

# themelios

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April 1989

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An international journal for theological students  
75p

**Vol. 14**

**No. 3**

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Vol. 14 No. 3

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

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North America and Canada orders may  
be sent

c/o IFES Link, 6400 Schroeder Road,  
PO Box 7895, Madison, WI 53707-7895, USA

## Subscription rates

(including postage)

British Isles £3.60

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

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

1 year	£3.60	US \$9.00
2 years	£7.20	US \$17.00
3 years	£10.80	US \$25.00

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

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ISSN 0307-8388

# Editorial: Follow the guidebook!

'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path'; so said the Psalmist (119:105). In today's terms he might have spoken of a map or guidebook, because the Bible speaks of life's destination and of how to get there. People in the modern world typically lack a sense of direction and destination, but 'the holy Scriptures', as Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:15-16, 'are able to make you wise for salvation' (our proper destination) and are 'useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness' (*i.e.* for giving us direction).

Paul explains that the Scriptures are 'inspired by God'. We might put it this way: our Christian guidebook for life was written by a large number of human authors, but the publisher who commissioned and directed the whole writing process and who guarantees the contents is God himself. Of course some modern scholars have emphasized the human nature of Scripture and questioned its divine authority. But their view is at odds with that of Jesus himself and with that of most Christian tradition, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox; and the human errors they have supposedly detected in the guidebook do not add up to a strong case against its divinely guaranteed truth.

The Bible is not the sort of guidebook which gives step-by-step instructions for every stage of our journey. Life is too complex and people too different for such an approach. Instead the Bible shows us how God led his people in days gone by; and as we see how he dealt with his people in various situations in the past, we can appreciate what the same God wants of us in the present (*e.g.* 1 Cor. 10:6-12). Many of the lessons are obvious, especially on central issues of faith and conduct (*e.g.* 'Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved'; 'You shall do no murder'); but sometimes the interpretation of the guidebook is much less obvious (*e.g.* on the Christian view of nuclear deterrence or of women's ministry).

The most important lesson of all in the Bible is what it teaches about the living and loving reality of God. We have (happily) not just been given a guidebook and been told to get on with our journey. We have also been given a guide in the person of Jesus, who has been on the journey before us, and in his Holy Spirit, who helps us understand the guidebook and follow its instructions. Just as some guidebooks contain addresses and 'phone numbers of people who can help the traveller, so the Bible shows us how to get and keep in touch with our heavenly guide.

If all this is true, we should treasure the Bible, not because it is anything in itself, but because it comes from God and leads us to God. We should treasure it not by putting it on a

pedestal or in a glass case, but by paying the closest attention to its teaching and guidance.

This is part of the justification for biblical and theological research. The Christian church needs scholars who will study the guidebook and its implications, avoiding on the one hand the scepticism of those scholars who think they know better than the guidebook and on the other hand the errors of those who use the Bible in a superficial way, taking texts out of context rather than wrestling with the profundities of biblical teaching. Readers of *Themelios* who are interested in research may like to know of the reissued pamphlet, *Serving Christ through biblical and theological research*, which is available free of charge from Tyndale House, 36 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge CB3 9BA. (Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope if writing from within UK.)

But what we have said is important not just for those doing research, but for every Christian student of theology and religious studies. It is all too easy for theological students and others to read books about the Bible and theology rather than the Bible itself, and to base their ideas on a rather vague impression of what they suppose the Bible means instead of on serious study of the Christian guidebook. But to travel through unknown country without paying careful attention to the map, though it may sometimes be fun, is dangerous at the best of times (as many of us know to our cost). It is especially dangerous, indeed potentially fatal, in spiritual matters, because there are so many voices to confuse us and our own instincts are not to be trusted (because of sin). It may be fashionable to sit rather lightly to Scripture, but the fashion must be unequivocally rejected. There is nothing more important for ourselves, for the church and the world than that we keep our Bibles open, and that (in the words of the ancient collect) we 'read, mark, learn and inwardly digest' what God caused to be written for our learning.

## New *Themelios* editor

We are delighted to announce the appointment of the Rev Dr Christopher Wright as the new general editor of *Themelios*, as from the next issue. Dr Wright has taught at Union Biblical Seminary in India for the past five years, but has recently been appointed tutor and Director of Academic Studies at All Nations Christian College in Britain. He is already known to many readers through his writing in the fields of OT studies, Christian ethics and biblical interpretation. The present editor would like to express his gratitude to all those who have helped and supported him in many ways and to request your ongoing support and prayer for Dr Wright.

# The place of biblical criticism in theological study

Gordon J. Wenham

*This article was the 1988 Griffith Thomas lecture given at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford. The author, who teaches at the College of St Paul and St Mary in Cheltenham, is well known for his writings on the Old Testament, his most recent book being a major commentary on Genesis 1-14 (in the Word series).*

'Tis mystery all! The immortal dies.  
Who can explore his strange design?'

These great lines of Charles Wesley's draw attention to the greatest of all mysteries in Christian theology, the death of Christ. How could the eternal Son of God, the agent of creation, die? How could the Son who always enjoyed perfect union with the Father cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Wherever we look in the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation, we are faced with paradox and mystery. 'That the Father is God, the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not three Gods, but one God' (Athanasian Creed). Our human minds cannot comprehend how God can be both three persons, but only one. We cannot understand how Christ can be both fully God and fully man. If he is not omnipotent can he be truly God? But if he is, is he really human? Such dilemmas try and perplex us at every turn in theology. We are tempted to deny one truth in order to uphold another. But this is not the course taken by main-line Christian orthodoxy. With great persistence the church has insisted on maintaining both Christ's full humanity and his full divinity.

## Mystery — a characteristic of Christian doctrine

But the necessity of holding in tension apparently mutually irreconcilable doctrines is not confined to Christology and Trinitarian thought. It is found in many other areas of doctrine as well. The doctrines of divine sovereignty and human responsibility may be logically incompatible, but a Christian is not free to reject either. If we deny that God is in control of all events, we become virtual atheists, or at least we deny the value of all intercessory prayer; for why pray, if God cannot respond to our prayers and do something about what we ask? Conversely the denial of human responsibility undercuts all exertion in any direction. We shall become fatalists unwilling to throw ourselves into evangelism or any good works: 'what will be, will be' will be our motto and nothing will get done! But Scripture and Christian theologians assert both doctrines are essential and mutually complementary, even if they are not logically reconcilable.

We could go on: the doctrines of grace contain similar tensions, antinomies, paradoxes, or mysteries, describe them how you will. Both Jesus and Paul teach that God freely forgives sinners; both teach that all men, even believers, will be judged by their works and rewarded. It was Paul who said, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God' (Rom. 5),

who also said, 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil according to what he has done in the body' (2 Cor. 5:10). If mediaeval Christianity tended to overlook the doctrine of justification by faith, I fear twentieth-century Christians play down the doctrine of judgment. The doctrines are certainly very difficult to reconcile, so it is not surprising if we cleave to the one and reject the other. But fidelity to our Lord and the apostles surely involves upholding both.

Often it is the discovery that we have grasped only half the truth of a particular doctrine that makes theological study so uncomfortable. There must have been many theological students who have been dismayed to discover that the Christology they have assumed for years is technically heretical. Christians from a conservative background may come to realize that their beliefs about the Trinity are essentially modalist, that is that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are merely different descriptions of the one God. Whereas those from liberal backgrounds are liable to discover that their Christology is adoptionist, *i.e.* that Christ became fully Son of God during his ministry, or Arian, *i.e.* that Christ is not God to the same degree as the Father. And if you avoid falling into one of these errors you may well discover you have embraced some other position such as monophysitism or nestorianism, gnosticism or montanism; pelagianism, or antinomianism, that no orthodox right-thinking Christian should dally with.

And it can be a painful process adapting our thinking to the truth of revelation. It requires humility to recognize and accept that what we believed in the past is not the whole truth, and then to reprogramme our minds and wills to the new truth. For Christian doctrines have an ethical as well as an intellectual dimension. To affirm that Jesus Christ is fully God as well as fully man means committing oneself unreservedly and totally to his teaching and obeying it to the letter. Similarly the doctrines of original sin and human depravity will affect profoundly our actions and attitudes across a wide range of social, political, spiritual and pastoral issues. And adjusting ourselves to these new aspects of truth can be a very painful process.

But I suspect that if either you or your lecturers discover during your study that you are a Sabellian montanist or semi-pelagian gnostic, it will not cause over-much excitement. Such deviants are commonplace today and in this pluralistic society are usually accepted without much fuss. However should you be diagnosed as a fundamentalist your fate may be very different. In the modern theology faculty fundamentalism is the great heresy. It is regarded as nearly as dangerous as the HIV virus and is treated with similar fervour but with rather less tact and sympathy. Fundamentalists will find themselves denounced in lectures and tutorials, and doubtless be encouraged to read James Barr's books on the

subject. And those of this persuasion or even simply brought up in a fairly traditional church may well find their studies rather difficult in consequence. I still remember with sadness two of my tutorial partners at Cambridge. Neither could have been branded fundamentalist, but both were devout Christians intent on ordination. However as a result of their study they both lost their faith and neither entered the ministry.

So what is this fundamentalism that causes so much controversy? The term 'fundamentalism' has been called a theological swear-word, and it is used differently by different people — usually in abuse. Sometimes the term is used in a narrow sense to describe an exceptionally literalistic and wooden approach to the interpretation of the Bible; in this sense the name would be disowned by many evangelical Christians. But the word is commonly used much more broadly, for example, by Barr, to refer to Christians who hold to most traditional Christian doctrines and who in particular insist on the truthfulness of the whole Bible as God's written word. It is on the doctrine of Scripture that the critics of fundamentalism focus. For them the Bible contains essentially a variety of viewpoints, some of which contradict each other. It is not always reliable historically or theologically. To understand the Bible aright, all the tools of biblical criticism need to be employed. They will allow us not simply to correct the errors in the biblical text, but help us to read Scripture in context as a book of its time, with the assumptions and limitations of the age in which it was written. It is the rejection of biblical critical method and the naïvety of fundamentalist interpretation that is the focus of modern theologians' complaints.

Is criticism the indispensable tool for understanding Scripture as its protagonists argue, or is it, as it so often appears to the theological student, just a means of relativizing the Bible so that we cannot be sure what we should believe about anything? These are the issues on which I wish to focus.

### Scripture — a divine and human work

The role we ascribe to biblical criticism depends to a large extent on our understanding of the nature of Scripture. Is it a divine book or a human one? Is the fundamentalist right to insist on the divinity of Scripture, or the biblical scholar more correct in underlining its humanity? I wish to argue here that such antitheses are wrong: it is not the case of either divine or human, but it is a case of both human and divine. As in many other aspects of Christian doctrine, the incarnation, the Trinity, grace and law, we are confronted with two truths, both of which need to be affirmed; neither can be dispensed with, yet they cannot be fully reconciled by mortal man. In the doctrine of Scripture we confront another antinomy, paradox, or mystery, of a book that is at once fully human and fully divine.

Perhaps before considering what implications this view of Scripture has for its interpretation, we should very briefly review the evidence for its being both a divine and a human work. The OT constantly claims divine authorship. Most of the laws begin 'the LORD said to Moses', while the ten commandments are said to have been written by the finger of God. The prophets typically introduce their messages with 'thus says the LORD', while the narrator of the historical books adopts an omniscient perspective.<sup>1</sup> He describes the

secret thoughts of men's hearts and also analyses the divine intentions, something beyond the scope of any human author. Within the NT the divine authorship and authority of the OT is always assumed and frequently asserted. For Jesus the OT is the word of God (Mk. 7:13; Jn. 10:35). According to St Paul it is all inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). And the claim that the NT comes from God too is also clear in many passages (Mt. 5:22, 28, 32, 34, etc.; 1 Cor. 14:37).

This attitude towards the Bible was continued by the early church. Kelly writes, 'It goes without saying that the fathers envisaged the whole of the Bible as inspired . . . their general view was that Scripture was not only exempt from error but contained nothing that was superfluous.'<sup>2</sup> According to Jerome, 'In the divine Scriptures every word, syllable, accent and point is packed with meaning.'<sup>3</sup>

If the divine character of Scripture has been affirmed by believers throughout the ages, its human qualities are equally apparent to careful readers, even though this aspect has only attracted detailed attention in the last two centuries. Most obviously, the fact that we have four gospels demonstrates the humanness of Scripture. Here we have four portraits of our Lord by four authors each with their own particular slant and emphasis. Then the epistles are addressed to different churches each with their own special problems, each demanding a response by the apostle to their particular needs. The variety of styles, the tendency for the writers to go off at tangents, all attest the fact that we are dealing with human compositions by human authors each with their own idiosyncrasies. Indeed the more you think about it, the more obvious it is that Scripture has to be a human book, if it is to communicate with man. For if it had been written in God's language as opposed to Israelite Hebrew or Koine Greek, no-one could have understood it without first learning God's language. But written in Hebrew the OT was at least immediately intelligible to an ancient Israelite, while the NT was equally accessible to first-century readers of Greek.

So then, Scripture is both a completely divine book and a totally human book. Neither aspect should be overlooked in the study of Scripture. We must bear both in mind as we read it and seek to apply it today. The dual nature of Scripture causes various problems, but none of the tensions are intrinsically any worse than those posed by the other doctrines I mentioned earlier. We face paradox and mystery here, just as we do in understanding the incarnation and atonement. But if we acknowledge that we do not understand how the immortal could die, we will not despair when confronted by the mystery of Scripture's dual nature.

### The indispensability of biblical criticism

What then is the place of biblical criticism in the study of Scripture? Very important, indeed indispensable, but not all-important. Biblical criticism is essential to the understanding of Scripture as a divine work. Let me elaborate.

I have already said that if God was to be understood by man, he had to speak in a human language. Had he addressed us in the language of the angels we would have been little the wiser. He chose rather to reveal himself to particular people in particular situations in their own language, in their own dialects and idioms. So if we are to understand those messages, we must somehow seek to put ourselves back into

the situation of the original recipients of the Word. We must discover exactly what the original authors of the Scriptures meant by their words. And this is where the arts of biblical criticism become necessary.

Let me list and illustrate some of the branches of biblical criticism that aid the interpretation of the Bible. There is first of all textual criticism. Whenever documents are copied, especially when copied by hand, mistakes are liable to creep in. And even in this age of computer typesetting I have found some very odd mistakes in my proofs from time to time. Similar things have unfortunately happened in the copying of the biblical text. We do not have the original text of Isaiah or St Paul's epistles, only copies; indeed in most cases copies of copies, so that there has been plenty of chance for errors to creep in. This is particularly the case in the NT, partly because there are many more manuscripts of it and partly because Christians were less careful copiers than the Jews! However thanks to the skills of the textual critics these errors can be spotted and the text restored to very nearly its original purity. To quote F. F. Bruce, "The various readings about which any doubt remains . . . affect no material question of historic fact or of Christian faith and practice."<sup>4</sup> We can in other words be very confident that our restored texts are so close to the original that there is no significant difference in meaning between them and the originals.

But once we have our restored texts, as near as makes no difference to the original, how do we establish what they mean? This brings us to the science of philology and linguistics, which has been most fruitfully applied to the understanding of the Bible; in particular James Barr has here made an immense and positive contribution to biblical interpretation. His studies<sup>5</sup> have transformed our approach to determining the precise meaning of words in Scripture. So often sermons are based on sloppy etymologies or words or phrases taken out of context, but linguistics has shown that this is quite mistaken. So quite central terms in the Bible's theological vocabulary, e.g. faith, soul, redemption, justification, may have been misunderstood by amateurs who fail to understand how language works. Modern linguistics has taught us to examine the context in which words are used rather than their etymology to determine their meaning. It has taught us to study language synchronically before studying it diachronically. In practice this means we must examine the usage of a word in a particular book of the Bible before examining its usage and meaning elsewhere. Just because a word means one thing in one writer, it does not necessarily follow that another writer uses it in exactly the same way. And once we recognize this principle we may well be on the way to resolving the apparent contradictions between different parts of Scripture, for example between Paul and James.

The next area of biblical criticism has burgeoned in the last decade. It is the new literary criticism, especially associated in Britain with Sheffield University. It is, I believe, one of the disciplines in biblical criticism of most potential value to would-be biblical expositors in that it opens up whole new vistas in the biblical narratives so that characters in the story come alive as real people not as mere names on the page. The new literary criticism has made us much more sensitive to the inner feelings of the actors in the Bible so that we can identify with them more closely.

Let me give a short example. Literary critics insist that repetition within a story often offers very valuable clues to the attitudes of the people involved. We must examine closely who says what, and what phrases they use.

For example, after God has promised Sarah a child, she laughs in disbelief. The RSV says, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' And it is remarkable that such brazen unbelief should be treated so mildly by God. Think of Isaiah's rebuke of King Ahaz when he refused to believe his message (Is. 7:13). But Sarah apparently gets away with it. Why?

A careful examination of the phraseology here gives the answer. The narrator first of all gives an objective, almost clinical, account of Sarah's situation: 'Abraham and Sarah were old, well on in years. Sarah had stopped having periods.' But Sarah describes herself more colourfully: 'After I am worn out, shall I have pleasure? And my husband is old too.'

From her language we see her real state of mind. It is not blind unbelief, rather it is the hopelessness of a woman exhausted by life who has been disappointed so often that she dare not believe things will change. And this is why God in his mercy treats her so gently and in the face of her doubts and lies reaffirms his promise and indeed quickly fulfils it.

In some ways this new-style literary criticism is a reversion to the older exegetical methods used before the nineteenth century. Reading the older commentaries, e.g. of Calvin or the mediaeval rabbis, one sometimes comes across interpretations like this. But this new-style criticism is a great advance over these old works. Their insights rested on the imagination of the commentator, and one is therefore never really quite sure whether Calvin's interpretation would have met with the biblical writers' approval. But the new literary criticism is based much more closely on hints contained within the text itself, so I dare to hope it is indeed enabling us to recover the original writers' understanding.

Next I should like to turn to an area of criticism that sometimes raises problems, but again has produced many valuable insights, indeed is indispensable to a fair and accurate understanding of Scripture. It is historical criticism. Under this heading I shall mention source criticism, issues of dating biblical books, and the writing of biblical history.

To understand the message of the Bible it is absolutely essential to have some understanding of the social setting in which its books were written. Otherwise we shall import our own twentieth-century models, impose them on the text and come up with quite a misleading interpretation. For example, Genesis 2:24 makes a very significant comment about the nature of marriage: 'For this reason a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.' But what exactly does it mean? A Westerner reading this passage might well conclude that it is endorsing our practice of setting up home independently of our parents, often indeed a long way from them. Indeed I remember reading a book by a missionary in Nigeria who criticized Nigerian men for continuing to live near their parents after they married. This he said was unbiblical and harmful to the marriage relationship! In fact what the Nigerians did was precisely what the Israelites did!! On marriage it was the woman who moved, not the man. The man stayed put, because he would succeed to his father's job and land, and the

new wife moved in with him. In a literal physical sense the ancient Israelite man did not leave his family at all. So what is Genesis 2:24 really saying? Something far more profound than telling you where to live when you marry: it is talking about priorities and commitments. Before marriage a man's first obligations are to his parents. In the Ten Commandments, 'honour your father and mother' comes immediately after our obligations to God and before 'Thou shalt not kill'. In the ancient world filial duty was regarded as the supreme obligation. But according to Genesis 2:24 marriage changes this. Now a man's first duty is to care for his wife, and secondarily to care for his parents. 'He leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife.' Read in the context of OT society, rather than modern ideas, we see that Genesis 2:24 is a statement that revolutionizes the status of married women. Wives are not mere appendages or chattels of their husbands, rather the welfare of his wife must be a man's first concern.

Perhaps I may give another illustration of the necessity of understanding the social setting of the Bible if we are to grasp its intentions correctly. Leviticus 19:9-10 says, 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap the field to its very border. . . . The motive of this law is then explained: 'You shall leave them for the poor and the sojourner [i.e. the immigrant].' But J. V. Taylor in his book *Enough is Enough* expounded this text as proof of the Bible's ecological concern, that we should not exploit the earth to its limits. And in a lecture I heard him say he was outraged at visiting an agricultural show where combine harvesters which boasted of their ability to reap right up to the edge of the field were on display. How unbiblical, he said! But he had failed to grasp the purpose of the law and the difference between our society and theirs. The law is designed to help the poor of ancient Israel, who were scattered throughout the land and could indeed easily go into the countryside and glean in the fields of their well-to-do neighbours (see the book of Ruth). But the poor of our society are in the cities, far from the fields. To leave the edges of our fields unreaped would not help them in the least. We must devise quite different welfare measures in our society to help our poor. So I believe historical criticism has a most important role to play in delineating the nature of biblical society. Without such sociological study we are liable to make terrible mistakes in interpreting and applying Scripture today.

The disciplines of source, form, and redaction criticism can also contribute to our understanding of the Bible. Form criticism has made us aware of the conventions that guided the biblical authors. It enables us to appreciate why they arranged material in the way they did, for example in the laws, the psalms, and the epistles. Through form criticism we can be more clear about the writers' intentions: why they included certain details and omitted others. And this knowledge should keep us from misinterpreting and misapplying biblical texts today.

Source and redaction criticism can again be valuable aids to interpretation. Source criticism is concerned with elucidating the sources used by the biblical writers. For example the book of Kings often refers to the royal annals of Judah and Israel, suggesting that if one wants further details about the events recorded these annals should be consulted. And for a historian concerned to reconstruct the exact course of OT

history, source criticism is clearly very important if he wants to come as close as possible to the earliest account of events. In the gospels some critics do their best to recover the exact words of Jesus, as opposed to the edited version offered by the evangelists.

But clearly what the editors do, whether they be Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, or the compiler of Kings, is also of great concern to Bible readers. By comparing their work with their source we can discover what their special interests are. We can see what they have left out, what they have added from another source, what aspects of the original they have played up, what they have played down. In this way we gain a much clearer insight into the editor's theological viewpoint and the message he is trying to convey. And this investigation, what is termed redaction criticism, has proved extremely fruitful for more clearly understanding the text.

Genesis 1-11 shows how source and redaction criticism can help to elucidate the purpose of this important but perplexing part of Scripture.<sup>6</sup> Several ancient Near Eastern texts from 1600 BC or earlier contain an account of world history that runs roughly parallel to Genesis 1-11. But it is quite unlikely that any of these texts serve as the direct source of Genesis 1-11; rather they show us the sort of thing people in the ancient Near East believed in the second millennium BC when Genesis originated. And by comparing Genesis 1-11 with these other texts we appreciate more precisely what it is saying and what ideas it was trying to confute. For example these non-biblical texts paint a picture of evolutionary optimism, from a primitive world where life was hard and difficult to the comforts and sophistication of Mesopotamian civilization. Genesis on the other hand shows a world that was created very good progressively being corrupted by sinful man. On the other hand while Mesopotamians regarded the creation of man as a divine afterthought, Genesis portrays him as the summit of God's creative purpose to which everything else is an accessory.

We are also presented with a very different picture of the supernatural world. Whereas the ancient Orient believed in a multitude of competing, lustful gods and goddesses limited in their powers, Genesis 1-11 shows that there is but one God, omnipotent and holy. Up to a point this theology is apparent to the simple reader of the Bible ignorant of source and redaction criticism, but it seems much more obvious when read against the views of Israel's neighbours. Indeed until the discovery of the Atrahasis epic, it had hardly been appreciated that the command given to Adam to 'be fruitful and multiply' showed Genesis rejecting the ancient fear of a population explosion.

#### Some limitations of criticism

But with source criticism we must be careful. C. S. Lewis, surely one of the greatest critics of English literature, was not at all impressed with the pretensions of biblical critics. His splendid essay, *On Fern Seed and Elephants*, ought to be compulsory reading for all students of theology. There he argues that theologians are often over-subtle in their source analysis. They claim to be able to spot fern seed but cannot recognize an elephant ten yards away!

The other reason we must not overrate source criticism is that the Christian is interested not so much in the sources

that lie behind Scripture but in the text of Scripture itself. This is I suppose obvious in the case of Genesis 1-11. We are not interested in the Near Eastern myths used by the writer but the present composition. But it is easy to forget when we look at other parts of the OT. Students of the prophets spend much time trying to distinguish between the pure original words of Isaiah and Jeremiah and later editorial traditions. But it is not the words of Jeremiah as recovered by John Bright or Ernest Nicholson that should be our chief interest: rather it is the present book of Jeremiah, whether it is all by Jeremiah or not, that is the canonical authoritative text for us today. Similarly in the gospels, it is not the words of Jesus as reconstructed by Joachim Jeremias or Ed Sanders that really matter, but the total portraits offered by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Finally we come to that aspect of biblical criticism that is often the most sensitive. This concerns the question of the dating of the biblical material and the attempt to assess its historicity. Establishing the historical setting of a book is often of great value in interpreting it. For example it makes a great difference to the interpretation of the book of Revelation whether we date it before AD 70, when Jerusalem fell, or afterwards. On the former view we can read it as a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem, of the great whore Babylon. Dated later it is more natural to read it as an anticipation of the end of the Roman empire. And there are many other books in the Bible where it makes a considerable difference to our understanding of them, when we date them. I think it is very natural for Christians to want to date the gospels as close as possible to the life of Christ, for then surely there is less chance of distortion and corruption creeping in. We can be more confident of the accuracy of the gospels if they were written around AD 50 than if they were written around AD 90. A similar motive surely underlies Jewish reluctance to give up the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch rather than with many Christian scholars to suppose it reached its final form nearly 1,000 years after Moses. For if it was written so late, who can be sure which stories, if any, bear any resemblance to historical reality?

Now I fear that some of your biblical courses may well spend a large amount of time on some of these issues. Which gospel was written first? Does Q exist? Were all the Pauline epistles written by Paul? Who were J, E, D, and P? How many Isaiahs were there? and so on. These are all perfectly legitimate questions, and the answers we give to them are often illuminating. But by way of conclusion, I should like to encourage you to keep these discussions in perspective.

First remember that the theories of authorship and dating are not as securely based as is sometimes claimed. The assured results of criticism are not quite as sure as they seem. Commenting on the source criticism of the Pentateuch, Professor Rendtorff of Heidelberg has written: 'We possess hardly any reliable criteria for the dating of pentateuchal literature. Every dating of the pentateuchal sources rests on purely hypothetical assumptions which only have any standing through the consensus of scholars.' And in his book *Redating the NT* J. A. T. Robinson makes much the same point. He wrote, 'Much more than is generally recognized, the chronology of the NT rests on presuppositions rather than facts. What seemed to be firm datings based on scientific evidence are revealed to rest on deductions from deductions.

The pattern is self-consistent but circular. Question some of the inbuilt assumptions and the entire edifice looks much less secure.\* So my first caveat when faced with some critical theories about the dates of the biblical books is, 'Do not be bowled over by them.' These theories may not be as securely based as they sound.

The second thing to bear in mind is that historicity is not everything. It of course matters whether Jesus lived, died, and rose again. But there is a Jewish scholar Pinhas Lapide who believes in these facts without being a Christian. And I suppose that if the Turin shroud had proved to be genuine, it would not have persuaded many unbelievers that Jesus was indeed resurrected. It is most heartening when archaeologists find evidence corroborating the historical record of the Bible, whether it be the names of the patriarchs, the ashes of towns sacked by Joshua, the pool of Bethesda or the house of Peter in Capernaum. All these discoveries confirm our faith in the historical reliability of the Bible. But the Bible is more than a human history book. Throughout, it claims to be offering a divine interpretation of public historical events, an interpretation that is beyond the scope of human verification. Take for example the book of Kings. It ends with recording the sacking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and Jehoiachin's release from prison. These are events that are beyond dispute because they are also mentioned in contemporary Babylonian records. However these events are not recorded in Kings just because the writer wanted to mention them as important events. He has included them because they reveal God's attitude to Israel, that he was angry with them for breaking the covenant, that he was fulfilling the warnings made much earlier by Moses. Now who can check whether this interpretation is correct? Obviously no-one. We cannot telephone God to check if that was his attitude or not. We simply have to accept or reject the view of the book of Kings. We have no means of checking his view. It is beyond the possibility of human verification. But that does not make it unimportant or insignificant: clearly it was the main theological point being made in Kings that Israel and Judah were punished for their sins. So let us keep the issue of historicity in perspective. As Christians we shall wish to maintain that where the Bible is relating historical events they really happened,<sup>9</sup> but let us bear in mind that it is not so important that they occurred so much as what they teach us about God and his purposes and how we should respond.

Finally my third caveat. Let us not spend too much time on the critical issues: it can easily divert us from the purpose of Scripture. Like the Jews we should be searching the Scriptures to find eternal life. Or as St Paul said, 'Whatever was written in former times was written for our instruction, that we might have hope' (Rom. 15:4). The purpose of the Scriptures is not simply to stimulate us academically, or to provide a living for professional biblical scholars. It is to lead us to God. Biblical criticism offers us indispensable aids to the interpretation and understanding of the Bible. But often instead of being the handmaid of Scripture it has become its master. I suppose that in the last 200 years there have been more than a hundred scholarly books discussing the criticism of Deuteronomy, its date, authorship, sources and so on. But very few have focused on its theology, or the meaning of its teaching and laws for today. And there is a similar imbalance in some biblical courses too — plenty on critical theory, and



little on theology and its application. Yet what is the chief concern of Deuteronomy? 'Hear O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD, and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.'

When the academic study of Scripture diverts our attention from loving God with all our heart, soul and strength, I think we should pause and take stock. We should ask ourselves whether we are using it as it was intended. As I said at the beginning, it is both a divine book and a human book. Because it is a human book we cannot understand it unless we employ all the types of biblical criticism to the full. But because it is also a divine book we must recognize that these tools are insufficient by themselves for us to grasp and apply its message. To do that we must have a humble mind and a heart open to the guidance of the Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of the omniscience of the biblical authors, see R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, 1981), pp. 23-46;

M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, 1985), pp. 23-57.

<sup>2</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London, 1960), p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?* (London, 1960), pp. 19-20.

<sup>5</sup> J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London, 1962); *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961). For a compact modern discussion see M. Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meanings* (Grand Rapids, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> For fuller treatment see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Waco, 1987), pp. xlv-1.

<sup>7</sup> R. Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch* (Berlin, 1976), p. 169.

<sup>8</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the NT* (London, 1976), pp. 2-3.

<sup>9</sup> Here we of course beg the question of genre. Though in most parts of the Bible it is quite clear whether or not Scripture is intending to describe historical events, there are of course some very problematic fringe cases, e.g. Genesis 1-11 or the book of Jonah. It is an important task for commentators to establish the genre of such books. But here as elsewhere what Christian readers should be most concerned about is what these books teach us about God and his purposes.

# Did Jesus and his followers preach the right doctrine from the wrong texts? An examination of the presuppositions of Jesus' and the apostles' exegetical method

G. K. Beale

*The question of the NT's use of the OT is a thorny one, which has been addressed more than once in Themelios, most recently by Prof. R. N. Longenecker (vol. 13, pp. 4-8). In this further study Dr Beale, who teaches at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts and who is author of a detailed study on The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St John, offers another perspective.*

## Introduction

The degree of continuity and discontinuity in both theology and interpretative method between Christianity and its Jewish environment has been a point of much debate in NT studies. This has especially been the case with the issue of the use of the OT in Judaism and in the NT.

One widely-held position is that Jesus and the writers of the NT used non-contextual and atomistic hermeneutical methods such as were used by their Jewish contemporaries. We today would regard such methods as illegitimate. But, we are assured, they were guided in their interpretation by the example of Christ and by the Spirit, and so, although we cannot initiate their methods today, we can trust their conclusions and believe their doctrine.<sup>1</sup> This article is

intended to raise questions about this approach and to offer a possible alternative.

## The issue of non-contextual exegesis in post-biblical Judaism and its relation to the NT methodology

Our starting-point is to observe that it is not at all clear that non-contextual midrashic exegesis was as central to earlier Pharisaic and Qumran exegesis as is suggested by scholars favouring the approach we have described. First, it may not be appropriate to speak of a non-contextual *rabbinic* method in the pre-AD 70 setting, since most examples come from after AD 70 and those which can be dated with probability before that do not appear to reflect such an atomistic approach.<sup>2</sup> Second, concern for contextual exegesis is found not uncharacteristically both in Qumran and in Jewish apocalyptic.<sup>3</sup> This analysis has far-reaching implications for the argument of those who believe that early Christian exegetes were influenced by a prevalent atomistic Jewish hermeneutic.

But even this assumption of influence may be questioned. It sounds *a priori* plausible that the exegetical procedures of the NT would resemble those of contemporary Judaism. And

author's perspective. This occurs mostly in Matthew but appears as well in the other gospels. But as we have discussed above this is partly explicable on the basis of the early Christian community's presupposition that Christ and the church (believing Jews and Gentiles) now represented true Israel, so that the various characteristic segments and patterns of God's interaction in Israel's history now apply to Christ and the church as the new people of God in the NT. Alternatively, such an approach is understandable because of its foundational assumption that history is an interrelated unity and that God had designed the earlier parts to correspond and point to the latter parts, especially to those events which have happened in the age of *eschatological fulfilment* in Christ. Consequently, the concept of prophetic fulfilment must not be limited to fulfilment of direct verbal prophecies in the OT but broadened to include also an indication of the 'redemptive-historical relationship of the new, climactic revelation of God in Christ to the preparatory, incomplete revelation to and through Israel'.<sup>25</sup>

Typology therefore indicates fulfilment of the indirect prophetic adumbration of events, people and institutions from the OT in Christ who now is the final, climactic expression of all God ideally intended through these things in the OT (e.g. the Law, the temple cultus, the commissions of prophets, judges, priests and kings). Everything which these things lacked by way of imperfections was prophetically 'filled up' by Christ, so that even what was imperfect in the OT pointed beyond itself to Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Romans 5:12-21 is a classic example of this, where Christ is not only contrasted with Adam but is said to have accomplished what Adam failed to do, i.e. to obey righteously. This is why Adam is called a *τύπος* in Romans 5:14. Therefore, it is a too narrow hermeneutic which concludes that NT writers are being non-contextual when they understand passages from historical or overtly non-prophetic genre as typologically prophetic.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, changed applications of the OT in general, whether or not typology is involved, do not necessitate the conclusion that these passages have been misinterpreted. For example, Matthew applies to Jesus what the OT intended for Israel (e.g. Mt. 2:4-22)<sup>28</sup> or Paul does the same thing with respect to the church (e.g. Rom. 9:24-26). What should be challenged is not their interpretation of the OT but the validity of the above-mentioned framework through which they interpreted the OT, especially the assumption that Christ corporately represented true Israel and that all who identify with him by faith are considered part of true Israel. If the validity of these presuppositions be granted, then the viability of their interpretation of the OT must also be viewed as plausible. Of course, many do not grant the legitimacy of these assumptions and consequently view the NT as distorting the original intention of the OT. But whatever conclusion one reaches, it is not based only on raw exegetical considerations but on the theological presupposition of the individual interpreter! For example, Hanson affirms that modern interpreters cannot reproduce the typological exegesis of the NT writers because essential to such exegesis was belief in the actual historicity of the events of the OT texts being referred to, a belief purportedly no longer tenable to post-critical thinking.<sup>29</sup>

Further, changes of application need not mean a *disregard* for OT context. Given the viability of the presuppositions,

although the new applications are technically different, they nevertheless stay within the conceptual bounds of the OT contextual meaning, so that what results often is an extended reference to or application of a principle which is inherent to the OT text.<sup>30</sup> Of course, it would be possible to hold these presuppositions and still interpret the OT non-contextually, but the point we are attempting to make here is that when a case by case study is made, our recognition of such presuppositions among the NT writers nevertheless helps us to see *how* their interpretations could have been contextual from their particular perspective and *why* they would have been more sensitive to respecting contexts.<sup>31</sup>

Even when there is use of the OT with no apparent interest in prophetic fulfilment, there appears to be a redemptive-historical rationale at work behind the scenes. For example, when an OT reference is utilized only for the perceptible purpose of making an analogy, a key idea in the OT context is usually in mind as the primary characteristic or principle applied to the NT situation. These comparisons almost always broadly retain an essential association with the OT context and convey principles of continuity between OT and NT even though they are handled with creative freedom. This is true even in the Apocalypse,<sup>32</sup> which is often seen as creatively handling the OT in a hermeneutically uncontrolled manner.<sup>33</sup>

In the light of our overall discussion, the proposal of many that the NT's exegetical approach to the OT is characteristically non-contextual is a substantial overstatement. It would take more space than allowed in this article to discuss all the relevant cases where the OT is used in the NT, but the present aim has been to focus on methodological and presuppositional issues which often influence the exegetical task itself. I remain convinced that once the hermeneutical and theological presuppositions of the NT writers are considered, there are no clear examples where they have developed a meaning from the OT which is inconsistent or contradictory to some aspect of the original OT intention.<sup>34</sup> However, there will probably always remain some enigmatic passages that are hard to understand under any reading.

#### The normative versus descriptive debate

The conclusion of those who see the NT use of the OT as non-contextual is that twentieth-century Christians should not attempt to reproduce the exegetical method of the NT writers, except when it corresponds to our grammatical-historical method.<sup>35</sup> There are usually two major reasons given for this assertion. First, we do not have the revelatory inspiration which the NT writers had in their *pesher* (and other non-contextual) interpretations (direct prophetic fulfilment and typological fulfilment are typically included as sub-categories of the *pesher* method, which can be defined as an *inspired application*<sup>36</sup>). But it is not necessary to claim that we have to have such inspiration to reproduce their method or their conclusions. The fact that we don't have the same 'revelatory stance' as the NT writers only means that we cannot have the same epistemological certainty about our interpretive conclusions and applications as they had. *Exegetical method* should not be confused with *certainty* about the conclusions of such a method, since the two are quite distinct.

One reason for discouraging imitation of the NT's exegesis

is a justified fear of an uncontrollable typological exegesis, since typology has been misused throughout church history. How can we today look at the apparently non-prophetic portions of the OT and try to make the same kind of correspondences between them and the NT which the inspired authors were able to make? However, the wrong use of a method should not lead to the conclusion that the method itself is wrong but only that great caution should be exercised in using it. Yet should not such care be taken with all the methods we employ in interpreting the Bible, since it is God's Word? Although we cannot reproduce the certainty the biblical authors had about their conclusions, should we not try to interpret the OT in the same way as they did, as long as we keep in mind the presuppositions which guided their approach to the OT and as long as we are ever cautious, in the light of the way such a method has been misused in past church history?<sup>37</sup>

Uppermost among the presuppositions to be aware of is the concern for broad historical patterns or significant individuals (prophets, priests, kings, *etc.*), institutions and events which integrally formed a part of such patterns.<sup>38</sup> Such a perspective should steer us away from illegitimately focusing on minutiae as typological foreshadowings (like the scarlet thread which Rahab hung out of her window in Jos. 2 being a type of Christ's blood, or the trees which Israel cut down in the promised land as a type of Satan whom Christ would slay).

Therefore, typology by nature does not necessitate a non-contextual approach (although like any method it can be misused in that way), but it is an attempted identification of OT contextual features with similar escalated NT correspondences (many evangelical scholars would want to restrict the identification of what OT texts are typological only to those so referred to by NT writers, yet, on the other hand, they would not be willing to acknowledge these as non-contextual uses of the OT). Whether or not we have made a legitimate connection is a matter of interpretive possibility or probability. One may not reply that this is an inappropriate method on the basis that the authorial intention of OT writers, especially of historical narratives, would never have included such NT identifications. This is because we are also concerned with divine intention discernible from a retrospective viewpoint, which is fuller than the original human intention but does not contradict its contextual meaning. The larger context of canonical, redemptive history reveals how such narrow human intentions are legitimately and consistently developed by other biblical writers (and ultimately the divine author) to include wider meaning, so that the whole canon of Scripture becomes the ultimate context for interpreting any particular passage.<sup>39</sup> Other controlling, heuristic guides helpful for typological exegesis may also be suggested. Repeated historical events, phrases or pictures may provide hints of typological correspondences both within the OT and between the testaments.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, these are only general parameters and will not be infallible guards against misuse and misinterpretation. We must also remember that the conclusions of all biblical exegesis are a matter of degrees of possibility and probability, and the conclusions of typology must be viewed in the same way.

Some dispute that typology should be referred to as a method of exegesis since exegesis is concerned with deriving

a human author's original intention and meaning from a text.<sup>41</sup> But this question is also bound up with the prior question of whether or not typology is prophetic.<sup>42</sup> If typology is classified as partially prophetic, then it can be viewed as an exegetical method since the NT correspondence would be drawing out retrospectively the fuller prophetic meaning of the OT type which was originally included by the divine author. One's presuppositions also can determine how typology is classified. For example, if we concede that God is also the author of OT Scripture, then we are not concerned only with discerning the intention of the human author but also the ultimate divine intent of what was written in the OT, which could well transcend that of the immediate consciousness of the writer.<sup>43</sup> The attempt to draw out the divine intention of a text is certainly part of the exegetical task. And above all, if we assume the legitimacy of an inspired canon, then we should seek to interpret any part of that canon within its overall canonical context (given that one divine mind stands behind it all and expresses its thoughts in logical fashion).

In this regard, typology can be called contextual exegesis within the framework of the canon, since it primarily involves the interpretation and elucidation of the meaning of earlier parts of Scripture by latter parts. If one wants to refer to such canonical contextual exegesis instead as the doing of biblical or systematic theology, or even as scriptural application, it would seem to be but a purely semantic distinction. Rather than exegeting a text only in the light of its immediate literary context within a book, we are now merely exegeting the passage in view of the wider canonical context. The canonical extension of the context of a passage being exegeted does not by itself transform the exegetical procedure into a non-exegetical one. Put another way, the extension of the data base being exegeted does not mean we are no longer exegeting but only that we are doing so with a larger block of material. Even those rejecting typology as exegesis employ exegetical language to describe typology.<sup>44</sup>

The plausibility of the suggestion that typological interpretation is normative and that we may seek for more OT types than the NT actually states for us is pointed to by the observation that this method is not unique to the NT writers but pervades the OT.<sup>45</sup> The fact that later OT writers understand earlier OT texts typologically also dilutes the claim that the NT writers' typological method was unique because of their special charismatic stance.<sup>46</sup> It is nevertheless still true that we today cannot reproduce the inspired *certainty* of our typological interpretations as either the OT or NT writers could, but the consistent use of such a method by biblical authors throughout hundreds of years of sacred history suggests strongly that it is a viable method for all saints to employ today.

A second reason given for rejecting the normativity of NT exegetical method is because of their supposed non-contextual use of the OT.<sup>47</sup> But we have already seen reason to question whether such use was characteristic of the NT writers. According to some scholars, the NT writers' methods were wrong according to twentieth-century standards but their conclusions from this method were right because they were inspired. Of course, if this assessment about the NT approach is correct, one is forced to conclude that we should not imitate their methods. However, if an inductive study of

the NT yields the results that the NT method is contextual, then we may imitate their approach. This is the answer to the question sometimes posed about 'how those exegetical procedures [of the NT] should be considered normative and exactly how they should be worked out'.<sup>48</sup>

I am prepared to accept the possibility of non-contextual, Jewish *ad hominem* argumentation used polemically by NT writers, although I am unconvinced that this occurs anywhere in the NT. If it did occur, it might best be understood as the author's intention not to exegete the OT but to beat the Jews at their own game. This would not be imitated by us as a method of exegeting the OT since it plausibly would not have been originally intended as a method of exegesis but as a manner of polemicalizing. This is not to say that the NT writers were not influenced by Jewish exegetical methods, interpretations and theology. Indeed, such influence pervades the NT but the influential methods consist of varieties of contextual approaches (which include *degrees* of contextual consideration) and the interpretive and theological traditions upon which they relied can be seen viably as consistent though quite creative developments of the OT.

A possible response to part of what has here been said is that it is incorrect to label the NT's (or the Jewish) interpretive method as 'wrong' according to twentieth-century criteria of logic, since first-century Judaism thought more holistically and employed less analytical and logical ways of thinking. We may only say that what applied in that culture and time no longer applies to ours, which can appear equivalent to saying that methodology is culturally determined and therefore relative (the same argument is sometimes appealed to in the biblical authority debate). But this response is a philosophical one (part of which James Barr in his studies on semantics has rightly criticized), arguing that our laws of logic underlying our evaluative standards were not the same laws of thought governing ancient, Semitic writers. The inductive historical evidence for this is negligible and, therefore, the assertion takes the form of a presupposition (although some have proposed that the purported presence of 'error' in biblical literature supports the contention, a proposal which itself has met with much response in recent discussions concerning the nature of scriptural inspiration). Moreover, it is unlikely that it is logically legitimate to separate method in this instance from conclusions derived from the method.

Finally, the significance of this discussion should not be limited to exegetical method because it also has a bearing on theology and theological method, since the use of the OT in the NT is the key to the theological relation of the testaments, which many scholars have acknowledged.<sup>49</sup> If we are limited to understanding this relation only by the explicit conclusions concerning particular OT passages given by NT writers, vast portions of the OT are lost to us. We can use the 'contextual method' of interpreting these portions but we have to remember, according to some scholars, that this was not the dominant hermeneutical approach of the NT writers. Therefore, a hiatus remains between the way they linked the testaments both exegetically *and* theologically and the way we should. If the contemporary church cannot exegete and do theology like the apostles did, how can it feel corporately at one with them in the theological process? If a radical hiatus exists between the interpretive method of the NT and ours

today, then the study of the relationship of the OT and the NT from the apostolic perspective is something to which the church has little access. Furthermore, if Jesus and the apostles were impoverished in their exegetical and theological method and only divine inspiration salvaged their conclusions, then the intellectual and apologetic foundation of our faith is seriously eroded. What kind of intellectual or apologetic foundation for our faith is this? M. Silva is likely correct when he states that 'if we refuse to pattern our exegesis after that of the apostles, we are in practice denying the authoritative character of their scriptural interpretation — and to do so is to strike at the very heart of the Christian faith'.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the polemical and apologetic atmosphere of early Christian interpretation also points to an intense concern for correctly interpreting the OT (e.g. Acts 17:2; 18:24-28; 1 Tim. 1:6-10; 2 Tim. 2:15).

Thus, I believe a positive answer can and must be given to the question, 'Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?'. True, we must be careful in distinguishing between the normative and descriptive (and this is an area in which there is disagreement in many areas among evangelicals in general), but in the case of the NT's method of interpreting the OT the burden of proof rests upon those attempting to deny its normativity.

<sup>1</sup> For a lucid and sympathetic presentation of this sort of view see, for example, the writings of Richard Longenecker, including his recent article "Who is the Prophet talking About?" *Some Reflections on the New Testament's Use of the Old*, *Themelios* 13 (1987), 4-8.

<sup>2</sup> On this latter point D. Instone Brewer has identified all the exegetical examples representing this early period (approx. 100) of purported pre-AD 70 proto-rabbinic exegesis. He has attempted to demonstrate every example shows that, while these Jewish exegetes may not have always succeeded, they attempted to interpret the OT according to its context, and they never supplanted the primary meaning by a secondary or allegorical one. Even if his conclusions are judged to be overstated, they nevertheless reveal an early concern for context to varying significant degrees which previously has not been sufficiently acknowledged (see his 'The Hermeneutical Method of Early Judaism and Paul', forthcoming PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> In Qumran, e.g. 1QM1; 1QS A 1; in Jewish apocalyptic, e.g. Enoch 36-72; 4 Ezra; 2 Baruch; The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. See my own *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St John* (Lanham: University Press, 1984); L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., as Longenecker surprisingly assumes ('NT's Use of the Old', 7), since he points out the same kind of presuppositional fallacy on the part of others (*ibid.*, 1).

<sup>5</sup> Here I am using Longenecker's examples from his 'Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?', *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970), 3-38, and *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> On 1 Cor. 10 and Gal. 3-4 see E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 51-54, 66-73; R. M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University, 1981), 193-297, and D. A. Hagner, 'The Old Testament in the New Testament', in *Interpreting the Word of God*, FS in honour of S. Barabas, ed. S. J. Schultz and M. A. Inch (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 101-102, who sees a broad, contextual and typological approach in these texts.

On 2 Cor. 3 see W. J. Dumbrell, *The Beginning of the End* (Homebush West, Australia: Lancer, 1985), 107-113, 121-128, and S. Hafemann's forthcoming work in progress on 2 Cor. 3:13-18.

On 1 Cor. 9:9 cf. A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (London: SPCK, 1974), 161-166; S. L. Johnson, *The Old*

*Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 39-51; D. J. Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 179-211.

On Rom. 10, cf. M. A. Seifrid, 'Paul's Approach to the Old Testament in Romans 10:6-8', *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985), 3-37, who sees a contextual and typological use.

<sup>7</sup> But Longenecker has most recently contended that among NT writers there can be found only 'some literalist, straightforward exegesis of biblical texts', that the *peshet* method (which he defines as an atomistic approach and which includes typology) 'dominates' Mt., Jn. and the early chapters of Acts and 1 Pet., and that midrashic interpretation (which he also views as a non-contextual method) 'characterizes' Paul and Heb. ('NT's Use of the Old', 6-8; cf. his *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 218-219). He does qualify this by saying that NT authors employed a 'controlled atomistic exegesis' (*ibid.*, 7), but this is unclear and he never explains what he means by this.

<sup>8</sup> Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 110, 126-127.

<sup>9</sup> E. G. A. Sundberg, 'On Testimonies', *NovT* 3 (1959), 268-281; B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London: SCM, 1961); S. V. McCasland, 'Matthew Twists the Scripture', *JBL* 80 (1961), 143-148; S. L. Edgar, 'Respect for Context in Quotations from the Old Testament', *NTS* 9 (1962-63), 56-59; A. T. Hanson, *The Living Utterances of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), 184-190; M. D. Hooker, 'Beyond the Things That are Written? St Paul's Use of Scripture', *NTS* 27 (1981-82), 295-309; B. Lindars, 'The Place of the Old Testament in the Formation of New Testament Theology', *NTS* 23 (1977), 59-66; for other references in this respect consult Longenecker's bibliography in *Biblical Exegesis*, 223-230.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to the sources cited above in this regard, see also, e.g., S. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961); R. Rendell, 'Quotation in Scripture as an Index of Wider Reference', *EQ* 36 (1964), 214-221; Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*; R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971); *idem*, 'The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication', *NTS* 27 (1980-81), 233-251; D. Secombe, 'Luke and Isaiah', *NTS* 27 (1980-81), 252-259; Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New*; Moo, *The OT in the Passion Narratives*; W. C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985); Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior'; Beale, *The Influence of Daniel Upon the Structure and Theology of John's Apocalypse*, *JETS* 27 (1984), 413-423; *idem*, 'The Use of the OT in Revelation', in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, FS for B. Lindars, ed. D. A. Carson and H. Williamson (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), 318-336; *idem*, 'The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5-7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1', *NTS* forthcoming (1989), approx. 25pp.; I. H. Marshall, 'An Assessment of Recent Developments' in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, 1-21. Although more nuanced than Dodd, see now also Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Beale, 'OT in Revelation'.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Beale, 'OT in Revelation', 330-332.

<sup>13</sup> E. H. W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Phil: Fortress, 1964; as qualified by later critics) and his bibliography; E. E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 170-171.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Is. 49:3-6 and the use of 49:6 in Lk. 2:32, Acts 13:47 and Acts 26:23; note how Christ and the church fulfil what is prophesied of Israel in the OT; see also France, *Jesus and the OT*, 50-60, 75; N. T. Wright, 'The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith', *TynBull* 29 (1978), 66-71, 87; H. K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1983); Beale, 'The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation'.

<sup>15</sup> Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 128, 133; and F. Foulkes, *The Acts of God*, Tyndale Monographs (London: Tyndale, 1958); cf. the significance of the temporal merisms applied to God's — and Christ's — relation to history in Ec. 3:1-11; Is. 46:9-11; Rev. 1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13; see likewise Rev. 1:4; 4:8; cf. Eph. 1:11.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Mk. 1:15; Acts 2:17; Gal. 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jude 18. Longenecker has a brief discussion of these first four presuppositions but he does not relate them to the issue of contextual exegesis (cf. *Biblical Exegesis*, 93-95, and 'NT's Use of the Old', 4-5). Likewise, see

the forthcoming brief article by E. E. Ellis, 'Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church', in *Mikra, Text, Translation and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 1:10-21; Mt. 5:17; 13:11, 16-17; Lk. 24:25-27, 32, 44-45; Jn. 5:39; 20:9; Rom. 10:4.

<sup>18</sup> For one of the most recent surveys of significant literature discussing *sensus plenior* see G. Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century* (London: SCM, 1986), 37-47.

<sup>19</sup> For a partial exegetical demonstration of this see the representative literature in favour of a contextual interpretation of the OT in the NT cited throughout the present article.

<sup>20</sup> So also Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', 204-211; V. S. Poythress, 'Divine Meaning of Scripture', *WTJ* 48 (1986), 241-279; W. S. LaSor, 'Prophecy, Inspiration, and Sensus Plenior', *TynBull* 29 [1978], 54-60; *idem*, 'The "Sensus Plenior" and Biblical Interpretation', *Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation*, FS for E. F. Harrison, ed. W. W. Gasque and W. S. LaSor (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 272-276; D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 92-93; J. I. Packer, 'Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics', *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 350; see Moo and LaSor for examples of how this method can be applied.

<sup>21</sup> 'Prophecy, Inspiration and Sensus Plenior', 55-56.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the typical examples noted by McCasland, 'Matthew Twists the Scriptures'; Edgar, 'Respect for Context in Quotations from the Old Testament', 56-59.

<sup>23</sup> P. Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1876), 19.

<sup>24</sup> This is an important distinction which cannot be developed further here, but for more discussion in agreement with our distinction see, e.g., L. Goppelt, *Typos* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*, 186; Foulkes, *Acts of God*, e.g. 35; O. Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM, 1967), 132-133.

<sup>25</sup> Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', 191, who cites others such as Moule, Banks, Metzger, Meier and Carson in support.

<sup>26</sup> On this point see G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* II (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 372-373.

<sup>27</sup> Cf., however, France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 38-40, and D. Baker, 'Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament', *SJT* 29 (1976), 149, who do not conclude that typology includes a prophetic aspect. But the *analogia* formulas prefixed to citations from formally non-prophetic OT passages in the gospels decisively argue against this. See in general agreement Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture* I, 46; Johnson, *OT in New*, 55-57; Goppelt, *Typos*, 18, 130, *passim*; Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, *passim*; Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', 196-198; Foulkes, *Acts of God*, 35-40, although he is sometimes cited wrongly as not holding this position.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. France's good discussion of this context in 'The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2'.

<sup>29</sup> *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*, 229-235.

<sup>30</sup> For examples of these kinds of changes of application see France, *Jesus*; Beale, 'The Use of the OT in Revelation'; *idem*, 'The OT Background of Reconciliation'; for further discussion of the legitimacy of this principle of extension see the section below entitled 'The normativity versus descriptive debate'.

<sup>31</sup> Again, for numerous examples of inductive case studies where this can be argued see the literature supporting a contextual approach cited throughout this article.

<sup>32</sup> For examples of this see Beale, 'OT in Revelation', 321-332; J. Cambier, 'Les images de l'Ancien Testament dans l'Apocalypse de saint Jean', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* (1955), 114-121; A. Vanhoye, 'L'utilization du livre d'Ezéchiel dans l'Apocalypse', *Biblica* 43 (1962), 462-467; 'L'utilizzazione del Deutero-Isaia nell'Apocalisse di Giovanni', *Euntes Docete* 27 (1974), 322-339.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. see L. A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965), 21-37, 41.

<sup>34</sup> This conclusion is corroborated by the articles of Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior'; R. Nicole, 'The New Testament Use of the Old Testament', in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. C. F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 135-151, and *idem*, 'The Old Testament in the New Testament', in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* I, ed. F.

E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 617-628.

<sup>35</sup> E.g. see Longenecker, 'Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?', *Tynbull* 21 (1970), 38.

<sup>36</sup> Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 99-100.

<sup>37</sup> See likewise Moo, 'The Problem of Sensus Plenior', 197, 206-210; Fairbairn, *Typology* I, 42-44; M. Silva, 'The NT Use of the OT: Text Form and Authority', *Scripture and Truth*, 162-163; Johnson, *OT in New*, 23, 67, 77-79; who generally hold that it is plausible to attempt to discern with caution OT types beyond those mentioned in the NT.

<sup>38</sup> For one of the most recent surveys of significant literature discussing typology, see G. Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 14-37.

<sup>39</sup> See on this point the above discussion of the fifth presupposition of early Christian exegesis of the OT.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. see Foulkes, *The Acts of God*.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. France, *Jesus and the OT*, 40-41, and Baker, 'Typology', 149.

<sup>42</sup> France, *ibid*.

<sup>43</sup> On the fallacy of equating meaning exhaustively with authorial intention see P. B. Payne, 'The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention', *JETS* 20 (1977), 243-252, in contrast to the more extreme position of W. Kaiser, 'The Eschatological Hermeneutics of "Evangelicalism": Promise Theology', *JETS* 13 (1970), 94-95; 'The Present State of OT Studies', *JETS* 18 (1975), 71-72; who thinks that discerning only the human author's intention exhausts the full meaning of an OT text and that the NT provides no fuller meaning of OT texts than the OT authors would not also have been completely cognizant of; the unusual interpretations which result from this view can be seen in Kaiser's *The Uses of the OT in the NT* (Chicago: Moody, 1985).

<sup>44</sup> E.g. Baker, 'Typology', 155, says that 'although it is not a method of exegesis, typology supplements exegesis by throwing further light on the text in question'; cf. Goppelt, *Typos*, 152, 198, who, although referring to typology as not 'a systematic exposition of Scripture, but as a spiritual approach', says it 'is the method of interpreting Scripture that is predominant in the NT'.

<sup>45</sup> So Foulkes, *Acts of God*, *passim*; e.g. 40.

<sup>46</sup> In addition to Foulkes, *Acts of God*. cf. M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 350-379, and sources cited therein for discussion of such typological exegesis within the OT itself; see likewise H. G. Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 28-29; H. D. Hummel, 'The OT Basis of Typological Interpretation', *Biblical Research* 9 (1964), 38-50.

<sup>47</sup> E.g., Longenecker refers to their 'atomistic manipulations of midrash . . . the circumstantial or [Jewish] *ad hominem*' polemical argumentation ('NT's Use of the Old', 8) and 'their allegorical explications' (*Biblical Exegesis*, 218).

<sup>48</sup> Longenecker, 'NT's Use of the Old', 7.

<sup>49</sup> E.g. see G. Hasel, *Current Issues in NT Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of Some Modern Solutions to the Theological Problem of The Relationship between the Old and New Testaments* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977); Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*. So also Longenecker, 'NT's Use of the Old', 1.

<sup>50</sup> 'NT's Use of the OT', 164, although he does slightly qualify this assertion; so likewise Johnson, *Use of OT in NT*, 67.

## The Sabbath: mark of distinction

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As a Briton resident overseas, I try to follow events in my home country and have been struck by the amount of hot air generated recently over the question of Sunday trading. It has caused a lot of thought, and I believe we must continue to consider the Christian attitude to Sunday, especially as the forces which would 'abolish' Sunday in Britain and elsewhere are still active.

In brief, my view is that, if the Sabbath is primarily a gift of God for his own, it is not something that should be imposed on others. If, however, it is given to believers as good, it is likely to be good for society as a whole, and Christians should try to convince society of the value of a day of rest. Perhaps Christians themselves need convincing; there are real practical difficulties if, as I think will happen in any case, a Christian who seeks to keep one day special has to try to live and work in a society which does not. It is perhaps particularly ironic that the traditional Sunday or Sabbath is under attack in Britain just when most people's financial circumstances make work unnecessary for more than five or sometimes even four days a week.

### Why the fuss over the Sabbath?

It is clear from a reading of the gospel accounts that the opposition to Jesus that eventually led to his crucifixion was stirred up to a significant degree by his attitude to the Sabbath, although there were many other factors involved as well. It would seem that Jesus deliberately healed on the Sabbath day when it is likely that he could easily have delayed until the following day; and various other incidents, such as the disciples' plucking of ears of corn as they went through the field (Mk. 2:23f.) indicate something of the attitude that is forcibly expressed in the sayings, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath' (Mk. 2:27); 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath' (Mk. 2:28).

The Jewish leaders found his attitude intolerable, so much so that they considered it worthy of death. We naturally side with Jesus on this matter, not only because we are Christians, but also often because we fail to understand the attitude of these Jewish leaders to the question of the Sabbath. Many Christians believe that, although for Jesus' contemporaries it was a vital matter, for us in a freer age it is almost an irrelevancy. After all, they reason, the law is abolished for us (Rom. 7:4), there is no repetition of the fourth commandment in the NT, and in particular, whereas it was practicable to keep Sabbath in the OT environment, it is hardly possible in the modern world where so many things just have to be kept going seven days a week (although on closer examination some are not so essential).

In order to appreciate the attitudes of the Jewish leaders it is necessary to go back to the exile. Two matters are significant here:

(a) The prophets and other parts of the OT clearly suggest that the reason for the exile was not a simple political matter of a strong empire adding to its conquests, but that God allowed, even caused, the exile as a punishment for disobedience to his law. Now the major aspect of this disobedience was the replacement of the worship of God by the worship of idols, but there was also direct disobedience to the laws of God, which included the Sabbath. Jeremiah thunders:

But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched (Je. 17:27).

Now the Sabbath should not be taken here simply as one of the laws which were being broken, but as a sign of the covenant between God and his people such that Sabbath-breaking was symptomatic of the whole attitude of apostasy (Ex. 31:13f.).

This means that on the return from exile, the people were determined that disaster should not befall them again. Therefore they came back to Jerusalem utterly determined to be strictly monotheistic, and also to be scrupulous in obedience to the law of God. Thus the Sabbath, as a sign of covenant and as a facet of the law, became of great importance, and a great number of regulations were laid down to ensure obedience. (It is worth pointing out here that Jesus did not actually break the OT law at all, but only the Jewish regulations which surrounded the law.<sup>2</sup>)

(b) The big danger for a people undergoing the experience of exile was that they would disappear as a people, as seems to have happened to the Northern tribes after their deportation by the Assyrians in 722 BC. It is easy for the first generation in a foreign land to maintain their distinctiveness, but their children will very likely 'fall away', adopting habits, customs and the language of the host country. This was, after all, the motive behind deportation, which very effectively destroyed any possibility of resistance. This assimilation is clearly seen today in the children of immigrants, for example in Britain, where even racial differences are readily overcome; and where these are not present, such as with my own children in 'white' South Africa, cultural shift easily takes place.

Now Israel, or rather Judah, was in an invidious position, being separated from nearly everything that made them distinct as a nation. They were separated particularly from their land, which was central to their thinking since the promises to Abraham, and from their worship, as they could not visit the Temple, which in any case was soon destroyed, and, with their king captured, from their social organization. However, one of the things which could maintain their distinctiveness was the Sabbath, so it is not surprising that once again it became of overriding importance. That this was so can be seen at the return to Jerusalem, where Nehemiah strictly enforces the Sabbath prohibition against trade (Ne. 13:15ff.).

Thus at the time of Jesus, when again there was an experience of foreign domination and the ever-present threat

to their existence as a nation by the Romans, it is not surprising that any perceived attack on the Sabbath was viewed in a very serious light.

However, if this is the case, then the Sabbath should be seen as a particular sign of the covenant with Israel and thus belongs to their particular nature as an individual people, and so is no longer relevant to us who are Gentile Christians. The existence of the people, it may be argued, was to bring forth the Messiah; now he has come, it is no longer relevant, and the Sabbath also must fall away. It was a sign of the old covenant, and Christians have a new covenant in Christ. In a sense in his rest in the grave on the Saturday, he completely fulfilled the Sabbath for us.

#### A creation ordinance

Contrary to this idea is the view that the Sabbath originated at creation. The codification of this then took place at Sinai, and then it continued until Jesus, when the resurrection provided the impetus for a change to Sunday. The basic idea however remained the same: as God is recorded as having created in six days and then rested the seventh, the keeping of one day in seven is fundamental not to Jews only but to the entire created order. All should therefore observe a Sabbath.<sup>3</sup>

Supporting this view is the fact that men, and indeed creation as a whole, do seem to function better if a Sabbath rest is observed, and that, strikingly, the cycle of seven does seem to be the most efficient. Thus Luther and Calvin only advocated keeping a Sabbath for practical reasons, the need for rest and a time for worship.<sup>4</sup> Experiments have been made to dispose of the cycle, such as in post-revolutionary France and Russia, where the church was thrown out with all that was old, but a cycle of five or ten, although more in keeping with our system of counting, just did not seem to work. There is also some evidence that in nature as well, the seven-year cycle of rest for trees and the land is beneficial, although here the seven does not seem to be so well established (for example, cows need milking every day, and of course man-made industry totally ignores any biological rhythm).

This is the thinking behind the insistence of the Seventh Day Adventists and others, who insist on continuing Sabbath-observance, either on a Saturday, to keep the Jewish Sabbath literally, or on a Sunday to retain the spirit of the legislation. Some argue that even if the Sinaitic law is abrogated by Christ, if the Sabbath is fundamental to creation, then it should be retained absolutely even today.<sup>5</sup> Others distinguish between moral, civil and ceremonial law, and say that only the last two categories are abrogated and also that the Sabbath, as part of the commandments, belongs to the moral law and therefore remains valid. The view of Davies<sup>6</sup> is noteworthy: as a day of rest, looking to the eschatological rest, it is for all, but as a day of worship it is Mosaic, and fulfilled in Christ.

A number of points should be made against this idea:

(a) There is no record of any Sabbath observance whatsoever before the Exodus and its formulation in the ten commandments.<sup>7</sup> Jewett<sup>8</sup> sees no reason to doubt the Mosaic origin of the Sabbath, seeing evidence for this in Ezekiel 20:11-12 and Nehemiah 9:12-24. It is argued that if it were in fact fundamental to creation then there would be at least some indication of it before Sinai. This incidentally is an

amount of time. This is a very appropriate reminder of salvation, since all are saved on the same basis through Christ. The Sabbath likewise, in its reminder of creation, reflects human equality in that it refers to our essence of being human, in which we are equal, rather than to our roles, which are different.<sup>28</sup>

(k) *Worship*. Again a closely related idea is that we have an obligation to be regular in our worship.<sup>29</sup> This is a NT injunction (Heb. 10:25) as well as an OT one, where it was obligatory for all males to attend the festivals. The reformers therefore, although not retaining the Sabbath because of any legal reason, sought to retain it to give time and opportunity for worship.<sup>30</sup> I am a little hesitant simply to connect the idea of Sabbath to worship as there is nowhere in the OT which actually makes that explicit connection; Leviticus 23:2-3 calls it a feast, but that is by no means the same. However, it has been asserted by Rordorf<sup>1</sup> that the OT Sabbath started as a day of rest and became a day of rest and worship, whereas the Christian Sunday started as a day of worship and became a day of worship and rest. In this case there is no actual inconsistency between the basic ideas of Sabbath and Sunday. Rest, as well as being an opportunity for worship, may be in itself a response of worship,<sup>32</sup> and one free from idolatry (if not from legalism), as no object of worship is involved.

(l) *Identification*. Barth<sup>33</sup> makes an interesting point in that he sees in the injunction to keep the Sabbath a call to participate in the life of God. Thus keeping the Sabbath is identification with the creator, particularly significant as an aspect of salvation in that we receive the life of God, eternal life, by union with God in Christ. However it is then also identification more specifically with redemption, in that a day of rest is identified with the day Christ 'rested' in the grave, and we are saved by participation in Christ's experience (Rom. 6:1-11). (I am not arguing that salvation depends on our Sabbath observance, or even that we keep Saturday. It is the principle that matters.) Barth also observes<sup>34</sup> that there is no corresponding call to participation in the creative work of God. This means that our subduing the world is not a creative activity, so our dominion (Gn. 1:28) is not absolute, but we have a responsibility not to abuse the created order (for example to over-exploitation in excessive capitalism).

(m) *An acknowledgment of the basis of Christianity*. In a day when there are so many competing ideologies, the keeping of the Lord's day is a reminder that Christianity is based on real historical events. On the one hand, although there was no fundamental reason for so doing, the early church continued to observe one day in seven for worship, thus acknowledging its Jewish origins. On the other hand, by observing Sunday, we are reminded that without the resurrection our faith is vain (1 Cor. 15:17). By observation of the first day, rather than the seventh, the church avoids the extremes of both Judaism and Marcionism.<sup>35</sup>

### What the Sabbath does not mean

It is possible to make a couple of observations from the nature of the OT Sabbath to deny some erroneous beliefs.

(a) *Bondage*. It should be clear from a number of the preceding sections that the intention of the Sabbath is to be

release and restoration, rather than a matter of bondage. It would seem that this is what was behind Jesus' protests concerning the Sabbath. Therefore he deliberately healed on the Sabbath day (e.g. Lk. 13:10f.) because that was the day most appropriate to demonstrate freedom from bondage to disease. Therefore the Sabbath must not become, however it is observed, a form of bondage in itself. In fact the OT, as Jesus pointed out, gives a number of permissible activities for the Sabbath day.<sup>36</sup> This is quite a contrast with some later Jewish casuistry.

Jesus points out that 'the Sabbath was made for man' and this is exactly true; it was 'for man', for his benefit, not for bondage. This freedom is reiterated elsewhere in the NT (e.g. Gal. 5:1; Col. 2:16), but has to be moderated by the idea that our attitude to keeping days must not be an offence to others (Rom. 14:5f.). When Jesus was accused of profaning the Sabbath he replied, '... the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath' (Mk. 2:28). It is notable here that it was in fact not Jesus but the disciples who were guilty, and so what Jesus is saying is that by their relation to him, they too are Lords of the Sabbath, so having authority over it. To put it another way, by our faith we are adopted as sons, with the rights and privileges that sonship brings.

(b) *Coupling to prosperity*. Whereas there is a promise of reward to those who are obedient to God, especially in the matter of the day, it would be erroneous to make a direct causal link between the two. Pagan religion essentially made that connection by holding feast days or holidays on days related to the agricultural calendar. The Sabbath in itself is entirely unrelated to external events. (The most likely suggestion is a quarter of the cycle of the moon; but then why a quarter, and why is it now allowed to get out of phase?<sup>37</sup>) By maintaining a Sabbath, whether of rest or worship or both, the attention is then on God alone and not on any material benefits.

(c) *The other days regarded as not holy*. Observation of the Sabbath, particularly in an extreme form, led to a division in the ways the various days are regarded. If the Sabbath or Sunday is so holy, then the other days are not, so whereas keeping the Sabbath should consecrate the whole, it has, I believe, rather contributed to a division between the secular and sacred, and ultimately the growth of secularism of modern society, whereas if the Sabbath was not emphasized so much as different from other days, such a move would not be so likely to occur. However the separation or transcendence of God which observation of the Sabbath symbolizes is more adequately seen in a day of worship than a day of rest. If therefore a Christian Sunday emphasizes worship rather than rest it does not lead so much to secularization, although such an emphasis at this stage can hardly contribute to a stopping of the moves towards total secularization of society.

### Keeping Sabbath

There is an insertion after Luke 6:4 in one of the early manuscripts (*Codex Bezae [D]*):

Jesus saw a man working on the Sabbath and said, 'Man, if indeed you know what you are doing, you are blessed, but if you do not know, you are cursed and a transgressor of the Law.'

Although it is doubtful whether this is authentic, it has been seen that the idea would seem scriptural that Sabbath-



keeping is not an absolute requirement (*cf.* also Rom. 14:23).<sup>38</sup> Observation of the Sabbath for no good reason will bring us under the condemnation that Jesus had for the Pharisees. Nevertheless it seems to me that there is sufficient reason given above for Christians to maintain the principle, although not slavishly, of one day in seven. It will be observed that the majority of reasons I have given are for Christians only. Hence just as the Sabbath provides a mark of covenant and distinction for Jews, it can do exactly the same for Christians, who have a new covenant with God. Yet some, such as the Marxists who see the value of man in his work, and reject the desire for worship. It was given for the benefit of Israel, so its continued observation will be good for the church, even if not a command, and good advice for the church to give to the world. There is enough reason for Christians to urge society to retain a special day even if they cannot insist that the world obeys the command of a God that it does not acknowledge, particularly, as seems to be the case, if the Sabbath was only revealed as such to Israel in the Sinaitic covenant, and is part of Israel's distinctiveness. Christians, although they will benefit from the rest, will however continue to see the main value of the day in worship.

This day should preferably be Sunday. Keeping an arbitrary day (even the Saturday, as Sunday is the conventional day) will detract from the witness value. Bacchiocchi<sup>39</sup> believes that the biblical position is to keep a specific day rather than just the principle of one in seven, noting that otherwise the priests would have been given an alternative day of rest (Nu. 28:9,10; Mt. 12:5). The Didache urged Christians to fast on different days from the Jews in order to be different from them. Keeping a Sunday rather than a Saturday for that reason alone is hardly adequate, but the fact that Christ rose on the Sunday does hallow the day for us. My only concern here is that Christians may be so caught up with meetings on a Sunday that it fails to be a real Sabbath, and it may be necessary for the 'professional' to take a different day.<sup>40</sup> Ministers who find that everything is always left to Saturday before the Sunday may just need self-discipline!

Discipline, whether in work, rest or worship, is the heart of the matter, indeed of being a disciple of Christ, and I believe should, if at all possible, manifest itself in a distinctive day. However let Paul have the last word:

One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord (Rom. 14:5-6).

<sup>1</sup> The film *Chariots of Fire* highlighted this difficulty. Whether Eric Liddell was right to make his stand is debatable, but it is true that even today due to the film his stand then is having good effects for the kingdom of God.

<sup>2</sup> Lincoln, A. T., in Carson, D. A. (ed.), *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), p. 361. (This book contains a mass of information about Sabbath and Sunday.)

<sup>3</sup> Bacchiocchi, S., *Divine rest for human restlessness: a theological study of the good news of the Sabbath for today* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1980), p. 32f. Bacchiocchi's other book, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, has been most influential but as an historical study is really outside the scope of this article.

<sup>4</sup> Bauckham, R. J., in Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Beckwith, R. T., and Stott, W., *This is the Day: the Biblical Doctrine of the Christian Sunday in its Jewish and early Christian setting* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1978), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Davies, G. N., 'The Christian Sabbath', *Reformed Theological Review* 42 (2), 1983, pp. 33-41.

<sup>7</sup> The first observation of the Sabbath (Ex. 16, the manna) was in fact prior to the ten commandments. It would however have been illogical for God to supply on a seven-day basis knowing what would shortly be commanded. The reaction of the people in Ex. 16 would indicate that the whole idea of a seven-day cycle was foreign to them.

<sup>8</sup> Jewett, P. K., *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian day of worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> In Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

<sup>10</sup> Bauckham in Carson, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-267.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Carson in Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Dressler, H. H. P., in Carson, *op. cit.*, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> In Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>15</sup> In Carson, *op. cit.*, pp. 266, 274.

<sup>16</sup> Rushdoony, R. N., *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1973), p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> Bacchiocchi, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

<sup>18</sup> Lincoln in Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>19</sup> F. Macnutt, *The Power to Heal* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> Rushdoony, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>21</sup> Barth, K., *Christian Dogmatics 3(1) The doctrine of creation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. 215.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Rushdoony, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> Wolterstorff, N., *Until Justice and Peace embrace: the Kuyper lectures for 1981 delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 153.

<sup>24</sup> Carson in Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 87 n.30.

<sup>25</sup> Islam also observes a special day. Whether their current economic boom is in any way due to this rather than the presence of oil is questionable; in any case the Friday is not so much a day of rest as of worship, so that economic activity could continue.

<sup>26</sup> See Lincoln in Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 250f.

<sup>27</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>28</sup> Bacchiocchi, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Davies, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Bauckham in Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 314 *etc.*

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Carson (*op. cit.*), p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> Bacchiocchi, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>33</sup> Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>35</sup> Jewett, *op. cit.*, pp. 74, 105.

<sup>36</sup> Dressler, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Bacchiocchi, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Bauckham in Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>39</sup> Bacchiocchi, *op. cit.*, p. 158. He, however, advocates the Saturday.

<sup>40</sup> When I was in the ministry I observed Saturday for practical reasons, as it could be a family day, whereas Sunday, on which we had services, was very much a work day. As a Sabbath of rest and a Sunday of worship, was this in fact religiously correct? Most ministers I know took Monday off, and it got filled with fraternal and other business which I could only really identify as work, meaning they never actually had a full day off — and suffered accordingly!

# Book Reviews

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Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15 World Biblical Commentary 1* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), liii + 353 pp., £18.95.

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Those who are familiar with Wenham's commentaries on other books of the Pentateuch will rejoice to see the addition of a work on this key section of Scripture added to the list. The work is designed to be of interest to students, pastors, lay persons and lecturers. The introduction of 33 pages discusses the present state of scholarship on the whole of Genesis, as well as focusing on chs. 1-11 in particular. There is an introduction to Genesis 12ff. at the beginning of the comments on chapter 12. The inclusion of chs. 12-15 in this volume may reflect Wenham's conviction that the later part of the book is tied in with the earlier section.

Wenham demonstrates a broadly evangelical position with a survey of the contemporary concerns of source criticism, that vexing problem which has occupied so many scholars of Genesis over the past century. His decision to opt for an early P (in the form of a series of shorter sources) followed by a J, dated somewhere between the thirteenth and the tenth centuries BC, should not cause the serious evangelical student to overlook the combined force of linguistic and comparative Ancient Near Eastern arguments which Wenham marshals to define a date of the early second millennium as accurately reflected in many traditions. Nor can a commentary which deals with the contemporary scholarly literature fail to consider the literary aspects which distinguish sections and chapters in Genesis. This is indeed the great advantage of his approach; for by dealing carefully with those distinctives it is possible also to appreciate the literary motifs and devices which unify the text and bring it out of an Ancient Near Eastern environment to address readers of today.

While remaining within the limits of the Word series format (bibliography, translation, textual notes, form/structure/setting, verse-by-verse comment, and explanation), Wenham introduces several helpful additions. First, the bibliography, already vast for the opening chapters of Genesis, is limited to key older works and otherwise serves as a supplement to Westermann's 1974 tome. From that year until 1987 it will serve as a standard resource for students and scholars, providing one of the most complete listings available. The incorporation of secondary literature into the commentary's discussion is impressive. Of course, full justice to all the literature can never be more than an ideal (e.g. I missed more than a passing reference to Bird's majestic study of 1:27 or Meyers' careful analysis of 3:16).

Second, the textual notes serve both the traditional purpose of comparing the readings of other translations, versions and targumim, and also provide an analysis of verbs and verbal forms in the MT. The former is always of interest, observing the difficulties (although the larger problem of 15:2 is placed in the comment section), the conjectures and the variants (thus the note on 4:17 allows the emendation of a misplaced gloss and one on 4:18 observes the harmonization tendencies of the versions), while regularly retaining the MT in the translation. The latter will be welcome to many students who read Genesis as part of their introduction to biblical Hebrew. Further, such notes provide a point of departure for analysis of the Hebrew text and avoid confusion in assessing interpretations where ambiguous verbal forms are involved. Indices at the end include authors, subjects (surely there are more than 60 listed), biblical texts and Hebrew words.

The form/structure/setting sections allow Wenham to continue the sort of literary analysis already begun with his earlier work on Genesis 6-9. In characteristic style, there is a competent survey of the

important older and recent opinions, which is followed by a position more often mediating than polemical. There is a minimum of bias for or against evangelical scholarship. Thus the comments of Wiseman and Ross are set alongside those of Savasta and Oded in evaluating Genesis 10. The value of such an approach is an honest presentation of the variety of important views. The weakness is lack of adequate criticism and a clear distinction of where interpretations differ. Thus the discussion concerning Genesis 1:26-27 and the image of God is one where the problems and proposed solutions are set out in a fashion which is a model of clarity, but the conclusion remains non-committal.

Wenham's designation of the early material (Genesis 1 through the flood story) as protohistory seems to be a compromise between a reluctance to use the term mythology and a recognition that it cannot be called history or even the prehistory of the following chapters. Despite the symbolic and universal significance which he finds in the protohistory, Wenham clearly sides with an historical emphasis, as evidenced by his observations that the writer/redactor saw no difference between the material of Genesis 1-11 and that found in the patriarchal narratives.

We miss more space devoted to an integrated theological understanding of the text, if only because the few pages set aside for distinguishing Genesis 1-11 from Ancient Near Eastern ideology and for integrating it with the rest of the book are so provocative. For either the traditional discussions of Christian theology, which have made the opening chapters of the Bible so important, or the more recent studies from feminist and deconstructionist theological perspectives (often reflected in what Wenham designates 'new literary criticism'), the reader is left to find scattered observations in comments on specific sections. In fairness, however, Wenham's own concern is 'the original meaning of Genesis, what it meant to its final editor and its first readers' (p. xiv), and he should be evaluated on that basis, not some other. An important example is the contrast Wenham makes between the Gilgamesh epic, with its emphasis upon the 'Noah' figure's activities and speeches, and the biblical flood account's description of the quiet and passive obedience of Noah. The Explanation section of the commentary is where theological interests are appreciated. Usually they provide more than the three-and-a-half page redundant plot summary found in the Explanation of 2:4-3:24.

In an already crowded field, Wenham's work will serve the interests of students and pastors who seek guidance with the Hebrew text and some sane and informed direction in the bewildering array of explanations of the early chapters of Genesis. Scholars will find Wenham's bibliographies and his reinterpretation of source criticism to be of interest.

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**N. Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature: Its Meaning and Function*** (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 208 pp., £25.00/\$42.50.

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If a poll were taken of the least-read parts of the OT, it would likely have been high on the list of laws of Israel's worship recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. The institutions are described in forbidding detail, many of the concepts are difficult, and the rituals are foreign to our experience. Critical scholars have

generally assigned this material to the priestly school (P), but have not had great success in elucidating its theology and meaning. Added to this is a long history of Protestant suspicion that here, if anywhere, we have law and not gospel.

But the foundational character of the Pentateuch in the Hebrew Bible should make us think again. The priestly traditions have recently been subject to a number of fine studies by American Jews (Milgrom, Levine), German Protestants (Rendtorff, Janowski) and British anthropologists (Mary Douglas, Douglas Davies). Readers of *Themelios* will also know the fine commentary on Leviticus by Gordon Wenham, which assimilates much of the best of the recent research. Kiuchi is a Japanese evangelical who completed his doctoral dissertation under Wenham's direction and is now in Japan teaching at Tokyo Christian Theological Seminary. This book is based on his thesis and makes a welcome contribution to the international debate on the meaning of the priestly cultic texts.

Kiuchi's central concern is to investigate the meaning of one of the most important types of sacrifice in the priestly literature, the *hattat*. This is normally translated sin offering, but Kiuchi follows Milgrom and others (correctly in my view) in translating it as purification offering. Along the way Kiuchi discusses the meaning of atonement (Hebrew *kipper*), the nature of uncleanness, the role of the priests, and the interpretation of the Day of Atonement (Lv. 16). The book is the result of wide reading in several languages, and makes frequent reference to the Hebrew. I found especially valuable his critical interaction with studies by Milgrom and Janowski. The number of disputed points show clearly that there is a long way to go in understanding this difficult section of the Hebrew Bible.

The result of Kiuchi's detailed investigation is a synthesis of striking originality. Against Milgrom, Kiuchi concludes that the *hattat* purifies people as well as the sanctuary. The priests have a vital role in the sacrificial procedure, not merely being agents of purification, but also bearing the guilt of the people. Atonement includes both these aspects of *hattat* ritual, and the manipulation of the blood of the sacrificed animal symbolizes the substitutionary death of the animal.

Kiuchi connects the hattath ritual in Leviticus 4 very closely to the ritual on the Day of Atonement (Lv. 16). Leviticus 4 contains several accounts of *hattat* rituals, but only in the first case (for the anointed priest, Lv. 4:1-2) is there no mention of atonement and forgiveness. Kiuchi suggests that this is because there is no one who can bear the high priest's guilt, but that this lack is made good on the Day of Atonement. The two goats offered on this occasion comprise one *hattat*, and the expulsion of the scapegoat is equivalent to the burning of the *hattat* outside the camp, symbolizing the removal of guilt.

The thesis is supported by detailed argument, but it depends upon a specific interpretation of a number of disputed texts and concepts. Many would hesitate to fit the varied material into a tight overall framework, and Kiuchi often needs to argue for the unity and coherence of a priestly text (e.g. Lv. 16). But even apart from the literary-critical questions, there is a weakness in Kiuchi's discussion which may be crucial. Kiuchi pays little attention to the considerable debate by anthropologists and theologians about the nature of sacrifice, ritual and religious language. For example, he finds that 'death' is the common theme to both sin and uncleanness, but it is doubtful whether this is the sole key to the complexities. I would have been interested in his response to Mary Douglas' very different perspective on impurity. Similarly, substitution is a term with overtones of later theological discussion, and it is uncertain whether it brings us to the heart of the dominant concerns of the priestly writers. But what is certain is that Kiuchi's arguments will need to be taken into account in the further discussion of these issues.

**Philip Jenson, Brentwood.**

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D. Barthélemy, D. W. Gooding, J. Lust and E. Tov, **The Story of David and Goliath. Textual and Literary Criticism. Papers of a Joint Research Venture, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 73** (Freiburg and Göttingen: Éditions Universitaires and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), viii + 157pp.

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Traditionally – and therefore still in many student textbooks dealing with method in the study of the OT – a sharp distinction has been drawn between 'lower' and 'higher' criticism of the text. The former relates to textual criticism narrowly defined, that is to say, establishing with the help of the ancient versions and, if necessary, conjectural emendation what may have been the original form of the Hebrew text. Higher criticism, by contrast, begins its work only with the text so established and speculates about how that text came to be written by use of such methods as source and form criticism.

In recent years, however, and especially in the light of the finds at Qumran, these two disciplines have been brought closer together and in the case of some books have been thought to overlap. For instance, it is well known that the Septuagint version of the book of Jeremiah is considerably shorter than the Masoretic Text and presents some of the chapters in a different order. Because some of these differences are now seen to be based not on the process of translation or subsequent editorial activity on the Greek text but on a different Hebrew text, there are a number of scholars who have argued that the Greek text bears witness to an earlier stage in the composition of the book. In that case, textual criticism would provide important evidence for unravelling issues which have traditionally been thought to be the province only of the second stage of higher criticism.

In this discussion, the books of Samuel assume an important position. It has been known for more than a century that the Septuagint sometimes differs quite significantly from the Masoretic Text, and that in ways which many argue on text-critical grounds are to be preferred. More recently, some fragments from Qumran have shown that many of these differences are due to the fact that the Greek translation was based on a Hebrew text which itself differed from the Masoretic Text. In most cases, these differences can be explained on the usual ground of faulty transmission of the text in its earliest stages. In the story of David and Goliath, however, the differences are of a more fundamental kind. The Greek text is considerably shorter than the Hebrew (for instance, it omits 1 Sa. 17:12-31 entirely), and by its omissions it removes a number of apparent difficulties in the account which some scholars had argued on higher-critical grounds were due to the combination of sources in the formation of the Hebrew text. The most celebrated example of such a difficulty is the fact that Saul seems unaware of David's identity in 17:55-56 despite the fact that already at the end of chapter 16 David had been brought into the personal service of the king. In the Septuagint, however, 17:55-18:6a is lacking, so that the difficulty does not arise.

The issues raised by these and similar phenomena are the subject of the book here under review. By way of an experiment, the four authors, who are all Septuagint experts, agreed each to examine the topic, initially on their own and then by way of several responses to their collaborators' contributions and with a few days spent together in discussion as well. From start to finish they disagree (sometimes quite radically) both over the methods proper to such an investigation and consequently over their conclusions. To oversimplify more than somewhat, Lust and Tov argue that the Septuagint was based on a shorter Hebrew text, and that this shorter text preceded the longer Masoretic Text in the history of composition. For them, the starting-point has to be an evaluation of the textual data. Barthélemy and Gooding, by contrast, start with the Masoretic Text and maintain that it can be understood as a consistent and satisfying story; for them, the Septuagint represents a truncated version, and is therefore secondary. Consequently, they seek to advance reasons why the text should have been thus shortened (basically, a misguided attempt to eliminate just the kind of difficulties which more recent scholars have also found with the longer text). For them, literary criticism must be applied first in a case such as this, because it is the text which is most

satisfying from a literary point of view which should have the priority.

Inevitably, much of the discussion is of a highly technical nature, though readers will find that Gooding's contribution is a brilliant and lucid exposition of the text as it stands which advances our understanding very considerably. (Equally, tribute should be paid to Tov's detailed examination of the Septuagint's translation technique in this passage, a study which, like Gooding's, can stand quite independently of the more specific issues under discussion.) Furthermore, as an experiment in scholarly collaboration this book has an interest all of its own, since by the close interaction between the four authors matters such as method and presupposition come sharply into focus, even if they are not definitively resolved. It is instructive for any reader to have his or her own personal preferences thus exposed.

Because these four experts argue the topic to and fro, it is unlikely that a reviewer's contribution could be more than yet another statement of personal preference; the substantial issues are fully laid out here for all to see. It is perhaps not a book for those who lack knowledge of the biblical languages, but for any with such knowledge and an interest in modern developments in the critical field this book will provide a most instructive introduction. Readers of *Themelios* will probably feel instinctively drawn to Gooding's conclusions, and indeed to this reviewer it appears that he often has the better of the argument regarding this particular passage; but whether one may legitimately extrapolate from this to other examples of differences between the Greek and Hebrew texts is quite another question!

H. G. M. Williamson, Cambridge.

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F. C. Holmgren, **Israel Alive Again: A commentary on the books of Ezra and Nehemiah** (International Theological Commentary, Edinburgh: Handsel, 1987), 180 pp., £4.95.

G. S. Ogden and R. R. Deutsch, **A Promise of Hope—A Call to Obedience: A commentary on the books of Joel and Malachi** (International Theological Commentary, Edinburgh: Handsel, 1987), 128 pp., £4.95.

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Most readers of this journal will be aware that the International Theological Commentary has made an attempt to produce biblical commentaries rather different from the standard format, large or small, with which we have become familiar. Rather than emphasize the form and sources of the biblical material or analyse linguistic and historical issues, this series has taken seriously the theological challenge of the Bible, as it relates to the modern as well as the ancient world. Perhaps inevitably, the various volumes so far published have not consistently achieved their desired aim, and the two books under consideration provide contrasting examples of the different ways in which individual authors have set about their task. They also illustrate very clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the series.

One of the series' most distinctive features has been the deliberate choice of authors from outside the traditional boundaries of Western scholarship. Graham Ogden, for example, who contributes the section on Joel but who is well known for his recent work on Ecclesiastes, has worked for some years in Taiwan, while Richard Deutsch's Jewish ancestry is complemented by extensive experience of lecturing in Hong Kong. Here he writes on Malachi. Fredrick Holmgren, who teaches in Chicago, is one of the joint editors of the series, and his volume (on Ezra/Nehemiah) is presumably intended as a model of what the series is about. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that, apart from occasional comments on matters such as the importance of genealogy in kinship-oriented societies or the stress placed on the value of a community's experience of God alongside that of an individual, these volumes do not appear substantially different from those produced by Western-based authors. Perhaps biblical scholarship has been less Westernized than the editors imagine, or alternatively the contributors might not have fully freed themselves from their Western heritage (or bondage?). Or

is it after all that the most vital qualification for a good biblical commentator is his knowledge of the biblical text? Although it is important for all readers of the Bible to be aware of the cultural baggage they bring to the sacred text, for a commentator it is surely a higher priority to bring out what the biblical text says to his readers and their culture rather than to emphasize what he himself brings to the Bible.

This is not to deny, of course, the value of our own cultural background, and there are two major areas in these commentaries where this comes to the fore. The Jewish dimension of exegesis is emphasized by both Holmgren and Deutsch. This is generally sensitively done, especially in discussing the mixed marriage issue in Ezra/Nehemiah for minority communities and in underlining the priority of 'the Torah of life'. Indeed, many evangelical Christians would do well to pay attention to the positive views of OT 'Law' enunciated here. Deutsch shows, for example, that 'Torah is the framework of renewal', and for both commentators the Torah is all about the *life* of faith.

A rather different kind of cultural emphasis emerges in Ogden's work on Joel. He interprets Joel as a lament liturgy, and develops this theme theologically in quite a striking manner. Noting that Christians 'have little opportunity liturgically to pour out fears, pain, anger, and frustrations, or our doubts about God's care', he suggests that Christians do actually need to express such emotions to God: 'To lament or pour out one's despair in a context of worship is appropriate, for there we call upon a compassionate God to act against the powers that bind us. There too we hear the assurance of God's commitment to all in need. . . .' For Joel, this was part of the experience of God's salvation, and there is no reason why it should not be the same today. The interesting thing, however, is that it is the content and significance of the biblical text that has led Ogden to this conclusion rather than his contemporary Asian context, even though, as he acknowledges, public lamentation is part of the fabric of life in his particular culture.

If, then, a commentary must in the end be judged by its ability to make plain the meaning of the biblical text, then these volumes cannot be said to have achieved uniform success. There is undoubtedly much to welcome in the theological emphases which are still all too often lacking in OT commentaries. Holmgren, for example, has helpful treatments of the theme of providence, and of the importance of forms and institutions as a means for remembering and celebrating the great acts of God, while Ogden highlights the fact that God's plans for blessing involve a reversal of evil's onslaught and that Joel's key message is that God will indeed 'restore the years'. Similarly, it is good to be able to welcome the awareness that the NT can be taken seriously in OT commenting, a feature that is still rare enough for its appearance to be worth noting. Although the more traditional literary and historical issues are dealt with more briefly, it is good to see an attempt made to treat Nehemiah 8-10 seriously in its own context without it having to be transplanted elsewhere, and Ogden adduces sound arguments concerning the unity and structure of Joel.

On the other hand, however, one has to question Holmgren's repeated statements about chronological slips in the text, and especially the way in which he sets Isaiah 56-66 against a range of biblical authors (including Ezra/Nehemiah) on the question of the temple. One may legitimately recognize the existence of varied views in the Bible without taking the views of Hanson and others to the extreme of seeing the supporters of Ezra/Nehemiah, etc. as those who have cast out the author of Isaiah 66:5-6 and his disciples and been regarded by the latter as God's enemies (Is. 66:6). Holmgren would have done better to have taken his own advice 'not to exaggerate the divisions', especially as we know comparatively little about the post-exilic community. A question mark must also be raised about Ogden's description of the NT's use of the OT simply 'free quotation', or his view of the early church as merely claiming 'equality with the synagogue as inheritors of the true faith'. In discussing Malachi 1:11, Deutsch, too, seems to be oversensitive to non-Christian religious groups in his desire to see evidence of the kingdom of God in their efforts 'to make this world a better place to live in', albeit according to their own beliefs. Jesus' acknowledgment of the Roman centurion's faith is hardly an appropriate analogy — in his case, the whole point was that he put his faith in Jesus as Lord.

It is precisely this kind of theological comment, rather loosely

related to the biblical text, that will diminish somewhat the usefulness of these otherwise stimulating volumes. The contributions of Holmgren and Deutsch tend at times to have the nature of a collection of brief essays on points of theological interest, resulting in a very brief treatment of many issues (e.g. the nature and value of sacrifice in Mal. 1:6-14). This reviewer found Ogden's work the most valuable of the three simply because it took the content of the text more seriously, and managed to do so without going into vast detail or losing its appeal for the non-scholarly reader. In short, even in the search for relevance and theology in the OT, there is no substitute for exegesis.

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**Giovanni Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*** (London: SCM Press, 1987), xvi + 222 pp., £10.50.

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Giovanni Garbini of Rome University is well known among Semitists for his essays and monographs on Semitic languages and inscriptions. They are characterized by crisp, stimulating argumentation and readiness to take an independent position. During the past ten years he has also turned his attention to the OT, and in this volume he presents several essays setting out his arguments and conclusions. It is a *tour de force*. Regrettably, it is *tour de force* of ill-founded and unjustifiably sceptical reasoning. Only in order to alert readers of *Themelios* to some of its failings does the reviewer comment on it.

On the first page of his Introduction, Professor Garbini reveals his starting-point: reading Exodus 32, 'I was struck by the detail that the tables of the law were written on two surfaces . . . and were broken so easily by Moses. Although it is said that they were of stone, these tablets seem to have been the small terra-cotta tablets on which the Babylonians wrote. And given that cuneiform tablets had disappeared from Egypt and Palestine by the end of the thirteenth century BC (they were only reintroduced by the Assyrian administration), the story of the golden calf, written by someone who was familiar with such tablets, must have been composed by an author who was or had been in Babylon.' On p. 104 the Golden Calf narrative is dated to the Exile. Two fallacies are immediately evident. The first is a logical one. The author assumes the stone tablets are transformations of clay ones inscribed in cuneiform because he apparently does not know of stone tablets of suitable type in the ancient Near East. This is a simple example of the 'I don't see it, therefore it does not exist' argument. In the second place, while it is true that cuneiform writing on clay tablets did disappear from the Levant soon after 1220 BC for 400 hundred years or so, no one supposes Moses lived after that date (cf. p. 155 'thirteenth century BC'), so whenever the present account was written it could preserve correctly a memory from that time. However, there is no compulsion to envisage Moses writing cuneiform; all the other scripts current in the second millennium BC could be scratched on stone, and that was the most readily available writing material given the circumstances of the story. (Moses was not called to climb the mountain with a papyrus scroll, pen and ink!) The alleged absence of comparable examples is no proof of non-existence; the fact, in Egypt apprentice-scribes often did their writing exercises on flakes of stone which could be held in one hand and would shatter if dropped on a rock.

Equally unsatisfactory is Professor Garbini's treatment of 'Hezekiah's Siege' (pp. 44-47). His several criticisms of the biblical narrative require an essay in reply. To be noted are his inadequate arguments for the contrast between Hebrew and Aramaic being anachronistic for the eighth century BC. His position is astonishing: 'It is obvious that the whole episode presupposes a linguistic situation in which Aramaic had become an international language, known to the educated class throughout the Near East; but what we call 'imperial' Aramaic seems somewhat anachronistic in 701 BC, when the Jerusalem court must have been more familiar with Phoenician than the Aramaic' (p. 46). Since 'Imperial Aramaic' is the term Semitists apply to the language of the Persian Empire, its

introduction here is misleading. Aramaic was already widely used in the Assyrian Empire by Assyrian government officials. In the palace of Sennacherib's father, Sargon II (c. 721-705 BC), have been found mace-heads belonging to some of them, with their owners' Assyrian names engraved on them in Aramaic letters (see *Iraq* 45 (1983), pp. 101-108). Other Assyrian kings received letters from provincial governors in Aramaic, one being from the governor of Tyre to the same Sargon or an earlier king (see H. W. F. Saggis, *Iraq* 17 (1955), pp. 130, no. 13). To say 'the languages neighbouring on Hebrew were Phoenician, Moabite and Edomite but not Aramaic' at the end of the eighth century BC and that Hebrew only came 'directly up against Aramaic' after 586 BC (p. 46) is to misrepresent the situation quite badly. Hezekiah's father, King Ahaz, visited Damascus, the former Aramaean capital, for an audience with the Assyrian king (2 Ki. 16:1ff.), and Israel was absorbed into Assyria's provincial system after 720 BC. It is impossible to believe no one in the Jerusalem court had a working knowledge of Aramaic, unless it can be shown that Hezekiah and his courtiers lived in almost total isolation from the rest of the Near East!

These examples of failure to take adequate account of ancient textual sources illustrate the nature of this book. There are many more like them, as well as numerous unsubstantiated assertions about the biblical texts. While it is valuable to have long-accepted theories questioned and the scholarly consensus challenged, there is no value in mounting such attacks without sound reasons and water-tight arguments. Professor Garbini is free to doubt 'whether a historical history of Israel can be written at all', but in this work he does not make a case in favour of his view which can command any assent. History was certainly understood by the OT writers from a particular standpoint or ideology; that does not mean their reports are therefore factually incorrect or tendentiously constructed to mislead. Any who read this book using their brains with an open Bible, as recommended on the back cover, should be able to detect its special pleading and flawed reasoning on page after page.

A. R. Millard, University of Liverpool.

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**D. S. Russell, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*** (London: SCM, 1987), 144 pp., £5.50.

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Over recent years, intertestamental studies have become something of a growth industry. No serious student of the NT can afford to overlook the importance of the Jewish literature for this period (c. 200 BC-AD 100). However, for the uninitiated this literature forms a veritable labyrinth through which guidance in terms of dating, content and appropriate use of the material is needed.

In my view, this book is not an ideal 'first reader' for undergraduates entering the field of intertestamental literature for the first time. Here the student would do well to begin with George Nickelsburg's *Jewish Literature Between The Bible And The Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1981). Once acquainted with the literature, however, Russell's book then provides a most useful first exercise which demonstrates how this literature may be used to throw valuable light on developments which took place in early Judaism relating to the character and function of patriarchs and prophets found in the biblical tradition.

Throughout the book, readers will find themselves confronted with allusions and parallels to the NT which will whet their appetite for further study. To me this is a great strength of this book; perhaps its weakness is that Dr Russell does not follow these through as much as he might have done with more NT references for readers to follow up later (only 29 NT references in the index including two refs in Matthew and only one ref to Paul!).

By way of introduction, Dr Russell shows how the patriarchs were idealized in such writings as the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus, Ben Sira, the Rabbinic literature and, of course, the OT Pseudepigrapha. Throughout his treatment of the Pseudepigrapha, Dr Russell succeeds in conveying to the reader the sensitivity with which we need to approach this literature if we are to understand its form and character. It simply will not do to say that pseudepigraphical writings, which claim to have been written by notables from

the past, are just forgeries. Here Dr Russell alerts readers to the feeling of affinity which the seer shared with heroes from Israel's past, an affinity which was strengthened by the belief that the seer shared in those same mysteries that were originally revealed to the ancient patriarchs in whose name the seer wrote, and which were now relevant to the new situation.

Dr Russell's discussion of the OT book of Daniel may be cause for some concern amongst readers of *Themelios*. He begins his discussion cautiously by stating: 'It is generally agreed that the Book of Daniel, in the form in which it now appears, was written in the time of the Syrian tyrant, Antiochus Epiphanes, around the year 164 BC' (p. 44, italics mine). From here he suggests that the biblical Daniel was originally an antediluvian hero, known in Phoenician-Canaanite legend as a wise and righteous ruler (p. 44f.). The lack of a genealogy for Daniel suggests to Dr Russell that the Daniel of the Babylonian exile was, in fact, a 'borrowed legendary figure' (p. 46) around whom various traditions grew and found their current expression in our OT book of Daniel. (For a useful discussion of approaches to the Book of Daniel, see 'Approaching Daniel: Three Studies', in *Themelios* 2.2, 1977.)

In his discussion of Job, Dr Russell points out that the OT book presents us with a literary form which is found as early as the 2nd millennium BC. As with Daniel, Job as it now appears in the OT is a post-exilic work; nevertheless, '... there is reason to believe that the prose narratives are of an earlier date and contain reflections of an old Job legend within the traditions of the Hebrew people' (p. 59).

The final chapter, 'Prophets and Portents', contains an interesting (though brief) discussion of the developments within Jewish eschatological thinking which led to speculations about Elijah the Forerunner and a Mosaic prophet being connected with the end-time and which are reflected in the NT.

Overall, the book is short (only 127 pages) and well presented. There is a very helpful 'For Further Reading' list together with indices of subjects, modern authors and original sources. Perhaps the most helpful aid is a 'checklist' of the literature set out in chronological order, which the author gives in his Introduction (pp. xiii). For students who need to familiarize themselves with the intertestamental literature, Dr Russell has provided a useful study to be included on an introductory list.

Keith Hacking, Swindon.

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David Prior, **Jesus and Power** (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987), 192 pp., £6.95.

This stimulating book is the eleventh title in Hodder's 'Jesus Library' series. Power, its use and abuse, is a key issue in today's world because of its relevance to the economic, political, marital and religious arenas. It is a subject encrusted with ideological slogans such as 'power to the people' and misleading religious jargon which tried to make Jesus too wealthy, too powerful or too militant.

The biblical foundation is laid with reference to the NT material and is focused on Jesus and his attitude to and use of power. 'At every turn and in every detail Jesus revealed an utterly different kind of power. Because the theme of power is so central to everyday experience, to study Jesus and power is to study the everyday life of Jesus - and the way he both treated power of a worldly kind and exercised power of a non-worldly kind' (p. 13).

In this way the subject of power is handled in a concrete, or rather incarnate, way and does not spin off into vague abstractions. Jesus is held up as our model. At the outset of his ministry Jesus was tempted by Satan. Each of the temptations involved some aspect of power and tested Jesus as to what kind of messiah he was to be. In an interesting way Prior shows that these same temptations came again and again to Jesus. For example, Peter tried to deflect Jesus from pursuing the path of suffering on the cross. Indeed, the way of the cross is the key to understanding Jesus's exercise of power. In the seminal passage in Phil. 2 Jesus does not snatch at his rights; instead he takes the form of a servant who suffers and pours himself out in self-giving sacrificial love.

This perfectly correct emphasis becomes a repeated refrain of the book. For example, 'true religious power is properly exercised when we behave towards one another on the pattern of God himself in Jesus - i.e. by becoming a servant, humbling ourselves and seeing true Christlikeness in terms of not grasping, in pouring ourselves out for others' (p. 137).

The exposition of this view of power refutes those who would justify the use of violence by arguing that God sanctified violence because of the violence of the cross. Prior argues '... that the followers of Jesus, acting and speaking explicitly in his name as the Christian church, are not free to espouse any violent expression of power' (p. 154). Allowance is, however, made for instances when individual Christians acting in the political arena may have to choose the lesser of two evils and resort to methods which fall short of Christ's way.

In some sections of the church today the power aspect of the resurrection leads to mistaken attitudes to methodology, success and manipulation. A wrong doctrine of the resurrection suggests that Christians, as resurrection people, live on the other side of the cross and therefore overemphasize mighty works. While not denying the validity of signs and wonders, the author rightly places the emphasis of 'power' on the Spirit's power to change lives so as to be like Jesus and resist the temptations to exercise power in purely human, worldly or even satanic ways. The resurrection of Jesus and the power of the Spirit vindicate the way of the cross for all time and for all believers.

There are occasions when the rapid survey of NT themes has led to a proof-texting approach devoid of normal exegetical controls. The broad sweep of necessity gives rise to generalizations in places, for example in unqualified statements about the malevolent Pharisees as a class. These minor reservations should not discourage anyone from reading this book. It could most profitably be used in small groups to discuss the implications of the teaching. In fact a study guide or at least a list of questions at the end of each chapter would be useful additions to this stimulating book.

Bill Houston, All Nations Christian College.

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L. Joseph Kreitzer, **Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology** (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 293 pp., £12.50.

This is a revised form of the author's PhD thesis, which was prepared under the supervision of Professor Graham Stanton at King's College, London. Larry Kreitzer is now NT tutor at Regent's Park College, Oxford.

Various approaches have been used in exploring Paul's understanding of the relationship of Jesus to God. Some scholars, for example, have seen 'wisdom theology' as a crucial key to his Christological language. Others have focused on the way in which Christology developed through reflection on the OT, or through the church's worship, particularly its use of hymns about Christ. Kreitzer proposes another route into the same question: what can be learnt from the fact that in Paul's doctrines of the parousia (second coming of Christ) and the final judgment there is a certain identification of roles between Jesus and God?

In chapter 1 Kreitzer examines Jewish pseudepigraphical documents in order to establish a comparative basis for examining the Pauline material. He is especially interested in those documents which express belief both in a temporary earthly rule of the Messiah and in an eternal, heavenly kingdom of God, since such a 'two-edged' eschatological scheme appears to reflect 'a tension between God and Messiah with respect to their eschatological roles and is a partial attempt at its resolution' (p. 24). Whereas D. S. Russell claimed to find five such documents, Kreitzer's careful study (greatly helped by the recent work of J. H. Charlesworth and others) identifies only three: the *Apocalypse of weeks* in 1 Enoch (though here the earthly kingdom is not specifically messianic), 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. In the latter books, passages stressing God's role at the final judgment exist alongside passages asserting the Messiah's role in final judgment. Thus the Messiah is presented as the author of divine activity without

any apparent sense of contradiction. But 'it is not unreasonable to assume that the distinction between a temporary earthly kingdom and the eternal age to come is an attempt to sort out the confusion between the functions of God and of the Messiah' (pp. 90-91).

Chapter 2 examines the parousia and final judgment in Paul. He observes that, as in 1 Enoch 46:1, Paul can speak of the throne of judgment being occupied either by God (Rom. 14:10) or by the Messiah (2 Cor. 5:10). There is a blurring of roles also in 1 Thes. 3:11-13. A similar phenomenon occurs where Paul transforms the OT idea of the Day of the Lord into an expectation of the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5:5; and similar phrases in 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6, 10, etc.). And in other passages such as Rom. 10:13 and Phil. 2:10-11 OT references to Yahweh become for Paul references to the Lord Jesus. All this points to 'a delicate balance between theocentricity and Christocentricity in Paul's thought' (p. 129).

Chapter 3, on the Messiah and the kingdom in Paul, argues that in 1 Cor. 15:20-28 the apostle probably speaks of a temporary messianic kingdom before the eternal age to come, and that this modification of Paul's normal teaching may arise from traditional Jewish speculations such as have been found in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Kreitzer makes use here of the work of Albert Schweitzer, and particularly of Wilber Wallis ('The Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18, 1975, pp. 229-242). The temporary earthly kingdom is located between the parousia (v. 23) and the 'end' (v. 24). The destruction of Christ's enemies (v. 25) takes place during this interval.

1 Cor. 15:28 also raises the issue of Christ's subordination to the Father. This indicates Paul's concern to preserve monotheism despite his high Christology.

The book is an important exploration of the relationship between Christology and eschatology in Paul. It is clearly written, even though it is handling difficult material at times. And it makes valuable comments on several controversial questions which are not quite at the centre of its own concerns - How does the millennial teaching of Rev. 20 relate to Jewish apocalyptic ideas? How did the doctrine of the parousia arise in Judaism and Christianity? Are there developments or inconsistencies in Paul's eschatology (as of course there are if 1 Cor. 15 teaches a temporary messianic kingdom)?

It is good to see a strong case made for a temporary messianic kingdom in 1 Cor. 15. But in the end I find it unconvincing. Kreitzer appeals, for instance, to Wallis' argument that Paul distinguishes between two resurrections in this passage - a general resurrection of all people, and a resurrection of believers to eternal life. But it is very doubtful whether Paul has anything but the resurrection of believers in mind here. The argument is in fact difficult to follow unless one has access to Wallis' article itself, and Kreitzer would have made out his case better if he had presented a detailed exegesis of his own. Also, he offers no suggestion as to why the idea of a temporary messianic kingdom crops up specifically in the context of 1 Cor.

There are a number of misprints, particularly in citations of Greek texts. But this is undoubtedly a significant study touching on numerous important issues, and a stimulus to further study of Paul's Christology and eschatology.

Stephen Travis, Nottingham.

C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* rev. ed.; London: SPCK, 1987, 361 pp., £12.50.

For over 30 years Barrett's *Documents* have provided theological students with a fascinating taste of the world in which the NT was written. In 1956 Barrett's book was a first (at least in English); since then many others have attempted a similar task, but for me at least Barrett's somehow remained the most judicious and palatable selection. But it was compiled when Qumran literature was barely beginning to be noticed in NT studies, and before any of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic material was readily available. So a revised and expanded edition has long been needed.

The new edition is 85 pages longer. Much of this is accounted for by material which has newly become available during these 30 years, not only Qumran and Nag Hammadi, but Mandaean and Mithraic texts and ossuary inscriptions. Barrett has not merely added one or two new sections, however, but has worked over the whole collection in the light of his own continuing study of the first-century world. He has now decided to include small tastes of Aristotle and of the Greek dramatists, and of Juvenal's bitter anti-Judaism. New selections appear also among the Rabbinic texts, and particular attention has been paid to Jewish biblical exegesis (remedying the remarkable omission of targums from the first edition) and Jewish mysticism.

Any such anthology must be a personal selection, and none is ever completely satisfactory. But Barrett's mature judgment and the breadth of his knowledge of the relevant literature inspires confidence. I hope that in the next 30 years it will be not only theological students who are guided by him into a broad and enriching awareness of the world in which Christianity came to birth.

Dick France, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

John Thurmer, *The Son in the Bible and the Church* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1987), 103 pp., £4.95.

This is a useful little book, easy to read and covering a great deal of ground in 100 pages. The author asks the question: Did Jesus believe himself to be the Son of God, one with the Father in a unique sense? In several brief chapters, the answer which emerges is that Jesus was indeed aware of his unique status as affirmed by traditional orthodoxy. The book is aimed at those 'with some knowledge of modern thought who wish to maintain and strengthen their faith, but are disappointed or alarmed . . . by much of what is now said and done'.

Inevitably, the author's treatment of his subject is somewhat superficial, but there are, nevertheless, frequent flashes of insight and the chapter dealing with the virgin birth is particularly valuable. By his concentration on the theme of Sonship, the author conveys how crucial is this category in the NT as the key to Jesus' self-understanding.

The chapter on Son and Spirit has some telling criticism of the Spirit Christology recently advocated by Lampe and others. The next one on the suffering of God is a subject that has come to the fore in recent years and Canon Thurmer has a sensitive and sensible contribution to make to this debate. He only partially endorses W. H. Van-Stone's moving book *Love's Endeavour Love's Expense* (1977) by noting that it points dangerously in the direction of identifying God with his creation. What, however, is undeniable, especially from the evidence of Hebrews, is that 'the incarnate son has an element of the questing and experimental about his Sonship' (p. 73). Clearly, divine Sonship is not incompatible with learning obedience (Heb. 5).

This book, then, has many strengths, but there are blemishes. On a general note, the author's handling of critical issues is at times inadequate. Thus in seeking to rehabilitate the Fourth Gospel as a reliable historical source, he ventures into a field where both his prejudices and lack of critical skill are somewhat evident. It seems that one has to choose between 'accurate reminiscence' or 'Christian reflection' - one cannot have both (see p. 16).

My other main criticism centres on the chapters dealing with the role of women. Canon Thurmer believes that what he writes about the Father-Son relationship has consequences for the 'maleness' of God. He writes: 'Christian orthodoxy requires us to hold that, from the incarnation and to all eternity, God has a male human body' (p. 78). It has to be said that in chapters 13 and 14 the quality of the book plummets and the style suggests a good deal of bitterness at recent developments connected with women's ministry. He insists that the arguments advanced by all advocates of the ordination of women are entirely due to 'secular movements and changes' (p. 82). He refuses to see any influence of the Spirit at all in contemporary developments and dismisses Mary Hayter's recent carefully argued book in favour of women's ordination (*The New Eve in Christ*, SPCK, 1987) in a

footnote. It is a great pity that muddled thinking and prejudice on this issue should mar an otherwise well-written and attractive little book.

Canon Thurmer's book should, with the reservations expressed above, prove useful to clergy and others as an introduction to a complex area. It will also give students new to theological study an overview of a relevant area of Christology.

**Howard Bigg, Cambridge.**

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**K. M. Kenyon, rev. edn by P. R. S. Moorey, *The Bible and Recent Archaeology* (London: British Museum Publications, 1987), 192 pp., £9.95.**

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The pace of archaeological research in the lands of the Bible and the rapid development of its interpretation fully justifies the revision of Kenyon's popular introductory survey within ten years of its original publication (1978). As one who dug with Kenyon and who shows evident respect for and loyalty to her opinions, Moorey was well placed to undertake this work now that Kenyon is sadly no longer with us to do it herself. However, he is even more qualified for the task because of encyclopedic knowledge of the field, his wide acquaintance with the vast body of relevant secondary literature and his willingness to depart from Kenyon's often trenchantly expressed opinions when he believes that the evidence calls for such revision. The result is in effect a new work with three more chapters than the original, including the most welcome addition of one on the post-exilic and intertestamental periods. With 120 black and white illustrations, the whole is beautifully produced and reflects credit on the publishers.

As befits a museum publication, the work is aimed primarily at intelligent lay readers. It presupposes little prior knowledge of the subject, is written with clarity of style and without technical jargon (though a concise glossary of technical terms is included at the end), and without being dogmatic does not generally argue controversial topics in particular detail. Moorey fairly makes clear the major points at which opinions diverge, but this is not the place for detailed refutations of positions to which he does not subscribe. This will thus make a useful introductory textbook for students, though they will need to look elsewhere if they wish to take their studies beyond first principles.

When it comes to relating archaeology to the Bible, Moorey rightly insists that 'the information provided by excavations proves nothing about the Biblical tradition' (p. 18). While admitting that he is not a textual, literary or historical critic, he follows the consensus of moderate critical scholarship in these areas. He thus finds it difficult, for instance, to hold to a united conquest of Canaan under Joshua, suggesting instead that the Israelite settlement was 'a protracted and complex process, varying from area to area, as indeed a careful reading of the Old Testament suggests' (p. 76). At the same time, however, it should be noted that the nomadic infiltration theory, which he seems to favour, has come in for some severe criticism in recent years.

While readers of *Themelios* may thus wish to raise questions about some of Moorey's conclusions, that should not detract from their finding here one of the most informative, up-to-date and readable introductions to the archaeological background to the Bible and the great deal of positive light which can be shed from this quarter on its setting and history.

**H. G. M. Williamson, Cambridge.**

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**David Brown, *Continental Philosophy and Modern Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 250 pp., £27.50.**

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This book is a comprehensive study of Systematic Theology as it has interacted with developments in French and German philosophy

since the time of Kant. There are, however, numerous references to earlier theologians and philosophers, and in some sections of the book (e.g. the treatment of atonement) they play a more prominent part in the narrative than the moderns do.

The book is distinguished first of all by its somewhat unusual method. Unlike most studies of this kind, it is not historical or biographical in nature, but analytical. The chapter headings are those of a textbook on Systematic Theology, and each section deals with the contribution of a particular group of philosophers and theologians to our understanding of that particular theme. In some cases, as for example in the discussion of hermeneutics, it is fairly clear that particular schools of thought have contributed to discussion in one major area and not in others, so this type of treatment is quite legitimate. Unfortunately though, it is not always clear why a philosopher or theologian should appear under the rubric chosen for him by the author. Does Jüngel, for example, fit naturally into a chapter dealing with the Last Things?

It must be admitted that the method adopted occasionally produces a certain arbitrariness in the choice of both authors and subjects, and at times one would have been grateful for a more biographical approach. After all, Barth and Bultmann (to name but two of the best known) made contributions in more than one area! By adopting the approach he has, the author gives the impression that the leading intellectual figures he discusses confined themselves to a single aspect of systematic theological thought, which is obviously a serious distortion! Another problem is that it is not always easy to find philosophers who have dealt competently with the same questions, and it is hard to escape the feeling that some of the choices, at least, are artificial.

One of the great strengths of the book is the author's vast range of reading. He is familiar with virtually every work of significance in the field in English, French and German, and he is not afraid to discuss people like Josef Maréchal or Theodor Adorno at unaccustomed length, pointing out just how significant their contributions have been to intellectual endeavour in the 20th century. There can be few readers of this book who will not learn something about figures like these of which they were previously unaware, and we must be grateful to Dr Brown for having introduced them to an English-speaking audience.

We must also be grateful to him for having demonstrated that continental philosophy is much richer than many of us think, and for having shown that in France and Germany there is an interaction between philosophy and theology which seems quite strange in a British (or American) context. Most of his philosophers were (or are) atheists, or at least non-religious in their approach, and not a few were secularized Jews, which makes both their interest in and their influence on religion that much more striking. Committed Christians may dispute whether this is really healthy for theology in the life of the church, but it is important to understand the breadth and nature of the interaction which has taken place and done so much to shape theological thought in recent times.

Having said that, it is not unfair to add that the author is frequently better at explaining the thought of a particular philosopher or theologian, without really going into the exact nature of his dependence on the other discipline. Quite what Jacques Lacan has to say about the Church or Ernst Bloch about Eschatology remains something of a mystery, and it is not altogether clear that the theologians discussed under these same headings borrowed anything of significance from them.

It is also noticeable that certain subjects, in particular the doctrine of Human Nature and the doctrine of Salvation, rely much more than the others on classical thought, with special attention being given to people like Irenaeus, Anselm and Calvin.

In relation to the Christian theological tradition, the author is a fairly conservative Anglo-Catholic, who defends Anselm's theory of atonement and finds some good things to say about transubstantiation. At the same time, he is clearly opposed to the Reformers, and quite dismissive of 'fundamentalism', although he does at least mention it! He tries to combine a fairly orthodox theology with a frank acceptance of radical biblical criticism, which is not easy and may in the long run be untenable. Much of his argument seems to rely on the premiss that traditional theology was discussing real issues in what is now an outmoded way of thinking, so that it is possible to reject the latter without turning one's back on the former.



The author is sympathetic to Liberation Theology and to Feminist Theology, without following either of them all the way. On the other hand, he is more dismissive of Personalism (which he never mentions by name) and leaves out some thinkers of considerable importance, like Martin Buber, for example. By restricting himself to France and Germany (although Edward Schillebeeckx, Gustav Aulén and Søren Kierkegaard manage to find their way into the discussion) he misses out on the important contributions made by other thinkers like Benedetto Croce, Miguel de Unamuno and Herman Dooyeweerd, none of whom is mentioned in the book.

British thinkers are not supposed to be covered, though inevitably they play a fairly prominent role in some sections. Dr Brown is not afraid to criticize even the most eminent among them, though it is interesting to note that he gives T. F. Torrance a recognition which is sadly too rare in this country. Perhaps it is only in the context of continental philosophy that his contribution to theological thought can be properly assessed and appreciated. At any rate Torrance stands alongside the greats in a way that no other living British or American theologian does, and his originality is given the fullest honour here.

This book will be a valuable reference tool for students who need to know something about the matters of which it treats, though the author's bias must constantly be borne in mind. It must also be said that neither the subject matter nor the author's style makes it easy for the non-specialist to follow his arguments in every area. Again, one cannot help thinking that a more historical-biographical approach would have been useful here, especially for the uninitiated. The price is also forbidding, which is a pity, since books of this kind are so few.

Gerald Bray, Oak Hill College.

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David F. Wells, *God the Evangelist: How the Holy Spirit Works to Bring Men and Women to Faith* (Grand Rapids/Exeter: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1987), 128 pp., £4.95.

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There was once a time when the Holy Spirit could be referred to as 'the displaced person of the Godhead and the Cinderella of theology', but recent years have brought a spate of books on the theology of the Holy Spirit, both academic and popular, good and indifferent. Is there any real justification for yet another? Dr Packer, in his introduction to *God the Evangelist*, argues that there is, that we still do not take the Holy Spirit seriously enough, and that our theology of the Spirit is often superficial and inadequate.

The origin of *God the Evangelist* lies in the Consultation on the Work of the Holy Spirit and Evangelization held in Oslo, Norway, in May 1985. David Wells was given the task of writing a book which would not only utilize papers given at the Consultation but also give his own interpretation of how the collective understanding of the participants moved on beyond the original papers. Because the book is relatively brief, the reader is sometimes left feeling a little breathless (particularly when great historical controversies about the Holy Spirit are summarized in a few brief paragraphs), but the achievement of David Wells in highlighting the major themes from the great mass of material at his disposal is masterly.

This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to take the doctrine of the Holy Spirit seriously, and to see the church rediscover the work of the Spirit in its life and evangelism. One reason is that this book does not get bogged down in the comparatively trivial questions that often obsess Christians in their discussion of the Spirit, but it does give some of the most serious and profound discussion that I have read of the questions that are of real importance. Three great themes are discussed: 'the Holy Spirit in relation to creation and history, the Holy Spirit empowering the local church for evangelization, and the Holy Spirit confronting the world'. If for no other reason, the book is worth reading simply for the chapter on 'Spiritual Power Encounters', which provides superb insights for the contemporary debate on the place of signs and wonders in evangelism. Avoiding the two extreme positions of saying either that signs and wonders are an absolutely necessary accompaniment of the

gospel to authenticate it, or that the need for signs and wonders ended with the apostolic era, David Wells concludes that signs and wonders occur in 'clusters' at particular times and places in church history, and that the charismatic movement, rather than having any particular eschatological significance, has brought a return to the church life experienced by the patristic church of the first three centuries AD.

The other outstanding feature of the book is that it is not bound by the cultural shackles of the European and North American church. It recognizes that the insights of theologians and pastors working in the Second and Third Worlds are essential for a full understanding of the theology of the Holy Spirit, and the five Appendices are of immense value and interest, describing characteristics of the Holy Spirit's working in evangelism and revival in such diverse places as China, Northern Australia among the Aborigines, and a South African university campus.

Christopher Hingley, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

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Sallie McFague, *Models of God. Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (London: SCM, 1987), 224 pp., £8.50.

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The purpose of this book, as the title suggests, is to explore a number of 'models' of God to see what their potential might be for presenting the Christian faith in a way which is contemporary and relevant for our age – an age which the author characterizes as 'ecological' and 'nuclear'. The models proposed are those of the world as God's body, God as Mother, as Lover and as Friend. The book is not, however, concerned with the issues of ecology, feminism or nuclear power *as such*, but with the very nature and task of Christian theology. It raises issues which evangelical theologians and students *must* be prepared to deal with.

*Models of God* continues a train of thought beginning with an analysis of religious language as imagistic and metaphorical (*Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology*, Fortress, 1975), leading on to an exploration of how these basic images and metaphors became conceptual theological language (*Metaphorical Theology. Models of God in Religious Language*, SCM, 1982), which considers the role of models such as 'Father' in theology. The present book takes a logical next step, looking at some possible alternative models.

Professor McFague begins by calling for a new, 'ecological, evolutionary' perspective in order for Christian theology to be 'theology for our time'. What she means by this is a holistic, organic, inclusive understanding of the world which acknowledges the interdependence of all life, and accepts human responsibility for the fate of this earth. Such a perspective should promote justice and care, change and openness rather than maintaining ancient and oppressive dualisms and hierarchies, and requires new models of God's relationship to the world.

It is on the methodological issues of where these models should come from, what is their function, their status and their relationship with Scripture that there are weaknesses and problems with the book. McFague designates the task of metaphorical theology as one of *correlation* between Scripture/tradition and contemporary experience, and insists on continuity with the 'paradigmatic events' of Jesus. However Jesus is not unique for her either as the definitive revelation of God or as the salvation of the world, and there is ambiguity as to which is finally more normative for our vision of God and salvation – the story of Jesus or the contemporary situation. This confusion results in the downplaying of elements which I believe to be intrinsic to the Christian faith and it means that the models McFague suggests look arbitrary and lack the power they could have if rooted more clearly in Scripture and the Christian tradition.

However, given that evangelicals would want to argue for a more rigorous understanding of revelation and salvation in Christ, McFague is absolutely right that the vision of salvation conveyed in this revelation *must* be expressed in ways which are contemporary, relevant and powerful; and in wanting to correct the balance of

Western Christianity by emphasizing the nonhierarchical, inclusive and destabilizing elements of that vision. The models she explores and the conclusions she draws from them should challenge our own understanding of the gospel. I have reservations about the ultimate value of seeing the world as God's body – McFague seems to be opening herself up unnecessarily to misunderstanding and confusion, and most of the import of the model is expressed more clearly in the other models she looks at – but then she emphasizes continually that this work is experimental, limited and partial. The other models – Mother, Lover and Friend – offer some very important insights. They complement the more traditional metaphors and are in fact more congruous with the Christian gospel and tradition than McFague herself seems to allow.

Finally however, whatever our reactions are to the specific content of the models, we should certainly be prepared to be provoked and stimulated by this book, and challenged not only about our understanding of God and salvation but also about our understanding of and commitment to the task of theology.

Sally Alsford, London Bible College.

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Thomas Molnar, **The Pagan Temptation** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, distrib. by Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1987), 201 pp., £9.80.

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The thesis of Molnar's intriguing book can be stated quite briefly. In his own words, 'the pagan worldview persists behind the Christian worldview and . . . favorable circumstances, among which the most important is the fading of Christian truth as symbolized myth . . . allow it to manifest itself with a renewed vigor' (p. 60). Molnar detects just such a revival of paganism in 20th-century culture.

Molnar begins by analysing the conflict between Christianity and the paganism of pre-Christian Hellenism. He does so by painting contrasting pictures of the pagan sage and the Christian saint. This is a refreshing approach to familiar material and gives a useful alternative to the usual concentration on the intellectual components of Christianity and paganism. Chapter 2 perceives a re-emergence of paganism in the intellectual tendencies of 14th- and 15th-century catholic Europe. Molnar focuses in particular on the inroads into European thought made by Averroism and negative theology.

Taken together, chapters 4 and 5 provide us with a thumbnail sketch of neo-paganism (Molnar's term for the 20th-century revival of elements of pagan thought). It is contemptuous of monotheism and the notion of a divine monarch: gods are mere expressions of the human condition. Instead it favours a return to a pantheistic worldview and its corollary, a cyclical view of time. Where it differs from pre-Christian paganism and classical Hinduism is in its assessment of man's place in the universe. For the pagan sage and the Brahmin the ultimate meaninglessness of reality suggested that 'salvation' was by withdrawal from reality. For the neo-pagan the same ultimate meaninglessness encourages him to identify a human elite with the Absolute: thus the future is created by the will of a select band of heroes and illuminati.

Nietzsche remains the outstanding spokesman of neo-paganism but Molnar claims that its influence pervades our culture thanks to the work of such men as Levi-Strauss, Jung, Hesse and Heidegger. As evidence he points to what he sees as its influence in the social sciences, natural science and literature. This points to a major weakness of his analysis. The phenomenon called neo-paganism is so diffuse that Molnar has to build up his picture of a neo-pagan from a wide variety of writers and scholars of quite contradictory outlooks. In spite of this, his book serves as a useful reminder of the dangers of accommodating Christianity to secular culture.

The pivotal chapter 3 and the concluding chapter set out his explanation for the perceived retreat of Christianity in the face of a renewed paganism. He argues that Christianity, insofar as it has set faith and reason in opposition, has favoured the development of a stultifying rationalism. The victory of Christianity involved the desacralization of the world and the suppression of the mythic imagination in favour of belief in the supernatural. The present

revival of pagan thought is in large measure a reaction against the very successful rationalist heresy of Christianity.

Molnar is right to insist that genuine Christianity rests on the interdependence of faith and reason and that in order to resist the pagan temptation the churches need to re-affirm their faith in the supernatural. However, his idea of what constitutes genuine Christianity will not commend itself to evangelical readers: he bemoans the passing of a traditional Roman Catholicism in which Latin was a sacred language, priests were sacred men mediating between God and the laity, and the consecrated host was transubstantiated. In short, his answer to the powerful appeal of neo-pagan beliefs and symbols is a return to Tridentine ritualism.

L. H. Osborn, London.

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Richard Viladesau, **Answering for Faith: Christ and the human search for salvation** (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 312 + xiv pp., \$12.95.

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This book, whose author is professor of theology at Immaculate Conception seminary, Huntington, New York, is meant as a work of apologetics, and more specifically apologetics *vis-à-vis* other world religions. Dr Viladesau's method is to begin with an 'anthropology' (i.e. a theology of human nature) based on an earlier book of his, *The Reason for our Hope*. To be human is to be conscious; to have a finite freedom; to be orientated to the infinite; to be alienated; and yet to seek salvation 'as a collaboration of love with God and with others'. This leads to a section on the problem of evil: Viladesau here deliberately blends the philosophical problem ('Why is there evil, if there is a God?') and the religious one ('How does God deal with evil?').

But can God, to whom we are orientated, really speak to us? (a very difficult section, because Viladesau is reluctant to accept specific divine acts in the world, and obviously finds it hard to reconcile this with his belief that God has indeed spoken). Given that he can and does, we next look at possible cases of such speaking: and so Viladesau surveys first the Indian and Chinese religions (evinced a certain sympathy for Mahayana Buddhism in particular), and then the 'Perso-Semitic-Hellenic'. Can there be a *final* word of God? Can these religions be seen as converging (e.g. in the principle of mysticism, or in that of mediation and incarnation)? This leads on to the claims of Christianity, and to the position of Christ as 'eschatological saviour'. His finality is affirmed, but not exclusively: Christianity should both take in the positive elements of other faiths, and act as a catalyst for them – as in fact historically has happened.

The book suffers from two major defects. Firstly, Viladesau tends (like others before him) to try and force other religions to say what he would like them to rather than what is actually said by their own adherents; and, correspondingly, to assimilate Christian ideas to those found in other religions. (Is Jesus's 'I and the Father are one' really the same as the Advaitin's 'I am Brahman', when the latter applies to everyone, not just Jesus?) What is worse, especially for one who is presumably trying to convince others, is the appallingly difficult style. Viladesau seems reluctant to use a short word if a long one will do. Typically, when he comes to mention a point allied to my first criticism just now, what he says is 'our treatment has been typological rather than concretely phenomenological'. In describing what happens in a miracle, he tells us that 'the action points to the Absolute as the source of the spiritual power . . . for God is the "final cause" of the entire dynamism of transcendence'. And these are rather mild examples of the style. Moreover, he belongs to the Roman Catholic theological school of 'transcendental Thomism' whose most notable members are Lonergan and Rahner (the latter in particular is frequently quoted). But transcendental Thomists seem to have their own peculiar language or jargon, and Viladesau uses it with no concessions at all to the reader. Any discipline will need a technical vocabulary of its own; but it is putting-off to find within the first few pages a statement like 'The method of subjectivity as we practice it, therefore, includes both a *transcendental* and a *dialectical* movement'. The result is that although Viladesau aims to

base his work on philosophical grounds which are potentially common not only to all Christians but also to non-Christians and even non-believers, the book is unlikely to help any except the initiated.

**Richard Sturch, Islip.**

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Garry W. Trompf, **The Gospel is not Western: Black Theologies from the Southwest Pacific** (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1987), 213 pp., US \$17.95.

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Garry Trompf, formerly a lecturer at the University of Papua New Guinea, has put together this compendium of papers on the interaction between Christianity and culture in the Southwest Pacific, almost all having been first presented at a conference held near Brisbane, Australia in August 1981. The 21 contributions, all except Trompf's coming from indigenes of the region, provide insight into some of the varieties of thought going on in the Melanesian and Aboriginal worlds. The contributors are varied and include politicians with a Christian perspective, academics, church representatives and activists in the various communities; their theological persuasion may be radical, traditional or evangelical and they come from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds.

The sub-title claims to present to us 'Black Theologies', a claim that seemed dubious on first reading. However, on reflection, the book provides us with such a range of material that one is able to see where theology stands in cultures that resist a separation between the earthly and the spiritual.

The book is divided into five sections. The first provides us with an introduction to the world being dealt with and to the authors – a section that makes the book of value outside the Pacific.

The second records some of the interactions between Christianity and tradition. The authors here identify the cultural imperialism that was present in much missionary work and went alongside the activities of the colonial powers – not a unique happening! The next step they make is to attempt to evaluate the impact of this Christianization on the culture. The work of mission had been so successful that in 1980 96% of the region classed themselves as Christian in some way. It is a balanced account, presenting both the positives and the negatives. However, the third step of the process is to envision the way ahead and it is here the different presuppositions of the contributors reveal themselves. One urges that the 'Bible should NOT (my emphasis) be used as a measuring rod to dismiss or support developing ideas and theologies', whilst another would argue that '[the Christians] discriminated between what they saw as the central tenets of the Christian faith and the western application of that faith to their specific cultural situation'.

The third section of the book introduces us to 'the impact of indigenous tradition' and in particular examines the relationship between traditional and Christian priesthood, the cargo cult concept, the centrality of the ancestors and the land and the place of healing arising from the cultural past but brought into a Christian framework. This section is more of *apotpourri* of ideas without much cohesiveness. Whilst it represents aspects of culture which are present and affect the life of the Christian, they seem to be dealt with relationally and with little biblical reflection.

Part four provides us with deeper reflection and presents a very helpful search for theology and practice. It deals with the relationship between 'spirits' and the Holy Spirit, expressions of worship, the role of women, and the search for a Melanesian theology. There is more interaction with Scripture and there is a helpful moving away from the concept of 'Melanesian Christian' to that of 'Being a Christian in Melanesia' that seeks not to change the basics of the gospel but to sharpen its cultural application.

The final section deals with the political reality of the region and reflects views of radicals, both in theology and praxis, views of churchmen who are actively involved in the democratic political life and those of the search for peace and justice in the region.

Overall an interesting compendium to those concerned with cross-cultural theological interaction and an exceedingly helpful one to

those in the Pacific. Today there is a strident Pentecostal/charismatic voice to be heard and it would have been good to have heard this as part of the spectrum of theological sounds coming from the Southwest Pacific.

**John Chapman, Papua New Guinea.**

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Geoffrey Ahern and Grace Davie, **Inner City God. The nature of belief in the inner city** (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), 160 pp., £7.95.

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This book is one of the first publications of The C. S. Lewis Centre for the Study of Religion and Modernity, a research organization working to publish material concerning the relationship between the Christian faith and the modern world. The policy is to reach a broad market and so the Centre has among its Trustees members from Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican and House Church backgrounds. Two types of books will be published: some overtly defending Christian beliefs, others presenting empirical research concerning contemporary society not necessarily carried out by Christians. It is into the latter category that this book falls.

With the realization that the mushrooming population of the world is increasingly concentrated in rapidly growing cities, Christians are beginning to focus attention on the needs and challenges of cities. In the advanced industrial cities of Europe and North America the challenge is particularly that of relating the Christian faith to decaying inner cities.

*Inner City God* brings together two pieces of research which examine the frequently-observed phenomenon in inner cities of a continuing religiosity coexisting with a decline in church attendance.

The first paper, 'The nature of belief in the inner city', is by Grace Davie and was commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. It is basically a review of the sociological literature relating to the nature of belief in contemporary Britain, and as such is particularly strong on bibliographical material. The underlying question is whether the nature of belief makes the task of the church in UPAs easier or harder, and Davie is at pains to stress that there are no simple answers and that great care is needed in evaluating available information.

The first chapter considers various sociological approaches to the nature of belief and relates to two contemporary questions – what takes the place of religious belief for moderns with the same problems as earlier generations, and what are the effects on society if traditional beliefs are discarded and not replaced. Davie favours Towler's definition of 'common religion' – non-organized, but with supernatural referents, and gives a useful critique of alternative approaches.

The second chapter deals briefly with the secularization debate in its British context and draws valuable contrasts with Latin Europe and America. This leads to a consideration of belief in a local context in chapter three, where Davie shows that differences in belief and practice are distributed through society in complex ways. She stresses that no one theory is adequate to explain the data and is alert to the role of researcher's views in interpreting evidence. The final chapter considers the relationship between conventional and common religion and the challenges posed to the church. The orientation is entirely Anglican and various options are presented but not evaluated. Perhaps to do so would have exceeded her brief.

The second paper, 'I do believe in Christmas', White working-class people and Anglican clergy in inner-city London', is by Geoffrey Ahern, from the Alister Hardy Research Centre in Oxford, and summarizes his research into the beliefs of these particular groups in Tower Hamlets in East London. In the course of five chapters he presents a vivid picture of white working-class attitudes to themselves, to God ('Do you believe in a God who can change the course of events on earth?' 'No, just the ordinary one.'), and to the C of E (very definitely 'them'). There is much valuable information presented, for example concerning soap operas replacing a sense of local community, and the correlation between the visibility and acceptance of the clergy. The attitudes of the Anglican clergy are also

well explored, including their inbuilt competitiveness and 'neurosis' about numbers. The use of frequent quotations from those interviewed gives the results of this research a feeling of immediacy and vividness. The paper closes with recommendations which vary greatly in value, which is perhaps not surprising in view of Ahern's agnosticism. In general they owe more to pragmatism than principle.

Although the two papers are entirely separate in their origins, they combine to provide a useful picture of belief in the inner city, and many of the attitudes would not be confined to UPAs. Both wisely stress the complexity of the situation and no easy answers are offered. The focus exclusively on Anglicanism is a drawback in both studies – there is little sense of anything happening elsewhere – and it is unfortunate that writers such as David Lyon and Alan Storkey are entirely absent even from the bibliographies. Nevertheless Davie and Ahern present much food for thought by those called to proclaim the reign of Christ in a city context.

**W. David J. McKay**, Aghadowey, Co. Londonderry.

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Kenneth Boyack (ed.), **Catholic Evangelization Today – a new Pentecost for the United States** (New York: Paulist Press), 209 pp., \$9.95.

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The 1974 Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops was followed by Pope Paul VI's influential statement on evangelization, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which was followed in 1979 by the further papal *Catechesi Tradendae* by John Paul II. The collection of essays in *Catholic Evangelization Today* stems from a conference of the National Council for Catholic Evangelization in 1985 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Section One of this book gives us some useful reflections and commentaries on the text of the papal statement.

In evangelical circles *Evangelii Nuntiandi* has sometimes been compared to its contemporary Lausanne Statement. Despite the Pope's added epilogue with its eulogy to Mary as the star of evangelization, evangelicals have found considerable parallels with their own Lausanne Statement and have received *Evangelii Nuntiandi* with some warmth.

The volume before us in this review relates particularly to the Roman Catholic struggles concerning the validity and content of evangelization. While reaffirming the socio-political dimension of evangelization, it takes care to stress that evangelization 'is to help another person pay attention to, celebrate and live in terms of the living God, revealed fully by Jesus and present in our human experiences'. The emphasis comes across clearly that the message of evangelization is the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in the Scriptures and the continuing tradition of the church. It is not just social action. Likewise these essays struggle with the post-Vatican II acceptance of other churches and religions as loci of revelation and grace. But the authors of these chapters clearly aim at an evangelization which will result in people being converted into the Catholic Church. This relates not only to other religions, but also to evangelical Protestants. This is particularly brought out in Bernard Quinn's chapter on 'A Catholic vision for the south'.

Readers of this volume will not only be grateful for its commentaries on *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and the insights it gives into Catholic internal struggles concerning the theology of evangelization, but will also gain useful stimuli towards the more effective practice of evangelism ourselves.

**Martin Goldsmith**, All Nations Christian College, Ware.

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Patrick Sookhdeo (ed.), **New Frontiers in Mission** (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1987), 190 pp., £6.95.

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This valuable book represents the main discussions at the 1983 Wheaton consultation on 'The nature and mission of the church in

new frontier mission'. There are 16 chapters contributed by specialist writers on mission from many parts of the world. (I found the absence of any biographical information about these writers and especially the lack of any indication of their actual involvement in mission irritating. It's one thing to write about mission, quite another to get your hands dirty and then reflect on hard experience. And there is no index to help the reader find his way to key subjects.)

Many of the issues in modern mission are dealt with in these pages: unreached peoples, church growth, church-mission relations, church unity, church renewal. There is a chapter on new structures for contemporary mission, illustrated by more-or-less helpful diagrams.

The book will be extremely useful for those who are already familiar with the jargon, and who have some understanding of the agenda established by American missiology. Bible College students will be grateful for the concise up-dates provided for items on that agenda. However the book is lacking any serious engagement with the Bible. It is liberally sprinkled with Bible quotes, but like most writing that focuses on the limited agenda accepted here the emphasis is pragmatic: 'Will this work?', not 'Is this biblical?' Of the emphasis on reaching *groups* rather than *individuals* Ralph Winter comments, 'That strategy is both a better and a faster way to reach people', which might be true, but which begs many questions. The focal question of the role of the Holy Spirit in all this is effectively marginalized. The chapter by Petrus Octavianus on 'Divine resources for frontier missions' is a refreshing oasis as he studies eight missiologically-important incidents in Acts, not omitting Acts 1:8 (p. 137).

The omissions are clearly significant. It is truly surprising to find no more than passing reference to Liberation Theology (p. 106) or to the pressing need for an evangelical theology of the poor (pp. 23 and 65). There is no reference to the enormous importance of Marxism and Islam in thinking Christian mission. There is no consideration of the vast problem posed by the existence of state and national churches which blur the image of the sending church, no grappling with the issue of the position of the unevangelized, no consideration of the Jew, no engaging with the important question of Christianity in post-Christian Europe confronting pluralism and materialism and multi-culturalism. Perhaps these omissions could be excused as inevitable in a book on new frontiers in mission, but I don't see how.

In fact evangelical missiology today appears to have taken a direction which makes it almost irrelevant to large parts of the world. It may speak to some parts of Asia and Africa (Kenya?) but totally misses the mark in Latin America, in other parts of Africa (Uganda, South Africa, Ethiopia, Sudan), and in Europe. As in so many aspects of the life of the church in the United Kingdom today we desperately need, we urgently need, biblical scholarship which can be added to evangelical commitment to mission to produce a counter agenda, an agenda which will move us forward and out of the contemporary obsession with structures and methods and statistics. I think that what I miss is the heart of God beating with compassion for the pains of the people.

**Peter Cotterell**, London Bible College.

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Michael Nazir-Ali, **Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter** (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1987), 191 pp., £6.50.

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Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali writes from his evangelical perspective and personal experience of life in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan where the Christian community is the largest minority (about 3% of a total population of 101 million according to a 1987 estimate). His perspective in no way limits him – he has studied deeply, travelled widely, is internationally recognized and is at present Assistant to the Archbishop of Canterbury and Co-ordinator of studies for the 1988 Lambeth Conference.

His book is in essence his reflection on crucial issues of Muslim-Christian Encounter over the last 15 years and is a collection of papers under this main heading but divided into four more specific areas: 'Theology in Encounter', dealing with the doctrine of God,

Christology and the Scriptures: 'Missiology in Context', dealing with the gospel's offer of wholeness, contextualization, and the church in Pakistan as a case study; 'Faith in Dialogue?' dealing with Christianity in relation to other faiths, especially Islam. A chapter on 'A Christian Assessment of the Cult of Prophet-Veneration' ends this section. The last section deals with 'The Church and the Social Order', focusing on a situation of increasing Islamization. One of the themes is the gospel and repression.

For any who are concerned with ministry to Muslims and the opportunities and problems of the church in minority situations, Nazir-Ali's book will be a stimulation and a help. The fact that so much comes from a Pakistani situation adds to the value of the insights in that a devout Christian scholar seeks to make his contribution to 'understanding the times' so that the church may know its role (1 Ch. 12:32). Pakistan has significance far beyond its borders as it is the Islamic political experiment par excellence of the 20th century. Bishop Kenneth Cragg, to whom Nazir-Ali often refers in his book, wrote that 'Pakistan, as concept, policy and fact, must be seen as the surest Muslim index to Islam in our time, doing for its contemporary definition what the Hijra did in the seventh century'. Christians as well as Muslims find in Pakistan a model, a case study, a 'laboratory of Islam'. Christians see clues to understanding how a legally recognized minority community and church might respond positively to the challenges and pressures of finding its role in a country created in the name of Islam. All that Nazir-Ali has to say on such issues is relevant in various ways to other Christian communities living in areas largely Muslim.

Examples of the author's incisive comments and stimulating reflections are now given from three of the four sections of his book.

'Theology in Encounter': In his chapter on 'Christology in an Islamic Context' the writer notes that God in the Muslim view 'cannot share our suffering because he has never been incarnate' (p. 28). He quotes the famous poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (who in a Persian poem tried to articulate the dilemma of the sensitive Muslim:

God is beyond death and is the essence of life  
God does not know what the death of man is,  
Though we be as naked birds,  
In the knowledge of death we are better than God.

In his next chapter on 'A Recovery of Traditional Christology in an Asian Context' the writer's appreciation of poetry gives him insights we do well to consider. He notes that a 'study of traditional Christology recalls us to a theology of the Incarnation, aids us in our task of theological reconstruction and reminds us of the importance of devotion in Christological thought' (p. 44). He refers to the passionate concern in Pakistan to conserve historic Christianity and to relate it to Islam as it is experienced today. A mass of devotional theology is found in poetry, allegory and hymns in Pakistan today. 'If we are really concerned to promote "a people's theology", we must take these expressions of popular devotion very seriously'.

The writer's section on 'Faith in Dialogue?' ends with a chapter on prophet-veneration. 'The extent of this veneration in modern Pakistani society is astonishing. The society normally adheres to Sunni orthodoxy. But Muhammad-veneration is projected through the mass media, school books and cultural events all of which contribute to the deification of the Arabian Prophet' (p. 130). 'Muhammad-veneration implies a rejection of the Muslim view of God' (p. 137).

The fourth section on 'The Christian and Social Order' deals with questions of religious freedom. Pakistani Christians 'would continue to wish to be treated as equal citizens with freedom of worship and proclamation, free to build, maintain and manage our own institutions' (p. 144). 'We must beware of serving only our own community interest. We must work for the good of the entire nation and especially for the poor, the weak and the oppressed' (p. 145).

As Archbishop David Penman writes in the foreword to *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter*, 'the reader is drawn into the meaning of Christ for those living within a Muslim environment'. Whether or not we live in a Muslim environment we can be enriched by Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali's reflections.

**Vivienne Stacey, Pakistan.**

**John Parratt, A Reader in African Christian Theology** (London: SPCK, 1987), 178 pp., £6.50.

The last 30 years have seen a proliferation of articles and books relating to 'African Christian Theology' by both African and non-African authors; the majority of the material is scattered in a wide variety of journals. In the present book, Parratt (Professor and Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Botswana), has done students of the subject the service of bringing together, in a single volume, a selection of a dozen essays by some of Africa's leading theologians.

The readership the author has in mind is theological seminary students in the Third World, but they will not be the only ones to benefit. The book will not add much to those who have a specialist knowledge of the field, but it will prove invaluable as an introduction to the broad scope of theology done by Africans and with Africa in mind.

Most of the names will be well known to those interested in the subject. Some pioneer authors, like Mbiti and Mulago, are conspicuous by their absence, but it is to the credit of Parratt that he has chosen to include two lesser-known authors like Marc Ntemem (Cameroun) and Ade Aina (from the Aladura Church in Nigeria). Parratt has clearly tried to be representative of his choice of contributors: if English-speaking authors outnumber their French-speaking counterparts by three to one, the contributors nevertheless represent fairly evenly West, Central, East and Southern Africa, and denominations ranging from Roman Catholic through to the African Independent Churches.

The main body of the book is divided into three parts, with four essays apiece. The first section explores the methodology advocated by African theologians. John Pobee wisely warns against facile generalizations about 'African' thought and practice in a continent of great complexity and diversity. Sawyerr and Tshibangu in their respective articles argue insisting that there cannot be a meaningful interaction of the biblical message and African culture without a thorough investigation of both, and it is this taking seriously of the African world which is perhaps the most distinctive aspect of so-called 'African theology'. Tutu's article (perhaps oddly placed in this section?) distinguishes between African Theology and Black Theology, but concludes that the latter belongs to the former as a smaller of two concentric circles.

The second section shows how four African theologians have sought to understand or reinterpret such central Christian doctrines as God, christology, the cross, and salvation, in the light of traditional African concepts. While Nyamiti seeks to discern between positive and negative aspects of traditional religious understanding, Appiah-Kubi's article is a robust endorsement of an African reinterpretation of such christological terms as 'Mediator' and 'Saviour', frankly insisting that any idea of mediator as one who removes barriers of sin and guilt makes no sense to the African. The section as a whole rightly insists that the gospel must be made intelligible to the African, relating to his real world, but it also invites such crucial questions as: Does traditional African (or indeed, any other) religious culture constitute part of God's general revelation to mankind? The answer to that question will help decide to what extent and in what way religious tradition can be considered a 'source' of theology.

The final section relates to the task of the church in the (African) world. Such issues as initiation and healing are dealt with here. Nyerere challenges the church to throw itself into the struggle against poverty and oppression. Boesak produces a penetrating critique of Cone's dangerously simplistic understanding of Black Theology, while nevertheless insisting that liberation is central to an understanding of the message of the gospel. No fewer than three of the twelve articles address the South African situation, and would strictly belong to the realm of so-called Black Theology. Increasingly, with the cross-fertilization of writing and conferences, the two 'theologies' are being seen together.

Each chapter concludes with study suggestions. Words and meanings are explored, and there are questions (some of them excellent) designed to promote discussion and reflection. Parratt seeks, by means of an introduction and conclusion, to provide the

reader with additional understanding of what is a very wide and disparate subject. In his conclusion the author touches briefly on the great importance of 'oral theology' in Africa, *i.e.* the unwritten sermons, songs and prayers which are also part of the whole theological scene. A glossary of terms deemed by the author to be obscure or difficult is provided at the end of the book, which finishes with an index.

There is much in this book which African theological students will welcome as needing to be said. But there is also much in the twelve articles with which the evangelical student will be unhappy. However, Parratt states at the beginning of the book that the readings are designed 'not only to provide an introduction to the ideas of leading theologians on the African continent today, but also to stimulate original thought, as readers address themselves to the issues raised in the papers'. It may well be in this latter dimension that the book will be of greatest usefulness. The fact that any evangelical voice is lacking among the twelve contributors is perhaps an eloquent evidence that evangelicals in Africa have been reluctant to be at the cutting edge of original theological reflection, contenting themselves rather to accept passively what others (in the West) have concluded, thereby leaving certain crucial issues in the African world unexposed to the gospel and to biblical thinking. The excellent study questions which Parratt provides may well help to stimulate discerning, penetrating reflection both about the African world and about the Word of God, and how the two should interact.

**Gordon Molyneux, Bunia Theological Seminary, Zaire.**

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**Robin Gill, *Beyond Decline: A Challenge to the Churches***  
(London: SCH, 1988), 146 pp., £5.95.

At last someone in the UK has addressed a major issue on which there has been an embarrassing silence for far too long, namely, the decline of the mainline churches. Robin Gill is both a practising clergyman and an academic sociologist of some standing and he is convinced that although churches have been in decline all this century decline is not 'some ineluctable process'. All this, one would think, would make him admirably equipped to write this book. Furthermore, he writes with a clear-sighted integrity, pointing out much we would prefer to sweep under the carpet. Many will find the book disturbing.

The burden of his opening chapters is that church leaders have failed to assess correctly both their own church constituencies and the nature of the wider society. The gulf between academic theology and most parish preaching is yawning ever wider at a time when members of society are getting increasingly educated and so it should be getting smaller. And simplistic theological and moral statements by church leaders hide the fact that the churches' practice is very different from its theory (*e.g.* it speaks about oneness in Christ whilst often being racist), and that its members espouse very diverse, anything but unified, theological and moral views. The answer has often been for the church, both of the right and left, to lobby on specific issues.

Gill advocates a new way, believing, with John Habgood, that the church, especially the established church, still has a vital role to play within British society because of her historical place and her own contemporary pluralism. The way he advocates is that of moral praxis, that is, a combination of moral insight with a sustained effort to care.

Next he looks at the simplistic nature of both mass evangelism and the Church Growth Movement and rejects them as 'seductive temptations' that do not hold answers to decline. Although he grudgingly acknowledges some aspects of McGavran's teaching he fears that it will only burden the clergy more with guilt and pronounces it 'empirically suspect, theologically contentious and morally dubious in the methods that it encourages'!

His own answer lies in outreach which is related to worship. But if it is to be effective it involves changing structures. Present patterns of the deployment of the clergy actually contribute to decline. Resources must be shifted to urban areas, amalgamations of parishes

in rural areas must be resisted and a much more imaginative use made of the untapped resources available in non-stipendiary ministers. There also needs to be a radical look at the place of buildings which have too often become clergy millstones.

He concludes as a pastor and theologian, rejecting the idea that getting the structures right will in itself overcome decay. Here his spirituality is obvious and calls forth respect. With a commitment to the value of ecumenical theology and a rejection of reductionism he argues that we should see faith in relational terms and hence worship is the vital factor if decline is to be overcome.

There is so much of value here but there was so much which I also found curious. Gill made no attempt to sketch the course of decline or to examine its historical and sociological roots. May that not have been relevant? At the very least it would have been helpful to the reader rather than simply accepting the fact as the starting place.

Secondly, Gill has made no attempt to relate his discussions with those which have been going on for some years in the USA examining other factors such as demography and theology. A debate with Kelly, Hoge, Roozen, Roof, McKinney, Michaelsen and others would have been helpful.

Thirdly, he nowhere recognizes that in the UK some religious groups as well as individual churches are in fact growing. What have they to teach us, if anything?

Fourthly, he is honest about the presuppositions on which he builds, but some of them may be questioned. In particular his view of the level of education and value of academic theology reflects his university setting, even though I recognize he says it does not. Many would also not share his view of the church's role in social morals.

Fifthly, as most of us are, he is perhaps better at criticizing, especially Donald McGavran, than he is at suggesting constructive alternatives. Although his comments on structure were excellent I was not left at other times with too clear a picture of what I could do.

In the end I was not wholly convinced that Dr Gill was leading us 'beyond decline'. But it is a contribution to a debate which desperately needs to get going and if Dr Gill helps to initiate it we are all very much in his debt.

**Derek J. Tidball, Plymouth.**

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**Frank Whaling, *Christian Theology and World Religions***  
(Marshall Pickering), 192 pp., £9.95.

Perhaps the hottest theological potato of our age lies in the relationship of the Christian faith to other religions. At last missiology has invaded the ivory towers of theology. Because of this we gladly welcome every book which contributes to the debate, even if we radically reject the theological presuppositions of the author.

After a basic introductory chapter Whaling gives us an overall sweep of world history showing that religions and civilization go together. He sees for foundational religious civilizations — Greek-based Christian Europe, the Muslim Middle East, Hindu India and Buddhist-Confucian-Taoist China. The Jews form the great exception to the scheme. While these generalizations leave something to be desired, we appreciated his emphasis that each religion has its own questions, eyes and history.

In chapter 3 the author debates the meaning of 'theology', its relationship to 'humanitas' and the value of doctrine. This introduces us to the more immediate question of Christian theological attitudes to other religions. Having briefly dismissed exclusivism and discontinuity he looks at secularization, fulfilment, universalization, dialogue and relativism.

In chapter 5 we are helpfully introduced to Wilfred Cantwell Smith and the philosophia perennis of S. H. Nasr. Whaling shows the different approaches of Christian theology and religious studies. This is a helpful reminder of a basic distinction. Whaling goes on to show how Christian theology needs to be renewed through the theologies and world-views of other faiths, giving the specific examples of African and Chinese religions. He then develops the inter-relationship between Indian religion and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

This book rightly challenges the narrow insularity of traditional Christian theology, for in our day no studies have any real validity if they fail to relate to the wider world of other cultures and religions. But we have also to ask what standards of truth there are. Is there one God? Does he reveal himself and his purposes to humanity? If so, by what means? Is there therefore any absolute which forms the foundation of truth and ethics? Our main struggle today lies in the battle between particularism and some form of universalism. The evangelical may want to ask then whether Whaling and others do not fall into the trap of being tolerant of tolerance, but somewhat intolerant of any particularism which could to them imply intolerance. Hinduism has traditionally been tolerant of tolerance, but aggressive in opposition to particularism. But the Christian faith stands on the firm foundation of the one God who is and therefore on the reality of absolutes.

**Martin Goldsmith**, All Nations Christian College, Ware.

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**David Deeks, Pastoral Theology: An Inquiry** (London: Epworth Press, 1987), 279 pp., £9.50.

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David Deeks recognizes that his approach to Pastoral Theology is not one that fits easily with the traditional approach to pastoral education. He compares the pastor to an artist and sees the aims of the pastor as to encourage people to make their own sense of their experience; as disclosing Christian meaning in life; as stimulating them to engage in their own conversation with the Christian tradition and to encourage holiness, which he defines as a commitment to infuse our interior lives and exterior world with love. He is acutely conscious that the contemporary world is largely secular and that the pastor cannot make assumptions that those with whom they converse believe that there is a God. The pastor's task is to try to establish a conversation between the struggle for meaning and the Christian tradition.

Deeks believes that if that is to be done successfully much of the traditional approach to theology which is abstract and philosophical, dogmatic and doctrinal will be inappropriate. The search for points of contact will have to be much broader. He writes that 'the pastor's first calling . . . is to be human, to work with risk at an agenda that is as wide as life itself' (p. 83). He encourages, therefore, a much greater use of words, deeds, imagination and feelings as a basic resource for pastoral care as well as a recognition of the contribution which can be made by the human and social sciences.

The book has some positive contributions to make. There is much which is stimulating and much that evangelicals need to hear. For example, its realism is commendable. It seems to relate to men and women searching for meaning in life, whose experience of God or whose religious experience is only marginal at best. He is concerned to put the quest for professionalism in pastoral care in perspective so that we do give fairer expression to love. He clearly wants to rescue 'the person' from the merely intellectual concern of much theology. As he begins to put flesh on the bones he has identified, he writes very helpfully about the human personality, the leadership of groups and the role of leadership in various situations.

But in the end the basic approach is one with which evangelicals would have difficulties. He admits this, saying that many would hold assumptions in direct conflict with the methods he has described. Among them he names 'Those who exalt the Bible or the theological tradition above all other resources in the struggle to make sense of life and to act lovingly in the world' (p. 250). The debate about our starting-point and approach is crucial to pastoral theology, as the reviewer has detailed in *Skilful Shepherds* (1VP). The result of the approach Deeks, and others like Michael Taylor, adopt is not one that can give us confidence that we shall be able to lead people to the God who has revealed himself.

Much of Deeks' writing was imaginative and illuminating. The medium chosen matched the message he sought to convey. But the reader would have been helped by more signposts or summaries throughout the book.

**Derek J. Tidball**, Plymouth.

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**V. H Fiddes, Science and the Gospel** (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), xii + 113 pp., £10.50.

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This book is no. 7 in the series *Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge*, edited by Prof. T. F. Torrance. Its author is a minister of the United Church of Canada who has, he tells us, tried for more than 40 years to keep abreast of developments in natural science and trends in Christian theology. He is convinced that 'Recent developments in natural science, particularly in physics, cosmology and biology, have created an openness on the part of the scientific community to the possibility of renewed dialogue with religion. In society itself a growing anxiety concerning the human enterprise challenges science and religion to bring a common understanding to bear upon the question of the meaning of life and the nature of ultimate realities' (p. 1). He bemoans the fact that on the whole Protestant theologians are not responding to this opportunity to dialogue with scientists to the mutual benefit of both.

Mr Fiddes' theological stance seems to be essentially Barthian (see the discussion of Scripture on p. 68ff.). Torrance and Barth (in that order) are the theologians most often quoted in the book. The book deals with a number of important topics – the nature of the scientific enterprise and its limitations; quantum theory and its philosophical implications; the unique place of light in the theory of relativity; time and eternity; evolution; the uniqueness of human personality; the nature of ultimate reality. On the whole the presentation and handling of the scientific material in the book is competently done. However, the shortness of the book and the vastness and complexity of the topics covered means that the presentation of the scientific matter is sketchy and the theological and philosophical discussion all too brief.

Mr Fiddes is at his strongest when exposing the weaknesses in scientific positivism and reductionism. For example, 'Science cannot have it both ways. It cannot "want to be able to explain everything" as long as it is forced by its presuppositions to ignore the most meaningful aspects of reality. . . . By what logic does science exclude from nature its most significant aspect – the inner being of man?' (p. 18). If the logic is that of logical positivism, Mr Fiddes points out that 'The scientist is a human being before he becomes a scientist and he remains one afterwards. He knows that there have to be "good" reasons for doing what he is doing or there would be no point in his doing it. . . . But it should be realized that this investment of moral worth and meaning in science is made possible only by removing the logic from logical positivism' (p. 19).

However, when it comes to discussion of the philosophical and theological implications of aspects of the modern scientific view of the world, Mr Fiddes is less convincing. Thus, his statement that quantum physics provides 'a grounding for free-will rather than an attack on it' (p. 34) rests on nothing stronger than the *suggestion* of some physicists that the fact that law and order prevail in nature despite the Uncertainty Principle points to 'an influence that can be better be described as noetic than accidental' (p. 33). This reviewer cannot see the basis for his claim that the NT use of light imagery of Jesus 'seems to require more than analogical thought' and gives light 'particular, even physical refinement, in relation to the being of Jesus Christ' (p. 47). Nor is it clear what he means by this. All in all, Mr Fiddes sometimes seems to be going to extremes in order to find theological significance in scientific ideas or phenomena.

There are some good things and interesting ideas in this book. However, clearer discussion of the current state of the sciences, and a more restrained discussion of them in relation to Christian belief (even if from a rather more literal position), are to be found in J. C. Polkinghorne's two books, *The Way The World Is* and *One World* (both SPCK), at less cost than this slim volume.

**E. C. Lucas**, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity.

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- D. Barthélemy, D. W. Gooding, J. Lust and E. Tov **The Story of David and Goliath, Textual and Literary Criticism. Papers of a Joint Research Venture** (H. G. M. Williams)
- F. C. Holmgren **Israel Alive Again: A commentary on the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and** (H. G. M. Williams)
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