more than most the significance of the OT.

The Interpretation series of commentaries claims to be designed 'for teaching and preaching'. Richard B. Hays' addition to this series on *First Corinthians*⁷ is worthy of the preacher's attention. Hays has been steadily building a reputation as a sensitive and constructive interpreter of Scripture, and much of his work on Paul's use of the OT and on ethics comes together in this very readable commentary. Each exegetical section concludes with 'Reflections for Teachers and Preachers'. These reflect serious consideration both of Paul's thought and of the modern world and should stimulate the preacher to think even if he comes to different conclusions from Hays. Particularly good examples of Hays' robust theological and ethical thinking are found in the 'Reflections' on 1 Corinthians 7 (on male-female relationships) and on 1 Corinthians 15 (on the resurrection). I do not commend all of Hays' views but I warmly commend his commentary as an aid to good biblical interpretation.

The new International Critical Commentary by I. Howard Marshall on *The Pastoral Epistles*⁸ has been long-awaited and its appearance is to be welcomed. No doubt the first question in the minds of many will be 'What does he think about authorship?' It is true that this is an important subject, and it is true that Marshall takes a position that is somewhat distanced from traditional Pauline authorship (though he seeks to preserve strong continuity with Paul in his argument). However, although many readers may be uncomfortable with Marshall's conclusions, it would be deeply unjust to dismiss this commentary on this point alone. This is a rich exegetical and theological exposition, which deals with exegetical issues in such a way that the reader can gain a clear understanding of the arguments for and against a given view. The discussion may be too exhaustive for preachers under pressure in any given week, but this commentary will provide a reference tool on difficult issues when other brief books do not satisfy. Eleven excursuses deal in a more focussed manner with significant theological issues in the Pastoral

⁵ Grace Publications, 2000

⁶ Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999

⁷ Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997

⁸ Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999

Epistles such as 'Christology and the concept of "epiphany"'. Competence in Greek is required in order to gain full benefit from this commentary.

In mentioning one commentary of mammoth proportions, it is worth noting that readers who have appreciated previous volumes in the New International Greek Testament Commentary series will want to look out for the substantial volume on 1 Corinthians by Anthony Thiselton which was published at the beginning of 2001.

Monographs

First of all in this category, I should mention additions to two valuable series published by Baker. The 'Encountering' series already includes excellent introductory volumes on both the OT⁹ and the NT.¹⁰ To these has been added a volume on John's Gospel by A.J. Köstenberger, who has already written or translated several books.¹¹ This book is presented in the form of a textbook, but it is written with clarity in language that conveys both learning and Christian conviction. While the working pastor may not find this volume as immediately accessible as a traditional commentary, careful reading of Köstenberger's work will provide a literary and theological perspective on the whole gospel that will enrich a teaching ministry.

At a completely different level are the dissertations by evangelical scholars Brian Rosner (*Paul, Scripture and Ethics*) and David Crump (*Jesus the Intercessor*).¹² Though originally published some years ago in very expensive hardback editions by European publishers, these books have now been republished in affordable paperback editions in Baker's 'Biblical Studies Library' series. While they exhibit all the drawbacks of a technical dissertation (frequent quotations in Hebrew, Greek and German, constant reference to inaccessible scholarly literature) they also exhibit great exegetical strengths, and are well worth the effort for the persevering reader who possesses the necessary linguistic skills. Look out for further important volumes in this promising series, including the recently published *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism* by D. Bock,¹³ who seeks to provide background information to Jesus' declaration in Mark 14:62 and the resultant response of the high priest.

John D. Harvey's book, *Listening to the Text*, is the first volume in a projected series to be published under the auspices of the Evangelical Theological Society.¹⁴ This volume is a published dissertation and is *full* of Greek. No concessions are made for the

⁹ *Encountering the Old Testament*, B. Beyer, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999

¹⁰ *Encountering the New Testament*, Elwell and Yarbrough, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998

¹¹ Notably, he is responsible for the translation of Adolf Schlatter's two-volume *New Testament Theology*.

¹² Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994 and 1992, respectively

¹³ Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000

¹⁴ Leicester: Apollos, 1998. The series is published by Baker in the USA.

reader without Greek. If you don't read Greek, you will find this book utterly incomprehensible! If on the other hand, you do have Greek Harvey provides a useful, if demanding, discussion of features characteristic of oral rhetoric which he finds in the Pauline letters.

Paul is the focus of the large new volume from Robert L. Reymond, *Paul, Missionary Theologian*.¹⁵ The book is the fruit of many years of teaching, and it treats the letters of Paul and the accounts of Acts both thoroughly and with reverence. The first part of the book deals with Paul's life and travels, while the second part expounds the key elements of Paul's 'mission theology'. Sometimes the original lecture format shows itself clearly, leading to lists with numerous headings and very brief discussions, but overall this book provides a wealth of material in (generally) accessible form. (Greek text is used often, but it is normally translated in the main body of the text.)

Frank Thielman has contributed *The Law and the New Testament: The Question of Continuity* to Herder's Companions to the New Testament series. Those who are familiar with Thielman's previous volume on Paul and the Law will not want to miss this more wide ranging study.

Also tracing a theme through the NT Scriptures is *The Promise of the Father* by Marianne Meye Thompson.¹⁶ Set against the backdrop of contemporary feminist challenges to the use of 'Father' as a designation for God, this is a careful study of the biblical material which presents God as Father, either explicitly or by implication. Along the way, Thompson reconsiders Joachim Jeremias' famous views on Jesus' use of the Aramaic term *abba* and helpfully challenges the view that the concept of God taught by Jesus and developed in the NT is fundamentally different from that of the OT.

Serve the Community of the Church, subtitled 'Christians as Leaders and Ministers' sounds as if it should be required reading for every serving minister.¹⁷ The news that this volume, written by Andrew D. Clarke, comes within a series entitled 'First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World', will no doubt crush the sense' of expectation in some readers, but this would be a very unfortunate response. While the first six chapters do indeed focus primarily on background studies, these studies allow the modern reader to better understand important terms (for example, *ekklesia*) and patterns of behaviour in secular and religious leadership. The remaining chapters then interpret the Pauline letters in the light of the background studies, indicating the way in which Paul rejected authoritarian leadership in favour of presenting himself as a servant.

¹⁵ Fearn: Mentor, 2000

¹⁶ Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000

¹⁷ Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000

¹⁸ Published by Eerdmans in the USA and IVP in the UK.

¹⁹ Leicester: Apolllos, 2000

In my review of NT literature for 1999, I drew attention to several volumes from the New Studies in Biblical Theology series.¹⁸ The latest volume on justification, entitled *Christ, Our Righteousness*,¹⁹ and written by Mark Seifrid of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is bound to be of great interest to leaders in the church. Seifrid works carefully through substantial portions of Paul's letters, particularly Romans, interacting with important recent scholarship from Germany and from the so-called 'new perspective' on Paul.

At the slim end of the monograph scale come two contributions to the Didsbury Lecture Series which includes volumes of published lectures by Professors F.F. Bruce, I.H. Marshall, J.D.G. Dunn and M.D. Hooker among others. Professor Richard Bauckham of the University of St Andrews gave the 1996 lectures, which have been published under the provocative title, *God Crucified*.²⁰ This brief (79 pp.) book is significant out of all proportion to its size, presenting in condensed form an important argument for understanding early Christology which Bauckham intends to develop in a longer volume. The 1999 Didsbury Lectures were given by Professor Larry Hurtado of the University of Edinburgh. They have been printed as *At the Origins of Christian Worship*.²¹ In many ways Hurtado's book complements that of Bauckham as they both seek to establish the way in which Jesus was acknowledged to be worthy of worship. Both are historical studies though Hurtado's book concludes with some reflections on worship in the contemporary church.

It is barely conceivable that an annual review of NT literature would fail to include a volume by Ben Witherington III. True to form, Witherington has recently published *Jesus the Seer*, a study of prophecy from its earliest expressions in the Ancient Near East right through the canonical literature of the Old and New Testaments, Jewish literature such as 1 Enoch and the Dead Sea Scrolls and on to the Montanist movement in early Christianity. This is an absorbing study which is written with flair and supreme confidence in handling the diverse materials.

Taking a broad sweep through the history of the primitive church, while maintaining a decidedly theological perspective, Paul Barnett has written an excellent volume entitled *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity*.²² An excellent text for gaining proper perspective on the historical development of the early Christian community.

Volumes of Essays

Volumes of essays are frequently among the most interesting and yet the most disjointed of books, providing the reader with a rich menu

²⁰ Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998. Readers who are aware of Bauckham's expertise in the writings of Jürgen Moltmann will not be overly surprised at his choice of title.

²¹ Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999

²² Downers Grove: IVP-USA, 1999

²³ S. Soderlund and N.T. Wright (eds) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999

of essays which probably relate to each other only very loosely. Among the most interesting are so-called *Festschriften* or celebratory volumes presented to distinguished scholars at particular milestones in their lives.

One such *Festschrift*, which does not suffer from the typical disjointed characteristics, is *Romans and the People of God*,²³ presented to Professor Gordon Fee on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday. Fee's name has become synonymous with respectful exegesis of Paul, and his works will bring benefit to the careful reader, even if he or she disagrees with some of Fee's views. This volume includes exegetical, theological and pastoral essays on Romans, largely, though not exclusively, by evangelical colleagues and former students of Fee. It has a balanced feel and will provide stimulating material to augment the standard commentaries for those who preach and teach from Romans.

As the title suggests, *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church* attempts to discuss an issue of great pastoral significance with reference to both pastoral ministry and the academic study of the NT. Presented to R.E.O. White, formerly Principal of the Scottish Baptist College in Glasgow, there is not surprisingly a substantial representation of contributors from the 'credo-baptist' perspective. However, there is sufficient diversity in this volume to interest readers regardless of their convictions regarding baptism, and there is certainly the potential for richer understanding of the debate. In addition to a biographical sketch of the honouree, there are many interesting articles on biblical material by evangelical scholars such as John Nolland (on baptism in Matthew's gospel), Stanley Porter (on the translation of Mark 1:4), Joel Green (on baptism in Luke-Acts) and Matthew Brook O'Donnell (who provides a fascinating study of 1 Corinthians 12:13 which develops from a comparison of the views of John Stott and Martyn Lloyd-Jones on 'baptism in the Spirit'). In addition there are several excellent historical essays such as those by David Wright on 'Infant Dedication in the Early Church' and Geoffrey Bromiley on 'Baptism in the Reformed Confessions and Catechisms'. Though several essays demand competence in Greek and or Hebrew, this volume will prove to be enjoyable and rewarding for pastors who wrestle with the exegetical, theological and pastoral issues relating to this subject.²⁴

A third *Festschrift* of note has been published in honour of Jack Dean Kingsbury. *Who Do You Say That I Am? Essays on Christology*²⁵ is a collection of 17 essays by scholars such as Ben Witherington III, Paul J. Achtemeier and C.K. Barrett, primarily on

²⁴ The price tag of £50.00 may well put off many potential readers, but Sheffield Academic Press has a policy of making hardback volumes available to individual readers at 50% discount where there is no paperback edition. The price of £25.00, though not cheap, is not unreasonable for a finely produced book.

²⁵ Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999

the Christology of the NT documents. However, there are also some less predictable titles such as 'Christology and the Old Testament' and essays on the significance of NT Christology for Systematic Theology, for Pastoral Ministry and for Preaching. While many of the contributors are not evangelicals, there is a generally constructive approach to the biblical texts and the essays are written with a view to bringing benefit to the church as well as to the academy.

Any teacher, minister or serious student of theology who has not heard of N.T. Wright's exceptional volume, *Jesus and the Victory of God*²⁶ has clearly been on a different theological planet. Anyone who has not read and interacted with this book has missed a rich opportunity to learn, even if in disagreement. Such is the significance of this book that a volume of essays has been produced with the sole purpose of interacting with Wright's book. (Try to think of the last time *that* happened.) Thus *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*²⁷ draws together a group of distinguished scholars who evaluate Wright's work from a variety of angles and from varying degrees of sympathy. This book will be of limited value to those who have not read Wright first and indeed it would probably be unfair to Wright to hear the criticisms of his work before letting him speak for himself. However, for those who have read his book, this volume provides an opportunity to reflect on some of the important issues that are raised by Wright such as the significance of Jesus' death, the interpretation of 'apocalyptic' language in the gospels and Jesus' predictions about the future.

The high standard of the McMaster New Testament Studies series is continued by *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*.²⁸ Containing clearly written essays on both the form and content of Jesus' parables, this book will provide stimulating material for teachers and preachers, as well as those who have not had formal theological training.

*The New Testament Today*²⁹ is a collection of short essays aimed at students or busy pastors who want to be aware of the current trends in NT scholarship. This is both its strength and its drawback. It certainly provides a representative selection of essays on all the NT literature written by scholars who are recognised as experts in their respective fields (such as James Dunn on Paul and Donald Hagner on Matthew). Some of the essays also have good bibliographical information. However, there is a tendency to give attention to trends in scholarship rather than to the biblical documents themselves, so that the title is somewhat misleading. While some of the authors are evangelicals or sympathetic to evangelical scholarship, others are not. This book will probably be of most use to the theological student who requires an orientation to the diverse world of contemporary NT scholarship.

²⁶ London: SPCK, 1996

²⁷ C.C. Newman (ed.). Downers Grove: IVP-USA, 1999

²⁸ R.N. Longenecker (ed.), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000

²⁹ M.A. Powell (ed.), Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999

*Between Two Horizons*³⁰ is boldly subtitled 'Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology'. Those who consider themselves advocates of the latter discipline may be somewhat sceptical of the success of the endeavour in the light of the fact that eight of the nine contributors are professional biblical scholars. In fact, the theme of the volume is really hermeneutics, which of course remains a crucial issue for those who are charged with teaching the people of God. This book serves as an introduction to the forthcoming 'Two Horizons Commentary' series which has the potential to encourage fruitful interaction between NT studies and Systematic Theology. Whether it is able to realise that potential remains to be seen when the first volumes come off the press.

Miscellaneous

There is really no way suitably to class *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?*,³¹ which is accurately subtitled as 'A debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan'. This book is essentially a transcript of a debate between the evangelical scholar and apologist William Lane Craig and the most celebrated representative of the American 'Jesus Seminar', John Dominic Crossan. Craig is a remarkable combination of brilliant academic and gifted apologist. It is the latter gift that comes through most clearly in this volume. Crossan is also widely regarded as a gifted communicator and so the scene is set for an illuminating exchange. At times readers will feel that the 'performance' setting leads to a measure of overstatement in views, and the chairman of the debate is rather intrusive. Readers will also, almost certainly, think of arguments that they would have presented had they been in the debate. However this book provides a useful and accessible insight into the fundamental points of contention between orthodox scholarship and 'the Jesus Seminar' as expressed by representatives of each position.

*The Historical Jesus Quest*³² is a reader which includes short excerpts from some of the major figures in the history of study of Jesus including Reimarus, Strauss, Schweitzer and Bultmann. Though that group of names may sound rather forbidding, it is nonetheless useful to have access to a good range of sources which might otherwise be inaccessible so as to gain first-hand acquaintance with the views of these significant figures. This book will probably find its most ready market among students, though all who see the value of apologetics may wish to become familiar with such influential views.

A useful resource for students or others who want to re-visit their studies of the distinctive voices of the four gospels is *Portraits of Jesus: An Inductive Approach to the Gospels* by M.R. Cosby.³³ As the

³⁰ Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000

³¹ Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999

³² G.W. Dawes (ed.), Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999

³³ Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999

sub-title suggests, this volume is intended to provide a 'guided reading' resource to accompany reading of the gospels themselves rather than be a textbook about the gospels. As such it is admirable in its aim. Cosby provides comments which set each passage of each gospel in both literary and historical context, includes relevant selections of background materials, and then sets questions for reflection on the part of the student. The resultant text does not read like a typical textbook; it is much more like a workbook or exercise book. It will not be enjoyable to read unless the gospel passages are read thoroughly at the required points. Also, some readers may be put off by Cosby's apparent confidence in commenting on the synoptic relationships. However this book has the potential to help careful readers find the riches of the gospels for themselves and so may be warmly welcomed.

Conclusion

Not all readers will find each of the above books relevant to their own interests or needs. The wise reader will think carefully about what he or she needs to read and use available time for the greatest benefit and will beware of allowing secondary reading to replace continual fresh exposure to the 'God-breathed' Scriptures, which must remain a priority at all times. However, careful, thoughtful and prayerful use of some of the above volumes may help readers to be better informed as they interpret the NT Scriptures for themselves, for teaching the people of God or for defending the faith in the modern world.

THE SECRET DIARIES OF JONATHAN EDWARDS AGED 54½: A RECONSTRUCTION (AND DECONSTRUCTION?) OF THE NEW ENGLAND THEOLOGIAN – A REVIEW ARTICLE

Daniel Strange

Daniel's PhD was on 'The possibility of salvation among the unevangelised'. He has a book of the same title which has been published by Paternoster Press. He is the Systematics Reviews Editor and Managing Editor of Themelios.

Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion and Non-Christian Faiths

Gerald R. McDermott
Oxford: OUP, 2000, xi + 245 pp.

Introduction

A few years ago, the BBC 2 series, *Reputations* offered a number of what might be called 'deconstructionist historical portraits'. Here figures that we have known and loved (Baden Powell and Walt Disney were included) were given a revisionist makeover as the programme researchers attempted to get beneath 'bright and shiny' public personas to reveal more opaque and ambiguous private lives. At the time I found these programmes both fascinating and rather unsettling: Was this 'new' person the 'real' person? Was the public face a complete façade? Had the programme makers over-exaggerated minor personality traits for the sake of viewing consumption? Was or was this not an accurate piece of historical research? These same kinds of questions were running through my mind as I read Gerald McDermott's book, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths*. In this detailed study, we have a theological equivalent of *Secret Lives* (but in reverse), as McDermott presents the reader with a 'strange, new Edwards'.¹ Those who only associate Edwards with his sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' and who might have thought he was tightly restrictivist on those who were privy to religious truth (i.e. only Calvinists), have been wrong in their assumptions:

This book is about a strange, new Edwards unfamiliar to generations of readers and scholars. It is a story of America's

¹ Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion and Non-Christian Faiths* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 3. McDermott is Associate Professor of Religion at Roanoke College in Virginia, USA.

most frightening preacher who – strangely – was fascinated by other religions and religious others. It will startle those who know Edwards from their American literature surveys to learn that he believed there was true revelation from God in non-Christian religions. Those who have been schooled in the stereotypical Edwards will find it even more remarkable that he believed that some non-Christians worshipped, perhaps without knowing it, the true God. A son of the Enlightenment who adopted key Enlightenment assumptions, Edwards nevertheless spent his life fighting Enlightenment religions. This battle reshaped his own understanding of the divine and its way with human beings. And like some of the better-known thinkers of the Enlightenment, he was mesmerized by non-European religions and scoured New England for books on unfamiliar faiths.²

Leigh Schmidt states that the book is 'one of the most interesting and important works on Edwards in the last decade',³ and he places the work within a 'neo-evangelical renaissance'⁴ and the 'opening of the evangelical mind'⁵ where 'Edwards stands as a beacon of the evangelical aspiration for greater intellectual heft'⁶ and where:

a new generation of historians and theologians is making use of the increasing accessible Edwards and the scholarly authority of the Yale edition to undo the scandalously trifling qualities of the evangelical mind. 'Edwards vision has not faded', Piper writes. 'It is being recovered and reconsidered more extensively and with more vigour today, than at any time since his own day'. Amid this love-fest, Edwards has managed to silence most of his detractors ... Above any other figure in American religious history, Edwards now comes recommended.⁷

In this article I want to try to demonstrate why I think McDermott's book is important both in terms of what it can teach us, generally about the way we approach history as evangelicals, and more specifically what we can learn about the difficult area of evangelical thought called the 'theology of religions'. The article is split into two parts: a description of McDermott's thesis and a subsequent analysis and critique.

Description

Although McDermott refers to the corpus of Edwards' public writing, the primary source for his re-evaluation is a painstaking analysis of

² McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 3.

³ Leigh E. Schmidt 'The Edwards Revival: Or, The Public Consequences of Exceedingly Careful Scholarship' in *William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (2000), 484.

⁴ Schmidt, 'The Edwards Revival', 481.

⁵ Schmidt, 'The Edwards Revival', 482.

⁶ Schmidt, 'The Edwards Revival'.

⁷ Schmidt, 'The Edwards Revival'. Schmidt is referring to John Piper's *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (IVP, 1998), 27.

Edwards' private theological notebooks, called collectively the *Miscellanies*, of which there are over 1300 entries spanning a large part of Edwards' life. McDermott originally came across the original unpublished manuscripts in Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library during his dissertation research in 1987 but two volumes of these *Miscellanies* have now been published under Yale's *Works of Jonathan Edwards* project⁸ with another two volumes forthcoming.⁹ McDermott also has recourse to refer to other private writings, Edwards' *Notes on Scripture* and his *Blank Bible*, a Bible Edwards kept which had blank pages for notes between each page of Scripture.¹⁰

The scaffolding supporting this 'strange, new Edwards' is McDermott's thesis that Edwards perceived the greatest enemy to Calvinist Christianity not to be Arminianism as is commonly thought, but rather Deism and this is reflected by the evidence that over twenty-five percent of the *Miscellanies* relate to the Deist challenge. Although McDermott is very careful to delineate different forms of Deism, he does note a number of family resemblances. To Byrne's definition of Deism as 'the negative criticism for claims for the uniqueness and divine character of any revealed religion and the positive affirmation that a religion based on reason and nature is sufficient for salvation',¹¹ McDermott adds two further components. These were: Deists rejected an appeal to authority because of their own understanding of reasonability that was the final test of the divine: 'the location of a doctrine in the Bible was not reason enough to be declared divine; it had to meet the approval of what the eighteenth-century reason considered acceptable'.¹² Secondly, the end or purpose of religion for the Deists was morality: 'not only is the function of true religion moral and social – that is its role is to show the way to good society – but in its very essence religion is morality'.¹³ Amongst other attacks they made against Calvinist doctrine, Deists critiqued the scandal of particularity associated with the Calvinist God, arguing that a God who restricted salvation to a chosen few was partial and arbitrary. The heart of McDermott's book is an analysis of Edward's strategies of response to the Deist

⁸ For details of this project see (www.yale.edu/wje).

⁹ *Works of Jonathan Edwards* Volume 13: The 'Miscellanies': (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500) ed. Thomas A. Schafer (Yale University Press, 1994); Volume 18: The 'Miscellanies': (Entry Nos. 501-832) ed. Ava Chamberlain (Yale University Press, 2000); The "Miscellanies", 833-1152, Edited by Amy Plantinga Pauw (Yale University Press: forthcoming); The 'Miscellanies', 1153-360 Edited by Douglas A. Sweeney (Yale University Press: forthcoming).

¹⁰ *Works of Jonathan Edwards* Volume 15: Notes on Scripture ed. Stephen J. Stein (Yale University Press, 1998); *The 'Blank Bible'* (Vol. 1) Ed. Stephen J. Stein (Yale University Press, forthcoming); *The 'Blank Bible'* (Vol. 2) Ed. Stephen J. Stein (Yale University Press, forthcoming).

¹¹ Peter Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Nature of Religion: The Legacy of Deism* (London, 1989), quoted in McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 20f.

¹² McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 21.

¹³ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*.

threat, and in particular the Deist challenge as presented by Thomas Chubb (1679–1746) and Matthew Tindal (1657–1733). As McDermott notes:

Scholars have never before considered Edwards's proposal for reason and revelation in the full context of the deist challenge ... In these ... chapters, I reconstruct a theology of revelation and religion that was left in pieces in his notebooks, some parts of it reworked for use in treatises on the will, original sin, and virtue – and others awaiting the day when he would complete the massive apologia he had been planning for decades. Herein I hope to suggest what Edwards might have one day published on reason, revelation and other world religions – if he had survived the smallpox outbreak at Princeton.¹⁴

After spending two chapters outlining the Deist challenge in general and Edwards' dealings with the Deists in particular, McDermott spends the following two chapters describing Edwards' position on the promise and limits of reason in religion and the necessity of divine revelation. This amounts to a description of Edwards' stance on natural theology and his doctrine of general revelation and a description that places him well within the boundaries of orthodox Reformed thought while demonstrating a high level of sophistication and nuance in his thinking on these matters. It is only when we come to McDermott's exposition of Edwards' understanding on the nature and history of religion that we really begin to see the 'new Edwards'.

For Deists, religion was identified with morality, what Placher calls a domesticating of the divine:

while confidence in human abilities burgeoned and the range of 'acceptable reasoning' narrowed, there was less emphasis on revelation and grace, 'decreasing attention paid to the Trinity', and a 'shift to Christian reflection on a simply unitary God'. Religion and theology were judged by their adequacy to fulfil objectives human beings set for them.¹⁵

In contrast to this, Edwards' placed worship at the heart of both true and false religion, and stressed the developmental, progressive and historical nature of religion. McDermott notes that Edwards was as keen as the Deists (and for McDermott this shows that Edwards was a child of the Enlightenment as well as critique of it) to square the goodness of God with the limited reach of the Christian church and that he employed a number of theological strategies to demonstrate this fact.

McDermott notes Edwards' fascination with other religions as seen in the extracts he copied into his notebooks from writers of the time. McDermott notes that these writers (he mentions Philip Skelton [1707–87] and Chevalier Ramsey [1686–1743] in particular)

¹⁴ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 8.

¹⁵ See William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville, 1996), 3, 14f. quoted in McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 89.

understood other religions in terms of the *prisca theologia* (ancient theology). This was a tradition in apologetic theology developed by among others Clement of Alexandria and Origen that stated:

all human beings were originally given knowledge of true religion (monotheism, the Trinity, creatio ex nihilo) by the Jews or by traditions going back to Noah's good sons (Shem and Japheth) or antediluvians such as Enoch and Adam. This knowledge was subsequently passed down to Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Brahmins and Druids, Orpheus, Pythagorus, Plato, and the Sybils.¹⁶

McDermott argues that Edwards adopted and adapted the *prisca theologia*:

Edwards was clearly impressed by these proponents of the prisca theologia. He copied enormous extracts from their works into his private notebooks. Yet as Diderot once said, imitation is continual invention. From his marginal notes and recapitulation of the tradition in other private notebooks, it is clear that Edwards was selectively refashioning the tradition to serve his own polemical needs. His principal purpose was to show, against the deists, that nearly all humans have received revelation, and therefore all knowledge of true religion among the heathen is from revelation rather than the light of natural reason.¹⁷

In Edwards' understanding, the fathers of the nations received both direct and indirect revelation from God. This revelation was then passed down by tradition in a trickle-down process. However, parallel to this was a religious law of entropy that distorted and perverted this revelation and turned it into idolatry while retaining scraps of truth. What is significant about McDermott's understanding of Edwards' appropriation of the *prisca theologia* is that McDermott claims Edwards broke with Reformed orthodoxy by claiming that knowledge of God *the Redeemer* could be known from the beginning of human history and not only knowledge of God *the Creator*.

The second strategy Edwards' adopted in answering the Deist objections to the scandal of particularity was his typological view of reality:

Types, Edwards pronounced, 'are a certain sort of language, as it were, in which God is wont to speak to us'. These types are words in persons, places, and things – and they are found in every part of his creation. Hence there are sermons in the stones, flowers and stars. God also speaks in history, both sacred and profane. He even speaks in the history of religions, heathen included. Indeed, every last atom of his creation

¹⁶ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 93.

¹⁷ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 94.

*pulsates with a divine melody. If the deists do not hear it, it is because they have stopped their ears.*¹⁸

These types are God's teaching aids to his creation whereby God accommodated infinite truth to finite minds. Those who have eyes to see (the regenerated) can read this typological language. The warrant for such a typological system is found in Scripture and the OT types that prefigure NT anti-types. McDermott shows clearly that Edwards had a rich and complex understanding of typology and that typology was used in his understanding of the religious other in that God had planted types of true religion into false religious systems. One example of this is the heathen practice of human sacrifice that was the result of Satan's mimicry of God ordained animal sacrifice instituted after the Fall:

*Edwards insisted that animal sacrifice, the main type of Christ in the Old Testament but revealed to all heathen, taught the necessity of propitiatory sacrifice to atone for sin. Imitating this divine type, the devil led the heathen to sacrifice human beings even their own sons ... But God used this deception for his own purposes as well, to prepare the Gentile mind for the concept of incarnation, perfectly realised in Christ ... God used false religion to teach the true. In each case the devil's machinations were overruled ironically by divine wisdom. Practices considered by all Jews to be abominable – human sacrifice and idol worship – were transposed by a divine stratagem into pedagogical devices to prepare the heathen for true religion. In both cases God used non-Christian religions typologically to point to Christian truths. The practice of sacrifice taught far more than simple propitiation. It also showed that God would not pardon without sacrifice being made, that sin 'must be suffered for'. It demonstrated God's jealousy and hatred for sin, indicated the need to fear God and respect the glory of his holiness and suggested to sinners that they must trust in God's mercy.*¹⁹

Again the interesting point here is that McDermott classifies these as 'redemptive myths' more akin to special revelation and not just 'creational myths' which fall under God's general revelation.

Armed with the *prisca theologia* and typology, McDermott now moves into the area of soteriology and the possibility of salvation among the heathen. Despite there being much revelation of God in the world, the majority of people do not avail themselves of it and rather than leading them to salvation it only led them to condemnation. At this point McDermott changes disciplines and moves into Edwards' philosophical theology and into the concept of dispositional soteriology, a concept already familiar in Edwards scholarship.²⁰

¹⁸ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 110f.

¹⁹ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 126.

²⁰ See Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 1988); Anri Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, Pa., 1995).

In summary, for Edwards the essence of all being is a disposition or habit that can have an ontological reality without being exercised:

*The disposition is all that can said to be absolutely necessary. The act [of receiving Christ] cannot be proved to be absolutely necessary ... 'Tis the disposition or principle is the thing that God looks at.*²¹

This position has implications for the *ordo salutis*, particularly regeneration,

*The whole of the saving work of God's [sic] Spirit on the soul in the beginning and progress of it from the very first dawns of the divine light until death is in some respect to be looked upon as all one work of regeneration ... There is as it were an unregenerate part still in man after the first regeneration that still needs to be regenerated.*²²

At this point McDermott makes a cautious comparison between Edwards' soteriology and Roman Catholic soteriology, noting that the *Miscellanies* may lay the foundations for a more inclusive view if both regeneration and justification can be considered from the perspective of processes that unfold in stages, for if someone has the right disposition but has incomplete knowledge of Christ, it may be because they are in the initial stages of regeneration and justification. However, note McDermott's conclusion on this point: 'Edwards never reached this explicit conclusion, at least in his published writings or private notebooks. But his own theology lays the groundwork for such an interpretation.'²³

McDermott is on firmer ground with Edwards' thinking when he discusses four types of persons who could be saved without explicit knowledge of Christ because they had the proper disposition: children dying in infancy, OT saints, NT saints like Cornelius and holy pagans like Melchizedek. What did God expect of a saving disposition? Edwards' answer is based on his progressive view of revelation: while the basic conditions for salvation stay the same, God's expectations are always in proportion to the revelation present. Moving one stage further, McDermott attempts to demonstrate that in the later *Miscellanies* Edwards tentatively reflected on the salvation of the heathen. In *Miscellanies* 1162 Edwards argues that heathen philosophers like Socrates and Plato were privy to revelation just as the wise men from the East were. If these philosophers did not use this revelation to lead their nations toward truth, then God must have had other intentions:

Edwards suggested four: to dispose heathen nations in the future to converse with and learn from the Jews, to prepare the Gentile for their future reception of the Gospel, to confirm the

²¹ *Miscellanies* 27b, quoted in McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 134.

²² *Miscellanies* 847, quoted in McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 136.

²³ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 137.

truths of Christianity, and (in what is one of the Edwards's most cryptic comments in the thousands of pages of his private notebooks) to benefit their own souls: 'We know not what evidence God might give to the men themselves that were subjects of these inspirations that they were divine and true ... and so we know not of how great benefit the truths suggested might be to their own souls.' Edwards is hesitant and tentative, but he nevertheless clearly opens the possibility that these heathen could have used revelation for their own spiritual benefit – a notion that is incoherent unless it means they can be saved. When we recall that Edwards wrote this entry during a period in which he was frequently quoting from writers who explicitly argued for the salvation of the virtuous heathen, it is difficult not to believe that Edwards did not include salvation among the possible benefits to human souls.²⁴

McDermott's conclusion here is that we are left with a curious tension on the subject and that Edwards was comfortably agnostic. On the one hand in his most explicit treatments, Edwards is as negative about other religions as his Reformed predecessors and holds almost no hope for salvation for those of other faiths. However, as I have already noted, McDermott believes that the *prisca theologia*, typology and dispositional soteriology 'prepared the way for a more expansive view of salvation'.²⁵

The final five chapters of the book see how Edwards specifically applied these strategies to religious others he encountered, namely Judaism, Islam, the philosophies of Greece and Rome, American Indians and the Chinese philosophies. The chapter on American Indians is worth special mention. McDermott notes Edwards' contempt for practitioners of native American religion:

*not only were they owned by the devil and therefore rightly called 'the devil's People', but they were being devoured unwittingly by the prince of darkness. As the minister of an angry God put it, 'The devil sucks their blood.' They could look forward only to the misery of hell.*²⁶

However, despite these views, McDermott attempts to show firstly, Edwards' fascination with God's work of grace among these people as seen in the missionary endeavour of Solomon Stoddard and David Brainerd and their subsequent converts, and secondly his increasing affection for his Indian congregation:

Although he gave little indication of seeing any value in their religion and culture, he was clearly impressed by what God seemed to be doing among them. They seemed to him a divinely determined bellwether of the future direction of redemptive history. They may also have prodded him into thinking more deeply about the relationship between regeneration and conversion ... But if he was not convinced that they were saved,

²⁴ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 140f.

²⁵ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 143.

²⁶ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 195.

he was certainly struck by their common humanity. These American heathen, whom he once called 'beasts', had now become souls with names – and parishioners whose interests he protected against those who would exploit them ... The uncivilised natives showed more civility and common virtue than the educated English. Little wonder that Edwards's private notebooks evidence continual rethinking of the spiritual knowledge and state of the heathen.²⁷

Analysis and Critique

This is a truly fascinating and stimulating book, beautifully written and referenced and characterised by careful and thorough research. Even if one does not agree entirely with the force of McDermott's thesis, the book will be helpful for those who wish to get a taster of the *Miscellanies* and Edwards other private writings without having to gorge (and bankrupt) themselves on the seven huge volumes given over to these writings in the Yale edition. In what follows, I wish to focus on a number of historical and theological questions that the book raises.

Like some of the *Reputations* programmes I mentioned, I felt a slight anticlimax (and, to be honest, relief), after completing McDermott's book. The strange, new Edwards promised at the beginning is not really all that strange or new, and while some epicycles need to be put in place, a paradigmatic shift in my thinking on Edwards is not yet necessary. On one level a reviewer like Schmidt is keen to show how Edwards has far more in common in his cultural and intellectual historical context than McDermott perhaps allows:

Edwards, an astonishingly imaginative exegete, to be sure, needs nonetheless to be situated more fully in a colonial landscape of encounter – a context that was crucial to the very production of Enlightenment theorizing about religion. He also deserves a little more company from his compatriots. To set up Edwards's 'confrontation with the gods' as 'America's most profound in that age of light' (6–7, 227) makes him sound too singular, cutting him off from eighteenth century culture that also produced such inquiries into religion as John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Hannah Adams and that ultimately came to include such sojourners as Joseph Priestley, Thomas Paine, and Constantin de Volney.²⁸

However much of a visionary he is, Edwards remains a man of his time. In terms of the theological issues of revelation and truth in other religions, then we do see some fascinating ideas in the *Miscellanies*, and compared to other versions of Reformed orthodoxy Edwards is certainly 'progressive' in this thinking in his use of the *prisca theologia* and the typological system. However, if one is expecting Edwards to legitimise some form of salvific inclusivism in the form of Karl Rahner, or closer to home Clark Pinnock, then there

²⁷ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 206.

²⁸ Schmidt, 'William and Mary Quarterly', Vol. 58, (2001), 480–86.

will be disappointment. Indeed McDermott acknowledges this: 'On the question of salvation, he usually only conceded the possibility that heathen could be saved and never spoke in the expansively hopeful terms of a Watts, Ramsay, Skelton, or even a Baxter or Wesley.' McDermott's conclusion is somewhat ambiguous:

The result – as a reading of these massive notebooks demonstrates – is a remarkable intellectual drama. Colonial America's greatest mind, of whom it has often been said that his thinking changed little over the course of his career, seems to have been a work in process on the question of world religions ... Edwards seems to have tossed and turned, as it were, trying to reconcile those truths with a theological tradition that had relegated other traditions to irrelevance ... Edwards found a way to acknowledge genuine religious truth outside the Judeo-Christian world while at the same time holding fast to a particular and historical revelation. In the process, Edwards opened his own intricate system to the possibility of salvation outside the Christian church. Like Barth on universalism, Edwards could deny that he ever explicitly conceded what until then was heterodox while nevertheless constructing a system that could permit its entrance.²⁹

The difference here is that, unlike the case of Barth, McDermott's book does not lead me to take Edwards out of the tradition of Reformed Calvinistic orthodoxy and to be fair I do not think this is McDermott's aim. Having said this, at several points in the book, I did discern the hint of a tension between McDermott the careful historian, and McDermott the creative systematic theologian as though there are ideas and strategies to do with the religious other in Edwards' writing which McDermott is keen to explore and develop, but which he has to reign in and temper for the sake of historical objectivity. What we are left with are bold promises in the introduction of the book that appear far more tentative at the conclusion of the book when the evidence has been sifted through.

One of the reasons for this sense of tension is, I believe, the status of the *Miscellanies* as a literary genre. McDermott and the Yale project show us a whole body of work that can be paralleled to that of a great musician or artist. It is common in musical retrospectives today to be able to purchase exhaustive editions of an artist's work, not just the original master takes but the alternative takes, the rehearsals, the false starts and fluff endings. Similarly with a master like Leonardo Da Vinci we are left with some complete masterpieces, some puzzling abstracts, and a whole pile of fascinating sketches. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this 'completist desire' as new discoveries can help us understand known work. However, one must be careful as to how one weighs up all this new material. In terms of Edwards, the *Miscellanies* surely belong to the 'sketch' genre and must be assessed on this basis. In his recent work on Edwards, Stephen Holmes makes the following point:

²⁹ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 13.

The discovery and close reading of the Miscellanies have been among the most significant features of Edwards scholarship over the past few years, providing great insight into how his thought holds together, and illuminating references to many theological issues not dealt with in many of his published works. This has led, however, to a mistaken regard for these notes. They cannot be considered as Edwards' final word on any subject, but rather must be seen as his 'rough workings.' These books are the place where he jotted down interesting ideas that he felt the need to think more about; where he sketched new statements of arguments to see if they work.³⁰

On the issue of salvation among the heathen, McDermott comments on the curious tension between Edwards' public and private writing on religious others. He suggests that the reason for the tension possibly was due to the fact that if he had openly pushed a more hopeful soteriology that he may have been associated too closely with Arminians and Deists. However, I think it would be a mistake to take the *Miscellanies* as being authoritative over and against Edwards' public writings. All of us have ideas, thoughts and 'brainstorms', some of which we discard because they lead to dead-ends or are wrong-headed, others which we develop and build upon. The *Miscellanies* show us that Edwards had more of these thoughts than most and also show an inexhaustibly creative mind, but one does wonder what Edwards would think about these private items becoming public items for analysis and scrutiny. To reconstruct Edwards' theology of revelation and religion from these writings is as perilous and difficult a task as a contemporary composer completing an unfinished symphony of a dead musical genius: while we can get a rough idea of what the completed *opus* might have sounded like, there is always a nagging thought at the back of the mind which says that this is not truly 'authentic' because there is another hand at work. There is an amount of speculation and imagination needed to attempt to show how Edwards would have developed these theological ideas and the temptation to read too much into these notes must be great. To be fair to McDermott, the historian in him appears to win through most of the time and many of his overall conclusions are fairly measured and cautious. However on a few occasions I did ask myself: whose theology of revelation and religion are we seeing here – a reconstruction of Edwards or a construction of McDermott's. Note the effect that the writing of the book had on the author:

In short, this book is the result of a discovery that rather startled me. My forays into his private notebooks, and then my explorations of his published works guided by what I have uncovered in the notebooks, led me to an Edwards whom I and other scholars had never met ... I think the result is a new perspective on the thinking of America's greatest theologian. At the same time, this Edwards opens a window on how Christians of another era responded to a scandal of

³⁰ Stephen Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory* (T. & T., 2001), 35f.

particularity not unlike the one that bedevils their successors at the dawn of the twenty-first century.³¹

Perhaps I myself need to be careful not to unfairly project my own 'systematic theological' temptations onto McDermott. As a Reformed evangelical who is nevertheless fascinated by the 'religious other' and the phenomenon we call 'religion', the idea that progressive and developmental thinking in terms of truth and revelation in other religions can be legitimated because one of the giants of Reformed thought has paved the way for such thinking, is a wonderful discovery. There is still a real paucity of material concerning a conservative evangelical theology of religions and if a giant like Edwards can help us construct a biblically faithful framework to understand religious other then it is to be welcomed. Certainly from a contemporary perspective, Edwards' strategies like the *prisca theologia* and typological system may provide useful springboards to explore the genesis of religion and nuance the way evangelicals construe God's general revelation and special revelation. McDermott himself has attempted to do this in another book published at the same time as his work on Edwards, *Can Evangelicals Learn From World Religions: Jesus, Revelation and Religious Traditions* (IVP, 2000). However as evangelicals, we must make a clear distinction between legitimate and genuine theological extrapolation forwards and unfair and illegitimate theological projection backwards. If we succumb to the latter it can lead to a twisting of history that will impoverish the evangelical tradition. While noting and perhaps building upon the discoveries contained in the *Miscellanies*, it will be extreme folly, not to mention bad history, to forget the 'unreconstructed' Edwards who wrote 'Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God' and who emphasised the world's need to confess Christ as Lord and Saviour in a sin-soaked world.

³¹ McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 13.

LAST WORD

Robbie Castleman

Narrative theology is the substance of a good testimony. Giving voice to our faith journey, our encounter and transformation by the work and person of Jesus, and our longings for holiness to match our ontological wholeness is the way Christians invite people to 'come and see' the Saviour. Keeping in mind that *our* story is not the jewel, but the setting, not the picture, but the frame, we invite people to look into our lives and see the real presence of Jesus. Paul tells us in Romans that the power of God is the gospel and this good news must be the focus of our 'testimony'. A testimony that contains the power of God finds its focus in the person of Jesus, not our personal encounter with him.

What I often hear in churches, on TV and in many Christian venues from people is often what I call a 'Me-amony', a story that talks about the goodness of God and a person's personal experience, but the sacred rehearsal of atonement through the cross, and recreation through the resurrection – the salvific work of Christ Jesus is missing.

Other than forgiveness and eternal life, the Gospel makes no other guarantees really. I can't guarantee that a person who surrenders their life to Christ will have a faithful spouse, healthy children, cure for a malady or peace-filled nights of rest. The gospel does guarantee its power for salvation from sin and salvation for eternal life. That is it. If the story of my life is not bound up in the centrality of his story, then I am bound to either misrepresent the gospel or misdirect the seeker.

In my work with students, I often have them attend a workshop on how to give a clear presentation of the gospel within the framework of their faith story. I call it 'The Andy Johnson Workshop'.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'.

John 1:40, 41a

Andrew's simple invitation to his brother (and witness within one's family is always more difficult than with those we don't know as well!) was 'come and see'. Today this is still the invitation. We invite spiritually hungry people to take a close look at our lives, hear our story of transformation and come and see who Jesus is and what he can do. Learning to do this with language that is not 'stained glass and churchy' is often a challenge for Christians. We need to do this so that we do not just *talk to*, but to *communicate* with people who don't know the endearing language of the faith yet. What can really describe what God has done in your life? What words can be substituted for redemption; salvation; asked Christ to come in;

atonement; justification; sin and the like? These substitutions can help build a bridge into another's life, another's language.

Contrast Andrew's simple invitation to that of well-intentioned Philip in the passage that follows:

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.'

John 1:45

What is Nathanael's response? Scepticism about Nazareth! Philip wanted to surround his invitation with an apologetic that was, as far as he knew, convincing, but it almost got in the way of interesting Nathanael at all. We are often tempted to do the same thing. From the age of the earth, to the ten reasons we know the tomb was empty, we want to make a case for God instead of just inviting hungry people to taste the Bread of Life, just to 'come and see'.

In our attempts at telling our story, we often get in the way of the gospel story that bears the power of God's saving grace to those to whom we speak. When you share the narrative theology of your own life, people listen if it introduces them to Jesus.

Now apologetics has its place, and it has a different place for the post-modern hearer than it did in my own student days. In my university days, the 'ten reasons the tomb was empty' was part of the compelling truth that led us to grace. Truth was a driving issue in a generation that wasn't used to being lied to. We were shocked when the President lied to us, when the government hid war statistics from us, when our parents divorced. Today, people expect to be lied to, truth claims are vacuous no matter who speaks them. Today, it is often grace that leads people to truth and we serve the Saviour well when we remember that. Students today seldom ask me 'truth' questions; they are on a quest for *meaning*. Apologetics today is less an evangelistic tool than it is a means of discipleship.

Be responsive to-day to the hunger in the lives of others and invite them to come and see Jesus, close up and personal, in your own faith story. Keep the person and work of Jesus central. Witness the power of God that brings salvation.

Book Reviews

Old Testament

Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan

John Day

JSOTSup 265, Sheffield:
Sheffield Academic Press, 1999,
282 pp., h/b., £46.00

John Day's recent study is a helpful guide to the religious milieu lying behind the texts of the OT, and offers balanced conclusions to controversial issues. It is the fruit of a long-standing 'ambition of completing a more thoroughgoing and comprehensive investigation of the relationship between Yahweh and the gods and goddesses of Canaan'. Day makes this topic accessible while retaining scholarly integrity through extensive reference to both ancient text and recent scholarship.

The book is structured according to the major deities worshipped in Canaan, relating them in turn to Yahweh: El, Asherah, Baal, Astarte and Anat, Astral Deities (Sun, Moon, Lucifer), and Underworld Deities (Mot, Resheph, Molech, the Rephaim). While each chapter is interesting and useful, the two on Baal are particularly fascinating. In the first, Day highlights contexts in which Yahweh is in conflict with Baal. He argues that Jezebel's Baal was Baal-Shamem (Lord of Heaven), illuminating Elijah's conflict on Mt Carmel; that Baal-zebul is a corruption of Baal-zebul (Baal the prince); and that the famous 'abomination of desolation' (Dan. 9-12) is a word play on Baal-Shamem (equivalent to Zeus Olympios). This

last reveals the enduring legacy of Canaanite descriptions of deity into the Greek and Roman periods. In the second, he focuses on Yahwistic appropriation of Baal imagery, e.g. the storm theophany with chariot-clouds (Ps. 68:4; 104:3) and thunder (Ps. 29), the conflict with chaos monsters and the sea (Ps. 74:12-17; 89:9-14; Is. 27:1; Job 3:8; 7:12 etc.), and the divine dwelling place at Zaphon (Ps. 48:2; Is 14:12-15; 37:24).

In conclusion, Day discusses the rise of monotheism in Israel. Here he places himself between the two extremes of Tigay (worship of other gods was rare in ancient Israel) and Hayman (absolute monotheism was only achieved in the Middle Ages), arguing instead that there was a monolatrous party already in the pre-exilic period and that absolute monotheism was first expressed by Deutero-Isaiah in the exile and became 'fully operative' in the post-exilic period. This does not mean, however, that the influence of Canaanite deities was extinguished, since it continued through an effect which he calls 'afterglow', discernible especially in the imagery of apocalyptic material.

Day's adoption of a 'History of Religion' approach will be a difficulty for some interpreters of the Old Testament. He gives the impression that Yahweh and monotheism are merely the result of an evolution of religious thought within the culture of Israel. It is unquestionable that the worship of other gods endured alongside Yahwistic religion, attaining dominance in many eras. However, the denial of an ancient monotheistic stream does not do justice to the early traditions of Israel.

Day's assertion of an 'afterglow' in post-exilic contexts where absolute monotheism is clearly dominant provides one way to understand the appropriation of Canaanite religious elements into Yahwistic expressions. In earlier passages this appropriation may be seen as particularistic apologetic rhetoric (Yahweh is greater than that god) or general religious imagery (Yahweh is deity), rather than as appropriation of Canaanite religion into Yahwism.

Any points of contention, however, should not detract from the value of this book as an extensive and accessible review of primary and secondary sources related to religion in ancient Canaan. It is a helpful guide to understanding the religious context of many theological statements in the OT and for grasping the dynamics of idolatry which plagued Israel throughout its history.

Mark J. Boda

Canadian Theological Seminary,
Regina

The Pentateuch: A Story of Beginnings

Paula Gooder

London and New York: Continuum, 2000,
122 pp., £9.99

This is the sixth volume to appear in The Continuum Biblical Studies Series, an ecumenical series designed primarily for those 'embarking on theological and ministerial education'. Gooder aims to introduce the reader briefly to both the history of Pentateuchal studies and the contents of the Pentateuch. Any attempt to write such an introduction is fraught with difficulties, especially given the current multiplicity of views and approaches. To do so in about 110 pages is a major challenge. Indeed, one might seriously question the wisdom of trying to cover so complex a topic in such a limited space.

To her credit Gooder manages to incorporate into this book a wide

range of material, although the presentation is often very limited and somewhat uneven. Thus, for example, the contents of most of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are covered in merely 21 pages. This stands in marked contrast to the Book of Genesis which receives 42 pages of discussion. So great an imbalance is hard to justify.

In many ways, the whole book resembles a small supermarket, where the reader is presented with an array of different products and brands. Restrictions on shelving mean, however, that not all products and brands are represented; the omission of such Pentateuchal heavyweights as Blum and Milgrom is particularly surprising, especially given some of those who have been included. Others might have packed the shelves somewhat differently.

The brevity with which so many topics are treated naturally prevents the author from engaging critically with different viewpoints. Yet, one senses that this is not particularly important to Gooder. The critical evaluation of different readings of the text comes across as somewhat irrelevant. Thus, among many examples that could be quoted, the reader is informed of S.J. Teubal's view that Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, were 'all Mesopotamian priestesses' (60). Remarkably, no counter-arguments are mentioned to this highly speculative and unwarranted approach.

The subjective nature of Gooder's approach is striking. In her conclusion, she writes, 'The task of those who wish to understand Genesis to Deuteronomy better is to pick their way through the many different possible approaches to the text and find those which are most helpful' (108). The use of the expression 'most helpful' is significant. The idea that there may be objective standards by which views and opinions should be judged and accepted as true or false does not figure prominently in the book. Indeed, Gooder comments

elsewhere that 'although an argument may contain many flaws, the ability to demonstrate this does not necessarily indicate that the argument is wrong' (52). While this perhaps reflect the spirit of the present age, it is a spirit which if taken to its logical conclusion must mean the end of rational discussion as we know it.

Although Gooder avoids saying so herself, the book exemplifies a post-modern approach to the Pentateuch where readers are invited to take from it as they please. Yet, we need to ask seriously, are all interpretations of the text equally valid? A good introduction to the Pentateuch should guide the reader as to how best to read and interpret the text. Judged by this standard, Gooder's approach is insufficiently critical.

T. Desmond Alexander

Union Theological College, Belfast

Genesis

John E. Hartley

NIBC: Peabody, MA: Hendrickson /

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000,

xvii + 393 pp., £8.99/\$11.95

This volume is part of a series advocating 'believing criticism' (xii), i.e., a critically aware yet conservative approach which endeavours to relate scholarship to Church life. Thus Hartley takes a relatively orthodox evangelical approach to the editing of Genesis, which he sees as beginning with Moses and continuing until the time of Solomon. On the contentious issue of the historicity of the patriarchal narratives, for example, he argues for their historical reliability, though conceding some limitations of the text for reconstructing precise historical situations.

The Introduction deals with standard fare, though with a decided emphasis on the book's structure. Hartley is not the first to be bewitched by the possibilities of chiasmic structures, and reflecting work by Fishbane,

Rendsburg and others, suggests comprehensive chiasmic and parallel structures for the entire book. While some suggestions are plausible, other details appear contrived, and one is left wondering why such literary patterns are largely not taken up in the body of the commentary if they are as pervasive as suggested.

The commentary itself is willing to accept the inherent difficulties in some passages (e.g. ch. 22), does not proffer simplistic solutions, and concedes that the text itself sometimes only hints at answers to readers' questions. The goal seems to be to provide reliable information to guide readers rather than to stimulate them to interact. The additional notes and excurses, usually of an historical, archaeological or linguistic nature, provide further details for the serious reader, though occasionally they say no more than the obvious (e.g. on Genesis 1 and scientific theory).

Hartley is generally a careful exegete, though he sometimes goes beyond the explicit evidence of the text. For example, he assumes that God told Terah to move from Ur (131); that Abraham invited other relatives to join him but only Lot accepted (134); that the change of Jacob's name initiates a radical change of character (284), and that Jacob's silence after the rape of Dinah shows his reliance on God (293). Occasionally, he falls victim to the bane of all commentators: having to say something even when they have nothing to say, and serving up no more than an expanded paraphrase of the text (e.g. on the animals entering the ark, 103). Also, while Hartley is usually abreast of recent scholarship, he occasionally ignores significant studies that challenge his interpretation, e.g. studies that deny on linguistic and sociological grounds that Dinah was raped (ch. 34).

No commentator on Genesis can explore every avenue, but personally I would have welcomed more engagement with the literary art of the book. Hartley provides a few

glimpses of this, e.g. regarding Abraham's emotional involvement in chapter 22 (207-209), the account of the wrestling match in chapter 32 as 'deliberately enigmatic' (283), and on the use of motifs in the narrative of Judah and Tamar in chapter 38 (314-15), but this is not a sustained feature.

Finally, I wonder whether Hartley's conservative presuppositions, while serving him well in much of the commentary, make him blind to some of the text's implicit criticism of its characters. For example, not all would agree that the text presents Joseph as 'a wise, shrewd and compassionate administrator' (347), when he enslaves Egyptians during the famine.

Nevertheless, despite these misgivings, this is a conservative, readable and reliable guide to the essential message of Genesis, which accepts the book's role as Christian Scripture, and which will act as a balance to more imaginative readings of Genesis.

Laurence A. Turner

Newbold College, Bracknell

Joshua, Berit Olam, Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry

Daniel L. Hawk

Minnesota: Liturgical Press 2001,
xxii + 303 pp, h/b., \$39.95.

This commentary on the Book of Joshua is one of a series which approaches the text as narrative, and therein lies its main difficulty. Between a third and a half of Joshua comprises lists of kings and territories, which do not read like narrative at all. As with any commentary series, some biblical books will fit the overall theme better than others. It seems unfortunate to have to force Joshua into a mould that does not fully suit it.

That said, however, there are many positive aspects to the volume. Its starting point, that the book's

fundamental concern is 'to construct an identity for the people of God' (dust jacket), is well worth pondering. The frequent observations on structure in Joshua and allusions to the Pentateuch are helpful. I enjoyed the twelve charts. In particular, the Deuteronomistic outlook of Joshua is often addressed, and helpful comparisons made with the book of Deuteronomy.

Moving to points of detail, the Contents page does not make it clear at first glance that Hawk's chapter two is an overview of his chapters three to nine. Matters of literary sources and of archaeology are not addressed, in keeping with the desire to see the book as narrative. These considerations are matters of taste. But the description of Joshua as 'a story that seems to endorse brutality against others' (xli) is more serious. It ignores Genesis 15:16, as do several other recent commentaries on Joshua. This key verse explains that the reason for Israel's prolonged suffering in Egypt was that the inhabitants of the promised land were not yet ripe for punishment. In other words, the Bible's own explanation is that the invasion of Canaan was God's act of judgement on the inhabitants of the land. Viewed in this light, Joshua is not a text that supports the 'violent execution of power' (xii) in today's world. This insight could have been addressed with advantage; as it stands, the Judge of all the earth is not seen to be doing right (cf. Gen. 18:25).

Readers for whom English is a second language may find this book hard going, but those who do not flinch at words like 'paratactic' (20) will appreciate it. To my mind, it is a useful addition to the growing corpus of literary approaches to Scripture.

David F. Pennant

Woking

Invitation to the Septuagint

Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva
 Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker/
 Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000,
 351 pp., h/b., £29.99

If you want a basic introduction to the Septuagint then look no further. This book is unique in seeking to introduce students to the maze of Septuagint studies without assuming prior knowledge of, or even (to begin with) acquaintance with Greek. Yet despite this its final chapters contain enough depth to allure scholars who have already traced the Septuagint's labyrinthine paths.

The book is divided into three parts: Part 1 introduces the Septuagint, the translations of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion and the complexities of transmission of the Septuagint introduced by revisions prior to Origen and in Origen's production of the Hexapla. There are pictures of the most important manuscripts and modern editions of the Septuagint, with explanations of their salient characteristics. No term is introduced undefined, and the ambiguities of terms are carefully highlighted. There is then a frank evaluation of the Septuagint as a translation, and the linguistic issues that surround its study. By the end of Part 1 a student should be ready to avoid the most common pitfalls in using the Septuagint.

Part 2 takes us deeper and requires a knowledge of the biblical languages. The authors consider how 'Semitic' the language of the Septuagint is, distinguishing types of grammatical and lexical influence. In the following chapter, one is treated not just to a lucid articulation of the basic principles of textual criticism, but different types of internal and external evidence are meticulously defined and evaluated. Logically only once one has rightly determined the text of the Septuagint itself can one use it as a witness to what its original may have been. While eschewing the approach

that adheres to the Masoretic Text at all costs, the authors warn about the many problems there are in using the Septuagint as a witness to the text of the OT. In connection with this there is an analysis of the biblical texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls and related discoveries in the Judaean Desert.

On this foundation the authors devote a chapter to considering the NT's use of the Septuagint. This involves not just NT quotations of the Septuagint, but also the potential influence of the Septuagint on NT language and theology. A further chapter with extensive example texts considers how one can interpret the Septuagint as a text in its own right. The discussion here of Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 provides particularly rich material for theological reflection.

Part 3 will help specialists the most. It begins with delightful biographical cameos of the founding figures of Septuagint studies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We can learn from the constant underestimation by scholars of the size of a task. Next follows a discussion of contemporary linguistic debates about the Septuagint, and thereafter an overview of the intricacies of current debate about the original text of the Septuagint. The final chapter assesses the possibilities of penetrating the theological perspectives of those who translated the Bible into Greek.

The book ends with four appendices: A, descriptions of ten major organisations or projects related to the Septuagint; B, a handy list of the most basic reference works; C, a complete glossary of the many terms that could overwhelm the neophyte; D, a list of the differences in versification between the Septuagint and English Bible translations.

It is hard to have reservations about this book which are not too petty to record.

P.J. Williams
 Tyndale House, Cambridge

Jeremiah in Prophetic Tradition: An Examination of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Israel's Prophetic Traditions

H. Lalleman-de Winkel

Leuven: Peeters, 2000,
280 pp.

This slightly revised PhD thesis investigates the relationship of the book of Jeremiah with those of Hosea and Amos. Questioning the widely held view that Jeremiah in its present form is a deuteronomistic product, Lalleman-de Winkel argues instead for Jeremiah to be located in a 'prophetic tradition'.

First reviewing Jeremiah research from Duhm to Carroll, the author investigates proposed deuteronomistic influences. Important issues include the poetry-prose 'problem' (prose was first attributed to deuteronomistic redactors), Baruch's role in the book's production, and the relationship between Jeremiah and the Josianic reform.

Secondly examining prophetic traditions, the author finds no conclusive evidence to support an alleged northern context for Deuteronomy, supposedly exemplified by E, D and Hosea. She denies the distinction between northern and southern prophetic traditions, and concludes that Jeremiah cannot be located in a distinct northern tradition.

Then in the following chapters Lalleman-de Winkel examines in turn repentance and hope, the covenant, and the prophet's role. Tracing these themes in Hosea and Amos, often thought to represent northern and southern traditions respectively, she argues that Jeremiah stands in both traditions.

Repentance and hope are not post-exilic, deuteronomistic additions, and the alternation between judgement and hope is best explained by developments in the prophets' own understanding. Thus Hosea and Amos as well as Jeremiah initially believed

that repentance could avert divine punishment. Then followed the realisation that judgement was irreversible, which in turn led to hope of a new beginning, initiated by Yahweh's love and mercy.

Similarly regarding covenant. The concept, widespread in the ancient Near East, is found in pre-exilic prophetic texts, and Jeremiah stands in this tradition. The author again proposes a development: a period in which the prophets expected the people to fulfil their covenantal obligations was followed by breach of the covenant, and eventually by the promise of a new covenant in Jeremiah.

As to the prophet's role, Jeremiah followed Amos in intercessory prayer, first attempting to prevent divine punishment, then realising that it was irreversible. But he stands in the tradition of Hosea regarding suffering, as both their lives illustrate the crisis in the relationship between Yahweh and his people.

This study is a welcome attempt to reverse what Lohfink once described as pan-deuteronomistic tendencies in OT studies. As such, there is much of value here. But the project suffers from being too ambitious. For instance, the dating of prophetic oracles of hope is highly controversial, and the author gives hostages to fortune by basing her case on a pre-exilic dating of these passages. To be fair, she is well versed in the critical issues, but apparently space did not permit her to engage some of them in suitable depth. Regrettably, her case is not helped by several grammatical errors and stylistic peculiarities, which could have been eliminated with editorial help. However, these criticisms should not deter anybody engaged in Jeremiah research from consulting what is a valuable study, which promotes an alternative understanding of this important book.

Karl Möller

Cheltenham and Gloucester College
of Higher Education

Hammurabi's Laws: Text, Translation and Glossary

M.E.J. Richardson

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000,
423 pp., £56.00/\$90.00, h/b., £22.95/\$35.00, p/b.

For the first time since Driver and Miles' two-volume edition of 1955, the student now has available a full volume devoted entirely to a critical edition of the Old Babylonian text of the law collection of Hammurabi. An introduction discusses the textual sources as well as the rationale for the presentation of the text in transcription. Richardson then provides the text and a readable translation on opposing pages, allowing for convenient consultation of the two together. Footnotes provide for textual variants (on the Akkadian pages) and for alternative translations as well as distinctive grammatical features (on the English pages). A comprehensive glossary follows with an appendix of proper names, numerals and units of measure. The glossary of more than one hundred pages is more like a lexicon with most lexemes (listed in a manner following *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*) having all their occurrences in the text cited with full transcription and translation of the line. There follows a listing of words by Semitic roots and stems, a comprehensive listing of all verbal forms for each verb that occurs in the law collection, an English-Akkadian index and an Akkadian-English index.

For English readers who wish to study the Old Babylonian language and text of the laws of Hammurabi, this is the best resource available. It is based upon Richardson's long experience of using the laws as a basic text for teaching university students the fundamentals of Akkadian grammar. It reflects his careful scholarship and breadth of knowledge.

Richardson bases his text on the work of Martha Roth, whose 1995 text and translation appeared in the SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. However, Richardson's introduction, glossary and other helps are far more comprehensive and useful for the beginning student. Further, he does not hesitate to disagree with Roth and others where he feels a different reading or text is preferable. Meanwhile Roth has updated her translation, which now appears in volume 2 of W.W. Hallo and K.L. Younger Jr. eds., *The Context of Scripture* (Brill, 2000). This is the resource that students of the Bible should use for comparative study, as it provides relevant biblical references in side notes throughout the translation. However, it does not have the Old Babylonian text. So Richardson's work remains the best critical edition available. Indeed, the student interested in comparative biblical associations would be well served by reading Richardson anyway, since not all parallels are presented in Roth's translation. For example, compare Hammurabi law 109 and Rahab's role in Joshua 2. Note also law 154 where the verb 'to learn, know' is used with reference to sexual relations (see Richardson's footnote), as in the Hebrew Bible (though with a different verb). There is also much that can be gained from reading the prologue and epilogue regarding the value placed upon social justice, a value not unique to the OT law or prophets. Thus students of the English translation, as well as those of the Old Babylonian text, will benefit by consulting Richardson's contribution.

Richard S. Hess

Denver Seminary, Co.

The Future of the Deuteronomistic History (BETL 147)

T. Römer (Ed.)

Leuven: University Press and Peeters, 2000,
265 pp.

Israel constructs its history. Deuteronomistic historiography in recent research (JSOTSup. 306)

A. de Pury, T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi (Eds.)

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2000,
504 pp., h/b., £60.00

Two volumes with a variety of articles about the 'Deuteronomistic History' lie in front of me, inevitably dealing with the same issues. I will refer to them as Leuven and Sheffield respectively. Several authors contributed to both volumes, e.g. Römer, McKenzie, Dietrich, and Knauf. In one way or another, most of the articles discuss whether, how, where and when Deuteronomists had a hand in OT texts. The 'whether' is generally agreed, though not every contributor accepts a Deuteronomistic History. For instance, for Knauf (Leuven 110; Sheffield 388-98), Samuel and Kings contain stories which convey spiritual truth but cannot properly be called history.

Regarding 'how, where and when', there is no unanimity, either in OT scholarship generally or in these representative volumes. Noth's thesis that there was one Deuteronomistic historian who reworked the stories of the past in the light of the exile has been modified, expanded and replaced. Did the Deuteronomists form a school? Or were they a movement? If so, was it prophetic, priestly or scribal? What sort of interests did they have? Were they editors, authors, preachers? Is their work also visible in the first four books of the Pentateuch? Can we find their traces in the prophetic books, or even in the writings? And what about apparent contradictions between the

Deuteronomistic history and the so called Deuteronomistic passages of Jeremiah? Were there more than one Deuteronomistic edition, and if so how many?

The two volumes deal with these questions in a variety of ways. Sheffield contains an extensive 118 page history of research by Römer and de Pury, recommended reading for every serious student of Deuteronomy, Joshua-Kings, Jeremiah and Chronicles. It even includes a brief discussion of Noth's personality and circumstances of writing (1943), seeing these reflected in his thesis. It would be very helpful to have such psychological insights more often.

The Leuven volume contains articles in English (7), French (4), German (2) and Spanish (1). The Sheffield volume is all in English, and is a translation of a work published mostly in French in 1996. (However, Albertz's article is an exception, in that it was part of the French original of Sheffield, but now appears in adapted form in English in Leuven.) Sheffield also contains several articles about historiography in the Ancient Near East.

These books deal with much material relevant to the current debate, but I would only recommend them to post-graduates. Unfortunately, synchronic reading is hardly present (except for Smith in Sheffield). I must confess that reading again so many hypothetical proposals left me longing for some coherent exegesis. But I suppose the debate about the Deuteronomistic influences in the OT will continue.

Hetty Lalleman-de Winkel
Spurgeon's College, London

A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The survival of Jonah in western culture

Y. Sherwood

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000,
xii + 321 pp., £14.95

This is a remarkable book – original, erudite, multidisciplinary, witty, provocative, committed. Its basic plot is a survey of the ways in which Jonah has been interpreted over the centuries. To this scattered, confused and convoluted story the author brings not only exceptional powers of analysis and description, but also her own spin on issues of method, ethics and theology. This is as far from a dry, objective listing of the opinions of dead authors as it is possible to imagine. Sherwood is not interested in merely presenting evidence. She wants us to admire, marvel, laugh, even be brought to repentance.

She explores three main approaches to Jonah: 'mainstream' Christian readings, Jewish readings, and the 'backwaters' of popular interpretations. The mainstream readings are further divided into four main strands: the Christ-like Jonah of the Fathers, the Jewish Jonah of anti-semitic Christian tradition, the Jonah of the Reformers (subject to extreme chastisement), and the historically uncertain Jonah of the improbable fish. The fantastic diversity of popular readings is given a sympathetic discussion, displaying the author's expertise in English Literature (e.g. the review of the complex relations between *Moby Dick* and Jonah). The cumulative impression is of the amazing versatility of the book of Jonah. Radically diverse Jonahs have been constructed from just 48 verses, with the help of plentiful gaps in the text, the virtuoso exercise of the imagination, and a wide range of intertexts from the rest of the Bible and beyond. The corresponding lesson is the crucial significance of the social, cultural and theological place from which we read.

A significant bonus is the discussion of secular, Jewish and Christian approaches to hermeneutics. Much of this will be reasonably familiar to scholars, but to it Sherwood brings an impressive breadth of reading and a sharply nuanced evaluation. Her scholarship and sophistication makes for a demanding read, but the task is both lightened and raised to a new level by the author's high, allusive style. She has a fine eye for a contemporary analogy from literature, film, or art. (Jonah's Tarshish ship is as doomed as the Titanic.) Her creative exposition of key images constantly illuminates and furthers her argument. Her own reading of the book is titled 'Regurgitating Jonah,' a characteristic combination of historical awareness, humility before an inexhaustible text, and metaphorical creativity.

For all her awareness of diversity, Sherwood wants to make some strong points. The fiercest condemnations are aimed at one-sided universalizing interpretations, particularly those that see Jonah negatively as a typical hard-hearted, nationalistic Jew, an unlikable foil for the loving, universal 'Christian' God. The positive representation of Jonah in the early Christian fathers and in Jewish interpretation highlights the danger of this kind of superficial reading. Instead, she exhorts us to heed the rabbinic injunction to 'watch over the universal from the particular'.

The book is too subtle and ambivalent for crude judgement in any direction. But while I fully endorse this attentiveness to the text, I think that it is also true that any reading reflects prior decisions about who God is and how he reveals himself. Sherwood regards Jonah as an appropriate starting-point for reflection on the character of God, but I suspect that at a fundamental level the universal must watch over the particular. The creed of Jonah 4:2 is accepted by both God and Jonah as the starting-point. It is how this works out in

Jonah's untypical context that is unpredictable, uncomfortable, and surprising. Even more fundamental is whether someone reads these texts as from a Jewish or a Christian context, or from somewhere else. Sherwood's location in the third of these camps necessarily limits what she can say in the closing pages. But wherever we locate our permanent home, the voyage she takes us on is an exhilarating one from which we will not return unchanged. I cannot remember enjoying a book on biblical interpretation more.

Philip Jenson,
Trinity College, Bristol

New Testament

Birth of Jesus: Biblical and Theological Reflections

George J. Brooke (ed.)
Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2000,
xiii + 141 pp., £9.95

The Stories of Jesus' Birth: a Critical Introduction

Edwin D. Freed
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001,
184 pp., £14.95

What are we to make of the doctrine of the virginal conception today, and what is its basis in Scripture? These are the questions asked by two accessible books on the birth of Jesus, each of which is sceptical about the historical value of the biblical accounts.

Brooke's collection of essays arises from a conference held at Manchester to mark the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus. The contributors approach the birth of Jesus from the perspective of their own disciplines, and in so doing raise a variety of interesting and provocative questions and suggestions. Thus, for example,

Grace Jantzen suggests that Christian reflection on the death of Jesus has led to an unnecessary theological neglect of the actuality of his birth. Jesus, unlike Adam, entered the world as a child through birth and infancy, and this givenness of the nativity leads her to present the concept of human natality as something to set alongside an awareness of human mortality. Therefore she calls for an awareness that all humans are those who are born as well as those who will die, and she argues that an appreciation of natality will help to construct a theology that signifies a future and a hope.

Perhaps of most interest to readers of *Themelios* will be those essays that reflect either on the question of whether there is any historical content to the biblical accounts – could it have happened, and is there evidence to suggest that it did? Or on understanding the biblical accounts. Arthur Peacocke, writing in the light both of theology and biological science, addresses head on the question of whether it could have happened and claims that it could not. He argues that modern science and its understanding of the world as a closed causal nexus tends to exclude the possibility of any miracle, and that there is no good historical evidence to make the virginal conception an exception. Not all scientists accept that the universe is such a closed causal nexus, however, so this argument need not rule out the possibility of the virginal conception, although it does show the enormity of the claim. Similarly, it is not clear that modern genetics rule out the possibility of God causing a virgin to give birth anymore than it rules out the possibility of God acting to raise the dead.

Other contributors interact more exegetically with the biblical material. Todd Klutz draws attention to frequent Lukan connections between female chastity and the Spirit of prophecy in Luke-Acts. Graham Ward,

discussing what he calls the politics of circumcision, suggests that Luke's account of the circumcision of Jesus is a gesture of resistance to the cultural hegemony of Hellenism. Gentiles had great difficulty with circumcision, yet Luke (unlike Matthew) chooses to draw attention to Jesus' circumcision. Philip Alexander, rather curiously, suggests that little of Jesus' Jewishness is to be seen in the stories of his birth, while George Brooke offers four texts from Qumran which help to show how a Second Temple Jew might have understood aspects of these accounts. He assumes that these texts from Qumran show what was possible for Second Temple Jews to believe, but he does not justify why he reads parts of the story of the birth of Jesus and associated narratives in the light of Qumran rather than vice versa. Barry Matlock, interacting with David Wenham, argues that there is no reason to attribute any belief in the virgin birth to Paul. He suggests that the silence of Mark (and Paul) on the subject, together with the apparent evidence of the lateness of the traditions in Matthew and in Luke raises the question of what Paul may have known of the human Jesus, and this takes him into the wider Jesus-Paul debate.

Freed's introduction to the infancy narratives takes a similar approach to that of Matlock. He concludes that the sum total of Paul's evidence concerning the birth of Jesus is that he was born a Jew of a woman, possibly as a descendant of David. These too are the only facts of history that he will admit from the stories of Jesus birth in the Gospels; 'The rest of the birth stories express religious truths and theological convictions of Matthew and Luke in beautiful and edifying legends, myths and poetry.'

This conclusion seems more definite than Freed's discussion of the birth narratives might allow, however. He does note that there are elements common to the Matthean and Lukan

narratives which means that each evangelist may have used an earlier source, but his belief (following Goulder) that Luke may have drawn on Matthew as well as on Mark also allows for the possibility that such common elements are due to Luke's dependence on Matthew. Thus Freed sees the genesis of the Matthean infancy narrative in a defence against Jewish accusations that Jesus was illegitimate, although he accepts that it is difficult to tell what material Matthew acquired from earlier sources and what he added to them.

Freed's historical conclusions are interwoven with (but perhaps not demanded by) his readings of the Matthean and Lukan narratives. He sets out to read them both as literary units that are complete in themselves, and also as integral parts of the Gospels of which they are parts. There are times when a firmer editorial hand might have improved the structure of the book and separated more clearly the discussions of Matthew and Luke, but the greatest strength of the discussion is the careful attention it pays to literary parallels within and between each account as well as between the two accounts and narratives in the Septuagint. Thus there is a synoptic comparison of the Matthean and Lukan accounts; of 1 Samuel 1-2 and Luke 1-2; and of Luke's stories of John and Jesus. He also notes significant parallels between Luke and the Septuagint in his accounts of Zechariah and Elisabeth (cf. Abraham and Sarah), John the Baptist (cf. Samson) and the annunciation to Mary (cf. God's promise to David through Nathan in 2 Samuel 7). Freed is strong on the use of the OT in both Matthew and Luke, although his discussion often includes the sub-text that accounts written in the light of earlier accounts of God's activity reflect the composition of the evangelists rather than any basis in historical events.

Freed also includes useful discussions of most sections of the Matthean and

Lukan narratives such as the identity and significance of the magi and the shepherds, although there were times when these discussions did seem too diffuse and in need of focus. There are many useful discussions in this book, and its modest size may make it more accessible to the students and interested church groups for whom the author writes than the longer work by Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*. I tried to avoid making such a comparison, since Brown's work is a magisterial treatment on another scale altogether, yet time and time again I found Freed wanting in the light of Brown's study. The comparison may be unfair, but somehow it seems inevitable, and it may be the case that Brown remains the better book even for most undergraduates and some church groups. Certainly anyone wishing to take further the questions raised by Freed will turn to Brown, not least because Freed's own discussion of controversial questions as well as his bibliography is disappointing. Most significant, perhaps, is the omission of any reference to authors who take a different view to his own on the question of the historicity of the virgin birth. In this respect, his failure to acknowledge different opinions on the problem posed by Luke's reference to a census under Quirinius is particularly striking.

Themelios readers might well wish to look also at articles such as those of C.E.B. Cranfield (SJT 41 1998, now reprinted in his *On Romans and Other Essays*), I.H. Marshall (in *Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, ed. D.F. Wright) and B. Witherington III ('Birth of Jesus', in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J.B. Green). Certainly there are serious historical questions to be asked about the beginnings of belief in the virginal conception, and about the nature of the event, but serious discussion requires interaction with those of differing views. Thus it is disappointing that both of these books, although stimulating in many ways, have no

room for anyone to argue for a traditional understanding of the birth of Jesus.

Andrew Gregory
Lincoln College, Oxford

Paul and the Mosaic Law

James D.G. Dunn (ed.)
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001,
xi + 363 pp.

This paperback edition and part-translation of the 1994 Durham-Tübingen Symposium on 'Paul and the Mosaic Law' will do much to widen the audience of this important collection of essays. The contributors are some of the key players in the contemporary debates on the issue, and the original German contributions to the symposium and to the original edition are available in English for the first time.

In the first chapter, Hermann Lichtenberger ('The Understanding of the Torah in the Judaism of Paul's Day') identifies a number of areas of progress in recent study of Judaism. The old dangerous caricatures of Judaism as a religion of purely external obedience are on the wane. Older works such as Schürer's *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* and Billerbeck's source-book providing rabbinic parallels to the NT are being superseded by studies which have a more sympathetic attitude to Judaism. But Lichtenberger also rightly warns that E.P. Sanders' work must not become a 'new Billerbeck'. Sanders' work also has numerous problems - Lichtenberger mentions the criticism by Friedrich Avemarie, for example, that Sanders systematises Judaism too much.

N.T. Wright's piece on Romans 2 is particularly interesting. He makes an important contribution in his argument for Romans 2:14-15 as referring to gentile *Christians*, and that 2:12 makes clear that gentiles are

not subject to judgement according to Torah. The chapter is a useful and clear statement of his position that Paul is responding to Israel's extended exile (Rom. 2:23-24). It also sets out his understanding of Israel's sense of national privilege as God's chosen people irrespective of how much Israelites sinned. This last point (one of the key elements of the 'New Perspective' on Paul) goes too far in reacting against traditional understandings of Jewish self-righteousness/works-righteousness, however. The evidence in the book from Lichtenberger (21-22) and Barclay (308) shows how Josephus 'boasts' of Israel's greater adherence to their laws by comparison with the other nations.

It is also good to have the work of Otfried Hofius translated into English for the first time (as far as I am aware) in this volume. Hofius' chapter ('The Adam-Christ Antithesis and the Law') argues that the Adam-Christ antithesis is central to the understanding of Romans 5:12-21, and that the statements about the Law are relatively incidental to that section. However, where the Law is mentioned, it lies squarely on the 'Adam' side, and is not partway between Adam and Christ in terms of its contribution to salvation. Its function is merely to declare the pattern of sin and death that Adam inaugurated, and the fact that humanity is thus subject to God's condemnation. This contrasts sharply with the positive view of the Law presented elsewhere in the book. (See, for example, Dunn's criticisms on p. 322.)

For anyone involved in research on Paul, this volume is a must. For the undergraduate wanting to get a feel for the key issues in current debates on Paul and the Law, one could hardly do better than the brief conclusion by J.D.G. Dunn ('In Search of Common Ground') at the end of the volume. This section sets up the issues, and collects together some of the

discussion which took place at the Symposium, although this material is sometimes slanted in favour of Dunn's own views. This comes out, for example, in another often repeated *New Perspective* emphasis: that Judaism's view of obedience to the Law did not make 'final acceptance by God conditional on that obedience' (312). But, as a number of scholars have shown, eschatological salvation in Judaism was precisely dependent upon obedience to the Law. (See, for example, elsewhere in the book: Lichtenberger, 15-16. 22-23; Hengel, 33; Stanton, 105.)

There is, unfortunately, not space to discuss all the essays in the volume. Hengel's essay ('The Attitude of Paul to the Law') argues in particular detail that Paul's doctrine of justification apart from works of the Law could not have originated in the dispute at Galatia, but rather had its source in his conversion. Stanton's chapter ('The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ - Galatians 3.1 - 6.2') defends the thesis that Paul does not completely abandon the Law of Moses, and makes a number of criticisms of E.P. Sanders along the way. A debate between S. Westerholm and H. Räisänen focuses around Romans 9-11, while Hans Hübner covers Romans 7, and John Barclay Romans 14-15. There are two chapters on the Law in 1 Corinthians (by Peter Tomson and Stephen Barton), two on Galatians 2 (J. Lambrecht and Bruce Longenecker), and one on 2 Corinthians 3 by Karl Kertelge. Richard Hays' piece on Romans 3-4 is a particularly useful (and characteristically well written) statement of his positions on these key chapters. Some of the sections in the book are more technical than others, and the volume is not intended as an introduction to Paul and the Law. It is in general much more suited to research students and scholars than to undergraduates and ministers.

Simon Gathercole
University of Aberdeen

Paul and the Stoics

Troels Engberg-Pedersen

Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000,

435 pp., £19.95/\$39.95

Engberg-Pedersen finds the key to a 'comprehensive and coherent understanding' of Paul in Stoicism. He abstracts from it and from three Pauline letters – Philippians, Galatians, and Romans – a heuristic model that he thinks underlies Stoic ethics and much of Paul's thought.

Chapter 1 provides Engberg-Pedersen's stance vis-à-vis Paul and Pauline scholarship. He is interested in how insiders (himself included) might appropriate Paul today, but he argues that before one can go there, one must read Paul critically and 'coolly from the outside' (2). Chapter 2 focuses on the model and what he hopes it will achieve. He believes there is a payoff for reading 'Paul – the whole of Paul, not just this or that fairly restricted motif – in the light of Stoicism and the ancient ethical tradition generally' (1). A respectful and sympathetic interpretation will be obtained, one which sees a 'sufficient degree of coherence' between the theological and practical levels of Paul's discourse, and which takes him seriously as a thinker who was 'accustomed to thinking along ancient Greek philosophical lines'. Chapter 3 fleshes out his model in relation to Stoic ethics as may be relevant for studying Paul. Chapters 3 to 10 analyse Philippians (two chapters), Galatians (two chapters), and Romans (three chapters). Some thought-provoking interpretations are served up throughout. In his discussion of Romans 6–8, for example, he argues that Paul claimed for the baptised a state of actual, realised sinlessness, based, not so much on any substantive changes that took place in baptism, but on the 'logical category of the understanding'. Chapter 11 provides a summary of the theses presented earlier.

Five years previously, Engberg-Pedersen wrote, 'The last fifteen years of scholarly research on Paul have seen the breakdown of the traditional monolithic contrasts – between Paul and Judaism (taken as one simple block) and between Paul and Hellenism (again taken as one simple block)' (Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, 256). He reaffirms this in *Paul and the Stoics*. In view of this much to be welcomed shift away from the conventional approach to reading Paul, this reviewer wants to see what the author's comprehensive and coherent interpretation of Paul might look like were it to incorporate, not just the apostle's relationship to Stoicism, but also his connection to Judaism and other contours in Hellenistic thought. Engberg-Pedersen concedes that his book should be read alongside others that stress Paul's 'Jewish profile' (ix), and he does not deny significant differences between Paul and the Stoics; Paul's apocalyptic world-view is illustrative. Yet when he sets the relevance of Paul's apocalypticism apart, I am left to ponder whether he has allowed the Stoic viewpoint to take over altogether. Something similar may be seen in the way he handles the substantive categories in Paul's thought. Engberg-Pedersen says they are there, but he believes they are not a 'real option for us'. At the level of exegesis, however, he does not remain open to the place the substantive language might play in his interpretation. Based on the selectivity of his approach, I wonder whether he has not left me with a skewed interpretation of the data.

Be this as it may, Engberg-Pedersen's risky and daring (in the best sense of these words) approach makes transparent many connections between Paul's hortatory practice and the ancient ethical tradition and his application of his model generates an overabundance of exciting questions.

Kenneth A. Fox

Wycliffe College, Toronto

The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ

Martin Hengel

London: SCM Press, 2000,
xi + 354 pp., £14.95

This is a wide-ranging work by one of the senior statesmen of NT scholarship. It draws on a lifetime's work, although some of Hengel's arguments are presented more cogently in his earlier writings to which he refers. Hengel's main concern is to present his understanding of how four written Gospels came together in one collection, and how written biographical accounts of the activity of Jesus came to be known as 'Gospels' in the light of the earlier understanding of the term 'Gospel' as the proclamation of Jesus as Saviour. A final chapter, offered as a postscript, argues against too ready an acceptance of the Q hypothesis. Hengel claims not to dispute the existence of Q, 'but only the possibility of demonstrating its unity and reconstructing it in any way which is at all reliable'. Elsewhere he refers to Q as 'a modern pseudo-scientific "myth"'. Closely related to this are his arguments that *Luke* is earlier than *Matthew*, and that the author of *Matthew* drew on *Luke*.

The book's origin in an expansion of lectures has mixed consequences. The book reads easily, but there is repetition. So too Hengel offers controversial opinions on a number of disputed questions, but the text of the book seems at times to imply that these opinions may be taken as given. Thus the reader carried along by the text (207 pp.) may miss the further discussion in the lengthy endnotes. (113 pp.), although sometimes even in the notes Hengel simply lambasts rather than interacts with those who offer hypotheses different to his own.

Hengel's discussion begins with the conundrum that there can only be one 'Gospel', the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, yet there are

four 'Gospels', separate biographical narrative accounts concerning Jesus that are both rival and mutually supplementary. From this situation arise two questions. First, what is the relationship between the gospel preached by Paul and the account written by Mark, and how can each be given the same designation? Second, how is it that we have the narrative of Jesus' activity in a fourfold and often contradictory form in the NT Canon, and how old are these Gospels?

Hengel's answer to the first question, which stresses the essential continuity between Paul's gospel and the accounts of the Evangelists, accounts for the bulk of the book. Mark, whose authority rests on that of Peter, wrote a narrative account of the life of Jesus. He called this work a Gospel, for it contains the account of the saving message of Jesus. It is a kerygmatic biography which takes its title from its opening, *Mark* 1:1, and which originated as a single Gospel codex. This codex was disseminated from Rome, and Luke drew on it as one of several sources which he combined with sayings-traditions. Matthew, who drew on both *Mark* and *Luke*, took this process a stage further. Luke's authority rested on his connection with Paul, whereas the later authors of *Matthew* and *John* needed to claim the authority of an apostle. The uniformity of the titles goes back to Mark's title, and these titles allowed the different accounts of the life of Jesus to be distinguished from one another in the book cupboard where they were kept when not being read publicly in worship.

Hengel suggests that this development will have taken place in Rome by the late first or early second century, and he argues that the practice of reading the gospels alongside the OT derived from synagogue worship at an early stage, although the first description of such a practice is not found until the writings of Justin Martyr.

Hengel devotes less attention to the question of why the early church

retained four authoritative accounts of the life of Jesus. He claims that the development of the fourfold gospel was presupposed rather than occasioned by Marcion. Thus Hengel argues that the decision to draw on four gospels, first defended explicitly in Irenaeus, was made at an early stage.

Hengel's reconstructions are always possible and often plausible, but rarely are they either the necessary or the only possible or plausible reading of the evidence. Hengel notes that probably more than 85% of Christian texts from the second century have been lost, but this means that what extant evidence there is may be interpreted in more than one way. Therefore the last word is yet to be said on these questions. Hengel does well to question the sometimes dubious support for scholarly hypotheses that are sometimes taken as givens, but so too some aspects of his own reconstruction of the origin of the fourfold gospel should be seen as conjectural or hypothetical rather than as the assured results of scholarship.

Andrew Gregory

Lincoln College, Oxford

Paul: A Man of Two Worlds

C.J. den Heyer, trans. John Bowden

London: SCM Press, 2000,

312 pp., £17.50

Den Heyer, Professor of New Testament at the Theological University of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, may be known to readers from his earlier survey of life of Jesus research entitled, *Jesus Matters: 150 Years of Research* (Trinity Press International, 1996). In this sweeping 'biographical' and 'historical' survey of Paul's life and letters, Den Heyer offers his interpretation of the Apostle Paul.

The first chapter treats preliminary matters such as method and sources. The next four chapters reconstruct

Paul's life until the commencement of his letter-writing activities preserved in the NT. The remainder of the book is organised around chapters devoted to each of what Den Heyer regards at the seven authentic Pauline letters in their chronological order according to the author's reconstruction. The concluding chapter offers 'A Retrospect'. The book concludes with endnotes and a Scripture index.

Readers will find areas to profit from in this book: for example, den Heyer places firm emphasis on the role of apocalyptic in Paul's life and thought. Furthermore, he understands Paul as a 'contextual theologian' writing letters to young churches in response to their questions and concerns. Den Heyer concludes that Paul's letters deal primarily with the unity of these churches.

Nevertheless, the book proves to be an overall disappointment. Several factors contribute to this judgement. First, as the subtitle indicates, Den Heyer regards Paul as a 'man of two worlds', or as he states in his retrospect, a man with 'two souls'. A *diaspora* Jew became a zealot for Jesus Christ. The differences between his Jewish roots and new-found life as a disciple of Christ brought not only internal conflict, but external conflict with Jews and Roman authorities as well. So far, so good. Yet one finds little in this book about the Jewish or Greco-Roman worlds that fed this conflict. One of the most profitable areas in NT studies of late has been precisely in our understanding of these worlds. One looks in vain, however, for interaction with the multitudes of studies emerging from sociological and rhetorical analysis that could inform the conflict Den Heyer finds at the centre of Paul. One could easily contrast this book with profitable use made of such research in Ben Witherington's, *The Paul Quest*.

Readers of this journal will also take exception to the author's summary dismissal (in four pages) of Pauline authorship of Ephesians, Colossians,

2 Thessalonians and the Pastoral Epistles. Although mainstream scholarship would agree with Den Heyer on this point, he fails to mention evidence for Pauline authorship. Rather, he presupposes a trajectory within the early Christian movement from primitive egalitarian communities with little structure to late first century/early second century groups where order and structure are paramount. Once such a structure becomes assumed, letters such as the Pastorals can neatly be inserted into their proper place in the prescribed trajectory. For contrary reconstructions and a critique of approaches such as Den Heyer's, readers should consult recent works (on the Pastorals, for example) such as William Mounce's commentary in the Word Biblical Commentary series or Luke T. Johnson's commentary on First and Second Timothy in the Anchor Bible series.

Thirdly, Den Heyer regards the Acts of the Apostles as a late first-century work produced by someone other than a companion of Paul. Although the writer of Acts used sources and thus produced a fairly reliable record of Paul's activities, the testimony of Acts remains coloured by the writer's later perspective. Thus, Acts may be used to inform our understanding of Paul, but no 'general guideline' can be laid down for discerning how to sort out the historically accurate information from that tainted by the writer's later viewpoint. Rather, each passage in Acts must be assessed individually. Yet, Den Heyer seldom provides any such assessment in his treatment of Acts. Passages are typically accepted or rejected with little comment. This practice leaves one wondering whether the evidence in Acts, evaluated on its own, determines what Den Heyer accepts or rejects, or if his own understanding of Paul shapes his decision in these matters.

Finally, Den Heyer divides Philippians into two letters. The first, consisting

of Philippians 1:1 – 3:1, 4:2–7, and 4:10–23 was written before Philemon and the fragments of letters now combined into our present 2 Corinthians. The second letter, made up of Philippians 3:2 – 4:1 and 4:8–9, was written afterwards. Although he admits the decision to divide the letter in this fashion was a difficult one, the reader is left wondering where the scholar gets the wisdom to discern how previous letters were dissected into pieces and later recombined, and more importantly, what historical setting can explain such a process. This same criticism applies to Den Heyer's dismantling of 2 Corinthians.

If one is searching for an overview of Paul's life and letters amidst the recent plethora of such works, this is not the place to start. Students are better served by Ben Witherington's book cited above, or for the life of Paul, F.F. Bruce's *Apostle of the Free Spirit*. The positive points in Den Heyer's reconstruction can readily be found elsewhere.

James C. Miller

Daystar University, Nairobi

John

D. Moody Smith Jr.
Oxford: Abingdon, 1999,
428 pp., £15.99

D. Moody Smith Jr. has for many years been one of the world's most distinguished Johannine scholars. It is good finally to have a substantial commentary to add to his various books and articles on the Gospel. As in the other Abingdon Commentaries, the style is accessible (not needing Greek) but there is a good level of detail. There is also space given to discussing the theology of the passages in the Gospel.

Smith is a strong advocate of the 'Johannine Community' approach to studying John. He sees the Gospel as reflecting three or four historical stages. The first is Jesus' own

ministry. The next is a stage of conflict between Christians and non-Christians that takes place while Christians are still within synagogues. This is represented by Jesus' conflict with 'The Jews' (e.g., John 8). The third stage takes place after the split from the synagogue and involves issues of Christian life which are raised in passages such as the Farewell Discourse. The possible fourth stage would involve further Christian issues raised in the Epilogue (John 21) and maybe elsewhere.

It follows from this that Smith is sceptical about the historicity of most accounts in the Gospel. A good example is his comment on John 8:44: 'although there were serious differences and debates between them, no such hostility dominated the relationship between the historical Jesus and other Jews. We see here rather the reflection of the mortal tension between the Johannine community and the Jews who had rejected their claims' (186f.). Many of Smith's points on historicity are argued reasonably. However, at key places such as the texts relating to the date of the crucifixion, his case is seriously weakened by not interacting at all with the substantial arguments of conservative scholars such as Carson (whom he cites approvingly on some other issues).

The absence of interaction with recent work that questions his own approach is a serious limitation of Smith's commentary. He has no interaction at all with feminist scholarship. On 'the Jews' in John he does not respond to Steve Motyer's important recent work in the area. Most fundamentally, he shows no awareness of the work of Richard Bauckham and others who challenge the whole idea of centring exegesis on the concept of a 'Johannine Community'.

Having said all this, I would still recommend this commentary, albeit not as one's only resource on John's Gospel. It distils years of experience

and considerable wisdom in the handling of the text. Its accessibility is enhanced by helpful summaries before and after many sections. It is a commentary that provides plenty of food for exegetical and theological reflection on the text in a very digestible form.

Peter Oakes

Northern College and
University of Manchester

History

Evangelicalism Divided. A record of crucial change in the years 1950–2000

Iain H. Murray

Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000,
342 pp., h/b, £13.50

In the autumn of 1952, a young and newly converted student at Durham University sought counsel from the President of the Christian Union. He had become confused by the statement made by a senior Christian Union member, one Iain Murray, that the theologically liberal department of theology was 'Satanic'. That bewildered student was the present reviewer of Iain Murray's recent book *Evangelicalism Divided*.

Over the years, Iain Murray has had time to nurture, mature and crystallise his views but, as *Evangelicalism Divided* clearly demonstrates, he has not radically changed them. Having discovered as a student the writings of the Reformers and Puritans, Murray became convinced that the message of the Bible was far more powerful than he was hearing from the pulpits and platforms of most evangelicals of his own day. Thus his zeal for the great preachers of the past motivated his founding of the Banner of Truth Trust and its production of many publications, including *Evangelicalism Divided*.

This book is not merely a piece of research, as by a scholar or investigative journalist, but part of

Murray's *apologia pro vita sua*, covering not only the development of post-war evangelicalism but also the period of Murray's own Christian activity. He has lived, read and thought through every event recorded in the book other than in the first chapter 'setting the scene', which traces the origins of modern liberal theology.

Murray begins by asserting that the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was the father of theological liberalism, which was to permeate almost every theological faculty then move outward into the denominations throughout Europe and the USA during the 19th and 20th centuries. Liberalism, however, was denounced by Grescham Machen and other orthodox theologians as being not only non-Christian but altogether another religion. Consequently, Machen and his colleagues, forced to secede from Princeton, founded the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. This was to become a bastion of orthodox evangelicalism in the United States, set aside from the mainstream denominations.

Nevertheless, two of the earliest graduates of Westminster, Harold John Ockenga and Edward John Carnell, believed that evangelicalism could be carried back into the denominations in a respected academic fashion, and pioneered the Fuller Bible Seminary in Pasadena. Ockenga and Carnell were in turn the fathers of what came to be known as the 'new evangelicalism'. This kind of evangelicalism was to influence powerfully the hitherto fundamentalist evangelist Dr Billy Graham, and the Billy Graham Organisation came to accept co-operation from such liberal churches as were willing to work on its terms. In due course, however, the BGO became enmeshed in the ecumenical movement and ready to work with Roman Catholicism.

Murray argues that a similar process began in Anglican evangelicalism, the

watershed of which was the National Evangelical Congress at Keele in 1967, followed by two further such congresses, at Nottingham in 1977 and Caister in 1987. Among evangelical leaders, only Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones realised what was happening, which was why he had only given very cautious support to the UK Billy Graham Crusades in the 1960s. Anglican evangelicalism, in its desire to be ecclesiastically acceptable and ever looking over its shoulder for approval from liberal theologians, had come to blunt its message. For Murray, there is no such thing as theological neutrality. The new evangelicals had been simply deluded by Satan.

This is clearly a very controversial book and Murray presents his case powerfully, citing over 300 authorities, some of them several times. *Evangelicalism Divided* should be read alongside the writings of such as David Wells, D.A. Carson, Oliver Barclay and others who, at various levels, are calling evangelicals back to sound and forthright Biblical teaching lest they break away from their moorings altogether.

Peter Cook

Alston, Cumbria

From Awakening to Secession: Radical Evangelicals in Switzerland and Britain 1815-35

Timothy C.F. Stunt

Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2000,
402 pp., h/b., £29.95/\$59.95

This major work represents the fruit of a lifetime's research. Timothy Stunt has produced numerous articles during his long career but this is his first book for thirty years. And it is a *magnum opus*!

In it Stunt considers the various evangelicals of Switzerland and Britain, and in particular the links and interactions between them. He is little concerned with established

groups of dissenters and non-conformists; Methodism receives scant attention, and the Congregationalists and Baptists none at all. Instead, Stunt focuses on the national or 'mainline' churches, and on the evangelical movements struggling to emerge within them. As his title suggests, the groups which emerged early in his chosen period had, as often as not, seceded from the national churches by the mid-1830s. The process by which this happened is the central theme of the book.

As Stunt himself points out, his story is concerned with those radical evangelicals who, whilst unhappy about the rise of nationalism and the politics of the French Revolution, were not merely nostalgic for the past, but assumed instead 'that peace could be no more than a momentary chimera' and that they were 'living in the "last times"'. - This was a conviction that inclined many of them to a new interest in the eschatology. Inevitably, the rise of the Brethren, replete with their new dispensational schema, and the career of Edward Irving and his rediscovery of the charismata play significant parts in the story. So too do the awakenings in Geneva (which had sunk into a complete spiritual torpor a century or so before these developments) and Bern in the 1810s.

It should be said that this book is a detailed study, rather than a racy read. It is careful and judicious in its style that is also to say, alas, heavy going in places. Stunt's work will certainly be a prime point of reference for scholars for decades to come, but is unlikely to be a historical best-seller in the short term. For those already in the know about some of his leading characters, however, Stunt's book is an invaluable 'filling in' of the background, and of the wider connections. Here are the whole host of figures placed in their broader context. J.H. Merle d'Aubigné is a case in point. Many readers will know of him, if only because of the Banner of Truth's keeping some of his works in

print long after they have been superseded as works of scholarship. Stunt provides the backcloth from which Merle d'Aubigné emerged, and against which he worked.

The book commences with a very insightful summary of the relationship between politics, intellectual life and religion during the eighteenth century. It then gives detailed accounts of the *réveil* in Switzerland, including the parts played by British visitors to that country, and its subsequent impact upon Britain in turn. There are complete chapters given over to events in Ireland (J.N. Darby, A.N. Groves etc.) and in Scotland (Thomas Chalmers, Thomas Erskine et al.), as well as to pre-Tractarian Oxford. The final chapters look at the process of secession.

Stunt's conclusion is that radical evangelicalism offers both benefits and negativities. He points to the 'ecclesiastical agoraphobia which so often accompanies the quest for a smaller and purer communion', and sees this epitomised by Brethren divisiveness and the 'fervent but lonely piety' of the Catholic Apostolics. At the same time, he is appreciative of the radical emphasis (he mentions the contemporary charismatic movement) that have managed to find their way into 'forms of worship across the entire ecclesiastical spectrum'. As Stunt sees it, the trick for radicals is to channel their energies into renewing the whole body without making their own rigorism normative; the trick for church authorities is to make a place for 'a more intimate and committed circle of devotion'. *Ecclesiola in ecclesiae*. Whether or not one agrees with Stunt's conclusion, reading his work is both a broadening and a deepening experience. A must for theological libraries, nineteenth-century specialists and, one suspects, for many others besides.

Meic Pearse

London Bible College

Reformation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Carl R. Trueman
Brynthirion: Brynthirion Press, 2000,
99 pp., £4.95

This short, thought-provoking book is based on four lectures given at the *Word and Spirit* conference of the Evangelical Theological College of Wales. In a characteristically direct and hard-hitting style, Carl Trueman sets out to rescue the Reformation from both its detractors and its friends. On the one hand, he is concerned about those on the evangelical 'left', 'the radicals, the visionaries, the risk-takers'; theologians who deny that God knows the future or that Christ is the only way to salvation, and charismatics whose services centre not on biblical preaching but on nebulous choruses, testimonies and entertainment. However, he is also worried about the Reformed 'right', which tends to idolise the Reformers whilst often failing to appreciate Luther's 'theology of the cross' or the Reformation stress on assurance of salvation. For Trueman, a proper understanding and application of Reformation theology provides the antidote to our current evangelical ills.

After introducing his theme in chapter 1, Trueman moves on in the three subsequent chapters to explain the relevance of Reformation teaching on the Cross, biblical preaching, and assurance. The outstanding chapter is chapter 2, 'Meeting the Man of Sorrows'. Here we read of Luther's insistence that God's ultimate revelation of himself is in the weakness, brokenness, suffering and humiliation of the Cross. Trueman laments the fact that Luther's 'theology of the cross' quickly slipped from the agenda of Protestant theology, and contends that it is an explosive challenge to a society obsessed with self-fulfilment, materialism, and personal comfort. Here Reformation theology produces

radical social analysis. Chapter 3 focuses on 'the most difficult and perhaps most controversial part of the Reformation legacy today' – the centrality of the Word written and preached. Trueman champions the traditional Reformed vision of a learned ministry, whose practitioners possess a solid grounding in biblical languages, biblical theology and systematic theology. Finally, chapter 4 discusses the Reformation doctrine of assurance, which directs the believer to look outside himself to a trustworthy God, rather than to look within. Trueman makes the intriguing case that this is the corrective to both the 'introspective legalism' found in certain branches of Highland Presbyterianism and the 'joyful triumphalism' common in some charismatic circles.

Reformation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow is never dull, and it demonstrates that far from being the irrelevant playground of antiquarians, sixteenth-century Protestant theology can enrich and deepen the life of the evangelical church. However, the book could, I think, have been stronger if it had shown greater sympathy for the pietist and charismatic currents within evangelicalism. The pietist and charismatic movements, of course, have had their faults, but they have also done much to revitalise evangelical Protestantism, and bring millions of people into a living faith in Christ. There are also hard questions to be asked about the Reformed model of a learned ministry, since the extraordinary impact of mass evangelical movements like Methodism and Pentecostalism owes much to their populist impulse and their tendency to prize charisma over erudition. Evangelicalism does need to keep returning to its Reformation roots, but it also needs to learn from subsequent movements in later centuries.

John Coffey
University of Leicester

Systematics

The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology

T.D. Alexander; Brian S. Rosner (eds)

Leicester: IVP, 2000,
xx + 866 pp., £29.99

If you are going to gather together a team of scholars to produce a dictionary of biblical theology you need to have an agreed definition of biblical theology with which to work. Brian Rosner one of the editors of the IVP *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* offers this definition:

biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the Church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus (10).

His opening essay examines the site where a biblical theology in and for the Church is to be constructed, explicating in particular five elements of his definition. They are:

- i the tools for the task
– analysis and synthesis
- ii the materials
– biblical concepts and words
- iii the span of the construction
– across the whole Bible
- iv the plans – the Bible's storyline
- v the foundations and the pinnacle
– Jesus Christ.

All of this is done very helpfully in the first essay of the Dictionary but the question then presents itself as to how well the rest of the Dictionary matches up to this?

The book is divided into three parts. In many ways, part one can be seen as a site-clearing exercise. It sweeps away many misconceptions and lays down some markers before the work of

construction can begin. The majority of these essays could form a very useful book in and of themselves. The bibliographies to these essays may be taken as indicators to the extent to which biblical and theological studies have been integrated up to the present. The article on the relationship between the OT and the NT has just seven items in its bibliography; the most recent book is 10 years old (and that is a revision of a book from 1976). In contrast the article on systematic theology and biblical theology has an extremely full bibliography extending to over fifty books, many of them from the past decade. There is much that is useful in these opening essays and it would be a great pity if those using this Dictionary ignore them.

Part two contains introductions to the different *copora* of Scripture and to the individual books. Many of these later essays do clearly try to show the position of their particular book within its wider biblical context. There are however some disappointments when, for example, an OT book's connection with the NT was simply characterised in sentence or two. In a volume with the professed aim of this one, not to spend more time on drawing out these connections and their significance seems like a lost opportunity. There are, after all, perfectly good OT introductions that we can turn to – some of them, on the OT seek to highlight not only the books theological themes but also its relationship to the NT.

In the third part of the book, on individual themes, there is much useful and helpful material and few readers will go away not having been enlightened and stimulated. Yet, one is left with a lingering doubt as to whether the policy of the editors and the design of the Dictionary represent every author's approach to biblical theology. Allied with this there is the occasional failure to link together related themes. In the article on blessing for instance one looked for

help to see how all the material blessings of the OT were taken up or transformed by the NT. This could have been related to the article on land or a possible entry on inheritance, wealth or prosperity etc if they had been included. Having said this the article on blessing was very clear and helpful. Perhaps the editorial policy should have been made clearer to all the individual writers.

Overall we should be grateful indeed to the Biblical Theology Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship and of Rutherford House and IVP their publisher for giving us a most useful dictionary. Perhaps one day there might be a second edition!

Doug Johnson

Cornhill Training Scheme, London

A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology

John Bolt

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001,
xxv + 502 pp., £25.00

This is a rich and fascinating book about two big subjects: Abraham Kuyper and the United States of America. Its author (professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary) summarises a vast literature on Kuyper and on contemporary American politics. He shows that Kuyper was a great admirer of the United States, believing that the civil and religious liberty which had its origins in the Calvinist Dutch republic was now finding its providential fulfilment in the American republic. Bolt also detects striking similarities between the Netherlands in the late nineteenth century and contemporary America, for in both a secular-liberal elite was engaged in a culture war with a popular Christian conservatism. Responding to Mark Noll's diagnosis that American evangelicals are

political activists in search of a political theology, Bolt provides the prescription: a strong dose of Abraham Kuyper.

It is impossible in a short review to do justice to the range of topics that Bolt discusses and illuminates: politics and the artistic imagination, Calvinist theories of history, liberation theology and economic libertarianism, theocracy and pluralism, Catholic-evangelical co-operation, contemporary American 'culture wars', and the fortunes and future of the Religious Right. As well as providing a marvellous introduction to Kuyper's political vision, the book also contains extended discussions of Solzhenitsyn, Edmund Burke, Jonathan Edwards, Alexis de Tocqueville, Lord Acton, and Walter Rauschenbusch. The eloquent text is complemented by some vivid illustrations, and every page is packed with material that is fresh, informative and often surprising.

For all its richness, the book does have its shortcomings. It is rather startling to find a major work on public theology that contains no reference whatsoever to the work of Oliver O'Donovan or Stanley Hauerwas, and Bolt would surely have benefited from the writings of Britain's Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, especially his recent work *The Politics of Hope* (1997). Moreover the book is almost silent on the vexed subject of race, something that surely must be addressed in a work on evangelical politics in America, where black and white believers differ so markedly in their political views and allegiances. Some British readers might also feel that Bolt is too hard on socialism, too generous to the Religious Right, and too interested in the United States to be relevant to Europeans.

Most significantly, the book does not deliver a fully-fledged 'public theology', and it is perhaps best thought of as a massive prolegomena to such a project. Bolt's work is full of

important insights, but it is not a systematic political theory, and there is no engagement with the work of major thinkers like John Rawls. If it demonstrates that Kuyper has much to teach contemporary evangelicals, it also reveals that we need to do some fresh thinking ourselves. Bolt shows that Kuyper tried to hold on to a softer, gentler version of the traditional Reformed vision of a godly nation: he vigorously defended civil and religious liberties for people of all religions, but he continued to think of the Netherlands and the United States as Protestant nations and of the Dutch and Americans as Protestant peoples. In today's profoundly pluralistic societies, this vision of national identity seems doubly problematic: it does not fit the facts, and it suggests that those of other faiths are not truly American, or Dutch, or British. An evangelical public theology for the future needs to start from the realisation that the era of Christendom is over – a point acknowledged, in their very different ways, by both Hauerwas and O'Donovan. Nevertheless, this book can be highly recommended to anyone with a serious interest in Kuyper, the Reformed tradition, the United States, or contemporary Christian politics.

John Coffey

University of Leicester

The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God

D.A. Carson

IVP, Leicester: 2000,

111 pp., £4.99

This is a fine little book that should be in the hands of every pastor and Bible student. At just over one hundred pages long it can be read thoughtfully in an afternoon and yet it will provide enough food for thought and open up enough avenues for further exploration to keep you occupied for weeks!

The book is made up of four chapters. In the first chapter, *On distorting the*

love of God, Carson explains why the love of God must be judged a difficult doctrine. The majority of people today hold that any sort of Ultimate Being is necessarily a loving being, but they hold this belief outside the matrix of biblical theology. Other truths about God are widely disbelieved (such as the sovereignty of God, the wrath of God, the holiness of God) and postmodern epistemology has eroded concepts of truth and authority. Even within Christian confessionalism, articulating the love of God poses difficulties this side of two world wars, worldwide genocide, mass starvation, Hitler and Pol Pot. Carson then sets out five distinguishable ways in which the Bible speaks of the love of God: (i) The peculiar love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father; (ii) God's providential love over all that he has made; (iii) God's salvific stance toward his fallen world; (iv) God's particular, effective, selecting love toward his elect; (v) God's provisional or conditional love toward his own people.

In the rest of the book Carson looks at these distinctive ways of talking about the love of God (some in a lot more detail than others) but he does not do it point by point. Rather, he examines them by examining God's love alongside other great biblical themes (the remaining chapters are entitled *God is love; God's love and God's sovereignty; God's love and God's wrath*) and it is this which gives the book its greatest strength: while it is excellent on its intended topic – helping Christians to 'grow in our grasp of what it means to confess that God is love' – it also invaluablely models a way of reading both the whole and the parts of Scripture that extends beyond the topic. It models first-rate exegetical, biblical and systematic theology. Pastors wanting to put together a doctrinal sermon series will find here implicit guidance on certain errors to avoid. Carson for instance highlights the problems with methodologically flawed word studies, in this case *agapao* and *phileo*, and

students wanting to unpack the doctrine of certain passages will find a model for reading individual texts with sensitivity to their place in the unfolding plot-line of the Bible. The book is littered with helpful applications: given that the love of God is undoubtedly very important pastorally, he points out that the pastoral and doctrinal implications of absolutizing any of the five distinctive ways of speaking of God's love are disastrous. He shows how certain well-worn evangelical clichés are shown to be less than correct - 'God's love is unconditional'; 'God loves everyone exactly the same way'; 'God hates the sin and loves the sinner'. Finally, at the end of the book he examines his five categories to see how in each case God's love elicits our love.

Along the way Carson touches on some profound theological issues. The intra-Trinitarian nature of God's love prompts brief discussion of the economic and immanent Trinity and he reads John 5:25 as an eternal grant from the Father to the Son; God's sovereignty and human responsibility; God's immutability and the challenges to this from the 'open view of God' camp; and the intent of the atonement. On each of the issues Carson has very illuminating comments which illustrate the way he reads the whole of Scripture together. For instance on the issue of impassibility, he writes:

God is impassible in the sense that he sustains no 'passion', no emotion, that makes him vulnerable from the outside, over which he has no control, or which he has not foreseen ... God's 'passions', like everything else in God, are displayed in conjunction with the fullness of all his other perfections. In that framework, God's love is not so much a function of his will as something that displays itself in perfect harmony with his will - and with his holiness, his purposes in

redemption, his infinitely wise plans, and so forth.

On the issue of the atonement, even readers not in sympathy with Carson's Reformed stance will doubtless still be helped by his irenic treatment of the matter just as those of a Reformed persuasion will probably be challenged. (Carson is critical of the term 'limited' atonement and of attempts to make 'the world' in John 3:16 refer to the elect.) He urges the usefulness here of the five distinguishable aspects of the love of God to argue that, given the third and fourth senses in which the Bible depicts God's love, Christians should confess that Christ died for all in the sense that his death was sufficient for all and yet should also confess that in a different sense, in the intent of God, Christ died effectively for the elect alone. Whether you agree or disagree, the reader is challenged to integrate both individual texts and the relationship between doctrines (atonement and election) more thoughtfully than we are prone to do.

Although Carson deals with each of the above profound topics more than ably, his treatment will leave some wanting a much more extensive discussion of the issues. But as a way in and as a faithful example of how to handle Scripture in doctrinal study with head and heart, this is an excellent place to start. If you haven't got this book, get it; if you have it and haven't read it, read it.

David Gibson
London

Listening to the Spirit in the Text

Gordon D. Fee
Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2000,
ix + 180 pp., £7.99

Every so often I pick up a book that has an interesting cover, is about the right size of read (not over-wordy, not too slim) and is on an interesting

subject. Often I have been disappointed. However, not so in this case. This collection of essays by Gordon Fee was one of 'those' books: it was difficult to put down, was an easy read, was challenging, informative and thoroughly uplifting. What makes the book so is the fact that whilst the subject matter itself lies at the very core of academic theology, it was not written for such readers. Rather, it has been deliberately written for a broader audience. Thankfully, Gordon Fee has succeeded in his task. The reader learns much from the Pentecostal professor of New Testament Studies at Regents College, Vancouver. Indeed, at several points I simply had to stop, reflect and then write down what Fee was saying.

The book is divided into two very distinct parts. Part 1, 'The Text and the Life of the Spirit', engages with aspects of the biblical text as they inform us about the Spirit of God. I was particularly 'blessed' by Fee's own articulation of what the New Testament means by the term 'spirituality'. It was refreshing to be told, 'to be "spiritual" is to be a Spirit person', that 'true spirituality ... is nothing more nor less than life by the Spirit' (6). What is so evident, is the fact that the author embodies his own theological method. It is, perhaps, best to allow Fee to state it:

To be a good exegete, and consequently a good theologian, one must know the fullness of the Spirit; and that includes a life of prayer ... and obedience ... The danger is to become a professional (in the pejorative sense of that word): to analyse texts and to talk *about* God, but slowly let the fire of passion *for* God run low, so that one does not spend much time talking *with* God. (7)

The rest of the book is simply an unpacking of what that means in relation to biblical interpretation. Fee's 'Reflections on Commentary Writing' is a master-class in describing the dynamics of writing serious

theology. All budding and maturing wannabe commentary writers should read this chapter.

In subsequent chapters the reader is introduced to a variety of insights from a thoroughgoing Pauline and trinitarian scholar. Here the impact of Fee's own churchmanship and training come to the fore. On the one hand, the trinitarian character of God is shown to be no dogmatic development: it stands full square within the biblical texts themselves. On the other hand, the reader engages with someone who is very much at home with the Spirituality and theology of Paul.

From here, the reader is then introduced to one of the most helpful responses to the question of wealth and possessions from a NT perspective. The righteousness of the OT is shown to express itself in relation to the disenfranchised, the poor and the oppressed. 'This is the way God is; this is the righteousness he demands' (52). Helpfully, Fee does not damn wealth. As he puts it, 'This does not require poverty, but it does require righteousness, which in this context means to use our wealth not to manipulate others, but to alleviate the hurt and pain of the oppressed' (55).

In Part 2, 'The Text and the Life of the Church' Fee goes on to tackle the kind of practical issues one would expect from a Pentecostal and Evangelical scholar: worship within Pauline churches, speaking in tongues, leadership structures within the New Covenant, Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles and lastly, the Church's Global Mission. In each of these topics the reader comes away the richer for having had the texts opened and the issues raised.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough: it will refresh the tired mind, resource the preacher and encourage, perhaps even rebuke, the academic.

Graham McFarlane
London Bible College

Seeing God in the Ordinary: Theology of the Everyday

Michael Frost
Hendrickson, 2000,
203 pp.

The greatest cultural challenge facing the Western church is not the challenge from the world but the prevalence and pervasiveness of the sacred-secular divide within the church. There is an almost omnipresent heresy that only one part of life is really important to God – church activities, Sunday, relationship in the neighbourhood. The rest of life is relegated to the secular zone – school, work, food, parties, art, sunsets, Monday to Friday – and is ultimately trivial. This goes a long way to explaining why 50% of evangelicals have never heard a sermon on work, never mind been encouraged to view their so-called secular work as unto the Lord. It explains why teenagers are, as one Agape leader put it, taught nuclear physics at school but gentle Jesus meek and mild in Sunday School. And it also explains why one senior UCCF leader said, 'I could almost guarantee that you could walk into any CU in any university and not find a single person who could give you a theology of the subject they were studying to degree level.'

In this context, Michael Frost's book is both timely and refreshing. His focus is on helping us re-discover the wonder in the everyday, in the ordinary, helping us see the divine hand behind the beauty of a sunset, helping us hear the divine voice whispering to us through ordinary conversations, through the wisdom and skill of artists and writers and musicians. And he succeeds. And he does so without crossing the fine line between enthusing about nature and turning nature into a God; between rampant hedonism and enjoying a splendid meal crafted from the luxuriant diversity of God's creative hand.

The theology that underpins the book is founded on an understanding of God as creator, of humans as creatures created in the flesh, and on the implications of the incarnation. This combines with a profound grasp of God's desire to be the Joybringer and for humans to be his creative partners in love and grace and wonder. Still, the book's subtitle may mislead you. This is not a systematic theology of the ordinary but a theological exploration of the ordinary. Its feel is narrative. And it gently, seamlessly blends Biblical texts, Calvin et al. with stories of being human in God's world, and with insights from some other faiths. Such eclecticism can sometimes reek of an uncritical pluralism but, though on occasion I found that I was bracing myself for some incipient heresy and wondering why Frost couldn't find a Christian to say it better than a Rabbi. I began to realise that this was part of his point: are my eyes and ears open to God speaking in his world through a Cyrus or an ass or a playful Leviathan? Or have I muzzled him? Frost recognises that we have something to learn from other faiths but that salvation is only to be found in Jesus Christ. For him, the glory of our salvation is much in evidence in the ordinary as well as in the extraordinary. And for those with eyes to see, such perceptions lead to gratitude, humility, wonder and joy. As Blamires put it in his classic book *The Christian Mind*, our minds should have 'a sacramental cast'. That is, 'The Christian Faith ... shows life's positive richness as derivative from the supernatural. It teaches us that to create beauty or to experience beauty, to recognise truth or to discover truth, to receive love or to give love, is to come into contact with realities which express the Divine Nature.'

Lyricaly, perceptively and riskily, Frost shows how to make such contact.

Mark Greene

London Institute for
Contemporary Christianity

Waiting for the Word: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Speaking About God

Frits de Lange, translated by Martin N Walton
Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000,
154 pp., £12.99/\$19.00

Frits de Lange is professor of ethics in Kampen, and this is a translation of his 1995 Dutch original. It is fascinating reading and a vital contribution to our developing understanding of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology. One can say very honestly and deliberately of this book that it will profit theological teachers and pastors and be accessible to theological students, such is its clarity and unpretentious style.

'Waiting for the Word' sums up the contents of the book. We already knew of Bonhoeffer's Lutheran and Barthian inheritance, his critical revisions of these legacies, and his final probing letters about the nature of the faith in the secular world. Perhaps the new item which De Lange so helpfully introduces to help interpret Bonhoeffer is the home background in which grew up. The Bonhoeffer tradition of table talk was one of deep precision, the very opposite of thoughtless chatter, words were taken seriously and not uttered carelessly. De Lange points this out and suggests that the profound respect in Bonhoeffer's theology for the Word, and the need to wait patiently for it, has some roots in the family mode of discourse.

The Word is actuated in the preached words and in the church community itself. The word should not be dominated by the idea, as if the mere utterance of a prior timeless truth in neo platonian fashion. The Word addresses us concretely, it is unique and new, seeking community by way of free response. Because God speaks in human language, we can speak humanly of God. We are reminded of current theological stress on the non-dominating character of God, prefigured by Bonhoeffer and often

in much convincing, less dilettante aesthetic fashion. The concrete reality of the Word is described in the chapter entitled 'a red apple, a glass of cool water' – similes of the actual presence and relevance of the Word to our need. De Lange takes us through Bonhoeffer's ethics and pastoral theology, showing the seriousness of humble, but not paralysed and passive, waiting on the Word.

The final chapter unfolds the famous discussion about religionless Christianity and what Bonhoeffer meant by the phrase in his letters and papers in prison under the Nazis prior to his death. The importance of context for meaning to be heard is stressed, the new thoroughgoing secular mindset Bonhoeffer perceived around him. Religion as way of clericalising and narrowing the actualising of the Word in the world seems to be the target of Bonhoeffer's ponderings, reinforced by his grave disappointment in the church and her faithfulness to the Word.

De Lange opens up many key questions of faith and life in his profound study. The practical orientation of the book sharply demonstrates itself in a final challenge. De Lange closes with these words: 'The Word of God is most clearly understood not in a sacral space of the church but in the church's worldly obedience to its Lord. In that way, according to Bonhoeffer, the church is *Christus praesens*, Christ present in the world. Will the church in the coming century live up to this word of Bonhoeffer or betray it? It is up to the church to answer.'

Timothy Bradshaw
Regents Park, Oxford

The Message of the Living God

Peter Lewis

Leicester: IVP, 2000,
356 pp., £9.99

The theme could not be more appropriate for one of the first of the new series of *The Bible Speaks Today* expositions. What theme is more fundamental to the Bible's message than this one?

The earlier series of *Bible Speaks Today* expositions on particular Old and New Testament books have maintained a remarkably consistent standard of excellence. They continue to be of enormous value both to those who teach the Bible and to other Christians who wish to be serious in their study of it. If this volume sets the standard for those that follow, the new series on particular Bible themes will be no less so. Like the earlier series this one will aim to expound the text accurately, to relate it to contemporary life and to be readable. The first of these aims is a more difficult task as the starting point is a theme rather than the text itself. In particular when the theme is as large and as all pervasive in the Bible as is this one, the author must have faced a considerable difficulty in knowing where to begin and where to end, and on what particular passages of Scripture to focus especially.

The author gathers material into three sections: God and his world, God and his people and God in three Persons. More than two thirds of the book is given to an exposition of OT passages, most of them from the Pentateuch. Thus the first section deals with the first nine chapters of Genesis. 'Moses' says the author 'is the Paul of the Old Testament'. Three other chapters give an overview of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah 40-48. Those dealing with the NT cover five passages: John 1, Romans 3:21-26, Matthew 28:18-20, Romans 11:33-36 and Revelation 4 and 5.

But, as one would hope, the reader is constantly pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of all to which the OT pointed and God's supreme revelation of himself.

Although a particular passage of Scripture stands at the head of each chapter the author is not constrained by it. In a number of cases the selected passage serves as a focus into which are drawn many other related texts, rather after the manner of a systematic theology. So when he heads the final chapter 'Alpha and Omega: the worship of the living God' and roots it in Revelation 4 and 5, he includes a section on the essential work of the Holy Spirit in enabling us to worship without any reference to Revelation at all. At some points I found myself wishing for a more confined and detailed exposition of the main passage cited.

The book is sprinkled liberally with quotations from many other authors; rather too liberally, in my view, for the smooth reading of the book. To repeatedly include a sentence or two introduced by 'as so-and-so' says seems unnecessary for an author who is as good a wordsmith as is this one! Most of the quotations are from evangelical writers but some are not so, such as William Barclay and Walter Brueggemann.

The truths expounded are well applied and, as one would expect from an author who is first and foremost a preacher, there are some good illustrations. The book concludes with a helpful study guide designed both for group and individual use.

To quote the author: 'It is only as we get God in perspective that we get other things in our life and world into focus and perspective, including our own concerns and self understanding.' This book, used alongside our Bibles, will help us both to get that perspective and to keep it.

Peter Secombe
St Albans

The Promise of Hermeneutics

Roger Lundin, Clarence Walkout and
Anthony C. Thiselton
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Cambridge, 1999,
xii + 260 pp., £12.99

This fine book argues very clearly that there is great philosophical and theological support available for a hermeneutical position which steers away both from Enlightenment individualism, which pictures the interpreter as a single mind trying to understand the mind of the author, and from contemporary unconstrained textual indeterminacy, which regards interpretation as a kind of play. The two great hermeneutical theorists of the twentieth century, Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer, are shown to provide profound philosophical resources for this alternative hermeneutical position, which sees authors and readers not just as 'minds on legs', or as mere players with words, but as ethical and responsible human subjects. (This book therefore builds on the authors' earlier 1985 work *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics*.)

Any reader who wishes to be shown a clear hermeneutical position which escapes the problems of the false dichotomy often set up between 'Enlightenment/Cartesian' hermeneutics and 'post-modern' hermeneutics, would do very well to start here. This is the first aspect of the meaning of the book's title: it outlines a very promising hermeneutical position. The book will be especially helpful in showing readers from different disciplines a wider academic context than they are perhaps aware of. It is encouraging to be shown that this hermeneutical position, which, as Thiselton rightly says, 'coheres profoundly with Christian theology' (134), can appeal for support to some of the most heavy-weight philosophical minds of the last century - not only to Gadamer and Ricoeur, but also to Wittgenstein, Levinas, Plantinga and Wolterstorff.

(Along the way the book provides excellent thumbnail sketches of some of the thought of these vitally important writers.) Whether you know a little or a lot about philosophical hermeneutics and epistemology, there is much to learn here.

In the first section of the book, Lundin offers one of the most stimulating analyses of modernity that one is likely to find in 60 odd pages. (A helpful crash-course in the hermeneutics of Hegel and Schleiermacher can be found here too, on 30ff.). His key concept is that of the orphan. He argues that the Cartesian attempt to break the self free from all constraints of tradition, has not made us free as it promised to do, but has left us lost and parent-less. History and tradition, it turns out, are just unavoidable and necessary in interpretation and knowledge, and don't always get in the way. Walkout contributes the second section. His central argument is that textual meaning requires flesh-and-blood human authors. While interpretation includes the gaining of knowledge, it is in the end an ethical activity, for it is about learning from others how to live wisely (127). Any student of literature seeking a Christian perspective on the interpretation of literature will find Walkout's closing comments especially helpful (130-31). Lundin's analysis of how the key themes of modernity have been grappled with in literature are also fascinating in this regard (42-52). (Walkout and Lundin are both professors of English.)

The theologian Anthony Thiselton provides the third section. He begins by helpfully tying the three sections of the book together, and succeeds well in giving it overall coherence. He presupposes more background knowledge than either Walkout or Lundin - especially in the details of the sections on speech act theory - but the gaps could be filled in by chasing up the references he gives to his earlier works. Nevertheless, Thiselton's section explains clearly the

second aspect of the meaning of the book's title, and brings its overall argument to a climax. Christian theology, he argues, offers a distinctive hermeneutic of trust and promise; the biblical God is, after all, a God who fundamentally makes promises. The heart of hermeneutics, he says, is 'respect for the otherness of the other' – the opposite of self-absorption – and this is found not only in Gadamer and Ricoeur but fundamentally in the NT concept of agape (221–22).

Timothy Ward
Crowborough

Calvin's Institutes: Abridged Edition

Donald K. McKim (Ed.)

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001,
xxi + 189 pp., £19.95

This is an abridgement of John Calvin's magnum opus, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), based on the Library of Christian Classics edition translated by Ford Lewis Battles (minus the critical notes and textual apparatus). In the past there have only been four translations of the *Institutes* into English: Norton (1561), Allen (1813), Beveridge (1845), and Battles (1960), but it should come as no surprise that there have been more abridgements than translations, given the importance of the work and its great length. Calvin is a theologian more quoted than read, more demonised than carefully evaluated, so it is a great delight to see that Donald McKim has attempted to make this seminal work in Reformed theology more widely appreciated in a less intimidating format.

This slim volume is well-suited as a basic roadmap and encouragement to further exploration, but I would prefer to reserve the words on the back cover, 'a must read for students and scholars alike', for the *Institutes* themselves as opposed to this condensed version. That being said, this is not an introduction to Calvin's

theology where the reader is confused by a mingling of Calvin and the author's perspective; from the start we are exposed to Calvin's own words in carefully chosen segments of reasonable length.

Many of the more polemical sections of the *Institutes* are omitted due to their more historical than theological interest (sections dealing with the errors of Servetus in 2.14.4–8 and 4.16.31–32 are left out, for example) which makes grasping the general flow of the argument easier, although it also means that the reader misses out on some of Calvin's more biting and occasionally witty rhetoric. One great advantage is that where something has been omitted from the abridgement, the reader is instantly aware of this and can chase up the missing portions if they so desire because the headings and titles of subsections are all left in even where there is no text from that section quoted. A key to the Book, Chapter, and Section numbers in the original is included in the margins throughout. The general layout of the book is most helpful, and conducive to either consecutive reading (to give the interested first-timer a quick overview of the *Institutes*), 'dipping-in', or even as a ready reminder for those who are already familiar with the larger work.

Occasionally I found myself in disagreement with the editor's choice of texts: I would have liked to see more on Calvin's exposition of the Ten Commandments, and unfortunately in the superb section in Book 2 Chapters 9–11, dealing with the similarities and differences between the Old and New Testaments, we are left with only the headings (not original to Calvin). This is disappointing in view of the way that Calvin appeals in later chapters to the basic framework established here (when dealing with the sacraments for example). All the same, it would be difficult to please everyone with the choice of texts, and overall it must be said that the choices made are usually judicious. The book is

perhaps a little on the expensive side, and a (far too brief) introduction by McKim could usefully have been expanded to orientate the reader more. The outstanding merit of this book is that it leaves Calvin himself to do the talking and to persuade the reader that it is worth delving deeper into this enduring classic.

Lee Gatiss

Oak Hill Theological College

As a postscript to the above review, it should be noted that Westminster John Knox Press have now re-issued the *Library of Christian Classics* edition of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Volumes XX and XXI of the L.C.C.). Edited by John McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles in 1960, this surely is the definitive English translation of the full text and contains an invaluable set of bibliographies and indexes including a full list of previous editions, translations and abridgements of the *Institutes*, and useful Scripture, author and subject indexes. To re-affirm the comments of the above reviewer, despite being nearly 550 years old, Calvin's *Institutes* remain a seminal work in Christian theology and a 'desert island' necessity for evangelical theological students, pastors and teachers. The *Institutes* should not only be viewed as an important piece of historical theology but also as a contemporary systematic theological resource which has something relevant to say in today's theological climate. A price of £45.00 may seem steep for a single work, but it is truly indispensable and compared to the price of many abridgements is well worth the cost.

Daniel Strange

Leicester

**Where Shall My Wond'ring Soul Begin?:
The Landscape of Evangelical Piety and Thought**

Mark A. Noll and Ronald F. Thiemann (Eds)
Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000,
ix + 99 pp., £6.99/\$10.00

A conference in 1998 at Harvard Divinity School produced the essays that are included in this volume. The background to the essays is significant. Harvard Divinity School, known since the early nineteenth century as a liberal and even anti-evangelical Protestant school, established the McDonald chair in Evangelical Theological Studies. The purpose of the chair is 'to promote the study of evangelicalism as defined by a set of practices, ideals, convictions and habits that have characterized a number of Christian traditions over the centuries'. Mark Noll, Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College, Illinois, and a noted evangelical historian, was the first incumbent of the chair.

The essays in this volume indicate the way in which this new initiative is intended to operate. Scholars, who came together for a colloquium to inaugurate the chair, contributed to an examination of evangelical theology, piety and ethics. These are the main areas covered in this volume. Papers from the conference are presented here.

Apart from Alister McGrath, all the contributors are members of faculties of North American institutions. Mark Noll's essay looks at 'Evangelicalism at Its Best', as expressed in evangelical hymnody. Dallas Willard, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California and known for his work on evangelical spirituality, has an essay on 'Christ-Centered Piety'. Another chapter on evangelical spirituality, 'Disciplined Spirituality', comes from Cheryl Sanders, Professor of Christian Ethics at the Howard University School of Divinity. Attention is given to theology by

William J. Abraham, Professor of Wesley Studies at Southern Methodist University, looking at 'Commitment to Scripture', Alister McGrath, dealing with 'Trinitarian Theology', and David Wells, on 'Living Tradition'. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, takes up the subject of 'Evangelical Ethics'.

The emphasis on evangelical spirituality, which is evident in four of the eight essays, is a pointer to the deepening concern there is for this theme. The use of hymnody to illustrate evangelicalism is also a growing interest. In the theological and ethical areas fresh insights are offered. All the authors, as would be expected, reflect thoughtfully and at times critically on the tradition. They represent different parts of the evangelical spectrum, but what this reader took away from these essays was a sense of evangelical commonalities. There is also here a serious concern for the future of evangelicalism, expressed by academics who, as David Wells puts it, respond to a model not of the 'pure academic, but of the kneeling theologian'.

Havard's McDonald professorship was endowed with the intention that it should 'cultivate an understanding of the history, theology, spirituality, and ecumenical practice of evangelical Christianity'. Part of this aim is fulfilled through this fine book. It would be very good to see similar initiatives being taken in Europe. Dallas Willard bases his study on the assumption that one of the great engines of individual and social transformation has been evangelical thought and experience. This is not generally believed, and much more work needs to be done to convince Western societies that it is the case.

Ian Randall

Spurgeon's Theological College,
London

Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Andreas Pangritz

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000,
xii + 167 pp., £12.99

Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are often bracketed together in histories of twentieth century theology as examples of 'neo-orthodoxy'. However, although the two theologians were friends and although Barth was undoubtedly a great influence on Bonhoeffer, scholars have long argued that there were significant theological differences between them.

In his study of the relationship between the theologies of the two men, Pangritz, who is Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Aachen, looks at this relationship in detail, and, interacting with the work of other scholars in this field, seeks to explain the precise reasons for the differences between them.

After surveying the way in which Barth shaped Bonhoeffer's theological development and emphasising the theological closeness between the two, Pangritz then goes on to explore what Bonhoeffer was really talking about in his use of the term 'positivism of revelation' in relation to Barth's theology. His conclusion is that Bonhoeffer's criticism must be understood in the context of the reaction by conservative Lutheran elements in the German Confessing Church to Rudolf Bultmann's call in 1941 for a non-mythological approach to the interpretation of the NT.

According to Pangritz, Bonhoeffer saw a link between their failure to respond positively to Bultmann's challenge, and the failure of Barth's theology as found in the *Church Dogmatics* to provide a suitable basis for talking about God to those for whom the Church and religion in general were increasingly irrelevant. In addition, Pangritz argues, Bonhoeffer felt that Barth's treatment of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Virgin Birth failed

to respect the fact that these topics were divine mysteries which demanded veneration rather than detailed explanation.

In a final chapter entitled 'Proceeding on Barth's and Bonhoeffer's way' Pangritz probes deeper into the roots of the differences between the theologies of Barth and Bonhoeffer. He argues that the basis of their difference was that Bonhoeffer was prepared to take seriously the integrity of the world outside the Church as the sphere of God's activity in a way that Barth was never quite prepared to do. In a sign of the post-holocaust wrestling with the importance of Judaism that has been a feature of post-war German theology, Pangritz also suggests that both Barth and Bonhoeffer failed to take seriously the existence of Israel as a witness to the theological significance of those outside the sphere of the Christian Church.

The positive side of Pangritz's work is its great attention to detail and the way in which it patiently explores the various different understandings of the relationship between Barth and Bonhoeffer, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. However, the work is so detailed that it is often difficult to see the wood for the trees, and anyone who had not already got a firm grasp of Barth and Bonhoeffer's theology would be unlikely to be able to follow Pangritz's argument. In addition Pangritz's own universalist theological conclusions are not grounded in any interaction with the relevant Biblical material in Romans 9-11 and elsewhere.

This is a work that is only likely to be of interest to Barth and Bonhoeffer specialists. Anyone else, including students beginning to work in this area, would be well advised to leave Pangritz to one side and look directly at the work of Barth and Bonhoeffer for themselves. As so often in theological study, the original sources are much more interesting and a good deal easier to read!

Martin Davie
Ware

The Gender Neutral Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words

Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem
Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 2000,
xxix + 377 pp.

The New Revised Standard Version (1989) was the first major 'gender neutral' translation (for example avoiding the use of the generic 'he', and avoiding male orientated terms like 'father' or 'son'). Others followed, including a British inclusive language New International Version (1996). When American evangelicals realised that an inclusive language NIV might ultimately replace the current NIV, there was a furore. Since then controversy over 'gender neutral' Bibles has rumbled on.

A conservative evangelical scholar of the standing of Don Carson has entered the debate arguing that use of the generic 'he' is no longer appropriate, and that it is consistent with a high view of the Word of God to replace it (for example, with the plural form). The realities of linguistics mean that to attempt to maintain 'formal equivalence' is artificial. (*The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism*, IVP, 1998).

This book is a massive and closely argued rebuttal of such claims. Poythress and Grudem describe the controversy, outline the rise of gender-neutral translations, provide a powerful section on the Bible as the Word of God and give an outline of principles of translation. They agree that in some cases the older versions have been unnecessarily 'male' orientated, and that in such cases a shift to a more 'gender-neutral' approach is actually *more* faithful to the original language. For example, the Greek *pas* for 'everyone' does not need to be translated 'every man', as in some older versions. But the key is faithfulness to the original language. The longest section in the book deals with the generic 'he': outlining the arguments for and against, explaining

the strong opposition to its use, but concluding that it is still part of everyday English usage. Other translation issues (fathers, brothers etc.) are dealt with in detail.

The authors argue that wholesale replacement of the generic 'he' with the plural form or other forms, and widespread censoring out of anything male (just because it is male) are less about being 'faithful to original intent' and more concerned with submitting to the thought police who terrorise so many modern university campuses. We do not tamper with other historic documents – why tamper with Scripture? Substantial arguments are forwarded to show that while indeed the culture of the Bible may be strange to readers today, it is not the job of the translator to interpret the culture – it is the task of Bible teachers. Translators should translate.

The debate tends to get entangled with the egalitarian versus complementarian controversy. But Valerie Becker Makkai, a serving elder in her church, and past president of the Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States writes a preface which separates the two issues. She understands that the Bible was written for a different era, 'and I am perfectly capable of interpreting those teachings and applying them to modern times. It is not necessary for translators to do that for me, nor do I want them to ... it is of utmost importance to me, as a Christian, to know exactly what the Scripture says, in a translation that reflects as closely as possible the exact meaning of the original. Only then can I decide how the Biblical teachings apply to me today' (xxi-xxii). She says that Poythress and Grudem 'clearly understand the fluid and changing nature of language, and their arguments are based on sound linguistic principles ... their claim that substituting gender neutral language does indeed change nuance and meaning is entirely linguistically sound' (xvii, xxxiii).

This book is a scholarly and temperate but devastating critique of those who are willing to change the Words of God to accommodate our culture. 'Do we follow the Bible alone, submitting to all its teachings and all its nuances? Or do we trim it in order to fit in more comfortably with modern thought patterns?' (298).

Sharon James

Leamington Spa

Vernacular Hermeneutics

R.S. Sugirtharajah (Ed.)

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999,
148 pp., £12.95/\$19.95

This is the second volume in a series from Sheffield on the Bible and Post Colonialism. The contributors seek to break the stronghold of Western interpretation and to read the Bible from the vantage-point of Amerindian, Caribbean, Latin American, African and Indian contexts.

In 'The Sign of Orpah', Laura Donaldson re-reads *Ruth* 'through native eyes'. She finds not the paradigmatic convert, loyal daughter-in-law and ancestress of King David, but an agent of culturecide and of Jewish assimilationist strategy just like Pocahontas in American Indian history. Orpah is the real heroine of *Ruth* because in a courageous act of self and communal affirmations she chooses her Moabite mother's house over that of the alien Israelite Father.

Dalila Nayap-Pot provides a different perspective on *Ruth* however, from a Costa Rican socio-political context. Ruth is seen as a bridge builder between the accursed Moabites and their Israelite enemies. Orpah's acceptance of Naomi's advice to return to her Moabite family and gods typifies the fatalism of many Central American women trapped in a patriarchal society. Ruth, however, makes herself sexually vulnerable, and available to her potential benefactor, out of personal need and

solidarity with Naomi, and is blessed. The application? – How often do we expect God to do our 'dirty work' for us?

Gerald West's 'Local is Lekker, But Ubuntu is Best' advocates that biblical scholars read the Bible together with indigenes, as a resource in the South African struggle for survival, liberation and life. His African perspective on the Joseph story (Gen. 37–50) is not without value but his 'socially engaged biblical scholar' does not escape the elitism and western-ness of the academic guild.

African converts in mission churches were forbidden to use incantations, charms and amulets as protection against their enemies or sorcery. But David Tuesday Adamo reveals how the memorisation and incantation of certain Psalms has been used by independent indigenous Nigerian churches for protection, healing and success, together with indigenous rituals, herbs, prayer, fasting, and use of the names of God. The Western preoccupation with authorship, dates and *sitz im leben* is useless in the African context compared with a classification of the Psalms on the basis of content, function and efficacy in countering enemies, evil spirits, fear, barrenness, miscarriage and illness.

Among the remaining articles the editor contributes an honest 'Thinking about Vernacular Hermeneutics'. He acknowledges it is part of the intellectual movement of our time. It is post-modern in its renunciation of the Enlightenment meta-narratives, and in its elevation of the local as a site of creativity. It is post colonial in its battle against the invasion of foreign and universalist modes of interpretation. Sugratharajah provides a stimulating survey of the concept of 'the vernacular' in both European and Indian history with instructive historical examples of types of vernacular readings that he classifies as 'conceptual correspondences',

'narrative enrichments' or 'performantial parallels'. It is a relief to see that Sugratharajah does not romanticise the indigenous cultures which 'along with their enlivening aspects carry a baggage of feudal, patriarchal and even anti-egalitarian traditions'. Vernacularism can, he admits, easily degenerate into chauvinism, jingoism or narrow minded communalism. He also acknowledges that the interconnection between the vernacular and the global is now so deep that it is difficult to determine what is native and what is non-native. Nevertheless vernacularisation will be an important hermeneutical category in so far as 'it means critical freedom to resist cultural imperialism and to challenge dominant ideologies'.

In summary, vernacular hermeneutics seeks to provide yet another stage in the indigenous revolt against western hegemony, that we have witnessed in the past forty years. It began with Kosuke Koyama's *Water Buffalo Theology* which mobilised indigenous cultural concerns for the theological enterprise and was followed by Korean *minjung*, Indian *dalit*, Japanese *burakumin*, and the ostensibly Latin American liberation theology which was so popular in Western theological circles. Then in theological education, the Theological Education by Extension movement sought to burst out of the alienating Western urban academy and to take seriously the cultural context of learning and ministry. Arguably the most subversive of all, however, has been the shift in Bible translation policy worldwide with the triumph of Eugene Nida's Dynamic Equivalence theory with its emphasis on 'naturalness' and the priority of the readers' horizon.

Vernacularism is a branch of the 'new hermeneutic' which increasingly dominates not only biblical studies but also the disciplines of history, literature and politics. The important insight that human beings bring their own assumptions, biases and limitations to the reading of the Bible is salutary and humbling. But the

suggestion that meaning resides not in the text but in the reader, must be resisted. The apostle Paul tells Timothy to strive to 'correctly handle the word of truth' (2 Tim. 2:15). This implies a study of the text that will enable one to jettison misconceptions. More importantly it reinforces the teaching of Jesus that in Scripture God has in fact given a word of truth.

Anthony H. Nichols

Geraldton, Western Australia

Paul Tillich

John Heywood Thomas

London: Continuum 2000,
xi + 188 pp., £12.99

If a choice had to be made of the two greatest Protestant theologians of the twentieth century there can be little doubt that most experts in the field would choose Karl Barth and alongside him Paul Tillich.

As Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson note in their book *20th Century Theology*:

Tillich's theological contribution is comparable to Barth's in terms of overall influence and impact, although it is quite opposite in terms of approach. Like Barth he produced a massive system of theology that influenced an entire generation of Christian thinkers and was granted the notice and acclaim of secular society as well. Unlike Barth, he strove for positive correlation, if not synthesis, between modern secular philosophy and Christian theology. (114)

Although Tillich was influential and acclaimed both inside and outside the church his attempt to build a theology on the basis of a correlation between the questions raised by contemporary culture and the answers given by the Christian faith was, and remains, highly controversial. Those who favour his

approach feel that he provides a model of how to undertake apologetics effectively by building bridges between Christian theology and the needs and concerns of contemporary men and women. Those who disapprove feel, however, that apologetic concerns led to Tillich to distort Christian theology to the extent that it no longer bore any resemblance to traditional orthodoxy or biblical truth. Some even went so far as to accuse him of being an atheist.

In considering a theologian so complex and so deeply controversial as Tillich a reliable guide is highly desirable, and John Heywood Thomas, who was a friend and student of Tillich, provides just such a guide in his contribution to the *Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series*.

He begins his guide with an opening chapter on Tillich's life and career. This is then followed by two chapters on Tillich's theological method, which are in turn followed by five chapters which look at his teaching on God, human existence, Christology, salvation and the church. The book concludes with two chapters which look at Tillich's understanding of history: what Professor Heywood Thomas calls the 'global character' of Tillich's thought as expressed in: his appreciation of philosophy; his political thought; his view of the relationship between Christianity and the world's other religions; and his possible contribution to a theological approach to ecology.

Throughout his book Professor Heywood Thomas both expounds Tillich's thought and critiques it, explaining what Tillich was attempting to say and why; and exploring the strengths and weaknesses of Tillich's approach. Those who already have a reasonable grasp of the overall shape of Tillich's thought will find this study extremely useful both in stimulating them to think afresh about Tillich's theology and in helping them to assess it critically.

However, the complexity of Professor Heywood Thomas' own style will make his book hard going for the beginner, and evangelicals in particular will feel frustrated that his critique of Tillich focuses on issues of philosophical theology rather than the adequacy of Tillich's thought as an interpretation of Biblical teaching. Those wishing for an introductory account from an evangelical perspective might find it more helpful to begin with the account of Tillich in the volume by Grenz and Olson which was referred to at the beginning of this review.

Martin Davie
Ware

Religious Studies

Rites in the Spirit A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/ Charismatic Spirituality

Daniel E Albrecht
JPTSup 17, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999,
277 pp. £15.95/\$21.95

In terms of numerical growth Pentecostalism, including Neo-Pentecostalism or the Charismatic Movement, was the most significant phenomenon of the 20th Century Church. Beginning in the first year of that century, it grew rapidly, especially in North and South America, to a current estimated membership of five hundred million. Daniel Albrecht's book claims to be an investigation of Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality and at first sight the word 'Rites' seems strange in this connection. After all, Pentecostal preachers and writers have always made much of the essential spontaneity of their characteristic worship, claiming it was the direct outcome of the Spirit's activity and not something that was structured by any kind of rite or liturgy. Albrecht maintains this claim but argues that 'rites' is an appropriate word to describe what he

terms the 'corporate worship service' of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches.

The first chapter is a very good summary of the rise of both the early 20th century Pentecostal movement and the mid 20th century Charismatic movement, except that the history is restricted to what happened in America. No mention is made of the beginnings of Britain's Pentecostalism or Charismatic phenomena, both of which mirrored what was happening in America. In a similar way, the examination of three congregations, detailed in Chapter Two, is surprisingly localised. The three churches, Assemblies of God, Foursquare, and Charismatic, are all located in Sea City, California. We would have expected that the comparisons would have been made of congregations found in different regions of the USA and, perhaps, at least one of them from outside America.

Chapters 3 to 6 are occupied with looking in great detail at the Pentecostals' 'ritual field' i.e. foundational doctrinal beliefs, the physical structure of the selected auditoriums, and the planning, conduct, expectation and ethos of the services, both on Sundays and weekdays. Described as the 'key moments in a lifetime cycle', for Pentecostals and Charismatics, are the doctrines of conversion (followed by baptism), Spirit baptism and the expectation of physical healing. Running throughout the book are presuppositions about Spirit Baptism that are central to Pentecostal theology, especially the claim that Spirit Baptism is always post-conversion and in most instances evidenced by *glossalalia*, i.e. speaking in tongues. There is no attempt to offer any Biblical proof for this claim but perhaps looking for such evidence is asking too much from a volume that does not set out to offer Biblical or theological arguments. The Preface informs us that 'this is a book about and for Pentecostals', so presumably

there are theological assumptions that Professor Albrecht can count on among the majority of his readers. But it is nevertheless significant that one of the major premises of this book, and certainly the distinguishing premise, is an understanding of Spirit baptism that is not shared by a great number of equally committed Bible-believing evangelicals.

Describing the kinesthetic dimensions of Pentecostal worship the argument is: 'According to traditional Pentecostal ritual logic, God is expected to move, but so are God's worshippers' (148). As the worshippers' movements are described as 'sway and even dance,' then if God is 'expected to move,' presumably that means he also must sway and dance. The argument concludes: 'Each congregation moves even as God moves.' This either commits the Almighty to dancing and swaying or there is a confusion of thought as to what is meant by 'God is expected to move.' As this movement is described as manifesting the very highest spiritual experiences, may we not ask if there is no place left at all for that injunction of inspired Scripture: 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Ps. 46:10)?

This is a very informative book about Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and their practices. While its 'rites of passage' approach is not always gripping, and non-Pentecostal readers will be left with plenty of questions, still it provides a well-researched insight into the worship of these churches. The major question this reviewer has is about the subtitle: 'A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality.' But the book is hardly about Pentecostal spirituality at all; it is all about Pentecostal worship! Although Professor Albrecht defines spirituality well as 'the lived religious experience of the Christian faith' (14), this book is not about everyday living and Christian experience. Everything it describes happens either on Sundays (usually the mornings) or one particular weekday evening - and it

all happens inside churches and auditoriums. Spirituality is about the practical outworking of our faith, seven days a week, in the rough and tumble of life as we are beset with sins, temptations and disappointments alongside the presence of God and the daily enabling of his Spirit. This scholarly volume is really about Pentecostal/Charismatic worship - not spirituality.

Herbert McGonigle

Nazarene Theological College,
Manchester

When Science Meets Religion

Ian Barbour

SPCK, 2000,
xiv + 205 pp., £12.99

This book distils Ian Barbour's considerable knowledge of the burgeoning field of science/religion studies into a lucid, sensitive, irenic study. The whole gamut of physical, metaphysical and theological issues is canvassed, and most of the central positions on each of these is sketched. Readers are given an expertly written guided tour through the complexities of differing accounts of the science/religion relationship, the importance of astronomical findings, the implications of quantum physics, the perennial tension between creationism and evolution, the relevance of genetics and neuroscience and the relationship between God and nature.

Needless to say, such a wide ranging treatment does not always go deep, but Barbour writes with a humble open-mindedness, allowing his own views to percolate through his presentation of rival positions.

Barbour's preference is for a mild version of process theology, coupled to the fashionable 'critical realist' philosophy of science. Readers familiar with his earlier writings will find little that is new here, but the book does succeed in providing a

helpful, if at times slightly repetitive, overview of the contemporary state of discussion. For someone looking to go beyond the conceptually basic treatments offered by many apologetic tracts, or the polemics offered by militant creationists (at one extreme) and reductionist materialists at the other, there is much here to savour.

Barbour favours the possibility of seeking integration between religion and science. This is surely laudable, but those who are sensitive to the insights of modern philosophy of language may wonder whether the attempt to reconcile schemes of belief that involve such differing uses of language is not fundamentally misconceived. Barbour wants to reject a view that takes science and religion as independent, wishing instead to foster dialogue. Yet there would seem to be a position which treats them as independent, in the sense of being different modes of discourse, with their own norms, whilst still accepting that there is plenty of scope for fruitful dialogue about how changes in one domain may affect the other.

John Taylor

Regent's Park College, Oxford

Psychology, Religion and Mental Health

Montagu G. Barker

Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2000,
102 pp., £5.00

Dr Barker's book explores a number of contemporary issues in medicine, psychiatry, and religious experience from a scientific perspective. He challenges 'the sceptic to be more reflective in analysing spiritual experience', and 'religious enthusiasts to be more rigorous in evaluating their own religious experience'. He hopes the book will be of help 'to pastors, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and to all those who try to make sense of their own spiritual journey'.

The four chapters are transcripts of his Bristol Templeton Lectures from

1995. The first chapter reviews six figures who, over the course of the past 200 years, have particularly influenced the way religion is viewed, both within the scientific community and in the popular mind. Evangelicals who harbour a suspicion of psychiatry and psychotherapy may find it interesting to discover the historical roots of some of their prejudices. The analysis of Freud's critique of religion is succinct and helpful, as are his comments about those who have conducted studies on religious experience including William James, Sir Alister Hardy and David Hay. This historical review is concise and informative and pitched at a level that is accessible for the non-scientist.

The second chapter explores the experience of conversion and reviews the classic works by William James ('The Varieties of Religious Experience') and William Sargant ('The Battle for the Mind') as well as Professor Eileen Barker's more recent analysis of the cults. But as Dr Barker makes clear, what happens at conversion does not necessarily reveal anything about the validity of a person's beliefs. His analysis, however, of the techniques used by the cults to precipitate conversion may cause some evangelists to review their approach!

The third chapter explores our society's growing fascination with healing in general and alternative therapies in particular. He reviews Professor Jerome Frank's thesis that it is a sense of 'demoralisation' that underlies all our health seeking behaviour and that the four central features of any healing process are: a confiding relationship; a setting in which healing takes place; a convincing rationale to explain the healing and the arousing of strong emotions. This analysis is explored in relation to healing services and other more experiential expressions of Christianity.

The final chapter reports a number of fascinating studies demonstrating the positive effects religion has on

physical and mental health. Whether it is speed of recovery from hip surgery or susceptibility to heart attacks, or likelihood of mental illness it seems that a healthy dose of religion is good for you!

Although each chapter stands alone, it seems that the thesis underpinning Dr Barker's work is that while science can, and has, made important observations on religious experience, scientific enquiry can never be the method of choice to investigate the validity of religious claims. He appeals, nevertheless, to those of us in the religious community to be willing to submit our beliefs and our behaviour to honest appraisal. I too would share his concern that 'there can be a stifling, personality binding and inhibitory quality to some Christian groups, not just cults, which can damage and maim some souls'. With approval he quotes James Packer: 'Unreality in religion is an accursed thing. We need God to make us realists about both ourselves and him.'

This is a valuable and accessible introduction to certain aspects of the interface between psychological thinking and religious experience. As a short survey of some key figures, it is a rich source of information. If I have a hesitation it is that the concluding sections to each chapter are too short. Having done the hard work in reviewing many classic texts with great precision, I wish he had spent more time exploring the implications for the practice of biblical Christianity.

Steve Midgley

Hove

Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition

Simon Chan

JPTSUP 21, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2000,
129 pp., £10.95/\$13.95

Simon Chan's very good treatment of the modern Pentecostal movement and its role within the Christian spiritual tradition as a whole is intelligent, insightful and timely. Intelligent because he writes as one who has a firm grasp of Christian history and the very positive contributions of the Pentecostal movement in opening the eyes of the wider church to the charisms of the Spirit. He is unapologetic about the respect due to Pentecostalism as a force for renewal and as a movement which has mediated the rediscovery of the neglected Biblical truths about glossolalia and spirit baptism to the whole church. He is insightful because he writes with the perspective of a critical friend, and avoids knee-jerk reactions to recent Pentecostal dalliances with 'Toronto blessing' style meetings and the tendency of many Pentecostals to uncritically accept much of the Word of Faith type teaching of the so-called 'health and wealth' gospel. He has a keen appreciation of the need of the Pentecostal movement to cease from its wanderings and find a home for itself within mainstream Christianity. He sees the dangers inherent in the current state of affairs where a lack of effective traditioning and 'rootedness' has led to Pentecostalism making unwise alliances with the forces of fundamentalism and dispensationalism, not to mention unstable emotionalism. His treatment is timely because he speaks with a prophetic voice, calling the movement to think theologically rather than in terms of expediency with regards to its contemporary role in the Church of Christ. He tackles the Pentecostal preoccupation with all things new and the propensity of many within the movement to run after the latest

action. In short, his message is that it is time for the Pentecostal movement to grow up and establish its credentials in relation to the Christian spiritual tradition of which it is a part, and to which it must show more than lip-service if it is to be taken seriously.

Chan's basic thesis is that in defending Pentecostal distinctiveness, Pentecostals have only succeeded in isolating Pentecostalism from the Christian mainstream tradition. The fear that identification with the mainstream is equivalent to identifying with dead tradition rather than with what God is doing in the 'now', has caused Pentecostals to cut themselves off from the historical richness of the wider Christian community. The distance created as a result has, in Chan's view, deprived Pentecostals of the interpretative tools necessary to discern the true function of areas like glossolalia. This lack of ability to fully understand the function of the gifts of the Spirit, combined with a failure on the part of Pentecostals to formulate an effective traditioning process, has led to many within the movement lacking a true understanding of the very elements which are meant to give Pentecostalism its own distinctive spirituality.

Simon Chan argues persuasively for a Pentecostal Spiritual theology, which to my understanding he posits not as an alternative to Systematic theology, but as a more effective way of producing an integrative theology. I found his discussion of both the nature and the pros and cons of Systematic theology over-long and an unnecessary digression from the main substance of the book. His discussion on Spiritual theology is, however, very insightful and makes some very worthwhile points, particularly with regards to the need for a proper trinitarian understanding of the role of the Spirit in Pentecostal theology. His comments on the Pentecostal understanding of the value or otherwise of tradition will challenge the status quo in many circles.

Chan goes on to treat comprehensively the areas of glossolalia and Spirit baptism but the constraints of a short review do not give me the latitude to deal with these areas at any length. Suffice to say that Chan draws on a very wide degree of sources to argue for what was for this reviewer at least an extremely fresh and competent reinterpretation of the place of both concepts within wider Christian spirituality.

However, for me, the most important chapter of the book is the final one. Here Chan deals with Pentecostal ecclesiology and in it he argues for a move away from the usual Pentecostal emphasis on the individual making up the church, and a move towards an understanding of the church as a formative phenomenon which acts on the life of the believer.

This book is one which Pentecostal leaders, particularly those who have national and regional responsibilities, should read and discuss. It should be the catalyst for a much wider debate.

Sean O'Callaghan
Chester College

Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period

*Jacob Neusner (editor in chief),
William Scott Green (editor)*
Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999,
693 pp., h/b, £39.99

This dictionary was first published in 1996 as a two-volume Macmillan edition, now out of print. The scope of such a project is potentially considerable, consequently both the range and depth of material covered was closely circumscribed by the editors. The 'biblical period' is that period during which the Bible (both OT and NT) was being formulated and canonised, but is extended by some two centuries in order to include the Babylonian Talmud as well as the Mishnah, Tosefta and much Midrashic literature - the resulting

span is from 450 BCE to 600 CE. The volume is marketed as a dictionary as opposed to an encyclopaedia; consequently, the articles present brief definitions rather than in-depth analysis. This compromise results in little contrast made between so-called assured results of scholarship and issues which are currently the centre of significant scholarly debate; articles are not accompanied by a bibliography which might list further reading; and the names of individual contributors are not listed alongside their respective articles. As a non-technical publication, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words are transliterated and spellings of names adopt the widespread English usage. The editorial panel and list of contributors commendably include both Jews and Christians, from North America, Europe and Israel – all specialists in their represented fields.

A project of this nature is always going to be a compromise of various competing interests and prospective markets. It may be, however, that at a number of points the specific compromises adopted are not to the best advantage of the religious and theological student. For example, the comparative length and selection of articles is sometimes anomalous: articles on 'glass, gold', 'glassmaking' and 'glass vessels' are together afforded twice as much space as the article on 'Philo' or 'Rome'.

Another major drawback of the dictionary is the lack of indexes which might have offered important cross-referencing. For example, in addition to brief discussion of Egyptian synagogues in the article 'synagogue', there is further relevant material in the articles, 'Egypt' and 'Alexandria, Jews in' but the reader may not find these; and there is no reference to Egyptian synagogues where they might have been expected to occur in the article, 'synagogues, diaspora'. Similarly, there is a cross-reference from hesed (see gemilut hasadim), where the term is treated in some three lines and translated 'acts of

loving kindness'. A much greater discussion of the term, however, is provided in the article 'grace', but the reader is not directed to this. There are articles on attitudes to Jews in selected NT books: the four gospels, Hebrews, James and Revelation. Acts is the principal focus of the article 'Luke, Jews in the Gospel of', but there is no cross-reference to its inclusion at this juncture.

The value of the publication for students lies in the overviews that are provided of important subjects (e.g. synagogues), the brief definitions of technical terms (e.g. korban), and the identification of specific individuals, groups or locations (e.g. Hasideans). Unfortunately it cannot be relied upon as a major reference tool in support of arguments presented in student assignments. The *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2000) may prove over time to be a more appropriate publication for the requirements of the theological and religious studies undergraduate.

Andrew D. Clarke

University of Aberdeen

Charisma, Converts, Competitors. Societal and Sociological Factors in the Success of Early Christianity

Jack T. Sanders

SCM Press, London 2000,
xv + 223 pp., £14.95

In this book, Professor Jack T. Sanders, a prominent NT scholar, sets out to address the question, 'Why did the early Christian movement achieve the "success" that it did in the Roman world?' He brings to this long-standing problem the perspective of contemporary sociology of religion. In particular, he draws upon the resources of the sociological study of New Religious Movements (NRMs), a recently defined field in the social sciences and religious studies, but one with an already vast and growing body of literature. The result is a

study that is both refreshing and illuminating.

The book falls into three main sections. The first chapter tackles the question, 'Why Did People Follow Jesus?' Sanders considers the most frequently cited motivating factors: Jesus' teaching and miracle-working; his call to discipleship; the social location and psychological state of those who followed him. According to Sanders, such factors were important, but they do not provide an explanation for Jesus' success. More helpful, he claims, is the understanding of Jesus as 'charismatic', as developed by Martin Hengel and Geza Vermes. These scholars compared Jesus to ancient charismatics. Greater insight can be gained, Sanders argues, by drawing a comparison with charismatic leaders of NRMs. In the rest of the chapter, Sanders engages in such a comparison. He identifies four aspects of charismatic leadership of an NRM (the leader's charismatic qualities, his response to a crisis situation, the randomness of charisma, the hatred that charisma provokes) and finds these qualities in the ministry of Jesus. He concludes that the attraction of Jesus can be explained by the fact that he met the criteria of a successful charismatic leader of an NRM.

The second part discusses, 'Why did Gentiles Become Christians?' In this part Sanders reviews and criticises explanations of Gentile conversion given by previous scholars (including A.D. Nock's view that Christianity provided answers to the deep religious questions of Gentiles and Ramsey MacMullen's view that Christianity offered a more solid alternative to the superficiality of pagan religion). For his own account, Sanders draws on, amongst others, the work of sociologist Lewis Rambo. The latter identifies seven aspects of conversion in NRMs: context, crisis, quest, encounter, encapsulation, commitment, and consequences. Sanders finds these elements present in the phenomenon of Gentile conversion in

early Christianity. The context was opportune: Christianity emerged at a time when many people were turning to the worship of new deities. There was crisis in the form of the status inconsistency of many Gentile converts. Most converts to Christianity were engaged in a quest; they were religious seekers. Christianity was able to negotiate successful 'encounters': Christian missionaries were persuasive advocates of the new message, presenting to potential converts desirable benefits of the new faith (a comprehensive system of meaning, emotional gratification, techniques for living, displays of power); Christian missionaries also showed willingness to negotiate group boundaries with their converts. Christianity excelled at encapsulating its converts, through its rhetoric, its provision of community roles and social relationship and its rituals. The Christian movement was able to sustain the commitment of many of its converts. Conversion to Christianity entailed wide-ranging consequences for the Gentile converts: intellectual, ethical, social and political. Thus, Sanders concludes, Gentiles became Christians because all the elements of successful conversion to an NRM were in place.

In the third chapter, Sanders attempts to answer, 'Why Did Christianity Succeed in the Roman Empire?' Again, he begins by critiquing the answers given by other scholars, including Rodney Stark in his recent work. Sanders poses the question of Christianity's success in relation to the failure of its competitors: Why did Christianity triumph, while Mithraism did not? Christianity succeeded, Sanders argues, because of its refusal to be self-limiting (to one locale, to a particular aggregate, to one gender), its cohesiveness, its care for its members in times of distress and its constant adaptability.

I have already indicated my appreciation of this book. It contains many valuable insights into the

questions that it seeks to address. It is written in an engaging and highly accessible style. Indeed, it is something of a scholarly page-turner. Sanders draws on up-to-date sociological research, and he does not confine himself to one theorist or theory. Some may view a sociological study of this kind as reductionist, but Sanders makes clear that he is not attempting to give a total explanation but rather is focusing on the social factors in the success of Christianity. He freely admits an element of the elusive and mysterious to the eventual triumph of Christianity, beyond sociological explanation. Sanders is more susceptible, in my opinion, to the charge of anachronism which is often levelled against sociological studies of early Christianity. Too readily he fuses the two historical horizons of Graeco-Roman religious options and contemporary millenarian movements (e.g. the extended comparison of Jesus and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh). One may (I believe) legitimately use modern data to shed light on ancient evidence, but one must do so with extreme care. Sanders, I think, could have conducted the task with more hermeneutical sensitivity and reflection. Another problem is that Sanders tends to treat the NT and other early Christian texts as windows on the world of the first Christians, and does not (in my view) duly appreciate the role of these documents in the *formation* of the worlds of the early believers. These criticisms aside, this is an impressive book which I warmly commend to those interested in the social dynamics of emerging Christianity and the reasons for its 'triumph' in the Roman empire.

Edward Adams

King's College, London

Taking Religion to School: Christian Theology and Secular Education

Stephen H. Webb

Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000,
253 pp.

Stephen Webb has one message for his readers in this passionate book – the study of religion is a *religious* activity. Webb's thesis is that this simple point has been lost as academia has sought to embrace the increasing secularity and religious pluralism of society at large.

In Webb's view, the key problem has been the attempt to make a distinction between the dispassionate *teaching about* and the committed *teaching of* religion. In parallel with the civic repression of religion in society at large, the policy of the academy has been to divorce personal faith from the study of religion in the pursuit of academic objectivity. The cost, argues Webb, has been to disconnect students 'from the very source of their motivation to learn' (27). The fear of imposing a religion leads to educational paralysis, where the classroom becomes not open and tolerant, but secular and atheistic (224).

Webb's solution is refreshingly naive, the teaching of religion is to be treated as a *confessional* activity which embraces the personal history of both teacher and taught and gives 'more space for the articulation of distinctive religious voices' (137). He argues for a pedagogy where teacher and student are each encouraged to own, declare and reflect upon their personal faith, and not feel that 'being religious' is somehow a problem in the academic study of religion. Webb's confessional approach is not confrontational and polemical and does not seek to convert (he is clear about the distinction between the classroom and the church), but it is religious by opening up the possibility of encounter with God. He argues that this approach is the way to prepare

students for the world of religious pluralism, where controversy is a fact of life.

A number of styles are employed in the book in the pursuit of the thesis. The opening chapter is autobiographical, charting Webb's personal religious journey through the study of religion. This is followed by several chapters of more traditional philosophical argument, where contrasts are drawn with other key writers, and is complemented by a case study in the relationship between the chaplaincy and the religious studies department in his own college. Finally there is a delightful chapter where Webb records an email dialogue between himself and his former teacher William Placher, in which they explore their agreements and differences concerning the study of religion as a religious activity.

I found this a most helpful book. Although it emerges from the American context, where the practice of religion is 'verboden' in public education, the themes and analysis are highly relevant in other contexts. It was encouraging to see Webb reaching similar conclusions to Christians working in school religious education in Britain. Above all the book was exemplary in modelling the argument. To begin with, I was disturbed at the seeming lack of rigour in the first autobiographical chapter. However, as I read on, the importance of the first chapter emerged. For how else can one write passionately about the importance of personal history in the study of religion but through autobiography? Webb is surely right to remind the self-appointed guardians of objectivity that personal history shapes us all and that their liberal Protestant approach to the study of religion is a religious activity as much as anyone else's.

Trevor Cooling

The Stapleford Centre, Nottingham

BOOK NOTES

Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays

P.D. Miller,
JSOTS 267, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000,
715 pp., h/b., £60.00

These 41 collected essays by the doyen of OT studies at Princeton cover three overlapping areas: 'The Bible in its Near Eastern World' (11), 'The Psalms' (11), and 'Old Testament Theology' (19). They were first published in the period 1965–2000, with increased interest through time in the later sections. Only one appears for the first time in English ('The Canon in Contemporary American Discussion'); the others can be found in various journals (24), *Festschriften* (10) and other books (6). They develop Miller's probing and stimulating interest in Israel's faith, as seen especially in the Psalms and Deuteronomy, and in its relevance to Christians. The book will be a handy place to consult several important articles, though more for the library than the student shelf.

1 and 2 Samuel

M.J. Evans
NIBCOT, Hendrickson & Paternoster, 2000,
xiv + 267 pp., h/b., £8.99

This is a worthy addition to an increasingly well-known series. In a brief introduction, Evans notes three important interests (adapting Brueggemann): politics, people and preaching. She then suggests an integrating perspective: 'The book of Samuel examines and reflects on the nature, accession, use and abuse of power' (9). Much of this reflection is implicit, and Evans needs to cite the beginning of Kings to create an inclusion of weakness (childless Hannah, senile David), but the approach is certainly helpful. The rest

of the volume deals competently with this rich and fascinating book in the limited space available, reflecting on power where appropriate.

First and Second Samuel

D.C. Hester,
Interpretation Bible Studies, Geneva Press, 2000,
vii + 118 pp.

This is one of about a dozen Bible study guides available in this series. It contains an introduction, 10 study units on key chapters (1 Sam. 2, 8, 12, 15, 16; 2 Sam. 7, 11, 12, 18, 22), and a leader's guide. Each unit is about 10 pages of well-written thoughtful text, ending with four 'Questions for Reflection'. This is complemented by occasional pictures or side boxes, with quotes and further reading (often from the same publishers, and from mainstream scholarship). The book would work well for personal reflection, but would leave too much work for study group leaders to do themselves. Fortunately help is available on a website (www.pcpub.org, IBS Teacher Helps), and this could almost be used independently of the book! It's a pity it wasn't included.

Introducing the Old Testament

J. Drane
Oxford: Lion, 2000, £20.00

This is significant revision of the 1987 edition, which was actually two previous books in a single volume: *The Old Testament Story* (1983) and *The Old Testament Faith* (1986). Separately and together these were widely praised and very popular, combining Lion's innovative and attractive layout with a clear and readable text, and including many illustrations and 'special articles'. The new edition retains and updates all these features. In presentation, the photographs are better chosen and more sharply produced (on coated

paper), the line drawings are more numerous and the layout more modern. In content, the opening and closing sections are significantly rewritten, and the text lightly reworked throughout (though hardly as much as the back cover suggests). As before, this generally reflects mainstream critical scholarship, though with a keen theological interest. Unfortunately, however, the text gives little access to more conservative views, and the further reading is woefully inadequate in this respect. In summary, another excellently produced volume, which will introduce many to the OT and its study, but which needs to be complemented as well as complimented.

Philip Johnston

Wycliffe Hall, Oxford

The Apostle of God: Paul and the Promise of Abraham

John L. White

Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999,
277 pp., h/b., \$24.95

White contends that Paul's encounter with the resurrected Jesus transformed his understanding of God. Once conceived of as lawgiver and judge, God as creator now became his root metaphor for God. Part one of the book examines this metaphor. Part two investigates Greco-Roman influences on Paul's thought. More specifically, White contends that Augustus provides the model for Paul's description of Christ's lordship. Part three looks at 'God our Father', 'Christ the Lord', and the 'Household of Faith' in the light of the previous findings.

White's argument rests on his contention that 'God as Creator' forms the master metaphor of Paul's conception of God. Yet, he asserts more than argues this point. The same holds true of his claim for an Augustan model for Christ's lordship. The reader will find extensive evidence

from the Greco-Roman world. Yet, references to Paul's letters are noticeably lacking. As a result, the reader is left with an interesting but unsustainable attempt to listen to Paul.

James C. Miller

Daystar University, Nairobi

Book Reviews

- Old Testament** p. 46
-
- Day, John* **Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan** Mark J. Boda
- Gooder, Paula* **The Pentateuch: A Story of Beginnings** Desmond Alexander
- Hartley, John E.* **Genesis** Laurence A. Turner
- Hawk, Daniel L.* **Joshua, Berit Olam, Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry** David F. Pennant
- Jobes, Karen H. and Silva, Moisés* **Invitation to the Septuagint** P.J. Williams
- Lalleman-de Winkel, H.* **Jeremiah in Prophetic Tradition** Karl Möller
- Richardson, M.E.J.* **Hammurabi's Laws: Text, Translation and Glossary** Richard S. Hess
- Römer, T. (ed.)* **The Future of the Deuteronomistic History**
- Römer Pury, A. de T., Macchi, J.-D. (eds)* **Israel constructs its History. Deuteronomistic historiography in recent research** Hetty Lalleman-de Winkel
- Sherwood, Y.* **A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The survival of Jonah in western culture** Philip Jenson
- New Testament** p. 55
-
- Brooke, George J. (ed.)* **Birth of Jesus: Biblical and Theological Reflections**
- Freed, Edwin D.* **The Stories of Jesus' Birth: a Critical Introduction** Andrew Gregory
- Dunn, James D.G. (ed.)* **Paul and the Mosaic Law** Simon Gathercole
- Engberg-Pedersen, Troels* **Paul and the Stoics** Kenneth A. Fox
- Hengel, Martin* **The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ** Andrew Gregory
- Heyer, C.J. den. (trans. John Bowden)* **Paul: A Man of Two Worlds** James C. Miller
- Smith, D. Moody Jr* **John** Peter Oakes
- History** p. 63
-
- Murray, Iain H.* **Evangelicalism Divided A record of crucial change in the years 1950-2000** Peter Cook
- Stunt, Timothy C.F.* **From Awakening to Secession: Radical Evangelicals in Switzerland and Britain 1815-35** Meic Pearse
- Trueman, Carl R.* **Reformation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow** John Coffey

Systematics

p. 67

- Alexander, T.D. and Rosner, Brian S. (eds)*
The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology Doug Johnson
- Bolt, John* **A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology** John Coffey
- Carson, D.A.* **The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God** David Gibson
- Fee, Gordon D.* **Listening to the Spirit in the Text** Graham McFarlane
- Frost, Michael* **Seeing God in the Ordinary: A Theology of the Everyday** Mark Greene
- Lange, Frtts de (trans. Martin N. Walton)*
Waiting for the Word: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Speaking About God Timothy Bradshaw
- Lewis, Peter* **The Message of the Living God** Peter Seccombe
- Lundin, Roger; Walhout, Clarence and Thiselton, Anthony C.*
The Promise of Hermeneutics Timothy Ward
- McKim, Donald K. (ed.)* **Calvin's Institutes: Abridged Edition** Lee Gatiss, Daniel Strange
- Noll, Mark A. and Thiemann, Ronald F. (eds)*
Where Shall My Wond'ring Soul Begin?: The Landscape of Evangelical Piety and Thought Ian Randall
- Pangritz, Andreas* **Karl Barth in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer** Martin Davie
- Poythress, Vern S. and Grudem, Wayne A.*
The Gender Neutral Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words Sharon James
- Sugiratharajah, R.S. (ed.)* **Vernacular Hermeneutics** Anthony H. Nichols
- Thomas, John Heywood* **Paul Tillich** Martin Davie

Religious Studies

p. 83

- Albrecht, Daniel E.* **Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality** Herbert McGonigle
- Barbour, Ian* **When Science Meets Religion** John Taylor
- Barker, Montagu G.*
Psychology, Religion and Mental Health Steve Midgley
- Chan, Simon* **Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition** Sean O'Callaghan
- Neusner, Jacob and Green, William Scott (eds)*
Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period Andrew D. Clarke
- Sanders, Jack T.* **Charisma, Converts, Competitors. Societal and Sociological Factors in the Success of Early Christianity** Edward Adams
- Webb, Stephen H.* **Taking Religion to School: Christian Theology and Secular Education** Trevor Cooling

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