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## Book Reviews

### PAROCHIAL VISION: THE FUTURE OF THE ENGLISH PARISH

Nick Spencer

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004 171pp £7.99pb ISBN: 1-84227-238-1

This book is an excellent place to begin to understand why the Church of England's parish system is failing to deliver effective mission today. Its first purpose is to demonstrate that 'the parish system was not brought down from Mount Sinai pure and divinely inspired' (p. xv), and this is done by a rapid survey of the system's history. Then, in order to find a model that would be more helpful for today, Spencer takes a closer look at the so-called minster churches that were established before the Norman Conquest.

Further material follows in which the current social and ecclesiastical scene is reviewed. Here Spencer highlights important features that must be recognised if the missionary challenge facing the Church of England is to be seriously addressed. In particular, the different sense of place that people have because of far better transport, and the declining number of clergy available to staff the parish system, are noted. This overview thus serves the author's conclusion that the Anglo-Saxon minster model is the best option for effective mission today.

However this conclusion can be seriously questioned in a number of ways. For instance, it is key to recognise that the pre-Conquest church did not operate with a 'minster model' and that attempts to define the 'minster' from the historical record are actually very difficult. The point is that the method of outreach was simply adapted to the social realities and networks of the time. The message was more important than the means of organising its dissemination. Today we need to recapture this fluidity in structure rather than place our trust in a particular form of organising church life.

Even more seriously this book does not take account of the problems associated with the theological diversity that exists within the Church of England today. Indeed this diversity is unfortunately seen as an ideal to be reflected in each minster parish (p. 109). There is only a slight flicker of concern that the consecration of the Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003 might make this questionable. However the reality is that changes in the organisation of local congregations will not make much difference unless the presence of unbiblical ministry is recognised and tackled.

Finally I suspect that there needs to be a greater recognition that the inflexibility of the parish system stems from its identification with 'Anglicanism'. Until this and other secondary features of Christianity are distinguished as such, then the radical solutions which the present circumstances demand are unlikely to be adopted.

Thus this is a good book for understanding the basic problems with the parish system today, but it is not one which sees the basic gospel message as the real answer to those problems.

MARK BURKILL  
Leytonstone

**CHARLES HODGE REVISITED. A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF HIS LIFE AND WORK**

**John W. Stewart and James H. Moorhead, eds.**

**Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002 375pp £17.99pb**

**ISBN: 08028-4750-1**

Well-known in conservative Evangelical circles as the author of a classic three-volume systematic theology, which remains in print after more than a century, Charles Hodge has been short changed by the 'mainstream' of American theological opinion, which he did so much to shape during his own lifetime. A conservative in doctrinal matters, he has all too often been seen as a reactionary in social and political terms as well, though the true picture is far more complex than that. Alone of his generation, Hodge took the trouble to go to Germany to study, where he followed not only the latest developments in theology but also the tremendous scientific advances which were being made at the same time.

Judged by modern standards, Hodge inevitably seems behind the times on such issues as slavery and feminism, but as more than one contributor to this symposium points out, that is an unfair measurement of his true position as seen by his contemporaries. Set in his context rather than in ours, Hodge comes across as defective mainly in his failure to appreciate the nature and importance of history. Locked as he was in a commitment to eternal truth, he found it almost impossible to see how ideas could have been shaped by historical processes.

When he was a young man, that view was widely shared, but as he grew older it became more and more archaic. What John Henry Newman did for Roman Catholicism in his *Development of Christian Doctrine* never affected Hodge, who thus appeared increasingly irrelevant as time went on.

But if this was undoubtedly a problem, it should not be allowed to obscure his very real achievements in so many other areas. Hodge argued long and hard for a spiritual view of life, and never minimised the importance of the church. He was much less anti-Catholic than most of his Protestant contemporaries were, and understood the need to incorporate modern scientific discoveries into the Christian faith—in that respect, he was no fundamentalist. His negative assessment of German philosophy and theology grates on some, but who can deny that he saw clearly, both the magnificence of the German achievement and its potential for wreaking havoc on Western civilisation if it continued down its anti-Christian, idealistic path? We who have reaped that whirlwind can only respect Hodge's prescience in this matter, which was not shared by many of his more naive and less well-informed contemporaries.

The essays in this volume are of a uniformly high standard, and if there is a good deal of repetition from one to the other, this is a small price to pay for a comprehensive treatment of Hodge by a group of scholars who do not really share his outlook, although some have been more deeply influenced by it than others. It is difficult to single out particular chapters for special mention, though perhaps David Kelsey's treatment of Hodge's doctrine of Scripture and his hermeneutical practice will attract the widest readership. It is a clear statement of a position which has survived remarkably unchanged, though significantly augmented, for nearly two centuries, and deserves to be studied with great care and attention.

The hidden reality behind this book, which comes out most clearly in the afterword, is that Hodge is still, for many, a living voice in the life of the church. His seminary abandoned his position in the years after 1929, but it continues to thrive in a number of breakaway Presbyterian bodies, and remains deeply influential among Evangelical scholars and intellectuals everywhere. In many ways, Hodge is the true theological mentor of modern Calvinism, at least in the English-speaking world, and a man whose basic theology retains its power among the most dynamic strand of Protestants today. This is no mean

achievement, and the editors of this volume are surely right when they say that a reassessment of his legacy is long overdue.

GERALD BRAY  
Cambridge

## THE SUPREME HARMONY OF ALL

### The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards

Amy Plantinga Pauw

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002 196pp £13.70pb ISBN:0 8028 4984 9

In recent years there has been something of a revival of interest in Jonathan Edwards, who is widely recognised as one of America's greatest thinkers and theologians. This is true, in spite of the fact that Edwards went against some of the leading currents of his day, which were gradually weaning many of his compatriots off Puritanism and on to various forms of liberalism associated with the Enlightenment. Edwards was certainly progressive in many ways, and quite literally paid for this with his life. He died of a smallpox inoculation, which he had agreed to try in the hope that it might one day provide the cure for that particular scourge.

It is this Edwards, rather than the late Puritan divine, who has captured the imagination of most modern scholars of the man, and Professor Pauw is to be congratulated for doing her best to put him in a more balanced perspective. Edwards was a strong Trinitarian in the age of Deism, and so it is perhaps not surprising that he was not heard on that subject as clearly as he was on others. In fact, as Professor Pauw points out, much of his writing on the subject remained unpublished (and therefore essentially unknown) until quite recently.

It might be thought that Edwards did little more than repeat the standard Trinitarian orthodoxy of his Calvinist forbears, but Professor Pauw demonstrates that there was much more to him than that. Edwards gave particular prominence to what we now call the 'social' Trinity, emphasising the fellowship of the three persons of the Godhead and the relevance of their life for that of the Christian family and the church. Though this theme was not entirely new, it had not been explored in Reformed theology before Edwards' time, and he must therefore be regarded as a pioneer in that respect.

At the same time, Edwards never lost sight of the importance of the Trinity for understanding redemption, and he frequently waxed eloquent on the significance both of Christ's atoning sacrifice and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer, to make that sacrifice effectual in the lives of chosen individuals.

It is when we come to the more 'negative' aspects of Edwards' thought that Professor Pauw starts to falter. She cannot reconcile Edwards' insistence on the Trinity as a fellowship of mutual love, extending to the salvation of the human race and the reconciliation of the created order, with his corresponding emphasis on predestination and the terrible fate awaiting the damned. To her, this is inconsistent, and she concludes that Edwards was too biblical in his theology to be concerned with systematisation!

No-one need doubt that the problems and paradoxes of theodicy defy even the most subtle attempts at harmonisation, but at the same time we ought to resist the temptation to regard failure in this respect as incoherence. The mystery of God's love does not preclude pain, suffering and judgment. At the deepest level, Christ's work of atonement was the fruit of the inner-Trinitarian relationship of the Son to the Father; it was their love for each other which made the divine experience of human sin and death possible. We shall never understand this fully, and Professor Pauw is quite right to say, as she frequently does, that the issues raised by these questions remain alive in modern theological discussion. So it always has been, and always will be, until Christ comes again and all secrets are revealed.

Jonathan Edwards was a faithful witness to the wonder of God's saving love in an age when that was being doubted and rejected in the academic circles in which he moved. To be able to read of how far that commitment went, in terms of Trinitarian theology, is a great joy for all faithful believers today, and we must thank Professor Pauw for her welcome introduction to this sadly neglected subject. It can only be hoped that her work will provide an inspiration to others, so that Jonathan Edwards may take his rightful place among the giants of Trinitarian thought in the history of the Christian church.

GERALD BRAY  
Cambridge

**PAUL FOR EVERYONE: 1 CORINTHIANS** N. T. Wright  
 London: SPCK, 2003 256 pp £9.99pb ISBN 0-281-05305-7

**PAUL FOR EVERYONE: 2 CORINTHIANS** N. T. Wright  
 London: SPCK, 2003 164pp £8.99pb ISBN 0-281-05306-5

In these volumes Tom Wright gives his expositions of the Corinthian letters as part of his Bible for Everyone series. The format will be familiar to anyone who has bought previous volumes in the series. Wright breaks up the letters into passages, gives his own fairly free translation of the passage, and then comments on it. His comments usually start with an illustration from his own life before giving a short exposition of the passage.

The illustrations are frequently witty and to the point, like his illustration on 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 where, on a journey through central Northumberland, he notices signs saying '150 accidents last year on this road'. The message here is clear: don't become part of the statistics yourself! From this illustration, Wright explains Paul's use of the Old Testament in this passage; the Corinthians need to find out where they are in the Bible's story.

Wright comments on the main exegetical issues in the passage, with key words in bold type referenced to a glossary at the back. However, he does not comment or evaluate different options in any detail given the format and limitation of the series. The exegesis will be familiar to anyone who has read Wright's work. Wright believes that Paul is a narrative theologian interpreting the story of Israel as it climaxes in the story of Christ and the church. Wright is at his very best when he considers Paul's use of the Old Testament. Frequently he goes back to the Old Testament text and briefly comments upon it.

Wright sees the problems at Corinth as caused by sophists, and briefly and helpfully sketches the Corinthian context. It is difficult to discern from these books where Wright stands on a number of critical issues such as the integrity of 2 Corinthians. However, Wright's exegesis is mostly conservative. He insists that Paul has a high Christology and is passionate about Paul's belief in a physical resurrection (which of course he has argued at great length in his major book on the resurrection, *The Resurrection of The Son of God*). He is clear that Paul is conservative on moral issues and exclusive with regard to the pluralism of his day.

Nevertheless, many will properly disagree with his exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5. Wright sees the passage as speaking of Paul as the ambassador of reconciliation even in verse 21. It is here that Wright's debt to the New Perspective becomes most clear. Consequently, the traditional evangelical view of the atonement is downplayed.

Despite this weakness, these books are to be highly recommended. Wright writes with great clarity and passion. The applications are frequently challenging and flow from the text. A preacher or Bible study leader preparing to teach from Corinthians will find these books a treasure trove of help in basic exegesis and application. Indeed, any Christian reading Corinthians in their quiet times will find these books a fine stimulation towards devotion.

ROHINTAN MODY  
Cambridge

## ROME IN THE BIBLE AND THE EARLY CHURCH

Peter Oakes (editor)

Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker/Paternoster, 2002 166pp £12.99  
ISBN: 0-8010-2608-3 and 1-94227-133-4

This book is a collection of papers delivered at the Tyndale Fellowship's seminar in the summer of 1999, and the unwary must be warned immediately that it bears all the hallmarks of its origin! This does not make it a bad book, by any means, but it is highly specialised and obviously geared to the academic community. The papers all deal with the city of Rome and its local church as these appear in the New Testament and in the earliest Christian literature.

For the non-specialist, the most interesting and accessible chapter will probably be the first, written by Stephen Walton of London Bible College. Dr. Walton discusses how Luke saw the Roman Empire as both a positive and a negative force with which the early church had to engage. As such, Luke's portrait of church-state relations remains a model for future generations as they seek to determine what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God.

Similarly accessible to a wider public is Bruce Winter's discussion of Roman law in Romans 12-15. The impact of Roman law on ancient society, and

therefore on the emerging Christian church, is not sufficiently appreciated today, but it was enormous, and it is impossible to grasp what was really going on in the New Testament churches without taking the law into account.

The other papers are more specialised, and require greater familiarity with current scholarly debate if they are to be properly appreciated. Conrad Gempf contributes an interesting piece on Paul's reception in Rome, pointing out that the church there must have had a fairly organised network in place if it could send representatives at short notice, to meet the apostle when he landed in Italy. Andrew Clarke takes us through the list of obscure people in Romans 16, pointing out that it is far from being a mere appendix to the rest of the epistle. On the contrary, it has a theology all its own, showing us how and why Paul included a wide range of people in his description of the church.

Peter Oakes gives a good overview of how divine sovereignty interacted with Roman power in the context of Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia, and Andrew Gregory completes the series with a discussion of what 1 Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas can tell us about the development of Roman Christianity in the obscure but pivotal period following the close of the New Testament era.

From an ecclesiastical point of view, the great omission in this series is the lack of any reference to the Apostle Peter. The scholars who contribute to the symposium might argue that that is because there is nothing to say about him, but things are not quite so simple. The fact remains that, as far as we today are concerned, the Petrine claims of the papacy remain the biggest issue facing any study of this subject. In that sense, this book is like Hamlet without the prince!

Another defect is the discussion of Junia in Romans 16, which fails to go into the question of what is meant by calling her and Andronicus 'apostles', if that is indeed what the text does. Once again we are faced here with a practical issue which impinges on women's ministry in the church today but it is passed over in silence.

To sum up, the book is scholarly, well-written and important for specialists in the field. For others it will be harder going, and on certain key points it may prove to be a disappointment to anyone looking to it for enlightenment.

GERALD BRAY  
Cambridge

**GREGORY OF NYSSA AND THE GRASP OF FAITH****Union, knowledge and divine presence****Martin Laird****Oxford: University Press, 2004 240pp £50hb ISBN:0-19-926799-5**

This book is an in-depth study of a vital aspect of Gregory of Nyssa's thought. Martin Laird has chosen the theme of 'faith' as a means of access to the presence of God as something which illustrates, perhaps better than anything else, what made Gregory tick spiritually. He was the most prolific of the Cappadocian fathers of the fourth century, but he is also the least well-known in the modern world. His older brother, Basil of Caesarea, is remembered for his great work on the Holy Spirit, preserved for us today in the third article of the Nicene Creed, and his friend Gregory of Nazianzus is known to every theological student as the man who described the need for the incarnation of the Son of God by saying, quite simply, that 'what has not been assumed has not been healed'. Gregory of Nyssa has left nothing quite as memorable as that, though arguably he is the most accessible of the three great Cappadocians and perhaps also the most influential in spiritual terms on the life of the church, particularly in the Greek east.

In the course of his study of Gregory's concept of faith, Dr. Laird introduces us to the mystical theology which is so characteristic of the eastern church and to which he made such an important contribution. Dr. Laird compares Gregory's teaching with that of other church fathers, notably Origen, and he also examines the nature of Gregory's links with contemporary neo-Platonism. This is especially important, since so many modern scholars have simply assumed that patristic theology was so shot through with Hellenism that it can no longer be regarded as authentically Christian. Of course Dr. Laird recognises that Gregory made use of neo-Platonic concepts, but he also demonstrates that his theology is quite different at certain key points. In particular, he shows that Gregory did not accept the Platonic belief that knowledge stands higher in the hierarchy of values than ethics—for a Christian thinker, argued Gregory, the two must inevitably go together. Dr. Laird also points out that for Gregory, knowledge of God could only be fully realised in the context of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a belief which was quite alien to Platonists.

Dr Laird discusses the nature of Gregory's mystical vision, which was deeply rooted in Biblical exposition, particularly of the Song of Solomon. He enters

into dialogue with the most prominent modern scholars and is not afraid to disagree with their conclusions when he feels that the evidence points him in another direction. This comes out most clearly when he rejects the assertion that 'divine darkness' represents the summit of Gregory's mystical experience and insists that we must go beyond that to the eternal light which is the very being of God. There can be no doubt that this is a book for specialists, but it makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Gregory of Nyssa, and for those who have a particular interest in Greek patristic or in mystical theology, it will be an important addition to our knowledge of the subject.

GERALD BRAY  
Cambridge

## THE SEARCH FOR FORGIVENESS

Chawkat Moucarray

Leicester: IVP, 2004 373pp £12.99pb ISBN: 1-84474-018-8

Moucarray's own background—born and growing up in Syria as an Arab Christian, but surrounded by Muslim family friends—enables him to write this guide to central Islamic beliefs from a sympathetic perspective. His purpose for *The Search for Forgiveness* is that Christian readers will be challenged about how they view Islam, together with an 'earnest desire...that this book will also provide an opportunity for the Muslim reader to discover what the Christian faith is all about' (p. 16).

The book is divided in four main sections, covering Islamic belief about forgiveness in God's attributes, in theology, in mysticism and in ethics. The format of almost every chapter is uniform: for each topic, the various Islamic interpretations based on the Qur'an and Hadith are set out and then compared with biblical material to present a clear evangelical perspective, pointing out the similarities and the stark contrasts between the two faiths. In this way, for example, the grounds for repentance and God's forgiveness in Christianity are seen to be very different from Islam (chs. 5 and 9).

Although Moucarray distinguishes between different expressions of Islam - noting the way that the Karijite, Mu'tazilite Sunnite and Sufi communities variously interpret the Qur'an—he perhaps deliberately avoids similar

differences within the Christian church, presenting instead a monolithic evangelical theology. Whilst illuminating in themselves, the differences between Islamic theologies interestingly parallel similar issues within Christian theology (e.g. chapter 8, 'Faith: What does it mean to be a believer?' and chapter 11 'God's Forgiveness: A Reward or a Favour?'), and provide a fresh stimulus in reflecting on present debates between Christians. Given current concerns over extremism within Islam, his chapters on 'forgiveness in ethics' (chs. 17 and 18) highlight differences between not only Christianity and Islam, but also within the Muslim community.

His explanations are straightforward but not simplistic and include detailed appendices listing key Islamic theologians and explaining transliterated theological terms (which also occur throughout the text). However, despite short accessible chapters and helpful tables to assist understanding the major variations between Islamic interpretations of the Qur'an, those with little previous knowledge of Islam may potentially be overwhelmed by the detail.

Some may consider Moucarray's analysis of Islamic belief too uncritical, and his apparent underlying assumption—that the God of Islam and Christianity being described is the same—left this reviewer somewhat troubled. Nevertheless he has provided us with an invaluable resource for use in discussion with Muslims, enabling the reader to recognise not only the varieties of beliefs within Islam, but also how they would appeal to the Qur'an to substantiate those beliefs.

NEIL WATKINSON  
Maidenhead

## **STEPS ALONG HOPE STREET**

**My Life in Cricket, the Church and the Inner City**

**David Sheppard**

**London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002 336pp £8.99pb**

**ISBN: 0-340-86117-7**

This autobiography by the former Bishop of Liverpool (and opening Test batsman for England) shows how one man developed his understanding of God's will. From conversion to Christ on a Varsity and Public Schools camp

and early steps in discipleship at Cambridge University, the author developed his social conscience as he refused to join a cricket tour to South Africa as a protest against apartheid, established the Mayflower Centre in London's East End to reach the working-class for Christ, and was then appointed in turn Bishop of Woolwich and Liverpool. The last appointment covered such troubles as the Toxteth riots of 1981 and the Hillsborough football disaster of 1989 when the bishop showed much courage in his civic role.

The author left his evangelical beginnings because of its 'tight boundaries' (p. 147) and preference for 'neat answers as though there were no further mystery' (p. 22). This led to the two dominant ideas that 'the Gospel was at stake in building bridges between Christian churches' (p. 165) and that a 'priority concern for the poor' sprang 'out of mainstream Christianity' (p. 235).

There were other theological developments too (each one supported by reasoning unpersuasive to this reviewer). Sheppard accepted the ordination of women because of Galatians 3:28 and because it brought us 'a more whole ministerial priesthood' (p. 5). He accepted believers in same-sex partnerships 'as Christian brothers and sisters' (p. 113) because their situation could be the lesser of two evils just as a war can sometimes be necessary (p. 296). Also, abortion can also be the lesser of two evils (p. 270) and Abraham is an example of people of other faiths who are acceptable to God (p. 283).

Inevitably, the book is selective. For instance, there is no record of the suppression of Alan Storkey's dissenting report when *Something to Celebrate* was published in 1995 (under Sheppard's chairmanship of the Church of England's Board for Social Responsibility). More puzzling is the absence of any examination of the differences between the Church of England (with her Articles) and the Church of Rome on matters such as the mediation of Mary, prayer for the dead and the sacrifice of the mass. After all, the author worked closely with Roman Catholic Archbishop Worlock and the book's title refers to the road that links their cathedrals.

We should be grateful to the writer for this record of his ministry and the help it gives in understanding the recent history of the Church of England.

JONATHAN FRAIS  
Kiev, Ukraine

**THE KING OF GOD'S KINGDOM:****A SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE OF JESUS**

David Seccombe

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002 656 pp £17.99pb ISBN: 1-84227-075-3

It is something of a truism to observe that Jesus of Nazareth is a unique subject for biography; his claims to be the Son of God massively raise the stakes in any endeavour to identify his aims and purpose. The nature of any portrait will in practice be largely determined by what evidence is deemed to be admissible, let alone how that evidence is to be weighed. Seccombe has combined evangelical starting points with critical analysis to produce a volume which will be of service to the thoughtful Christian.

The canonical gospels provide ample and reliable data about Jesus. Other contemporary documents provide much useful background, but nothing of the same order of authority. Having established these boundaries, Seccombe judiciously weighs individual pericopae to assess their place in the final synthesis. There are questions at every turn which makes for a lengthy book. Many of these questions however are the sorts of queries that arise in the intelligent lay reader's mind. For instance, in looking at the account of Jesus' wilderness temptations, the reader may wonder whether it is feasible that Jesus really fasted for forty days? Neither denying the question (obscurantism) nor undermining the gospels' reliability (liberalism) will satisfy such a reader. Instead, Seccombe gives an intelligent, evangelical answer to this question and to many others like it.

The Law and the Prophets spoke of the Kingdom that Jesus came to inaugurate, and his own self-understanding grew from the Scriptures. Jesus' aims and purposes become clearer as the Kingdom's biblical trajectory is traced from the Old Testament through to the Gospels. The success of this endeavour confirms that the Jesus of history is indeed the Jesus of biblical faith after all. Although this book may be read from beginning to end, some readers may find a book of more than six hundred pages easier to dip into. Indexes by author and Scripture reference will greatly help, but a fuller subject index might have been desired. There is much here to help both thoughtful enquirer and seasoned Life-of-Jesus scholar.

ED MOLL  
Basingstoke

## GIVING THE SENSE: UNDERSTANDING AND USING OLD TESTAMENT HISTORICAL TEXTS

David M. Howard Jr. and Michael A. Grisanti (eds.)

Grand Rapids: Kregel; Leicester: Apollos, 2003 482pp £14.99pb

ISBN: 1-84474-016-1

In the study of Old Testament, the historical narratives have received the Cinderella treatment. The object of study has not been the text itself, but how the text can be used as a route to other goals. This series of essays charts Cinderella's various travels, in order that the student and reader may find the study of these inspired texts to be a good match for the thinking heart.

The first set of goals were archaeological, and are stated with candour in G. F. Moore's commentary of 1895: 'The interest and importance of the Book of Judges lie chiefly in the knowledge which it gives us of the state of society and religion in Israel in the early centuries of its settlement in Palestine' (quoted on p. 54). Today we find there are broadly four positions on the historical value of the Old Testament historical narratives: Minimalists espouse a radical scepticism that (m)any of the events depicted from Exodus through to the United Monarchy ever took place. Maximalists treat the biblical text with the same presumption of accuracy as is routinely accorded to other ancient texts, and use this approach to correlate literary and mute archaeological artefacts. Medialists predictably lie somewhere in between, and finally the Literalists pursue a reading of the texts which shows little desire to learn from the disciplines of ancient literature or archaeology.

The first two sections of essays are written to provide evangelical guidance and sanity in the light of the current confusion regarding the historical treatment of Old Testament narratives. The key is to approach these texts in the manner in which they were intended to be read, rather than to do so with some other agenda in mind. One, and occasionally two, of the following tasks are undertaken in each essay: a survey of the field, naming names and giving dates in order to orient the new student or reader to the players (Maximalist, Minimalist and others) and to the issues; a defence of the historicity of biblical events in the light of the current evidence; or an example of an evangelical approach to questions that arise in the field. In all this makes for a readable and informative overview of the main questions in the archaeology of Israel and the history of the Old Testament.

The second set of goals are literary, and these are addressed in the third set of essays. When the pendulum of scholarly interest swings away from the plunder of texts in search of archaeological data, it swings towards the study of the texts as they are, and their study as texts. Once again we have a Maximalist–Minimalist spectrum, diffracted along the lines of allegiance to the so-called Deuteronomist and to the plausibility of the sources JEDP. Even the synchronic reading of Narrative criticism proves to be something of a double-edged sword: the text is studied as it is, but in some hands is divorced from any notion of authorial intent. Once again the student is in need of survey, defence and example of evangelical approach, and the contributors oblige. The outcome is a greater appreciation of the art in biblical narrative.

In the end, the narrative texts are primarily neither a repository of historical information, nor a literary patchwork whose seams ask to be unpicked; narratives are ‘theological statements with hands and feet’ (p. 437) and as such they are to be preached. Two final chapters by Daniel I. Block and Walter C. Kaiser Jr. address this topic with the conviction that the ‘topic for a sermon should be obtained within the text itself’. The strength of their method is that listening to the shape, texture, thrust and literary clues of a passage will lead with confidence to uncovering the author’s main point. Moving from that point (inevitably Jewish and Old Testament based) to the composition of a Christian sermon requires more sophisticated biblical theology than is described in these chapters. The works of Greidanus and Goldsworthy come to mind as helpful, but even they would be powerless to rescue a sermon based on poor preparation that fails to read the thrust of the original text.

These twenty essays were presented to Eugene Merrill as ‘an exemplar of the current state of evangelical scholarship’. The collection seems to fit the bill very well. This would be a valuable addition to any library, a useful purchase for the interested reader and concerned student; footnotes provide leads into the literature, and Hebrew is always either transliterated or translated.

ED MOLL  
Basingstoke

## JUSTIFICATION: WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THE CURRENT DEBATES

Mark Husbands & Daniel J. Treier (eds.)

Downers Grove, IL: IVP/Leicester: Apollos, 2004, 278pp £14.99pb  
ISBN: 0830827811

This is a selection of papers presented in 2003 at a Wheaton College conference, focusing on 'whether imputed righteousness is fictive, forensic or transformative' (p. 7). The calibre of the contributors is high (including Robert Gundry, Don Carson, Bruce McCormack, Mark Seifrid, Tony Lane and Geoffrey Wainwright), and overall the essays do not disappoint. They are written from a variety of consciously denominational perspectives. Two topics constantly recur.

First, how can justification be articulated so as to avoid the old criticism that it is a 'legal fiction', and moreover one which does not give due significance to righteous living? Gundry argues that the apostle Paul emphasised both obedient righteousness and the future judgement of our works by explicitly not teaching that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. Instead, our sins are imputed to Christ, and God simply counts our faith as righteousness. In response, Carson acknowledges that no single biblical text unequivocally teaches the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer, but argues that a proper reading of the relevant passages in their immediate and wider New Testament context should force us to that conclusion. He argues, too, that we must see imputation as grounded in the biblical notion of incorporation into Christ, so as not to reduce justification to a mere declaration distinct from the act of redemption itself.

McCormack and Lane tackle the issue from the perspective of historical and systematic theology. The former argues that 'imputation is regenerative', because God's word constitutes what it declares. And because imputation takes place with God's eschatological purification of the believer in view, we can respond (unlike Carson) to the 'legal fiction' charge without appealing to 'union with Christ', which McCormack understands primarily as an ethical union (which becomes ontological, since, as McCormack rightly insists, we are significantly constituted by what we do). Although I find that McCormack's view of union is in fact implied in his counter to the 'legal fiction' objection, his overall arguments are well made.

Lane argues that the Regensburg Colloquy's article on justification holds imputed and inherent righteousness together in a way that makes clear that imputed righteousness is the basis of God's acceptance of us. Moreover, it rightly asserts that justification and sanctification are simultaneous in conversion, a point often ignored, Lane suggests, in much contemporary evangelical preaching, which makes good works more of a desirable attainment for the believer than a necessary proof of saving faith. Geoffrey Wainwright points out that Wesley also saw justification and sanctification as simultaneous.

A second common theme is a negative response to the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Joint Declaration (1999). From a Wesleyan perspective, Kenneth Collins objects to the lack of a clear exposition of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. Paul Molnar (a Roman Catholic) compares Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, arguing powerfully that their different understandings of justification by faith are at the root of their very different epistemological starting-points (divine revelation in Christ for Barth, and the supposed human orientation to God for Rahner). Any alleged rapprochement between Protestant and Roman understandings of justification must go on, argues Molnar, to questions of method and Christology, if it is to stand up as substantive agreement.

As a whole, these essays illuminate in two further ways. They regularly show that the word 'justification' (along with 'sanctification') is consistently used dogmatically to describe teaching that, although biblical, is not exactly what that same word means every time it appears in Scripture. This confusion needs to be pointed out. Second, they give the reader a broad historical and biblical perspective on his/her own position. Seifrid shows that what many non-Lutheran Protestants take to be simply an orthodox doctrine of justification (i.e. forensic and declarative) has its roots in Melancthon, whereas Seifrid finds Luther's view of justification as both declarative and effective to be much closer to the biblical doctrine. Many readers may also discover that they have unfortunately not been forced to reflect on the vital biblical notion of 'union with Christ' as deeply as their theological forebears did. When a topic is hotly debated, as justification currently is, it's easy to entrench one's own position, without considering where it needs reforming. This book could help many to a deeper biblical reflection on justification.

TIMOTHY WARD

Hinckley

## **OUT OF THE STORM: Grappling with God in the Book of Job**

### **Christopher Ash**

**Leicester: IVP, 2004    111pp    £6.99pb    ISBN:1-84474-056-0**

This short book grapples with the big issues in the book of Job which, the author tells us, is about God. ‘This ought not to surprise us,’ he writes, ‘but it is easy to forget. If we take our eye off the central focus and major instead on suffering, we shall be disappointed—for we do not find in Job the answers to the questions we have chosen to pose’ (p. 109). This is a healthy corrective to the idea that reading and studying a forty-two chapter book of the Old Testament is the best prescription for those who are undergoing painful suffering because it gives us answers. All the same, I read this book at a time when the Asian tsunami had struck and some friends had just lost a baby, and I found much helpful material to put those and other tragedies into biblical perspective, as well as help on how to speak to people about such horrific occurrences. I also found a book which takes the agonising struggles of our messy and often unhappy lives seriously without resorting to pious clichés or platitudes.

In eleven expository chapters (based on sermons delivered before he became the Director of the Cornhill Training Course), Christopher Ash takes us through Job in easy-to-read and short-ish sections which could be read alongside the biblical text itself in daily quiet times, or instead of Eastenders. One of the great strengths of this book is the fact that it lingers on the central section of Job (chs. 4–37), which may be skated over in more superficial treatments. There must be a reason why God gave us such a long section in between the disasters of 1–3 and the denouement of 38–42. These are not comfortable chapters, but it is valuable to have them dealt with in this way.

There are some excellent illustrations and applications throughout the book. As part of wisdom literature, Job is often read by those seeking ‘wisdom’ and a deeper understanding of the complexities of life. Yet we are warned here not to seek any wisdom for its own sake alone as this merely puffs us up. ‘So do not seek Wisdom; seek the Lord’ (p. 73). Ash has some interesting thoughts on the place of the original angry young man, Elihu, in Job 32–37. I warmed to the idea that he could be ‘a type of the puzzled believer, mixed both in motives and tone, mixed also in theology, and yet set before us as one who is on the way to wisdom’ (p. 88). In many ways that makes him a type of us and many preachers of the book of Job.

There are some minor errors in the book, including the mistaken idea that Jesus called Satan 'the god of this world' (p. 95). In 2 Corinthians 4:4 the phrase 'god of this age' is used (probably referring to Satan but not necessarily), and in John's Gospel, Jesus calls Satan 'the prince [or ruler] of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, etc), which probably accounts for the confusion. In this reviewer's opinion, the font size of the Bible text is too small, which sadly encourages the reader to skip over the quotations from Job itself (and also the poems which are occasionally cited). Occasionally I found the style a tiny bit cumbersome such as on p. 104 where we are told that 'directed, prayer-filled waiting is the integrating arrow of hope that holds together the authentic Christian life'. I am still trying to work out what is 'integrating' about an arrow but, needless to say, these are only small quibbles which could be sorted out in further (well-deserved) reprints of this very useful volume.

LEE GATISS

London

## **BREAKING THE DA VINCI CODE**

**Darrell L. Bock**

**Nashville: Nelson, 2004 208pp £11.99hb ISBN: 0-7852-6046-3**

The world has been taken by storm by Dan Brown's 'The Da Vinci Code', which has spawned all manner of spin-offs including the spoofs 'The Va Dinci Cod' and 'The Asti Spumanti Code'. Everyone who has read the book makes the same two comments. First it is a great page turning thriller. Second it is among the poorest literature written! Yet it is a best seller. How could an airport trashy (but very entertaining) novel cause such a stir? There are plenty of other bad but appealing novels, so why has Bock written on this one?

The stir is caused because Brown, the author, claims that his work of fiction is based on a number of facts that the church doesn't want you to know. He claims that Jesus didn't die on the cross but lived on and married Mary Magdalene and they had children together. Brown also claims that when the New Testament was compiled the church included the four gospels that put across a divine Jesus and suppressed a group of gospels known as the Gnostic gospels as they revealed the true, married human. This cover-up happened in the fourth Century. This, he claims, is FACT, which inspired his fiction.

Unlike Brown and others who have made these claims, Darrell Bock is a biblical scholar with expertise on Gnostic gospels. This book investigates each of Brown's claims. He looks at the evidence particularly relating to Jesus and Mary, and a helpful chapter on how the Bible was put together where he also looks at the Gnostic gospels. The appendix deals with other 'facts' from the book to do with the medieval church.

Contra to Brown the Gnostics were written 100 years or more after the four New Testament gospels, they portray a divine, but totally non-human Jesus (rather than a divine and human Jesus as found in the Bible) and have no record of his marriage. Bock shows brilliantly how the Gnostic material is itself mishandled, then shows that they are unreliable anyway.

Bock brings in evidence ignored by Brown and exposes these facts for what they are. To write a novel is one thing, to claim it is based on hard facts, when they are actually as made up as the storyline is quite another. Bock blows the Da Vinci code out of the water completely.

Bock has written an easy-to-read book. He also ends with a chapter, called 'Breaking the Jesus Code', pointing to who the real Jesus was and is and how we can know him today. After the clarity of the rest of the book, I did expect a bit more here. The only bit of the book that can be a little tricky for the average reader is where he quotes from the Gnostic gospels or from first or second century Christian writers; Bock himself is crystal clear and very compelling.

When I bought this book from Waterstones the sales assistant said they stock both sides of the argument, including these less good ones, referring to Bock. The assumption being the book that can disprove the Jesus of the Bible must be right and better. This demonstrates the strength of these conspiracy theories. The Jesus of Brown and fiction has no claims on my life and makes no demands, but ultimately does not really help me much either. The Jesus of Bock and of the Bible is less comfortable. He demands my whole life and transforms me.

DARREN MOORE  
Tranmere

## THE HOPE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

A handbook of patristic eschatology

Brian E. Daley

Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2003 £17.99 303pp ISBN:1-56563-737-2

Originally published by Cambridge University Press in 1991 and now reprinted as a paperback, Professor Daley's account of the early church's eschatology has lost none of its freshness or relevance in the interval. If we could go back in time and ask the fathers themselves what was most important to them, probably many of them would answer that they were waiting, above all, for the imminent return of Christ. In their eyes, eschatology was not a somewhat esoteric doctrine tacked on, somewhat embarrassedly, to the end of a systematic theology, but a living dynamic which gave shape and purpose to their entire theological endeavour. The progressive evangelisation of the world, coupled with the crisis and then the collapse of the secular Roman order, seemed to them to be the harbingers of the second coming, an event which they were privileged to be hastening by their own preaching and teaching.

This did not prevent them from seeing the coming kingdom with different eyes, and it most certainly did not preserve them from the impact of false prophets—notably the Montanists. In the end, one might say, it was the danger of misunderstanding the true nature of biblical eschatology which drove Augustine to reformulate it in amillenarian terms. His synthesis was to become the dominant form of eschatology in the Western church during the middle ages, and in essence it remains so to this day. But more exciting forms of eschatology also managed to survive, and have reappeared from time to time as alternatives to the dominant model. Readers of Professor Daley's book will recognise these as they emerge, and see that many people whom we would now dismiss as fanatics or as cranks have a respectable pedigree dating from the earliest centuries of Christianity. That does not make them right, of course, but it does help to put their views into a wider perspective than is customary in modern theological manuals.

Perhaps the biggest difference between ancient and modern eschatology is that the ancients had no appreciation of apocalyptic as a literary genre in its own right, related to prophecy but in some important respects distinguished from it also. Realisation of this, helped immeasurably by the rediscovery of other, non-canonical apocalypses, has made a complete reassessment of eschatology

possible, in a way which transcends earlier syntheses, even if it tends to reflect the classical amillenarian model more than any other.

Now that this book is available in paperback, it is to be hoped that it will reach a wider audience, and be used as the reliable guide to the subject which it undoubtedly is.

GERALD BRAY  
Cambridge

### MY FIRST BIBLE BOOK

Dorling Kindersley: £9.99 ISBN: 1-4053-0828-1

### THE CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

Dorling Kindersley: £4.99 ISBN: 1-4053-0885-0

The Bible Societies and Collins have produced an attractive pocket/handbag size edition of the Good News Bible. It has a two-tone soft-touch imitation brown leather binding and would make an ideal personal gift (ISBN: 0-00-718450-6, price £15.99). The same edition is also available for wedding presentation in a white binding (ISBN: 0-00-718449-2, also £15.99). Printed on good quality India paper they also include maps, a word-list, index, introduction to, and summary of, each book in turn, and a guide to reading the Good News Bible together with advice on where to turn to find special occasions, well-known events, and parables and miracles of Jesus (though these last two are not exhaustive). The only drawback is that inevitably the print has to be quite small.

Dorling Kindersley have published *My First Bible Book* and *The Children's Illustrated Bible*. The title of the first of these is somewhat misleading, as it is really a book about the Bible rather than introducing children to the stories of the Bible. Its pages contain colourful pictures of animals, houses, food, weapons and clothes of the Bible, and early exercises in counting and recognizing shapes. It is perhaps surprising then, that it has been produced as a board book, as children likely to enjoy its contents will probably be past that stage.

*The Children's Illustrated Bible* has some 130+ stories retold by Selina Hastings with attractive illustrations by Eric Thomas. There are also very

helpful maps and every so often a parenthetical section introduces the next stage of the unfolding drama. With maps, an index and who's who in the Bible stories, this will make an ideal present for a junior age child: unfortunately again the small type and vocabulary will probably mean that they will need adult help with reading.

DAVID WHEATON  
Chesham

### **EXPLORING AND PROCLAIMING THE APOSTLES' CREED**

**Roger E. Van Harn, ed.**

**London/New York: Continuum, 2004 297pp £ 14.99pb**

**ISBN: 0-8192-8116-6**

Geoffrey Wainwright closes his foreword to this book with the assurance that not only will he use it as a text in his theology classes, but the book is so good that it could conceivably replace whatever he might have to say and so make his lectures redundant! Praise of that kind makes us expect an extraordinarily good piece of work, and although we can hardly fail to be disappointed to some extent after such a build-up, it remains true that this collection of essays and sermons is very much better than the usual run of such things.

The contributors represent a wide range of church and confessional backgrounds, with Roman Catholics and Presbyterians particularly prominent. The essays generally maintain a good standard of scholarly integrity, though some tend to be closer to the sermons that perhaps they were originally meant to be. This is not such a surprise however, since the book's aim is to reconcile the academic with the pastoral, which has led the editor to attach a sermon to each article of the creed. We are meant to understand by this that the doctrine is not merely believable, but also preachable—Karl Barth's ultimate test of good theology.

The explanations for the different parts of the creed are generally illuminating, pointing out to us aspects of the text which have generally been obscured over the years. For example, we are reminded of the interesting history of the word 'Almighty' in the first article, which is only partly connected to the word 'Father' which precedes it. The commentary on the descent into hell is very

interesting, giving as it does a detailed exposition of what John Calvin—one of the doctrine's staunchest defenders—thought about it. We discover that he came to much the same conclusion as Thomas Aquinas—though by a very different exegetical route. We also find that Melancthon and other reformers took quite a different tack, and came up with an explanation of the phrase which bears little relation to that of either Calvin or Aquinas.

Another interesting chapter is the one on the 'communion of saints' which points out that if the phrase is of Greek origin—something which is generally asserted, but which may not be correct—then it refers in the first instance to participation in the sacraments, not to the fellowship of believers. If that is indeed the source of the words, then we must rejoice that the tradition has corrected the emphasis of the original and given them a much more Biblical flavour than they once had.

By far the most ambitious chapter is the one devoted to the Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed is not very expansive on this theme, and so the chapter deals essentially with the teaching of the Nicene Creed, taking in much of the New Testament and a wide sweep of current charismatic thinking along the way. It is amazing what you can do with only five words to start with—or four if you are reading the Latin.

One of the curious features of the book is that the creed is given in the original Latin, without any explanation as to why. Perhaps it is meant to stress the historicity and catholicity of the original text, but now that so few people really know Latin any more, it must be asked whether this feature serves any real purpose. Within the body of the text itself, there are occasional concessions to political correctness—several contributors seem to have trouble with the inescapable masculinity of biblical language about God, for instance—but on the whole, extremes of this kind have been avoided. Indeed, the sheer orthodoxy of so much of what the contributors have to say is both refreshing and surprising, since some of the contributors (at least) are hardly known for that!

The sermons, by contrast, tend to be somewhat disappointing. Perhaps this is inevitable, since sermons are not meant to be read, but heard, and it is possible to imagine that they would have been much better in their original setting. But having said that, it is also true that few of them are genuinely exegetical, and

if a sermon is not expounding Holy Scripture, it is not really doing its job properly. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of food for thought in this volume, and people looking for something to do in Lent or in a teaching course in their church, would be well advised to take a look at this book for ideas. The Apostles' Creed has been brought back to life in its pages, and the presentation offered here is one which will stimulate and inspire any number of pastors and lay people looking for solid meat for their sermon diet.

GERALD BRAY  
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### **CHARACTER AND SCRIPTURE: Moral Formation, Community and Biblical Interpretation**

William P. Brown (ed.)

Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2002 440pp

£24.99pb ISBN: 0-8028-4625-4

This is a collection of twenty-two essays by advanced scholars attempting to explore the application and intersection between biblical texts and Christian ethics. This is the 'character ethics approach' which seeks to examine the integration of the Bible with the lives of Christian communities that read the Scriptures seriously. Put another way, it postulates that the interpretation of the Bible and the moral formation of communities that read it are inextricably linked, with Scripture forming the community as much as the community informing the reading of Scripture. Still further this approach acknowledges that the interpretation of Scripture with the milieu of a reading community entails an appropriation of the Bible in an on-going process. It assumes that all human beings are formed in communities which are, in turn, formed by the normative story of Scripture and that this formation can best be discussed in the language of character.

This collection contains many fresh or novel exegeses of biblical texts, some very familiar to the average reader, and puts forth ideas and insights that such a reader would never have contemplated. The essays tend to be original, penetrating and thought-provoking. Although the essayists quote or cite the writings of other scholars, they do so only to show that a matter has been previously considered, or that there is a view contrary to their own. Unlike too

many modern works on Christian thought, they devote themselves to the biblical texts or other primary sources instead of (as has become all too common in the academic world) producing what is essentially a discussion about modern commentaries.

This collection has a number of failings. In some instances the essayists who are exegeting a Scripture text seem to gut the biblical narrative to fit their theses, or at least this is how it would appear to a Christian who is accustomed to read and interpret the narratives in a traditional way. Nor is it clear why some essays are in this collection. One does not touch on ethics until the final paragraph, and then only incidentally. Some essays deal with hermeneutics without clearly making a connection with character ethics, while some deal with ethics without clearly demonstrating a biblical foundation.

While many essays are very informative and deserve to be considered individually, the book as a collection lacks the coherence and integration a reader would expect from such a volume. A very serious and highly dedicated reader might be able to read the book more than once, make notes, draw relationships and synthesise the four hundred and twenty-two pages of essays to obtain a coherent view of what they say about the Bible's connection with character ethics, but I doubt that any but a hardy few would be willing to make such an effort. Much greater co-ordination and input should have been exercised by the editor to make the book integrated and clear on a single reading.

In this product of prominent Christian academics (most of them full professors), the language, need for very high abilities of concentration and understanding, and the intensive analysis render it more suitable for other scholars, or at least the extraordinarily well-informed, than for the novice.

DAVID W. T. BRATTSTON  
Nova Scotia