

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ref-rev-01.php



Review

*ADVANCING THE
CHRISTIAN TRADITION
IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM*

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER 1 • 2006

BOOK REVIEWS



FRED! WHAT A PLEASANT SURPRISE!

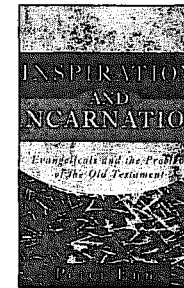
INSPIRATION & INCARNATION: EVANGELICALS & THE PROBLEM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Peter Enns

Grand Rapids: Baker (2005)

197 pages, paper, \$17.99

LET'S PLAY "STUMP THE PASTOR"



Imagine for a moment you are a seasoned pastor at a mid-sized church in an affluent college town. You have about thirty families who regularly attend your church, including a host of college students and "twenty-somethings." Many of these families are born and reared in your town and a good number send their children to the local college. By now you have a good handle on what students learn at the various humanities classes they are required to take at the college, and from time to time you give your sermons an "apologetic spin" that helps students hold fast to the gospel in a pluralistic culture. You aren't an apologetics expert, but you did learn enough in seminary to at least get by in apologetic discussions and to show students how they can be a Christian in a non-religious academic setting. Then it happens.

A fourteen-year-old male member of the youth group approaches you after Sunday service. "Pastor, I need to talk to you. I have some questions about some things I have been reading in the Bible."

“Sure,” you reply. Probably some kind of doctrinal question, or something that relates to a dating relationship, or something like that, you think to yourself. You love those questions. It shows you that your congregation is seeking out answers in the Bible, and they are usually pretty easy to answer. That a fourteen-year-old would have this kind of question is particularly exciting. “What are your questions?”

“Well,” the adolescent replies, “I know you teach the Bible is God’s word, and that it is inspired. So that means it can’t be false or contradict itself, right?”

“Yes, of course,” you answer, as you begin to wonder where he is going with this.

“Well,” he says, almost hesitantly, “I keep running into statements that seem to be contradicting.”

Okay, you think, this should be pretty easy. “Don’t worry. I can assure you, there are no contradictions in the Bible. Why don’t you tell me one of these seeming ‘contradictions,’ and I’ll show you how it isn’t a contradiction.”

“All right,” he sheepishly responds. “I think I have found a bunch, but here is just one. My Mom says you should be able to answer it pretty easily. What about Proverbs 26:4 and 5?” And with that, he hands you his Bible with those verses highlighted.

“Do not answer a fool according to his folly,” you read aloud from verse 4. “Or you will be like him yourself.” Easy enough, you think to yourself. Then you read verse 5. “Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.”

“So,” the fourteen year old asks you. “Does the Bible teach that we are *supposed* to answer a fool according to his own folly, or not? And don’t these two verses contradict each other? So how can the Bible be the word of God? God wouldn’t contradict himself . . . Mom said you would know.” You pause, not wanting to sound like a fool, answering in *folly*, and at the same time, you wonder who this kid’s mom is.

It is inevitable that any pastor who encourages their congregation to think for themselves and search the Scripture for truth will run into a scenario like the one just described. Though liberals are quick to point out the *seeming* contradictions in the Bible, even the astute Christian reader will eventually take note of the fact that

the gospels record the same events in different, seemingly contradictory fashion. The same holds true when you compare the exact wording of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:2–17 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21. Which were the words that were *actually* written down by God for Moses?

For years, the church has had many different ways in which they answered these kinds of questions. Yet as biblical scholarship advanced (or regressed, depending on who you ask), and as new archeological and textual findings emerged concerning the Ancient Near Eastern cultural context in which the Bible was written, many of the traditional answers no longer carry as much intellectual weight as they once did. *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* is Peter Enns’ ambitious attempt to help evangelicals deal with these very real questions, in light of modern scholarship, while at the same time holding true to a traditional—and, more specifically, a *Reformed*—view of the Scriptures. Enns, a professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, raises some very difficult questions and answers them in ways that will no doubt make some uneasy. Regardless, he manages to successfully reconcile traditional views on inspiration with modern biblical scholarship in a manner that is most helpful for the pastor or inquisitive layperson.

METHOD

Enns uses a pretty straightforward method to resolve the issues. He first establishes his scholarly context and clearly lays out his goals. He represents part of the Westminster Seminary scholastic tradition, one rooted in the Old Princeton tradition of Reformed theology. It has always valued intellectual integrity and at the same time has never been afraid to ask the difficult questions that modern scholars have brought to bear on the Bible. All the while, they have managed to stand their ground in support of the much-attacked doctrine of biblical inspiration.

He also has a particular kind of reader in mind: “those who desire to maintain a vibrant and reverent doctrine of Scripture, but who find it difficult to do so because they find familiar and conventional approaches to newer problems to be unhelpful” (13). He

also sets very clear boundaries that he will *not* cross in his attempts to explain some of the difficulties Scripture can present, specifically, “that the Bible is ultimately from God and that it is God’s gift to the church. Any theories concerning Scripture that do not arise from these fundamental instincts are unacceptable” (12). He maintains this high regard for the inspiration of Scripture throughout the book, something that should assuage the concerns of some that Enns is just another “theological conservative turned liberal.”

Enns identifies three main themes that modern scholarship has given us that threaten the traditional view of the inspiration of Scripture: the similarities between the Old Testament and other literature from the ancient world, theological diversity (think “contradictions”) in the Old Testament, and the way in which the New Testament writers handle the Old Testament. The first issue deals with the Bible’s uniqueness, the second issue deals with its integrity, and the third deals with its interpretation. In order to properly address all these issues, he suggests we view the Bible in light of the “incarnational analogy.”

Drawing heavily upon the idea of *concursum*, as developed by Old Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield¹ in the late nineteenth century, the incarnational analogy essentially suggests that we approach our understanding of the Bible in a manner similar to how we approach our understanding of the incarnation of Christ. Ever since the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, the church has accepted, by faith and according to the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ was simultaneously both human and divine. So then, “In the same way that Jesus is—*must be*—both God and human, the Bible is also a divine and human book” (17). It is this incarnational analogy then that serves as the backdrop to the rest of the book.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND OTHER ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE

Concerning the similarities between the Old Testament and other literature of the ancient world, Enns points out that many Christians consider the Bible’s *uniqueness* compared to its surrounding culture a key indication that it is inspired. Yet recent discoveries show quite clearly that as a book, the Old Testament is

not much different in form or style than other Ancient Near Eastern religious books. In fact, in some ways it is identical. Christians need not, however, feel threatened by these kinds of discoveries. This only shows the incarnational nature of God’s revelation to man. Or, as Enns puts it, “that the Bible bears an unmistakable human stamp does not lead to the necessary conclusion that it is *merely* the words of humans, rather than the word of God” (21). His use of the word “merely” here should placate the fears of anyone concerned that the incarnational analogy somehow takes away from the inspiration of Scripture.² Further, most sound seminaries still teach that the first step in proper biblical interpretation is to figure out what the text meant to its *original hearers* in its *original context*. Understanding the culture in which the Bible was written can only help to this affect.

THEOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Concerning theological diversity in the Old Testament, he brings up many examples of *seeming* contradictions in meaning. These include those mentioned in the introduction, as well as tensions found in Job (the “poor counsel” from his friends was actually biblically based), dissimilarities between Chronicles and Samuel–Kings (which supposedly tell the same stories), and accounts of God “changing” his mind (can an unchanging God really do that?), among others. These are all issues that pastors and attentive lay-people alike will have to deal with, and he uses the incarnational analogy to help explain why this theological diversity exists. He categorically rejects the assumptions made by many Bible scholars and critics that “Scripture should have no tensions and that any such tensions are not real but introduced from the outside” (72). The fact that tension endemically exists in the Bible, he argues, does not take away from its inspiration, but rather confirms it (111). Internal biblical tensions exist because God intended them to exist.

NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Perhaps the most difficult part of the book encompasses Enns’

handling of how the New Testament writers interpreted the Old Testament. Why is it, for example, that the New Testament writers quote many extra-biblical sources as though they were inspired? For example, 2 Timothy 3:8 talks about Pharaoh's magicians, Jannes and Jambres, names not mentioned in the Bible but mentioned in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. Jude quotes from both *The Assumption of Moses* and *1 Enoch*. 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 makes reference to a "movable rock" that followed the Israelites around in the desert and provided them with water, something not found in the Old Testament but rather in *Targum Onqelos* and *Sukkah* 3.11. (If all those extra-biblical references don't make any sense to you, don't worry, the book explains them quite well.)

Enns also makes the bold statement that many of the New Testament authors take Old Testament passages out of context in order to use them to communicate some things about Christ. Jesus himself does this in Luke 20:34–38, where he quotes Exodus 3:6 but does not apply a meaning to it that is contained within its grammatical-historical context.³ Yet in Luke 20:39–40, those present in the temple applaud the way Jesus handles this reading of the Law. Why is that? Enns argues that Jesus used an exegetical⁴ technique that was quite common during the Second Temple⁵ period, and that in order for him to engage in apologetic discussion with the religious leaders of his day, this type of method would have been expected.

Matthew does the same thing in his gospel, utilizing a Second Temple form of exegesis known as "Midrash" in his attempts to prove to his readers that Jesus is the *true* Israel. See, for example, his use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15. And Matthew isn't the only culprit. The apostle Paul changes the actual *wording* of the Old Testament to make his point that Jesus is the Messiah, as can be seen in his quote from Isaiah 59:20 in Romans 11:26, 27. Isaiah reads, "the redeemer will come to Zion," but Paul quotes it as "the messiah will come *from* Zion."

So how is it that New Testament writers, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, could use such techniques in the writing of Scripture, and why would God allow it to stand? Applying the incarnational analogy to this question provides a simple answer, though in so doing it raises other questions. God allowed the writers to

communicate the coming of the messiah to their readers through the use of means that would have been commonly accepted in their day. In no way does this take away from the inspiration of Scripture; rather, it supports it, because it shows God condescending to humanity in order to communicate to us in a manner that we can understand, just like he did with the incarnation of Jesus.

This raises the question: Can we use these *same* exegetical techniques today? While Enns acknowledges that this is a legitimate question to ask, he does not give a definitive answer. In fact, he actually makes the concession that few "experts" are willing to do: he admits that he does not have the final answer in the matter, and that apostolic exegesis presents us with some "difficult dilemmas" (156–63). He does allow that "when we observe what the apostles did with their Scripture, we can only conclude that there must be more to Christian biblical interpretation than uncovering the original meaning of an Old Testament passage . . ." (160), and he then encourages Christians to read the Old Testament in a "christotelic" manner, that is, seeing how it ultimately points us "towards Christ" (161).

The difficulty with this section lies in the fact that, by his own admission, there is no simple answer to whether or not we can use the same methods to interpret Scripture that the apostles did. Enns doesn't resolve this tension, unless the resolution lies in his admission that there is no simple resolution. He does fittingly close this section by making an admission that no liberal scholar would ever make, perhaps to demonstrate that he still stands amongst the conservatives of the Old Princeton tradition: "The reality of the crucified and risen Christ is both the beginning and end of Christian biblical interpretation" (163). Those who take issue with him on this point would also have to take issue with the likes of Geerhardus Vos⁶ and Edmund Clowney,⁷ both of whom paved the way for modern, christotelic biblical interpretation.

CONTROVERSIES AND CRITIQUES

Inspiration and Incarnation is a very well-written book that doesn't require a theological degree to get through. Enns tackles

some very difficult questions concerning the Bible and goes where few conservatives these days would fear to tread. Undoubtedly, many of his contemporaries, even from within his own theological ranks, will take issue with his conclusions and methods.

Some may say, for example, that he breaks with the parameters for defining the inspiration of Scripture as laid out in the Westminster Confession of Faith's⁸ first chapter. However, there is nothing in Enns' book that goes directly against the Confession. Quite the contrary! Again and again, Enns affirms his belief that Scripture is inspired in a manner that in no way goes against the words of the Confession. In fact, nowhere in the first chapter of the Confession does it ever say or even imply that the Holy Spirit could *not* allow the biblical writers to write in a manner that reflected their cultural context. To limit the Holy Spirit in this manner would be to deny another key tenet of the Reformation: the doctrine of the *providence* of God.

The book will, no doubt, appear to be in conflict with some people's *interpretation* of the Confession, but conflicts over interpretation of the Confession are nothing new. Such perceived conflict certainly is no reason to accuse Enns of standing outside of the Reformed tradition, let alone accuse him of heresy. One has only to be reminded of the various interpretations of the *regulative principle for worship*,⁹ also taken out of the Confession, to see that the Confession provides clear boundaries in some areas, but also allows plenty of room for disagreement in others.¹⁰

Some statements that Enns makes, if taken out of context, could definitely be troublesome, such as his pointing out a "scribal mistake" in the Hebrew Old Testament in Proverbs 22:17 (37), his explanation as to why the laws of God seem to change as the Old Testament progresses ("God seems to be perfectly willing to allow his law to be adjusted over time" [87]), and a bold statement concerning the purpose of the Bible ("It is not an evangelistic tract, designed to convert nonbelievers . . ." [110]). In context, however, Enns continually clarifies what he means, as exemplified by his immediate follow-up to the latter statement (on 110), where he emphasizes that "the Holy Spirit certainly uses the Bible this way!" Throughout the book, he is constantly reminding the reader of the importance of maintaining a high view of the inspiration of Scripture.

A case in point is the way he handles comparisons of Genesis to other Ancient Near Eastern creation accounts. He admits that he has difficulty with labeling Genesis as either myth or history, because making such a distinction is a modern invention and not something the original hearers would have been concerned with. He proposes that conservative Christians *can* view Genesis as part of the "myth" genre, but he also goes to great lengths to explain how this does not take away from its inspiration, nor is the word "myth" to be understood in the contemporary sense. "Myth is an ancient, premodern, prescientific way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories: who are we; where do we come from?" (49, 50). Again, most sound Bible expositors should agree with him on this point, since the first step in sound biblical exegesis is to understand what the text meant to its original hearers in its original context.¹¹ Enns emphasizes that this "context was not a modern scientific one but an ancient mythic one . . . we do not protect the Bible or render it more believable to modern people by trying to demonstrate that it is consistent with modern science."¹²

CONCLUSION

Again and again, Enns points out how, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the biblical writers incorporated elements from the surrounding culture into the Scriptures, but he also emphasizes that this in no way takes away from biblical inspiration. If anything, by applying the incarnational analogy, we can see how through the providence of God the writers were perfectly prepped to be in their cultural-historical contexts so that the Bible could be written in exactly the way that God wanted it written. Perhaps those who feel the need to be excessively critical of this work because they fear the fact that the biblical writers could have been influenced by their surrounding cultures should look into the Reformed doctrine of common grace¹³ and see how not all cultural influence is bad.

One cannot escape the fact that his handling of the apostolic interpretation of the Old Testament raises some very difficult questions; questions he doesn't really answer, but, as stated before, perhaps saying there is no easy answer in this situation is the

answer. He never claims to have all of the *answers*, but wants at least to show his readers what the right *questions* are.

This brings us back to the pastoral situation that opened this review. If you ask the question, "Will this book help me in my ministry?" the answer is, "Yes, it will." People sometimes ask difficult questions. Pastors and Christian leaders should want to encourage Christians to seek out truth and to think for themselves. In this process, some may discover apparent discrepancies or inconsistencies in the Bible. And if they don't discover them on their own, they will when they go to college or engage non-Christians in apologetic discussions. Even Christian colleges will teach the documentary hypothesis¹⁴ or Barthianism,¹⁵ both of which will make Christians question what they believe about the inspiration of Scripture. A book like this will help bring such people back into the fold of biblical orthodoxy, while at the same time discouraging an unhealthy fear of the Bible or the difficult questions that a traditional understanding of inspiration may raise. We don't want to commit the traditional Roman Catholic error and leave Christian believers so afraid of the Bible that they will deal only with the issues they are told they *can* deal with by their spiritual leaders. Conversely, we don't want these same people to come to the wrong conclusions just because our answers don't properly deal with the information presented by modern scholarship.

So what about the question as to whether or not this book will help you in the pulpit? That depends on your approach to preaching. If you follow the redemptive-historical model, you will most likely want to find out what the text you are using meant to the original listeners at the time of its writing (grammatical-historical exegesis). Then you can determine how it points to Christ (a christotelic approach), and then you can look for application today. In order to have a sound grammatical-historical exegesis, you need to be able to put yourself in the shoes (or sandals) of the original hearers and figure out what it meant for them at that time. To this end, the book is most helpful.

Some may argue that this book is proof of Peter Enns' descent into liberalism, but I would heartily disagree. One need only read his commentary on Exodus,¹⁶ a brilliant work in its own right, to see his ability to uncover what the texts meant to the original hearers,

how they lead us to fulfillment in Christ, and what meaning they have for us today. *Inspiration and Incarnation* shows us how he was able to come to many of the conclusions he arrived at in his commentary. He asks honest questions that need to be asked and provides a great resource for those who are the recipients of such questions from inquiring congregants.

And by the way, the answer to the question about the Proverbs, posed by the young gentleman with the overconfident mom in the introduction, can be found on pages 74 to 76.

AUTHOR

Joshua Lickter is an MAR candidate at Westminster Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Rachel, have recently moved from Philadelphia to Northern California, where Joshua now serves as pastor for the Underground Café, a cultural outreach of Valley Springs Presbyterian Church.

NOTES

1. See, for example, B. B. Warfield, "The Divine and the Human in the Bible," in *Evolution, Science, and Scripture: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Noll, David Livingston (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 51–58.
2. This is the same understanding of Scripture held by many evangelicals whether they are aware of it or not. For example, Dr. James Montgomery Boice says, in his commentary on Romans, "When we speak of the Bible as the Word of God, we do not deny that the message of the Bible is also expressed in human language. . . . We must stress this because some have fallen into thinking that the words of the Bible were made known to the human writers in a mechanical way so that they were mere scribes, thereby bypassing their own vocabularies and thought processes. But of course, this is not the evangelical view"; *Romans Volume 1: Justification by Faith; An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 274–75.
3. "Grammatical-historical context" is a phrase used by theologians and biblical scholars that refers to the meaning a given text would have had to its original hearers, in their cultural context, in a particular time and place.
4. "Exegesis" is a theological term that refers to how we derive meaning from a particular Bible text.
5. "Second Temple Period" refers to the time period between the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian exile (516 BC) until the temple was destroyed at the hands of the Romans (AD 70).

6. Vos held the chair of biblical theology at Princeton Seminary at the turn of the nineteenth century, and was the author of such influential theological books as *Biblical Theology* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Publications, 1996), and *Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1979). His greatest legacy is perhaps in laying the groundwork for a redemptive-historical approach to the Bible, that is, seeing the Bible not as a textbook for life, or even as a history book, but rather as a book whose primary purpose is to tell the history of redemption, which climaxes in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
7. A “preacher’s pastor” and the first president of Westminster Theological Seminary, he took the Vosian understanding of redemptive history to the next level, teaching expositors how to incorporate a redemptive-historical understanding of Scripture into their preaching. His works on christotelic biblical interpretation include, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1988), and *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2003).
8. The Westminster Confession of Faith is a document written in the seventeenth century to define what the Protestant church believed. Since its writing, it has undergone only a few minor changes, and is still held by most Presbyterian and Reformed Churches as the standard by which biblical orthodoxy is to be measured.
9. The regulative principle for worship is taken from the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 21, Section 1. No matter what position anyone holds on interpreting this section of the Confession, a brief glimpse at the history of the churches that subscribe to the Confession show that they have *never been* monolithic in their interpretations.
10. I refer here to the so-called “worship war” disagreements. Take a Covenanter with his or her belief in exclusive Psalmody, a traditional hymnodist who insists that seventeenth-century Europe gave us the standard by which all church music should be measured, and a college minister who encourages reworking classic hymns into contemporary music; put them all together in the same room and you will get very different views of what the regulative principle actually means, but all three would claim to adhere to it. For more on this issue, see John Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1996).
11. This is a basic principle of grammatical-historical exegesis.
12. On this point, it would be interesting to see how this view would interact with that of astrophysicist/apologist Hugh Ross, who tenaciously holds to the view that the Genesis account in no way goes *contrary* to modern scientific findings, and that it is the only religious book whose creation account fully supports the findings of modern science. For more on his views, see Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Latest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress Group, 2001).
13. “Common grace” refers to the grace that God extends to all aspects of culture, not just to Christians. For example, Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 that God allows the rain to fall on the just and the unjust (thus providing for both what is vitally necessary for life). This is not to say that culture is neutral, but it is

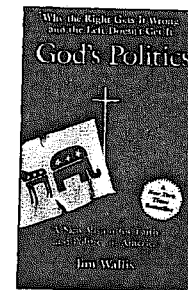
- to say that God has direct involvement in all of the cultural developments of both the Christian and the non-Christian. For more on common grace, see Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931).
14. The documentary hypothesis is the system of Old Testament analysis that divides the various books into different sections (JEDP) based on the assumption that different authors wrote them. So portions of the Pentateuch may have been written by followers of the Yahwist cult (J), others by the Elohim cult (E), others by the Deuteronomistic cult (D) and others by the Priestly cult (P). The key proponent of this view was the nineteenth-century, liberal Christian scholar Julius Wellhausen.
 15. Barthianism is an understanding of the Bible based on the teaching of Karl Barth, one of the twentieth century’s most influential theologians. Though sound in many areas, he held that Scripture, in itself, was not inspired, but rather that the Bible, as the word of God, had its “being in becoming,” that is, it “became” the word of God only when its readers were converted. See Karl Barth, *Christian Dogmatics, Volume I: The Doctrine of the Word of God, Part One* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 110.
 16. Peter Enns, *Exodus* (NIV Application Commentary Series, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

GOD’S POLITICS: WHY THE RIGHT GETS IT WRONG AND THE LEFT DOESN’T GET IT

Jim Wallis

San Francisco: Harper, 2005

384 pages, cloth, \$24.95



A review by Clark H. Pinnock (CHP) with additional responses/comments by P. Andrew Sandlin (PAS)

CHP—I got to know Jim Wallis in the late 1960s when he came to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School from Michigan State University. It was a heady time in America, what with the Vietnam War protests, the peace movement, feminism and gay rights activism, the war on poverty, the assassinations of Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and the Jesus movement. He was a young, twenty-something fired up Christian who found himself involved in this cauldron of social change, and began a movement called The People’s Christian Coalition and a street paper called *The Post*

American (later *Sojourners*). It was easy to be caught up in the enthusiasm of it all, as I myself was.

Politically, at the time, Jim sided with the new left (nowadays preferring the label “progressive”), and theologically he was nourished by anabaptist and evangelical thinking. (Arthur Gish would later write a good book in the 1970s which brought together these two themes entitled, *The New Left and Christian Radicalism*.)

PAS—Ironically, the *Sojourners* folks often lay claim to an anabaptist heritage while being heavily involved in the political scene. But the anabaptist vision is contra-political, not leftist per se. For example, while it is pacifist, and on that point its concerns would coincide with many in the Democratic Party in the U.S., the anabaptist vision has no logical stake in redistributionist economics, at once both a staple of the Left and a contradiction to the anabaptist suspicion of statist solutions.

CHP—Since then, Jim has become less sectarian mainstream as he called for a better America alongside the likes of Rich Mouw, Ron Sider, and Tony Campolo. For three decades, *Sojourners* magazine has argued the possibility of marrying the political left with strong biblical convictions. The publication stays on message and keeps in touch with progressive politics and with its original evangelical base. It has proved to be a winning combination that presents itself as a kind of *Mother Jones*—gutsy, colorful, hip, and creative. I may not now be a *Sojourner* man, but I am very proud of Jim Wallis and the work he has done in good faith and genuine love.

So what then is Jim’s message in this book? Wallis maintains (1) that the religious Right does not own or control a normative interpretation of Christian truth and (2) that the political left is hurting itself badly by being too closely allied to a secular world view. The Right needs to be more deeply Christian, and the Left needs to stop driving voters of faith into the arms of the Republican party. What Jim wants to see happen is for people of faith to act out of kingdom values and to be engaged in changing the world, as did Martin Luther King and Mother Theresa. Jim believes there is an unexploited option for American politics that flows from a reading of the prophetic religious tradition. He would like to see Democrats wed

their “progressive” policies with the prophetic religious tradition.

PAS—This is surely an odd proposal for an evangelical committed to an anabaptist impulse. To be more consistent, would he not rather oppose the “cultural captivity” of *both* major parties and, in fact, politics in general? Why cozy up to Democrats who, in fact, are generally more committed to politics than are Republicans, the latter of whom tend to favor non-political solutions such as, e.g., the marketplace.

CHP—Viewing him as a political strategist, as, in part, he definitely is (he is out on the stump all the time and talking to political leaders), Jim has an idea that could see the Democrats win the national election the next time round. After all, the book did become a *New York Times* best seller. Is it not just possible that there is a constituency out there for this, and, given the desperation of the Democratic party to come up with something (anything!) that would put them in the running next time, it’s worth a closer look.

Two-thirds of the book is devoted to the “platform” of this vision. It touches on three broad areas of concern: international relations, economic justice, and social issues. First, under international relations, the big issue he discusses is war and peace after 9/11. While able to appreciate the need to somehow deal with Saddam Hussein, Wallis dwells on the fact (as he sees it) that the path chosen, war with Iraq, was illegal, unwise, and based upon faulty intelligence about weapons of mass destruction, of which very little was found.

PAS—This is fine Monday morning political quarterbacking, but the fact is, international leaders as diverse as Bill Clinton, Vladimir Putin, and Tony Blair, as well as varied intelligence agencies around the world, were convinced Iraq had WMDs.

CHP—This section is not at all radical, since these are the very arguments one is hearing these days in the halls of Congress, in parts of the military, and in the media. George Bush made a mistake.

PAS—Well, this conviction would need to be proven and not merely asserted. One must marshal arguments that Bush was wrong to attack Iraq and not assume that merely because no WMDs have (yet?) been found that he was wrong to go to war.

CHP—Second, under economic justice, Wallis challenges Christians to help those people trapped in poverty. He does not discuss market principles or the engines of economic growth; instead, he highlights faith-based initiatives happening among grassroots Christians who are making a difference in their communities. It's hard to argue with that.

PAS—It is not hard to argue with that, and libertarians, including Christian libertarians, are arguing it. Is it possible that so-called faith-based initiatives, though well-intentioned, carry the likelihood of deleterious government controls somewhere down the road? At any rate, has it not been proven that, in most cases, the market does a better job of meeting these needs than does the state?

CHP—Third, under social issues, Jim offers what he calls a consistent ethic of life—that is, pro-life and anti-death penalty.

PAS—But for evangelicals, the real issue is fidelity to Scripture, not an abstract commitment to “consistency.” In fact, no one is *really* “consistently” pro-life in the sense Wallis posits. Almost all Christians believe the Bible permits killing in the case of self-defense. “Pro-life” means protecting human life worthy of protection. The Bible does not teach that all human life is worthy of protection under all conditions. So to support the death penalty is not to violate a biblical “pro-life” position.

CHP—He also rails like a Falwell against the sickening sleaze infesting our television programming and movies. He says, let's go after the companies that corrupt the character of our people by their advertising and put the pornographers out of business. As for gay marriage, Wallis does not support it. Marriage (he believes) is for one man and one woman with civil unions for homosexuals, if

we need to. I see little in this platform which one could call radical left, and I see the need in the public square for a voice like Wallis's.

PAS—As do I, but he should not do this while flying under the banner of anabaptism.

CHP—In Canada, we used to have a political party called “Progressive Conservative.” It has changed its name by now, but it could describe Wallis.

In this hefty volume, one learns a good deal about Jim Wallis as a person. Many elements of autobiography find their way into it. He is married to a British Anglican priest (female) and has two lively boys. He does a lot of public speaking and preaching. He participates in important meetings and publishes resolutions. He teaches at important and influential places like Harvard and visits communities of faith around the world. Many of his articles and columns, letters and communications, find their way into the book, but one need not be not put off by this, because their inclusion has a purpose, and not merely to glorify him. Jim is a gifted person, but I detect here little or no boasting about it. In closing, I wonder to myself how likely is it that Democrats will forsake their often aggressively secular ways and be able to win back voters of faith? Says the *Economist*: “It seems that the religious right cannot fail to win. Either the Democrats will continue to get more secular, in which case middle America will continue to vote Republican, or they will embrace religion a little more fully, and then the religious right will just get a little more of what it wants” (“America's Religious Right,” vol. 375 [June 25–July 1, 2005]: 127).

PAS—Since 1976, the Republican Party has become documentably and demonstrably more Christian (the old “Eastern Establishment” wing of the Nelson Rockefeller types has evaporated), and the Democratic Party has become documentably and demonstrably more secular. The upshot has been that, over the last thirty years, the fault lines of the culture wars have, in most cases, roughly paralleled the fault lines of the political parties. As much as we may dislike this “partisanship” of cultural issues, we cannot close our eyes to this historical phenomenon. To be Repub-

lican is more likely to be Christian; to be Democrat is more likely to be secular. These are the cold, hard, documentable facts.

—CLARK H. PINNOCK

Canada

—P. ANDREW SANDLIN

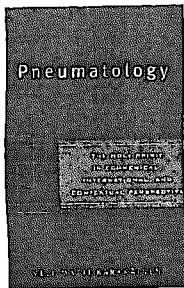
Center for Cultural Leadership,
Santa Cruz, California

*PNEUMATOLOGY: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ECUMENICAL,
INTERNATIONAL, AND CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE*

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002

195 pages, paper, \$17.99



Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen is a Finnish Pentecostal and professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Kärkkäinen has been extremely productive in the last several years, publishing introductions to ecclesiology (InterVarsity, 2002), theology of religions (InterVarsity, 2003), Christology (Baker, 2003), and the doctrine of God (Baker, 2004). In the midst of writing these

introductions, Kärkkäinen has also found the time to author *Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions* (Ashgate, 2004); *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Liturgical, 2005); as well as a collection of journal articles *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and Theology of Mission* (University of America Press, 2002).

In *Pneumatology*, as the subtitle suggests, Kärkkäinen presents an introduction to pneumatology that differs from other works on the subject. This unique presentation exhibits his experience in the international sphere and in ecumenical discussions. Rather than structuring his book according to the various issues and categories within pneumatology (e.g., the *filioque*, divine personhood, and so

forth), Kärkkäinen surveys the content of pneumatology by presenting various perspectives and approaches to the subject. He explains that his guiding principles, which he believes should guide all contemporary pneumatology, are (1) taking “into account the diverse and rich variety of approaches to the experience of the Spirit ecumenically,” and (2), at the same time, making theologies of the Spirit “culture specific,” since the Spirit “indwells believers and creation in specific and tangible ways” (9). Readers will likely appreciate the personal nature of the perspective method of presentation that Kärkkäinen uses over a less personal topical presentation.

Kärkkäinen’s work shows that pneumatology is no longer the “Cinderella” of theology. He first surveys the Spirit as found present in the Old and New Testaments. This provides the necessary background for readers to understand the perspectives presented in subsequent chapters. Kärkkäinen continues by considering how these biblical perspectives on the Spirit developed historically, resulting in church doctrine, by means of the early church charismatic experiences: the Montanists, the Eastern Church Fathers, Augustine, the medieval mystics, Anabaptists, philosophical theology, and classical liberalism. In the following chapter, Kärkkäinen presents contemporary ecclesiastical perspectives on the Holy Spirit as found in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Pentecostal/Charismatic traditions, as well as theologies of the Spirit within the ecumenical movement. Kärkkäinen curiously bypasses the Reformed tradition at this point. However, to illustrate the ecclesiastical perspectives already discussed (and others), Kärkkäinen proceeds to briefly survey leading theologians on the Spirit, including John Zizioulas (Eastern Orthodox), Karl Rahner (Roman Catholic), Wolfhart Pannenberg (Lutheran), Jürgen Moltmann and Michael Welker (Reformed), and Clark Pinnock (charismatic evangelical). Kärkkäinen concludes his work by presenting theologies of the Spirit as found in process theological, liberation, ecological, feminist, and African contextual perspectives. Beyond the impressive number that are already represented, other contextual pneumatologies, such as Asian and Latin American, would have been welcomed and provided more range in Kärkkäinen’s discussion of contextual perspectives.

Kärkkäinen's presentation is at times critical, but for the most part his aim is only to survey the various perspectives. He clearly appreciates the variety found in contemporary and even biblical perspectives on the Spirit, leaving readers to evaluate the various theologies for themselves. Further critical reflection would have been welcomed, but this is after all intended to be an introduction, and we are reminded of this by the helpful explanation of theological vocabulary found throughout the book.

Kärkkäinen's work discusses the various issues within pneumatology, but they are presented in the context of the various perspectives he addresses. This provides one clear advantage for Kärkkäinen's work: readers will walk away with a clear understanding of how various church and contextual traditions have understood the Spirit and how an ecumenical understanding is developing. Kärkkäinen's most original contribution is his consideration of so many perspectives. It is unusual to find authors discussing, for example, African theology in an introduction to a theology. In addition, readers will clearly begin to see how pneumatology can and has affected all aspects of systematic theology (to see further examples of this, see Kärkkäinen's *Toward a Pneumatological Theology* and Clark H. Pinnock's *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* [InterVarsity, 1996]), and they will also appreciate how the development of pneumatology is affected by the ecclesiastical, political, or geographical context that people find themselves in. The numerous footnotes found in this text are very helpful for those who wish to do research on a topic which Kärkkäinen discusses, however, they occur so frequently (often at the end of each sentence) that they may also serve as a distraction.

The primary disadvantage of Kärkkäinen's method of presentation is that readers have to string together themes as they appear throughout the book in order to understand the contemporary discussion regarding individual topics in pneumatology, such as the idea of deification. Aside from this, and others have commented on this regarding his other introductions, Kärkkäinen wrongly presents "contextual" theology in contrast to "Western" theology (see especially his comments on page 145), which also, of course, arises from within its own context(s).

Overall, Kärkkäinen offers an excellent overview of the face of

pneumatological studies today. Due to its many strengths, this book will appeal to a wide variety of audiences. I would highly recommend this book, likely to be used widely as a textbook, for anyone looking for an introduction to pneumatology, though you may wish to supplement it with a text that presents pneumatology with a topical and issues-oriented approach. Those interested in contemporary theology, and especially contextual and ecumenical theology, will appreciate this work for including perspectives that are otherwise often ignored. With this, Kärkkäinen has successfully followed his guiding principles for pneumatology.

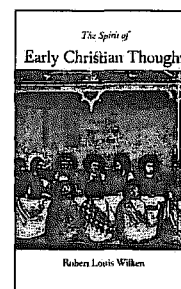
—ANDREW GABRIEL
Kitchener, Ontario

THE SPIRIT OF EARLY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Robert Louis Wilken

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003

368 pages, paper, \$19.00



Last Fall I wanted to organize our church's adult education program around the theme of knowing Jesus and making him known. As I considered my own contribution, I decided to teach a seven-week course on Dan Brown's murder mystery, *The Da Vinci Code*. The book is something of a cultural phenomenon with over fourteen million copies sold and the movie on the way (no doubt accompanied by the paperback edition which will likely sell in the millions). While I had qualms about a course on a book that has the literary merit of any airplane reading ("What next, a class on John Grisham novels?"), its frontal assault on Christian orthodoxy, the story of the early church and the integrity of the New Testament has all the subtlety of a sledge hammer.

After reading the novel, there was the question of which resources might help me think about the issues and prepare to teach the course. I picked up three highly touted books which

claimed to expose *The Da Vinci Code* in some way or another. I have to confess that all three books left me cold. Their usefulness was limited and they seemed to miss key issues. Surprisingly, the best commentator on *The Da Vinci Code* turned out to be someone who had never read *The Da Vinci Code*. Reaching back almost nineteen centuries, I took Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* off my shelf. While I won't argue that everything I needed for the course came from Irenaeus, he provided the framework for thinking, the substance of some of the most important responses, and I found myself quoting him regularly in class. His biting critique of Gnosticism, his discussion of tradition and the 'rule of faith' (*regula fidei*) and his consideration of the role of bishops all proved invaluable in crafting the course.

This experience reminded me again that our ignorance of the Fathers robs us of one of the richest resources at our disposal both for both ministry and piety. With a view to ending this ignorance, no book can be recommended more highly than Robert Louis Wilken's, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*. No attempt is made to be comprehensive. As Wilken notes in the preface, his goal is not a history of early Christian thought. "My aim," he says, "is less to show how certain teachings emerged and developed than to show how a Christian intellectual tradition came into being, how Christians thought about the things they believed." We are introduced to the great company of these larger-than-life thinkers as they intersect the issues of their times. This volume displays the breadth of Robert Wilken's scholarship, yet it also has devotional warmth (in the best sense of that phrase) that is unmistakable. This fine study will fill your heart as well as your mind.

Wilken takes us for a ride in an open cockpit two-seater plane to get a breathtaking view of the entire landscape of the spirit of early Christian thought. The first three chapters look at foundational issues: how God is known, worship and sacraments, and the Scriptures. The next three explore major doctrinal issues—the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, and the creation of the world—that significantly occupied the attention of the patristic church. Considering the life of the believer, Wilken moves on in the next two chapters to consider faith as a way of knowing and the church in relation to culture. Finally, in the remaining chapters

(there are twelve in all), he examines the formation of distinctively Christian culture, the moral life, and the spiritual life.

Pastors, elders, and ministry leaders will find this book to be a rich source for reflection that will renew their vision and reshape their practice of ministry. The life of the early church was shaped by a rule, *lex orandi est lex credendi*, the rule of prayer is the rule of belief. In our era of shallow faith (experiential and creedal) flowing from shallow worship, chapter three, for example, reminds us that the great bishops and teachers of the church's early centuries were men whose enormous intellects and towering theological contributions were forged in the context of liturgy and the practice of worship. To use another example, in my rather cognitively oriented Presbyterian church in a university town, I asked all my adult teachers to read chapter twelve, "The Knowledge of Sensuous Intelligence," so they could wrestle with this compelling discussion of knowledge wedded to passion, desire, and longing for God. Wilken brings this discussion of the spiritual life to a close saying, "Christian thinking, like all thinking, requires questioning, reflection, interpretation, argument. But reason has short wings. Without love it is tethered to the earth." I'm hoping this chapter will change the way they teach. I also noticed in preparing this review that chapter seven, "The Reasonableness of Faith," in my copy of the book has a number of places where the margin notation is simply, "Wow!" This wonderful reflection on epistemology reminds us that faith in the service of truth "enables reason to exercise its power in realms to which it would otherwise have no access. It is only in giving that we receive, only in loving that we are loved, only in obeying that we know." In a culture so deeply shaped by the scientific epistemology of the Enlightenment (the assumptions of which have crept into the church), Wilken's discussion of a Christian way of knowing rooted in love and faith is vitally important.

Many Fathers are quoted and referred to throughout the book. But Wilken reminds us that four stood above the others as he wrote this book: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, and Maximus the Confessor. The first three were familiar names for obvious reasons, but the fourth? Who on earth was Maximus the Confessor? Wilken's recommendation was enough for me, and Maximus' "The Four Hundred Chapters of Love" was soon in my

hands.¹ My church experienced some significant trauma this past year; fractures under the surface came into plain and unsightly view. Nothing I read spoke more clearly, convictingly, or biblically about what love required in the midst of a wrenching season of ministry. All I needed to know about love in a modern church conflict I learned from an ancient church father thanks to this rich and rewarding book.

—REV. ROBERT LYNN
Knox Presbyterian Church
Ann Arbor, Michigan

NOTES

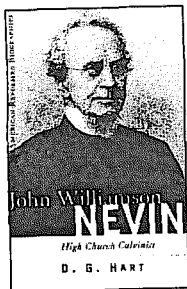
1. From George C. Berthold, trans., *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 33–98.

JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN: HIGH CHURCH CALVINIST

D. G. Hart

Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2005

271 pages, cloth, \$22.99



For all those who appreciate the conversations about the value of an “ancient future” faith, as in Robert Webber’s valuable books among others, *John Williamson Nevin* will be must reading. I think it needs to be stressed, so I reiterate: For all North American evangelicals concerned about the kingdom of God in a post-modern world, Dr. Hart’s study will be of great value, both for what it contains and for the

world of history and literature into which it introduces the reader. I emphasize this fact because, as published, the majority of those who would benefit from the biographical study could easily neglect it. The word “Calvinist” is on the cover, it is from a series on “American Reformed Thinkers,” and it is published by P&R, which stands for “Presbyterian and Reformed.” Additionally, Hart begins by

emphasizing Nevin’s traditional Presbyterian background. At a superficial level, everything about this work indicates that it is written only for a small segment of the spectrum of contemporary American evangelicalism.

But nothing could be further from the truth. While the subject matter of this book does have special reference to Reformed theology and Reformed churches, Nevin produced reactions from many quarters of the Christian world—from Roman Catholics to Jacob Weinbrenner of the Church of God. A paradoxical fact about Nevin, and the “Mercersberg Theology” he became associated with, was that it defended a traditional form of church life using new philosophy and new historical scholarship—raising issues that were of interest not only to the Reformed and Presbyterian. His thinking was perceived as somehow both radical and primitive, as too conservative (and “Romanist”) and too contemporary (in debt to German idealism) at the same time. He was accused of defecting from traditional Protestant thought even as he exposed what passed for this thought and practice as a relatively recent creation. While his influence was small due to his position in a small denomination (so Hart argues), he was nevertheless noticed and either valued or rejected by a wide variety of Christian thinkers from various traditions. In the last few decades there has been a great recovery and appreciation of his work and thought in more main-line circles, resulting in secondary sources such as *Worship and Reformed Theology: The Liturgical Lessons of Mercersburg* (Pittsburgh Theological Monographs: No. 10) by Jack E. Maxwell, *The Interior Sense of Scripture: The Sacred Hermeneutics of John W. Nevin* (Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics) by William DiPuccio, and *John Williamson Nevin: American Theologian* (Religion in America) by Richard D. Wentz. These are by no means the only titles, and if we included Nevin’s close associate Philip Schaff, there would be even more studies to look at.

John Williamson Nevin was a great critic of American Christianity as it was growing and developing (I suppose he would call it “degenerating”) in North America. For Nevin it was deviating from the pattern of life presented in the Bible and found both in the patristic and Reformation eras of the church. It was becoming ravenously individualistic, rationalistic, and ideological. Abstract

ideas and verbalized flow charts forming alleged systems of thought were overshadowing the actual life of the church with her preaching, teaching, and sacraments. The community, so important to the apostle Paul, was simply an appendage of a "gospel" of individual experiential transformation. Thus the number of denominations was growing as these forces gave rise to sect after sect.

Enabling the American church in this headlong rush was a virulent form of historical amnesia. The average Christian, and even the educated theologian, had either little or no idea of church history, or else simply discounted it as the work of Roman Catholicism and thus as possessing nothing of value worthy of any real consideration. Nevin diagnosed the church as chronologically arrogant and ignorant.

In short, Nevin threw himself in front of the train headed for what we now know as "modernity" as it has nested in American religious life and thought. He diagnosed it as being infected with Enlightenment values and assumptions that were at odds with true Christian faith. The train, more or less, ran over him, but since that time increasing numbers are realizing that American Christians would have done well to heed his warnings.

There are a couple reasons that Hart's contribution to this revival of interest in Nevin stands out. First and foremost, he is the first evangelical scholar writing for an evangelical publisher for an evangelical audience. Second, to the extent that Nevin was widely rejected by his own Presbyterian friends and mentors, Hart, as a known Reformed theologian and writer, represents a vindication of Nevin. While Jeff Meyers, an evangelical and Presbyterian pastor, gave lectures coming to substantially similar conclusions in the early 1990s, these were never widely distributed. Both Keith Mathison, an associate of R. C. Sproul's at Ligonier Ministries, and Robert Letham, another Presbyterian and Reformed pastor, vindicated Nevin on the narrow issue of the Lord's Supper. But this is the first more general study of Nevin to receive wide recognition.

As Hart tells of his life, Nevin came to full consciousness of his perception of the problem of "the church question" by gradual degrees. Looking back on his upbringing, Nevin wrote that he noticed a tension in college. He was brought up, "thoroughly

enmeshed in the religious and cultural life of Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism" (37). It was a "Scotch regime," he later recalled, "the old Presbyterian faith . . . based throughout on the idea of covenant family religion, church membership by God's holy act of baptism, and following this a regular catechetical training of the young, with direct reference to their coming to the Lord's table" (37). But when he left the Presbyterian culture of rural Pennsylvania for Union College, "an outpost of New England Puritanism in upstate New York," according to Hart, he was exposed to a new and different religious culture, especially in the form of "revivals." "In this way I was converted, and brought into the Church," he later wrote, "as if I have been altogether out of it before" (45).

But had he really "been altogether out of it before"? Only if "God's holy act of baptism" had signified nothing and his "regular catechetical training" had been meaningless. Nevin had to choose eventually between these two different religious cultures, and he felt deeply the need to make the decision. His experience with revivalism "set Nevin on a collision course with the dominant trend in American Protestantism," Hart writes (45). Nevin later said of the experience, that it "involved . . . although, alas I knew it not *then*—a very serious falling away from the educational and churchly scheme of religion, in which I have previously been born and bred" (59).

Nevin eventually went to Princeton Theological Seminary. There he excelled academically as a student to the point that, when Charles Hodge left to study Hebrew in Europe, Nevin replaced him temporarily as an instructor until his return. At this time, he also wrote his first book, a two-volume *Summary of Biblical Antiquities*, that is "by twenty-first century standards impressive, bordering on doctoral" (52). This in turn led to a short stint as an underpaid professor at Western Theological Seminary (now Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), and then his position teaching at the German Reformed Church's seminary at Mercersburg.

While some have tried to argue that Nevin's switch to a new communion involved a repudiation of things Presbyterian, this is highly dubious. All Nevin's Presbyterian friends regarded his move as simply a continuation of a Reformed teaching ministry in a new ethnic context. Archibald Alexander, the founder of Princeton

Theological Seminary, and Nevin's former professor, approved of the move and characterized it as "merely a transfer from one branch of Reformed Christianity, 'the Scotch Reformed,' to another very similar one, 'the German Presbyterians'" (61). Rather than a move from staid Presbyterianism to some sort of radically new German paradigm, Hart suggests a different interpretation:

Ironically, then, Nevin's relocation to the German Reformed Church would turn out to be the means by which he attempted to reappropriate the churchly faith of his Presbyterian past. To be sure, this effort would involve a rejection of a Puritan career. But Nevin's Puritan past was different from his boyhood Presbyterianism; his Puritan career began in 1819 with his conversion, no matter how weak, at Union and would not end until 1846 with the publication of his reflections on the Lord's Supper. In between Nevin tried to take sustenance from the revivalistic Protestantism that undergirded both the Presbyterian and Congregationalist [i.e., Puritan] communions. What he found was a spiritual diet rich in subjective experience but lean on the essentials of historic Christianity. (60)

When one thinks how foundational the Puritan experience has been to America's identity, one gets an inkling of how important Nevin's writings might be for readers today. Without trying to reproduce every part of Hart's biography, it is worth noting that before Nevin's book on the Lord's Supper, Nevin wrote a critique of revivalism called *The Anxious Bench*. "Revivalism" here should not be equated with a desire or experience of the work of God's Spirit in calling believers or former unbelievers to repentance and (renewed) commitment to Christ. Revivalism, while claiming to stand for nothing more than these things, actually was the practice of techniques that were supposed to bring a person to this sort of emotional crisis.

Nevin found these practices making inroads into his own church situation and responded with a tract against them. He opposed it to the traditional system of simply training one's children to be Christians and raising them according to that identity. "What is wrought in the way of the Catechism," he pointed out, "is considered to be of man, what is wrought by the Bench is taken

readily for the work of God" (96). While many were claiming that revivals (equated with the fervor brought about by certain techniques) were extraordinary works of God's Spirit, Nevin insisted that *the mere ordinary ministry of the church should be understood as the supernatural work of God*. The reason for this was that sin and salvation were to be found in two opposed corporate solidarities. "Just as particular sins of individual persons were manifestations of the estate in which the entire human race lived after the fall of Adam," explains Hart, "so salvation was larger than the individual's decision to go forward or to believe in Christ. Salvation, according to the catechetical scheme, consisted of a new life emanating from this union with Christ, who is 'the organic root of the Church'" (97).

These two solidarities were expounded further in Nevin's 1846 book, *The Mystical Presence: A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*. Here Nevin exposed the great gap that existed between "the views of the past" and "those of contemporaries" (117). Nevin argued the Protestant faith of the Reformation "clearly affirmed a more objective conception of the sacrament than the symbolic one common among American Protestants" (116). Because salvation involved incorporation into the body of Christ, not simply a series of experiences or only a decreed legal transition, the Lord's Supper, as the seal of that salvation, could not be less than a way in which communicants were further strengthened and renewed in Christ's transfigured humanity.

By exploring the meaning of the incarnation as a mystical union between Christ and the church, Nevin was doing more than trying to locate an adequate grounding (or as he put it, a "scientific statement") for the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper. He was also attempting to make sense of biblical language about the new life that Christians experience in regeneration. Here, scriptural metaphors—such as the Johannine image of Christ as the vine and the church as its branches, or the Pauline figures of Christ as the head and the church as its body or Christ as bridegroom and church as bride—symbols that the biblical authors used to describe the union between Christ and Christians, were ones to which Nevin appealed. This part of Nevin's argument had a degree of plausibility. Even the classic federal theology of the Reformed tradition, which taught a

union between Adam and the whole human race and between Christ and the church, indicated that Nevin's idea of mystical union was not as bizarre as it might at first have sounded. Just as Adam, he explained, "was at once an individual and a whole race," and just as "all his posterity partake of his life, and grow forth from him as their root," so with Christ believers "spring from [him], so far as our new life is concerned" and "stand in him perpetually also as our ever living and ever present root." Nevin added that this union did not involve Christ's "ubiquity or idealistic dissipation of his body." But this participation in Christ's humanity did occur through the work and power of the Holy Spirit: "There is no other medium, by which it is possible for us to be in Christ, or to have Christ in ourselves." Nevin also indicated that the mystical union required faith, another reason why the work of the Spirit was essential. This life, begun in regeneration, grew and developed over the course of the Christian's life, just as an oak tree grows from an acorn, and became complete full in death and resurrection when believers would be "set free from the first form of existence entirely, and made to supersede it for ever in the immortality of heaven" (125–26).

The upshot of this perspective was that Nevin found in American Protestantism a fixation on *ideas* and/or *feelings*, whereas in the Bible he saw an emphasis on *incorporation into a new community*. This American Protestant emphasis, besides betraying itself as a falling away from the Reformation (as demonstrated by the material change that had occurred in Reformed teaching about the Lord's Supper, to name just one example), led to a host of problems. Nevin's series of articles on the growing number of sects in American life was a devastating critique of individualism and biblicist rationalism prevalent in evangelicalism. Likewise, his series on "Early Christianity" showed how contemporary Protestantism was incapable of acknowledging what the early church was like, insisting that somewhere, somehow, at some point the early Christians *must* have been just like orthodox evangelicals. Nevin demonstrated that this simply was not true and that Protestantism could only be vindicated as a true progress over the early church.

Hart's biography is filled with many great insights and is a great way to begin what could be a profitable historical study for

any evangelical trying to be self-critical about his heritage.

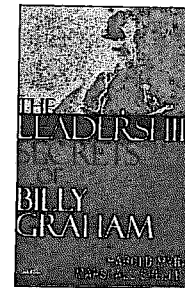
I hope, however, that readers won't stop there. There are several interesting and readable secondary sources mentioned in Hart's bibliographic ending. Additionally, one can download two excellent lectures by Jeff Meyers on "The Mercersburg Movement" (www.prpc-stl.org/articles.html?cm_id=344 and www.prpc-stl.org/articles.html?cm_id=346). More importantly, Nevin himself is quite readable, and often even entertaining. His book on the Lord's Supper, probably his best work, is available through Wipf & Stock Publishing company and can also be ordered at Amazon.com. Wipf & Stock also publishes "The Anxious Bench," "The Anti-Christ," and his sermon on Catholic unity. However, at Amazon.com one can also obtain *Catholic & Reformed*, which includes more good material, albeit without the sermon, and costs less. Hopefully, Hart will be only a beginning.

—MARK HORNE

Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church
St. Louis, Missouri

THE LEADERSHIP SECRETS OF BILLY GRAHAM

Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley
Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2005)
348 pages, cloth, \$24.99



We have been blessed in our time to live when Billy Graham has ministered and preached. John Wesley said, "The world is my parish." Two Christian leaders have exemplified that approach to ministry in the last fifty years and they are Pope John Paul II and Billy Graham. Many things come to mind when we think of Graham including evangelist, preacher, and pastor to the United States. But do we consider teamwork and teambuilding? Since the formation of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association fifty years ago, the same team has been intact. This dedicated group has traveled the world with Graham to spread the gospel. They have done so without scandal and with integrity. There has not

been a cult of personality in the BGEA, as we have seen in various ministries and megachurches in recent times.

The authors list twenty-one specific leadership traits they see in Graham's ministry. Included in the list are "secrets" like forming a team, confronting the temptations, lasering in on the mission, loving harsh critics, summoning courage, learning from failure, sowing seeds in all seasons, innovating, and leading with love.

This book gives us twenty-one qualities that characterize the unique style of Graham. Two of the main principles in the getting-started section of this book are forming the team and lasering in on the mission. For twenty-three years I have been a pastor in the local parish, serving in nine churches. After reading this worthwhile book, the most important thing I learned was Graham's ability to form and retain an effective team for the ministry for five decades. This team-building concept dates back to the Gospels. Jesus formed a team with twelve disciples. Paul continued this practice in his missionary travels.

John Wesley followed this principle of teamwork in his work. He emphasized the small group or class that became the backbone of the Methodist tradition. These small groups of Christians met together for prayer, Bible study, worship, and service. For example, Wesley and these small groups ministered in prisons, coal mines, and among the poor in England in the 1700s.

When Graham started his ministry, he formed a small team, which included Cliff Barrows, George Beverly Shea, and several others. This team has stayed together, throughout Graham's work worldwide. The BGEA is certainly one of the most significant ministries of the past half-century. All those in ministry, non-profits, service, and educational organizations will find this book useful and helpful.

—REV. ERIC HAUGAN

Faith United Church
Winthrop, Minnesota