

REVIEWS

The Coming Evangelical Crisis

Edited by John H. Armstrong

Moody Press, Chicago, 1996; 269pp., \$12.99; ISBN 0 8024 7738 0

In this symposium, fourteen evangelical scholars address the current state of evangelicalism and argue that current trends within the movement contain the seeds of its destruction. The contributors include some very well-known writers and pastors such as John MacArthur Jr, R.C. Sproul and Michael Horton, together with senior academics like Robert Godfrey and Albert Mohler Jr. Lined up together, they constitute a significant constituency within the evangelical camp and the book deserves to be taken seriously.

The essays range across the spectrum of current issues, but always with a particular target or focus. The book is divided into five parts. Part one is entitled 'The Present Crisis Observed'. Albert Mohler leads the field with an article seeking to define the word 'evangelical' and bemoaning the lack of clarity in its usage today. Bob Godfrey draws attention to Luther and the doctrine of justification, clearly with a sidelong glance at Packer and Colson. Gary Johnson asks 'Does theology still matter?' not only because of our 'mindless and irrational culture' but also because even some evangelicals neglect or ignore the importance of theology.

Part 2 is concerned with 'The Crisis of Revelation' and has two essays. R. Fowler White deals with the question as to whether God speaks today apart from the Bible. In the course of this he rejects some of the modern evangelical views on prophecy, naming particularly Jack Deere and Wayne Grudem as those with whom he disagrees. In the other essay in this section, R. Kent Hughes presents a biblical defence of preaching as over against those pastors (even so-called evangelicals) who give little or no time to the study of the word and instead offer short devotional talks or spend their time in the pulpit telling stories instead of expounding the word of God.

Part 3 is entitled 'The Crisis of Gospel Authority' and has four essays. R. C. Sproul argues, from an exegesis of Galatians 1, that there is the danger today of another gospel being preached which is not the biblical gospel. Lewis Johnson hammers this point home by focusing attention on substitutionary atonement as being the heart and centre of gospel. Robert Strimple continues this section of the book with an attack on those who

deny the biblical doctrine of God, particularly his omniscience. His target is the 'free will theism' of Clark Pinnock and Richard Rice, among others. John Hannah concludes this section by arguing that evangelicals have been so concerned to be 'relevant' that we have watered down the gospel. More particularly, he argues that opposition to the enlightenment has led to a rationalist mentality which has robbed us of the notions of mystery, awe and wonder.

Part 4 is concerned with particular topics of debate and is entitled 'Flash Points in the Crisis'. In this section John McArthur has an article on worship in which he condemns the emphasis upon drama, music, comedy *etc.*, which in many places has replaced true biblical worship. Leonard Payton follows this up with an essay on singing praise which is very practical and challenging and insists that worship and entertainment are different! David Powlison continues the section with an article of pastoral care which argues that true pastoral counselling must be biblical and rejects the solutions (often imported into evangelical churches) of the psychotherapists. John Armstrong concludes the section with an essay on spiritual warfare which challenges the notion of 'territorial spirits' and similar deviations.

The final part of the book (Part 5) is called 'Responding to the Crisis' and contains a single essay in which Michael Horton seeks to draw the thread of the various contributions together and offer a way forward for evangelicals. In this essay, 'Recovering the Plumb Line', he argues that a recovery of confidence in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture is the only way to stop the current decay within evangelicalism and to restore the cause of Christ.

This is a challenging book which drives us back to the fundamentals and one can only hope that its lessons will be learned.

A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Sermons on Galatians

John Calvin, translated by Kathy Childress

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1997; xii+671pp.,

£21.95; ISBN 0 85151 699 8

These 43 sermons, preached in Geneva between November 1557 and May 1558, were first published in French in 1563 and in English in 1574. This first subsequent fresh translation from the French reproduces language as readable as the content is relevant and compelling. Calvin – exact exegete and expositor, biblical theologian and alert pastor, with

much study behind him and nothing before him in the pulpit but his Greek New Testament – speaks from these pages for the reader's personal edification and as an example to all who are called to feed the flock. In the absence of formally announced structure the sermons receive coherence and point from their faithfulness in unfolding the particular text under review, clause by clause. Calvin the commentator and theologian informs, but does not supplant, Calvin the preacher. It is a useful exercise for preachers acquainted with the theology of Calvin's *Institutes* to take his commentary alongside his sermons to observe the biblical scholar and theologian in the pulpit and the sometimes-forgotten difference between commenting and preaching. The sermons generally conclude with a call to fall down before the majesty of the great God and to seek grace to put the truth into practical effect and are calculated to promote these ends.

Hugh M. Cartwright, Free Presbyterian Church, Edinburgh

Models for Scripture

John Goldingay

Paternoster, Carlisle, 1994; xi+420pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 85364 638 4

Models for Interpretation of Scripture

John Goldingay

Paternoster, Carlisle, 1995; x+328pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 85364 643 0

A Model Answer? John Goldingay's Analysis of the Nature and Interpretation of Scripture

No one could accuse John Goldingay of timidity! Having previously produced wide-ranging studies on the Old Testament and a detailed critical commentary on that most demanding prophecy, the Book of Daniel, Goldingay published two significant volumes (within only a few weeks of each other) on the fundamental issues of the nature and interpretation of Scripture. They are entitled *Models for Scripture* and *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*.

In the face of such adventure, one might well ask where the line falls between boldness and recklessness, but it appears that Goldingay's labour has not been in vain, at least in the eyes of some of scholarship's most notable interpreters of Scripture who offer their enthusiastic commendations for these volumes. Indeed, there is much to commend these volumes to serious students of the Bible, and not the least of the virtues is the very obvious fact that the two volumes are companion

volumes, seen most clearly in the common use of the term 'models' in the titles.

Uniting what cannot be separated

What Goldingay has done in tying these two volumes so closely together is to make it plain that the work has not been completed when a doctrine of Scripture has been formulated. Even the highest view of Scripture as the infallible word of God still leaves the interpreter with the vexed question of how to understand the text in question. To make this point is not to say that we do not need a high view of Scripture; it is simply to recognise the need to wrestle with difficult questions which arise out of our view of Scripture, which cannot be settled purely on the claim, 'the Bible is the word of God'. This is certainly part of the contribution that Goldingay's books make.

The concept of 'models'

Goldingay has clearly chosen the term 'models' with some care as the key to his books. It is a term that may be unfamiliar to many Christians in the context of a discussion of the Bible. It is a modern term, but that, in and of itself, does not invalidate it. It is also a term which has been used by authors at the more radical end of the theological spectrum (notably Sallie McFague, in her book *Models of God*¹) but this too is not a sufficient reason for avoiding it. Goldingay defines a 'model' in the following terms:

A model is an image or construct that helps us grasp aspects of these realities by providing us with something we can understand that has points of comparison with the object we wish to understand, thus helping us to get our mind round its nature.²

The term (in the plural) brings to the reader's attention Goldingay's fundamental contention that a single concept is insufficient to do justice to the diversity of the biblical literature.

What are these models? Goldingay has chosen four: *witnessing tradition*, *authoritative canon*, *inspired word*, *experienced revelation*. Each of these models has been chosen because it is considered to be particularly appropriate to a particular swathe of biblical literature. Thus the model of *witnessing tradition* is considered most appropriate for discussion of narrative in the Bible, while the prophetic writings are best understood by the model of *inspired word*; the instruction material associated with the

¹ London, 1987.

² *Models for Scripture*, p. 7.

Pentateuch is understood as *authoritative canon*, and the model of *experienced revelation* includes biblical poetry, the epistles and the apocalypses. However, in the first volume, each model is applied to each form of literature in order to give an indication of how the different forms of literature compose one coherent scripture.

The problem with any model is that it can sometimes be too precise for the data for which it attempts to account. It is probably the case that Goldingay's models, while helpful in many ways, are neither entirely appropriate in every case nor mutually exclusive. Yet the value of any model may lie as much in provoking further reflection and nuanced argument, as in putting an end to discussion altogether. The particular merit of Goldingay's models, however, is that they are multiple!

Diversity Celebrated

Goldingay is to be commended for adopting the principle that the various units of literature in the Bible should be allowed to have their own distinctive voice. The emphasis on giving proper respect to the various genres of biblical writings is one of the most valuable emphases to come from contemporary scholarship (though it might be claimed with some justification that the best interpreters among the Fathers and the Reformers displayed a similar sensitivity).

When Goldingay describes the way in which many preachers treat a narrative in Scripture – a brief summary of the story (usually leaving out many of the interesting details) followed by a question: now what can we *learn* from this? (*Models for Interpretation of Scripture*, p. 71) – he perhaps makes many of us uncomfortable and that is the first step towards asking whether we are doing justice to the biblical texts.

Unity Concealed?

The suspicion remains, however, that the emphasis on the diversity of the genres of Scripture is not balanced by an emphasis on the organic unity of the works that have been recognised as canonical. If this is indeed the case then a reason for this must be considered, and perhaps the answer is simply that in laying entirely due emphasis on the distinctive human contribution to the texts of Scripture, insufficient emphasis has been laid on the 'God-breathed' character of these documents.

It would not be surprising, therefore, if chapter 19 of *Models of Scripture* draws most attention and critical comment, being entitled 'Inspiration and Inerrancy'. The chapter is located in Part III of the book, well on into a discussion of 'Scripture as Inspired Word', and assumed

from the start that the previous discussion has established the inspiration of Scripture. The question then remains, Does inspiration imply inerrancy?

The chapter contains a useful discussion of what 'inerrancy' might mean in historical terms, and who actually held such a position. He points out numerous instances where a biblical author is apparently unconcerned about, for example, the precise figure of casualties in a battle. However, he goes on to categorise such examples as 'factual errors' (p. 265), without explaining what constitutes an 'error' or by whose standard this is judged. Goldingay is not prepared to go down the road of saying that the scriptural text is inerrant in relation to the intention of the author on the basis that such a route leads to the 'intentional fallacy' (how are we to read the mind of the author? See *Models for Scripture*, p. 270). This is indeed a valid concern, and the work of E. D. Hirsch has rightly been criticised for being rather naive in what it suggests we can know about an author's intentions. However, we *may* ask the modified question, what can we know of the author's intention, *in so far as it is embodied in the text?*

Is Goldingay fair in his identification of 'errors'? If I tell my wife that there were forty thousand people at the football match, I should not be criticised for error (or even inaccuracy) if there were in fact 41,316 people at the match, on several grounds. First, I have no access to that precise figure (unless it is specifically made known to me). Secondly, it is a common convention to use round figures in the case of a large crowd. Thirdly, it is of no real consequence to the purpose of my communication to my wife concerning how I spent my afternoon. It seems to this reviewer that Goldingay takes a number of similar examples from the pages of Scripture, claims that they are errors, and absolves the author of guilt because it does not really matter. I would suggest that at least some of his examples do not constitute 'errors' in any fair sense at all.

Inerrancy rests primarily on the character of the God who breathed out his words and on the character of the Lord who sustained every word of Scripture with his own authority. Goldingay protests that this does not provide a consensus on the meaning of Scripture since there remain disagreements at the level of hermeneutics. True enough, but what Goldingay does not seem to appreciate is that for those who hold to inerrancy (however expressed), it is not a pragmatic ploy to bring ecclesiastical unity but a theological necessity that must be maintained regardless of the problems that remain for the interpreter.

So we must voice reservations concerning Goldingay's discussion of inspiration and inerrancy, and these are important reservations, but it would be disappointing if Goldingay's contribution to these important

aspects of theological discussion was neglected on the basis of disagreement with him at this point. The more that the diversity of the documents that comprise the canon of Scripture is appreciated, the more the reader can appreciate the richness of expression found there, and also the striking harmony that is found in the combined voices of these documents.

Believer and Scholar Combined

That Goldingay is a scholar, and a very competent one at that, is evident throughout these works. The volumes which he draws from in his discussion represent the whole spectrum of theological investigation, from Old and New Testament (though Goldingay would say 'First' and 'Second' Testament) exegesis through philosophical hermeneutics and history to dogmatics and contemporary liberationist trends in theology.

His discussion of the rather daunting field of hermeneutics in *Models for Interpretation of Scripture* evidences awareness of and interaction with important discussion in the most recent literature, and yet a readable presentation of the issues at stake that does not lose the reader in a fog. This places Goldingay's writings in a very rare position in a field of literature where ease of reading is not frequently high on the list of notable qualities.

Throughout the two volumes, Goldingay tends to adopt a mediating position between more critical scholarship and more conservative scholarship. It is, of course, always admirable to take a position that is eminently reasonable and avoids the excesses of those who hold positions on either side, but at times it appears that Goldingay is not so much defending the legitimacy of a more constructive approach to the biblical text as attempting to avoid the conservatives being too badly scolded.

That Goldingay is a believer is also evident throughout these books, and it is refreshing that this is so. There are numerous references to the place of Scripture in the life of the church, and these serve to give a pastoral warmth to these volumes that is missing from some other discussions of these subjects. It is entirely fitting that this two-volume project should be concluded with a chapter entitled 'Reflective Expository Preaching' in which the preacher is challenged to 'open yourself to the costly demand of the text and commit yourself to repentance and change in the light of it', and encouraged to lead the congregation 'into the same

position of being addressed by the passage as you have occupied in your presentation.³

If Goldingay's work leads preachers (and all who read and interpret the Bible) to such an attitude to their task then it will have been of value, even if some aspects of Goldingay's own position may require just that same change in the light of the text.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

The Unique Christ In Our Pluralist World

Edited by Bruce J. Nicholls

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1995; 288pp., \$14.99; ISBN 0 85364 574 4

This book contains the papers presented at a consultation held in Manila in 1992 under the auspices of the World Evangelical Fellowship. The twenty chapters are authored by evangelical theologians from around the world and the book includes the full text of the 'The WEF Manila Declaration' – a long statement discussing Christology in the context of modernity which was drafted during the consultation and agreed by all the participants.

The theme of the uniqueness of Christ is discussed in relation to key aspects of modern culture: religious pluralism, modernity, and the demand that genuine theology must address the pressing issues of peace and economic justice. Inevitably there is unevenness in the quality of the contributions offered here but the book contains some fine material on a crucial subject. With more than half the contributors coming from the non-Western world, including countries like Japan and India where other religions have been dominant for centuries, the subject is treated in a manner that is both realistic and deeply challenging. The 'Declaration' hints that there were problems in obtaining a consensus among participants, even in areas where Evangelicals have previously taken a common line. Thus, there was disagreement as to whether salvation might be found through the blood of Christ by people who 'do not consciously know the name of Jesus'. The 'Declaration' simply concludes that 'More study is needed' on this issue and affirms (rightly in my view) that Evangelicals must give priority to the development of 'a more adequate theology of religions'.

³ *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*, p. 286.

As far as individual contributions are concerned it is difficult to single out particular chapters for mention from such a wide range of papers, but I was helped especially by reading Chris Wright's opening survey of the issues at stake, Rene Padilla's brilliant discussion of the challenge of modernity, and the profound and genuinely fresh approach of Miroslav Volf, who attempts to chart a path between the 'false alternatives' of an unshakeable dogmatism, on the one hand, and an absolute relativism, on the other. There is not space here to describe Volf's 'middle way' but, for this reader, it suggested the direction evangelical theology may need to take as it comes to terms with the twin imperatives of faithfulness to the Bible and relevance in the context of a shifting culture.

David Smith, Whitefield Institute, Oxford

The Scandal of A Crucified World. Perspectives on the Cross and Suffering

Yacob Tesfai

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1994; 155pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 88344 976 5

This book is the outcome of a Third World consultation within a project of the Institute for Ecumenical Research. The consultation's topic was the cross and suffering with special attention to 'the division and unity of humanity in the face of suffering'. It resolved to carry out this debate particularly in dialogue with Lutheran and feminist theologies already addressing the same concerns.

The consultation, if these papers are anything to go by, succeeded in sticking to its brief. The results, however, are mixed. The volume is of particular value to readers in the northern hemisphere for its painful but purifying education into the catastrophic effects of the colonial and modern era on Africa and Asia particularly. Slavery, apartheid, racial inequality and cultural colonialism fall under withering analysis and critique. No doubt remains as to the sources of the main injustice. In some places, it has to be admitted, the case is overstated but, in the main, western pride and complacency undergo a thorough and well-deserved shaking. And most of it is well referenced with data. The analysis cuts even deeper than this, pinpointing the complicity of institutional Christianity of varying traditions. In Latin America, according to Walter Altmann's penetrating contribution, the situation is acute. Because of the alliance between the cross and the sword, right up to very recent times, the question faces Christians: can 'one talk about experiencing liberation

in Christ. Inversely, would not a liberation *from* Christ be necessary?' The answer is that we can again speak of liberation *in* Christ only if we have re-earned the right to do so by acting justly.

The main source of disappointment is the lack of theological depth. There is useful evaluation and development of Luther's theology of the cross, but much else is repetition of such familiar rubrics as the suffering of God, liberation theology, God's solidarity with the oppressed, *etc.* In respect of these, not much new is added, though the historical context is helpfully expanded with broader and deeper perspectives, particularly on Africa and Asia.

Two exceptions to the complaint above are Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel's discussion of feminist critiques of the cross, and Theo Sundermeier's updating of Luther's theology of the cross. Moltmann-Wendel very skilfully, though sympathetically, exposes the weaknesses in some feminist criticisms. The solutions she offers fall short of traditional aspirations, but she does force reflection at levels not normally reached by conventional theologies of the cross. Sundermeier's 'Contextualising Luther's Theology of the Cross' not only throws new light on Luther's thinking but relates it to today, illustrating the fertility of the Reformer's theology.

Criticisms notwithstanding, this book deserves serious attention by theologian and, especially, by practitioner, if only to put mettle into the sometimes romantically privatised, and hermetically sealed, safe haven of today's evangelical mentality.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College

Child Sexual Abuse and the Churches

Patrick Parkinson

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1997; 287pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 340 630159

Stories of child sexual abuse continue to flood the news, but these incidents are more disturbing still when they focus on the church. In this book, Professor Patrick Parkinson, a specialist in family law and child protection, and an advisor to churches on this subject, challenges Christians to face the problem and take action. While recognising that the official church responses are improving, especially in Britain, he makes the chilling comment that 'in my experience of child protection in Australia, children are less likely to be protected in churches than in almost any other group in society'.

This book is an invaluable tool in moving towards greater concern and knowledge. The author draws on the latest research, but also on the personal experiences of a number of victims, thus giving statistics and general points a very human feel. The stories are intensely moving – and call for a response from the church so that others will be prevented from suffering in the same way.

Part One is devoted to understanding child sexual abuse. Parkinson describes the nature of sexual abuse, and gives some information concerning its prevalence. He explores the world of the perpetrators, who may be men, women, adolescents, Christians; the rationalisations made for abuse; the process of victimisation and the reasons why the church has been reluctant to deal with the issue. He also tackles some of the controversies surrounding abuse including sexual relations between adults and young teenagers, the reliability of recovered memory, and ritual abuse.

Part Two concentrates on pastoral issues. The author describes the effects of child sexual abuse on victims in the short and long-term, and the factors which are likely to influence the outcomes. He deals with emotions like guilt and shame, grief and anger, along with other consequences such as post-traumatic stress, sexuality and the capacity to trust. The struggle of faith is also raised as a real problem for those who believe God was not present during their suffering, and who have distorted images of God, not least his 'maleness'. The author goes on to discuss the issues surrounding the difficult subject of forgiveness and repentance.

Finally, in Part Three, Parkinson turns to the churches' response to child sexual abuse in their own communities. Recognising some of the reasons why the church has often evaded its responsibility, he argues for the rightness of taking the issue seriously. He gives information concerning the process of disclosure, investigation and law, and proposes disciplinary procedures for those within the church who sin. He concludes by advising on ways to make churches safer for children, giving suggestions for both action and prevention. Further reading and resources are listed at the end.

This book is a must, especially for ministers and anyone concerned with the welfare of children in our churches. It is a first-class source of information and understanding, written with clarity and fairness and out of great experience, good biblical foundation and unmistakable compassion.

Fiona Barnard, St Andrews