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# Book Reviews

## REFORMED THEOLOGY AND VISUAL CULTURE

### The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards

William A. Dyrness

Cambridge: CUP, 2004    338pp    £21.99pb    ISBN: 0-521-54073-9

How Francis Schaeffer would have loved this book! This is not least in that it is dedicated to the author's 'mentor', Schaeffer's friend Hans Rookmaker. Schaeffer might even be pleasantly surprised to find that the author is now Professor of Theology and Culture at Fuller Seminary, Pasadena.

The book is a study of the 'the interaction between theology and visual culture', the 'Protestant imagination'. As Dyrness admits, many will see this as an oxymoron. Protestantism, with the honourable exception of seventeenth century Dutch art, is commonly seen as a destructive, iconoclastic movement, hostile to the visual image, and to the fine arts generally. Many readers will be familiar with this theme in the work of Eamonn Duffy, recently popularised in Britain by Sir Roy Strong. Dyrness sets out to show that the reality was much more complicated: that a major shift in the use of the imagination during the Reformation, in which a 'clean break' was made with the visual mediation of faith, and its replacement with 'an internalised faith which privileged the ear over the eye'. However, Dyrness believes, the iconoclasm of the Reformers had positive as well as a negative influence on the developing culture, opening up certain pathways in art, whilst it closed off others.

After setting the late medieval scene, Dyrness notes the crucial importance of Calvin, and his idea that the world is the theatre of God's glory. This made possible a new aesthetics of ordinary life: in serving our neighbour we are creating a world, 'making images' that reflect God's glory. It is this structuring of both the interior and exterior life as an artistic act, shaped by Scripture, which is the heart of the book. Dyrness then traces these themes through sixteenth century England into seventeenth century Holland and New England. One of the great strengths of this account is that Dyrness takes in not only fine art such as the work of Nicholas Hilliard, and Dutch landscape painters, but also other visual media such as book illustrations, town planning and landscape gardening, through which Reformed Christians constructed a visual world that glorified God. He notes how the Calvinist architect Bernard Palissy

was able to work unmolested for the court of France, laying out the Tuilières gardens for the staunchly Catholic Catherine de Medici, inspired first of all by his meditation on Psalm 104, but also, Dyrness suggests, by *Calvin's Institutes*. Dyrness also believes that the influence of the latter can be seen behind Rembrandt's "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp".

However, Dyrness suggest that a 'retreat' took place from visual imagery after 1580, caused by the influence of Petrus Ramus. According to Dyrness, those most influenced by Ramus, such as William Perkins, and most importantly William Ames, moved away from Calvin's belief that world was a 'theatre', and became much more suspicious of the imagination, inclining towards logical analysis and theological correctness. Another stream, represented by William Sibbes, Richard Baxter and, in the New World, John Cotton, put the emphasis on internal, spiritual experience, including imaginative meditation. Here the narratives of Scripture fed and enriched the imagination, and imaginative grasp of the next world was used to shape the present. This stream was much more open to see the glory of God in nature, and its imitation in art. This was the point in the book where I was most cautious: there seemed to be the danger of a false dichotomy between doctrine and piety. Dyrness is at pains to emphasise that the differences should not be exaggerated: the two streams were part of the same movement. He traces the interaction between the two in seventeenth and early eighteenth century New England, leading up to the work of Jonathan Edwards, who was in the Sibbes–Cotton stream, and brought a new appreciation of beauty and imagination into Puritan theology. Dyrness sees Edwards as proposing a 'powerful theological aesthetic', but tragically not proposing any cultural forms that it might take. Here is an unfinished project for the heirs of Calvin and Edwards to take up: the development of a Reformed aesthetics. Dyrness finishes his book by calling on twenty-first century Reformed Christians to recapture the aesthetic values of their forebears, and shape culture in God-honouring ways.

This is a fascinating work, of a type of history rarely appreciated in England: *histoire de mentalités*. My main complaint is that there are no colour illustrations: how can anyone print Van Eyck's *The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin* in black-and-white?! As Dyrness notes, for the Puritans the whole of life was worship, and they sought to structure it so that it became an 'icon' of God's presence. At the centre of the drama was the human individual, the true image

of God, who replaced the shattered idols of the Middle Ages. For modern evangelicals, there are obvious affinities here with the views on worship that in recent years have been associated with Moore College, Sydney, and with Oak Hill. For the Puritans, painting a landscape, designing a garden, dissecting a body, structuring a family, or, (in a project dear to Calvin's heart at Geneva), structuring a society so that the poor, God's images, were fed and protected, were all dramatic activities that glorified God. They did not have to be justified as a pretext for evangelism: they were acts of worship, and things of beauty in their own right. Francis Schaeffer would have approved.

STEPHEN WALTON

Marbury, Tushingham, and Whitewell

## DELIGHTING IN THE TRINITY

**Just why are Father, Son, and Spirit such good news?**

**Tim Chester**

Monarch Books: Oxford/Grand Rapids, MI, 2005     192pp     £7.99pb

ISBN 1-85424-685-2 (UK)/ISBN 0-8254-6080-8 (USA)

I suspect that most readers of *Churchman* will have had the same experience as I have: in a Bible study group someone asks a question about the Trinity. Suddenly, there is an embarrassed silence, and everyone looks nervously at the study leader, who tries desperately to disappear into his armchair. Then someone says that this is one of those things we just cannot understand, and with a sigh of relief the discussion moves on, leaving the question unanswered, and the questioner dissatisfied. Such reticence is extremely sad, and leaves young Christians defenceless against Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses they may meet. In *Delighting in the Trinity*, Dr. Tim Chester, has given us a popular introduction to the doctrine of the trinity, which provides an excellent resource for dealing with this problem.

Part One covers the biblical foundations of the doctrine in an accessible and reliable way. In the light of current evangelical disputes, Chester's comments on the Old Testament are judicious: evidence for the plurality as well as the oneness of God in the Old Testament is 'striking', but not 'compelling': it only becomes 'decisive' when the Old Testament is read from a Christian perspective, and we should not 'anachronistically suppose that the Old

Testament saints were Trinitarians'. He emphasises how the doctrine emerges from the story of Jesus, as well as from explicit statements about him. Part Two then covers historical developments from the earliest Church Fathers through Aquinas and the Reformers, to Barth and Moltmann. Part Three outlines the 'practical implications', with chapters on the Trinity and revelation, humanity, salvation, and mission.

Each chapter begins with a helpful summary paragraph, and in Section Two information boxes give more details on key individuals and movements. Chester's style is clear and engaging: I suspect that he is incapable of writing a boring sentence, and I found the book a compelling read. My criticisms are of what is omitted. The historical section jumps straight from Calvin to the enlightenment, without considering Protestant Scholasticism. This means that there is no consideration of the Trinitarian piety of figures such as John Owen and Jonathan Edwards, and neither is there any mention of the idea, once a common place of Reformed theology, that there is a 'Covenant of Redemption' between the persons of the Trinity in eternity. Chester thus misses the opportunity to mine a rich vein of practical doctrine. Neither does he fully consider the implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for gender relations. It is also a shame that Chester did not include a chapter on how the doctrine of the Trinity might shape our corporate worship.

These omissions do not detract from the book's greatest strength: the links it draws between the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement. Running through the book is a key theme: the unity and plurality of God are only fully revealed at the cross, and the Trinity cannot be understood apart from Calvary; but neither can Calvary be understood apart from the Trinity. Thus chapter 4, 'Unity and Plurality at the Cross', is the keystone which holds the biblical evidence together, (and is profoundly moving to read); whilst chapter 9, 'Trinity and Salvation', is crucial in working out the practical implications. Here Chester emphasizes that the cross is an event 'within' God, in which the Son offers himself to the Father; and that penal substitution is the only truly Trinitarian view of the atonement. Steve Chalke comes in for criticism for having a faulty view of the trinity.

I highly recommend *Delighting in the Trinity*. I will be encouraging leaders in my congregation to read it, and I will give it to new Christians. I can even

imagine giving it to a thoughtful non-Christian as an evangelistic book. When we line *Delighting in the Trinity* up next to Donald Macleod's *Shared Life*, as a popular introduction, and Robert Letham's *The Holy Trinity*, as a more in-depth study, evangelicals now have three excellent studies of the doctrine of the Trinity. We no longer have an excuse for silence!

STEPHEN WALTON  
Marbury

### ENGAGING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT: SIX CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

Graham A. Cole

Nottingham: Apollos, 2007 138pp £9.99pb ISBN 978-1-84474-179-3

This book is an expanded version of lectures given in 2006 at Oak Hill College's Annual School of Theology. The previous books have been pertinent, concise and refreshing—this volume is no exception. Each chapter asks a question about the Holy Spirit: What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? How may we resist the Holy Spirit? Ought we to pray to the Holy Spirit? How do we quench the Holy Spirit? How do we grieve the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit fill us?

All of these questions are important since they are raised by the biblical texts, have caused controversy in churches and are paradigmatic of aspects of Christian living. The particular value of this book is its self-conscious method of firstly highlighting relevant scriptural texts, then exploring historical answers given to the questions before offering a balanced and mature theological reflection. Due attention is given to pastoral implications.

One example of the balance with which Cole states his conclusions may be seen in his view of whether a Christian ought to pray to the Spirit: 'Christians may indeed pray to the Spirit. Our God is triune. But without biblical precedents and explicit biblical warrants, there is no obligation that the Christian pray to the spirit. Permission, yes! Obligation, no!' (p. 71).

In his effort to be clear and settle controversial issues, Cole may be guilty of forcing unnecessary either/or distinctions upon the reader. On, How does the

Spirit fill us? Cole's key insight is that, in Ephesians 5, 'on view is not the individual, but the congregation'. (p. 115, cf pp. 124, 127). This may be an emphasis to be factored into interpretation, but the reviewer would hesitate to set a contextual emphasis on the corporate against the personal. Similarly, the setting of 'vertical' against 'horizontal' in meetings appears to be rather artificial: a Christian being thankful to God is vertical, but if a Christian is a thankful person, then this ontological reality will be something far richer than can be described by concepts such as vertical or horizontal. The same point can be made concerning the opposition of 'means' to 'ends' (pp. 118, 123). In summary, the chapter on filling by the Spirit highlights the difficulty of interpreting a command with little other New Testament precedent and suggests helpful emphases, but the case made against Calvin, Stott and others would need to be done in a way that avoids false antithesis. On the whole, a book to be commended for its brevity, clarity and method. Highly recommended to students, pastors and the general reader.

PETER SANLON  
Cambridge

### **LAST THINGS FIRST: UNLOCKING GENESIS 1–3 WITH THE CHRIST OF ESCHATOLOGY**

**J. V. Fesko**

Fearn: Mentor, Christian Focus Publications, 2007 207pp £11.99pb

ISBN: 978-1-845502294

With so many available, any book has to have something special to justify its purchase. Reference works or commentaries must be candidates for regular use. Practical books must be resources for action. Books whose appeal relies on originality of thought are trickier. The likelihood, in a busy life, is that they will be read only once. They must therefore contain something exceptional. Indeed, for my own part, I judge such a book as much by the ideas it suggests which are not in the text as those which are.

J. V. Fesko's *Last Things First* certainly comes into the category of 'worthwhile'. No doubt this is partly because of my own interest in his topic, succinctly summarised as 'unlocking Genesis 1–3 with the Christ of eschatology'. The more I am acquainted with these chapters, the more convinced I am that they contain the raw material of our theology. I am not

surprised that the two volumes of Augustine's *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* alone cover this material.

Fesko's premise, and I am sure he is right, is that instead of being approached primarily for what it says about physical origins, Genesis 1–3 should, first and foremost, be read within a christological framework. For him, the opening three chapters of Genesis are a work of 'protology', which can only be interpreted properly when it is tied in to a Christ-centred eschatology.

Underlying Fesko's argument is a thoroughly 'biblical theological' approach to Scripture, exemplified by Dumbrell, Vos and Childs. At the same time, his theological framework is that of the Westminster Confession of Faith, although in my view this is also the source of some of its weaknesses. Within this twin perspective, Adam is crucially understood as the first Adam, corresponding to the second Adam who is, of course, Christ. Everything about the first Adam, then—his nature, his location, his relationships, his mandate—must be understood as pointing to the second Adam, and therefore finding their true fulfilment in him.

The mandate to be fruitful and to exercise dominion over the earth is thus not to be fulfilled by Christians having large families or via material enterprise, but through the propagation of the gospel. Similarly, Adam's mandate to till the garden of Eden is not an agricultural but a priestly commission, pointing to the extension of God's true temple, the Church. 'The reason for Genesis 1–3,' Fesko writes, 'was not to refute Charles Darwin and scientific evolutionary theory. On the contrary, it was intended to show the work of the first Adam, which is foundational to comprehending properly the work of the second Adam' (p. 201).

Above all, Fesko's approach presents us with the realisation that the world took its entire shape from the eschatological nature of Christ. It has taken its course always from the goal towards which it was heading, rather than being, as it were, something which God first made 'on a whim' and then had to mend by means of his Son.

Nevertheless, there are questions I would ask of some of the details in Fesko's thesis. His Reformed approach means that Adam is seen as living within a

‘covenant of works’. Fesko spends a considerable amount of space arguing this. The explicit conclusion from this is that Adam failed in an enterprise which would otherwise have led him to exercise dominion over the whole world and then, finally, to enter God’s Sabbath rest. Yet this seems to me to overlook precisely the point Fesko is making—that the first Adam is just that, and that the nature of Christ foreordains that the world would take the path calling for its redemption.

I would also have liked to see more about the outcome of the Fall in terms of the gaining of the knowledge of good and evil and what this means for our likeness to God. Fesko quotes Vos with approval: ‘the eschatological process is intended not only to put man back at the point where he stood before the invasion of sin and death, but to carry him higher to a plane of life, not attained before the probation, nor, so far as we can see, attainable without it’ (p. 198). There is surely much more to be said about the *felix culpa*—the happy fault which not only calls for a great Redeemer but achieves what, without redemption, could not be achieved at all.

There are one or two niggles with the production of the book. Early on, there are redundant hyphens, where pagination may have changed. There are also, perhaps for the same reason, some examples of footnotes which appear on the following page. Finally, there is something wrong with some of the pointing of the Hebrew text. These can, however, be easily overlooked. On balance, this is certainly a book worth reading and, for the money, worth buying. Fesko has raised some valuable points. It is up to others to take these forward.

JOHN P. RICHARDSON

Ugley, Essex

## **HEBREWS: A COMMENTARY (New Testament Library)**

**Luke Timothy Johnson**

Louisville, KY: WJK, 2006 pp. xxviii+400 \$49.95hb ISBN 0-664-22118-1

Luke Timothy Johnson’s commentary on Hebrews, a recent addition to the New Testament Library series, is the work of a seasoned scholar, at home with the social, philosophical, and literary contexts in which Hebrews emerged. He sets out to write a commentary that enables readers to make themselves at

home in that world too, and so to be challenged by Hebrews' distinctive 'vision of reality', 'understanding of Jesus Christ', and 'sense of Christian identity' (p. 1). While doing so he places Hebrews firmly in its canonical context within the New Testament.

Johnson's introduction is readable and informative, providing a helpful overview of Hebrews' background in the Christian tradition, its context in the ancient world, the circumstances surrounding its composition, and its distinctive theological emphases. Influences in the ancient world that shaped Hebrews are navigated skillfully; indeed, one of the greatest strengths of the commentary is its illuminating and full picture of these influences—Greek, Jewish, and Christian—that are so important for understanding Hebrews. Perhaps more limited is the introduction's discussion of Hebrews' structure; while Johnson outlines structural theories based on content, form, and rhetorical convention, he does not refer, for example, to the stream of scholarship (represented by Richard N. Longenecker, Lawrence Wills, and R. T. France) that sees Hebrews as a series of expositions of Old Testament texts and themes which serve as its structural framework.

In his exegesis, Johnson tends to tackle four or five verses at once and to comment on them in reasonably lengthy paragraphs, often elegantly written but not always convenient for reference. Consistent with other volumes in the series, Johnson keeps his explicit engagement with secondary literature to a minimum (on average, a footnote once every two or three pages), thus avoiding clutter but also limiting the reader's ability to follow up specific questions in detail. He has struck a good balance in his sparing reference to the Greek text; he consistently provides a transliteration and a clear explanation of the relevant points of grammar, syntax, or vocabulary, so that a reader with even a rudimentary knowledge of Greek can follow and benefit.

Throughout, Johnson places heavy emphasis on the influence of Platonism, especially Philo's, on Hebrews. While he is careful in his introduction to note that this is 'a Platonism that is stretched and reshaped by engagement with Scripture' (p. 21), the general impression given is that Hebrews is a Platonic text, evincing a 'religious Platonism' (p. 165), and a 'pervasive' 'Platonic worldview' (p. 40). Although the parallels between Philo and Hebrews are undeniable, a thoroughgoing Platonic reading of Hebrews does not enjoy

widespread support, on the grounds that Hebrews is clearly saturated with the worldview (and especially the eschatology) of the Old Testament.

Particularly welcome is Johnson's recognition of the centrality to Hebrews of the theme of the word of God, especially the Word as incarnate. Johnson gets it just right: 'Hebrews makes the life, death, resurrection, and royal enthronement of Jesus a form of speech, a word spoken by God' (p. 46). His treatment of the opening verses of Hebrews is superb for its discussion of this theme, and his exegesis of 4:12-13 (with its playful use of *logos*) is the most lively of any recent commentator.

In his treatment of the atonement Johnson is less engaging, proposing simply that 'for Hebrews the essence of Christ's work is to "represent humans" in their movement toward God' (p. 103). He generally avoids reference to sin unless it is explicitly demanded by the text, and comment on key verses such as 7:27 and 9:28 never quite tackles the question of how Christ's death addresses the problem of human sin, a question that is surely central to understanding Hebrews.

As to the theme of covenant, Johnson argues that Hebrews 'lacks any element of supersessionism', understood as replacement of Israel by the Gentiles as God's people (p. 33). In his excursus on Old and New Covenants (pp. 210-15), he confuses national supersession (which is absent in Hebrews) with the inadequacy of the Old Covenant now that Christ has come (which Hebrews affirms on every page). He suggests that the New Covenant in Hebrews merely brings a 'deeper obedience of faith' (p. 212), and that its affirmation of the superiority of the New Covenant 'should be seen less as asserting a theological position than as expressing a community conviction' (p. 214). For those outside its community, Hebrews cannot object to continued worship under the Old Covenant without reference to Christ. This view undermines Hebrews' insistence on the utter inadequacy of the old order in light of Christ's once and for all atoning sacrifice.

This is a readable and learned commentary providing a comprehensive picture of the influences that shaped Hebrews, but its exegesis is not always persuasive. For both scholar and preacher it has its limitations; it is neither technical enough for serious research (as are William L. Lane's and Harold

Attridge's fully referenced commentaries), nor is it accessible enough for the busy pastor (as is F. F. Bruce's thorough but concise commentary).

JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

Cambridge

**THE WAR ON TERROR: HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS RESPOND?**

**Nicky Solly Megoran**

Nottingham: IVP, 2007 158pp £7.99pb ISBN: 978-1-84474-175-5

Where was God on 9/11, 7/7, and when the bombs started falling on Afghanistan and Iraq? Why does God allow wars and terrorist attacks to happen? Should Western Christians support or oppose their government's wars? Should Palestinian and Iraqi Christians support armed resistance to the occupation of their lands? What relevance is the gospel to the big international political questions of our day? Is there a distinctive message that the church can proclaim at this time? How can the Bible guide our thinking and help us live out our daily lives in the War on Terror? Do the Old and New Testaments contradict each other in what they teach about how we should treat our enemies? Was Jesus seriously commanding us to 'love our enemies', even when they are suicide bombers or enemy soldiers? What can ordinary Christians do, and how should we pray for the world?

As I read this in the introduction to the book, I was excited. Yes, I want to engage with exactly these questions and to hear wisdom from someone who has thought about this much more deeply than I have been able to as yet. And, having read on, I was indeed educated and challenged. Nick Solly Megoran is a lecturer in political geography at Newcastle University, and has a history of personal involvement in other parts of the globe. His explanations of the political motivations and backgrounds to our present-day situation were clear and concise, dispersing much of the fog, and for me this was the highlight.

The book finds its origins in a series of sermons delivered by the author, and this heritage is still apparent in its style and structure. For those who like anecdotes and real-life stories to demonstrate a point, there is a substantial source here, and although the book tries to represent the differing stances, it is not long before the author's own pacifism becomes dominant. This position is

built on three fundamental conclusions which I summarise as: (1) War is bad; (2) God is king so our citizenship is not primarily national; (3) Jesus said 'love your enemy'. While having no problem with any of these, and accepting that we possibly do need to be motivated to live and think differently, I felt that the arguments were sometimes simplistic, and tended to lean heavily on one or two 'proof' texts and on personal stories as if they provided conclusive evidence. Perhaps it is unfair to expect more from a book of this size, but despite plenty here to stimulate, I feel I need to do more reading, particularly in biblical theology, to come closer to answers to these questions.

MARGARET HOBBS  
Oakwood, London

## **ANGELS AND DEMONS:**

### **Perspectives and Practices from Diverse Religious Traditions**

**Peter G. Riddell and Beverly Smith Riddell (eds.)**

Nottingham: IVP, 2007 277pp £14.99pb ISBN: 978-1-84474-182-3

This book is derived from papers delivered to the Religion, Culture and Communication group of the Tyndale Fellowship. Given this origin, one expects an evangelical treatment of the fascinating subject of the supernatural world of angels and demons. Unfortunately, one is hard pressed to discover a truly evangelical commitment from some of its contributors.

The book begins with two papers on angels and demons in African religion. The first, by Keith Ferdinando, focuses upon traditional religion. Ferdinando rightly argues that the absence of the notion of a sovereign God in traditional African religion means that the spiritual realm is a chaos of competing forces and God's effective absence renders problematic the moral evaluation of spirits. The second paper on African religion is one by Alan Anderson on African Pentecostalism and notes its stress on exorcism and deliverance. Anderson argues that criticism of traditional African religion as demonic by Western missionaries and their Pentecostal successors displays their ignorance and prejudice, and is a far cry from Paul's strategy, who used existing religious concepts to proclaim his gospel. Perhaps Anderson should read 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. He will find that the apostle is in agreement with the ignorant and prejudiced Western missionaries who see paganism as the service of demons.

The book then continues on the place of spiritual powers in Pentecostalism/charismaticism with papers by William Kay, Nigel Scotland, and Martin Parsons. Quite why the editors commissioned four papers on Pentecostalism/charismaticism is a mystery. Kay describes Pentecostal theology on evil powers but does not evaluate these views in any depth. Scotland provides a classification of the views of prominent charismatics on evil powers (expansives, moderates, and progressives). Scotland sympathizes with the progressives and seems to commend the view of Nigel Wright that the devil is less than a person, which is very dubious in terms of biblical theology. He makes the extraordinary statement that Jesus did not believe in a demon-infested universe nor did he engage with principalities and powers. The synoptics clearly show that Galilee, at least, during Jesus's ministry was demon-infested, and Jesus says that he came to bind the strong man/Satan (Mark 3:27) which certainly suggests engagement with evil powers. While Scotland underplays the importance of evil powers, Parsons, exaggerates their importance, and produces some extraordinary stories of his own involvement in the exorcism of evil powers. It is difficult to know what to make of these stories without considerably more information.

The book then moves to discuss the place of spiritual powers in Hinduism (Theodore Gabriel, Chris Ganakan) and Islam (Peter Riddell, Andrew Bannister, Bill Musk). Gabriel argues convincingly that in Hinduism there is no stark distinction between good and evil, but rather that these represent a contrast between pre-creation and post-creation. Gods can act wickedly and demons can act morally. Ganakan focuses upon the Hindu concept of the Manthiravadi, a wounded warrior healer, a person supposedly endowed with spiritual powers to deliver people from various ailments caused by evil powers by experiencing suffering himself. Gankan astonishingly concludes that the existence of this Hindu warrior healer is a sign of hope for religion. One is left baffled as to how this paper was commissioned in an evangelical book. Surely, only Christ can produce true hope and deliver Hindus from the powers of darkness (i.e. their own religion).

Riddell considers Islamic responses to the 2004 Tsunami and its relationship to evil, while Musk focuses upon angels and demons in folk Islam. Both these articles are revealing about contemporary Muslim attitudes. Bannister argues that the doctrine of angels and demons in the Quran is derived from oral

traditions that predate Mohammed. However Bannister omits to point out that his findings question the Islamic doctrine of Quranic inspiration.

The last three articles focus upon secular Western culture. Ruth Bradby properly critiques the seminal New Age book, *A Course of Miracles*, which denies the reality of evil. Christopher Partridge looks at contemporary Satanism and the heavy-metal subculture. In this article, Partridge uncovers the fact that one contemporary American Satanist is also a member of the American Episcopal Church. This will come as no surprise to some of us. The book ends with an interesting article by Amy Summers-Minette on angels and demons in Western pop culture (such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer). In Western pop culture, angels are no longer absolutely good and demons are no longer absolutely evil, which suggests that there may be a parallel between Western pop culture and Hindu views in Gabriel's article.

This book, like the curate's egg, is good in parts, but overall is a great disappointment. Instead of four articles on Pentecostalism/charismaticism, articles on early Judaism's and especially the church fathers' views on angels and demons would have been fascinating and instructive. It represents a great missed opportunity to offer an evangelical treatment of a subject of substantial importance in theology and practice.

ROHINTAN MODY  
Aberdeen

## **JUDAISM BEFORE JESUS**

**The Events and Ideas that shaped the New Testament World**

**Anthony J. Tomasino**

Downers Grove/Leicester: IVP, 2003 345pp £14.99pb ISBN: 0-85111-787-2

This is a readable, popularly written, and informative book on an important subject. It covers the history, literature and thought of the inter-testamental period in an accessible way. Many of the opinions expressed are open to question, but that is bound to be the case where the subject-matter has so many obscurities.

ROGER BECKWITH  
Oxford

**ZION SYMBOLISM IN HEBREWS** (Paternoster Biblical Monographs)  
**Kiwoong Son**

Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005 xviii+248pp £19.99pb ISBN:1-84227-368-X

Son's monograph (his PhD thesis with minor revisions) seeks to demonstrate that the Sinai–Zion symbolism in Hebrews 12:18–24, properly understood, provides the interpretive key to the whole letter. In Part 1, after introducing his theme and method, Son presents an exhaustive survey of Sinai–Zion symbolism in the Old Testament, contemporary Judaism, and the New Testament.

In Part 2, he argues for the structural and thematic centrality of Hebrews 12:18–24 to the rest of the letter, considering the scriptural citations in Hebrews 1, the comparison of Jesus and Moses in 3:1–4:13, and the theme of Jesus' High Priesthood in 4:14–7.28, all against the background of Sinai–Zion symbolism. Son then investigates the relationship in Hebrews between temple symbolism and the Sinai–Zion contrast. He draws particular attention to Psalm 110:1 and Jeremiah 31:31–34 which, in their broader context, associate Zion with the Son's exaltation and with the New Covenant respectively. He suggests that these texts are the basis for Hebrews' insistence on the superior nature of the heavenly temple. Throughout, Son sets Sinai–Zion symbolism in Hebrews against the background of Jewish apocalyptic, rather than Platonic dualism or a straightforward linear eschatology.

Son's exegesis is convincing, and he gives ample evidence of the investigative steps he has taken in reaching his conclusions. His basic thesis should win very wide assent among his readers. Son has effectively demonstrated that Sinai–Zion symbolism in 12:18–24 provides a crucial interpretive key to Hebrews' message and the intellectual background to much of its argument. He may sometimes overstate his case, giving the impression that Hebrews is really all about Sinai and Zion (its symbolism is proposed as the author's 'principal conceptual framework', p. 27), rather than limiting himself to the basic (and sound) proposition that a clear understanding of the Sinai–Zion symbolism in 12:18–24 is essential for unlocking the rest of Hebrews' theology and message. Son's suggestion that Jewish apocalyptic provides the cosmological and eschatological framework for the Sinai–Zion symbolism is

intriguing and helpful; however, he does not fully justify his almost outright rejection of Philo's cosmology as an influence on Hebrews.

This monograph does not pretend to be anything other than a published PhD thesis, and certain lexical and syntactical infelicities make passage through the work rocky at times. But these stylistic glitches are not so severe as to detract substantially from the clarity of the work, or from its significant contribution to our understanding of Hebrews. For the keen student of Hebrews, this book amply repays time invested in reading it, and its careful exegesis of key passages means that it will remain a valuable reference tool for the expositor.

JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

Cambridge

## **STEWARDS, PROPHETS, KEEPERS OF THE WORD**

**Ritva H. Williams**

Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2006 220pp \$24.95pb ISBN 978-1-56563-949-2

Books about the pattern of ministry and authority in the early Christian communities continue to roll off the presses, perhaps because much of what they have to say has special relevance for the modern church as it grapples with new forms of ministry and profound challenges to its inherited tradition. Dr. Williams contributes to this phenomenon with a study of what she perceives as the three types of leadership figure found in the churches of the first and early second centuries. After making a passing nod to the Catholic tradition at the beginning of the book, she makes it clear that she disagrees fundamentally with it and branches out on her own. Readers must be advised that she takes the so-called liberal consensus in New Testament scholarship for granted, especially where the Pastoral Epistles are concerned. By relegating so much of the New Testament material to the sub-apostolic era, she is free to posit a Jesus and a Paul who were substantially different from the way in which they have been traditionally portrayed, and this difference is essential to her thesis.

In Dr. Williams' view, the early church had stewards whose primary function was to administer the existing structures, prophets who were called to inject religious experience into the mix and keepers of the word, whose job it was to preserve tradition and show its relevance to each new generation. People

corresponding to such types could be found in many different settings in the first Christian centuries, and one or more of them was usually the head of a local congregation. There was nothing exceptional about this in itself, but when the types were combined in a single individual, things began to move. Someone who could claim to be a steward, a prophet and a keeper of the word at the same time had the freedom to mingle these different tasks in ways which were ground-breaking and subversive of the existing order. Jesus was just such a person. He preached to a society formed along the model of the patriarchal household and advocated that instead of a hierarchy descending from the *pater familias* downwards, the Christian community should be restructured as a fellowship of equal siblings in which co-operation and sharing would replace domination by a single (male) individual.

Paul was another such person, and between them they can be said to have laid the groundwork for a new type of society—the Christian church. That the result did not live up to the original promise is perhaps not surprising, since the all-pervasive patriarchal household model of the ancient world could not be so easily dislodged from its hegemony. Things are different today, of course, and our generation is at last free to put into practice the primitive ideals sketched out for us by Jesus and Paul. Equally important though is Dr. Williams' belief that the authority of such figures rested not on their teaching or qualifications within the synagogue or the church, but on religious experience(s) based on what she calls an 'altered state of consciousness'. In other words, dreams, visions, glossolalia and other such phenomena provided the assurance to the members of the first churches that their teachers were authentic spiritual guides. Only later, as these things diminished or died out and leaders who did not manifest them were appointed in the churches, did a hardening of the spiritual arteries occur and the Catholic tradition as we know it become dominant.

What we make of a book like this very much depends on the degree to which we can accept the author's presuppositions. Her late dating of many key documents reflects a certain trend in modern scholarship and cannot be called special pleading on her part, but it must also be recognised that those who dissent from her analysis will also probably disagree with what she says about this. They will also probably have a very different picture of Jesus, seeing him as the Son of God incarnate rather than as a happy combination of three different strands of ministry, garnished with supernatural experiences. Finally

they will want to see the apostle Paul as a preacher of the gospel and as a teacher of sound doctrine, aspects of his ministry that were far more important than visions or tongues, and qualities which he looked for in those who were expected to continue his work into the next generation.

Once these points are made it becomes clear that there is a great gulf fixed between Dr. Williams' view of the early church and that of the orthodox Christian tradition. The existence of this gulf is not new or unexpected, but it seems that if Dr. Williams has achieved anything by her labours, she has made it even wider than it was before. This would not matter very much if the book were no more than a scholarly study which could, and certainly would, be countered by other scholars and then forgotten. But Dr. Williams sees her work as having a relevance to the life of the modern church, and it is here that grave doubts inevitably arise.

The belief that because Jesus overthrew patriarchy in his day so we must do the same in ours is not just an unsettling message. It could have serious negative consequences for the life of the church if it were to be taken seriously. Academic freedom means that we must be prepared to accept the existence of thought-provoking books which try to overturn centuries of tradition and to learn from them where we can, but pastoral responsibility also means that we cannot allow highly dubious theses based on more than questionable premisses to dominate our thinking about practical questions of church life. This is a book to provoke us, but not one to guide the church into its next millennium.

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## **THE MESSAGE OF LEVITICUS: FREE TO BE HOLY**

**Derek Tidball**

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Some parts of the Bible have always been more taxing for interpreters than others. Leviticus has something of a reputation as a difficult book to read, so we must be grateful to Derek Tidball for writing this thorough and lucid exposition of it. It is a challenge to work through Leviticus and to try and make sense of it, understanding how it is God-breathed and useful for today. I had

many questions and issues after studying it again recently and on many of them Tidball is very helpful in showing the way. This is no surprise since he is an experienced writer and has already completed another commentary on this book in the Crossway Bible Guides series.

Tidball is excellent in helping us to see the different contexts into which Leviticus fits. He does not go from a text in Leviticus straight to Jesus but spends time trying to understand its context within the book first, as well as the Pentateuch, which some sermons I have heard on Leviticus fail to take account of altogether. He thinks through knotty theological issues and addresses them, outlining and assessing alternative theological interpretations as he does so while engaging with major commentators, both Jewish and Christian. He is usually sane in his applications, rejecting views which feed our fancy with their creativity and imagination rather than feeding our hearts in adoration (as he puts it). That is not always the case; I found the suggestion that ‘the mildew that was embedded in the homes of people who had settled in the promised land is representative of the sin embedded in the institutions of our society’ a little fanciful, though that is not to say we should not think through structural or institutionalized sin.

Other applications are more helpful and rooted in the text. On homosexuality in Leviticus 18 he advocates the traditional interpretation in quite definite language as ‘the plain meaning...straightforward...obvious’ and has little time for special pleading which attempts to circumvent such verses. Comparing contemporary penal codes to the Old Testament he writes that ‘One cannot help but feel that the emphasis on restitution, at least, would lead to a great improvement in the current system of sentencing’. On tithing he suggests, ‘the tithe should probably be regarded as the minimum a Christian should give’; and on several occasions he counters the arguments of those who dislike substitutionary atonement, at one point labelling their view ‘extraordinarily shallow’.

I was edified by the plethora of applications which were addressed to ministers (e.g. on seriousness in our task, on not making ministry an idol, on ministerial pay). I found some of his comments on chapter 8 somewhat inconsistent and difficult to reconcile with other parts of the book; for instance, he refers to ministers as ‘standing in the gap’ today as Moses and Aaron did, but in several other places he is quite clear that Christian ministers are not priests. Elsewhere

the remarks can perhaps be a little tendentious, as when he applies parts of chapter 10 to say that ‘there was room for two godly people, both qualified in the law, and both handling it with perfect integrity, to see it differently. However precise its stipulations, there were always going to be areas where there was freedom to interpret it one way or another’.

Nevertheless, generally speaking Tidball’s exegesis is well founded and his application carefully worked through a biblical–theological grid which sees Christ as the fulfilment of the law. On a final note, I am left slightly puzzled as to why this book had to be so long. At 327 pages and 23 chapters (to 27 within Leviticus itself) it could have benefited from some judicious editing in places, especially compared with Barry Webb’s excellent *Bible Speaks Today on Isaiah* which somehow manages to treat 66 chapters of text in far fewer (252) pages. Of course, Leviticus is a neglected book which we want to recover for Christian preaching and teaching. But will we preach it in this much depth? Since it would be pastorally wise in most churches to cover larger swathes of the text or simply edited highlights in a shorter series of sermons, then that will require having to read much longer sections of this book for it to function as a useful guide. Still, there is so much here to chew on and praise God for.

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