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#### **REVIEWS**

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Emigration is a strange experience, and that of myself and my family to the US has, as I write this, only just begun. Yes, I have made it through customs, through the labyrinth that is American bureaucracy, through the usual institutionalised absurdity of mortgage applications, driving tests, medicals etc. – yet the hard part is only just beginning: learning how to relate to a culture that is not my own, and never will be, and yet which will become the very air that my own small boys will breathe. I will always be British; my children will be Americans; and that is, strange to tell, the most difficult thing for me to take.

There is, however, another challenge which I have faced, one which was completely unexpected and for which life had left me unprepared: the choice of a church. As readers in the UK will know, unless you happen to live in a big city in Britain, or in certain rural areas in the Celtic rim, you are unlikely to be spoiled for choice as far as church goes. Having spent two years of my adult life without a car and without much money in the wilds of the Grampian region of Scotland, I know what it is like to have no church fellowship at all for extended periods of time; and I am also aware that I am not unique in this experience, since much of the UK has little or no gospel preaching at all. Thus, when one does live in a place where there is something resembling a good church, one tends to support it, even if one does not endorse everything that is said and done there. In effect, for many British Christians the decision is very often made for us: beggars, as the old adage has it, cannot be choosers.

The US, however, is radically different – or at least in Philadelphia this would seem to be the case. True, the place has more lawyers in the phone book than churches – no surprise there, I'm sad to say – but to the person seeking good, solid, biblical preaching and fervent fellowship, there is apparently no shortage of places to go. Indeed, you name it, they've got: from charismatic to exclusive psalmody, from 'New Life' to highly liturgical, the choice is remarkable. It is, one might say, typical of the consumer culture that is America: you can, after all, get any kind of cuisine or car or music in the shops; it should not be surprising therefore that churches should reflect the variety, eclecticism, and consumer-driven cornucopia of the wider culture. Of course, when I look at American society in general, I am left with profound doubts about the depth of much American Christianity. The rates of abortion are tragically high; the ubiquity of drugs eats at the fabric of society; unbelievable levels of deprivation and poverty stand side by side with vast wealth and opulence; the awful urban violence easily (and ironically, given American help in the province) eclipses that of Ulster in numbers of dead and wounded; and glib political blasphemies drip constantly from the lips of politicians who consistently identify the American way with God's way. Yet, for all this, one cannot deny that, for good or ill, there are a lot of churches over here and a lot of church-goers. The British can be very condescending about American Christianity — but I have yet to pass a church building over here that has recently been turned into a night club or bingo hall.

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Much could be said on these themes, but the thing that caught me off-guard most was not the obvious need to deconstruct the theologies and social underpinnings of American Christianity, but the sheer amount of choice available to the Christian looking for a church. I have never lived anywhere where there were more than two (at most) churches that I would consider attending; yet here I am where there are probably fifteen or so within ten minutes of my front door. Too much freedom can indeed be a form of oppression, and, to be honest, the freedom of so much choice has made my life a lot more difficult over recent weeks; but it has also forced me to reflect in some depth upon the question of what exactly the church is. After all, the answer to this question in general is of crucial importance to the more particular issue of where any individual should worship.

As a presbyterian, my mind automatically started thinking of the three basic marks of the church as taught by my church's subordinate standards: word, sacrament and discipline. For me – as for you — any church to which I belong here on earth will be less than perfect; that's because of the imperfect people like ourselves who go to make up the church. Yet there are degrees of perfection, and I firmly believe that it is consistent with biblical teaching that every church should strive to conform to these three marks as perfectly as it can. Let me expand a little on this.

*Word.* This is very simple. Does the church read the Bible prayerfully at its meetings? Does the minister expound that word faithfully and humbly, drawing out its timeless truth and applying it to the present in an earnest and accurate manner? In other words, any church worthy of the name must place the gospel – the good news of God's salvation in Christ – at the very centre of its life and ministry. If other things, however worthy in themselves, are coming to eclipse the basic, verbal confession of the church that Christ is Lord and Saviour, then the word is being removed from its proper place and what is left – be it social club or social service – while it may well fulfil a useful function in wider society, is most definitely no longer a Christian church. It is an absolute essential for the church that the good news of Jesus Christ, the promise of grace that he embodies, needs to be sounded forth from a church's pulpit with clarity if it is to be worthy of the name.

*Sacrament.* Are baptism and the Lord's Supper an important part of the church's practice? Do they mean something in the church's life, or are they optional extras which are there for those who, for some reason, feel they need them or don't have to rush home to get the roast on after the Sunday service? Now I know that the church is split over the mode and subjects of baptism, and I do not want to use this column to exacerbate any differences there may be. I do want to say, however, that whether one is a believer baptist or an infant baptist, one should never make the mistake of assuming that baptism is of no importance. It is a command of Christ and is thus of absolute importance – and anyone who says otherwise is flying in the clear face of New Testament teaching. Let us therefore learn to respect each other's differences on this one, but let us not make the mistake of reducing those differences to matters of complete indifference. That would be the worst attitude of all. It is politically incorrect to say so, but I believe it to be one of the tragedies of the modern church that we have become less denominational – the result not so much

of a developing sense of the unity all believers have in Christ, whatever the rhetoric at evangelical jamborees might encourage us to believe, but of an increasingly casual attitude both to things that are actually of great importance and to the doctrine of the church. I am aware of the sin that lies behind much denominationalism – make no mistake, it lies behind much of the para-church anti-denominationalism as well – but I also rejoice that denominations often testify to the seriousness with which men and women took the teaching of the Bible on issues such as the sacraments. We need once again such churches that take the commands of Christ and the practice of the early church seriously – and that means moving beyond evangelical indifference to baptism and the awful habit of appending communion to the end of the worship service. Instead, we need to place them more firmly at the centre of the church's life. They are, after all, God's gracious gifts to us; let us not despise them.<sup>1</sup>

*Discipline.* This, of course, is one of the bogey-words of modern society, with its connotations of oppression, of bully-boy unpleasantness, and of sinister manipulation. Surely to identify Christianity with discipline is to fall right into the hands of Nietzsche, Foucault and others for whom religion is merely one more means of manipulation and of stifling creativity? Sadly, the arguments of such atheistic philosophers have often had more than a grain of truth about them: the church has indeed frequently used its power to crush and oppress rather than to liberate and encourage; but that is the fault of the sinful men and women who filled its positions of power, not of the gospel. In the right hands, under God, discipline is a positive, liberating thing. We must rid ourselves of the mindless, predictable and boring cynicism of the postmodern age. Discipline in the church is all about caring for and nurturing the saints. Put simply: does the church have a leadership that will look after you? Will they encourage you when you are feeling down? Will they rebuke you in an intelligent and loving manner when you slip-up or backslide? In other words, do they care enough for your soul to look after you and help you mature as a Christian? Church discipline should mirror that of God the Father for his own children – rooted in wisdom and love, and manifested in wisdom and love. If your church cannot offer you that, then you are being short-changed and need to find somewhere that will, for your own sake.

These, then, were my markers as I set about trying to navigate through the uncharted waters of American Christianity. You will notice that I have said nothing in the above about styles of worship, dress codes, charismata etc. This is because, compared to the three issues outlined above, these latter things are trivia. If you have no word, no sacraments, and no discipline, you can sing all the psalms or choruses you want, dress as conservatively or as outlandishly as you wish, and attempt to perform as many miracles as you can cram into a service, but you will not

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelicals are often more uncomfortable with why communion is important than baptism so I take this opportunity to recommend Robert Letham's little book, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread* (Presbyterian and Reformed) as a great introduction to the sacrament from an evangelical perspective.

have a church; what you will have is a gathering of crooners, of fashion victims or of well-meaning enthusiasts. For those who want to grow as Christians, more profound questions about the church need to be answered before such ephemera are addressed.

I was blessed: even after asking these questions, the number of churches on my list of potentials remained rather high and so I did what, with all things being equal, I felt was right: I went to the church where, in addition to the above, my children felt comfortable and my wife and I could sing the psalms we love in the simplicity of unaccompanied four part harmony. But make no mistake: even for a dyed-in-the-wool presbyterian traditionalist like myself, word, sacraments and discipline are of far more importance than the outward aesthetics of the worship service. Aesthetics do not make a church; word, sacrament and discipline do.

# EATING IS BELIEVING? ON MIDRASH AND THE MIXING OF METAPHORS IN JOHN 6

*David Gibson*

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## Introduction

The Gospel of John may be remote from the context and time of William Wordsworth but M. Stibbe's comparison is noteworthy:

*Both authors have created texts in which the diction is demotic, simple and accessible ... Yet, at the same time, both authors have managed to create meanings which are 'half hidden from the eye'.<sup>1</sup>*

Perhaps the modern problem in reading John is not so much a half hidden meaning as an only half-open eye that fails to see beyond the apparently obvious, the literal, and a superficial reading. John 6 presents precisely such a challenge to the exegete and critical scholar with its combination of midrashic exposition of Exodus motifs and metaphorical language. Here the eyes of scholars down through the centuries have seen sacramental, non-sacramental, and anti-sacramental theology in the text and any attempt to continue the discussion joins this legacy of division.

## Questions of method

This article seeks to examine the context, language, and structure of the John 6 discourse and to show that as a literary text it focuses theologically on the person and death of Jesus, at the expense of dealing with a sacramental theology.<sup>2</sup> However in terms of hermeneutics and how we approach the text the matter is complex. All scholars ultimately align themselves with a school of thought on John which influences and guides the approach to the text. The methodological options in current Johannine studies are many and any look at the history of exegesis of John 6 shows that whether the text is read sacramentally or not can often be the result of other ideological concerns.<sup>3</sup> My alignment is to a view of the text as sacred

<sup>1</sup> M. Stibbe *John's Gospel*, 133 (New York/London: Routledge, 1994)

<sup>2</sup> C.R. Koester illustrates that the concern for theological plausibility and use of the literary context have been standard features in non-sacramental interpretations of the text as far back as Clement of Alexandria, Origen and, later, Eusebius ('John Six and the Lord's Supper' *LQ* 4, 1990, 420).

<sup>3</sup> Koester provides an illuminating outline of this history. On the issue of method in the interpretation of John, see the brief survey in S. Motyer, *Your Father the Devil? A New Approach to John and 'the Jews'*, 8-31 (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997 at p. 13).

Scripture within the evangelical Protestant tradition and this background of 'low-sacramentalism' ensures that Jesus' words in 6:53-56 leap from the page and in their literal sense jar with theological sensibilities. This means that to argue the John 6 discourse is emphatically Christological, not Eucharistic could be deemed by some as simply an attempt, with eyes closed, to make the text mean what it does not say. I hope to show that it is not.

Such methodological issues are represented in the views of two scholars from opposing sides of the debate, P.M. Casey and J.D.G. Dunn and their work provides a way in to the discussion. Casey is one of the most recent scholars to argue vigorously for a highly sacramental understanding of John 6. He rejects Dunn's much earlier non-sacramental reading as 'methodologically unsatisfactory', and his own work is based on a confident assertion of a real *Sitz im Leben* for the document – a Johannine community in fierce conflict with 'the Jews' – and as such his interpretation of this passage is closely related to his views on the text's weak historicity and anti-Jewishness.<sup>4</sup> Dunn and Casey are at one in the view that the John 6 discourse should be considered as a whole, but Casey berates Dunn's non-sacramental understanding of the earlier part of the passage by arguing that 'we should ... not interpret the earlier part of the discourse in isolation from the end of it'. Casey also criticises Dunn for starting 'with 6:63, which he interprets literally, and takes to exercise a controlling influence over the previous exposition'. Casey's own view is that 6:51-58 is 'a climax in the eucharist' but that this sacramental theology has been 'expounded in stages' throughout the earlier sections of John 6.<sup>5</sup>

The starting points for both scholars are so different that it is hard not to feel there is something of a methodological impasse here; nevertheless, some criticisms of Casey's critique suggest themselves. It is just as valid to argue that we should not interpret the end part of the discourse in isolation from the earlier part of it, as Casey would agree. However in terms of context and flow of argumentation this is a more sure-footed interpretive key and one which poses problems for a eucharistic interpretation of 6:51-58 if these verses, however they are interpreted, are not first read back across 6:1-50. Indeed, Casey's view that v. 63 exercises a controlling influence for Dunn over the previous exposition is no different from his eucharistic understanding of vv. 51-58 ensuring that he sees the eucharist expounded in stages before v. 51. Even on Casey's own terms of allowing the end part to control the meaning of the earlier part, Dunn seems to have achieved this more thoroughly by going further than v. 58 and considering the significance of v. 63. Casey's criticism of Dunn's literal understanding of this verse is the result of his own literal understanding of 'eat' and 'drink' in v. 53. We shall see that the choice of what is literal and what is metaphorical is not

<sup>4</sup> P.M. Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?*, 42-51 (London/New York: Routledge, 1996); J.D.G. Dunn, 'John vi – A Eucharistic Discourse?', *NTS* 17, (1970-71) 328-38

<sup>5</sup> Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?* 48, 46



an arbitrary hermeneutical move, but can actually be governed by the structure and content of the text itself. Casey's work reflects the replacement of the content, structure and details of the text as decisive ingredients in the hermeneutical circle of interpretation with the details of conjectural community disputes and a pre-supposed sacramental reading of 6:51-58. His work offers almost no discussion of the metaphorical language of the passage, or implicit references to the death of Jesus as crucial to its meaning.

## 6:1-24: Jesus, Moses and faith

Chapter 6 can be seen to fall into at least three main parts: verses 1-15; 16-24; and 25-71, although separate sections can be discerned within these parts – particularly vv. 25-71. We will give most attention to vv. 51-58 and the questions that this section evokes, but the context of the preceding parts of the chapter is vital. Some commentators see it as part of a larger section in John 5-12, with the portrayal of Jesus in relation to Judaism, particularly the figure of Moses, a key feature. For Lindars it is 5:46 that sets the agenda for chapter 6, and this is taken up by other writers. For Stibbe a true reading of the narrative here must 'penetrate the hidden "Mosaic" of Jesus' words and actions'.<sup>6</sup> Perry, following Fortna and Martyn respectively, in seeing Messianic and Prophetic function in the 'signs', argues that 'Jesus is midrashically described in 6:1-21 in a manner reminiscent of Moses'. Jesus crosses a sea (v. 1), he is followed by a multitude that has witnessed signs performed by him (v. 2), goes up a mountain (v. 3), and then feeds the multitude with miraculous bread (v. 11).<sup>7</sup> This view is substantiated by the intensely detailed exegetical study of P. Anderson who argues that the underlying Christology of John 6 is the Prophet-like-Moses typology based on Deuteronomy 18:15-22.<sup>8</sup>

We shall see that the reference to signs in 6:1 is significant, but we should also note that the purpose of the two miracles stories which open the chapter is to 'reveal Jesus' identity and contrast different types of faith ... by contrasting the misguided response of the crowd, with the genuine response of the disciples'.<sup>9</sup> This introduces faith as a vitally important concept in the passage. The record of the two miracles in 6:1-24 has prompted much discussion. Given that the feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle common to all four gospels<sup>10</sup> and the story of Jesus walking on the water also has Synoptic parallels<sup>11</sup> the discussion has tended to focus on the nature of the tradition and dependency.

<sup>6</sup> M. Stibbe, *John*, 81 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993). Stibbe suggests that the whole narrative of John 6 is replete with both transtextual and intertextual echoes of the Exodus story; he draws attention particularly to Exodus 12 and Numbers 11 (87-88).

<sup>7</sup> J.M. Perry, 'The Evolution of the Johannine Eucharist', 23 *NTS* 39 (1993), 22-35

<sup>8</sup> P.N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, 174-78 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996)

<sup>9</sup> Koester, 'John Six and the Lord's Supper' 426

<sup>10</sup> cf. Mark 6:31-44; Matt. 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17

<sup>11</sup> cf. Mark 6:45-52; Matt. 14:22-33

In favour of an independent tradition, there are a number of features in the Johannine version of the feeding miracle which make it appear very likely that John was not working over the Markan account to give it a eucharistic interpretation: John's omission of 'looking up to heaven' and of the 'breaking of the bread'; the description of the bread as 'barley loaves'; the reason given for the collecting of the remaining pieces of food.<sup>12</sup> Further, we observe that for 'fish' John does not use the word '*ichthys*' which very early came to have sacramental significance, and so Johnston argues:

*John's word did not serve to bring the story any closer to the [sacramental] discourse because the discourse is argued in terms of bread and wine, and not fish.*<sup>13</sup>

The eucharistic interpretation of 'gave thanks' in 6:11 is unlikely, given that Matthew and Mark use it for the feeding of the four thousand and not for the Last Supper, while John uses it again in 11:41, a passage wholly devoid of eucharistic overtones. For him, as for many commentators, the action simply corresponds to the Jewish custom at the meal table.<sup>14</sup> It follows from this that if we allow 6:51-58 to wait their turn in the discourse and not read them back across vv. 1-15 with a pre-supposed meaning, it is hard to see eucharistic import in the Johannine account of the feeding miracle.

### 6:25-50: Finding the hermeneutical keys

In coming to look at the main section of John 6:25-71, we should note how both vv. 27 and 31 have exercised significant roles for different scholars as hermeneutical keys to the chapter. P. Borgen focuses on the significance of v. 31, pointing out that the discourse by Jesus following that verse is meant to be an exegesis, a midrash, of the reference to the manna miracle with its quotation from OT Scripture: 'Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat"'.<sup>15</sup> The whole section can be seen to be a midrash by the fact that the direct reference to the manna miracle in v. 31 is repeated in vv. 49 and 58 and the rest of the discourse unfolds as an exposition of each part of the quotation: vv. 32-33 corresponding to 'he gave them'; vv. 34-48 to 'bread from heaven'; and vv. 49-59 to 'to eat'.

From this, verses 25-66 can be identified as homiletical in the sense that they call forth a response to the exhortation of v. 27. However, Anderson wishes to stress that with this in mind the verse should be seen as the central exhortation in the chapter. Seeing it as the pivotal fulcrum of chapter 6, he argues that from dialogues to

<sup>12</sup> E.D. Johnston, 'The Johannine Version of the Feeding of the Five Thousand - An Independent Tradition?' *NTS* 8 (1961-62), 151-54

<sup>13</sup> Johnston, 'The Johannine Version', 153

<sup>14</sup> Dunn, 'John vi', 332-33

<sup>15</sup> P. Borgen, 'The Unity of the Discourse in John 6', *ZNW* 50 (1959) 277-78. Cf. also Borgen, 'Observations on the Midrashic Character of John 6', *ZNW* 54 (1963) 232-40; Borgen, *Bread from Heaven*, (Leiden: Brill [NT.S 10] 1965).

discourses vv. 28ff. develop homiletically the Johannine version of the 'two ways' introduced in verse 27. The first is *the way of life* which involves seeking the truth, walking in the light, knowing the Father, believing in the Son, beholding his glory. The other is *the way of death* in John, which involves disobeying the truth, remaining in darkness, not knowing the Father, and thus neither recognising the Son nor beholding his glory. The two ways in John are described in *revelational* and *epistemological* terms.<sup>16</sup> Within this context Anderson does not regard v. 31 as the starting point of the homily. Instead, following the 6:1 reference to Jesus' signs, he argues that the 'main text' of the John 6 exhortation is not an OT quotation, but the *narration of Jesus' ministry*. He regards the tradition in verses 1–24 as having acquired something near the degree of authority possessed by the Jewish scriptures. Thus the 'midrash' in chapter 6 is actually the works and words of Jesus: 'the invitation to choose the life-producing Bread over other kinds of "bread" is the exhortative fulcrum of John 6'.<sup>17</sup> It follows from this that the rhetorical device used by the crowd in quoting Psalm 78:14, itself a midrashic conflation of Exodus 16:4, 15 and Numbers 11:7–9, functions only as 'a secondary text, employed as a rhetorical trump within the development of another theme'.<sup>18</sup> In painstaking detail he traces the function of the Psalm 78 midrash to argue this theme: in John 6

*the interpretation of the manna motif by the Johannine Jesus shifts the locus of import from that which is given to the one who gives ... the significance of Jesus' ministry is not that he provides barley loaves for the crowds but that he is sent from above, and the nourishment he provides has been attested by the Father (v. 27).<sup>19</sup>*

The importance of this cannot be underestimated: the emphasis here on Christology and on the one who gives, not what is given, is vital when we come to consider whether in vv. 51ff. the emphasis is on the eucharistic elements or the person of Jesus himself in his death.

Several other features of this section deserve attention. Very importantly, v. 35 picks up the theme of faith again and, presenting himself as 'the bread of life', Jesus claims to be able to both satisfy hunger and quench thirst. We should note the metaphorical language; further, we should note how the metaphor functions: in what sense does one 'come' to bread or 'believe' in it? The emphasis throughout the whole of the chapter is on the need to believe in Jesus<sup>20</sup> and that Jesus himself is central throughout. The contrast with the manna is that eating it did not prevent death (v. 58), but coming to Jesus and believing in him will result in eternal life.<sup>21</sup> If Jesus, as 'bread', is not to be interpreted literally then we need to exercise care in understanding the language related to what one does

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 200

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 197, 257

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 202

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 203

<sup>20</sup> cf. vv. 29, 35, 36, 40, 47, 64, 49

<sup>21</sup> Dunn, 'John vi', 333

with that bread – coming to Jesus and believing in him does not satisfy literal hunger or literal thirst. Verses 26–27 already work to dispel any continuing preoccupations in the narrative with material bread and contrast material food that perishes with ‘the food that endures to eternal life’. The point is that here the structures for the discourse are being put in place: if literal bread is able to be developed metaphorically, so the language of literal eating provides the scope for eating to be used metaphorically to refer to the process of eating that spiritual bread. John 6:35 recalls earlier themes the gospel introduced in clearly non-sacramental contexts<sup>22</sup> and also later in 7:37–38; similarly OT texts spoke metaphorically of hunger and thirst, eating and drinking in connection with hearing God’s Word (Amos 8:11) or partaking in divine wisdom.<sup>23</sup>

With their clear correlation of faith with the gift of eternal life vv. 40 and 47 are also important. Verse 47 introduces a section leading up to v. 51 which is a Christological development of the manna motif as it relates to v. 47 and is full of the mixing of metaphors. In v. 47 believing yields eternal life; in vv. 50–51 eating the bread yields eternal life. Here, it will not do to argue, as is often done with vv. 40, 54, that the two things are necessary for eternal life (i.e. belief in Jesus *and* eating the sacrament), because this section *binds together as identical both the thing to be eaten and the person to be believed* so that it does not speak of believing *and* eating. It depicts believing as metaphorical eating because the subject of belief is being described metaphorically. Thus Anderson’s key observation: ‘As believing is to Jesus, eating is to this life-producing Bread which comes from down from heaven.’<sup>24</sup>

### 6:51–58: Eating flesh and drinking blood

In coming to look closely at the main section of the text, verses 51–58, one of the key exegetical issues to be faced immediately is the importance and function of v. 51c: ‘This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world’. Many scholars who argue for a sacramental understanding of the passage rest part of their case on seeing v. 51c as introducing a new section, given the introduction of the word ‘flesh’ which, it is argued, shifts the imagery from believing

<sup>22</sup> cf. 4:14, 31–34

<sup>23</sup> Koester, ‘John Six and the Lord’s Supper’ 427. Dunn makes similar points but is again chided by Casey for ignoring ‘the cultural context of these terms’ and for considering them ‘in isolation from known aspects of Christian culture’ (48). With methodological differences again on clear display, the question is raised as to why the cultural/Christian context for these terms as a hermeneutical device should be elevated above the Johannine text context for these terms? Should we not start with how the *text itself* uses these terms before looking at what might stand behind the text?

See Prov. 9:5; cf. Sir. 15:3; 24:21

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 207. The identity in vv. 47–51 between the thing to be eaten and the person to be believed is vital in moving forward into vv. 53ff. where, without vv. 47–51, it would be easy to read back two separate but necessary salvific objects: in v. 40 (the Son) and in v. 54 (the sacramental elements).

to partaking of the Lord's Supper. However, this is to be questioned on a number of grounds.

C.K. Barrett, for instance, argues that division here is not satisfactory as it means Jesus breaks off after one short sentence, the Jews ask their complaining question and the discourse then resumes with a reiteration of the reference to 'flesh'. As further evidence, he examines the function of objections and complaints both in John 6 and elsewhere in the document to conclude that this seems to be the author's way of breaking up his discourses.<sup>25</sup> Anderson develops this more stringently by noting the three-fold structure of the characteristic ending of each of Jesus' discourses in chapter 6. Jesus concludes each discourse in vv. 27, 32f., 40, 51, 58, and 63f. with a three-fold sentence which sums up the former discussion and leads into the next discourse:

*Jesus' discussants, therefore, play a pivotal role in the progression of the narrative. By raising a question or making a comment, they prepare the reader/hearer for the subsequent teaching of the Johannine Jesus.*<sup>26</sup>

It is in this sense that the whole of verse 51 should be regarded as a unitive conclusion to the discourse in vv. 43–51 which addresses the question of 'the Jews' in vv. 41f: v. 51c is a concluding, not opening clause. Dunn is thus correct to insist that although introducing a new theme, v. 51c belongs to the preceding context and so 'in consequence it should be understood metaphorically – its primary reference being the redemptive death of Jesus'.<sup>27</sup> We should note how 'flesh' in verse 51c is a reference to Jesus himself and note how the metaphor is being developed: the way in which the 'bread' of vv. 47–51 will give life is in the 'bread' giving himself, his flesh, in death. The 'bread' is the metaphorical way of referring to the literal 'flesh'; but in v. 51 this metaphor is connected with metaphorical eating. If verse 51c develops the image of v. 27 by expanding the sense of the image to include Jesus' death, and verses 53ff. in turn simply further develop the 'flesh' motif, we must ask why the 'eating' should then change from metaphorical to literal?

From this it follows that vv. 53ff. are crucial. M.J.J. Menken's essay highlights four main reasons why vv. 51c–58 are seen in a eucharistic manner, with the supposed changes in content between vv. 51c–58 and what precedes them essentially the heart of this interpretation.<sup>28</sup> The arguments are as follows: One, up to v. 51b Jesus himself is the bread that came down from heaven, whereas in v. 51c ff. Jesus' flesh and blood are the bread from heaven. Two, in v. 32 the Father gives the bread from heaven whereas in v. 51c Jesus will give the bread. Three, up to v. 51c the eating of the bread can only be understood in a symbolic way; in vv. 51c–58 however, both of

<sup>25</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Essays on John*, 40 (London: SPCK, 1982)

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 132

<sup>27</sup> Dunn, 'John vi', 329f.

<sup>28</sup> M.J.J. Menken, 'John 6:51c–58: Eucharist or Christology?', *Bib* 74 (1993) 1–26

the Greek words that are used for eating in vv. 51c–58 have to be understood literally. Four, in the first part of the discourse the issue is Jesus' heavenly provenance whereas from v. 51c onwards, it is his corporality and humanity.<sup>29</sup> We will give most attention to considering the first three points.

First, we must notice how the change from 'bread' to 'flesh' and 'blood' in verse 53ff. actually functions. The change can only be a relative one given that there is again a change at vv. 56–57 with 'flesh' and 'blood' in turn being replaced by the first person singular. This 'I' is again identified in v. 58, to close the circle of the discourse, as 'the bread that came down from heaven': 'This double shift suggests that "flesh" and "blood" do not indicate the eucharistic elements, but qualify Jesus' person'.<sup>30</sup> This is made even clearer by considering the significance of the terms 'flesh' and 'blood' in their context. Menken's argument that 'flesh' denotes man in his frailty and mortality and is thus applicable to the dying Jesus is furthered by the final clause of verse 51c. This has the preposition, commonly used in John together with a following genitive to indicate 'for' whom or what Jesus' death has a salvific effect. As well as this the word 'for' is connected frequently, as in verse 51c, with the verb 'to give' referring to Jesus' giving himself.<sup>31</sup> Koester argues that when flesh and blood are combined they constitute a living being (1:13; cf. Matt. 16:17). So partaking of Jesus' flesh and blood means partaking of his whole person (thus the 'me' of v. 57): 'but the consumption of blood in addition to flesh indicates that the blood will be shed'.<sup>32</sup> Menken wishes to distinguish the Johannine usage of 'flesh' and 'blood' here from the Matthew 16:17 sense but still holds that 'flesh' and 'blood' in this instance evoke the referent of a human being who suffers a violent death.

This means that in v. 51c we have not a direct change of picture but an identification of Jesus' flesh and blood with the bread from heaven as an intensification of the image: Jesus is the bread from heaven as a human being who suffers a violent death. Thus Dunn is justified in developing the sacrificial connotations of 'flesh' and 'blood': in vv. 51c ff.

*this is how John presents the offence of the cross, and we find ourselves at once within that complex event of Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension and gift of the Spirit which John presents as a theological unity.*<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Menken, 'John 6:51c–58', 5

<sup>30</sup> Menken, 'John 6:51c–58', 9

<sup>31</sup> Menken, 'John 6:51c–58', 9–10. Menken argues that there is a developing specificity throughout the discourse, a movement of increasing unambiguity, of the identification of Jesus with the thing that gives life: the climax is that he is the bread of life *in his death*. He points to other discourses in John with a comparable movement towards ending in a reference to Jesus' death and its salvific meaning (see 12).

<sup>32</sup> Koester, 'John Six and the Lord's Supper' 429

<sup>33</sup> Dunn, 'John vi', 331

John 6:54 promises that the one who eats and drinks of Jesus 'has eternal life': this promise is identical to that of vv. 40 and 47. We have stressed above the necessity of identity between 'flesh' and 'blood' and the person of Jesus. It follows from this that we either have a theological contradiction between v. 54 and vv. 40, 47 or the relationship must be explained on other grounds. D.A. Carson states the case that this handling of the text suggests: 'The conclusion is obvious: the former [v. 54] is the metaphorical way of referring to the latter [v. 40].'<sup>34</sup> It is not hard to see that eating and drinking are synonymous with believing in the context of the discourse – here belief is developed to include belief in Jesus' death – but this has met with some objections on historical-critical grounds. Casey argues that, even symbolically, the Johannine language here of drinking blood is 'stunningly anti-Jewish' and sees the whole discourse functioning as part of the Johannine community's re-writing of the historical Jesus to exclude 'the Jews from salvation'. On the one hand however, in his trenchant criticism of Carson, Casey misreads Carson's statement of what is metaphorical. It is the drinking blood which is the metaphor and not 'looking to' or 'believing'. On the other hand, if even the *symbolic* language of drinking blood is 'so alien to Judaism' as to be 'culturally ludicrous' it is hard to see what sense we are to give to Jesus' recorded words at the Last Supper<sup>35</sup> where the disciples are told that, symbolically, they have drunk Jesus' blood.<sup>36</sup>

Secondly, this understanding of Jesus giving *himself* for the life of the world is important. If 'the bread' of v. 51c has already been qualified as Jesus himself, this makes it impossible to see 'the bread which I shall give' as referring to the eucharistic bread, or even to a disjunction with the bread that the Father will give. In Johannine Christology, 'God's giving of Jesus reaches its goal in Jesus' giving of himself'. So the transition from Jesus as bread to Jesus as the giver of bread remains within a Christological framework; this binds together both the incarnation and the death of Jesus as salvific events in Johannine thought with the idea that Jesus *gives* what he *is*.<sup>37</sup>

Thirdly, it follows from this that if 'flesh' and 'blood' refer to Jesus' person in his death, not the eucharistic elements, then the verbs 'eat' and 'drink' in v. 53 have to be understood in the same metaphorical way as 'eat' in vv. 50–51b is used in reference to Jesus' person. The fact that in v. 51 'bread' is used as a metaphor for 'flesh' validates Menken's key observation:

<sup>34</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 297 (Leicester: IVP, 1991)

<sup>35</sup> cf. Mark 14:22–25; Matt. 26:26–29; Luke 22:15–22

<sup>36</sup> Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?*, 44, 50. The challenge of Casey's work, that John's Gospel is anti-Jewish, cannot be adequately addressed here. See S. Motyer, *Your Father the Devil? A New Approach to John and 'the Jews'*. On this particular issue of drinking someone's blood, see N.T. Wright's cf. to 2 Samuel 23:13–17 (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 560, London: SPCK, 1996).

<sup>37</sup> Menken, 'John 6:51c–58', 13–15

*In verses 48–51b both the verb 'to eat' and its object 'bread' are used metaphorically; in verses 53–58 the verbs 'to eat' and 'to drink' are used metaphorically, but the objects 'flesh' and 'blood', or 'me' (v. 57), are not.*<sup>38</sup>

The move from metaphorical to literal object occurs clearly in v. 51c by describing the literal 'flesh' metaphorically and so this is simply consistent continuity in the text.

It is important to see verse 55 within the context of the whole discourse where Jesus contrasts himself as eternal life-giving bread with the manna which could not prevent death. In this sense, the adjectives of 'true food' and 'true drink' mean that Jesus' flesh and blood achieve more than what food and drink can achieve: eternal life. A metaphorical understanding of 'eat' is in keeping with the sense of v. 56ff. with the notion of 'remaining' in Jesus. If what is meant in vv. 51ff. is literal eating and drinking we would expect the sequence in v. 56 to be more akin to the inverted 'I remain in him, and he in me'. The fact that 'eating' and 'drinking' leads to the remaining in Jesus makes them seem much more plausible as metaphors for faith in his life-giving death.

The idea of dependence is developed in v. 57: just as the Son lives because of the Father, so believers live because of Jesus. Koester points out that in v. 57 'the verb "eat" in the second half of the verse is parallel to "sent" in the first half; both terms characterise a life-giving relationship'.<sup>39</sup> The 'flesh' and 'blood' are again represented as a unity in the person of Jesus with a return in v. 58 to the metaphor of 'bread that came down from heaven'. Both Jesus and the manna had come down from heaven but the same could not be said about the bread of the eucharist. In speaking here, as in vv. 47–50, of a bread that is received by faith and not the mouth, Jesus concludes the discourse by bringing it back to the beginning – the place where he chided those who focused on material, not spiritual, food.<sup>40</sup>

The remainder of the text has been subjected to all manner of treatments in scholarship. These range from the significance of vv. 51–58 as anti-docetic, anti-Jewish, or even both, in relation to a variety of conjectural community disputes represented in vv. 60–71. The argument for the interpretation of John 6 that I have presented has followed a different methodological route, but some points in these verses emerge as important.

The focus on receiving Jesus by faith is sustained throughout this concluding section, with a contrasting response between that of the crowd and the disciples serving as a parallel to the responses to the two miracles in vv. 1–21 which introduced the chapter. There are repeated references to the Son of Man throughout the discourse and the idea is present again in v. 62 so that the overall concept is of the

<sup>38</sup> Menken, 'John 6:51c–58', 16, so also 6:35, where there is a similar combination of metaphorical and literal language.

<sup>39</sup> Koester, 'John Six and the Lord's Supper', 430

<sup>40</sup> Koester, 'John Six and the Lord's Supper', 430–31



unity of descent and ascent. These ideas are important for Dunn who argues that it is vv. 62–63 *together* which meet the objection of both v. 60 and the as yet unanswered objection of v. 52. Jesus has said that life comes from eating the flesh of the Son of Man who descended from heaven:

*He now explains more fully that this will be possible because the Son of Man will ascend to where he was before, and as the climax and result of his ascension and glorification will give the Spirit.*<sup>41</sup>

Thus for Dunn 'the life-giving consumption of the Son of Man really refers to the reception of the Spirit of the exalted Jesus. For it is the *Spirit* who gives life'.<sup>42</sup> It follows from this reading that Dunn is justified in seeing v. 63 as highly significant. If John is referring to the eucharist in vv. 51c–58 then v. 63 must have a similar reference, but one which tells against the view of the sacraments as communicating eternal life. Verse 63 is a rebuke of such literalism. Importantly, Anderson sees the verse as linked to the positing of the two ways in v. 27: 'It is a reference to the two ways of seeking (v. 27), the two kinds of bread (vv. 30–33), and the choice of either adhering to or rejecting the cross of Jesus.'<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusion

The concluding section of verses 60–71 deserves much further attention, and indeed this article is simply an attempt at a first movement in interpretation and leaves a whole range of questions untouched. However, I have tried to show that even if John 6 uses eucharistic terminology like 'flesh' and 'blood' the issue which the text raises is how the terminology is used, and to show that it is used to point to the significance of Jesus' death, not the sacramental elements. As such, within this framework, the first part of this article's title is capable of being read literally or metaphorically. Literally, it is false – in John 6 literal eating is not the way of true belief. On the other hand, the discourse functions to show that eating is a metaphor for believing and in this sense the metaphor is perhaps better inverted: in John 6 believing is eating. Barrett suggests that John may have been written at a time when the Christian eucharistic rite was believed to secure, *ex opere operato*, eternal life for the recipient.<sup>44</sup> If this is the case then Anderson's comment is fitting, that in using eucharistic terminology in chapter 6:53ff., the evangelist is not emphasising the importance of the eucharist but pointing to an abiding belief in the 'flesh and bloodness' of the incarnation, which is the true end of all eucharistic rites and Christian discipleship'.<sup>45</sup> This means that if John 6 is not about the eucharist, the eucharist is undoubtedly about John 6.

<sup>41</sup> Dunn, 'John vi', 331

<sup>42</sup> Dunn, 'John vi', 331

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 210

<sup>44</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Church Ministry, and Sacraments in the New Testament*, 74 (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1985)

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 210

## REDEMPTION AND RESURRECTION: AN EXERCISE IN BIBLICAL-SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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Christ's resurrection, inseparably connected with his death, is at the heart of the gospel (e.g., Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:3-5). Central to the hope ministered by the gospel is the Christian's resurrection (e.g., Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15). A reality so evidently dominant presents a variety of aspects for reflection. As my title suggests, here I propose to consider particularly its relationship to our salvation by taking a so-called biblical-theological approach.

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1. I should probably make clear how I understand 'biblical theology'. Briefly, I have in view not so much one particular discipline or area of study among others, as I do methodological considerations indispensable for sound biblical interpretation. Specifically, in terms of the principle of context, the text, whatever its relative size, is always to be read in its redemptive- or salvation-historical context, understanding the text's subject matter within the horizon of the unfolding history of salvation - that, I take it, is the distinguishing concern of biblical-theological exegesis (= redemptive-historical interpretation).

Such an approach stems from recognising that Scripture as a whole, with its various human authors and diverse literary genres, has its integrity as the God-breathed record of the actual revelation process of Scripture, the Bible's own origin being an essential part of that process. This history of (verbal) revelation, in turn, is tethered, as a strand within, to the larger history of the accomplishment of redemption (deed revelation); that history begins already in the Garden, subsequent to the Fall (Gen. 3:15), and reaches its consummation in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), in the incarnate Christ and his work.

The clearest, most explicit biblical warrant for this fundamental theological construct is provided by the opening words of

Hebrews 1:1-2a: 'God, having spoken in the past to the fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, has spoken to us in these last days by his Son'. This umbrella statement, intended to provide an overall perspective on the teaching of the entire document, is fairly applied, by extension, to the Bible as a whole. Note how it captures three interrelated factors: a) revelation as a historical process; b) the diversity involved in that process (including, we might observe, multiple modes and literary genres – as well as, whatever legitimate methodologies have emerged, particularly in the modern era, for dealing with them); and c) the incarnate Christ as the integrating omega-point (cf. 2:2-4; 3:1-6, esp. 5-6), the nothing-less-than-last days, eschatological endpoint of the process.<sup>1</sup>

The biblical-theological treatment of the Resurrection offered here is primarily with a view to the expressed focus of the volume: the revitalisation of systematic theology. That, in brief, I understand to be the presentation, under appropriate topics (*loci*), of the unified teaching of the Bible as a whole, an overall statement of what is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:6). Systematics (or church dogmatics), then, is radically non-speculative in that its viability depends on biblical exegesis. Because of that, in my view, nothing will serve more to revitalise systematics than exegesis that is redemptive-historically sensitive, and biblical-theologically regulated.

2. Our reflections here on the Resurrection need to be set against a broad historical background. As a generalisation – no doubt subject to qualification but still fair as a generalisation – we may say that in the history of doctrine, especially in soteriology, Christ's resurrection has been relatively eclipsed. In Eastern Orthodoxy, if I rightly understand, the accent has been on his incarnation (with a view to salvation understood as theosis or deification). In Western Christianity (both Roman Catholic and Protestant), especially since Anselm (eleventh century) and the ensuing debate triggered, say, by the views of Abelard, attention has been focused heavily and at times almost exclusively on Christ's death and its significance. The overriding concern, especially since the Reformation, has been to keep clear that the Cross is not simply an ennobling and challenging example but a real atonement – a substitutionary, expiatory sacrifice that reconciles God to sinners and propitiates his judicial wrath. In short, the salvation accomplished by Christ and the atonement have been virtually synonymous.

My point is not to challenge the validity or even the necessity of this development, far less the conclusions reached. But in this dominating preoccupation with the death of Christ, the doctrinal or

<sup>1</sup> In my judgement, the most instructive single summary treatment of issues related to biblical-theological method is still Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), 11-27.

soteriological significance of his resurrection has been largely overlooked. Not that the Resurrection has been deemed unimportant, but all too frequently it has been considered exclusively as a stimulus and support for Christian faith (which it undoubtedly is) and in terms of its apologetic value, as the crowning evidence for Christ's deity and the truth of Christianity in general.

(Especially since the Enlightenment and with the emergence of the historical-critical method, this apologetic value has been rendered more and more problematic as increasingly the historicity of the Resurrection has been questioned or denied. On that large issue I simply assert here that for the NT the gospel plainly stands or falls with the reality of the Resurrection understood, despite all that is unique and unprecedented about it, as lying on the same plane of historical occurrence as Christ's death [1 Cor. 15:14, 17].)

3. Turning now to the NT, such an oversight or lack of emphasis on the doctrinal meaning of the Resurrection proves particularly impoverishing. That is especially true for Paul. His writings, which constitute such a substantial sub-unit within the larger organism of NT revelation, evidence, with their fully occasional character taken into account, a coherent and pervasive concern with how Christ's resurrection is integral to our salvation, or, as we might also put it, a concern with the specific saving efficacy or redemptive efficiency of his resurrection. I proceed now to sketch the basic dimensions of what we may fairly call Paul's resurrection theology, and then to reflect on several aspects in more detail.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The longest single continuous treatment of the Resurrection in Paul is 1 Corinthians 15. There, in verse 20 (cf. 23), he affirms that Christ in his resurrection is the first-fruits of those who are fallen asleep. We begin our survey here because this declaration expresses a key thought, one that governs not only much of the argument from verse 12 to the end of the chapter but, in large measure, Paul's teaching as a whole on resurrection.

This description of the resurrected Christ as first-fruits is more than an indication of bare temporal priority or even pre-eminence. Rather, commensurate with its OT cultic background (e.g., Ex. 23:19; Lev. 23:9ff.), the metaphor conveys the idea of organic connection or unity; the first-fruits is the initial quantity brought into view only as it is a part of and so inseparable from the whole; in that sense it represents the whole.

The resurrection of Christ and of believers cannot be separated, then, because to extend the metaphor as Paul surely intends, Christ is the first-fruits of the resurrection-harvest that includes believers

<sup>2</sup> See in greater detail my *The Centrality of the Resurrection* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978; reprinted as *Resurrection and Redemption*, 1987), 33-74.

(note, as 15:23 shows, that this harvest is an entirely soteriological reality; the resurrection of unbelievers, taught by Paul elsewhere, e.g. in Acts 24:15, is outside his purview here). Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of the future bodily resurrection of believers not simply as a bare sign but as 'the actual beginning of th[e] general epochal event'.<sup>3</sup> The two resurrections, though separated in time, are not so much separate events as two episodes of the same event, the beginning and end of the one and same harvest.

This unbreakable unity between the two resurrections is a controlling presupposition in the hypothetical argumentation of the immediately preceding section (vv. 12–19), so much so that a denial of the future resurrection of the believer entails a denial of Christ's resurrection (vv. 13, 15, 16). Essentially the same idea of solidarity in resurrection is also expressed elsewhere in the description of Christ as the firstborn from among the dead (Col. 1:18).

In view, further, is Christ's resurrection as an innately eschatological event. In fact, as much as any, it is the key inaugurating event of eschatology, the dawn of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), the arrival of the age to come (Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:4). It is not an isolated event in the past, but, in having occurred in the past, it belongs to the future consummation and from that future has entered history. In Christ's resurrection the resurrection-harvest at the end of history is already visible. Pressed, if present, say, at a modern-day prophecy conference, as to when the event of bodily resurrection for believers will take place, the first thing the apostle would probably want to say is, it has already begun!

2. The emphasis on Christ as the first-fruits of resurrection points out that, for Paul, the primary significance of Christ's resurrection lies in what he and believers have in common, not in the profound difference between them; the accent falls not on his true deity but on his genuine humanity. The Resurrection, as we will presently note in more detail, is not so much an especially evident display or powerful proof of Christ's divine nature as it is the powerful transformation of his human nature.

This emphasis is confirmed in an implicit but pervasive fashion by Paul's numerous references, without elaboration, to the simple fact of the Resurrection.<sup>4</sup> These undeveloped statements display a consistent, unmistakable pattern: 1) God in his specific identity as the Father raises Jesus from the dead (Gal. 1:1); 2) Jesus is passive in his resurrection. This viewpoint is held without exception, so far as I can see. Nowhere does Paul teach that Christ was active in or contributed to his resurrection, much less that he raised himself;

<sup>3</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1979), 45

<sup>4</sup> Grammatically, with the verb *egetrō* used almost exclusively, Christ is either the direct object of (aorist) active forms (e.g., Rom. 4:24; 10:9) or the subject of (aorist and perfect) passive forms (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:20; 2 Cor. 5:15). In the case of the latter, an intransitive/active sense is excluded by the context.

Jesus did not rise, but was raised from the dead. The stress everywhere is on the creative power and action of the Father, of which Christ is the recipient.

To see a conflict here with statements such as that of Jesus in John 10:18 ('I have authority to lay [my life] down and authority to take it up again', NIV) is both superficial and unnecessary. The Chalcedon formulation proves helpful here: The two natures co-exist hypostatistically (in one person), without either confusion or separation; Jesus expresses what is true of his person in terms of his deity, Paul expresses what is no less true in terms of his humanity.

3. To fill out this basic sketch, one other element needs to be noted. The passages so far considered express the bond between Christ's resurrection and the future, bodily resurrection of believers. But Paul also speaks of the Christian's resurrection in the past tense; believers have already been raised with Christ (e.g., Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:12-13; 3:1). This past resurrection, it needs to be recognised, is so, not only in the sense that Christ represented the church in his resurrection. Rather, it is an experience in the actual life-history of each believer. That is apparent from Ephesians 2, where the Resurrection in view terminates on being dead in your transgressions and sins (vv. 1, 5), and effects a radical, 180-degree reversal in walk or actual conduct - from walking in the deadness of sin (v. 1) to walking in the good works of new-creation existence in Christ (v. 10). It bears emphasising that to speak of this experiential transformation as resurrection is not merely metaphorical; Paul intends such language no less realistically or literally (and, we might add, no less irrevocably) than what he says about the hope of bodily resurrection.

4. To sum up this overview of Paul's resurrection theology: An unbreakable bond or unity exists between Christ and Christians in the experience of resurrection. That bond is such that the latter (the resurrection of Christians) has two components - one that has already taken place, at the inception of Christian life when the sinner is united to Christ by faith; and one that is still future, at Christ's return. From this it will be readily apparent how Paul's teaching on the fundamental event of resurrection reflects the overall already/not-yet structure of eschatological fulfilment in the period between Christ's resurrection and his return.

If we raise the question of distinguishing the two episodes of the believer's resurrection, various proposals suggest themselves: secret/open; non-bodily/bodily; internal/external.<sup>5</sup> Paul himself offers the distinction between the outer man and the inner man (2 Cor. 4:16), which we should understand not as two discrete

<sup>5</sup> Spiritual/physical is not an apt distinction, and is perhaps even misleading, at least if 'spiritual' is used in its pervasive NT sense, referring to the activity of the Holy Spirit. The past resurrection of the believer is certainly spiritual in this sense, but so is the future, bodily resurrection - pre-eminently, climactically so (1 Cor. 15:44).

entities but as two aspects of the whole person. So far as believers are 'outer man', that is, in terms of the body, they are yet to be raised. So far as they are 'inner man', they are already raised and, he adds, the subject of daily renewal.

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This pattern of teaching is open to being explored further along two interrelated but distinct lines: what concerns Christ (Christology), and what concerns Christians/the church (soteriology and ecclesiology). The reflections that follow are necessarily selective.<sup>6</sup>

1. So far as the Christ is concerned, most striking is the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit resulting from the Resurrection. Here the key, single most important passage is also in 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul says of Christ that the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit (v. 45). The observations that follow will have to be brief; an effort at more careful exegesis is found in several footnotes.

1) The noun *pneuma* (spirit) in 1 Corinthians 15:45 is definite<sup>7</sup> and refers to the person of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> This is the view taken, across

<sup>6</sup> Missing, for instance, is a treatment of the forensic significance of the Resurrection, especially its relationship to justification. Briefly, Christ was raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25). The Resurrection vindicates Jesus in his obedience unto death (Phil. 2:8-9); it reveals that he embodies the perfect righteousness that avails before God. In that sense his resurrection is his justification and so, by imputation, through union with him by faith, our justification. Without the Resurrection, along with his death, there would be no justification of the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), our faith would be futile, and we would still be in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17); see further my Resurrection and Redemption, 114ff.

<sup>7</sup> The absence of the article before *pneuma* has little weight as a counter-argument, if for no other reason, because of the tendency in koine Greek to omit the article before nouns designating persons when, as here, in construction with a preposition. See A. Blass, A. Debrunner, R.W. Funk, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 133f. (254, 255, 257).

<sup>8</sup> This conclusion rests on a couple of interlocking, mutually reinforcing considerations that appear to me to be decisive.

a) *Pneuma* in v. 45 and *pneumatikon* (spiritual, vv. 44a, b, 46) are cognate noun and adjective. The adjective, particularly as it is paired antithetically here with *pneumatikos*, and in the light of the only other NT occurrence of this antithesis earlier (in 2:14-15), has in view the work of the Spirit and what is effected by him. This is further confirmed by Paul's consistent use of *psuchikos anthrōpos* elsewhere; it never has an anthropological sense (e.g., Rom. 1:11; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:9; the only exception appears to be Eph. 6:12).

In 2:6-16 the activity of the Spirit - his sovereign, exclusive work in giving and receiving God's revealed wisdom - is the primary focus of the immediate context. In contrast to the unbeliever (*ho pneumatikos*, v. 14), the spiritual man (*pneumatikos*, v. 15) is the believer (cf. vv. 4-5) as indwelt, enlightened, motivated, directed by the Spirit. The long-standing effort to enlist this passage in support of an anthropological trichotomy (with *pneumatikos* here referring to the human spirit come to its revived

a fairly broad front, by a substantial majority of contemporary commentators and other interpreters who address the issue.<sup>9</sup> In English translation, Spirit should be capitalised;<sup>10</sup> Paul knows of no other 'life-giving' *pneuma* than the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6; cf. Rom. 8:11).<sup>11</sup>

2) 'The life-giving Spirit', it should not be missed, is not a timeless description of Christ – who he has always been. Rather, he 'became' *egeneto* such. The time-point of this 'becoming' is surely his resurrection or, more broadly, his exaltation.<sup>12</sup> As 'first-fruits' of the resurrection-harvest (vv. 20, 23) he is 'life-giving Spirit' (v. 45); as 'the life-giving Spirit' he is 'the first-fruits'. As resurrected, the last Adam has ascended; as 'the second man', he is now, by virtue of

ascendancy), I take it, is not successful and ought to be abandoned; see, e.g., John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 23–33, esp. 23–29.

b) The participial modifier in 15:45b points to the same conclusion. The last Adam did not simply become *pneuma* but 'life-giving' *pneuma* (*pneuma zōtopoioun*). Paul's use of this verb elsewhere with the Spirit as subject proves decisive, especially his sweeping assertion in 2 Corinthians 3:6: 'the Spirit gives life'. Few, if any, will dispute that here the Spirit (to *pneuma*) is 'the Spirit of the living God' just mentioned in 3:3, in other words, the Holy Spirit. And in Romans 8:11, a statement closely related to the 1 Corinthians 15 passage, the 'life-giving' activity of raising believers bodily is attributed to the Spirit (cf. John 6:63).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., various articles in the recent *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, G.F. Hawthorne, R.P. Martin, eds. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993), 12a and 263b (L.J. Kreitzer), 107b, 108a, 112a (B. Witherington), 349a (R. B. Gaffin), 407b (T. Paige), 435a (G. M. Burge), 554 (J. J. Scott). See further Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 10, 168–69, 184, 312; Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 88, 222–23, 225, 539; Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 78–92.

<sup>10</sup> Virtually all the standard English translations obscure the sense of v. 45 by rendering spirit in the lower case. Notable exceptions are The Living Bible (and now The New Living Translation) and Today's English Version; they, correctly I believe, capitalise Spirit.

<sup>11</sup> To deny that *pneuma* in v. 45 is the Holy Spirit at the very least undercuts a reference to his activity in the cognate adjective spiritual in v. 44 and ends up giving it a more indefinite sense of something like supernatural. That easily tends toward the widespread misunderstanding that it describes the (immaterial) composition of the Resurrection body. Also, it has to be asked: Within the first-century Mediterranean thought-world of Paul and his readers, what is a life-giving spirit with a lower-case s? What would that likely communicate, at least without further qualification, such as is lacking here, other than the notion of an angel or some other essentially immaterial being or apparition? But *pneuma* in that sense is exactly what Jesus, as resurrected, denies himself to be in Luke 24:37–39.

<sup>12</sup> The flow of the reasoning in ch. 15 makes that virtually certain. It would make no sense for Paul to argue for the Resurrection of believers as he does if Christ were 'life-giving' by virtue of, say, his pre-existence or incarnation – or any consideration other than his resurrection. This is in no way to suggest that his pre-existence and incarnation are unimportant or non-essential for Paul; they simply lie outside his purview here.



ascension, 'from heaven' (v. 47),<sup>13</sup> 'the man from heaven' (v. 48). All told, the last Adam, who has become 'the life-giving Spirit', is specifically the exalted Christ.

3) In the immediate context (vv. 42–49), 'life-giving' contemplates Christ's future action, when he will resurrect the mortal bodies of believers (cf. v. 22). Within the broader context of Paul's teaching, however, his present activity, as well, is surely in view. As we have already noted, the resurrection of the Christian, in union with Christ, is not only future but has already taken place (e.g., Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12–13; 3:1–4).

2. Here, more pointedly than anywhere else in Paul (or for that matter anywhere else in the NT), the significance of the Resurrection (and Ascension) for the relationship between Christ and the Spirit comes to light. In context, two closely related realities are in view: 1) Christ's own climactic transformation by the Spirit; and 2), along with that transformation, his unique and unprecedented reception of the Spirit.

1) Paul affirms what has not always been adequately elaborated in the church's Christology: the momentous, epochal significance of the exaltation for Christ personally; he has, as the first-fruits, what he did not have previously, a spiritual body.<sup>14</sup> In his resurrection, something really happened to Jesus; by that experience he was and remains a changed man, in the truest and deepest, even eschatological sense.

As Paul puts it elsewhere (on the most likely reading of Rom. 1:3–4), by the declarative energy of the Holy Spirit in his resurrection, God's eternal (v. 3a) and now incarnate (v. 3b) Son has become what he was not previously, the Son of God with power (v. 4). Relatively speaking, according to 2 Corinthians 13:4, while Christ was crucified in (a state of) weakness, he now lives by God's power; his is now, by virtue of the Resurrection and Ascension, a glorified human nature.

Here, as so often in Paul, Christology and soteriology are inextricable. Christ does not receive his glorified humanity merely for himself but for the sake of the church. In the language of Romans 8:29, the Resurrection constitutes him the image to which believers are

<sup>13</sup> With the immediate context in view, this prepositional phrase is almost certainly an exaltation predicate, not a description of origin, say, out of pre-existence at the incarnation. As such ('from heaven', 'the man from heaven', v. 48, NIV), he is the one whose image believers ('those who are of heaven', v. 48, NIV) will bear (fully, at the time of their bodily resurrection, v. 49; cf. Phil. 3:20–21).

<sup>14</sup> The resurrection body is 'spiritual' (v. 44), it bears emphasising, not in the sense of being adapted to the human *pneuma* or because of its (immaterial) composition or substance (to mention persisting misconceptions) but because it embodies (!) the fullest outworking, the ultimate outcome, of the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer (along with the renewal to be experienced by the entire creation, e.g., Rom. 8:19–22). That eschatological body is the believer's hope of total, (psycho-)physical transformation, and in that sense, our bodies, too, enlivened and renovated by the Spirit.

predestined to be conformed, so that he, the Son, might be firstborn among many brothers; specifically, the exalted Christ is that image into which Christians are even now already being transformed (2 Cor. 3:18) and which they will one day bear bodily in their future resurrection at his return (1 Cor. 15:49).

2) This resurrection-transformation of Christ by the Spirit also results in a climactic intimacy, a bond between them that surpasses what previously existed, a relationship involving, in fact, a new and permanent equation or oneness that Paul captures by saying that Christ became the life-giving Spirit.<sup>15</sup> This is not to deny that previously Christ and the Spirit were at work together among God's people.<sup>16</sup> But now, dating from his resurrection and ascension, their joint action is given its stable and consummate basis in the history of redemption; that culminating synergy is the crowning consequence of the work of the incarnate Christ actually and definitively accomplished in history.

First Corinthians 15:45 is, in effect, a one-sentence commentary on the primary meaning of Pentecost: Christ is the receiver-giver of the Spirit. What Peter delineates in his Pentecost sermon as inseparable once-for-all events – resurrection, ascension, reception of the Spirit, outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:32–33) – Paul telescopes by saying that the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

3. It bears emphasizing that this oneness or unity of Christ and the Spirit, though certainly sweeping, is at the same time circumscribed in a specific respect; it concerns their activity, the activity of giving resurrection (= eschatological) life. In this sense it may be dubbed 'functional' or 'eschatological', or, to use an older theological category, 'economic' (rather than 'ontological').<sup>18</sup>

In other words, the scope, the salvation-historical focus of Paul's statement, needs to be kept in view. Essential-eternal, ontological-trinitarian relationships are quite outside his purview here. His concern is not with who Christ is (timelessly), as the eternal Son, but with who he 'became', what has happened to him in history, and

<sup>15</sup> Herman Bavinck's way of stating this truth is striking: 'But the Holy Spirit has become entirely the property of Christ, and was, so to speak, absorbed into Christ or assimilated by him. By his resurrection and ascension Christ has become the quickening Spirit'. *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1956), 387.

<sup>16</sup> Prior to this time, already even under the old covenant, Christ pre-incarnate and the Spirit were conjointly present and at work; 1 Cor. 10:3–4, whatever its further exegesis, points to that. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:10–11: The Spirit comprehensively at work in the OT prophets is specifically 'the Spirit of Christ'.

<sup>17</sup> On the once-for-all significance of Pentecost – along with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ – see Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 13–41.

<sup>18</sup> Although, as noted earlier, there is involved a real change/transformation experienced by Christ in terms of his true humanity. By virtue of the Resurrection, he now possesses what he did not previously possess, a glorified human nature (cf. 2 Cor. 13:4).

specifically in his identity – Paul could hardly have been more emphatic – as ‘the last Adam’, ‘the second man’ (v. 47), that is, in terms of his true humanity.

Consequently, it is completely gratuitous to find here and elsewhere in Paul, as the historical-critical tradition has long and characteristically maintained, a ‘functional’ christology in the sense that it denies the personal difference between Christ and the Spirit and so is in conflict with later church formulation of trinitarian doctrine. In no way is Paul here even obscuring, much less denying, the distinction between the second and third persons of the Trinity. The personal, parallel distinction between God (the Father), Christ as Lord, and the (Holy) Spirit – underlying subsequent doctrinal formulation – is clear enough elsewhere in Paul (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4–6).<sup>19</sup> His trinitarian conception of God is not at issue but is properly made a presupposition in the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:45.

4. The last clause in 1 Corinthians 15:45 not only connects closely, as already noted, with Romans 1:4 but also with the subsequent statement at the beginning of 2 Corinthians 3:17: ‘the Lord is the Spirit’. There, the ‘Lord’ (*ho kurios*) likely refers to Christ, and an equation between him and the Spirit is affirmed.<sup>20</sup> Here, too, essential, trinitarian identities and relationships are not being denied or blurred, but simply remain outside Paul’s purview. His focus, clear from the immediate context (see esp. v. 18), is the conjoint activity of the Spirit and Christ as glorified. The ‘is’ (*estin*) of 2 Corinthians 3:17, we may say, is based on the ‘became’ of 1 Corinthians 15:45. The exaltation experienced by the incarnate Christ results in a

<sup>19</sup> In more recent literature, Paul’s clearly trinitarian understanding of God is admirably demonstrated by Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 825–45, esp. 839–42.

<sup>20</sup> A growing number of exegetes currently argue that the ‘Lord’ in v. 17a applies Ex. 34:34, just cited in v. 16, to the Spirit, and they minimise or even eliminate any christological reference from vv. 17b–18; e.g. Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 256ff.; J. Dunn, ‘2 Corinthians III.17 – “The Lord Is the Spirit”’, *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 31, no. 2 (Oct. 1970): 309–20; Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 311–14; Scott J. Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995), 396–400; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 143–44; N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1991), 183–84. But verse 17b (‘the Spirit of the Lord’) already distinguishes between the Spirit and the Lord, so that the latter likely refers to Christ, in light of what immediately follows in v.18. There, ‘the Lord’s glory’ (NIV) is surely not the glory of the Spirit in distinction from Christ, but the glory of Christ; in beholding/reflecting that glory, Paul continues, believers are being transformed into ‘the same image’, and that image can only be the glory-image of the exalted Christ. In the verses that follow, 4:4 (‘the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God’, NIV), especially, points to that conclusion (note as well Rom. 8:29 and 1 Cor. 15:49). The only transforming glory believers behold with unveiled faces, which Paul knows of, is the glory of God in the [gospel-] face of Christ (4:6), mediated, to be sure, to and within them by the Spirit.

(working) relationship with the Holy Spirit of new and unprecedented intimacy. They are one here, specifically, in giving (eschatological) 'freedom' (3:17b), the close correlative of the resurrection life, in view in 1 Corinthians 15. That correlation is particularly unmistakable in the phrasing of Romans 8:2: 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free'.

#### IV

1. First Corinthians 15:45, Paul's most pivotal pronouncement on the relationship between the exalted Christ and the Spirit, is consequently the cornerstone of his teaching on the Christian life and the work of the Holy Spirit. Life in the Spirit has its specific quality as the shared life of the resurrected Christ, in union with him. There is no activity of the Spirit within the believer that is not also the activity of Christ; Christ at work in the church is the Spirit at work.

Romans 8:9-10 is particularly instructive here. There, in short compass, four expressions are virtually interchangeable: 'you ... in the Spirit' (9a); 'the Spirit ... in you' (9b); 'belong to [Christ]' (9d, equivalent to the frequent 'in Christ'); and 'Christ ... in you' (10a). These four expressions hardly describe different experiences, distinct from each other, but have in view the same reality in its full, rich dimensions. The presence of the Spirit is the presence of Christ; there is no relationship with Christ that is not also fellowship with the Spirit; to belong to Christ is to be possessed by the Spirit.

This truth about the believer's experience, it bears emphasising, is so not because of some more or less arbitrary divine arrangement, but pre-eminently because of what is true prior to our experience, in the experience of Christ, because of (in virtue of his death and resurrection) who the Spirit now is ('the Spirit of Christ', v. 9c), and who Christ has become ('the life-giving Spirit').<sup>21</sup> So, elsewhere (in the prayer for the church in Eph. 3:16-17), for 'you ... to be strengthened ... through his Spirit in the inner man' is nothing other than for 'Christ [to] dwell in your hearts through faith' (NASB).

2. The Spirit at work in the church, then, is Christ at work in nothing less than eschatological (because resurrection) power. In fact, the NT has no more important or more basic perspective on being a Christian than this: The Christian life is resurrection-life. As we have already noted, it is part of the resurrection-harvest that begins with Christ's own resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20); the believer's place or share in that harvest is now – not only in the future but already in the present. The radical edge of Paul's outlook on the Christian life comes to light in the observation that, at the core of

<sup>21</sup> That here, too, Paul does not intend an absolute identity, denying the personal distinction between Christ and the Spirit, is clear later on in the passage: the Spirit's interceding here, within believers (vv. 26-27), is distinguished from the complementary intercession of the ascended Christ there, at God's right hand (v. 34).

their being (the 'inner man', 2 Cor. 4:16; or what he also calls the heart, Rom. 2:29; 6:17; Eph. 1:18), Christians will never be more resurrected than they already are! Christian existence across its full range is a manifestation and outworking of the resurrection life and power of Christ, the life-giving Spirit (Rom. 6:2ff.; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:12-13; 3:1-4).

These considerations need to be stressed in view of the tendency in much historical Christian thinking to de-eschatologise the gospel and its implications, especially where the work of the Holy Spirit is concerned. His present activity, characteristically, is viewed in a mystical or timeless way, as what God is doing in the inner life of the Christian, detached from eschatological realities. The result, too often has been largely privatised, individualistic, even self-centred understandings of the Spirit's work. The church ought constantly to make clear in its proclamation and teaching that, in the NT, 'eternal life' is eschatological life, specifically resurrection life. It is 'eternal', not because it is above or beyond history - 'timeless' in some ahistorical sense - but because it has been revealed, in Christ, at the end of history and, by the power of the Spirit, comes to us out of that consummation.

3. It seems fair to suggest that at issue here is a still-to-be-completed side of the Reformation. The Reformation, we should not forget, was a (re)discovery, at least implicitly, of the eschatological heart of the gospel; the *sola gratia* principle is eschatological in essence. Justification by faith, as the Reformers came to understand and experience it, is an anticipation of final judgement. It means that a favourable verdict at the last judgement is not an anxious, uncertain hope (where they felt themselves to be left by Rome), but a present possession, the confident and stable basis of the Christian life. Romans 8:1 ('There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus', NASB), which they clung to, is a decidedly eschatological pronouncement.

However while the Reformation and its children have grasped, at least intuitively, the eschatological thrust of the gospel for justification, that is not nearly the case for sanctification and the work of the Spirit. Undeniable is a tendency, at least in practice, to separate or even polarise justification and sanctification.<sup>22</sup> Justification, on the one hand, is seen as what God does, once for all and perfectly; sanctification, on the other hand, is what the believer does, imperfectly. Sanctification is viewed as the response of the believer, an expression of gratitude from our side for salvation defined in terms of justification and the forgiveness of sins - usually with an emphasis on the inadequate and even impoverished quality of the gratitude expressed.

<sup>22</sup> I leave to the side here the treatment of sanctification in the Lutheran and Reformed confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the extent to which they counteract and serve to correct this practical tendency.

The intention of such an emphasis is no doubt to safeguard the totally gratuitous character of justification. But church history has made all too evident that the apparently inevitable outcome of such an emphasis is the rise of moralism, the reintroduction into the Christian life of a refined works-principle, more or less divorced from the faith that justifies and eventually leaving no room for that faith. What is resolutely rejected at the front door of justification comes in through the back door of sanctification and takes over the whole house.

Certainly we must be on guard against all notions of sinless perfection. Forms of 'entire' sanctification or 'higher', 'victorious' life, supposedly achieved by a distinct act of faith subsequent to justification, operate with domesticated, voluntaristic notions of sin that invariably de-eschatologise the gospel and in their own way, despite their intention, end up promoting moralism. We must not forget that 'in this life even the holiest have only a small beginning' (Heidelberg Catechism, answer 114).

But – and this is the point – that beginning, however small, is an eschatological beginning. It stands under the apostolic promise that 'He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus' (Phil. 1:6, NASB). Sanctification, no less than justification, is God's work. In the NT there is no more basic perspective on sanctification and renewal than that expressed in Romans 6: It is a continual 'living to God' (v. 11) of those who are 'alive from the dead' (v. 13). Elsewhere, it is a matter of the 'good works' of the eschatological new creation, for which the church has already been 'created in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:10). In their sanctification, believers begin at the 'top', because they begin with Christ; in him they are those who are 'perfect' (1 Cor. 2:6) and 'spiritual' (v. 15), even when they have to be admonished as 'carnal' (3:1, 3).<sup>23</sup>

An important and fruitful challenge for the teaching ministry of the church today is to give adequate attention to the eschatological nature of sanctification and the present work of the Holy Spirit (ensuring at the same time that justification is clarified within the already/not yet structure of NT eschatology).

4. But, it might now be asked, has not the resurgent Pentecostal spirituality of recent decades seen and, in large measure, recaptured the eschatological aspect of the Spirit's working, and so compensated for the traditional neglect and shortcomings just noted?

One brief observation concerning this multi-faceted question will have to suffice.<sup>24</sup> A current widespread misperception notwithstanding, the NT does not teach that spiritual gifts,

<sup>23</sup> See further especially the penetrating discussion of John Murray, *Collected Writings*, vol. 2, 277–84 ('Definitive Sanctification'); 285–93 ('The Agency in Definitive Sanctification').

<sup>24</sup> See, in greater detail, my comments in Wayne A. Grudem, ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 56–59.

especially miraculous gifts such as prophecy, tongues, and healing, belong to realised eschatology. For instance, a concern of 1 Corinthians 13:8–13 is to point out that prophecy and tongues are temporary in the life of the church. Whether or not at some point prior to the *Parousia* (I leave that an open question here), Paul is clear that they will cease and pass away (v. 8). But that cannot possibly be said of what is eschatological. Such realities, by their very nature, endure.<sup>25</sup> Phenomena such as prophecy and tongues, where they occur, are no more than provisional, less-than-eschatological epiphenomena.<sup>26</sup> I suggest that this reading of the passage helps with the perennial problem exegesis has wrestled with in verse 13: How can faith and hope be said to continue after the *Parousia*, in the light, of, for instance, 2 Corinthians 5:7 (for the present, in contrast to our resurrection-future, we 'walk by faith, not by sight') and Romans 8:24 ('hope that is seen is not hope', NASB)? That question misses the point. The 'abiding' in view is not future but concerns the present, eschatological worth of faith and hope (as well as love), in the midst of the non-enduring, sub-eschatological quality of our present knowledge, including whatever word gifts bring that knowledge.

All told, the NT makes a categorical distinction between the gift (singular) and the gifts (plural) of the Spirit, between the eschatological gift, Christ, the indwelling, life-giving Spirit himself, in which all believers share (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:13), and those sub-eschatological giftings, none of which, by divine design, is intended for or received by every believer (1 Cor. 12:28–30, for one, makes that clear enough).

The truly enduring work of the Spirit is the resurrection-renewal already experienced by every believer. And that renewal manifests itself in what Paul calls fruit – like faith, hope, love, joy and peace (to mention just some, Gal. 5:22–23), with, we should not miss, the virtually unlimited potential for their concrete expression, both in the corporate witness as well as in the personal lives of the people of God. This fruit – pre-eminently love, not the gifts – embodies the eschatological 'first-fruits' and 'deposit' of the Spirit (to use Paul's metaphors). However imperfectly displayed for the present, such fruit

<sup>25</sup> To highlight this point by way of contrast, in terms of metaphors Paul uses for the Spirit: The arrival of the rest of the harvest does not involve the removal of the first-fruits (Rom. 8:23); the payment of the balance hardly results in subtracting the down payment or deposit (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14). Or, going to what is surely the heart of the Spirit's activity, the resurrection of the body at Christ's return will certainly not mean the undoing of the resurrection, already experienced, of the inner man.

<sup>26</sup> Contemporary discussion of this passage (on all sides, I would observe) too frequently obscures or even misses Paul's primary concern: for the present, until Jesus returns, it is not our knowledge (along with the prophetic gifts that may contribute to that knowledge), but our faith, hope, and love that have abiding, that is, eschatological, significance. In contrast to the partial, obscured, dimly mirrored quality of the believer's present knowledge brought by such gifts, faith in its modes of hope and especially love has what we might call an eschatological 'reach' or 'grasp' (vv. 12–13).

is eschatological at its core. Not in particular gifts, however important such gifts undoubtedly are for the health of the church, but in these fruits we experience the eschatological touch of the Spirit in our lives today. This is a point, I hope, on which charismatics and non-charismatics, whatever their remaining differences, will eventually agree.

5. A question may now come from another quarter: Will not stressing the resurrection quality of the Christian life and the eschatological nature of the Spirit's work minister an easy triumphalism, a false sense of attainment? Trivialising options such as 'possibility thinking' and 'prosperity theology' in various forms are by no means an imaginary danger, as our own times make all too clear.

The NT itself is alert to this danger – the perennial danger for the church of an overly realised eschatology. In the interim between Christ's resurrection and return, believers are 'alive from the dead', but they are that only 'in your mortal body' (Rom. 6:12–13); Christians experience 'the powers of the age to come' (Heb. 6:5), but only as 'the present evil age' (Gal. 1:4) is prolonged, only within the transient 'form of this world' (1 Cor. 7:31) (all references NASB).

What such interim existence entails is captured perhaps most instructively and challengingly, even if at first glance a paradox, in several passages in Paul. Though, strictly speaking, autobiographical and having uniquely apostolic dimensions, they intend the suffering he experienced as a paradigm for all believers.

Philippians 3:10 is a particularly compelling instance. As part of Paul's aspiration to gain Christ and be found in him (vv. 8–9), he expresses the desire to 'know [Christ] and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death' (NASB). In this declaration, I take it, the two 'ands' are not co-ordinating but explanatory. Knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering are not sequential or alternating in the believer's experience, as if memorable and exhilarating times of resurrection power are offset by down days of suffering. Rather, Paul is intent on articulating the single, much more than merely cognitive, experience of knowing Christ, what he has just called 'the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord' (v. 8, NIV). To know Christ, then, is to know his resurrection power as a sharing in his sufferings – an experience, all told, that Paul glosses as being conformed to his death. The imprint left in our lives by Christ's resurrection power is, in a word, the Cross.

Similarly, 2 Corinthians 4:10–11 speaks of always carrying around in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body, and, again, of always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. Here the two counterposed notions of the active dying of Jesus and of his resurrection life do not describe somehow separate sectors of experience. Rather, the life of Jesus, Paul is saying, is revealed in our mortal flesh, and nowhere else; the (mortal) body is the locus of the life of the exalted Jesus. Christian



suffering, described as the dying of Jesus, moulds the manifestation of his resurrection-life in believers.

This 'cross-conformity' of the church is, as much as anything about its life in this world-age, the signature of inaugurated eschatology. Believers suffer, not in spite of or even alongside the fact that they share in Christ's resurrection, but just because they are raised up and seated with him in heaven (Eph. 2:5-6). According to Peter (1 Pet. 4:14), it is just as Christians suffer for Christ that God's Spirit of (eschatological) glory rests on them. For the present, until he returns, suffering with Christ remains a primary discriminant of the eschatological Spirit. The choice Paul places before the church for all time, until Jesus comes, is not for a theology of the Cross instead of a theology of resurrection-glory, but for his resurrection theology as theology of the Cross.

The question of Christian suffering needs careful and probing reflection, especially for the church in North America with its relative freedom and affluence, where suffering can seem remote and confined to the church elsewhere, but where we are surely naive not to be preparing for the day when that distance may disappear – perhaps much sooner than we may think.

Romans 8:18ff., where Paul opens a much broader understanding of Christian suffering than we usually have, is instructive. There, with an eye to the Genesis 3 narrative and the curse on human sin, he reflects on what he calls, categorically, the sufferings of the present time (v. 18), that is, the time, for now, until the bodily resurrection of the believer (v. 23). From that sweeping angle of vision, suffering is everything about our lives, as they remain subjected, fundamentally and unremittingly, to the enervating futility (v. 20) and bondage to decay (v. 21), which, until Jesus comes, permeate the entire creation.

Christian suffering, then, is a comprehensive reality that includes everything in our lives in this present order, borne for Christ and done in his service. Suffering with Christ includes not only monumental and traumatic crises, martyrdom and overt persecution, but it is to be a daily reality (cf. Luke 9:23: 'take up his cross *daily*' [NIV, italics added]); it involves the mundane frustrations and unspectacular difficulties of our everyday lives – when these are endured for the sake of Christ.

Philippians 1:29, I take it, is a perennial word to the church: 'For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him' (NIV). Here Paul speaks of the givenness of Christian suffering for the church as church. Probably we are not over-translating to speak of the gracious given-ness of suffering; suffering is given to the church as a gift. At any rate, Paul is clear, the Christian life is a not only/but also proposition – not only a matter of believing but also a matter of suffering. Suffering is not simply for some believers but for all. We may be sure of this: where the church embraces this inseparable bond between faith and suffering, there it will have come a long way toward not only comprehending theologically but also actually experiencing the eschatological quality of its resurrection-life in Christ, the life-giving Spirit.

# A RESPONSE TO RODNEY HOLDER ON BARTH ON NATURAL THEOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

During a visit to the United States in 1961 Barth complained to Geoffrey Bromiley that certain of his questioners had superficially ignored his writings' details, because 'they are closed to anything else' than their orthodoxy, and 'they will cling to it at all costs'.<sup>2</sup> A failure to listen attentively characterises a number of critiques of Barth. No doubt fuel is provided by the fact that Barth's texts are so slippery, often taking away with one hand what he had appeared to present with the other. And, given that six million words are not easily digested, the manifold perspectives are not readily graspable.

Particularly among evangelical theological students the name of Karl Barth is greeted with cries of 'universalist', 'irrationalist', 'denier of biblical inspiration', and so on, as if one's whole work can be tied to the mast of a slogan or two and the terribly difficult task of seriously engaging with that corpus.

Whether Barth was guilty of whatever such slogans might mean, the absurdity of dismissing him lightly is obvious when the depth and complexity of his massive *oeuvre* is considered, and the fact that Barth, whatever his flaws – and he was himself not averse to believing that he had many – is a massively important theological intellect, a colossus of twentieth century theology. In the academic session 2000–1, the website of the Princeton Center for Barth Studies took pride in the fact that Barth, ranking fifth among such notable figures as evangelist Billy Graham, Mother Theresa, and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr, was the only academic theologian to make the top ten in a recent poll in *Christian History* of the most influential Christians of the last century.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the patient illuminating receptions of an earlier paper on similar matters my thanks go to Professors Nicholas Lash, David Ford, John Webster, and Drs. Mike Higton and David Moseley.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Barth (1 June 1961), *Karl Barth: Letters, 1961–1968*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 7f.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.ptsm.edu/grow/barth/index.htm](http://www.ptsm.edu/grow/barth/index.htm)

It was refreshing to read in Rodney Holder's recent article, while charging Barth with an ultimate 'irrationalism which deprives Christians of an important means of commending the faith in a pluralist society',

*It is ... only with the greatest respect and trepidation that I venture to engage with what Barth says about natural theology.*<sup>4</sup>

Holder argues for and defends a highly popular but, I would maintain, controversial interpretation of Barth's perspective on natural theology, a perspective given its most sophisticated expression by Richard Roberts. Two main problems are most readily perceivable: the approach to questions of rationality; and the lack of adequate distinction between Barth's understanding and critique of *natural theology* and what has occasionally been referred to by theologians as a *theology of nature*.

### An Eschatological Rationality of the Divine Subject

In their essays on the so-called 'classical arguments for the existence of God' my first year students are expected to consider questions of rationality, what counts as rationality and how can it be recognised at all. They quickly learn through the accompanying lectures that they cannot merely use the arguments, and the equally 'classical' counter-arguments, without seeing what is going on 'under the surface', so to speak. How the arguments function, and how they are received, depends, of course, on how one understands the notion of what is reasonable. For example, the version of the ontological argument used by René Descartes has its place within a very different style of how we know things, and what is counted as rational, from that of, for example, Richard Swinburne's much more recent rehabilitation of the empirical arguments.

Holder suggests a way of understanding what is reasonable that would appear more in tune with the perspective of the latter's concerns, an empiricism so supposedly successfully foundational to many of the enterprises of the natural sciences.

While I do not have space here for a substantial critique of this strategy, it is at least worth pointing out that some serious reservations have been expressed by key thinkers over the presumptions that this style of empiricism holds dear<sup>5</sup> – and these do not necessarily commit one to becoming an epistemological relativist, as Holder implies.<sup>6</sup> The reason for making this point, apart from to

<sup>4</sup> Rodney Holder, 'Karl Barth and the Legitimacy of Natural Theology', *Themelios* 26.3 (2001), 22–37 (22, 24).

<sup>5</sup> For further reading, see, for example, John E. Thiel, *Nonfoundationalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976); William Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Holder, 'Karl Barth', 36.

be fair to what is occurring in debates over the nature of rationality, is that Barth, among many things, refused to adhere to this strategy, at least for theology.<sup>7</sup> He saw it as an attempt by modernity to impose its criteria of knowing (and one, one might add, that works only within a certain specialist field) on theology. However, theological knowing has its own distinctive way of reasoning.

In his mid-1920 lectures at Göttingen, Barth began to express a version of theological rationality that has become particularly famous because of his Anselm-study. Without either defining this exposition from a general conception of 'science', or *a priori* ruling out the possibility of overlap between theological and other types of science (and this is important), Barth intends for theological rationality to take its rise from, and be wholly determined by, the nature of the object that is given to be known.<sup>8</sup> Since God is not an 'object' in the sense that other objects are, Barth argues that God cannot be known in the same way as other objects, and therefore theological rationality remains relatively independent from these other forms of rationality.<sup>9</sup>

Barth does not, therefore, begin with and expound 'faith', even the content of 'faith', as would 'fideism' and 'subjectivism'.<sup>10</sup> Theology becomes, if it is to be 'scientific' and rational, a faithful and obedient *Nachdenken* (literally, 'after thinking'). In other words, it has to be a thankful, realistic, and *a posteriori* reflection upon and explication of the divine object of faith's speaking, and that, of course for Barth, is in and through Christ.<sup>11</sup> This move Barth famously articulates through the Anselmian slogans, *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) and *credo ut intelligam* (I believe to understand), later arguing, with respect to the former, that this is 'what distinguishes faith from blind assent'.<sup>12</sup> Such a process, for Barth, could never be irrational since it is rather the proper form of rationality.<sup>13</sup> This is why Roger Trigg's accusation, cited by Holder, misses the mark:

<sup>7</sup> Barth was not concerned with the more general questions of epistemology.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g. Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum. Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme*, trans. of 2nd ed. 1958 by Ian W. Robertson (London: SCM Press, 1960), 18; CD, I.1, 3–11.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., CD, I.1, 3, 5, 10f.

<sup>10</sup> The first charge is levelled against Barth by, e.g., Robert Brecher, 'Karl Barth: Wittgensteinian Theologian Manqué', *Heythrop Journal* 24 (1983), 290–300 (299); James Richmond, *Theology and Metaphysics* (London: SCM, 1970), 13; the second by Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology I* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 42ff.

<sup>11</sup> Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion, Volume I*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 3, 8, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Grover Foley (London: Collins, 1963), 44.

<sup>13</sup> Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G.T. Thomson (London: SCM Press, 1949), 22f.

Barth says we must rely only on revelation, and not on human reason, yet of course his own arguments are a product of human reasoning.<sup>14</sup>

Barth is not opposing all theo-anthropological procedures, as Pannenberg, for example, supposes in classifying Barth as the pre-eminent modern exponent of 'the christological procedure "from above to below"'.<sup>15</sup> Later talk of a properly pneumatologically grounded anthropology, has been preceded by Barth's christologically determined anthropology.<sup>16</sup> His objection is to a theology that attempts to stand anywhere but under the hearing of the *Deus dixit* (God's speaking). This, Barth believes, is precisely what Schleiermacher's theology of 'man's religious consciousness', and Cartesianism's *cogito* do (see CD, III.1, 314).<sup>17</sup> Without challenging Feuerbach's materialist and atheistic humanism, Barth holds out Feuerbach's theological non-realism as a diagnosis of the fatal malaise affecting theology on the way of Schleiermacher (e.g. CD, I.2, 290). For example, the nineteenth century Ritschlians, Barth argues, constructed a ramp 'so that one may easily ('casually!') climb to the top, that is, to revelation'.<sup>18</sup> Feuerbach, however, indicated that the anthropocentrically conceived god of post-Cartesianism is the idolatrous positing of 'myself as the subject', 'a voice ... from this unredeemed world', a creation of a 'God for himself after his own image', and therefore a failure to hear the divine speech.<sup>19</sup> Barth's 1922 treatment of religion as the expression of the sinful human mind, as a factory of idols, therefore emphatically endures into CD, I.2.

Barth identifies a similar procedure of control operating in the *analogia entis*' premature objectivisation of God, with its postulation of a common being shared by God and creation alike, and the subsequently possible human epistemic movement to the divine 'It'. Such moves fall under Barth's general condemnation of 'natural theology', by which he intends all forms of theology that do not begin exclusively from the known *Ratio* of God.<sup>20</sup> Natural theology, in both its epistemically Pelagian (human discovery of God) and Semi-Pelagian (human discovery of God aided by grace) forms, operates as a 'good and useful narthex or first stage on the way to the true

<sup>14</sup> Holder, 'Karl Barth', 36, paraphrasing Roger Trigg, *Rationality and Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 177.

<sup>15</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (London: SCM, 1968), 33.

<sup>16</sup> On the former, see Barth, in Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas (London: Collins, 1967), 23f.; on the latter, see CD, I.1, 148; IV.1, 135; Robert E. Cushman, *Faith Seeking Understanding: Essays Theological and Critical* (Durham, N. Carolina: Duke University Press, 1981), 118f.

<sup>17</sup> For Barth, the test case is christology, and Christ fits badly into Schleiermacher's theology of the 'composite life'.

<sup>18</sup> *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 48; 92; CD, I.2, 6.

<sup>20</sup> See CD, I.1, 36, 219. While Barth does utilise Kant's metaphysics-critique, he theologically rejects an *a priori* philosophical agnosticism as a negative natural theology (see CD, I.2, 29f.; 244f.; II.1, 183).

Christian revelation', gained quite apart from that revelation.<sup>21</sup> All natural theologies

*begin their journey with their backs turned towards God and, with all brilliance and ingenuity, end at a deity who cannot be the God of Christian grace whom they seek.*<sup>22</sup>

Barth creates a faith beyond religion by reversing the orientation of the subject-object schemes of post-Cartesian epistemology, albeit this is not a simple 'reversal' which denies a christological anthropology. Cushman is right to argue that Barth 'cannot fairly be charged with swallowing up man in the sovereignty of God'.<sup>23</sup> Combined with this reversal is a stress on God's freedom, which functions both in a similar manner to Barth's earlier stress on the divine transcendence over all human ethical, political and religious constructs, and, crucially, to identify the movement of grace. Consequently, the Subject for Barth becomes the *divine Subject* who freely and graciously gives himself to be known to the human *object* of revelation, in a movement that necessarily becomes the indexical point of all theological thinking.<sup>24</sup> This human knowing is thereby asymmetrically characterised as one in which the human subject does not master the known object, but is rather mastered by the divine Subject (e.g., *CD*, I.2, 866). Moreover, in an eschatologically significant statement, Barth argues that revelation is not a *datum* (given) but a *dandum* (to be given).<sup>25</sup>

Given this, Barth proposes christology as the *sole* and regulative location of the objectivity of divine being and speaking. 'God is free for us at this point, and not elsewhere' (*CD*, I.2, 29). This is 'the narrow isolation' of the revelation-event, for it is in Christ *alone* that God reveals himself.<sup>26</sup>

Barth, then, did not need to enter into detailed critiques of the classical arguments for the existence of God, showing up the assumptions of their proponents to an unrealistic portrayal of theological rationality. After all, Kant had demonstrated that 'pure

<sup>21</sup> *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 91; cf. *CD*, I.1, 385; II.1, 86ff., 231.

<sup>22</sup> Buckley and Wilson, 286.

<sup>23</sup> Cushman, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 120. This concern is particularly prominent after *CD*, I. Rowan Williams' claim, that humanity is utterly passive before and in the event of revelation, is therefore unwarranted in respect of these writings, and even in relation to *CD*, I.1, 148 ('Barth on the Triune God', in S.W. Sykes (ed.), *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method* (Oxford, 1979), 147-93 (174)). Moreover, Gustaf Wingren's reading of Barth's project as a simple inversion of the liberal scheme, so that God's transcendence banishes his immanence, and God overwhelms humanity, is too simplistic and misleading (*Theology in Conflict: Nygren, Barth, Bultmann*, trans. Eric H. Wahlstrom (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), 25)].

<sup>24</sup> See *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 87.

<sup>25</sup> Barth, *The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life*, trans. R. Birch Hoyle (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1938), 16; cf. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Barth, 'The First Commandment as an Axiom of Theology', in H. Martin Rumscheidt (ed.), *The Way of Theology in Karl Barth: Essays and Comments* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1986), 63-78 (77).

reasoning' (and in his early period Barth was keen on Kant's 'negative natural theology', but later came to see it as presuming that which could only be known in the event of knowing God) is phenomenally limited. In one famous critique, Paul Tillich, for example, rejects the classical arguments because they deny divine transcendence. To say that 'God exists' is to place God on the same level as creatures. God thereby becomes a 'being' like all other existing 'beings' rather than the 'ground of being'.<sup>27</sup> Subsequent thinkers (and Hume before Kant also) have demonstrated not only the ambiguity of the universe, and therefore the varying ways that its story can be told depending on the network of beliefs formative of and available to the storyteller's imagination. John Wisdom's parable of the 'invisible gardener', used to anti-theist effect by Anthony Flew, could be an interesting observation on this. Even Barth recognises this ambiguity when he declares that the means through which God reveals himself

*can also not serve it [viz. revelation]; it can even hinder and prevent it. The very thing can fail to happen which, because this form is given, ought to happen. The direct opposite can even happen ... God himself can be rejected in the grace of his condescension to the creature [CD, II.1, 55f.].*

Of course, probabilistic claims are made by Richard Swinburne, for example. However, his case is far from assumed to be secure by philosophers of religion. Commenting earlier on a similar model, Alisdair MacIntyre argues that

*a fallacious argument points nowhere (except to the lack of logical acumen on the part of those who accept it). And three fallacious arguments are no better than one. What those who make such remarks may be really getting at is the quite different point that the proofs, though fallacious, may embody insights which have nothing to do with the logical value of the proofs.<sup>28</sup>*

Moreover, it can even be a double-edged sword with probabilistic claims being made by anti-theists. Something else is going on in the process of believing in God's existence that – a 'believing that' has its context only within a 'believing in'.

Ludwig Wittgenstein famously remarked that meaning depends on use.

*the words you utter or what you think as you utter them are not what matters, so much as the difference they make at various points in your life. How do I know that two people mean the same when each says he believes in God? ... Practice gives the words their sense.<sup>29</sup>*

<sup>27</sup> See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 235–38.

<sup>28</sup> Alisdair C. MacIntyre, *Difficulties in Christian Belief* (London: SCM Press, 1959), 63, 65.

<sup>29</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, eds. G.H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago University Press, 1980), 85.

According to Barth, the context for God-talk is very much within the environments of those witnessing to God's Self-giving in Christ. (What that does to the non-Christian religions for Barth I will not speculate. His critique of 'religion' has its place within his critique of God-talk not properly listening or attentive to God's own having spoken/speaking/coming to speak. Hence, he has his sights set primarily on 'Christian' forms of God-talk.)

Holder misses this, as is clear from his discussion of language of 'creation'. In the context of his criticism of Barth's supposed claim that God is Creator is an article of faith,<sup>30</sup> there is a problem in his arguing that:

*Arguably it is easier to believe in the reality of the world than in the incarnation!*<sup>31</sup>

However, the confusion here is that to speak of 'reality' in Holder's sense (the *existence* of the world) is not simply, and without further serious qualification, to speak of *creation*. Creaturehood is not something that atheists could legitimately speak of, since for them there can be no Creator. Existence is 'creation' only for the Christian in Christ, in the sense that only in him do we know God as the triune God (CD I), our gracious Elector (CD II), Creator (CD III), Reconciler (CD IV), and Redeemer (the proposed, but never composed, CD V). Hence Wisniewski's attempt to revive 'natural theology' through Barth's theology, when presented as 'knowledge of nature *without* God', should be viewed as being careless.<sup>32</sup> There simply cannot be any form of nature *without* God for the Christian. To speak of God as Creator without speaking of him as Saviour and Lord is not to speak of the God of Jesus Christ; to speak of humans as 'creatures' without speaking of them as reconciled and called to mission is not to speak of human beings elected in Christ.<sup>33</sup>

Barth's critique of natural theology indicates what happens when our claims to knowing God are not made within the participation in the grace of the trinitarian God. Barth had come to this realisation through his traumas with the *Kriegstheologie* (War-theology) of Germany in 1914. He saw, then, in Feuerbach's anthropocentric turn a warning of reifying our ideas of, and desires for God. 'One cannot speak of God', he claimed in reference to Schleiermacher, 'by speaking of man in a loud voice'.<sup>34</sup> In his worry over idolatry, Barth is not alone. After all, Calvin spoke of the human mind as a factory of idols, and his implying the doctrine of total depravity creates problems for any easy association of him with a kind of Thomistic

<sup>30</sup> Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 50.

<sup>31</sup> Holder, 'Karl Barth', 26.

<sup>32</sup> Ned Wisniewski, *Our Natural Knowledge of God: A Prospect for Natural Theology After Kant and Barth* (Peter Lang, 1990), 2, my emphasis.

<sup>33</sup> That Barth does not utilise insights from the natural sciences to aid in his description of creation is worth noting, but not because Barth felt that they were unimportant, merely because they could not dictate what Christians mean when they speak of creation.

<sup>34</sup> Karl Barth, *Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), 196.



(and this is not the Thomism appropriate to Aquinas, according to the likes of Ernst Best, Fergus Kerr, and Nicholas Lash, among others) knowing of God as Creator prior to God's Self-giving. Moreover, immediately after claiming creation's expression of God's 'invisible qualities', Paul, who could say this on the basis of his Hebraic faith in the creative God of Israel, asserts the exchanging of 'the truth of God for a lie', the lie of idolatry, a sinfulness and ignorance of the true God that appears to deepen in intensity to the Pauline mind as the letter continues (Rom. 1:20, 24). Hence, for Barth, the event of the cross, so powerful an image in the second edition of the *Romans* commentary (1922), stands as an iconoclastic exposure of human being as existing in a state of sinful rebellion from God. At Golgotha, Barth declares starkly, 'Man unveils himself here as really and finally guilty ... by killing God' (CD, I.2, 92). Hence, 'it is monstrous to describe the uniqueness of God as an object of "natural knowledge"'.<sup>35</sup>

### Barthian 'Irrationalism'?

Does this entail that Barth is a 'fideist'? He does not begin as such with the human act of faith, as he felt Schleiermacher was prone to do.

The question needs, then, to be reformulated: is Barth an 'irrationalist'? Barth, of course, and here he is far from being alone among theologians, philosophers, and philosophers of science, for example, in denying the appropriateness of empiricist accounts of the theological rationality, or accounts of rationality derived from 'alien' disciplines.

Rephrasing the question again, lest it be felt that Barth is being allowed to escape too easily: does Barth make theological rationality incommensurable with accounts of rationality in other disciplines, and therefore prevent any possibility for serious conversation (even if that is not understood as operating according to others' criteria and strategies), argument and engagement with these other disciplines, a denial of theology's 'public' language? It is this that Richard Roberts fears in Barth – that Barth ghettoises theology, isolating it from the 'public' domain and thereby encourages a profound 'totalitarianism', something akin to Bonhoeffer's suspicion of a Barthian 'positivism of revelation'. Roberts admits that Barth's stress on the incarnation could be one way freeing Barth from this bind, since it is claimed to be God's act for the world in space and time. Should Barth be able to do this, he would then, in theory at least, be free to engage in the kind of apologetics (perhaps a negative apologetics since he would not be able to follow an empiricist strategy) that focuses on the historical Jesus. Roberts 'discovers' that Barth is actually incapacitated from doing this because of the nature of the temporality of the incarnation.

<sup>35</sup> Inaccurately cited by Jung Young Lee as CD, IV.1, 453 ('Karl Barth's Use of Analogy in his Church Dogmatics', *SJT* 22 (1969), 129–51 (134)).

This is a complex study and critique, and I have attempted to critically engage with it elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Barth does not engage in this type of strategy. One could claim that Barth's work was not as a religious philosopher but as a constructive ecclesial theologian, and therefore to do this would have been 'preaching to the converted', so to speak. But there is more to it than that.

### 'As Open to the World as Any Theologian Could Be'<sup>37</sup>

When Holder announces that

*there is a limited knowledge of God available to us in creation, but ... this knowledge is God-given (it is God revealing himself), just as is our knowledge of God in Christ. To make this clear it might have been helpful ... to replace the term 'natural theology' by 'general revelation', and to call God's revelation of himself in Christ and Scripture 'special revelation'*<sup>38</sup>

he advertises an important, but common, misreading of Barth's theology of revelation. This is further evident in his claim that Barth denies

*all knowledge of God apart from God's own gracious revelation of himself ... in Christ ... known to us through Scripture.*<sup>39</sup>

Or again, 'God's self-revelation in Scripture is all that matters'.<sup>40</sup>

The problem, then, seems to lie in Barth's christocentrism, which John Baillie describes as a denial 'that except in his incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth God has ever spoken to man at all', since this alone is revelation.<sup>41</sup> Critics particularly lament the implication that Barth expensively denies creation's place as revelation; and a similar concern underlies some evangelical complaints over Barth's denial of Scripture as revelation.<sup>42</sup>

Without attempting to expose their own problematic presuppositions, these critics pre-eminently misrepresent Barth as rejecting revelation's mediateness, particularly through Scripture, and preaching (and creation?).

Barth equates revelation with God's *Self-giving* as the 'Word'. Herein, revelation is presented as an event of *personal*, I-Thou, encounter of

<sup>36</sup> John C. McDowell, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and Transformations Beyond Tragedy* (Ashgate, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John Drury (New York: Anchor, 1972), 157.

<sup>38</sup> Holder, 'Karl Barth', 23.

<sup>39</sup> Holder, 'Karl Barth', 24.

<sup>40</sup> Holder, 'Karl Barth', 34.

<sup>41</sup> John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (Oxford, 1939), 17f.

<sup>42</sup> On the former, see e.g. Barr, 124. On the latter, see Klaas Runia, *Karl Barth and the Word of God* (RTSF, 1980), 25; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 'The Authority of Scripture in Karl Barth', in D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (eds.), *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), 275-94 (290f.).

God in Christ with human beings, rather than as, for example, divinely authoritative propositions (e.g., CD, IV.3.1, 183). An uncompromisable distinction between God's *being* as revelation and all creaturely elements is consequently devised.<sup>43</sup> Baillie in particular, and Holder too as earlier cited, confuses Barth's primary emphasis here on 'revelation' as the *content* of the encounter (God's *Self* in Christ) with the *means* (Scripture, etc.) by which that revelation becomes present.<sup>44</sup> To suggest that content and means are identical, therefore, would be tantamount to declaring the latter's divinisation, which can either be a docetic embarrassment of revelation's use of the fragile and contingent, or an attempt to undermine eschatological provisionality in the quest for certainty. Perhaps Barth lacks a doctrine of creation.<sup>45</sup>

However, given Barth's stress on the divine selection of, and self-chosen identification with, the instrument by which he will be revealed – particularly and wholly in that of the incarnation – it is just not true that the event of revelation is external to the means as Rowan Williams believes is the case for Barth (see CD, II.1, 54f.). That is so only to the extent that Barth places the elements in the divine *choice*, so that they have no *intrinsic* value of their own by which to determine the nature of God's eternal choosing (this issue divided Barth from Brunner).

Nevertheless, although distinct from it, the identified sacramental *means* of revelation (Scripture and proclamation) function *indispensably* as what Torrance calls the 'earthen vessels' and 'corporeality' of revelation in order to mediate revelation's contemporary presentness.<sup>46</sup> They function *appropriately* as divinely chosen sacramental means through which God freely makes himself present. Thereby, Barth refers to the divine presence as a 'contingent contemporaneousness'.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Barth even claims that

*The power of Jesus Christ is not operative, however, save through these instruments, these secondary and therefore conditioned means of revelation.*<sup>48</sup>

Accordingly, they are invaluable witnesses to; tokens of; and, to adopt David Kelsey's description of Scripture, 'identity-descriptions' of God in the event of revelation, even though they are not that

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g. CD, II.1, 55. On Scripture's *distinction from* revelation, see *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 202, 212, 216; CD, I.1, 127; I.2, 457, 463ff., 506, 513, 744. Barth differentiates 'revelation' even from Christ's humanity, although it takes place through this 'primary token', or medium.

<sup>44</sup> Similarly, John Macken, *The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics: Karl Barth and his Critics* (Cambridge, 1990), 171. On this distinction, see Ronald F. Thiemann, 'Response to George Lindbeck', *Theology Today* 43 (1986), 377–82 (378).

<sup>45</sup> Williams, 192.

<sup>46</sup> T.F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 105.

<sup>47</sup> CD, I.1, 164; cf. 192.

<sup>48</sup> Barth, 'Revelation', in *Revelation*, ed. John Baillie (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1937), 41–81 (64), my emphasis.

revelation themselves.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, and here is the important point to put to Holder and others, even specifically extra-ecclesial elements can become witnesses, and are perceivable as such in the light of a christological hermeneutic.<sup>50</sup> On this Marshall correctly argues that Barth's christocentrism does not stipulate about the details of the process of revelation's subjective appropriation, since, as Thiemann indicates, Barth means by the term 'revelation' primarily the *content* of our knowing of God.<sup>51</sup> In a statement not unrelated, Barth himself affirmed,

*No one can say how this is done, not even the most devout and learned theologians of all times have been able to hear the Christmas message.*<sup>52</sup>

Consequently Barth eclectically comes to make positive, albeit critical, use of extra-ecclesial anthropologies (CD, III.2); Mozart's music (CD, III.3, 297ff.); and various philosophical elements.<sup>53</sup> For example, the last's perceivable role in the processes of Barth's theological ruminations and articulations is too complex to be reduced to any single systematic scheme of an opposition of relations. Barth uses philosophy eclectically in the service of theology, while intending to take care not to allow it to undermine or overwhelm the particularity of theology's witness to God in Christ. Thiemann describes this as 'the temporary borrowing of a tool to help us better understand the complex meaning of the Christian Gospel'.<sup>54</sup> A statement of Barth's renders the flavour of what he intends here. He admits that

*The central affirmations of the Bible are not self-evident ... Every possible means must be used ... not the least, the enlistment of every device of the conjectural imagination*

in order to interpret it.<sup>55</sup> In this thematic context he famously declares

*God may speak to us through Russian communism, through a flute concerto, through a blossoming shrub or through a dead*

<sup>49</sup> David H. Kelsey *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (London: SCM, 1975), 45. On the biblical writers as 'witnesses', see CD, I.1, 125ff., 169, 301; I.2, 64, 457. The Spirit makes the Scriptures authoritative for us (e.g., CD, I.1, 113), but only because he had inspired their authors to witness to Christ (see *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 219; CD, I.2, 505, 514ff.). Scripture is an 'authentic copy of revelation' (CD, I.2, 544) through which God will speak in each present (*Göttingen Dogmatics*, 201, 206; CD, I.2, 457).

<sup>50</sup> See *Göttingen Dogmatics*, 92; CD, I.1, 176.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce Marshall, *Christology in Conflict: The Identity of a Saviour in Rahner and Barth* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 148f.; Ronald F. Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture* (Louisville, Westminster: John Knox Press, 1991), 84.

<sup>52</sup> Barth, *Christmas*, trans. Bernhard Citron (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 25.

<sup>53</sup> Barth, 'The First Commandment in Theology', 63-78.

<sup>54</sup> Ronald F. Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture* (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1991), 82.

<sup>55</sup> See Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, 37f.

dog. We shall do well to listen to him if he really does so ... God may speak to us through a pagan or an atheist, and in that way give us to understand that the boundary between the Church and the profane world still and repeatedly takes a course quite different from that which we hitherto thought we saw.<sup>56</sup>

Anderson is mistaken, therefore, when arguing that the later Barth has *changed direction* on the issue of 'natural theology' (although the use of that term is questionable in relation to Barth in any case), albeit it does appear that Barth has *extended* the 'witness' concept to include creation in CD, IV.3.1.<sup>57</sup>

However, God does not identify himself through these with the specificity that he does in the incarnation and Scripture, but remains free in his choice of which extra-ecclesial elements to utilise, albeit a freedom which it becomes clear, as the CD progresses, is not arbitrary or occasionalistic as such.

### Conclusion: Barth Contra Brunner

It is worth assessing Holder's perspective on the Barth-Brunner debate in conjunction with that of Trevor Hart's very interesting piece on that controversy.<sup>58</sup> This article contains a helpful description of the Barth-Brunner debate of the 1930s, and rightly refuses to dismiss Barth's anti-Brunnerianism as purely a product of the times, an extreme reaction to circumstances, as some critics are wont to do (such as James Barr).<sup>59</sup> Barth, Hart emphasises, first voiced suspicions about Brunner in 1929 and not 1934, although it is also true, it needs to be added to Hart's account, that even prior to 1929 Barth had consistently rejected any notion of Creature-Creator continuity, but had come from 1929 onwards to focus the attack on the *analogia entis* (analogy of being).<sup>60</sup>

However, Hart problematically concludes that Barth's theology necessitates the application of Brunner's 'formal capacity', or rather a *passive* capacity in contrast to an aptitude or predisposition in favour of revelation, in that God reveals to human beings and not

<sup>56</sup> CD, I.1, 60f.

<sup>57</sup> Ray S. Anderson, 'Barth and a New Direction for Natural Theology', in John Thompson (ed.), *Theology Beyond Christendom: Essays on the Centenary of the Birth of Karl Barth* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1986), 241-66 (244f.); cf. CD, IV.3.1, 117f., 139.

<sup>58</sup> Trevor A. Hart, 'A Capacity for Ambiguity? The Barth-Brunner Debate Revisited', *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993), 289-305; reprinted in *Regarding Karl Barth: Essays Toward a Reading of his Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999). My review of this book is forthcoming in *Evangelical Quarterly*.

<sup>59</sup> See James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford Lectures for 1991 Delivered* in the University of Edinburgh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Karl Barth, 'Fate and Idea in Theology', in Rumscheidt (ed.), 25-62 (39f.); Stephen Andrews, 'The Ambiguity of Capacity: A Rejoinder to Trevor Hart', *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994), 169-79.

inanimate objects or beasts.<sup>61</sup> Barth nevertheless continues to suspect Brunner of 'smuggling in' some sense of this predisposition. What Brunner in the debate misses, and Hart and Holder are guilty here also, is the underlying issue of election. Even a 'formal capacity' would set the terms of God's action in the world and thereby threaten God's freedom, whereas Barth was more careful than Brunner in affirming that the eventful trinitarian God elects and creates human beings in Christ to respond to his Self-revelation. The 'capacity' or 'point of contact' is, therefore, a christological and eschatological concept, problematic if divorced from this since it can imply a sense of meritiveness.<sup>62</sup>

Just what is occurring, then, in complaints over Barth's 'irrationalism' is precisely a failure to be sufficiently attentive to the complex nuances of the nature of rationality in Barth's theology. It must be recognised that what he is doing when he rejects 'natural theology' is not denying the created order as a means of God's speaking; or rejecting the necessity of engaging both critically and responsibly with extra-ecclesial thinkers. But in that conversation, in which the church may learn new and surprising ways of reading its own Scriptures, Barth does not advocate either a totalitarian shouting of the gospel, or a forgetting of the Christian grammar. Whether, however, Barth was too hasty in practice to dismiss various 'apologetic' strategies or arguments is another matter. For him, the best apologetics is good dogmatics.

Holder, while not dealing with a wealth of secondary literature on the subject that indicate that this is a manifestly much more complex issue than often imagined,<sup>63</sup> is to be thanked for refusing to ignore a very important issue which indicates the magnitude of the task of comprehending and engaging with Barth.

<sup>61</sup> See Holder, 'Karl Barth', 34f.

<sup>62</sup> See Joan E. Donovan, 'Man in the Image of God: The Disagreement between Barth and Brunner Reconsidered', *SJT* 39 (1986), 433-59 (442, 445).

<sup>63</sup> Richard Roberts, *A Theology on its Way? Essays on Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991). Particularly worth noting are Ingolf U. Dalferth, 'Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism', in S.W. Sykes (ed.), *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 14-45; Steven G. Smith, 'Karl Barth and Fideism: A Reconsideration', *Anglican Theological Review* 66 (1984), 64-78; James J. Buckley and William McF. Wilson, 'A Dialogue with Barth and Farrer on Theological Method', *Heythrop Journal* 26 (1985), 274-93; Fergus Kerr, 'Cartesianism According to Karl Barth', *New Blackfriars* 77 (1996), 358-68; Gunton, 1988; Paul Molnar, 'Some Problems with Pannenberg's Solution to Barth's 'Faith Subjectivism'', *SJT* 48 (1995), 315-39.

## IS JOHN HICK'S CONCEPT OF THE REAL AN ADEQUATE CRITERION FOR EVALUATING RELIGIOUS TRUTH-CLAIMS?

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As is well-known, John Hick has done much to advance the popularity of the concept of religious pluralism over the past several years. As a Christian, Hick has worked assiduously to revamp the faith so that Christians will finally start to acknowledge the salvific nature of the other great world religions. Hick's goals are, to a certain extent, understandable. For too long Christians have often been arrogant in their assurance of the truth of their position, when in fact humble thanksgiving is the proper attitude for the Christian to assume in light of God's gift of redemption through his Son. However in his zeal to create a version of Christianity which does not suffer from 'theological imperialism', or 'the scandal of particularity', Hick reduces the truth or falsity of all religious experience to what he terms the 'Real'. In other words, any religion which establishes a genuine relationship between the devotee and the Real (i.e. God) must be considered a valid form of faith. Proof that one is in contact with the Real is evidenced in a changed life, in a turning away from selfishness towards selflessness. In short, there is ongoing moral improvement in the person's life. However, two serious, insurmountable problems arise from this view of religion: one, it allows for religions which are based on seemingly false premises to be labelled 'true', and two, it precludes, *a priori*, an honest *evidential* comparison and contrast between the conflicting truth-claims of the various religions.

To begin with, let us look briefly at Hick's criterion for determining a religion's truth: the concept of the Real. Once a person begins to renounce his or her self-centredness in favour of Reality-centredness, what is the result? It is what Hick terms salvation/liberation, although the traditional Christian understanding of salvation is not foremost in Hick's mind here:

*salvation is not a juridical transaction inscribed in heaven, nor is it a future hope beyond this life (although it is this too), but it is a spiritual, moral, and political change that can begin now and whose present possibility is grounded in the structure of reality.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> John Hick, 'A Pluralist View,' in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 43.

Hick is not denying an 'afterlife' in the Christian sense, but his definition of salvation/liberation is primarily a 'here and now' one. The result of this is an awakening to the 'peace and joy and compassionate kindness toward all life'.<sup>2</sup> Basically, Hick is defining religion as a turning away from selfishness, and a turning towards God, or the Real. This change of heart makes it possible for members of the religions to become, to put it simply, better human beings. And, since every culture, regardless of its religion, contains many examples of devout men and women whose lives seem to be getting 'better', this is for Hick proof that all religions are equally salvific:

*Their [the religions] soterical power can only be humanly judged by their human fruits, and ... these fruits seem to me to be found more or less equally within each of the great traditions.*<sup>3</sup>

Hick's insistence that all religions are equally valid, and therefore equally salvific, has mainly been confined to the major world faiths (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism). However if a genuine encounter with the Real is the test for spiritual veracity, why should not this criterion apply to other, lesser-known religious groups, or religions with fewer adherents than the great world faiths? Surely Hick, who has so tenaciously fought for the concept of religious pluralism, would not want to deny the validity of one's spiritual life simply because that person does not belong to one of the five 'major' religions? It is here that Hick's notion of the Real encounters its first serious hurdle. I have in mind religious 'cults', or unorthodox religious groups which make claims that most other thoughtful religious people will find hard to accept.

For example, what is one to make of the Nation of Islam, the radical 'black' version of Islam, currently led by Louis Farrakhan? This group has attracted thousands of members of the African-American community in the United States. However, it is well-known that many orthodox Muslims (both in the US and abroad) reject the group as heretical (because, for one thing, its theology is based not only upon the Koran, but also many extra-Koranic teachings). It is also a fact that the group's spokesmen have made numerous anti-white, but especially anti-Jewish, remarks in the press. So frequent have been these attacks that

*Farrakhan and his aides are now characteristically known as 'bigots' who have labelled Jews 'bloodsuckers', Judaism a 'gutter religion', Israel 'an outlaw state', and Hitler 'a very great man (albeit 'wickedly great').*<sup>4</sup>

It is therefore little surprise that, when Farrakhan spoke at New York's Madison Square Garden in 1985, the Jewish Defence League organised a 'Death to Farrakhan' march.<sup>5</sup> If all this were not enough

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 50-51.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Lieb, *Children of Ezekiel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) 185.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 184.



to ignite the ire of Jews, a publication put out by the Nation, entitled *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, accuses Jews of playing a disproportionately large (almost demonic) role in the African slave trade.<sup>6</sup>

The racist rhetoric of the Nation of Islam is unavoidable, really, given the nature of the sect's cosmological beliefs. The Nation's beliefs about the origin of the world and the creation of man are, to be blunt, somewhat cartoon-like, and it is hard to imagine anyone who is not within the Nation taking them seriously.<sup>7</sup> To put it briefly, Allah created humanity, but all the first men were of the so-called Asiatic black race (Asia being the original name for earth). These first blacks were created in a pristine state, and were 'not the true source of moral evil in the world, for the production of such misery is against their nature'.<sup>8</sup> (It is only when blacks reject the truth of Allah and Islam that they can be said to cause evil.) Whites, however, are a different story entirely. They were not 'created' by Allah, but rather 'made' by an evil one named Yakub. This Yakub groomed his creations ('white devils', if you will) to the point where they became the masters of the globe and held blacks in thrall.<sup>9</sup> It is this evil domination of blacks by whites which continues to this day, and which the Nation of Islam has so forcefully railed against. Ironically, this all sounds very similar to what various *white* supremacist groups believe when they describe people of colour as 'mud people', inferior beings who are to be distinguished from the superior white race, whose members are the true descendants of Adam.

Surely, such a religion that teaches the inherent evil of Jews, black superiority and white inferiority, cannot be a true expression of Hick's 'Real'? Surely no-one in touch with the loving being Hick insists on equating with the Real could be responsible for the theology of the Nation of Islam? But wait a moment. The Nation of Islam *does* seem to do, in many cases, what Hick claims true religion should do: change one's orientation from selfishness to the 'Other'. The Nation of Islam can boast several moral success stories. For example, the Nation has 'gained national recognition and respect' for liberating inner-city black neighbourhoods which were formerly controlled by drug dealers and addicts.<sup>10</sup> The Nation of Islam can also boast great success in converting and rehabilitating many black men who are incarcerated in the nations prisons: 'NOI [Nation of Islam] officials have received numerous awards for their rehabilitation programs'.<sup>11</sup> Farrakhan himself has 'become a respected presence in

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 185.

<sup>7</sup> For a good summary of the Nation's outlandish beliefs about human origins, see Anthony B. Pinn, *Varieties of African American Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998) 128-34.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 132-33.

<sup>10</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 271.

<sup>11</sup> Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) 306.

mediation and counsel' concerning the black-on-black gang violence which has wreaked such misery in the black community.<sup>12</sup>

Even if Hick were to claim that the overt racism of the group indicates they are not truly in touch with the Real, I would respond, why not? Their racism is a sin, but all truly religious persons manifest sin in their lives. Sin in one area (racial prejudice) does not cancel out all of the obvious turnings toward the Real which Nation members make in other areas, any more than a sincere Christian's trouble with, say, pornography or a bad temper, does not nullify all the truly Christian traits he or she evidences in other areas. All Hick's criterion of the Real requires is that religious persons are making moral progress, that they have turned away from self and toward the divine; moral perfection is never attainable. When one sees the well-groomed, smartly dressed members of the Nation of Islam passing out literature on the streets of major US cities (some of whom no doubt terrorised those same streets before their conversion), it is hard to think that they are not morally progressing, albeit imperfectly, towards Hick's Real.

In fact, the culmination of the Nation's positive influence can clearly be seen in Farrakhan's crowning achievement, his famous Million Man March. This was not a gathering of a few fanatics to spread racial hatred, as is so often the case with 'skinhead' and KKK rallies. This was the largest civil rights march in the history of the United States, and it drew anywhere from 650,000 to 1.1 million persons.<sup>13</sup> That this was a 'respectable' civil rights march can be judged by the black civil rights luminaries and scholars who supported and or attended it: Rosa Parks, Jesse Jackson, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Maya Angelou, and Cornel West.<sup>14</sup> West's words seem to sum up best the positive nature of the event:

*the Million Man March was an historic event – called by Minister Louis Farrakhan, claimed by black people of every sort and remembered by people around the globe as an expression of black men's humanity and decency. Never before has such black love flowed so freely and abundantly for so many in the eyes of the world.<sup>15</sup>*

Here Hick would seem to be caught on the horns of a dilemma of his own making. The Nation of Islam teaches racial superiority along with racial hatred; this racism has its roots in Allah himself, and his racist preference for blacks over whites. Surely this cannot be a religion which is truly in touch with the divine, with what Hick terms the Real. Yet many of its members have changed their orientation in a way which Hick insists is a mark of true religion. And, in Hick's system, it is not the *content* of the religion, but only its *results* in the lives of the faithful, which determine its validity. Using Hick's criterion, those whose lives have been changed by the Nation of

<sup>12</sup> Lincoln, *Black Muslims* 271.

<sup>13</sup> Lieb, *Children of Ezekiel* 190.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

Islam seem to indicate that the transforming power of this religion is quite powerful, and quite real.

A similar problem is posed for Hick by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints – the Mormons. Most Christian scholars would define them as a cult, not because they wish to denigrate Mormons, but because they are characterised by the things which are usually associated with cults. They take an established religion (Christianity) and add their own unique interpretation to it (the Book of Mormon); they have their own 'inspired' religious leaders (the leader of the Church, or the Prophet, the first of which was Mormon founder Joseph Smith); and they demand unswerving allegiance from their followers, and freely practise excommunication if their behaviour is unsatisfactory.

However, be they a cult or not, the Mormons have a widespread reputation for morally upright living.<sup>16</sup> I personally know several Mormons, and they are obviously devout, sincere people. Their devotion to God and family, and their eschewal of vices like drinking, smoking, and pre-marital sex, are well-known. Many readers of this essay could probably confirm this through personal encounter with Mormons in their everyday lives. Yet there is a problem with Mormonism: it is, in my estimation of the evidence, demonstrably *false*. Or, at the very least, it rests upon foundations which seems to have very little going for them in terms of verifiability. Many religions do not offer much in the way of negative or positive evidence for their truth-claims, so it is difficult to assess the veridicality of such faiths (for instance, can anyone prove one way or another that the Nirvana of Buddhism does or does not exist?). But unlike some religions, which are not capable of being decisively proven to be true or false, Mormonism *can* be shown to contain so many errors that its likelihood as a true path to Hick's Real must be seriously questioned.

The first problem arises from the Book of Mormon itself. It was supposedly discovered by Mormon founder Joseph Smith, who translated it from the original 'reformed Egyptian' via the use of a type of magical spectacles. The only problem here is that Reformed Egyptian does not exist, nor has it ever existed, according to 'every leading Egyptologist and philologist ever consulted on the problem'.<sup>17</sup> But the content of the Book of Mormon proves even more troubling. The Book claims to be a history of two ancient civilisations, one which left the Tower of Babel region and relocated to the east coast of what is now Central America around 2250 BC (according to Mormon reckoning). The second group left Jerusalem just before the Babylonian captivity, and settled on the West Coast of South America.<sup>18</sup> Of course, outside of the Book of Mormon, there is

<sup>16</sup> Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1965) 167, 169. This book is considered by many to be the standard reference work on religious cults. And although Martin is quite critical of the Mormons, even he admits their reputation for 'clean living,' 'sound moral traits,' and devotion to church and family. Thus, they seem to be in tune with Hick's concept of the Real.

<sup>17</sup> Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad* 172.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 178.

absolutely no evidence that such civilisations ever left the Middle East for the New World. In addition to this, the Book claims that there were thirty-eight great cities which were established in the Americas after the arrival of these transplanted Middle Eastern races. However, the

*Mormons have yet to explain the fact that leading archaeological researchers not only have repudiated the claims of the Book of Mormon as to the existence of these civilisations, but have adduced considerable evidence to show the impossibility of the accounts given in the Mormon Bible.<sup>19</sup>*

Much like the cosmology of the Nation of Islam, the alleged history of the Book of Mormon must seem utterly fantastic to anyone who is not a dedicated Mormon.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, there are the 'prophetic' utterances of Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith. If he was a prophet, as Mormons to this day believe, his prophetic skills (or lack thereof) may have got him stoned to death in ancient Israel, where false prophets were not suffered to live! His prophecy concerning the American Civil War predicated that England would become involved, and that the conflict would escalate into a world war. He also predicated that he would occupy his home in Nauvoo, IL 'for ever and ever'. The truth is that neither he nor his descendants remained in the house. In fact, the house was destroyed by fire, and the Mormons eventually sojourned into Utah.<sup>21</sup>

What are we to make of Mormonism then, in light of John Hick's criteria for determining a religion's truth? Without a doubt Mormon people seem to be living moral, 'holy' lives, which Hick insists is proof of a genuine encounter with the Real. However, what would a critical scholar like Hick do with the obviously false historical framework of the Book of Mormon? He certainly is not reluctant to discount portions of the Bible which he does not believe are historically accurate,<sup>22</sup> and the Bible is undoubtedly more firmly rooted in history than the Book of Mormon! What would he make of

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 183. It must be realised that these are not mere archaeological discrepancies, as are often found when the Christian Bible is examined. There are parts of the OT, for example, which cannot be verified by archaeology, and some parts which seem to be undermined by it, but on the whole, there is obviously an historical basis to the OT writings. And it has long been recognised that the NT is firmly anchored in historical reality. See, for instance, F.F. Bruce, *The New Testaments Documents: are they Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943) 80-99. This is not so with the Book of Mormon, where all the historical foundations of the book seem to be fabricated.

<sup>20</sup> For a thorough refutation of the 'historicity' of the Book of Mormon, see Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 178-87.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 190-91. As with the seriousness of the historical inaccuracies mentioned above, so with these false prophecies. Joseph Smith is not a minor figure in the history of Mormonism, who can be allowed a bit of prophetic 'leeway'. He is the founder of the religion itself, and his false predictions do not bode well for the faith he claims to have discovered.

<sup>22</sup> Hick, *Four Views*, 31-36.

the false prophecies by the religion's 'inspired' author? As with the Nation of Islam, Hick would have to ignore these glaring problems, since, according to his theory, Mormons are genuinely engaged with the Real, based on the lives they lead.<sup>23</sup>

How might Hick respond to such criticisms as those listed above? First, he rightly concludes that not all religions are valid paths to the Real. The twisted religious ideas of, for example, the Nazis, Jim Jones, or David Koresh, certainly are not salvific, for obvious reasons. Plus, many religions/cults are too new, and a fair assessment of their validity cannot yet be made.<sup>24</sup> With this I fully agree. However, the Nation of Islam and the Mormons cannot be so easily dismissed, for, as previously explained, both religions meet Hick's criterion for religious validity. Also consider Hick's comments, taken from a passage where he is discussing the way to determine the validity of cults, and those faiths which are not among the major world religions:

*[a]ny judgement about them has to be based on a close examination of each particular movement, and all that one can say in general is that the same criterion must apply as in the case of the great world faiths: are they effective contexts of the salvific transformation of human beings from self-centredness to a new orientation centred in the Real as authentically known in a particular human way?*<sup>25</sup>

Both the Nation of Islam and the Mormons provide a way for their adherents to make this transformation. And although Hick believes that a religion may be a genuine path to the Real, while at the same time containing elements 'that have little or no religious value, or indeed that work directly against the salvific transformation',<sup>26</sup> I do not think this approach will work in the case of the Nation of Islam and the Mormons. For the problems I have pointed out with these religions (i.e., racism, and dubious scriptural records) are not peripheral matters. Rather, they lie at the very core of each religion. The inherent evil of the white race, and the inherent superiority of the black race, are essential to Nation of Islam theology. And the Mormon religion itself would not be possible without the Book of Mormon.

The above-mentioned discrepancies encountered with the Nation of Islam and the Mormons are a serious problem for Hick, who sets up

<sup>23</sup> The same approach I have taken with the Nation of Islam and the Mormons could probably be taken with atheists, as well. They, of course, deny belief in any type of religion whatsoever, yet it is common knowledge that there are many 'good' atheists among us. How would Hick explain the existence of atheists who lead charitable, loving lives? Surely they are not in touch with the divine? Or, if they are, it is a 'secret' relationship, similar perhaps to Rahner's concept of 'anonymous Christianity.' Surely Hick, given his Christian commitment, would condemn atheism as a false worldview. Yet how to explain the reality of 'good' atheists?

<sup>24</sup> John Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions: the Rainbow of Faiths* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995) 44.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

a self-created, arbitrary criterion to determine what true religion is (self-improvement through contact with the Real). I suggest that one should examine the evidence (or lack thereof) for each religion and evaluate it, the same way one would evaluate the evidence for any other sort of truth-claim, secular or otherwise. Someone who does not share Hick's definition of religion could simply examine the religions described above (and all others as well), look at the pros and cons of each, and decide if the religion being scrutinised is true. For someone who believes God (or the Real) is a God of love, that person would have to reject the Nation of Islam's cosmology and theology, which portrays God as caring more for dark-skinned than for light-skinned persons. Someone who takes seriously the question of scriptural records (and this includes the closely-related matters of archaeology and history) upon which an 'historical' religion like Mormonism is based, would necessarily have to reject that religion, for the history espoused in the Book of Mormon seems to be entirely fanciful.

But such an honest look at the evidence for the world religions is something that Hick simply will not consider.<sup>27</sup> Why? For one thing, he does not think it is possible to acquire *enough* empirical knowledge about any of the religions in order to be certain that that particular religion is 'true'. Hick states that, because we cannot empirically prove, beyond a doubt, the truth of any religion,

*[religious truth-claims] are not matters concerning which absolute dogmas are appropriate. Still less is it appropriate to maintain that salvation depends upon accepting any one particular opinion or dogma concerning them.*<sup>28</sup>

The kind of absolute evidence Hick desires is quite unrealistic, considering we almost never have this type of evidence regarding the most important decisions we make every day. I, for instance, may drive a certain route to work. I may consider it to be a very safe route (light traffic, no hairpin turns, etc.). I consider the road in question so safe that I drive it every day, almost certain that nothing untoward will happen to me on it. Of course, I could be wrong – tomorrow, on that very road I could be involved in a fatal car crash. Yet I consider this event so unlikely that I am willing to continue

<sup>27</sup> One reason for Hick's reluctance here is the fact that he believes his interpretation of religion will allow the world religions to live in a more harmonious atmosphere, once such exclusionary religions like Christianity stop insisting the Christian faith is the only true faith: 'a religion that accepts the other great traditions as equally authentic can join with them to promote international peace and to solve the problems of planetary ecology and two-thirds world poverty, malnutrition and disease, and the vast periodic disasters of war and famine', in John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) 134. These wonderful things may indeed come about if religious claims to exclusivity cease, but the issue at hand is how does one know if a religion is true or false? As laudable as the goals mention by Hick are, they really do not have anything to do with the determination of which, if any, religion is in tune with the Real.

<sup>28</sup> Hick, *The Metaphor* 145.

driving that road. In short, I am 'dogmatic' about the safety of this road! Or, take for example, a man who has been married for twenty-five years. His wife is devoted to him, and has never shown him anything but love and affection. Now, it is possible that when she says she is going to the local mall, she is really going to meet a man with whom she is having an extra-marital affair. The husband would never consider this because, based on the evidence of twenty-five years of faithful marriage, the idea is preposterous. He, too, is 'dogmatic' about his wife's fidelity. Not because he can empirically prove beyond a doubt that she is faithful, but because the *evidence* (not ironclad proof) indicates that she is so. If such deeply important things like life and death driving decisions, and life-long marriage relationships do not require 100% empirical verification, why should a religious decision? The simple fact is, there is no area of life where we have absolute certainty, yet we continue to go on making very important decisions based on what evidence we *do* have.<sup>29</sup>

Hick's lack of confidence concerning religious evidence results in an inability to see that the issue of truth claims must be addressed, or else one is forced to accept outright contradiction among the religions (that the major world religions do indeed teach mutually exclusive concepts of man, sin, God, salvation, revelation, et al., has been pointed out more than enough times, so there is no need to belabour the point here). But it is not just contradiction of the theological kind, which Hick, of course, explains away by teaching that various, equally valid paths to God are available. The contradictions are *historical* in nature. This is especially apparent when addressing the issue of Christ's death on the cross. In the NT, of course, we are told that Christ dies on the cross, and that he was resurrected. However, the Koran denies that Christ died on the cross.<sup>30</sup> Here Hick makes the following statement:

*All that one can say in general about such disagreements, whether between two traditions or between any one of them and the secular historians, is that they could only properly be settled by the weight of historical evidence. However, the events in question are usually so remote in time, and the evidence so*

<sup>29</sup> I am indebted to the work of Christian apologist John Warwick Montgomery here, who often employed this sort of thinking when arguing for the strength of the evidential approach to Christianity. See, for instance, his *Human Rights and Human Dignity* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology, and Public Policy, Inc., 1986) 152-54.

<sup>30</sup> To Hick's credit, he does credit the NT version as an 'historical report', while he labels the Koranic version a 'theological inference - that God would not allow so great a prophet to be killed' (*The Metaphor*, 146). It must also be admitted that Hick is not here presenting an in-depth study of what happened to Christ on the cross. He is using the cross experience to show how historical records can vary from one religion to another. Still, I think the criticisms which follow are entirely warranted, based on Hick's overall approach to obvious contradictions among the world's religions, and his apparent disinterest in analysing religious truth claims from an evidentialist viewpoint.

*slight and uncertain, that the question cannot be definitively settled.*<sup>31</sup>

I find this statement to be quite surprising. First, he does not seem to take seriously the fact that the very truth, indeed, the very existence, of both Christianity and Islam rest on the issue of what happened to Christ on the cross. If Jesus did not die, as the Koran asserts, then Christianity is based upon a lie, and Christians are, as Paul once said, the most miserable of all men. If, however, Christ did die upon the cross, and later rose, then it is Islam that is based upon a false premise (i.e., that Jesus was only a prophet, rather than the One whose resurrection verified the early Christians' claim that he was indeed the divine Messiah).

What I find truly astounding is that Hick thinks that the evidence for the death of Christ upon the cross to be 'so slight and uncertain'. Has Hick's desire for religious pluralism, based on his concept of the Real, blinded him to the great amount of evidence which has been put forth by Christian apologists in support of the NT's description of Christ's death and resurrection? This evidence has been set forth and vigorously defended by numerous scholars,<sup>32</sup> so there is no need to re-state it here in-depth. Simply put, when one considers the major pieces of evidence, it is far easier to accept the authenticity of the resurrection narrative found in the NT, rather than to posit alternate explanations (such as the now thoroughly discredited 'swoon theory', where Christ allegedly fainted on the cross, then was later revived). Some of the major pieces of evidence are as follows.

One: The tomb of Christ was empty. Had he not risen, hostile Roman and Jewish authorities could have easily produced the body, thus squelching any talk of a risen Messiah. Such talk would have been blasphemy to the Jewish religious leaders, and potentially seditious as far as the Romans were concerned. The idea that the disciples stole and hid the body, then later claimed that Christ was resurrected, is ludicrous. The disciples suffered greatly for the gospel that they preached. They certainly gained no worldly benefits from preaching their message. Ultimately, tradition tells us, most of them died as martyrs. It is highly unlikely that twelve men would suffer and die for a religion they knew to be based on a lie.

Two: The resurrection must have actually occurred, for it is these appearances which obviously turned a rag-tag group of Jewish

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>32</sup> The literature in the area is enormous, but some of the best works are as follows: *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* Ed. Terry L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). This work contains a debate between Christian apologist Gary Habermas and renowned atheistic philosopher Antony Flew (the debate is rather one-sided, however, as Flew is unable to refute any of Habermas' arguments supporting the NT account of the resurrection). In a similar vein, see the debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan, in *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?* Ed. Paul Copan (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998). Also of interest is Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), and John Warwick Montgomery, *Where is History Going?* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1969) 37-74.



peasants into the mighty evangelists who began to preach the resurrection and divinity of Christ. How else would we explain the fact that these simple men, who were so dejected when their Master was executed, suddenly became witnesses unto death for that same Master? That these resurrection appearances were only visions, or hallucinations, is entirely untenable, for no twelve men (not to mention the 500 that Paul mentions!) can be expected to have the same hallucinations!

Three: The story of the resurrection was preached in the presence of 'hostile witnesses', that is, Jewish authorities who would have gladly discredited the story had they been able to do so. Suffice to say that the death and resurrection of Christ is easily the best-attested event in the NT, if not the entire Bible. Can we know with 100% proof that this happened? No, but as I pointed out earlier, such proof is never required when it comes to making important decisions (like, for instance, a religious decision to believe in Jesus because of the NT evidence that he rose from the dead, thus verifying his divinity). Even Hick himself, in the passage quoted above, says that the 'weight of historical evidence', not proof beyond all doubt, is required to resolve such issues. The weight of the historical evidence clearly favours the NT account of what happened to Jesus on (and after) the cross. The importance of this kind of evidence for the Christian faith cannot be overestimated, for such evidence simply does not exist for any of the other world religions. Consider Islam, for example: John Warwick Montgomery writes, concerning the evidence for the resurrection juxtaposed with the evidence for the Islamic faith, that '[n]o such attesting evidence for Muslim revelational claims can be marshalled, for it simply does not exist'.<sup>33</sup>

Hick also seems unwilling to admit just how central the death and resurrection of Christ is to the Christian faith. In one of his works, where he is discussing the 'historical' beliefs which separate different religions from each other, he lumps the resurrection of Christ in with such beliefs as the Buddhist belief that Buddha literally flew from India to Sri Lanka, the Muslim belief that Muhammad flew between Mecca and Jerusalem, and the Jewish belief that, at Joshua's command, the sun remained immobile in the sky for twenty-four hours.<sup>34</sup> Now, the problem here is that the resurrection of Jesus is a central (indeed, *the* central) belief for the Christian. A Muslim could dispense with Mohammed's airborne travel, as could a Buddhist with the story of Buddha's flight, and nothing of essential theological significance would be lost to either religion. These miraculous stories are really not important to either religion in terms of their respective theologies and belief systems. As for Joshua's commanding the sun to stop, this is hardly an essential part of Jewish theology. Besides, Joshua is not even the founder of Judaism! But Christianity stands

<sup>33</sup> Montgomery, *Human Rights* 119. For Montgomery's critique of Muslim attempts at apologetics, see his 'How Muslims do Apologetics', in *Faith Founded on Fact* (Newburgh, IN: Trinity Press, 1978) 81-99.

<sup>34</sup> John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 363-64.

or falls based upon the historicity of the resurrection. Ironically, it is Christianity which can offer solid empirical evidence that the miraculous event upon which it is based actually happened.

A final word must be said regarding Hick's incorporation of Kantian thought into his pluralistic theology. When confronted with criticism of his views, Hick has often sought refuge in Kant's theory that there is a difference between reality as such, and the *perception* of reality which we as human beings experience. Hick believes that, as each human has a different perception of the outside world, so human experience and interpretation of God can vary. This, combined with different historical and cultural settings, goes far in explaining the variety of religions in the world:

*It is the variations of the human cultural situation that concretise the notion of deity as specific images of God. And it is these images that inform man's actual religious experience, so that it is an experience specifically of the God of Israel, or of Allah, or of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or of Vishnu or Shiva.<sup>35</sup>*

This view, however, faces serious problems, especially in regard to the criticisms I have raised. First, it does not resolve the historical contradictions among the world's religions. If the Christian perception of reality is that Christ died on the cross, while the Muslim perception is that he did not, *one* of these perceptions must be erroneous. Kant can be invoked to explain these different interpretations, perhaps, but one must still decide which perception is historically, objectively, true. Similarly, Kant might be used to explain, but certainly not defend, the racist teachings of the Nation of Islam, since racism clearly violates Hick's own definition of what it means to be in touch with the Real. And, I definitely do not see how he could use the Kantian theory to defend the glaring historical fabrications which are the basis of the Book of Mormon. The events the Book purports to describe either happened, or did not happen. It is a question of historical fact, not human perception.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, Hick's criterion of the Real is not an adequate basis for assessing religious truth claims. We must not look only at the moral

<sup>35</sup> John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980) 105-106.

<sup>36</sup> Hick offers the following example of how human perception can view the same object differently. He uses an intentionally ambiguous drawing which, depending upon how one looks at it, either looks like a rabbit or a duck. Hick explains that the drawing will look like a rabbit to one who is acquainted only with rabbits. However, if one is familiar only with ducks, he can see in the drawing nothing but a duck (*A Christian Theology of Religions*, 24-25). This is true as far as it goes, since the object in question is only a drawing. However, if it were an actual object, it would be either a rabbit, or a duck. It would have an objective reality, and this reality is in no way dependent on the viewer's perception. If the object is actually a duck, and the onlooker perceives it to be a rabbit, he is simply wrong. Surely, such errors occur in the realm of religious perception, too, which at least partially explains the glaring contradictions among the world's religions.

improvements in the lives of religious believers (admirable as these changes may be), but rather at the religions *themselves*. A man or woman may evidence moral and spiritual improvement, yet still adhere to a faith that espouses racism. Can such a faith truly be a path to the Real? Equally, one may lead an exemplary moral life, yet be a member of a religion which rests on allegedly historical scriptures which in fact have no basis in reality. Is the path to the Real based upon myths masquerading as fact? Christianity, on the other hand, can boast of moral growth in the lives of its followers but, unlike other faiths, it can *also* offer convincing evidence that it is a religion based on empirical fact.

## THE LAST WORD

*Robbie Castleman*

Years ago I invited an older man at our church to join the adult Sunday School class. He wanted to know what the class was studying, and I responded, 'Romans'. He then commented, declining the invitation, 'Oh, Romans, I've studied that before, but maybe next time.' Given the depth of Romans, I knew in a heartbeat he had read it once, but never studied it. Did he know about Augustine, Luther, Wesley? Even the preface to the book changed lives! Plumb the depths of Romans? Never! I remembered this brief conversation recently in talking with two people, a brand-new middle-aged Christian and a University sophomore.

Their comments have created a spectrum for thinking about the dynamic of studying and teaching the Scriptures. Creating one end of the spectrum, the first comment was, 'The more I learn, the more I realise how much I don't know.' This was spoken by a bright-eyed woman in our congregation who had recently recommitted her life to the Lord and joined the Sunday School class I taught. She had never studied the Scripture before and was excited about its newness, challenges, history and salvation story.

The second comment, at the other end of the spectrum, was made by a young student in a NT survey class I teach at the University. 'I've had all this stuff since I was in kindergarten. I know it all and don't really want to take this class.' Although I appreciated the student's candour, I was saddened by his lack of hunger for the Word none of us ever completely 'knows'. But it was this young man's comment that radically challenged my goal for teaching this class.

I had, rather unconsciously, made it my aim to teach students as much as I possibly could so they could walk out of class at the end of the semester saying, 'That was great. I sure learned a lot!' However, this student's comment created a new and more honest challenge for me as a teacher. This naïve declaration of disinterest reflects the attitude of many students raised in the church and immersed in Sunday School and youth groups, especially in the 'Bible Belt' of the American South who attend the University where I teach. My new aim is to teach students in such a way that when they walk out of class at the end of the semester, they realise how much they have *not* learned and *don't* know.

Now, that may sound like a peculiar goal for an educator, but Scripture is no ordinary to-be-learned-and-conquered subject. As I thought about this dynamic, I realised it is this very hunger-to-learn-more attitude that has marked my own discipleship. I am a professor of Biblical studies because it keeps me learning, not because I know it all.

I want this young and already bored student to catch the passion for learning of my middle-aged friend who is digging into Scripture for the first time. And I want both of them to join me in the realisation that, when it comes to the Word of God, everyone is a kindergarten child. That's exciting! Five-year-olds can't wait for school to start. Surely this is a mark of the child in the Kingdom Jesus had in mind.

More than just my classroom aim has been transformed by the juxtaposition of these comments and my prayerful reflection on them. My overwhelming and generally hidden insecurity as a scholar has been challenged. I think most university faculty and students tend to be dishonest about what we don't know. We nod our heads knowingly in a conversation about a book we have never read, an author we have not heard of. We often play academic games that keep us on our toes, in the library and behind our computers. We can dread the classroom question we can't answer and are expert at responding for fifteen minutes as though we do.

My initial irritation with this young student's bravado uncovered a subconscious and very similar attitude harboured in my own heart. In my fear of not knowing enough, there is rooted a pride in what I do know. In embracing what I don't know, fear gives way for the freedom to honestly study, learn and be hungry again for all I want to know. I realised with insight that smacked of revelation that it is not just my student who needs the attitude of my friend – I do, too!

So, as I walk into my classroom day after day, my aim is no longer to teach my students what I know, but to create in them a hunger for all there is to learn. I will be satisfied at the end of the semester if my students walk out saying, 'I thought I knew a lot before this class, but there is so much more to learn!' And that's what I'll be saying, too.

What a privilege to be a Bible scholar, a student of the Word! May we all engage our studies with the understanding that the more we learn, the more we realise how much there is to learn. And that, more assuredly, includes Romans!

# Book Reviews

## Old Testament

### **The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches**

*David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (eds)*  
Leicester: IVP, 1999,  
512 pp., £27.99

This is the kind of book that is like manna from heaven for students struggling to find some direction through the maze of contemporary Biblical studies. OT study has seen massive changes in recent years in the way it is approached by scholars, who have generally bought into the latest fads in postmodern philosophy with much greater enthusiasm than their NT colleagues. Almost everything that once seemed to be an 'assured result' has been questioned, and into the bargain the rules themselves have been changed. So books of a previous generation are unlikely to give students much help in how to engage with today's questions.

This volume is the product of collaboration by some sixteen individuals, all of them acknowledged experts in their own particular field. However, it is not a collection of disconnected essays, as the editors have ensured a consistent treatment of the subject. It begins by looking at textual studies and ends with a chapter on the theology of the OT. In between there are chapters on archaeology, history writing, the monarchy, prophets, wisdom, and much more besides. The approach is the same in each chapter: an account of scholarly developments over the last thirty years or so (in Europe as well as the English-speaking world),

together with some critical analysis of key theories, and evaluation of positive and negative lessons to be learned from it all.

In view of the enormous amount of information included here, it might seem ungrateful to complain about just one issue. But I have to admit to some surprise that there was not more specific discussion about the issues raised by what is briefly mentioned on page 106 as 'ideological criticism'. One particular view seems to me to require significant treatment. This is the view, popularised by K.W. Whitelam in *The Invention of Ancient Israel* (1997) but adopted more widely, that much (if not all) early twentieth-century study of archeology and Israel's early history was motivated not by scholarly objectivity, but by a political desire to support Zionist aspirations for the establishment of the state of Israel, to the disadvantage of the Palestinians. Those who accept this argument might well be 'emperors with no clothes' – loudly proclaiming their own objectivity while denying the same integrity to others. But the underlying implication that the judgements of older scholars cannot be trusted (including such 'greats' as W.F. Albright) has a deliberately corrosive effect on academic integrity. Today's students need to be know this and know how to take account of it. For if we are all just products of our own environment, and there is no such thing as 'truth' (which, of course, is what this is all about), then why should anybody bother with the opinions of anyone else at all?

The editors are aware of this dimension to the topic, and in their preface label some theories as

'presuppositionally wrongheaded' (10), which makes it all the more surprising – and regrettable – that there was not a separate chapter on this central issue of how our presuppositions affect what we think we know. But noting this omission is in no way to detract from the enormous value that this book will be to those who read it. In relation to what it contains, it can be recommended without reservation. And if important things are missing, that is an invitation for the editors and writers to produce some more.

**John Drane**

University of Aberdeen

### Isaiah (Old Testament Library)

*Brevard S. Childs*

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001,  
xx + 555 pp., h./b., £35

I can't believe it. Within three years we have had two major commentaries on the whole of Isaiah from two of today's most respected OT scholars. And for me, despite their many good features, they are both disappointing. (The other, incidentally, was Brueggemann's two-volume commentary, Westminster, 1998.)

Childs' is most famous for his introduction of 'canonical approaches' to OT study. His *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979) argued that the Bible is not just a collection of books, but Scripture or Canon for both Jewish and Christian communities. Consequently it is legitimate – necessary, in fact – to study the finished product. This means that the editorial contributions, both additions and arrangement of material, have great importance. While he leaves some important questions unanswered, this has been a most helpful contribution to OT study. So, although Childs believes that the book of Isaiah may have been written over a period of more than 200 years, it has been put together as one book and that is how we must read it.

As an example, consider Isaiah 7–11. It has certain recurring themes, notably significant children (7:3, 14–17; 8:1–10, 18; 9:6–7; 11:1ff) and the alternation of judgement and salvation. I would have expected an exposition of the section as a whole, with a demonstration of how each part contributes to the overall concern of the editors of the final text, for Childs speaks as a canonical interpreter. In dealing with 'The Internal Coherence' [of ch. 7] he says:

In my approach, the goal of interpretation is toward an understanding of the full richness of the various voices in this passage, but always in relation to the text's final form. In other words, the aim is not to reconstruct an allegedly original oracle ... [and discard the rest]. Rather, my concern is to analyze how the coercion of the text from the hearing of the earliest levels of tradition evoked further interpretative activity from its original tradents who sought to register the continual effect of the whole on each single text (63).

This gives an idea of the type of language Childs uses, and you can decide whether you find it attractive and comprehensible or not. Personally I do not; it seems often to lead to ambiguity and confusion rather than clarity. Nevertheless, Childs' aim to show how an original message was understood and modified by succeeding readers/disciples/editors is promising and often successful.

However, 'The Function of Chapter 7 in the context of Chapters 1–12' is dealt with in half a page (cf. less than a page on 'Introduction to Isaiah 1–12'), 'Structure' in eight lines, and the exposition of 7:1–25 looks suspiciously like other standard commentaries on Isaiah. There *are* definite insights here; there *are* observations relating to the meaning of the text as we have it; but the broad sweep that I wanted is not there. The commentary proceeds to discuss the

separate sections (8:1-22; 8:23 - 9:6; 9:7 - 10:4; 10:5-34; 11:1-16), without even offering a proper explanation for the connections between 10:1-4 and 5:8-25, though he criticises others for their inadequacies.

Throughout the commentary there are references to other scholars, but Childs rarely tells us exactly what they said and why they are wrong. One example would be references to the commentaries of Motyer and Watts who 'have not recognised the extent of the problem' and whose 'synchronic readings' have not produced 'much help'. There is no presentation, appreciation or criticism of the extensive structural theories that both these very different scholars present (and about which I have strong reservations). This makes for a very frustrating commentary.

The commentary contains much useful material and must be read by all serious students of Isaiah (there's a quote for a dust jacket!) but my overall verdict is 'my high hopes were not realised'.

#### **Mike Butterworth**

Principal, St Albans and Oxford  
Ministry Course

### **What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What archaeology can tell us about the reality of ancient Israel**

*William G. Dever*

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001,  
xiii + 313 pp., h./b., £16.99/\$25.00

In the 1970s, with the demise of the previous generation of leading archaeologists concerned with the biblical world, Dever rose to prominence. He made a name for himself in scholarly circles by denouncing traditional biblical archaeology as an amateurish misuse of the field. He advocated the term Syro-Palestinian archaeology, grounded its theoretical basis in anthropology and social science theory, and argued that

archaeology should normally inform historical studies of the Bible, rather than the Bible serve as a grid to interpret archaeology. Now in 2001, Dever culminates a decade-long series of papers with a devastating critique of the philosophical bankruptcy of postmodernism and, in particular, that version of it advocated by the so-called minimalists, whom he designates as revisionists.

Against their view that texts, and especially the biblical ones, have no historical value, Dever presents an overwhelming array of evidence where the material culture matches general and specific descriptions of society from the Bible. Against sweeping generalisations by the minimalists that maintain a complete absence of evidence for the biblical portrait of ancient Israel and the composition of the OT in the Persian or Hellenistic period, Dever examines and affirms: (1) the emergence of 'proto-Israel' in Palestine as seen in the Merneptah stele and the settlement evidence; (2) Israelite statehood during the tenth century BC and the mention of David in the Tel Dan stele; (3) evidence for increasing bureaucracy and an expanding state during the mid-tenth century (the age of Solomon), and the detailed congruence of every item described in the construction of Solomon's Temple with Syrian cultic and architectural forms, many of which are found only prior to the eighth century; (4) clear cultural differences between the northern and southern kingdoms, as well as specific congruences in the names of Israelite and Judean kings between biblical and contemporary Neo-Assyrian inscriptions; (5) archaeological evidence for religious practices that the prophets decry; (6) numerous Hebrew inscriptions that leave no doubt as to the competency of some in pre-exilic Israel to compose and to read written accounts; and (7) specific congruences in matters of material culture, such as the occasional descriptions of gates in the OT that agree with the archaeological evidence



of Israelite gates before the exile, but not later.

Despite this apparent movement toward an affirmation of the OT's historical value, however, Dever has not changed his opinion from the mid-1970s on the matters noted above. Instead, he represents a middle ground between the literal interpretation of the Bible and a complete rejection of its objective statements as popularised by those he criticises here. Although this reviewer would find more in common with a God who acts in history, as affirmed by Dever's teacher G. Ernest Wright, than with Dever's own nontheistic neo-Pragmatism, and although one may raise objections about the dismissal of the early biblical period (patriarchs and exodus; there is at times a confusion between traditional interpretations of certain biblical texts and what the Bible actually claims), Dever's volume represents perhaps the only significant work on the present horizon that addresses the philosophical issues surrounding postmodernism as manifested in matters of history and the OT. Drawing on the insights of literary, archaeological, historical, anthropological and other disciplines, he is competent to evaluate and critique this phenomenon and to present an affirmation of the historical value of critical textual analysis. Here is a clarion call to clear thinking and the rigorous pursuit of the traditional disciplines of philology, philosophy, and historical (especially archaeological) study for the recovery and correct interpretation of the biblical text. What Evangelicals such as Thiselton and Vanhoozer have done for the literary analysis of the Bible, Dever has provided (in a more popular and readable format) for the historical study of the Old Testament. If, as he affirms, the affirmation of an accurate historical interpretation of the biblical text is essential for the survival of Western culture, how much more is it vital for the correct understanding and worship of the God of Israel who

acts on behalf of his people. History matters!

**Richard S. Hess**  
Denver Seminary

### **Joshua, Judges, Ruth (NIBC)**

*J.G. Harris, C.A. Brown, M.S. Moore*  
Hendrickson/Paternoster, 2000,  
xvii + 398 pp., £11.99/\$11.95

Welcome to a commentary on three books of the Bible that include everything: love and violence, faith and greediness, respect and harassment, sex and war √ (xv). The NIBC series has already established a good reputation for accessible comment and interpretation, and is certainly one which I would readily consult for Bible study and preaching. This composite volume largely lives up to the reputation.

For theological and historical reasons, Joshua and Judges are among the most difficult books to make accessible, but Gordon Harris (strangely 'J. Harris' on the cover) and Cheryl Brown commendably rise to the occasion. Their commentaries are well-written, thought-provoking (was it wrong to send spies?), constantly alive to literary features (irony, word-play, etc.), and sensitively applied. The more technical material is largely relegated to additional notes, which commendably often refer to accessible sources such as other commentaries and *ABD*. Ruth is a more amenable text, and is given disproportionate space (81 pages for 85 verses). But Michael Moore amply repays this generosity with a sparkling introduction and commentary. He constantly draws parallels and contrasts with Judges 17-21 at literary and theological levels, often with pithy and memorable phrases. Aesthetically his writing mirrors the book of Ruth itself.

A few aspects of the volume are less good. The introductions to Joshua and Judges focus initially on

traditional scholarly concerns (history and composition, surveyed briefly), with theology as the final element. At this level, the order should surely have been reversed, and more prominence given to theology. Better editing could have given a single, fuller introduction to conquest/settlement theories (if deemed necessary), rather two different and slightly dated versions. The numerous excursions are generally disappointing, caught somewhere between explanation (better in introduction or notes) and application (better in text), and the one on 'Holy War' disavows the term yet still refers to 'sacred battles'. Repeated cross-reference to the *Moody Bible Atlas* for land division in Joshua will be less helpful to readers outside North America. The transliteration is inconsistent, occasionally distinguishing between the different *h*, *s* and *t* letters, but usually not. Some Hebrew terms will stretch readers, e.g. *sedaqa* in Judges (fleeting explained in a quotation on p. 126), as will some English terms, e.g. macrodiachronic and microsynchronic in Ruth (297-98). And the occasional note is incomplete, e.g. pages 15, 30 (BAR volume nos), page 299 n. 20 (English edition).

But on the whole these are minor points. For most users, this volume will open up these biblical books to greater understanding and sensitive appropriation.

**Philip Johnston**  
Wycliffe Hall, Oxford

## Exodus

*John L. Mackay*  
Fearn: Mentor, 2001,  
623 pp., h./b., £19.99

Professor Mackay's substantial commentary on Exodus is a worthy addition to the growing Mentor series, and deserves a wide readership. The targeted readership is 'Bible college and seminary students, pastors and

others'. Unfortunately the author is not introduced.

In some respects, this commentary falls between two stools. The easy style, lack of Hebrew (even in transliteration), frequent references to the NT, and periodic 'reflections', all address lay-people, students and preachers. As a preacher, I found much to commend it. However the substantial length may be off-putting to these users, whereas those looking for more detail would, like me, be frustrated by the dearth of footnotes and brevity of bibliography. I was puzzled why some issues or debates were footnoted and others not, e.g. for brick-making (K. Kitchen noted) but not for Egyptian records in the next paragraph (108). At times I would have liked to follow up the sources of suggestions and comments.

The layout also seemed to reflect uncertainty. The commentary divides Exodus into six major units, with subdivisions marked by a simple heading. But independent of these headings, and in larger type, every new chapter of Exodus is also marked. This conflicts with the thematic divisions of the text and creates confusion. While the sections marked 'Reflection', which make links between Exodus, the NT and modern application, are helpful, they are irregular. Sometimes they follow the chapter divisions, sometimes the commentary sections.

Theologically, the commentary is conservative. A fifteenth-century date for the Exodus is argued briefly. The historicity of the events is assumed, with the large number of Israelites and the miraculous nature of the plagues and the exodus upheld. Difficulties in harmonising the text with other passages or external data are addressed, but always resolved conservatively, e.g. the Philistines (13:17) were in Canaan in the fifteenth century. Traditional locations of places are maintained, with brief discussions of alternatives.

The introduction is a very brief 26 pages, covering theological themes, historical background, authorship (substantially Mosaic), links between Exodus and the gospels, and the structure of the book.

Mackay's theological comments are a strength of this commentary. He seeks to elucidate not only the meaning of words, phrases and sentences, but also to raise the theological issues, e.g. the place of OT law for Christians. Theological comparisons and contrasts made between ANE lawcodes and the Book of the Covenant are useful. There is also a helpful theological introduction to the Tabernacle (429–31).

Nonetheless there are gaps and weaknesses. For example, Mackay discusses the literary place of repetition and doublets in chapters 35–40, but not what those final chapters contribute theologically to the book, especially following the golden calf incident. I was unconvinced by his reasoning for identifying the angel of the Lord with the second person of the Trinity in 14:19 (255), and by the explanation of why the altar was to have been made of undressed stones (362) which seemed to read too much into the text. At times also there was some psychologising of characters that failed to convince, e.g. on 3:11 (74). There are a number of typographical errors, some glaring such as 'Feat' of Unleavened Bread (232), and some incorrect page numbers in the Table of Contents. The full text of the NIV is included, though the Introduction does not name the version used.

Notwithstanding my criticisms, overall this is a reliable and very readable commentary. Its style is accessible. I would certainly use it for preaching and commend it to others.

**Paul A. Barker**

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## The Religion of Ancient Israel, Library of Ancient Israel

Patrick D. Miller

Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000,  
335 pp., h./b., £27.50/\$44.95

After a flurry of interest in the 1960s followed by a period of neglect, the topic of the religious practices of ancient Israel has once again returned to the forefront of academic interest. In both the previous and present incarnations, the object of interest is not simply an unfolding and explicating of the Scriptural data, but rather using the biblical data along with other sources as a means to reconstruct the actual practices of historical Israel. What has changed over the intervening period, however, is the breadth of other data and methodologies brought to bear on the topic, so that now sociology, anthropology and material archaeology are added to the data gleaned from the Biblical text. This breadth of methodologies makes intense demands on any would-be 'expert' in the discipline, especially in light of the need to deal with data culled from all of the different genres and time periods of the OT. The 'religion' of ancient Israel is a subject that touches every page of the Bible and almost every aspect of ancient Israelite life. To attempt to summarise a topic as broad as this in a little over 200 pages of text (plus extensive footnotes) is an overwhelming task. In his introduction, Miller is refreshingly humble about the scale of the project and the necessarily provisional nature of the results presented. Having said that, he has achieved a readable and reasonably comprehensive introduction to a fascinating and important topic.

In contrast to R. Albertz's two volume *History of Israelite Religion*, Miller achieves brevity by following a topical outline, deliberately avoiding difficult historical questions wherever possible (see p. xx). In his first chapter, he addresses the question of Israel's

conception of God, especially the similarities and differences between Yahweh and the gods of the surrounding nations. From there, he moves on to discuss types of religion in ancient Israel, in terms of the various forms of Yahwism (orthodox, heterodox, syncretistic) and of the various levels of the cult (family, regional, national). The third chapter addresses the forms and functions of sacrifices and offerings in Israel, while the fourth covers the topics of holiness and purity. Finally, he looks at leadership and participation in the cult: the tasks of priest, prophet, king, and sage in leadership and the participation and exclusion of foreigners and women.

From this summary it will be clear that some topics that were the mainstay of older approaches are barely mentioned – for example, the tabernacle rates a single reference in the index – while new subjects have come to the fore, notably the place of women in Israel's worship. The concepts of sacred space and time, which are subsumed under the chapter on holiness and purity, could each have been profitably expanded into a chapter of their own. For those disappointed by the relative omission of a particular topic, however, the comprehensive bibliography gives plenty of other sources to research. Meanwhile, in the areas that are covered Miller presents an up-to-date and balanced summary of the current state of research, along with a substantial number of helpful illustrations and photographs. Overall, this volume has admirably succeeded in its aim, which is to draw on multiple disciplines to expand our comprehension of the day-to-day reality of ancient Israelite religion.

#### **Iain Duguid**

Westminster Theological Seminary,  
California

## The History of the Second Temple Period

*Paolo Sacchi*

JSOTSup 285, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,  
2000,  
533 pp., h./b., £60

The title of this work may be initially misleading. Older, conventional histories of the biblical period focus upon narrating the events and personages of the time (often with greater emphasis on the pre-exilic period). This work, by a distinguished Italian specialist in Second Temple Judaism, gives due space to events and people, but concentrates more on the ideologies or religious themes and currents of the post-exilic era, and the sects or parties representing these beliefs. This approach is informed by the newer critical consensus that much of the OT received its final form only during the Persian and Hellenistic periods, a contention which holds for the ideologies as well. The author's aim is to place in context certain aspects of pre-Christian Jewish thought (the 'Middle Judaism' of c. 200 BCE onwards) as a prelude to a better understanding of earliest Christianity.

Sacchi sees Hebrew and Jewish thought oriented toward 'the search for salvation' (33), a concept which is refined over the centuries from salvation of the people to that of the individual, and finally to 'otherworldly salvation', belief in life after death. The means of achieving salvation can be grouped together in two fundamental categories for conceiving religion, which are conveniently termed 'the Theology of the Promise' and 'the Theology of the Covenant'. These terms refer not to separate theological systems but to 'two underlying attitudes of the Hebrew soul' (37). According to the first category, Israel's existence and survival are guaranteed by God's gracious promise, human guilt notwithstanding. 'Messianic' thinking (in all its forms) has its roots within this basic concept. The Theology of

the Covenant', on the other hand, focuses upon human freedom and Israel's responsibility to keep the Law. This outlook is seen as gaining increasing importance in what was to become canonical Judaism. It is linked with a converging understanding, towards the end of the Persian period, of sacrality and purity, and the growing power of the priesthood in an age without kings. From 200 BCE on to 70 CE, these two positions and the sects representing them (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and Samaritans) became more sharply divided, and 'a deep spiritual crisis' (305) characterised that period. Here the author's great expertise in the extra-canonical literature (Qumran, Apocrypha, Enochic writings, and Pseudepigrapha) comes strongly into play.

The book is organised according to four major sections: The Age of Exile; The Zadokite Period (c. 520-200 BCE); From the Seleucid Domination to 70 CE; and Themes of Middle Judaism. The reconstruction of events, and the dating and interpretation of individual texts are generally in line with the standard critical consensus, although Sacchi occasionally ploughs his own furrow, for example, with some controversial contentions about events of the early post-exilic period (64-67). The last section, drawing on a diverse range of literature, is probably the most accessible to most readers. Here is a succinct discussion of such themes as religious knowledge and revelation; predestination, dualism and evil; salvation, purification and life beyond death; and forms of messianism. The reverberation of these themes in the NT is clear, but the last chapter of the book, 'Jesus in his Time', is too brief (and Ritschlian in tone) to serve as the capstone of this work.

There are of course many points where readers of more conservative conviction would take issue with the author, over the dating and interpretation of texts, or over the rise

of messianism or the question of theodicy. However, this is a work of synthesis rather than exposition, and this book, marked by great erudition and subtlety of argument, should serve as a point of reference, even when we will want to disagree.

**Brian Kelly**

Canterbury Christ Church  
University College

### The Steward Living in Covenant

*Ronald E. Vallet*

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001,  
xiv + 251 pp., £12.99/\$20.00

This study of fourteen Old Testament stories was written for a North American audience. It is part of a series called Faith's Horizons, which aims to correct a mis-understanding of stewardship in some churches. The faulty view is a somewhat natural one, that when the church leaders start talking about stewardship, what they really want is more money from the members. Vallet wants to promote the idea that to be a steward means far more than that. All our time, talents and expertise should be at God's disposal, as well as our money. Church members need to broaden their perspectives. The series thus helpfully challenges the mental image of the church being like a bus, in which the driver sets the direction and chooses the route, and the passengers sit passively and contribute money as requested.

Each chapter of the book ends with discussion points to allow the book to be studied by small groups. There are also dramas and choral readings by Wanda Vassallo for use in larger groups. Vallet clearly wants his readers to ponder the issues of stewardship thoroughly.

In his treatments of the OT stories, there are so many quotations from other writers that the author's own view is not prominent. The range of authors quoted is also small,

suggesting a corpus of 'sound' commentators whose view can be safely adopted. (I distrust this idea.) Vallet's reluctance to promote his own view was frustrating. I appreciated what he had to say, but had to search quite hard to find it. In some cases it was his personal stories relegated to the footnotes which were the most interesting. Perhaps Vallet felt out of his depth in commenting on Scripture. In this respect, there is a serious error on page 83 – Jacob is not the same as Jabbok in Hebrew (Gen. 32). This suggests that his insights from Hebrew are not always first hand. Beware of writing on subjects you do not understand!

I was also uncertain of the value of trying to highlight the theme of stewardship in the OT. The notion is prominent in Jesus' parables, but the attempt to find it in OT stories felt more like imposition than exposition. Some of the stories survived the burden better than others. Trying to make the Bible say what we want it to say is not a good idea, even if what we want to say seems helpful.

My final reservation was with the attempt to breathe new life into the theme of stewardship itself. After all, Jesus did not call his followers to make stewards of all nations. Not only is the effort to make people into true disciples more Christian, and therefore more appropriate for churches, but also it will lead them into being good stewards without the word itself needing to be mentioned.

With these caveats in mind, this book has a place in opening the Old Testament to those unfamiliar with it, in a group setting, where stewardship is part of the church tradition.

**David Pennat**  
Woking

## The Story as Torah – Reading the Old Testament Ethically

Gordon J. Wenham  
Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2000,  
xi + 180 pp., h./b., £22.50

Gordon Wenham has again put us in his debt with this crisply written and well-documented book which admirably illustrates its sub-title of 'Reading the Old Testament Ethically'. Readers will probably have learned much from his magisterial commentaries on Genesis, Leviticus and Numbers, and will be glad to see this overview of OT interpretation, especially in the realm of ethics.

Wenham's introduction outlines the problems of interpreting and applying OT narrative without either fantastic allegorising or naive simplification. Making some shrewd comments on 'readerly' issues, he argues that full interpretation demands historical, literary and theological criticism. He develops this further in Chapter 2 on critical methodology, and gives us a useful and penetrating survey of the last twenty years of literary study of the Bible.

The heart of the book (chs 3–6) takes Genesis and Judges as examples of how rhetorical criticism relates to the ethical norms to be derived from these books. Chapter 3 outlines the structure and leading stories of Genesis, expounds chapters 1–11, and discusses the relationship of these to the patriarchal narratives. Chapter 4 does a similar task with Judges. Wenham explores the interplay of divine involvement and human leadership which are at the heart of Judges, and shows how the failure of individual judges means that the ideal leader remains elusive.

Chapter 5 begins with a useful comparison of the perspectives of the two biblical books, especially in their examination of war, peace and leadership. Wenham argues that mere obedience is not in itself ethical behaviour, demonstrating that God's

generosity and compassion are the mainsprings of genuinely good behaviour.

All these previous chapters flow from a holistic reading of the text, based on the belief that we can discern authorial intention. In chapter 6 Wenham looks at some problematic tales, the rape of Dinah and the Gideon story, and shows how these too are illuminated by rhetorical readings.

Chapter 7 traces these principles briefly through the NT, especially showing that in matters of sex and war the ethical issues are not very different. What Wenham does affirm is that, since the new creation has been inaugurated, the ways these are expressed will be different. Throughout the book he helpfully emphasises the importance of fitting individual episodes into the big picture. The final chapter underlines the importance of authorial intention and the interplay of God's faithfulness and human weakness.

This is a book I shall warmly recommend to my students. There are points where I would take issue, for instance it seems dubious to argue that Genesis 1-11 are essentially background (37). Also, more generally, in a study which concentrates on the flow of the canon, more might have been made of the relationship of Judges to the Pentateuch. These are minor issues. This book is a significant contribution to biblical theology.

**Bob Fyall**

Durham University

## New Testament

### Jewish Law in Gentile Churches

*Markus Bockmuehl*

Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000,  
xvi + 314 pp., h./b., £24.95

This book considers the ethical principals of Jesus and the early Christians, arguing particularly that Jewish law had ongoing significance for the Christian community as it took on a more Gentile character. After a brief orientation to the book, there follow nine essays, mostly previously published although some are new.

Part one relates to 'Christianity in the land of Israel'. The first brief chapter claims that Jesus did not distance himself from Jewish 'halakhah' (legal material) as is frequently claimed. Bockmuehl believes that Jesus gives priority to written Torah which itself provides the 'fence for the Torah' (compare the Mishnah tractate 'Avoth' 1:1). The second chapter considers Matthew's 'divorce texts' in the light of Jewish literature. Bockmuehl draws on OT texts and Qumran material to argue that 'Matthew's Gospel is indebted to this tradition and therefore teaches that *porneia* makes husband and wife unfit for continued conjugal union' (21). The third chapter is a stimulating study of Jesus' words to a prospective follower: 'Let the dead bury their dead', which begins with M. Hengel's important study (and also E.P. Sanders who follows Hengel) before challenging his view on the grounds that Jesus demands no more than was demanded of High Priests or Nazirites. Lastly, in this part, chapter four considers James' involvement in the so-called 'Antioch Incident' (Gal. 2).

The essays in part two are brought under the banner of 'Jewish and Christian ethics for gentiles'. Chapter five considers 'natural law' in Second temple Judaism. A survey of OT material is followed by discussion of

material from the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Rabbinic literature, Philo and Josephus. Chapter six picks up the 'natural law' theme with respect to the NT. Having considered various texts from the Gospels, Acts and Paul, Bockmuehl concludes that observations from the created order are freely used in moral instruction while there remains a keen awareness that the whole created order is in need of redemption. Bockmuehl's seventh chapter investigates how one may speak of ethics to a 'largely indifferent or adversarial public' (145) by means of a discussion of the so-called 'Noachide Commandments'. This term refers to the Rabbinic category of commandments given prior to Sinai to all of humanity without distinction, developed from the biblical laws for resident aliens in Israel.

The remaining two essays form part three, entitled 'the development of public ethics'. Chapter eight is concerned with the significance of a distinct public identity for Christianity on Christian apologetics. In particular, it considers 'public ethics', defined as 'the explication and defence of Christian morality in terms that were communicable and intelligible within a wider Graeco-Roman moral discourse' (184). Finally, chapter nine is a brief study of the possibilities of comparison between Jewish and Christian 'public ethics'. The book concludes with forty pages of bibliography and useful indices.

Bockmuehl spends much of his time discussing non-canonical texts and does so in a sure-footed manner. When he turns to the biblical texts he treats them carefully although the standard language of mainstream biblical scholarship (e.g. with respect to matters of authorship) is employed without comment. Greek and Hebrew fonts are used throughout the book but not usually in a way that will prevent a reader without facility in these languages from understanding

the point. More demanding may be the occasional untranslated German word (e.g. p. 17) and unexplained technical terms (e.g. *baraita* [authoritative Rabbinic sayings not included in the Mishnah] and *gezerah shawah* [a Rabbinic method of interpretation linking texts by common words]) and the general pitch of the discussion. This is an important volume for research students and scholars, containing lots of helpful information and thoughtful discussion on the significance of the OT for Christian ethics. It will probably be heavy-going for most undergraduates.

**Alistair I. Wilson**

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**Serve the Community of the Church:  
Christians as Leaders and Ministers,  
First-Century Christians in the  
Graeco-Roman World**

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*Andrew D. Clarke*

Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000,  
ix + 305 pp., \$30.00/£19.99.

In this excellent book Clarke, who teaches New Testament at the University of Aberdeen, studies ideas of leadership in the first-century Graeco-Roman society and uses this material to shed light on sections of the Pauline letters on that theme. Here, Clarke develops themes from his published work on leadership in Corinth with particular reference to 1 Corinthians 1-6, and makes large amounts of primary source research accessible to a wider readership. This book will be of value to students, pastors and ministers, and those who teach and train them.

After an introduction, setting the scene and explaining the approach, the book falls into two main parts, the first considering the Graeco-Roman setting (chs 2-6), and the second relating this material to the Pauline letters (chs 7-9). A brief conclusion (ch. 10) follows, along with a full



bibliography and indices: those valuable indices mean that I shall return to this book's discussion of particular issues or texts often.

Chapters 2-6 in turn survey Graeco-Roman cities, Roman colonies, cities and towns, voluntary associations, the family/household, and Judaism. In each case Clarke provides a careful study of the primary source material. He highlights the intertwining of the political and religious spheres in the Graeco-Roman settings, where political leaders were also expected to lead in offering sacrifice to the gods and in worshipping the emperor. The cities and towns also required considerable personal wealth to qualify for and exercise positions of leadership, because of the amount of patronage involved, including providing for public celebrations and events. By contrast, the voluntary associations offered opportunities for leaders for those outside the wealthy élites, but again combining leadership in this 'political' sphere with religious leadership.

The family or household sphere provided other forms of leadership, with the father as *paterfamilias*, exercising authority over his family, and the duty of *pietas* (honour and respect) of spouse and children to the *paterfamilias*. Clarke demonstrates the centrality of religious observance (offerings to the gods, etc.) to leadership in family life.

Regarding Judaism, Clarke discusses titles of synagogue leaders, noting that they were often (usually?) 'laypeople', rather than rabbis, and could be women. He notes parallels between titles and roles in the synagogues and those found in Graeco-Roman settings, which suggests there was influence from Graeco-Roman society.

Chapter 7 has a clear summary of chapters 1-6 (145-48), followed by discussion of the potential influence of each of these leadership settings on first-century Christians.

Chapters 8 and 9 illuminate the Pauline letters against this cultural context, the former focusing on leadership as it was actually exercised in the Pauline churches, and the latter as Paul wished it to be exercised. In chapter 8, Clarke in turn discusses 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon, in each case showing the value of understanding the cultural setting.

Chapter 9 provides fine discussion of the major Pauline themes on leadership, focusing on 'authority' and 'ministry', 'service' words and themes. Clarke helps us to understand passage after passage. He provides a judicious critique of the views of Castelli et al. that Paul is manipulative and authoritarian in his leadership, showing rather that he is counter-cultural in his approach, following a servant model rather than a 'power' model.

This is a fine, readable work which will enable readers to see first-century Christian leadership against its cultural context, and thus to see how *Christian* understandings of leadership are distinctive. What we need now from the author is a popular book that makes these findings accessible to 'ordinary' church members, who so often and so easily buy into twenty-first century cultural expectations of authoritarian leadership!

**Steve Walton**

London Bible College

### **Jesus the Intercessor: Prayer and Christology in Luke-Acts**

*David Crump*

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999,  
xviii + 295 pp., \$29.99

In the face of many books on prayer, one may ask, Why another book on prayer? Crump begins by answering this question for his book. While Luke's Gospel, more than any other,

shows Jesus in prayer, there has been relatively little scholarly work on prayer within Luke-Acts specifically. Like many scholarly books that began life as doctoral dissertations, Crump's book begins with an overview of previous research on prayer in Luke-Acts. This one is helpful in showing how the views of one scholar (H. Conzelmann's view of Luke's eschatology) can negatively influence subsequent scholarly research in many areas, including that of prayer in Luke-Acts. While earlier research has focused on Jesus as a 'model pray-er', Crump focuses on the christological significance of Jesus' prayer life, what it teaches about his ministry and his relationship with God. Crump seeks to show the nature of Jesus' prayer life in Luke's Gospel and its role in the presentation of christology in the book of Acts. Crump's methods are redaction and literary criticism, but he states that redaction criticism is only a short-cut to what could be learned from literary approaches. Results available only through redaction criticism are 'not legitimate readings of a gospel narrative' (13). While Jesus' intercessory prayers are only one aspect of Jesus' prayer-life in Luke-Acts, this aspect plays an important role in the christology of Luke-Acts. Jesus' intercession, says Crump, both in his earthly life and in heaven, are at the heart of Jesus' past and present role as saviour. Crump examines Luke's editorial notices of Jesus' prayer life, correlating them with the recorded contents of Jesus' prayers. Next Crump compares Jesus' prayer life to didactic material on prayer in Luke-Acts. This is followed by a comparison of Jesus as the heavenly intercessor in Acts with notions of heavenly intercession in ancient Judaism.

Beginning with chapter two, Crump addresses the subject of 'Prayer and Jesus' Self-Revelation'. He states that 'Luke associates the prayers of Jesus with the acquisition of spiritual insight at key locations throughout

his gospel' (21). At least three, if not four, texts show prayer providing insight to others of Jesus' character: Peter's confession (Luke 9:18-27), the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36), the Crucifixion account (Luke 23:32-49) and possibly the trip to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). Crump treats each of these texts in order to show that 'Luke presents Jesus primarily, though not exclusively, as an Intercessor' whose prayers for the disciples result in what is necessary for them to be obedient, successful disciples (21). For example, Peter's confession of Jesus as the 'Christ of God' came only through Jesus' intercessory prayers. While there may well be an association between Jesus' prayer and the disciples' question in Luke 9:18, however, is it really valid to infer that Luke intends his readers to understand Jesus' prayer asks for the disciples to correctly answer his question to them about his messianic identity (24)? Crump connects Luke's language about seeing and hearing in Luke-Acts to Jesus' prayers. Jesus prays that his followers will see and hear him correctly. Jesus' prayer life also plays an important role in the Transfiguration, according to Crump. Luke 9:28 associates the Transfiguration with Jesus' prayer and presents the disciples once again as witnesses of Jesus' praying. In the Transfiguration, the praying Jesus is related to the disciples' 'reception of a new revelation into the true meaning of Jesus' person and ministry' (48).

Crump argues that Jesus in Luke 10:21-24 thanks the Father for hearing and answering his prayers in Luke 9 for the disciples. After reviewing theories regarding the referent of 'these things' in Jesus' prayer, Crump argues that 'these things' are connected to the mission of the seventy described earlier in Luke 10. The success of their mission is a validation of the Father's revelation of the Son in Luke 9. The content of 'these things' is the identity of Jesus as the 'messianic Son of God'. This passage also shows that Jesus' role as

intercessory mediator was already operative during his earthly mission.

Chapter four focuses on the other two narratives in Luke's gospel which show Jesus' prayers as the means by which an individual received special illumination regarding the person of Jesus. After discussing the text of Luke 23:34a, Crump argues that Luke 23:32-49 contributes to Luke's usage of prayer for christology. Jesus' prayer in Luke 23:34 is closely connected with the thief's request of Jesus. Jesus' prayer thus provided the means for revelation to the thief of Jesus' true nature. Crump highlights (supposed) modifications of Mark's account and shows how Luke's alterations contribute to his theology of prayer. In Luke 23:44-49, the language of seeing/hearing in the response of the crowd and the centurion 'shows itself to be exemplary of the response required to God's revelation' (91). In the prayer-revelation equation used by Luke, perceiving Jesus' true identity leads to salvation. Through his self-disclosure, Jesus' prayers mediate God's salvation. Crump finds a similar connection in the story of the Emmaus Road, Luke 24:13-35. He challenges the view that this passage has a eucharistic focus. Instead, based on Jewish practice of 'breaking bread', Crump sees Jesus praying as he broke bread. This prayer precedes the disciples recognising Jesus. Through this recognition, they are able to understand the Scriptures (and not the reverse). The disciples receive instruction from 'the Resurrected One' regarding the necessity of his suffering and death. They receive revelation, not that their prophetic understanding of the messiah is wrong, but that it needs to be clarified to see 'the messiah must be the final, *suffering* prophet' (106). Once again, Jesus' prayer is seen to play a revelatory role.

In chapter five, Crump examines prayer as 'an avenue for the experience of spiritual realities' and

'prayer as a guiding element in the course of Jesus' ministry' (109). Chapter six focuses on Luke 22:31-32, the only place in Luke-Acts where Jesus makes known to the disciples the contents of his prayer for them and points to its answer in the future. Jesus the pray-er is clearly paradigmatic in Luke 22. Jesus stands against temptation through prayer, while the disciples fail through lack of prayer. Since the disciples after this event needed perseverance, as later disciples do, this text helps, to show that Jesus' intercession continues on past his death and resurrection. Crump draws from this the suggestion that Jesus' intercession is responsible for the composition of the Church. People are included through Jesus' prayers. One must ask, however, 'Does Judas' absence in Luke 22:31-32 mean that Jesus did not pray for him?'

Looking next at Acts, Crump argues that Stephen's vision of the Son of Man in Acts 7:55-56, in the one place in Acts which shows Jesus as the final prophet praying for his people. After reviewing the various theories about what Stephen's vision of Jesus signifies, Crump argues that it shows Jesus as an advocate for Stephen. While this is suggestive, Crump does not provide a substantial enough bridge to get from Jesus as Stephen's advocate to Jesus praying for Stephen. The picture in Acts of Jesus as the final, eschatological Prophet fulfilling the role of heavenly intercessor is consistent, according to Crump, with many Jewish works from the inter-testamental period which present human beings who interceded while on earth and now continue to intercede in heaven. This is especially the case for prophets. At the same time, 'perhaps Luke's most innovative contribution to NT christology is his presentation of a praying Messiah' (235).

Overall, Crump's work makes many helpful observations, but his argument, while cautious, is also

unconvincing. The arguments are generally based on possible hints in the text, but these are carried forward to assertions that go beyond the evidence. Still, the book raises many important questions and will reward critical readers.

**Kenneth Litwak**

Trinity College, Bristol

### **The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape and Interpretation**

*Peter W. Flint, (ed.)*

Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001,  
xv + 266 pp., £15.99/\$22.00

This collection of essays goes beyond basic information about the Dead Sea Scrolls and focuses on issues related to the text and contents of the 'Bible' at Qumran and the use of biblical texts and figures by non-biblical Qumran texts. The essays are divided into two parts. Part one, 'The Scriptures, the Canon and the Scrolls', focuses on the nature of canon (James Sanders), the text of the Scriptures of Israel represented by the Dead Sea Scrolls (Bruce Waltke), the biblical books and shape of the canon at Qumran (Eugene Ulrich and Craig Evans) and non-canonical works at Qumran (Peter Flint). Part two focuses on the interpretation of biblical texts at Qumran, including the interpretation of Genesis in 1 Enoch (James Vanderkam), Abraham in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Craig Evans), Moses in the Dead Sea Scrolls (James Bowley), Korah in the Qumran literature (James Scott), the understanding of 'works of the law' in 4QMMT and Paul (Martin Abegg) and the intertextual use of the story of Rahab in James 2:25 (Robert Wall). I will focus primarily on essays in part one, as these will likely be of greatest relevance to students of the Bible.

In 'How We Got the Bible: The Text and Canon of the Old Testament', Waltke describes the nature and practice of textual criticism, and its significance for exegesis. Waltke

examines the various stages the text of the Scriptures of Israel has undergone from the earliest times into the Middle Ages. He states that from 400 BCE to 150 BCE, both the canon and precise form of the biblical text was open. During this time there was a tendency both to preserve and to revise the text (32). The Dead Sea Scrolls and the LXX enable us to trace the history of the text in this period. Waltke argues that, based on the history of the text, 'we can now restrict the aim of OT text criticism to that of recovering the original text that lies behind the proto-MT recension' (42). Waltke disagrees with P.R. Ackroyd and J.A. Sanders who argue that the various recensions held equal canonical status. Based on the history of the text, the Church has good reason to continue confessing the reliability and purity of the OT text.

The question of the contents of the canon of the Scriptures of Israel in the early Church is important for students of the NT, and the canon at Qumran may help shed light on this issue. Ulrich examines the question of the canon at Qumran in 'The Bible in the Making: The Scriptures Found at Qumran'. He discusses the collection(s) of Scripture in the late Second Temple period, at the beginnings of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. About one fourth of the MSS found at Qumran are scriptural texts, and every book of the traditional Hebrew canon is represented except for Esther and Nehemiah. The most common are MSS of Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Psalms, which are also the works most-often quoted in the NT. While the books used by various groups differed, e.g., the Samaritan Pentateuch versus the scriptural texts at Qumran, Ulrich contends that there is no clear evidence that anyone was asking explicitly in Second Temple Judaism which scrolls did or did not belong in the 'Scripture' jar. In general, the Torah and the Prophets were considered authoritative works

of Scripture, while 'works nearer the periphery were still finding their place' (57). Ulrich next examines the text represented by each scriptural work at Qumran. For example, while all of the Genesis MSS exhibit essentially the same text, MSS of Exodus present two editions. Two major editions of the Psalms can also be seen in the Qumran scrolls. Books like Jeremiah and Daniel were considered Scripture in this period, but their textual form was not fixed. Ulrich concludes that while a Bible translation ought to reflect the best text based on all the available data, and not just the MT or LXX, it may not yet be practical to do so.

Craig Evans in 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Canon of Scripture in the Time of Jesus', focuses on a three-fold division of Scripture in the Second Temple period, the Law, Prophets and Writings. Evans follows this with a consideration of how Scripture in its three-fold divisions bore witness to Jesus. Sirach 39:1 may be the earliest reference to the three-fold division of Scripture. 4QMMT refers to the law of Moses, the prophets and David (which may refer solely to the Psalms). No other intertestamental documents, including those at Qumran, refer to the tripartite division of Scripture. Evans states that establishing the contents of the second and third divisions in this period is difficult. Luke, like the author of 4QMMT, found support for his faith in all three divisions of Scripture.

Peter Flint ('Noncanonical Writings in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Apocrypha, Other Previously Known Writings, and Pseudepigrapha') argues that the terms apocrypha and pseudepigrapha are ambiguous, so he begins by providing narrower definitions for these terms than are often assumed by others, even if these definitions run counter to scholarly or public conventions. Flint offers this definition of the Apocrypha: 'Jewish works of the Second Temple period that are excluded from the Hebrew Bible but are included in the Old Testament of

some but not all churches' (86). The pseudepigrapha is used generally to refer to both previously known Jewish works which are not part of the Apocrypha but not like Philo or Josephus, and falsely attributed works. Flint argues, with regard to Qumran, that these two categories should be separated, so that pseudepigrapha refers only to falsely attributed works, while other previously known works form a third group of texts. Next, Flint provides an overview of texts in these categories found at Qumran, such as Jubilees, Psalm 151 and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. Flint discusses evidence for the scriptural or authoritative status of the various works surveyed. Works like Psalm 155, Jubilees and 1 Enoch likely had 'scriptural status' at Qumran, while works such as Sirach or *The Prayer of Nabonidus* seem to have lacked scriptural status at Qumran. This essay concludes with a select bibliography for the works Flint discusses. Students of the NT will find valuable Abegg's essay '4QMMT, Paul and Works of the Law'. Both 4QMMT and Galatians refer to 'works of the law'. Abegg discusses the possible connection of these two instances of the phrase and implications of this for the 'new perspective' on Paul. Abegg understands the 'works of the law' in 4QMMT along the same lines as E.P. Sanders understands Jewish views of the Law in general, viz., keeping the Law is a consequence of being in the covenant. Abegg suggests further, then, that we have likely misunderstood Paul, and that the apostle does not argue in Galatians against a Jewish view that salvation was earned by obedience to the Law. The occurrence of 'works of the Law' in only Galatians and 4QMMT suggests they were addressing the same issue, and confirms that the 'new perspective' on Paul is correct. It may be asked, however, if the new perspective on Paul is actually attempting to include the data from Paul's letters in its analysis or simply reinterpreting them in order to force

Paul to say what other Jewish texts assert, as opposed possibly to what the 'average Jew on the street' may have believed?

All in all, this volume does a good job of compiling a lot of information on an area where much work remains to be done. The discussion of the canon of Scripture at Qumran and in Second Temple Judaism in general is important for how we read the NT. Abegg's discussion of the 'works of the Law' is important in the ongoing debate over the 'new perspective' on Paul. Other essays on biblical interpretation at Qumran will assist readers in understanding emphases in the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as how the Dead Sea Scrolls viewed Abraham and Moses. This book should be on the shelf of anyone who wants a better understanding of textual criticism, the Jewish background of the NT or the use of the Jewish Scriptures in the NT.

**Kenneth Litwak**

Trinity College, Bristol

## Church History

### **Martin Luther as Prophet, Teacher and Hero: Images of the Reformer, 1520-1620**

*Robert Kolb*

Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker/Paternoster, 1999,  
269 pp., £19.99

More books are written about Martin Luther every year, or so we are often told, than about any other single figure except Jesus of Nazareth. Strictly speaking, though, this is not just another book on Luther. It is a book about books about Luther. More specifically, it is a book about the way Luther was perceived and portrayed – mostly by his followers, but with an occasional sideways glance at the descriptions by his opponents – in the century following the indulgence controversy of 1517–21. The subject

is not one that is likely to capture the interest of many, but it is important in assessing the more immediate impact of Luther on the shape of Western Christianity. Today Luther is still a larger than life figure in many circles. In separating the man from the legend, it is helpful to be shown how the legend developed.

Robert Kolb (of Concordia Seminary, St Louis) has researched the subject at astonishing depth and his book reveals an impressive familiarity with the primary documents of the period. The book is divided into two halves. The first concentrates on literary portraits of Luther during the period in question and the second explores the rationale behind various collections of his writings.

After viewing the perspective of Luther's contemporaries, often coloured as it was by a sense of apocalyptic interruption and yearning for a new golden age of apostolic faith, Kolb goes on to identify three key representations of Luther which more or less served the needs of Lutherans and others in the succeeding century. The debate between the Gnesio-Lutherans and the Philippists that followed the Augsburg Interim (1548) was carried on not only with appeals to the Bible but to the writings of Luther. Luther began to function as a secondary interpretative authority counter to the authority of the Pope and the Roman magisterium. He was seen as an authoritative interpreter of God's Word. However, for a variety of reasons such an appeal to Luther's own writings could not be sustained into the latter part of the sixteenth century. Luther has written so much, at times contradicting things he had written elsewhere, and a need arose to rehabilitate Melancthon as an important source for Lutheran thought. Over time the Book of Concord assumed the role that Luther has performed at first.

Nevertheless, Luther remained a heroic figure throughout the century. Not only was he the prophet-like

champion of God's truth, he was a focus for German national aspirations, especially the desire to shake off the control of the Rome. The inscription on a medal minted around the time of his death captured the sentiment: 'Doctor Martin Luther, the German prophet: I was your plague while I lived, Pope; as I die, I will be your death'. Legends grew up around the remembrance of Luther. He was increasingly seen as himself the fulfilment of prophecy, most notably Huss' words about the 'swan' who would come after 'this goose'. Biblical parallels were made with all seriousness: the Damascus Road and the thunderstorm outside Stotternheim is the most obvious of them. All this served an important function of rallying Germans and others to the cause of evangelical independence from the church of Rome.

Alongside the portraits of Luther as prophetic interpretative authority and prophetic hero of the church and the nation, his influence as a teacher remained considerable. Though his successors might find different uses for his ideas and apply them to different contexts, his example of thinking from the starting point of the gospel and the powerful transformation of theology as a result, continued to inspire them. His conclusions remained significant, if not always determinative. This is why, as elaborated in the second part of Kolb's work, collections of Luther's writings either in their entirety, in more homogenous portions (e.g. the Postils, the Prayers, the Commentaries, etc.), or edited and rearranged to fit into a topical or systematic presentation of his thought, continued to be published with astonishing variety and regularity.

Luther enthusiasts will read this book with interest. It is yet another significant contribution to what has emerged as impressive series of Reformation studies in English. Of course, it ought not to be mistaken for

an introduction to Luther and his ideas. Those seeking such an introduction would be better served by reading the writings of the man himself, together with the recent major biographies by Brecht, Oberman, and Marius. Nevertheless, it is a book that repays careful study and helpfully warns us of the danger of hagiography or malevolent caricature.

**Mark Thompson**

Moore College, Newtown, Australia

### **Milton and the Preaching Arts**

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*Jameela Lares*

Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2001,  
xvi + 352 pp., h./b., £40.00

The most famous critique of the work of John Milton is probably still that offered by his equally celebrated admirer, William Blake. Blake insists that 'the reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of angels and God, and of liberty when of devils and Hell, is because he was a true poet'. A Romantic construction of the Puritan writer who was one of Cromwell's most trusted spin-doctors which shaped the reception of Milton's texts for the best part of two centuries. Only recently have historicists attempted to dislocate Miltonic criticism from such transcendent notions as that of the 'poetic', recontextualising the writer in the Seventeenth Century struggles for the control of Church and State (in both of which Milton was vigorously caught up), and re-reading his poetry in the light of his extensive political and theological works.

Jameela Lares' *Milton and the Preaching Arts* provides an interesting and highly readable contribution to this revisionism. She argues forcefully that Milton's decision not to enter the Anglican priesthood was not the rejection of the ministry which it is often represented to be. It is rather an indication of Presbyterian convictions which would repeatedly resurface in his published attacks on established

pralacy. By positioning him within contemporary debates about Church governance and homiletics, Lares demonstrates that Milton considered the private conviction of divine vocation crucial to a practising minister in a way that ecclesiastical ordination is not. At the same time that Milton believed those gifted and trained as expounders of God's message should indeed preach – whether the sermon was delivered from the pulpit or from the pages of published poetry. Whilst her recognition of Milton's conflating roles as poet and priest is by no means an original observation, Lares' attention to his views about rhetoric and the *artes praedicandi* provides an inventive hermeneutic tool with which to excavate the major poems *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. In particular she shows how Milton's unusual favouring and combination of two of the five established 'sermon types', correction and consolation (the others comprising doctrine, reproof, and instruction), informs the structure and characterisation of these two dramatic poems.

This is a scholarly and thoroughly researched book that will be of interest both to students of literature and those of post-Reformation Church history. Lares refuses to retread old ground – for example her discussion of homiletics bypasses Erasmus and Calvin in favour of an extended discussion of the less well-known Hyperius. Instead she manages to unearth a staggering array of Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century theologians and theorists: indeed the comprehensive bibliography is a superb resource and one of the book's greatest assets. Refreshingly she is also obviously a big fan of John Milton, sympathising with, if not sharing many of his perspectives upon Church authority and Scriptural truth. This should indeed strike notes of approval in most non-conformist evangelicals. Unfortunately Lares' drive to establish Milton as a true hero of such

dissenting traditions means that she studiously ignores much recent scholarship (undertaken by John Carey, amongst others) which has examined the arguably subversive nature of some of his theological writings and trawled the poems for instances of their encrypted expression within. It was particularly surprising, given the evidence of extensive reading, that a section on Michael Servetus and Faustus Socinus makes no reference to Milton's acknowledgement of them in the unconventional and questioning study of the Trinity in his *De Doctrina Christiana*. Overall however, it is gratifying to see this exemplary poet recognised not only for his undeniable contribution to English literature, but also understood as an important if complex contributor to the development of the early Reformed Church.

**Richard Coulton**  
London

## Systematics

### The Message of the Resurrection

*Paul Beasley Murray*  
Leicester: IVP, 2000,  
269 pp., £9.99

This is a splendid book from a preacher-theologian, a previous principal of Spurgeon's College and a Baptist pastor. 'The Resurrection is not part of the Christian faith', he asserts, 'it is the very heart of the Christian faith'. He proceeds to work out his assertion in over 250 pages of highly readable, intelligent and responsible exposition of large chunks of the NT.

In addition, the material is then applied to the world, the flesh, the devil and the Church! Any budding preacher will find a wealth of sermonic material here. Wide reading, quotable quotes and good illustrations abound.



Inevitably, each reader will have individual quibbles and queries with the author's exposition here and there. Not all will be convinced of the Adam-Christ polarity that is asserted for understanding Philippians 2. Does Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 really believe in some form of 'resurrection at death' for the individual Christian, rather than a disembodied, intermediate state before the *parousia*? And there is some fascinating comment on the *descensus ad infernos* of 1 Peter 3.19ff, and Paul's enigmatic 'baptism for the dead' in 1 Corinthians 15.29.

The final chapter deals with the 'witness of theologians to the resurrection' – a helpful survey of some recent attacks on and defences of the resurrection.

The stated aim of the *Bible Themes* series is to expound the biblical text accurately, relate it to contemporary life and to be readable. This contribution fulfils these objectives more than adequately. And there is a poignant personal note for the author. He dedicates his work to the outstanding NT scholar – George Beasley-Murray who died in the year of this book's publication. The book is a tribute to both father and son!

**Steve Brady**

Moorlands College

## The Trinity

*Philip W. Butin*

Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001,

xiv + 126 pp., £7.99

Butin's book is written as one of a proposed twelve volume series for lay persons and covers much of the material that might be expected of such an introductory book on the doctrine of the Trinity. The subjects he includes are: the relation of the specifically Trinitarian vision to OT monotheism; NT sources of the Trinitarian faith; and the development of Trinitarian theology from primitive baptism formulas, through the

ancient controversies and creeds, to the Enlightenment decline and resurgence of interest in the twentieth century. Butin's treatment of these themes is fresh and careful.

Butin's treatment of the issue of gender and his appropriation of disparate Trinitarian thinkers is particularly noteworthy. Regarding the former, he intermittently returns to such issues as the appropriateness or otherwise of various traditional Trinitarian terms – especially the term 'Father' – throughout the entire course of the book. His conclusion seems to be that while it is finally inadequate to refer to God as 'Mother' there is a real sense in which God may be perceived as possessing maternal characteristics. Regarding the latter, Butin shows little fear and some skill in hiring the works and ideas of scholars from various Christian traditions to the cause of his own evangelicalism. However he does make most use of those theologians from his tradition, such as Augustine, Barth, Torrance, Moltmann and especially Calvin.

Nevertheless, to classify this book as a basic textbook on the doctrine of the Trinity which is written for theological students would be to misjudge its nature and purpose. It should not even be identified with the sort of popular introductions to the subject with which British readers will already be familiar e.g. Alister McGrath's *Understanding the Trinity* (Kingsway, 1987). *The Trinity* was published in conjunction with the Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Thus it was written very much with the Christian church member in mind. It is in this context that it finds a niche. From the very commencement of the book, Butin is concerned to relate the doctrine of the Trinity to the ordinances and life of the Christian church. The sacraments of Baptism – the book commences and terminates with a consideration of our baptismal calling – and the Lord's Supper are

explained in Trinitarian terms. Traditional Trinitarian terminology (e.g. *coinherence*) is interrelated with words that are more usually reserved for describing fellowship within the church (e.g. *koinonia*). The mission and future of the church is described as being bound up with God's own Trinitarian story as it 'has taken and continues to take tangible shape in human history'.

In conjunction with this ecclesiastical perspective, one noteworthy feature is the eight-page glossary at the end of the book. There are no subject, name or Scripture indexes which detracts from the book's potential usefulness. This negation decreases the ease with which it might be referred back to after initial perusal. Taken as a whole, *The Trinity* can be judged as a successful attempt to introduce thoughtful lay persons to the complexities, but more importantly to the realities, of a self-conscious and vigorous Trinitarian Christianity.

**Allen Baird**

Ballymena

### **Knowing with the heart: Religious Experience and Belief in God**

*Roy Clouser*

Downers Grove: IVP, 1999,  
204 pp., \$12.99

The famous scientist and philosopher Pascal memorably said 'the heart has its reasons the mind will never know'. By the heart's 'reasons', Pascal meant, not emotions, but our intuitive knowledge of 'the first principles of number, time, space, and motion'. He believed that God is known in a similar way. Clouser develops Pascal's position: the traditional arguments for God's existence don't work, but belief in God doesn't require proof. All but the third chapter take the form of an imaginary dialogue with an unbeliever and, unlike some such dialogues, the sceptic seems to voice most of the obvious objections. Clouser urges

unbelievers to ask God to reveal himself if he exists. They should undertake an open-minded study of the Bible with the aid of a Bible Dictionary and in close association with Christian believers.

Much of the first chapter tries to define a religious belief, delaying discussion of the main thesis. Clouser contends that religious beliefs concern what is unconditionally, independently real. Unfortunately, this definition seems to fit neither normal usage nor religions like Buddhism that avoid metaphysical beliefs. Clouser wants to argue that positions like naturalistic materialism are intuited rather than proved, just like Christianity. His second chapter also delays discussion of the main thesis as he discusses types of religious belief and experience. Clouser defines a religious experience as one directly producing a certain belief in unconditional reality. Such belief can be counted both faith and knowledge. The experience need not be unusual or discrete.

The third chapter contains the heart of the argument that religious belief can be entirely justified without proof or argument. Not everything can be proved; there must be some starting axioms or premises. Most philosophers have allowed beliefs justified by what is evident to the senses or self-evident. Clouser takes self-evident beliefs to be certain without being inferred from any other beliefs; they are apprehended by intuition. This apprehension need not be instant and is not infallible. Intuition can be over-ridden by other self-evident beliefs. Even mathematical axioms are sometimes disputed and Hindus and Buddhists report experiences that seem to override even logic and sense perception.

The fourth chapter compares belief in God to belief in the axiom of equals, the axiom that two things equal to a third thing equal each other. The

doctrine that belief in God can be intuitively certain was held by Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Pascal. People may reasonably reject arguments disproving what seems self-evident, even if they cannot tell what is wrong with them. Religious beliefs are not completely determined by culture, and all beliefs are subject to some cultural conditioning. For example one South African culture only has words for counting to three, making mathematical axioms harder to grasp! Various experiences can confirm belief in God, just as they do other self-evident beliefs.

In the final two chapters, Clouser tackles objections, such as that Scripture is unreliable, contradicts modern science, and is falsified by the existence of evil. Clouser is well aware that these are all huge questions but offers many helpful comments. Unfortunately, he also offers some contentious claims without any support. In relation to evil, Clouser claims that God need not be loving or just. He has decided to be good in the ways that he has promised, and no more. Arguably, this leaves God less good than he might have been and so unworthy of unconditional worship and devotion. Arguing that we cannot expect to know God's good reasons for evil might have been a better strategy.

Overall, Clouser downplays the power of argument to change minds, both in philosophy and especially in religion, and seems more willing to accept justified stalemates in religious argument than many. However, the main argument, when it comes, is important, cogent and clear, even to those with little grounding in philosophy, and should be considered by all those interested in apologetics and philosophy of religion.

**Patrick Richmond**  
Leicester

## **Sexing the Trinity: Gender, Culture and the Divine**

Gavin D'Costa  
London: SCM Press, 2000,  
260 pp., £17.95

D'Costa has established a formidable reputation in the field of the theology of religions and his critiques of pluralism have been received well. In a previous book he drew upon the doctrine of the Trinity to address how Christians may respond to the world religions. This work continues that theme but applies his understanding of the Trinity to the treatment of gender in contemporary culture. Clearly, women have known exclusion from the Christian community during the centuries. D'Costa is convinced that the Trinity offers the key to their inclusion. However, this inclusion is not made by weakly affirming God as mother or Spirit as feminine. According to D'Costa it is possible to describe God as mother, but only when the meaning of God as Father is understood properly. He points out that the notion of God as Father can itself degenerate into a pagan notion of a cosmological generative figure if it is not properly interpreted within its Trinitarian context. Literalism is to be avoided, as it is a path to idolatry.

A remarkable array of philosophers, theologians and artists are drawn into D'Costa's discourse. Much of his agenda is set by the work of Luce Irigaray, a French feminist theologian, but his exploration of the theme involves dialogue with such thinkers as Salman Rushdie, Sigmund Freud and Paul Ricoeur. In both style and substance the book belongs more to the continental philosophical tradition than the Anglo-Saxon. Though this can be disconcerting at times it pays careful reading. In many respects, D'Costa is an apologist for Roman Catholic theology. He has an entirely unabashed commitment to the authority of that tradition and finds much insight in the documents of Vatican II particularly 'Lumen

Gentium'. There is no closed canon for his reflections and this is evident not only in his dialogue with a variety of sources but also in his willingness to shape theology through those sources. The Roman Catholic understanding of Mary as co-redeemer becomes a key element in D'Costa's reconciliation of the Trinity with feminist concerns. Mary makes up for whatever is lacking in God: 'Mary, a companion, mother, daughter, friend, lover and queen of heaven, is Co-Redeemer, pre-eminent amongst all creation' (196). Every Christian also shares in this work of being co-redeemers and thus, in the Church, one is able to look for the inclusion of women within the body of Christ. What is lacking in Christ regarding gender will be made up in the life of the Church.

This book is provocative, creative and wide-ranging. It is a significant discussion of complex issues by a theologian who has a profound commitment to the Catholic vision. From an evangelical perspective the role of tradition is problematic and this leads to unease with his argument. It is not clear what controls the conclusions that are reached. Certainly, D'Costa engages in some detailed Biblical exegesis but Scripture does not have the final authority. For that reason, the Marian tradition has significance, which would be hard to substantiate from the Bible. Nonetheless, the questions raised by the book are compelling and invite an evangelical alternative answer.

**Christopher Sinkinson**  
Fordingbridge

### **The Power of Speaking God's Word**

*Wilbur Ellsworth*

Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2000,  
144 pp., £8.99/\$14.99

This book is an argument that preaching should be formed by 'orality' (spoken language) rather than

'literacy' (written language).

At a practical level Wilbur Ellsworth wants us to avoid using notes in our preaching. At a deeper level he wants to think about preaching and prepare and present our sermons as speakers for those who will hear, not as writers for those who will read.

He claims in chapter 2 that 'orality', spoken language, will be dialogical, communal, formulaic, descriptive, situational, and acoustic. He points out that the spoken word must be instantly intelligible, and cannot depend on the ability to scroll back and review the argument so far. He rightly points out that the gap between spoken language and written language is immense. Spoken language reads badly when transcribed, and written language sounds badly when heard.

The point that Wilbur Ellsworth is making is an important one. Think of the gap between the style of a written review and a spoken reply to the question: What did you think of this book?

I reckon that the problem is increased by five factors:

One: We no longer read aloud (Augustine was amazed to see Ambrose reading silently!), and so the gap between written language and spoken language has increased.

Two: The production of many cheap copies of the Bible means that for us it is a book we read, rather than a book we hear read, as it was for most of its original audience.

Three: Students who study for the ministry from churches where there is little Bible teaching learn the Bible in the context of college lectures and essays. If they teach the Bible in their ministry the model they use is that of the academy.

Four: The use of word-processors means that the essay style can be easily, but unfortunately, transferred to the pulpit.

Five: The price of academic respectability is an academic style, which does not always take into account the hearer or listener.

His quotation from Robin Meyers' *With ears to hear* summarises the message of the book:

Perhaps the biggest failure in the teaching of preaching is that young ministers are not fully impressed with the difference between textuality and orality. Shaped by mountains of books, called upon to write scores of papers, and graded largely by what they commit to the page, aspiring preachers train the eye but neglect the ear.

We could change those last words to 'train the eye and typing hand but neglect the ear and speaking mouth'.

As one who loves the company of books, I was helpfully challenged by Ellsworth's ideas. He wants me to think 'orality' from the beginning of my sermon preparation, to work hard all the way through on the questions: How will I *say* it? and How will they *hear* it?

We should be able to do without notes. If the preacher cannot remember the sermon, how will the hearer remember it? This does not mean that I can skimp on my preparation: it does mean that I must not be so formed by the written word that I sound like a book and not like a person. Written words are good servants but bad masters.

God wants preachers, not walking books or talking computer screens!

**Peter Adam**

St. Jude's Carlton, Melbourne  
Australia

## Two Views of Hell

*Edward Fudge and Robert Peterson*  
Downers Grove: IVP, 2000,  
208 pp., \$12.99

When one first approaches a subject of intense theological debate, the quest is to find a resource that gives both sides equal opportunity to present their case. Here, the co-authors have written critically and incisively and yet have done so 'in a spirit of brotherly courtesies' (15).

Fudge begins his case for conditionalism by reminding his readers that scholarly, biblical argument determines the outcome of any theological debate rather than an appeal to tradition. Clearly he has many fewer historic figures than Peterson to defend his view, but he also sees weakness in the context of the early prominence of everlasting torment. This is the cornerstone of his critique of the traditionalist position: that it is systematically skewed by pagan Greek philosophy.

His biblical analysis of OT material is wide-ranging but at times frustratingly brief in detail (e.g. Nah. 1:1-10). He does however give more attention to references of 'everlasting burning' and to those passages referring to the 'two kinds of resurrection'. The most difficult aspect of this debate is finding a contextually consistent key for the interpretation of graphic language. Fudge's analysis is too fleeting to provide complete clarity.

After making some play of the alleged re-interpretation of Isaiah's references by the book of Judith, Fudge moves on to deal with the NT. His discussion on Jesus' teaching is at times very helpful (e.g. Gehenna (41-45)). On occasions, though, he makes polemic statements that are unconnected with their context which only serve to devalue the overall effect of his argument. He finds Paul's writings most promising for his cause and deals with the more difficult passages in Revelation by delving back into the

OT for his interpretation. His concluding chapter has a tendency for emotive outrage at the prospect of another view but ends with an uplifting picture of the gracious nature of God.

Peterson begins by reminding us of the long list of historically significant Christian thinkers who hold to the traditionalist position. Whilst he is clear that Biblical exegesis is the determining factor of any theological truth, he does not miss the opportunity to demonstrate that the conditionalist position has not attracted such weighty support.

Peterson's structure for each footing of his Biblical argument is helpful. It gives room for the exegetical and hermeneutical facets but also deals directly with the conditionalist interpretation. However, in comparison with Fudge, he limits the range of material he uses which leaves him open to the charge of proof-texting. After a brief foray into the OT he concentrates on Jesus teaching, paying particular attention to Matthew 25:31-46. Here he picks up Augustine's argument concerning the symmetry of the fates of the saved and the damned. However, his argument centres on a word-study of 'eternal' rather than defining the nature of the punishment (143).

He expends much time working through the significant material in Revelation and presents a cogent, readable case. Concluding with a chapter on systematic concerns does not enhance his purpose. It would perhaps have improved the presentation to have devoted such space to other exegetical passages.

Both authors respond to the other's arguments but this only enhances the impression that they are less comfortable battling on each other's wickets. Furthermore, often when they both deal with a subject their arguments miss one another completely (e.g. Augustine, Fudge emphasising preconceptions of soul

immortality, Peterson ignoring the debate).

This type of work has in-built frustrations. It may not be the best example of its genre but it does serve the purpose of illuminating the key arguments for the reader. However, it would be advisable to look elsewhere for further depth.

**Gareth Davies**  
Christchurch

### Recovering the Scandal of the Cross

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*Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker*  
Downers Grove: IVP, 2000,  
232 pp., \$15.99

### Where Wrath and Mercy Meet

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*David Peterson (ed.)*  
Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001,  
175 pp., £14.99

### Cross Examined

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*Mark Meynell*  
Leicester: IVP, 2001,  
191 pp., £5.99

The Scriptures as a whole provide no ground for a portrait of an angry God needing to be appeased in atoning sacrifice.

*(Recovering the Scandal of the Cross, 51)*

Penal substitution is an indispensable part of the scriptural revelation.

*(Where Wrath and Mercy Meet, 68)*

Two books, both of which come from evangelical publishing houses, and arrive at fundamentally different conclusions about the significance of the cross of Christ.

In *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* Joel Green and Mark Baker set out to show that a penal substitutionary understanding of the work of Christ on the cross is both a misinterpretation of the biblical evidence and

an unnecessary stumbling block to people from many cultures, including, increasingly, Western ones, coming to faith.

Three chapters survey the understanding of the death of Jesus in his own words and in those of the NT writers and summarise the saving significance of Jesus' death in the NT. A chapter which analyses the strengths and weaknesses of various atonement models (Irenaeus, Gregory, Anselm, Abelard and Hodge) is followed by four which look at different ways of communicating the significance of the cross to different audiences and cultures today.

The central aim of the book – to help Christians explain the cross in ways that will both resonate with and challenge the world in which we live – is admirable. Nevertheless this reviewer has a number of concerns about Green and Baker's work, helpful though it is in provoking reflection on things many of us assume every time we read the Bible. They start from the premise that for many Western Christians penal substitutionary atonement is the only model for understanding the cross. Whilst this may be the case in certain parts of American evangelicalism, in British evangelicalism most thinking about the cross is far hazier than that and often could not be said to conform to a particular 'model' at all.

Secondly it is never entirely clear in the book whether Green and Baker are arguing against a penal substitutionary model *per se* or against populist illustrations and explanations of penal substitution which make it appear that Christ is the innocent (and possibly unwilling) victim of an angry Father. This tends to lead them to interact principally with caricatures of penal substitution rather than with more thoughtful explanations (John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*, for example, has only one footnote in the book). In fact one has to read as far as page 90 before finding a reasonably dispassionate

summary of what the doctrine of penal substitution actually is.

Much of the material argues that penal substitution grew out of a Western worldview with particular notions of individual responsibility, punishment and justice. This is then compared with other cultures where such concepts have less resonance. It is unfortunate that the authors never consider whether it is possible that these values in Western culture spring, at least in part, from 2000 years of Christian influence and therefore from a Biblical worldview rather than being *merely* a grid through which the Bible is interpreted. Most importantly there are a number of omissions in the analysis of the Biblical material.

In their NT chapters Green and Baker make little reference to texts that are important to those who hold penal substitution to be a central or primary model by which to understand the cross. So, for instance, 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 2:17 are not to be found in the index of Scripture verses. In the very brief discussion of Romans 3:21–26 (104) it is simply asserted that, 'What is required is not a transformation within God's heart towards sinners but a transformation of their sinful existence before God'.

More broadly, there is little interaction with wider Biblical themes that suggest the necessity of punishment for sin. Genesis 3 is dealt with in just eleven words; there is no exploration of the substitutionary elements of Passover and no attempt to link the doctrine of the atonement to ideas about God's justice and about death and hell.

By contrast *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* is a collection of essays delivered at the Oak Hill Summer School in 2000. This book attempts to mount a defence of penal substitution in the face of challenges such as those by Green and Baker (the book interacts with some of Green's earlier work).

Two chapters by David Peterson reflect on atonement in the Old and New Testaments, the former focussing especially on Isaiah 53 and the way in which the Servant of the Lord's death is substitutionary and sin bearing.

Garry Williams' essay narrows the focus to look at the Biblical evidence for penalty bearing and the nature of the law and punishment in Scripture. In doing so he deals with the objections that the doctrine of penal substitution is mechanistic and impersonal. Mike Ovey examines the cross in relation to the renewal of creation and concludes that this 'is not merely consistent with penal substitution, but actually requires it'. (104). Finally Paul Weston's essay helps us to see how penal substitution can be preached from the text of the Gospels - he focuses particularly on John 19 - and Alan Stibbs' essay on Justification by Faith is reprinted as an appendix.

Each essay deals helpfully with the subject under consideration and the authors have avoided unnecessary overlap. Peterson and Williams in particular look at objections to the doctrine of penal substitution and produce material that is both clear and biblically compelling. Most of the essays helpfully retain their original lecture style, making them accessible to the non-expert.

There are some minor defects. It would have been nice to have much better indexing, particularly of Scripture references. The questions for further study at the end of each chapter seem to be written at a far more basic level than the essays - there is not much here to stretch most of those who are likely to be reading this book. Finally it is a pity that the price is so high as the book deserves a wide readership. These are small quibbles however, and this book will certainly repay careful study by both scholar and preacher.

At a much more introductory level Mark Meynell's *Cross Examined* seems to be aimed at both the new

and the non-Christian. Its vivid illustrations and accessible style will make it useful also to home group leaders, preachers and general readers.

Most of the short chapters are based around a passage of Scripture (some are more expository than others), possibly reflecting sermonic origins. The introductory encouragement to the reader to read through these passages before starting the chapter is welcome, though printing the passages might have been more effective in achieving the author's aim.

The first five chapters outline the historical events of Jesus death and the Biblical understanding of sin and God's justice. Four chapters look at the promise, execution, blood and triumph of Christ before Meynell moves on to two chapters of implications; 'A Life Made Possible' and 'A Cross Shaped Life'.

Meynell ably defends penal substitution as the primary model by which to understand the cross. Interestingly however he exhibits one of the faults Paul Weston warns against in his essay in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* - he tries to clinch his explanation of substitution using an illustration rather than the Biblical narrative itself. That said, Meynell's countering of the argument that penal substitution is barbaric and the way in which he sketches the differences between Christian and pagan concepts is particularly helpful (90f).

The case for understanding bloodshed in a substitutionary sense is made well and the survey of the significance of 'blood' in the Bible (106ff), though brief, is clear and useful. The sections on justification, reconciliation, redemption and cleansing achieve their aim of making it 'obvious' that penal substitution is the model on which all other models depend (108). However, some readers who are not as willing to be convinced as this reviewer might feel that obviousness is a slightly overstated claim.



Each chapter is summarised in bullet points and some have diagrams to recap the material covered. The book could easily be turned into a series of Bible studies, though in this regard it would have been helpful if some study questions had been included along with the chapter summaries.

This excellent little book plugs a significant gap in the literature on the cross and will be ideal for anyone who would struggle to complete *The Cross of Christ* or who would like a refresher on this most wonderful of Christian doctrines.

**Andrew Evans**  
Ellesmere Port

### **Intellect and Action: Elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith**

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*Colin E. Gunton*  
Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000,  
ix + 195 pp., £23.95

It is a fair rule that one should not judge a book by its cover. Nevertheless the cover design that holds the authors words together in book form is illuminating, at least post-reading. It offers, as background to the title header, a pleasant blue canvas upon which, at a slightly inclining angle, in lower case italics, we are given a repeated scroll of key words. In no particular order these are: ethics, holiness, faith, virtue, doctrine, ecclesiology, grace, dogma, election, freedom, doctrine, salvation.

The book gives us a snapshot of the theologian at work, gathering as it does, essays written over a period of eighteen months. These, in the words of the author, 'represent a continuing project of thought, not in a linear way, as if one builds on the one before, but as an attempt to enrich and develop earlier trains of thought' (vii). We thus have a demonstration of the economies of academic theological practice seeing similar ideas put to use in different contexts through the

book. Gunton is also exercised in at least the first three essays with theological method itself and its relation to the church.

The more general reader will be frustrated by the dense academic framing of this theology. I mean by this that despite the welcome emphasis on ecclesiology and ethics the communication of Gunton's thought to the church is dulled by the academy's requirements. Would the theologian not be serving the church more helpfully in publishing more accessibly? As it is these elucidations are perhaps less illuminating than they could be. The theological arguments, delving so expertly into the rich inheritance of the tradition, particularly Calvin, would bear being fleshed out. This is my reservation about Gunton's systematic theology becoming ethics. We are given a confident ethical framework with fine thinking on freedom (see last essay 'God, grace and freedom'), but are left only with theoretical action not acts or action itself. The buzz words of the cover need to be joined up in the life of the church and the individual, and the theological task would do well to acknowledge and describe this ultimate aim of fruit even as it tends or redesigns the garden (gardening illustration, p. 2). Students of systematics will stand to be enlightened the most by these essays as they see a leading exponent of the discipline at work.

**Andy Draycott**  
Coimbra, Portugal

### **God of Glory and God of Grace**

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*Stephen R. Holmes*  
Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000,  
xiv + 289 pp., h/b., £24.95

The problem with writing an account of Jonathan Edwards' (1703-1758) work is that his corpus is so diffuse and difficult to make clear in a short compass. A particular problem with Edwards is that he died before he

could condense his vast notebooks down to his projected life's work, *The History of the Work of Redemption*.

With the above in mind, Dr Holmes' book gives a good account of itself as a treatment of Edwards' theology that makes every effort to overcome these particular obstacles. The merit of this volume is that it ties Edwards' thought into one of the overarching concerns of his thinking, God's pursuit of his own self-glorification in all his works. Whilst Holmes is honest enough to grant that this is not a single unifying motif in Edwards thought, this is, arguably, one of the great themes that Edwards pursues in every area of his work.

Holmes takes into consideration the notebooks, the philosophy and the sermons of Edwards, but he also takes seriously, themes that are not as well known outside Edwardsian circles, like his aesthetics, typology and ecclesiastical writings. All this is done in the firm conviction that Edwards was a pastor and theologian first, before he was a philosopher or scientist. This focus on his theological concerns is the main strength of the book. For instance, Edwards' belief that God glorifies himself in all things does not mean that the Trinity is subsumed under some more basic theological concern, but that God in his Trinitarian glory seeks his own pleasures in all that he does. Edwards is a Trinitarian theologian, whose doctrine of election focuses on Christ in a way that, according to Holmes, seems to prefigure something of Barth's emphasis on the pre-eminence of Christ as the Elect One. In light of this, Edwards' treatment of election and reprobation appears to lead to an elliptic element in his thought. The elect have a real status in God's economy, since they are 'in Christ'. The reprobate, however, (the subject of ch. 6) have no status because they are by definition 'Christless'. This, according to Holmes, means that their very humanity and existence, is uncertain.

Edwards has not given enough attention to the being of those outside of Christ (what being can there be outside Christ?). This lacuna is the reason why Holmes parts company with Edwards in the final chapter that lauds Barth's understanding of election instead.

This serves to point out where Holmes' treatment is lacking. Although it is true that the vast majority of Edwards' work was theological (in fact, homiletical), the volume of such material should not be taken as an indicator of its supremacy in Edwards' thought. A working pastor may churn out a lot of theological material when his private intellectual interests lie elsewhere. This was the case with Edwards, who was as much philosopher as theologian. Holmes does deal with Edwards' philosophy, but he does not seem to think that philosophical concerns shaped his theological treatment of central doctrines. I am not sure that this is true. Edwards' two great works, *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin*, both utilise metaphysics to theological ends. The same is true of his doctrine of election, seen in terms of his Idealism: all things exist as ideas in the mind of God, the reprobate and the elect. God arbitrarily chooses the elect and treats them as one for the purposes of imputing Christ's righteousness, whilst the reprobate have Adam's sin imputed to them. Edwards believed that it is only when we see that the reprobate are as important to God's self-glorification as the elect that we have a true perspective on things. The reprobate are damned to display God's glory in his retributive justice, whilst the elect serve to display his grace and mercy. Problems arise when one of these attributes is prioritised over the other. But Edwards' doctrine of God required that no such privileging of divine attributes be permitted. That is why the righteous can rejoice in the damnation of the wicked: they see things God's way, whereas we do not.

Nevertheless, Holmes does a fine job of making the panoply of Edwards' thinking available in one volume, and his focus on the theological concerns are not to the exclusion of the philosophical, though they form the principal concern of the book. It is a welcome addition to the literature on Edwards, particularly for those studying him for the first time.

**Oliver D. Crisp,**  
King's College, London

## Jesus is Lord: Christology Yesterday and Today

*Donald Macleod*  
Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000,  
201 pp., £10.99

This book comes in the Mentor imprint of Christian Focus, designed mainly for seminary students and pastors. It comprises seven pieces from the pen of Professor Donald Macleod, Principal of the Free Church College in Edinburgh. Only three of the chapters are previously unpublished material. In fact the final two chapters originally appeared in *Themelios* in 1999 and 2000.

The first three chapters are the most straightforward of the book and is material that was excluded due to constraints of space from Macleod's 1998 volume *The Person of Christ* in the IVP 'Contours of Christian Theology' series. These chapters explore in turn whether the NT calls Jesus God, the significance of the ascription 'Lord' to Jesus and the meaning of the term 'Son of Man'.

These chapters are both intellectually satisfying and spiritually enriching. Professor Macleod works his way through the key scriptural passages whilst interacting with some widely accepted theological positions (e.g. that the NT never calls Jesus 'God' or that the 'Son of Man' designation has no precedent in pre-Christian Judaism). Personally I always find Macleod at his richest when

dealing with Philippians 2 and this publication is no exception. Here he gives considerable attention to Dunn's 'Adam Christology' approach to the chapter clearly, showing its deficiencies. Macleod's admission in the forward to 'The Person of Christ' that it is a book interacting with views up to the 1980s rather than the 1990s equally applies to these chapters. Even with this there is much of value here.

The next two chapters are historical essays assessing, in chapter 4, the accusation of Arianism against the 18th century Non-Conformists, Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge and in chapter 5 some key Scottish theologians' views (including Irving, Denney and Torrance) on the incarnation. These studies may carry less interest for some but they are accessible treatments that help to highlight the recurring issues in the field of Christology. The criticism of Torrance that his idea of incarnational redemption flagrantly contradicts the NT insistence on the centrality of the cross is surely a well made point.

The final chapters critique the important work of Jurgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Macleod gives a very sympathetic assessment of Moltmann, identifying his central Christological concept of *messiahship* and his emphasis on divine suffering as major contributions. He is not uncritical and questions whether Moltmann's theodicy really does justice to the grace of God and to the anomaly of divine pain. However, he finds something of great significance in the emphasis on God's sympathy with the oppressed.

The chapter on Pannenberg reflects the difficulty of attempting to assess a diverse body of work in the space of 25 pages. This is by far the hardest chapter and Macleod comes to the end with the statement that Pannenberg is 'heavy-going'. He questions Pannenberg's whole enterprise of seeking a *Christology from below* as an approach running counter to the

witness of the NT. He also calls into question the role Pannenberg assigns to the resurrection as the key indicator of Jesus' divinity. In all this Macleod wishes to point us to the NT emphasis on the self-consciousness of Jesus as divine.

Works that draw together articles from varied sources lack the coherence of full-length treatments. This book suffers from that deficiency but Donald Macleod is never dull and there is still much here to stimulate and inspire.

**Andy Bathgate**

Scripture Unton, Glasgow

### Rediscovering Friendship

*Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendell*

London: SCM Press, 2000,

viii + 132 pp., £9.95

Friendship is much lauded in our society and publicly encouraged from our pulpits, held in high regard and longed for by children and adult alike. Though it's press is good, the reality of friendships in the real world are less than satisfactory: friendship as an art, as a life long relationship has been lost to us in the fragmented relationships and fast changing jobs of a mobile western world. Moltmann-Wendell attempts to examine friendship and reflect on it from a feminist and theological framework.

Her examination and discussion of friendship is rooted in the conviction that friendship between women is not like that of friendship between men. Female friendship is not combative or comparitive, not rooted in being defined against the other which is how men typically think of friendship. Female friendship values the other, affirms difference and liberates the friends. She applies this hermeneutic throughout her book – opening a discussion on the nature of friendship, exploring the theological, ecclesiological and relational consequences of redefining

and rediscovering a friendship that uses the female rather than the male model as normative. In her rediscovery she offers a means of saving women and men, the church and Jesus himself from a binding and destructive (male) understanding of God and relationships.

Her thought is developed within a Roman Catholic theological framework and the most direct target of her critique is the hierarchy of Roman Catholicism. She stands too, in the line of Catholic liberation theologians in theological reflection on perceived systemic injustice. She also unapologetically and self-confidently stands within a feminist framework that feeds on the radicalism of Mary Daly and the revisionism of Rosemary Radford-Ruther. These three factors will lead her writing to be loved by some of her readers as a brave and radical challenge to the hierarchies of churchMANship which have denied the traditions of Mary Magdalene the tender and erotic friend of Jesus who teaches us what it is to be a friend of God, of women and men and even a friend of the earth in an open and liberating way. For other readers Moltmann-Wendell's writing will prove a typical liberal and revisionist reworking of Scripture: where Scripture is not God's Word nor Jesus the flesh and blood Son of God but the 'Christ' (or *Christa*) of 'the Jesus Movement' and as such are empty of content other than the interpretations of theologians wish to give them; where history is to be played with, and any negative critique is dismissed as an outworking of the male mindset.

I found reading Moltmann-Wendell without merit – only useful as an illustration of how far the liberal hermeneutic will divorce itself from God ordained revelation and replace it with human centred imagination.

**Andrew Shudall**

Leicester

## The Kingdom and the Power: The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann

Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz  
London: SCM, 2000,  
262 pp., £14.95

When I first encountered the thought of Jürgen Moltmann I did so with great enthusiasm. By the time I had completed a PhD on him I was aware of his faults and weary of his elusiveness. This book rekindled my enthusiasm and made me aware of the extent to which Moltmann has influenced my thinking.

Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, a former pupil of Moltmann, has written a good introduction to his thought. It is described as an 'aid to reading' and is, for the most part, a summary of Moltmann's major works book by book, sometimes chapter by chapter. Yet it remains engagingly written throughout. A summary can easily dull the rhetorical force of the original, but Müller-Fahrenholz has managed to retain much of the energy of Moltmann's writing while providing an accurate account of his thought. The early chapters are more powerful, but this, in the opinion of this reviewer, reflects the development of Moltmann's own work.

Described as a 'theology', it is also part biography. A feature of Moltmann's development has been the extent to which he has engaged with contemporary issues and one of the strengths of this introduction is the links it makes between Moltmann's life and thought. Müller-Fahrenholz writes powerfully about Moltmann's post-war imprisonment, his encounters with liberation theology, his interaction with the civil rights movement, feminism, and ecological issues. He shows how this personal history has impacted Moltmann's thinking and includes a helpful chapter in which he gathers together the various fragments of Moltmann's ethical writings.

Müller-Fahrenholz offers some critique of Moltmann, but this is not a strength of the book. He fails to highlight the important emphasis in Moltmann's early thought on God's future as *adventus* (a coming reality in contradiction to the present) rather than *futurum* (an extension of the present) – an emphasis which becomes problematic when Moltmann develops his doctrine of creation. At a number of points throughout the book Müller-Fahrenholz wonders whether we should regard Moltmann as a mystical writer. This is a suggestive idea, but its reprise in the final chapter is disappointing.

Müller-Fahrenholz is at his best when summarising Moltmann's work and has produced a good introduction to Moltmann for those new to his thought. It made this reviewer want to reread *Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*.

**Tim Chester**  
Sheffield

## Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader- Response Criticism

Mark Allan Powell  
Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001,  
249 pp., £15.99

What manner of book is this, with its computer-generated camels bearing down on us from the front cover inviting us to chase the eastern star? It is that rare animal: an utterly gripping academic book that entertains, enlightens and edifies in equal measure. I picked up my review copy to see what was in it and didn't put it down until 24 hours later when I'd read every word.

The book falls into three very different parts. Part one examines 'meaning' and begins with the claim that texts are polyvalent. In fact it begins anecdotally with good evidence from Powell's own experience as both a

writer and a reader that texts are open to various surprising interpretations. It also includes the key analytical device of the book: the distinction between expected and unexpected readings. Powell is very careful here: these categories do *not* imply good and bad, or right and wrong, or conservative and radical, but they *do* follow from careful examination of the narrative itself. Each text proposes certain expected readings that follow the detail wherever it leads.

This is a controversial claim in a world of postmodern hermeneutical sophistication, but Powell would rather accept the label 'postmodern' for himself because it reminds us that his own hermeneutic is reader-orientated and not author-orientated (for the reasons set out in the autobiographical opening). This is 'narrative criticism' because it examines a narrative for what is in it. It is 'reader-response criticism' because it tracks the narrative by way of asking what the ideal (or implied) reader is *expected* to notice. Finally, it is both historically orientated and focused on the final form of the text, thus avoiding many of the false polarizations in this particular hermeneutical arena.

Part two of the book works all this out in terms of the basic questions about expectancy: what is a reader expected to know and to believe in the process of reading? The discussion is kept tethered to the lives of ordinary Bible readers by the decision to focus it around reading the Gospel of Matthew. What are Matthew's readers expected to know and believe? How are they *expected to read*? Even those with no interest in Powell's aims could learn a great deal here about Matthew's gospel.

Part three then delivers on the promise of the theory by exploring the *magoi* of Matthew 2. I will not spoil all the delightful surprises of this section, although I will point out that Powell agrees with 'virtually all' modern critics that the magi could not

have been kings, but he agrees in a quite *unexpected* way, to his own chagrin.

In a concluding chapter Powell makes the daring move towards an explicit theological evaluation of what this approach tells us. What Powell sets down in this chapter ('The Magi and the Gospel') should be compulsory reading for all who have ever taken courses in hermeneutics and wondered where it leaves them with regard to their role in the wider community of Christian believers. Essentially, he avers, it is the gospel which judges the desirability of any reading, expected or unexpected, and even if it is not exactly the Lutheran gospel (as various recounted objections to this proposal clarify) it is going to be something like it if Powell's reading of Matthew has any merit. The implications of this position are spelled out in the closing pages: implications not just for hermeneutics but for the lives of all those trained to study the Bible professionally.

The book closes with a couple of 'bonus tracks': a sermon and a short story that exemplify the delightful style of the whole book.

It is exceptional stuff. On the back cover Robert Gundry says, 'Buy it. Read it. Join the chase.' Such words are overdone, but at least for those with anything more than a passing interest in how to interpret the Bible I would for once concur.

**Richard Briggs**

All Nations Christian College, Ware

### Self/Same/Other

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*Heather Walton and Andrew Hass (eds.)*  
 Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000,  
 214 pp., £14.95/\$24.50

There are a few good essays here: Pamela Sue Anderson, Roberta Quance, Kitty S. Datta and Philip Leonard emerge with some credit. The rest are too often like early

postgraduate scratchings: 'I've just discovered the writings of *x* and I want to apply it to *y*'. We should be warned when the introductory essay by Heather Walton includes an example of this: 'Levinas is Jewish and his work is an extended reflection upon the rise of fascism and its legacy ... These images of encounter with an alien God stand in stark contrast to the continuum between God, man and brother imagined in liberal religious thinking' (12–13). All this for the liberal to applaud, just what they would object to if it had been said by Karl Barth or Billy Graham.

Walton may be correct to claim that sexual difference is the defining concern of our age (following Luce Irigaray), but the idea that bodies are texts, and vice-versa, since there is no word/matter distinction still seems, to this reviewer, a good example of nonsense on stilts. There is a particularly poor essay on W.H. Auden. The last line of the poem and the article read: '*we are never alone* since our fractured selves, when we turn and face them, give us away' (42). Or, to say *Adieu* is to bring God in: 'We must say goodbye, *adieu*, to the paradisaal states of our being in order truly to preserve our Being, for paradise cannot hold'. Likewise, in other essays, there is a lot about the Other, and even how that magic word can be found in '(M)other' and '(Br)other'!

The essay on 'HD' by Quance is thought-provoking and gets us to the nub of at least one matter, that of the felt-need by some, perhaps many women to envisage God as female: 'According to Luce Irigaray, the idea of a goddess – of god in a female image – is essential for women, if they are to possess an image of their perfected subjectivity ... The self is both pearl and mother of pearl' (96). With reference to the last, concluding sentence, much Feminist theology in this vein may be rightly viewed as footnotes to Feuerbach (whose very thesis is in fact mentioned on p. 156).

Datta's essay gives an Irigarayan analysis in which she claims that religious women's silence is not suppression (*pace* Julia Kristeva whose study of mysticism was, allegedly, limited to Mme de Guyon) but which can be subversive of talkative theology. The Irigarayan loses her self in the tide of otherness, whereas Kristeva is still interested in building up the self through relation to the Other (for which Anderson criticises her in her useful essay on the Bulgarian). Leonard's essay describes how Irigaray has moved from a Levinasian ethics of difference to one of sexual difference and an eroticised mysticism, embracing eros, rather than denying that it matters *ultimately*. For Irigarayan feminism, Gender is an (the?) ultimate reality, whereas for Levinas (and Derrida) it was the obvious, the visibly symbolic of otherness in general.

**Mark W. Elliott**

Liverpool Hope University College

### Karl Barth

(*Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series*) John Webster

London: Continuum, 2000,

xvi + 181 pp., £12.99

### The Politics of the Cross. The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder

Craig A. Carter

Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001,

254 pp., \$18.99

Although students may prefer to be well acquainted with the exploits of the Simpsons or the latest episode of Star Wars, the theology student should not pass up the opportunity that is offered by these two books to meet Barth and Yoder. Both books gain significantly as introductions as they are individually authored. The reader does not find himself thrown straight into theological dispute but

rather is guided sympathetically into the thinking of the subject. This sympathy of the authors, whilst remaining critical, is particularly important as both Barth and Yoder are more often misknown and misunderstood on the basis of partial readings of their work.

In the case of Barth this is understandable if only for the immense volume of his output, most famously the unfinished *Church Dogmatics* (CD). Webster, a leading Barth scholar, presents Barth's work in biographical framework. The opening chapter, on Barth's life and work, looks over his life and publications before suggesting how one should interpret Barth. This begins: 'Reading Barth is no easy task.' He illustrates how Barth's theology follows a musical structure of development and recapitulation, not whimsically, but out of conviction that this was a method in keeping with the Christological anchoring of his theology. He follows this by taking key texts and opening them up to the reader in succeeding chapters. This is a highly instructive introduction. Indications of where to go beyond this introduction are clear throughout and a helpful bibliography is found at the beginning of the book.

Chapter two deals with Barth's early career up to CD. Chapters three to six follow the outline of CD looking at the doctrine of the Word of God, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Creation, and the incomplete doctrine of Reconciliation. Chapter seven deals with the integral place of ethics and politics in the dogmatic task and chapter eight examines ways in which Barth has been read and the possibilities his theology offers to the present life of the church.

Yoder's best known work is the influential *The Politics of Jesus*. Carter sets out to show that Yoder has a lot to offer beyond this work and clearly sees his life and work as of visionary importance for the church. It is precisely in the central place of

ecclesiology for Yoder that we are to see his gift as a theologian whose social ethics is tied to his orthodoxy. Carter situates Yoder within his Mennonite background whilst showing that he could be sharply critical of it, and also details the important influence of Barth, under whom Yoder studied. Yoder nevertheless sought to hold his theology up to the NT and scriptural standard before any other criteria. Carter continually engages with criticisms of Yoder's work, particularly those accusations of sectarianism and withdrawal from the world. He shows these to be unsubstantiated with continuous reference and quotation from Yoder's work. There was a lack of distinctive treatment of Yoder's pacifism that was disappointing, given that Yoder may only be known for this, if at all. It is clear how important it is but it is not clear quite what it looked like for Yoder. This is a serious omission as it is one of the stumbling blocks for many who encounter Yoder through *Politics*. Carter is not indulging in hagiography and he is rightly aware of the limitations and problems in Yoder's theology. His deliberate eschewal of method belies a doctrinal coherence in his work that should have been clearer. His attention on the cross left the resurrection dangerously underplayed (particularly in *Politics*). His emphasis on ethics was not balanced with published thought on prayer. Carter however pleads that Yoder should be understood as undertaking to address the church in those areas that would otherwise be neglected in his context. We are called to understand more what he did feel called to say, not to misunderstand because of what he didn't say.

This is an excellent survey and a great encouragement to engage more seriously with Yoder, another helpful bibliography here too, although we suspect that many disagreements will remain and readers will read differently to Carter.



Both these books then are highly commended as reading made enjoyable by generous interpretation.

**Andy Draycott**

Coimbra, Portugal

## Ethics

### Justice that Restores

*Charles Colson*

Leicester: IVP, 2000,

150 pp., £7.99

There are probably very few people better qualified than Colson to write about justice from the perspective of the criminal. Imprisoned himself for eight months in 1975 for his part in the infamous Watergate affair, he has since devoted his life to the Christian service of prisoners and their victims through Prison Fellowship Ministries. Prison Fellowship International now has branches in eighty-eight countries, as a result of which Colson has visited over 600 prisons in forty different countries. This intimate experience of those that have been caught up in the web of the justice system ensures the intensely human, rather than theoretical perspective of the book.

The book's four chapters were first delivered as the London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity for 1999 and retain the flavour of the spoken word. The underlying conviction of the lectures is that it is 'only the biblical worldview ... that can produce ... a truly just public order' (8). So, in the first lecture, 'The Basis for a Just Society', he argues for a return to a more objective view of the basis of law in the will of the Creator, which was the foundation of the idea of 'natural law'. There is a salutary warning in this chapter that the adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights in the context of a non-authoritarian view of justice could lead to the exaltation of the opinion of

individual judges and the degradation of Parliament as the supreme law-making body in the UK.

The second chapter, 'The Roots of Crime', emphasises the reality of the fall in the context of the prevailing optimistic opinions that the criminal justice system is either meant to reform or deter criminals. He makes a powerful case for the rediscovery of responsibility. Unfortunately his case is somewhat spoilt by a right-wing interpretation of history that can see no good in the movement which led to the French revolution, and puts the very Christian prison reformer John Howard in the same class as Jeremy Bentham and his utilitarian followers.

In the third chapter, 'Redemption', he deals with the need for moral reformation and makes the case that it is only Christianity that offers a genuine new beginning that makes this possible. In this context he argues that the right question to ask is not, 'What causes crime?' but 'Why do people *not* commit crime?' or 'What causes virtue?' The fact that there is a proven correlation between the prevalence of Christian teaching, such as through Sunday Schools, and a diminished level of crime strengthens his case.

In the final chapter entitled 'Justice that Restores' we are given a vision of what could be based on his experience through Prison Fellowship. He makes an impassioned plea for greater Christian involvement with the criminal justice system so that it becomes a means of restoring relationships between criminals and God and also between criminals and their victims. There are some moving tales in this chapter, as well as examples of Christian alternatives to the senseless practice of locking up more and more people in prisons where their criminal propensities are strengthened.

There is much in this volume that those involved with the criminal justice system would do well to heed

and that could make any Christian a better citizen.

### Dewi Hughes

Theological Advisor, Tearfund

## A History of Pastoral Care

G.R. Evans (ed.)

London and New York: Cassell, 2000,  
476 pp., h./b., £49.95

As pastoral theology has been assimilating insights from the human sciences and relating them to a pastoral care, a discontinuity has appeared between recent pastoral writing and the Church's experience throughout history. Many today are keen to bridge that gap.

In this book twenty-three writers focus briefly on specific aspects of care in particular historical contexts. They represent an ecumenical spectrum with Anglican and Roman Catholic predominating. The team is international but the choice of topics indicates a largely British perspective.

In the biblical section J.W. Rogerson raises a thoroughly post-modern issue: was hostility to idols and magic in the OT largely an attempt to exercise social control by imposing uniformity of belief? He exonerates it, unconvincingly, because of the elements of protest and non-conformity running through the material. David Graham surveys the NT books in order, taking a moderate critical stance on questions of authorship and context. He notes the sheer variety of pastoral methods and models, but finds an overall theme in the need to form a cohesive Christian community in the face of persecution and poverty from without and divisions within. Paul's theology is being increasingly seen as contextual rather than systematic.

The story follows the church through the patristic period where bishops are increasingly seen as the shepherds of Christ's flock. Pope Gregory's *Pastoral*

*Rule* assumes they will maintain faith and good order, while being sensitive to individual needs. Effective discipline where there is sin proves to be complex. Public confession of serious sin gives way to detailed private penitence, which by 1215 becomes at least an annual obligation in the West.

Alongside the diocesan hierarchies, alternatives emerge. Monks renounce power, retreat in search of God and yet are sought out as sources of care and spiritual direction. In the thirteenth century the missionary zeal of the friars and their itinerant preaching ministry brings revival, especially in cities where parish clergy find it hard to take a prophetic stance towards social injustice.

Healing remains a thread in the story. The carnage of the crusades produces the Order of Hospitalers. Foundations are laid for institutional medical care. Education is another. Lambros Kamperidis tells a less well-known story of the Eastern Orthodox churches importing models of catechesis from the Western church in the eighteenth century. These were strongly influenced by Aquinas' emphasis on the cultivation of virtues and the application of duties. He feels they formed a system that relegated the Holy Spirit to a supervisory role and deprived Orthodox spirituality of its lifeline to the patristic tradition.

As the story gets closer to the present day it becomes more obvious that hardly any of the writers are at home in contemporary pastoral theology. The familiar polarities are there. Is the fundamental pastoral problem pain or sin? Should the focus be on individuals or communities? Do we emphasise maintenance or mission? Is the pastor essentially an ordained minister or any baptised believer? G.R. Evans mentions most of these in the introduction and Ian Bunting gives a good account of the impact of pastoral counselling on the Church's pastoral care. Their colleagues tend to keep their feet firmly on the historical

bank. The book provides a mini-library of resources for those who would build a bridge between Christian tradition and contemporary pastoral care. It is not the bridge itself.

**Vera Sinton**  
Oxford

### The Human Person in Science and Theology

*Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees and Ulf Görman (eds),*  
Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000,  
240 pp., £14.95

These are the plenary lectures from the Durham conference of The European Society for the Study of Science and Theology in 1998. They bode well for the future work of this forum. Gregersen's introductory essay is especially helpful for those unfamiliar with these discussions. To the fore is the reasonable, perhaps even self-evident claim that there is more than biology at work in the way people think and intend: it is 'the co-evolution of brain and culture'. This is not, as earlier 20th century personalities (secular and Catholic) have done, to see the mind as transcending the brain ('different levels'), but rather of viewing human thought in at least two different ways. As Gregersen boldly states: 'the appearance of this book marks a break with the bogus dichotomy between personal and empirical features of human existence' (7). We can say that Jewish-Christian heritage is to see the person as having 'openness to others', but the Trinitarian analogy, as Studer warned, may not be altogether helpful for understanding human personhood.

Mary Midgely's essay is a bit polemical, *full of italicised phrases for emphasis*, but must have been fun to listen to as she lambasts Richard Dawkins for thinking we are run by our genes to the point of conscious effort being futile. Whither personal

responsibility? Where is there a place for original thought? Where indeed! Midgely seems to want a return to Descartes in the sense that the humanities and the natural sciences are distinguished – here there is surely lacking a treatment of Dilthey. It is the same terrain (the human being), but we use many (or at least more than the reductionist biological one) maps to make sense of it

Fraser Watts, in the lucid and coolly thoughtful style that we have come to expect from him, seems to beg to differ, holding that *Psychology* is the science, which can serve as an umbrella to social and biological science. He advocates the concept of affections as mediating between thoughts and passions.

Philip Hefner gets positively bullish when he writes: 'I interject the ironic observation that although Dennett and Dawkins are, by their own admission, hard reductionist thinkers, neither one friendly to religion, by introducing culture and memes as essential for human evolution and personhood, they admit an element into their thinking that renders their own reductionism wholly contradictory' (78).

The person 'is defined in its intercourse with the challenges it must face' (83). They are not just other people in relationships, but the world as a system, a bit like Pannenberg's 'openness to the world' and the wholeness (greater than the sum of parts) and the personality of that system – which we might call 'God'. 'Culture consists of learned and taught patterns of behaviour and the symbol systems that interpret and justify those behaviours' (90). It is culture (with its 'memes' and 'values') which organises our consciousness.

Just when it felt that the reader was being taken quite far away from theology in the essays by Bielfeld and Lagercrantz, there is a *tour de force* by the prominent Heidelberg systematic theologian, Michael Welker. After

a lightning tour of modern philosophical anthropology, he states his thesis, which has echoes of Eberhard Jüngel: 'faith constitutes the person'. It is better when subjective faith is built up and nourished by the objective faith of the church, and its 'dynamic structure of persuasion'. In this way the worth of the person is not reduced to absolute subjectivity, since faith means being one with the Risen One and what is avoided is: 'vacuous faith as immediate relationship to that which is wholly other' (111).

**Mark W. Elliott**

Liverpool Hope University College

**A Better Hope:  
Resources for a church confronting  
capitalism, democracy and postmodernity.**

*Stanley Hauerwas*  
Brazos Press, 2000,  
288 pp., \$19.99

This book is a strange blend of Hauerwas at his most brilliant, and also at his most confusing. First, let me explain the confusion. There is something about the style of *A Better Hope* that reads as if it is a collection of closely related essays yet at the same time, it is obviously intended to be something more than this. The almost-but-not-quite continuity, inspired by Hauerwas' laterally challenging mind, makes interesting, but hard work. Individual chapters or sections of the book have much of interest to say, but upon arriving at their end one is repeatedly faced with the question, 'So what?'

To add to the potential stylistic confusion, Hauerwas has written specifically for an audience that is well-versed in US contemporary theological scholarship. This discussion on the distinctive characters of some of the United States' better known theology faculties, may helpfully demonstrate a range of possible opinion, but is limited in value by its anecdotal references and

assumed knowledge that can leave you feeling left out of the joke. This is perhaps ironic as the main purpose laid out in the introductory chapters is to criticise the 'Americanisation' of the church – yet to the non-American this book is overtly Americanised itself.

There is, though, some brilliance in the book. Mostly this lies in the subtlety with which he approaches some of the big debates of our time – such as postmodernity or global capitalism; the call for Christianity to realise that it is bigger than either modernity or postmodernity, and to present its own meta-narrative; the need for Christians to present alternatives to the assumed wisdom of capital markets. These are easily woven into a conventional Hauerwas theme: for the distinctiveness of the church as the main concern of Christian teaching, reformation and witness. All the time, he wants Christians to realise that not only does being an American not automatically make them a Christian, but more importantly that being a Christian does not mean that they have to be blindly committed to all that is American.

Of course the centrality of the church in Hauerwas' thinking is not unproblematic and he writes as someone who is obsessive about denominational distinctives as a means of describing different church attributes. So in arguing for the place of ethics as enjoying equal rank beside evangelism and witness and in describing ethics as theology, Hauerwas plots a somewhat obscure course between Protestant social gospel, Catholic liberal/conservative schism and Mennonite separatism. You can imagine that the end-place is distinctive, though it is certainly not new.

Besides this general plot, there are amusing paradigms in which Hauerwas challenges us to look at commonplace issues through tangential spectacles. One example of

this is the brief discussion on capitalism, which takes place within an examination of the Methodist church's attitude towards homosexuality and promiscuity. Another is his concluding chapter, which discusses the reading of detective stories as a means of exhorting his audience to live boldly for what they believe. I suspect that much of this fun and games derives from his desire to show the importance of 'ethics of character' alongside, or intrinsic within, the ethics of social phenomenon.

Overall, the two-sided message of the book is that Christians should be actively involved in the reformation of society, and that this drive for reformation should come from the church speaking its own distinctive Christian language in the public arena. This language always has to be centred on and developed from the Cross of Jesus, which in Hauerwas' reasoning results in sacramental worship as the cornerstone of the church's language, and as the primary tool of God's grace.

This should not be the first book you ever read by Stanley Hauerwas, but it is both interesting and challenging - in style as well as content. It is thought-provoking, often contentious but far from conclusive.

### **Tim Vickers**

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity

### **Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate**

*Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse*  
Downers Grove: IVP, 2000,  
189 pp., \$12.99

That there is a debate raging in the churches about what the Bible does and does not say concerning homosexuality is hardly hot news. That the debate has taken on a higher profile and a greater depth is of no

surprise given those leading and participating in the debate. This debate, however, is not limited to church leaders and academic faculties - it is also raging at dinner tables and over coffee as friends meet together. Neither is there a 'liberal' versus 'evangelical' split - the debate has taken on an intensity since in the British evangelical scene since Roy Clements has begun to call for a refreshed and reframed debate, looking at the experience of gay men and women in evangelical churches.

Often in these conversations press reports of genetic research is alluded to, if not cited as an indication that as many as ten per cent of the population are gay, that being gay is genetic and so we cannot condemn people for that which they did not choose, and that anything other than unprejudiced acceptance of loving gay relationships is unworthy of Christians at the beginning of the 21st century. Into this debate comes the good and helpful contribution of Jones and Yarhouse.

The book is the reworking of a series of papers and presentations that authors have given in professional contexts. It is a refreshingly honest, sensitive and factual assessment of the various 'scientific' bases for the claims concerning the prevalence of homosexuality, the causation and nature of sexual identity and sexual orientation, whether homosexual identity is a psychopathology (dys-functioning self-identity) and if it can be changed. They are openly and obviously defending the biblical censure of homosexual sex and do so without hyperbole, antagonistic rhetoric or engaging in personal attack.

The authors examine the figure of ten per cent, which is often attributed to Alfred Kinsey's work in 1940s - 50s America, and propose that a more realistic figure may be two to three per cent. They look at the research done into the causation of homosexuality and suggest that neither biology nor

environment can singularly account for sexual identity's emergence. They survey the definitions of 'normality' and the work done by mental health professionals in the field of defining gay lifestyles as 'equally good' as heterosexual lifestyles and they cast an honest eye over the work of those (both Christian and secular) seeking to facilitate a change in orientation and seek to temper the absolutists' statements that are offered at both ends of the spectrum. Finally they propose a Christian Sexual Ethic, which is orthodox and compassionate.

Jones and Yarhouse are asking why and how science has been brought into the debate surrounding homosexuality. The book is an honest and well researched (and footnoted) assessment of the presented data, examining how it was collected and re-examining the figures quoted in the debates - presenting a thoughtful contribution to the conversations that are currently taking place in the letters' columns of the Christian press and in our homes and churches.

**Andy Shuddall**  
Leicester

### **Body and Soul. Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics**

*J.P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae*  
Downers Grove: IVP, 2000,  
384 pp., \$22.99

The concern of the authors is to uphold the importance of human nature for questions of ethics. In this they specifically mean a metaphysical description of the individual human as person. They wish to counter views that reduce personhood to materialist definition coterminous with some or other qualitative reading of physiological phenomena. Equally deficient in their view is the increasingly popular Christian compatibilism which allows personhood to be untethered freely from bodily reality as a separate criteria of

conscious identity - clearly potentially problematic for discussions of beginning and end of life issues.

The book is divided in two parts, 1: metaphysical reflections on human personhood, and 2: ethical reflections of human personhood. We open with a chapter that establishes a framework for approaching human personhood. This allows a brief survey of biblical material leading the authors to conclude that what is needed is a Thomistic version of substance dualism - which is nevertheless functionally holistic. By this they mean to defend a traditional account of body-soul dualism, using exegesis that points to the existence of immaterial beings in an intermediate state, meaning that a human is always a person, but that a person is essentially defined as a soul rather than a body. Chapters two to six explore in highly philosophical detail the arguments for and against this substance-dualism.

Part two relates the metaphysical stance to questions about the status of the unborn with regard to abortion, fetal research, reproductive and genetic technologies, as well as end of life issues of care and physician assisted suicide.

This reviewer is unconvinced. Despite the intricacy of the arguments we might demur initially over the scriptural interpretation in chapter one. We might suspect that the philosophical framework that drives the bulk of the book is actually driving the exegesis. Further, despite the occasional claim throughout that the authors are giving us a theological and philosophical treatment, this book is very thin on theology. (Indeed, even as a work of natural theology we are told that 'our conclusions about personhood are consistent with but not dependent upon our theological views' (241).) An initial chapter of proof-texting just will not do. If the proof of the pudding is in the eating then, whatever one makes of the intricacies of the metaphysical

arguments as they stand alone, the weakness of section two can only undermine the former. For example, it is incredible that a Christian treatment of reproductive technologies has nothing to say by way of critique of these technologies *per se*. A casuistry of how Christians might negotiate the minefield blatantly cries out for prior theological reflection of the whole area. Should the minefield be entered at all? Is infertility a disease that intervention ought to cure? Whatever our answer we should be surprised that the questions are never asked here. It simply does not do to limit discussion by addressing only those specific issues of personhood that the substance-dualism view raises, as the authors plead. Precisely because personhood becomes a matter of individual possession we lose a whole perspective of gift and thanksgiving, or relationality on a vertical and horizontal plain that properly should have a place in a theological description of the creature as creature. The staunch defence of thomistic substance-dualism is actually fatally imprisoned in the modern individualism that it purports to escape in retreating to an earlier source.

**Andy Draycott**  
Coimbra, Portugal

### **Genetic Turning Points: The Ethics of Human Intervention**

*James C. Peterson*  
Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001,  
xiv + 364 pp., £15.99/\$22

James Peterson's book on the ethics of human genetic intervention may be, to date, the best book written by a Christian on the topic. This is no small praise when judged against the number of books on the topic, yet such praise is warranted only if we understand what the book is not.

First, it is not a theological analysis of the topic, if by theological analysis we mean thought about practical

questions that is systematically integrated with doctrinal beliefs. Despite several sections detailing what he considers to be the relevant Christian doctrines, when getting down to discussion of particulars we suddenly find his summary of Christian 'attitudes' to have transmuted into the terminology of American secular medical ethics, revolving around the terms autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice. These terms are drawn from the 'bible' of secular medical ethics, Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress' *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), under whom Peterson did his PhD at the University of Virginia. Having trained with Beauchamp and Childress, Peterson can be said to be representative of contemporary medical ethics orthodoxy, concerned as it is with addressing its arguments to a liberal pluralist society rather than from and to the Christian church.

By making political liberalism his reference point, Peterson gives up his resources to resist the medical establishment's essentially uncritical embrace of genetic technology. Thus the second thing this book is not about is indicated in its subtitle. It is a book about how to manipulate the human genome responsibly. Behind that question is a simple acceptance that we will and should so manipulate, based on Peterson's acceptance of the familiar course of all modern thought: because others suffer, any inactivity becomes culpable (51, *passim*), and good human action is designed to provide people with more choice (340, *passim*). It is precisely here that a theological critique could make some serious headway, but Peterson's delight at the technological possibilities makes any more critical stance superfluous.

Despite these rather sweeping criticisms, this book still has much to offer a broad range of readers, and its merits stem from Peterson's extensive

clinical experience as a research fellow in molecular and clinical genetics. Few of the many writers on this topic have opinions that are based on first hand experience of the practicalities of the technology. Peterson is at his best when accurately and comprehensively surveying the state of the art in clinical practice, and clinic based ethicists' responses to those challenges. This is a book which gives a very clear picture of the ways in which genetics is radically changing the shape of modern medicine.

The four main foci of the book are genetic research, genetic testing, genetic drugs (adding gene products to the body), and gene surgery (changing genes in the human body). In each area Peterson explains the current technical possibilities, their practical clinical implications, and soberly assesses what may be possible in the coming decades. He sympathetically outlines the challenges which the new technologies bring to patients, doctors, the legal profession, the insurance profession, and national government. We are made privy to the ways the technical choices facing clinical and scientific practitioners have wide reaching implications across all of society. For those who are not familiar with the inner workings of the modern medical complex, such details are highly informative.

It is tempting to think that because the book is so informative, its ethical prescriptions are similarly cogent, but here the lack of theological acumen makes the book badly misleading. In Peterson's world one of the most important questions is how best to properly direct the inevitable project of human eugenics (ch. 15), while a proper theological ethic would begin to question the use of genetic technologies long before embracing such a wholesale remaking of the human race.

**Brian Brock**

King's College London

## Religious Studies

### Border Crossings – Christian Trespasses on Popular Culture and Public Affairs

*Radney Clapp*

Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000,

224 pp., \$16.99

This is an eclectic series of essays from the former senior editor for academic and general books at IVP (US). The essays cover a wide range of topics: Jazz, Epistemology, Winnie the Pooh, Thanksgiving, The X Files, and the Eucharist to name but a few. The initial temptation is to dismiss this book as an ill thought out compilation of random articles for various Christian journals and magazines, but there is a clue in the introduction that suggests another reading strategy. 'People learn how to farm, just as they learn how to read or build jet airplanes, from watching and listening and being apprenticed to masters who were themselves earlier apprentices' (10). What Clapp offers in this book is an apprenticeship in the art of theological cultural critique. This makes the wide-ranging nature of the book a virtue as it allows for a wide variety of test cases on which to observe the critic in action. Clapp is a master of his art and he exposes the Western Evangelical Church's accommodation to late modern culture.

Three areas receive consistent attention consumerism, individualism and epistemological foundationalism and each are dealt within a core essay. In 'How firm a foundation?' Clapp expounds his anti-foundational epistemology. Classical foundationalism argues that a belief is justified if it can be inferred from a set of self-evident foundational beliefs. Clapp rejects this approach as an accommodation to Enlightenment rationalism and argues instead for a more holistic approach to justification



that takes into account the influence of tradition on shaping what we find self-evident. Clapp is heavily influenced in his theology and epistemology by thinkers such as Stanley Hauerwas, John Milbank, Alasdair MacIntyre and George Lindbeck.

In 'The theology of consumption and the consumption of theology' Clapp explores the influence of advanced capitalism on Christian thought. He skillfully uses instances from the history of the church to demonstrate the subtle effect that changes in culture have brought on the values of the church. He argues that the reformation at least laid the foundation for western consumerism by 'rationalising and submitting all of life to the criterion of efficiency, by rendering the making money honourable, by isolating or individualising the believer, and by so doing turning the believer's attention inward toward introspection' (133). There is a challenge in this chapter to re-evaluate our personal acquiescence to consumerism.

The third central essay is 'From Family Values to Family Virtues' where Clapp uses historical and biblical studies on the place of the extended family times to expose an atomism in western family life that sentimentalises the nuclear family and disregards wider social and communal responsibilities. Clapp argues that 'Family needs purpose beyond itself and it mere sentimentality to survive and prosper' (116).

This book draws together elements of Clapp's other publications: *Families at Crossroads* (IVP, 1993), *Consuming Passion* (IVP, 1999) and *A Peculiar People* (IVP, 1996), and offers a helpful overview of his thought in one volume. There is however an ad hoc nature to the book as the articles were meant to stand alone and address an American evangelical audience. As a result there is a significant amount of repetition in the book because the dominant

themes emerge in many different chapters and there are a number of places where identical paragraphs appear in the book. But the tutelage provided in cultural criticism is first rate. Clapp challenges theologians to venture outside of their cosy academic ghettos and proclaim the implications of the gospel for public life and contemporary culture.

**Krish Kandiah**

Harrow

## The C.S. Lewis Encyclopedia

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Colin Duriez

Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books;

distr. UK by Kingsway

240 pp., £14.99.

This well-filled reference book is attractively produced in typical Crossway fashion, on quality paper with care taken over layout and avoiding too cramped a look – important, when a mass of information is to be presented. It is a much more detailed and substantial follow-up to the author's earlier *C.S. Lewis Handbook*, even if 'Encyclopedia' might seem too grand a title for a 240 page paperback. Colin Duriez justifies his title by pointing to the encyclopedic range of Lewis's writing, which is fair enough. Intended for the reader who knows Narnia or some of Lewis's other popular titles, or has seen *Shadowlands*, the book sets out to guide and inform further explorations into the diverse aspects of Lewis's work.

Colin Duriez – who is General Books Editor at IVP, UK – is an excellent companion for such explorations. He has written extensively about Lewis (he is a contributor, for example, to the recent *Reading the Classics with C.S. Lewis* – Baker, 2000: UK distributor Paternoster). He has lectured on Lewis topics all over the world and shows, in a fascinating introduction, that his love of Lewis's work has been a life-long one.

The entries in the encyclopedia range from brief amplifications of minor characters in the novels to extensive discussions of key themes such as 'Joy', 'Inklings' and 'Paganism and mysticism in C.S. Lewis'. The book summaries, as in the earlier *Handbook*, are very good, and will be a helpful preparation for reading some of the more daunting books like *Till We Have Faces*. Sometimes a little more information would be useful, such as why and how *That Hideous Strength* was abridged for paperback, but on the whole the summaries are models of how these things should be done. There is a useful bibliography and a reference guide.

There are, inevitably, omissions: for example, no entry for the volume of essays *Fern Seeds and Elephants* (nor under its US title *Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism*), though other collections of essays have entries. Several of Lewis's books – for example some works of literary criticism – do not have separate entries, which is probably the right decision given the aim of the book. On the other hand, if Walter Hooper is included surely Clyde Kilby should be in as well, especially given his role in the establishing of the Marion E. Wade Center Lewis collection at Wheaton. The book, correctly in my opinion, avoids a number of well-trodden Lewis minefields: you won't find entries for Kathy Lindskoog or A. N. Wilson, for example, and issues such as the nature of the relationship between Lewis and Mrs Moore are sensibly and sensitively handled. On the other hand, Duriez, like Walter Hooper in his *C.S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide*, ignores the robust criticisms made by Dame Helen Gardner of Lewis' critical qualities; a pity, as Gardner made no secret of her warm appreciation of Lewis and so her critique is all the more worth taking seriously, if only to refute it.

But this is a highly recommendable book, written with expertise and great

enthusiasm. It will make readers aware of the range of C.S. Lewis' work and equip them to explore it. It won't replace Hooper's weighty *Companion and Guide*, but as Colin Duriez points out in the introduction, it isn't intended to. As an aid to exploration and discovery, it should do valuable service for readers looking for help in getting to know one of the twentieth century's most remarkable Christians.

**David Porter**

Liss

### 'A Kind of Bible': Vincent Van Gogh as Evangelist

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*Anton Wessels*

1990: London: SCM edition trs John Bowden, 2000, 152 pp., £9.95

This translation from the prolific John Bowden might come as a surprise to those who know Van Gogh only as a turbulent artist, who abandoned an early attachment to the church and Christianity in favour of a deeply personal artistic vision. Anton Wessels, Professor of Missiology and Religion in the Free University, Amsterdam, argues that on the contrary, Van Gogh the artist was as much an evangelist as he had been when he was a young preacher-in-training, though he had left the institutional church behind.

Wessel's style is terse, his chapters broken up into brief segments. It is an effective way of telling a story, particularly in the swiftly-narrated biographical sketch that opens the book. However, in the next section – 'Vincent as Preacher and Evangelist', continuing to his dismissal at the age of 27 for over-radical application of texts and for working so hard that his health was put at risk – the author provides scant help to assess Van Gogh's qualities as a preacher. More samples of his sermons would have been useful, and some indication of popular sermon styles of the period. As it is, Vincent comes across as a

sincere and determined preacher without much gift of communication to the poor and illiterate. This doesn't really fit with the accounts of the enthusiastic reception of his preaching by such congregations. We are told that his dismissal was for his lack of a preaching gift, notwithstanding a recognised social concern and a fine record of personal sacrificial work for the poor and disadvantaged.

Moving on to 'Van Gogh as a Painter-Evangelist', Wessels provides useful analysis of the various influences on the developing artist. Illustrating his argument throughout from Van Gogh's writings, he argues that all his work was religious in character, exhibiting compassion and a sense of the worth and reality of 'ordinary' life. There is a consistent movement away from organised religion and an affirmation of simple peasant piety, general religious truth, and the example of hardworking clerics who served the people faithfully. The Potato Eaters' was, for its painter, a kind of holy family (81), and light assumes an increasingly religious significance. However, Wessels is careful to point out that Van Gogh does not oppose image to word but gives due value to both.

Van Gogh's concept of Christ is discussed in an illuminating chapter. He was deeply influenced by à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, admired Bunyan, and had an affinity with Rembrandt. Though he painted few biblical themes, he explored a Millet-inspired sower theme, created a Pièta heavily influenced by Delacroix's use of colour, and painted a version of a Rembrandt etching of the raising of Lazarus. Wessel's commentary on these works is fascinating, showing how colour for Van Gogh was a proof of reality, and how light continued to be a religious metaphor in his work.

He concludes with the necessary question of whether Van Gogh's break from organised religion meant an abandoning of Christian faith. The

chapter starts with a fusillade of rhetorical questions drawn from various commentators, probing various interpretations of the mature Vincent's faith. One with which many readers will sympathise, following a classic exposition of Van Gogh's visual language in John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972), is the view that images in Vincent's later work symbolise a loss of faith. But the author argues that it was not Christianity that Vincent rejected but a version of Christianity, a rejection chiefly located in his break with his father. The artist, Millet became a substitute father, and beliefs such as Millet's, a substitute for bourgeois Christianity. The case is well argued, especially in the discussion of light in Vincent's thought and art, and by close attention to the letters as well as the paintings Wessels suggests a much broader interpretation of Vincent's use of religious symbols than has sometimes been allowed.

This compact little book is packed with thought-provoking and well-documented argument and deserves to be widely read. My only lingering doubt is that many who have abandoned institutional religion in favour of a more broadly-based view of God have ended up believing in nothing at all. The thrust of this book is that Vincent van Gogh was not such a person; but to make an entirely convincing case would, I suspect, demand a rather more substantial book.

**David Porter**

Liss

## Missiology

### The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission

*Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (eds)*  
Leicester: Apollos, 2000,  
429 pp., £16.99

This substantial collection of twenty-three essays is in honour of P.T. O'Brien, Vice-Principal of Moore Theological College, Sydney. It also contains an appreciation of his life and work by a colleague.

The editors have organised the essays into four loose groupings. These concern theological perspectives on Paul's mission, various aspects of the mission itself, the context of Paul's mission in the Graeco-Roman world, and the implications of Paul's theology and mission for subsequent Christian thought and mission. The contributors often assume affirmative answers to the questions of Paul's authorship of the Pastorals and the historical reliability of Acts.

Such a collection is inevitably diverse, but there are themes around which groups of essays cluster. Those by Graeme Goldsworthy, William Dumbrell and Andrew Shead all present Salvation History as a vital element in any theological assessment of Paul's mission. Paul's reflections on suffering feature strongly in the essays by Ralph Martin and Scott Hafemann; the relationship between his thought and that of Graeco-Roman philosophy in those by Richard Gibson and Peter Bolt. Some contributors seem disturbed by Paul's perceived failure to do things that, judged from an evangelical perspective, he ought to have done. David Wenham and David Seccombe both argue that, despite our lack of evidence on the matter, Paul must have used stories of Jesus' teaching in his preaching of the gospel. Don Carson turns this genre to better account when he moves from a

consideration of Paul's apparent failure to pray for the lost to a questioning of our own pattern of prayer.

As always in such a collection the quality of the contributions varies, but there are some fine essays. Paul Barnett reviews the questions of whether Judaism was a missionary religion and I. Howard Marshall surveys Luke's portrait of Paul's mission. Neither of these essays breaks new ground, but they provide excellent introductions to their subjects. Michael Hill provides some interesting observations on theology and ethics in Romans, and the previously mentioned essays by Ralph Martin and Scott Hafemann are argued carefully.

Perhaps the best essays in the book are the very different contributions from Mark Thompson and Edwin Judge. Thompson calls for a more central role to be given to the Bible in contemporary systematic theology. He points out that, for all the other differences between our context and his, we are, eschatologically speaking, in the same missionary context as Paul. His letters are therefore of far more direct relevance to the situation of contemporary Christians than is sometimes imagined by theologians. Thompson provides less justification for his move from this conclusion to the assertion that revelation is essentially propositional, but his final seven-point agenda for theological study contains much that both evangelicals and many others will find thought-provoking.

Judge considers the impact of Paul's gospel on ancient society. This essay is a joy because he is not afraid to challenge several scholarly common places. Against the view that the gospel did little to produce social change Judge argues that Paul's theme of the inner man (Paul took an unparalleled interest in searching his own heart) found later expression in early monasticism. Similarly, his theme of the one new man (Paul's

insistence that Jews and Gentiles form a single social unity) found later expression in Christian attitudes towards martyrdom. The fashion in which they did so would sometimes have surprised Paul, but Judge argues that the links can be traced. The social impact of the gospel may not be found in those areas where our contemporary values might lead us to expect it, but that does not mean that there was none.

Most of the more stimulating essays happen to be concentrated in the second half of the book. Those readers who fear that they will not manage to read all the essays may be well advised to begin at the back!

**Stephen Chester**

International Christian College,  
Glasgow

### **Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Religions**

*John Bowker (ed.)*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000,  
702 pp., £8.99/\$15.95

This is an abridged version of the Oxford Dictionary of World Religions originally published in 1997. All the original entries have been retained, but longer articles have been shortened, and bibliographies have been removed. The Concise version is still a mine of information. Articles and entries cover the range of the world's religious traditions, many of the key thinkers associated with these traditions, key thinkers *about* religion, and key aspects of the study of the phenomenon of religion, such as breathing, ritual, revelation and so on. There is a helpful topic index at the back of the dictionary where all the relevant articles under a particular theme are listed. This index does not only include the major religious systems, but also lists, for example, philosophers in various traditions, themes such as marriage, death, afterlife, and so on. Where different

religions have different approaches to these issues this too is noted in the index. Within the articles themselves asterisks indicate cross-references to related entries. Variant transliterations of non-English terms are included, so that, for example, a reader searching under 'Koran' will be pointed to 'Qur'an'. Those interested in Chinese religion will benefit from the extensive conversion table between the Wade Giles and the Pinyin systems of romanisation of Chinese words. All of these features make the dictionary a very useful tool. It is also up-to-date. For example, there is an article on Falun Gong, a Chinese New Religious Movement that has come to prominence since the original dictionary was published.

John Bowker contributes an introductory essay which approaches religion from the modernist perspective on religious studies. Thus the origins of religion are identified in the findings of socio-biology, and religions are explained as systems for protection and preservation of society. The essay is, however, sympathetic towards religion and does serve to introduce key themes in the field of religious studies. Most of the contributors also write from the perspective of religious studies rather than from that of an 'insider' to a tradition. This may affect the presentation of certain concepts and the emphasis given or not given to particular themes. In general, however, the entries are fair, balanced and objective.

There are, inevitably, some omissions. Some of these are minor, presumably due to limits of space. For example, some quite significant New Religious Movements are not included. More serious, however, is the lack of material given to African traditional religions and to primal traditions (although African forms of Christianity are well represented). Nor is there any reference to post-modernity, which is already having an impact on religion in the west.

The brevity of the articles means that the dictionary on its own is of limited use in giving an overview to those seeking an introduction to particular religions. However, its breadth of entries means it is an ideal source of reference to use alongside more detailed textbooks. Students and teachers of religious studies will certainly benefit from having either this or, if they can afford the extra £7, the original edition.

**David Miller**

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### **Christian Missions and the Enlightenment: Studies in the History of Christian Missions**

*Brian Stanley*

Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans and  
Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001,  
246 pp., h./b., \$45.00

David Bosch contended that 'The entire modern missionary movement is, to a very real extent, a child of the Enlightenment' (*Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Marynoll, New York, 1991), 274). In this well-edited volume eight scholars interact with this significant statement, approaching it from a variety of perspectives.

Brian Stanley introduces the volume, raising issues, searching for a definition of the Enlightenment, concluding that there was not one but several Enlightenments, the Scottish Enlightenment being particularly influential with regard to mission.

Andrew F. Walls puts the British Protestant Missionary awakening in its European context showing that William Carey entered into a process already established by Pietism and the Moravians. He draws attention to the incompatibility of the pre-Enlightenment concept of Christendom and the desire to retain a Christian society in the face of

Enlightenment ideas of individual responsibility and choice.

Evangelical members of the English Parliament put pressure on the East India Company to permit missionaries to work within its territory. Penny Carson describes this debate as an example of the 'ambiguities of transition' for both supporters and opponents of missions in India claimed to have the well-being of Indian people at heart.

D. Bruce Hindmarsh works with the changes brought by the Enlightenment that created a heightened sense of introspective conscience and a sense of distinctive self-consciousness, a trend developed from the sixteenth century Reformers. Hindmarsh illustrates his thesis by investigating mission in the 1770s in three areas of contrasting culture. He concludes that evangelical conversion narrative requires the conditions of modern society where the individual has scope for self-determination.

Each of the next three contributions, by a scholar with expertise in a particular geographical area, illustrates and develops aspects of the material already discussed by reference to the process of mission in that area. Jane Samson writes of nineteenth century mission dilemmas in the South Pacific. She describes the variety of ethnic groups and cultures, the reactions and struggles of some early missionaries, the tensions they experienced in seeking to retain faith in the universal message of Christianity in the presence of cultural practices which they found abhorrent.

Ian Douglas Maxwell discusses the nineteenth century Scottish debate on mission methods. Two groups existed within Scottish Presbyterianism: the Evangelical Calvinists maintained there were two instruments of conversion, namely the preached word and the written word (Scripture) whereas the Rational Calvinists

believed that a process of civilising would lead to rational conviction. Alexander Duff, a great proponent of the latter, succeeded in gaining support from Evangelicals for the Scottish Church College, Calcutta at the General Assembly of 1835.

Natasha Erland outlines the intellectual and theological context of Scottish missions in the Cape of Good Hope and the changes that took place as Thomas Chalmers' version of 'evangelical Enlightenment' failed to bring about social transformation. The struggling mission benefited from reports of David Livingstone's travels and from Duff's personal intervention. Education was then seen as the key to mission.

Brian Stanley draws conclusions from the foregoing showing how the Enlightenment effected changes from an earlier simple antithesis between Christian and pagan, raising issues of the relationship between Christianity and civilisation and, in particular, the role of education in mission.

In the final chapter Daniel W. Hardy offers a theological perspective and finally gives a definition of the Enlightenment and its implications for mission.

This well-documented volume is an excellent resource. Students of theology and missiology will find the issues that are raised and the variety of perspectives offered give a necessary background to any thinking about mission in the twenty-first century when the largest section of the Christian church lies beyond Europe and North America.

**Elizabeth A. Clark**

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Glasgow

## BOOK NOTES

**Evangelical Dictionary of Theology  
(2nd Edition)***Walter A. Elwell (ed.)*Grand Rapids: Baker Books/Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001,  
1312 pp., h./b., £34.99

The *Themelios* reviewer of the first edition of the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (1985) stated that the work 'must be viewed as the definitive theological dictionary from an evangelical standpoint ... Here is a reference tool that ought, without question to be on the shelf of every university student seminarian and Christian worker' (*Themelios* 11.1, Sept. 1985, p.34). Over fifteen years later, and taking six years to complete, we now have the second edition of the *Dictionary* that covers the spectrum of theological disciplines: systematic, historical, and apologetic as well as theological ethics. Two hundred and fifteen new articles have been added and one hundred deleted, making a total of over 1,300 articles written by over 200 evangelical scholars, drawn predominately from North America. The editor notes that one of the major changes in the new edition has been to include living theologians and so there are articles on figures like Packer, Pannenberg, Lindbeck and Reuther. This is to be welcomed although there are some notable omissions: Cupitt, Milbank, Gunton, Von Balthasar. A number of new theological trends and movements are noted: Post-liberalism and the Jesus Seminar to name but two. However some current evangelical 'hot potatoes' like 'The Openness of God' and the 'New Perspective on Paul' are not mentioned in their own right. As with the first edition, each article has a useful cross-reference section and a bibliography for further reading although it was frustrating that this latter section contains no publisher or

publication date details. Overall, and like the first edition, the quality of scholarship contained in the articles is high for a work of this nature and although there is not a complete theological uniformity among the contributors, the dictionary can be placed, I think, at the 'conservative' end of the evangelical spectrum. This is an important reference work that students will benefit greatly from.

**The Lord's Supper:  
Eternal Word in Broken Bread***Robert Letham*Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001,  
vii + 75 pp., \$8.99

In the introduction to this little book, Letham observes that whereas in the past the Lord's Supper was the 'litmus test that defined a man's religion', today it is often seen as an optional extra. This 'tragic neglect', Letham seeks to rectify. After outlining the biblical foundations of the Lord's Supper, Letham describes the historic Reformed view of communion as real spiritual presence, classically expounded by Calvin and The Westminster Standards, in contrast to other views in Church history: physical presence (transubstantiation and consubstantiation) and real absence (memorialism). A final chapter deals with some practical issues: the elements, the issue of paedo-Communion and the frequency of the Lord's Supper. This is a clear and concise contemporary introduction on a subject that is still not often written about.

**God in Three Persons:  
Biblical Testimony to the Trinity***Allen Vander Pol*Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001,  
vi + 58 pp., \$6.99

This little book does exactly what it says it will do in the title by simply outlining the biblical evidence for the



Trinity. Vander Pol's format is interesting because the first three chapters concentrate on each of the three Persons starting with Christ and then relating the other two Persons to Christ, so 'The God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ' and 'The Spirit of Christ'. There then follow other three chapters. The first one summarises what has been said so far (There is only one true God; This one true God exists as three distinct persons; Each person is fully divine). The next which shows the Trinity in the economy of salvation and looks Titus 3 and Ephesians 1. Finally there is one which answers common objections to the doctrine. Each chapter is accompanied by a number of questions for review and further thought. Vander Pol does not get bogged down in technical theological terms and concepts such as *perichoresis*, *filioque* and *autotheos*, but this is not the aim of a book.

I think this book will be really helpful to new Christians and is an excellent, and user-friendly introduction to the unique doctrine of orthodox Christian belief.

### **Life's Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy**

Ronald H. Nash  
Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1999,  
400 pp., h./b.

Nash has been teaching philosophy for over 40 years and in his introduction says that this book is the kind of book he wishes he had had when he began teaching. The book is aimed at undergraduates who will use it as a text (it certainly looks very 'textbookish'), teachers who will use it as a teaching tool and anyone else interested in philosophy. It is clear that time has been taken to get a structure and layout that will aid the learning process. After an introduction to the place and importance of worldviews in philosophical thought, the book is split into three

parts. Part 1 looks at six conceptual systems with separate chapters on Naturalism, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine and Aquinas. Part 2 introduces many of the well-known problems and topics. After two chapters on the Law of Non-contradiction and Possible Worlds, chapters are grouped into three main areas, epistemology, God, and ethics. The final chapter deals with the mind/body problem. Each chapter has an optional essay question and the further reading list. There is also a glossary at the end of the book.

I have always found Nash to be a lucid writer and it is clear from the outset that he is an experienced teacher and one who has learned how to communicate difficult ideas effectively to students. The book is written in a 'chatty' style as if Nash were in the room giving the lecture himself and there are many personal illustrations which help to explain ideas and which give a 'lighter' feel than many philosophy textbooks. There are also a number of diagrams and a few pictures (if you ever wanted to see portraits of Kant and Locke) although I do not think they add much to the book. Nash does not apologise that he writes from a theistic point of view but hopes that this will not preclude a non-theist using it. I am sure the book will become a standard text in many colleges and as an evangelical I wish I had had such a book on my reading list when I was doing my philosophy of religion course as an undergraduate.

**Daniel Strange**  
Leicester

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# Amazing Grace

## SPEAKERS



### Dr Gerald Bray

ANGLICAN PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY,  
BEESON DIVINITY SCHOOL, SAMFORD  
UNIVERSITY, BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA USA.

Before going to Beeson Divinity School, Gerald was lecturer in Christian Doctrine at Oak Hill College, London. He has written a number of books, including *'The Doctrine of God'* (1993) and *'Biblical Interpretation'* (1996) both IVP. He is a member of the Themelios Committee.



### Dr Desi Alexander

DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN TRAINING AT  
UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, BELFAST.

Prior to this he lectured in Semitic Studies at the Queen's University of Belfast from 1980 to 1999. His research interests lie in Pentateuchal Studies and Biblical Theology. Among his publications are *'From Paradise to the Promised Land'* (Paternoster/ Baker, 1995), *'Abraham in the Negev'* (Paternoster, 1997) and *'The Servant King'* (IVP, 1998). More recently he has co-edited the *'New Dictionary of Biblical Theology'* (IVP, 2000).

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