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## REVIEWS

### **The Rhythm of Doctrine: A liturgical sketch of Christian faith and faithfulness**

John E. Colwell

Paternoster, Milton Keynes, 2007; 135 pp; £12.99; ISBN-13: 9781842274989.

The idea for this work came out of a conversation with a fellow theologian who posed the question, 'What structure would you follow if you were to ever write a Systematic Theology?' In response to this the author has produced a work that is constructed around the church calendar. Starting with Advent, he moves through the year with Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and concludes with All Saints Day.

There is value in such an approach, but, allowing for the 'big themes,' Lent and All Saints Day are of human manufacture, (some would argue that all are synthetic), and so his argument is weakened by their inclusion.

John Colwell is Tutor in Christian Doctrine and Ethics at Spurgeons' (Baptist) College, in South London. His churchmanship is therefore evident as he works through his thesis. So too is his own personal experience: he claims that his devotional life was deepened as he came through, 'the crushing darkness of clinical depression'. So also are his own theological prejudices: he speaks favourably, for example, of the enthusiasms of the Charismatic movement.

The author has attempted to present a case for the Christian Church to be more systematic in its worship and preaching, particularly in respect to the Christian diary that is used by some sections of the Church. By endeavouring to do this he will alienate some, but enthuse others, with the scheme he is proposing.

A number of points in this work give cause for concern. He is weak on original sin, and in places seems to prefer the writings of the Church fathers to Scripture. In proportion to the works of others referred, there are many more quotations from Karl Barth than, say, John Calvin. He also speaks of, 'something quite "magical" about the atmosphere of midnight Mass'. Of greater concern, however, is the footnote on page 2: 'I trust that I do sufficient in this book and elsewhere to demonstrate that I do not think of God as male and that I am sensitive to the continuing problems of this use of male pronouns'. There are other issues in the book which Reformed and evangelical Christians would have a problem with, and about which they would be rightly concerned.

With these reservations, this book is not without its uses. First, it helps to focus on the great fundamental facts of the history of the Christian faith, albeit with a different approach to many. Second, it forces the thoughtful reader to engage again with Scripture to see if the argument holds together. Third, it demonstrates how a tutor in one of the best known colleges in England tackles these subjects; this serves as a pointer to the theological state of teaching in mainstream theology, which all should be concerned about.

The Christian leader has to use his time wisely, but always to be reading books that confirm held and cherished beliefs can lead to sterility in mind and ministry. Whilst it is impossible for a Christian minister to cover every great truth adequately each year, in his pulpit work, if the great truths about the Lord Jesus are not foremost in his work, then something is surely wrong. So this book could be a wake-up call to those whose ministry has become predictable. With many reservations, I commend it, as 'iron sharpens iron'. Working with, or even against this text, could help to bring clarity to the Christian teacher as he seeks to proclaim the glorious gospel.

*Clive Anderson, The Butts Church, Alton, Hampshire*

## **Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament**

Richard M. Davidson

Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 2007; 844pp, \$29.95; ISBN 978-1-56563-847-1

In the present day, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive assessment of what the Bible says about human sexuality. The modern deconstruction of societal standards has been fuelled by a moral relativity that is evident in almost every aspect of contemporary life. Given this collapse of moral standards, a defence of the Bible's teaching on human sexuality in all its many dimensions is a much more urgent need than it seemed to be in the past. It is for this reason, and a number of other reasons, that Richard Davidson has undertaken the enormous task of writing a thorough treatment of the OT teaching on sexuality.

The purpose of this work is to examine "every passage in the HB (Hebrew Bible) dealing with human sexuality in the final (canonical) form of the OT, building on previous research and engaging in original exegesis where necessary" (p2). While embarking on such a colossal project, Davidson asserts that the creation account of Genesis 1-3 is the theological key that unlocks the mysteries of the OT: "One of the central premises of this book is that the Edenic pattern for sexuality constitutes the foundation for the rest of the OT perspective on this topic" (p3). Davidson

recognizes that a “paradigm shift in modern critical scholarship in the last few decades now sees creation, and not just salvation history, as foundational to the rest of the OT canon” (p3). God’s intention for the lifestyle of his image-bearers can only be obtained by a careful consideration of the Eden account.

While keeping this “Edenic pattern” at the centre of his hermeneutical method, Davidson proceeds to address such issues as gender roles, heterosexuality versus homosexuality, bestiality, transvestitism, monogamy versus polygamy, adultery, premarital sex, divorce and remarriage, as well as a plethora of other subsidiary subjects related to human sexuality. In addition to these subjects, Davidson provides a section on ANE literature that captures the interrelation of sexual activity and worship as it is manifest in the cultic prostitution of the ancient near East. Toward the end of the book Davidson dedicates two chapters to a consideration of the Song of Songs. Following in the footsteps of Phyllis Trible, Francis Landy, and Jill Munro, Davidson draws the conclusion, “in the Song of Songs we have come full circle in the OT back to the garden of Eden” (p. 552).

At the outset of the book, it becomes evident that one of his overarching goals is to establish the role of women in ecclesiastical settings. Davidson seeks to provide answers for the many passages that have been understood to place women in a subordinate role with regard to leadership in the church. Davidson ultimately takes a *via media* between the modern egalitarian perspective and a traditional complementarian position. He concludes that subordination is only applicable within the marital relationship and should not be imposed upon ecclesial structures.

While, on the one hand, this work is full of valuable exegesis and a rich array of sources, on the other hand, there are serious deficiencies in the author’s methodology and conclusions. In the first place, at times Davidson’s approach to the text isolates it from the rest of the canon. For instance, in his treatment of headship/leadership roles, Davidson rejects the idea that man was given leadership responsibility before the Fall based on the fact that he was created first. He argues that “a careful examination of the literary structure of Gen. 2 reveals that such a conclusion about hierarchy does not follow from the fact of man’s prior creation” (p27). But this stands in stark contrast to Paul’s argument in 1 Tim. 2:13, where he explains that man is the spiritual leader/head of woman precisely because “Adam was formed first, then Eve...” When Davidson finally comes to deal with this NT passage, he explains that it is “the submission of wives to their husbands, not of women to men in general” (p644) that is in view. Davidson allows his conclusions on the role relationship between Adam and Eve in the Genesis account to inform his conclusions on the NT

teaching about God's intention for man and woman, in the home and in the church. Instead of using the fuller revelation of the NT as a lamp to illuminate the text of Gen. 1-3, Davidson has chosen to do the opposite.

A second concern is that Davidson fails to utilize a Christocentric approach in his discussions of systematic and biblical theology. This is seen in the criticism above, as well as in a consideration of his treatment of the Song of Songs. After spending eighty-six pages on the history of the interpretation of the Song, while defending a literal interpretation that exalts human sexuality to the exclusion of a Christology interpretation, Davidson finally—and reluctantly it appears—admits that the Song “*typologically* points beyond itself to the Divine lover” (p. 632). While accurately making the “Edenic pattern” the centre of his hermeneutical method, Davidson fails to see the eschatological restoration of Eden, and its subsequent consequences, in the person and work of Christ—the centre of all special revelation. If the Song of Songs is “a return to Eden,” and if—as our Lord teaches—there is no marriage in heaven (i.e. in the eschatological Garden), then ought we to conclude that the lovers in the Song are representative of the heavenly Bridegroom and his bride?

Despite these criticisms Davidson's work is quite an accomplishment. I am unaware of any other single volume that deals so thoroughly with the issues addressed in this book. Its most valuable contribution is the way in which it lays out a multitude of positions with exegetical arguments in support of various the views. The reader will be led to realize the vast array of theological perspectives on specific issues of sexuality and gender relations. This book should serve to help pastors, scholars, and students alike develop and establish their own conclusions on these issues.

*Nicholas T. Batzig, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA*

## **Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation**

Herman Bavinck (Translated by John Vriend; Edited by John Bolt)

Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2006; 685pp; \$49.99; ISBN-10: 0801026563; ISBN-13: 9780801026560

The third and penultimate volume of Bavinck's dogmatics is devoted to the theological *loci* of Christology and Soteriology. The opening chapters on 'sin' continue Bavinck's magisterial ability to engage modern thought, from psychological, anthropological and sociological descriptions of sin and guilt to the theological history of the concept of total depravity. Bavinck's strong emphasis on grace as restoring nature, unfolding from the very start of the volume, is set within a distinctively Reformed mould that does not shy away from such questions as God's role with regard to sin's entrance and persistence in the world, or the world as having miseries

seemingly unattached to any particular moral failings ('Fallen people no longer belong in paradise. Corresponding to their state is the earth, which exists between heaven and hell', p180).

The high point of the volume, and that to which most of it is devoted, is the second part on 'Christ as Redeemer'. Bavinck opens by situating the discussion within classical covenant theology – a topic already pervasive in the first two volumes but only here discussed at length. He offers a fascinating and informed history of covenant theology, especially on the Continent, with some rather harsh words for those who want to follow Cocceius' approach, though defending the *pactum salutis* famously developed by Cocceius (a doctrine that should be rehabilitated in present theological discourse). This covenantal structure in place Bavinck, following a hallowed Reformed pattern, turns to the mediator of the covenant of grace: the person of Christ. Here we find a masterful statement of a classical Christology, attempting to root all in the self-consciousness of Jesus as the apocalyptic messiah. Bavinck patiently walks through the classical topics, from the virgin birth to the *communicatio idiomatum*, defending at each point against Kant, Schleiermacher and Ritschl as representative heads, as it were, of modern unease with such doctrines.

From the person of Christ, Bavinck turns to the work of Christ, both in his humiliation and exaltation. Again, the historical surveys worked into the fabric of the discussions would make the work valuable even if they were not serving the larger end of dogmatic construction. This is particularly true in his lengthy discussion of the atonement and the various ways in which the church has struggled to conceptualize Christ's work. Not all will be satisfied with his argumentation for the classical position, but the ways in which the argumentation moves seamlessly across the arguments of his other volumes testify to the coherence of Bavinck's proposals and the fluency with which he addressed the subject. The final section on the application of the work of Christ, or 'salvation' proper, follows much the same pattern, with discussion of the *ordo salutis*, justification, and the nature of grace.

Reading the text today confirms strongly the 'modernity' of Bavinck's work. He is concerned at each point to have a dogmatic theology of application and use to his own day – and is valuable today precisely because this was done so masterfully. But the weaknesses are evident, such as in his willingness to trust (some) currents of exegetical opinion now appearing quaint at best, his then-acceptable sociological and quasi-sociological observations, and his lack of awareness of issues that very quickly become central (e.g. the relationship of the reprobate and Christ as the true human). But none of these can at all be fairly lodged against the value of the work. Bavinck did not aim to provide a 'timeless' dogmatics. He is

at his best in bringing into dialogue the history of theology, Reformed thought, and his contemporary world. And each volume of this set that is released cannot but add to his solid reputation in the English-speaking world.

*Joshua Moon, University of St. Andrews*

## **The Human Person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century**

James R. Beck and Bruce Demarest

Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005; 428pp, \$24.99. ISBN: 0825421160

Any book which chooses as its subject ‘the human person’ is clearly embracing an ambitious agenda, whether in psychology or theology. The purpose of this book is to build ‘working alliances between the findings of science and the teachings of the Bible’. In doing so it seeks to avoid both a ‘theologized psychology’ and a ‘psychologized theology’, but argues that the integrity of both disciplines should be respected – psychology with its base in general revelation and theology with its base in special revelation – with the practical aim of enhancing understanding and fostering effective ministry through an integrated perspective. The authors affirm the integrity, inspiration and full authority of the Bible, and there are no respects in which the book is likely to disappoint the most conservative evangelical expectations.

Four aspects of the human person are explored, and these form the basis for the organisation of the book into major sections: origin and destiny, substance and identity, function and behaviour and relationships and community. In each of these sections one chapter deals with biblical, historical and theological considerations while a second covers psychological dimensions. A further chapter seeks to provide an integrative essay with conclusions as to how the two disciplines relate to each other in that area.

In terms of readership, while no prior expertise in either theology or psychology is required, this is a scholarly book aimed at informed Christian readers. It is well organized and on the whole very readable. I have to say it almost faltered at the starting line with an arcane section in the introduction about ‘a rejection of classical substance ontology and faculty psychology in favor of a relational ontology’ – no explanation needed, the assumption being that we all have some inkling of what on earth that might mean. I’m glad I read on, since the rest was both readable and worthwhile, although readers outside of the USA might find some features a little irritating. There is no accommodation to an international

cultural perspective. The book is thoroughly American: all its references to legislation, to statistics and trends, to psychology itself, are rooted in American experience, and when it refers to 'our ancestors in colonial America' it is unlikely to engage an international audience.

The book is supported by a useful bibliography, an extensive subject index and a Scripture index. The fact that the last mentioned covers almost 1,000 references to passages in 61 out of the 66 books in the Bible is an indication of how firmly the entire work is built on a scriptural foundation. I personally found the use of the Vancouver system of referencing (numbered footnotes) as opposed to the Harvard system most scholars use (author name and date in text and full reference at end of book) a little frustrating. Trying to check back later for a work by a particular author involves too much searching through the text again.

For me, both as psychologist and as Christian reader, this is a book with many strengths but also with a number of shortcomings. In relation to the latter, the attempt at integrating the two perspective seems the weakest link, and the four integrationist chapters plus a chapter on conclusions occupy a total of only 30 pages out of over 400. The integration touching on the subject of human destiny is in my view meaningless since, as the authors acknowledge, psychology – while contributing to issues of death, grief and loss – has nothing to say on the matter of destiny. There also seem to be many lost opportunities. Why is there little or nothing on major psychological issues that are of central interest to theology – for example, the rise of 'critical psychology', with its focus on values in science, or the advances of positive psychology, with its focus on topics such as hope, well-being and happiness?

However, the strengths of the book are also clear. In addressing a very complex subject from two perspectives that are seldom combined effectively, it reflects solid scholarship throughout. As the two authors are clearly well qualified in their respective fields of theology and psychology, each discipline is approached in a balanced and informed way, while maintaining fidelity to Scripture at all times. Even at the level of providing scholarly theological and psychological summaries of the four areas selected for study, the book provides a vast amount of useful material. My feeling is that this book does not so much succeed in integrating the two perspectives in question but rather in applying the subject matter and evidence base of psychology to theological understandings of the human person in a useful and relevant way. As such it may be seen as a valuable textbook on a subject which is seldom addressed effectively.

*Tommy MacKay, Dumbarton, former President, The British Psychological Society*



## **Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg 2nd edn**

Stanley J. Grenz

Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI; 2005, 318pp; \$35.00; ISBN-10: 802849091; ISBN-13: 9780802849090

Stanley Grenz (1950-2005) was a leading Baptist scholar who was professor of theology at Carey Theological College Vancouver and Mars Hill Graduate School Seattle. He was drawn to study under Pannenberg and did his doctorate on the topic of Isaac Backus, an important figure in Baptist life in 18th Century America. Grenz returned for further study with Pannenberg and in something of an academic coup gained the agreement of Pannenberg to publish a version of Pannenberg's as yet unfinished three volume systematic theology. Grenz therefore produced in advance an overview endorsed by Pannenberg, as the first edition of this book, 1990. This second edition now appears, posthumously, after the full publication of Pannenberg's three volumes of Systematic Theology. In fact there are few changes in the second edition.

Grenz's interpretation of Pannenberg is very accurate, and indeed approved by the subject himself. The future orientated metaphysics for which Pannenberg is well known remains a basic framework for the doctrine of God and the world. But Pannenberg has increasingly been uniting his theology of time and history with Trinitarian thought; now in his Systematic Theology volume 1, he outlines a very clearly Trinitarian ontology. The God of the open future, Jesus in revelatory union of essence with the Father, and the Spirit which continually integrates the present with the future, represent what classical dogmatics knows as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is a temporal version of the Trinitarian framework which explains most aspects of Pannenberg's doctrine. In fact Grenz fails somewhat to demonstrate precisely how this is so. Nevertheless he does give an accurate account of the various parts of Pannenberg's overall position.

Grenz sets himself the task of providing a synopsis of Pannenberg's theology, of showing the lines of continuity and coherence within it, and finally of describing the criticism that Pannenberg's theology has received and responses to that criticism. The first aim seems to be well met, the second aim reasonably so, with the third aim perhaps least well achieved. For example, Grenz does have a largely American lens to his review and omits some important critical essays, for example that of Christoph Schwobel. The second edition has the benefit of updating the critical literature and in particular Pannenberg's engagement with science to which he continues to remain very committed.

One particular problem, not identified by Grenz but which needs to be raised concerning Pannenberg's programme, is that of Apocalyptic and its interpretation. There is a rising tide of New Testament scholarly opinion arguing that Apocalyptic in the New Testament should not be interpreted in an eschatological fashion on a time line. If this opinion becomes the norm then Pannenberg's whole framework seems to be called into question. If the Apocalyptic thought forms of Jesus' day did not refer primarily to the end of history but to the presence of the Kingdom of God, then the end of history cannot be the interpretative matrix for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the way that Pannenberg argues. This will be a critical issue for Pannenberg and his school to address.

Grenz has written a very useful survey which will serve Christian ministers very well as an introduction to the important themes that Pannenberg handles. One hopes, however, that these readers will not be content with this introduction but will wish to move on from the processed version to the "real thing", particularly in the shape of Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology* or the much shorter introductory books *The Apostles Creed* (1972), and the little noticed *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (1991). Pannenberg's basic positions have not changed significantly since his arrival on the theological scene in the early 1960s, save for the more and more clear Trinitarianism which, was however always implicit.

*Timothy Bradshaw, Regent's Park College, Oxford*

## Letters of Thomas Chalmers

Edited by William Hanna

Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 2007; xxiv + 538pp; £17.50, ISBN-10: 085151 940 7; ISBN-13: 978 0 85151 940 1

In 1853 William Hanna edited *A Selection from the Correspondence of the late Thomas Chalmers, D.D. LL.D.* It is this scarce volume that the Banner of Truth has reprinted under the title *Letters of Thomas Chalmers*.

Two additions have been made to the original which are especially helpful to readers unfamiliar with Chalmers: a biographical table or timeline of Chalmers' life, and an introduction by Iain H. Murray in which he gives us a fine overview of Chalmers' life and of his impact on Scottish Christianity.

The vast majority of the letters are of course Chalmers' own. Hanna does, however, include a number of letters *to* Dr. Chalmers' with the replies that Chalmers penned. It is with two such exchanges that the volume opens. These exchanges are a continuation of a correspondence that begins for the reader in volumes one and two of Hanna's massive four-

volume Memoir of Dr. Chalmers, and regrettably can only be entered into fully if one has access to that memoir.

There seems, indeed, to be an assumed familiarity with the Memoir throughout the *Letters*. Hanna makes quite a number of footnoted references to it. He also, whilst giving us the names of Chalmers' correspondents, rarely indicates who they are. To a large extent he has already done that in the Memoir and probably thinks it unnecessary to repeat it. Everyone who has read the Memoir, for example, knows that the Mrs. Jane Morton to whom over fifty letters are addressed is one of Chalmers' sisters, but she is not identified as such in the *Letters*. It is certainly not a barrier to appreciating Chalmers' letters if you do not have access to the Memoir. But it is a little frustrating at times and makes one wish that a brief introduction to the letters themselves had been prepared for this reprint.

The letters are largely grouped according to the correspondent to whom they are addressed, and cover a wide range of topics. Comfort for the bereaved, counsel for young Christians, opinions on distinguished men and their books, glimpses of life in Glasgow and St. Andrews, notes on journeys and holidays, insights into the calibre of his students, comments on the church scene, news about his wife and children – the reader will find all these and much more besides. There is warmth, wisdom, shrewd observation, humour, and above all Chalmers' own fervent breathing after God and delight in the gospel of God's grace.

Given Chalmers' key role in the ecclesiastical conflict that culminated in the Disruption of 1843 and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland it is not surprising to find an entire section of the correspondence devoted to 'the church question'. Readers who are familiar with Disruption history will appreciate the insights these letters afford into Chalmers' thinking, motives, and actions.

Who will *best* appreciate these letters? There is certainly much in them that even a reader unfamiliar with Chalmers will find both interesting and edifying. The *Letters* will be appreciated most, however, by those who already know and love Chalmers.

Commenting in one of the letters (No.CCLXVI) on a biography of Joseph Butler that he has just read, Chalmers says, 'I have perused it with great eagerness, and a very intense feeling of satisfaction and interest. My veneration for Butler gives a magnitude even to the minutest traits which are recorded of him, insomuch that I feel as if I had made a real acquisition by knowing of his fast riding on a black horse, and his habit of stopping and turning to his companion with whom he was engaged in talk.' Those who share a similar veneration for Chalmers will find a like pleasure in making their way through this rich and fascinating volume.

*David Campbell, Grace Baptist Church, Carlisle, PA*

## **Must God Punish Sin**

Ben Cooper

Latimer Trust: London, 2006, 54pp; £2.50, ISBN: 978 0 946307 55 5

One of the themes connected to an evangelical understanding of God's justice is whether or not he had to punish sin. There have been discussions of the theme in the past, notably in Britain by John Owen and Samuel Rutherford, and aspects of it have risen today with the attempt of some evangelicals to delete penal substitution from the meaning of the cross.

While the discussion may seem at first to be only a theoretical one, a little reflection will show that it concerns, for example, our concept of the character of God (if he did not have to punish sin, then there is something monstrous about him punishing his Son), our doctrine of what took place on the cross (if he did not have to punish sin, then penal substitution was not necessary and may not have taken place), and our understanding of why we have to confess our sins (why do Christians need an advocate at God's right hand?).

The author shows that much current theological objections to the necessity of God's punishing sin seem to be connected to the outlook that punishment cannot be retributive alone but must in one way or another include restoration or deterrence. Since God is love, his love must explain all that he does, and some suggest that it would be inconsistent for a God of love to punish without the prospect of restoration. This idea leads to the suffering of Jesus on the cross being regarded as an example of humility, or an act of solidarity with humanity in its pain, or some other non-penal view of the work of Jesus.

In chapter 2, having discussed some current secular ideas regarding punishment, Cooper details the biblical data on divine punishment, including examining the lexical evidence as well as biblical examples of divine acts of punishment such as the ten plagues on Egypt, the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon, and the occasions that are marked by the use of the phrase, 'the day of the Lord'. It is clear that while some divine punishments did result in behavioural changes, other acts of divine punishment were clearly retributive.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the 'necessity' of sin being punished by God. The author admits that much of the discussion by theologians of previous generations is complex. He uses, in the main, the views of John Owen to oppose the idea of Socinius (vindictive justice is opposed to divine mercy) and of Rutherford (vindictive justice is not in God by necessity of nature, but is an option that he can choose to exercise; just as he could have chosen not to create, so he could have chosen not to punish sin). There is also some interaction with the thought of Turretin and

Jonathan Edwards. Owen, among other arguments, stressed as evidences that God must punish sin the following two aspects: (a) God's eternal hatred of sin and (b) the impossibility of Christ being punished for sin if another means of forgiveness was available. These are conclusive arguments once the penal nature of Christ's death has been established.

This booklet, within its limited compass, deals well with a difficult concept. There is a bibliography of relevant works which a person can use if he or she wishes to study the matter further.

*Malcolm Maclean, Scalpay Free Church, Isle of Harris*

## **Singing the Ethos of God: On the Place of Christian Ethics in Scripture**

Brian Brock

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2007; 386pp., £16.45; ISBN 9780802803795

In this, his first book, Brian Brock (lecturer in moral and practical theology at the University of Aberdeen) aims to transcend the contemporary debate over the proper hermeneutical appropriation of the Bible for Christian ethics. He proposes to do this by articulating the meta-hermeneutical preconditions deemed necessary for correctly understanding the Bible's 'grammar'. For Brock, Scripture's aggregate grammar (p. 247), its ethos, is best approached via the motif of our personal and situated foreignness. He proposes to overcome this estrangement to Scripture by disjoining interpretation and hermeneutics so as to assign a secondary, clarifying role to hermeneutics (p. 265). This allows interpretation to reappropriate for itself all of the tools which history has offered it.

The first part of the volume provides a well footnoted summary of the contemporary meta-hermeneutical landscape. Anyone seeking a concise introduction to these issues, as they pertain to Christian ethics, will find these chapters tremendously helpful. The initial chapter describes and evaluates the hermeneutically oriented approaches offered by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Daniel Patte and Charles Cosgrove. The following chapter addresses the communitarian approach by interacting with the ideas of Bruce Birch, Larry Rasmussen, Stephen Fowl and L. Gregory Jones. The biblical ethics trajectories of Frank Matera, Richard Hays and John Howard Yoder receive attention in the third chapter.

The next two chapters are organized around the biblical theology focus of the 'doctrinal Barth' and the exegetical theology approach of the 'exegetical Barth'. The former interacts with Brevard Childs, Francis Watson and John Webster while the latter with Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The second part of the book narrows in on the psalms in order to offer a de-

tailed presentation of Augustine's and Luther's respective appropriations of Scripture. It is here that Brock seeks to secure the allure of the richness of premodern interpretation against the impoverished approaches of part one. In the third part the author summarizes the issues raised by the preceding sections and offers his solution to the widespread segregation of Scripture and Christian ethics.

Brock's scholarly treatment of this area will find favour with his readers to the extent to which they share his post-critical, post-Constantinian (p. 311) and generally postmodern predispositions. There is much to be commended in his thesis that approaching Scripture and its ethical call is only properly possible from within a doxologically grounded tradition. That biblical content should be given a role in moulding Christian interpretation is similarly worthy of embrace.

Likewise welcome is the affirmation that Scripture's ethos and plausibility structures should be heeded. Brock certainly recognizes that his work is susceptible to critique from a variety of angles (pxviii). In his final chapter, Brock demonstrates his interpretive toolbox on Psalms 130 and 104 to arrive 'textually' at his doxological, creational, redemptional, language-sustaining, political and community-oriented meta-hermeneutical stance. His creative interpretation is sustained, in significant part, on connections based on term recurrence in other passages, imaginative intertextuality, allegory and tropological usage.

Because Brock does not wish to offer any systematized interpretation process, he is set free to be creative within the broadness of biblical content, grammar, and the interpretive tradition. It is indeed difficult to ascertain how his interpretation could possibly be falsified within this broad path. If no course is laid for arbitrating competing meta-hermeneutical approaches (such as those derivable from other psalms), on which basis should this one be accepted? 'Richness' and inclusivity of methods and meanings does not appear to be enough.

This ambitious book assumes a graduate level of background knowledge on the part of its audience. More analytically oriented readers will likely struggle with its broad-concept, non-delineating style which leaves much of the necessary conceptual synthesis to the reader. The book concludes with a helpful bibliography followed by thorough name, subject and Scripture indexes.

*Ondrej Hron, Protestant Theological Faculty of Universitas Carolina  
Pragensis*

## The Holy Trinity - In Scripture, History, Theology and Worship

Robert Letham

Presbyterian and Reformed: Phillipsburg, N.J, xv+551pp, 2004; \$24.99; ISBN-10: 0875520006, ISBN-13: 9780875520001

J I Packer commends this work as ‘solid and judicious, comprehensive and thorough, abreast of past wisdom and present-day debate, and doxological in tone throughout; this is far and away the best big textbook on the Trinity that you can find, and it will surely remain so for many years to come.’ This commendation is no exaggeration. The work is sheer excellence from first to last and is in a league of its own. It is not a book for beginners but is a volume highly recommended to all pastors.

Part one (biblical foundations) compactly surveys the Old Testament background. The only missing part is the activity of theophany on Sinai and fellowship with Moses. Perhaps Letham followed Wainwright into a mistake when he suggests that there is little, if any, trace of dialogue within the Godhead in the OT? What about Psalm 110 which is quoted often in the NT? And what about Isaiah 49:1-9 and 50:4-11?

The survey of Trinity in the NT is thorough, Jesus and the Father (chapter 2), the Holy Spirit and Triadic Patterns (chapter 3). It is refreshing to reflect on Jesus’ affirmation of binitarianism (John 5) and then his teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit in John 14 – 16. With regard to the Holy Spirit, the author by way of overview, comments as follows: ‘Due to the invisibility and anonymity of the Spirit, his presence is not normally noted, even though he may be known by what he does. Even so, there is a vast increase in references to the Holy Spirit in the NT, compared with the OT. The NT, while never explicitly calling the Holy Spirit “God”, ascribes to him divine characteristics. Among other things, fellowship with one another, and with the Father and the Son, is by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit sanctifies, gives joy in sufferings, opens people’s minds to believe, enables us to worship, and brings about union with Christ’ (p. 56). A twelve page excursus is devoted to ternary patterns in Ephesians.

Part two (historical developments) and part three (modern discussion) is historical theology at its very best, totally fascinating to a Trinity lover and hugely informative throughout.

The Arian controversy was over-ruled for good in the providence of God to attain theological clarity. It was complex. Letham corrects the common myth that Arius challenged the orthodox doctrine, leaving Athanasius as the sole defender, *Athanasius contra mundum*. There was no definitively settled orthodoxy before AD381, and Athanasius was not alone in defending the truth (pp. 119 and 127). Chapters are devoted to the Cap-

padocians, the Council of Constantinople, Augustine, the *Filioque* Controversy and to John Calvin.

From Calvin we jump several centuries into the modern era. There is a chapter devoted to Karl Barth, one to the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner (1904-1984), Moltmann (1928 - ) and Pannenberg (1928 - ), followed by a fascinating and enlightening chapter describing Eastern Orthodox theologians Bulgakov (1871-1944), Lossky (1903-1958) and Staniloae (1903-1993). Finally a chapter is devoted to Thomas F. Torrance who on this subject is at the top of the climbing frame.

With regard to Barth, Letham observes: 'Then came Karl Barth (1886-1968), and it is from him that the recent revival of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity has its genesis. As R W Jenson puts it, "[It is] from Barth that twentieth-century theology has learned that the doctrine of the Trinity has explanatory and interpretive use for the whole of theology; it is by him that the current vigorous revival of Trinitarian reflection was enabled." The translator of the first half-volume of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* suggests that his treatment of the Trinity in that volume is the most significant since Augustine. While this claim is exaggerated, there is little doubt that Barth's work has had a seminal effect' (p272).

A thorough and helpful analysis of the early and later Barth ensues. Did Barth succeed in his doctrine of the Trinity? According to Letham the answer is no: 'There is this persistent ambiguity at the heart of Barth's Trinitarianism that does not change. If he is not modalistic, he will escape from the charge of unipersonality only with the greatest difficulty.'

Having explored and analysed the theology of Rahner, Letham explains the theology of Moltmann and Pannenberg. Thomas Weinandy's refutation of Moltmann is assessed. Letham then turns eastwards to 20th century orthodox theologians Sergius Bulgakov, Vladimir Lossky and Dumitru Staniloae, the latter having worked in Romania where he was imprisoned by the Communist regime for five years.

Letham suggests that Moltmann's Trinitarianism 'encourages a reversal of patriarchal structures and attitudes. His view of God as suffering love, co-suffering with the world, is that of a weak bystander who can do nothing to change the situation. He simply suffers. God is a feminized God, indeed a transsexual deity, a motherly Father and a fatherly Mother. In turn, Moltmann's Christian society is a feminized society of persons in relationship, devoid of authority. One might call it a castrated theology. It is a mixture of Christian teaching and paganism. Whatever else one might say, it is certainly "politically correct"' (p. 312).

In summary of Eastern Trinitarian theology this conclusion is made, 'The Eastern doctrine of the Trinity requires different Trinitarian levels, undermines our knowledge of God, and, in so doing, implicitly questions



the faithfulness and reliability of God. Largely due to its isolation from the West, the East has had no medieval period, no Renaissance or Reformation, and no Enlightenment, and so has never had to grapple with the vital epistemological breakthrough achieved by Calvin' (p. 354).

Thomas F. Torrance's work is helpfully described with pithy, helpful insights. For instance, 'Torrance understands *perichoresis* (the mutual indwelling of the three persons of the Trinity in the one being of God), in a dynamic way as the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of the three persons in an ontological relational, spiritual and intensely personal way.'

Part four opens up four critical practical issues.

1. The Trinity and the Incarnation,
2. The Trinity, Worship and Prayer,
3. The Trinity, Creation and Missions,
4. The Trinity and Persons.

There is a stimulating section opening up the view that for the Reformed the whole of creation is an icon, 'The relationality of the cosmos points unmistakably to its relational Creator' (p. 436).

Analysis is made of Postmodern culture: diversity without unity. 'Postmodernism's world is one of instability, diversity and fragmentation. Since postmodernism allows no objective truth, there can be no fixed point of reference to determine what we should believe or how we are to act. This lack of fixity entails a total lack of stability in everyday life. No basis exists for a commonly accepted morality' (p. 451). While diversity without unity is the mark of postmodernism unity without diversity is the character of Islam: 'Its doctrine of God is the major weak point of Islam. It is the root of all other problems. It is here that the Christian apologete and evangelist can probe, with sensitivity and wisdom.' (p446).

There are two appendices addressing modern attempts by those with a feminist agenda (Bilezikian) to deny order within the Trinity. A six page glossary explaining the meaning of a wide range of terms used in Trinitarian theology is most useful.

Throughout the writing is robustly reformed. Robert Letham is the minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Delaware, and adjunct professor of Systematic Theology, Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. He is an Englishman who having settled in the USA still understands with enthusiasm the finer points of cricket.

*Errol Hulse, Leeds*

## Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books

Eds. Bill T. Arnold and H.G.M. Williamson

Leicester and Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005; 1025 pp. + index; \$60; ISBN: 9780830817825

This addition to IVP's outstanding set of reference dictionaries in every way lives up to the standards both of previous volumes and the current expectations for such a work. The editors have made judicious decisions as to what to exclude, keeping the work from devolving into another standard encyclopedia of place-names and people in the Old Testament historical books – a necessary tool, no doubt, but one of which there is no current lack.

Students will be especially pleased with the cogent summaries and bibliographies offered, while those more at home in the field will likewise benefit from the decision of most authors to push beyond simply a recounting of a 'scholarly consensus' into positive arguments. Topics covered vary from the Davidic line to non-Israelite written sources of history, and from the presentation of persons in the historical books (e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah) to important cities and their archaeological discoveries.

On the whole the contributors show their awareness to the hermeneutical malaise surrounding the reading of historical texts and the reconstructive of a 'history'. The dual challenge is somehow to be concerned and informative about both our own construction of Israel's history and the presentation of that history that we find in the biblical texts. Though some of the authors find a greater gap between those two concerns than others, very little antagonism or altruistic assumptions make their way into the articles. This makes the book a pleasant read, even when one disagrees with the contributor's perspective – no doubt the editors are in large part to be thanked for that.

A number of the articles stand out, such as that offered by Craig Bartholomew on 'Hermeneutics' and reading the historical books; or the treatment of 'Ethics' by Christopher J.H. Wright. Among the more interesting and provocative essays is the lengthy one on 'God' as presented in the Historical Books, written by Daniel Block – one of a number of theologically interested essays (e.g. 'Faith', 'Forgiveness', and 'Word of God'). Not all of these are equally helpful, however, and some even perpetuate the notion that Old Testament scholarship stands in no need of dialogue with theology proper, even on such issues as these: that the proper application of a good methodology will yield what is sufficient for discussing these issues in the Bible. 'Theology' simply comes as a second step (if that) for the discussion. The antidote to such thinking is present in the volume with Bartholomew's essay (who speaks of 'the impossibility of keeping

theological issues out of the debate about the historical dimension of the Historical Books', 405b); but this could have been more widely heeded.

In short this is a work to be highly recommended and, though the large size means it will take up significant precious space on any already-crowded bookshelf, the work is worth every inch.

*Joshua Moon, University of St. Andrews*

## **In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians**

Graham H. Twelftree

BakerAcademic: Grand Rapids, MI, 2007; 351pp., £13.69 ; ISBN 9 780801 027451

Graham Twelftree examines the place and practice of exorcism among early Christians. He notes that while some scholars maintain that exorcism was central activity in the early Church, others argue that it was of very little interest to early Christians. Similarly, while the synoptic gospels portray Jesus as a successful exorcist, Pauline literature and more notably, John's gospel say little on Jesus as an exorcist. This range of views warrants a detailed examination of the subject.

The book has 13 chapters and is divided into 4 parts. Part 1: *Jesus and the Problem of Exorcism*, highlights the options and models available to the followers of Jesus for conducting exorcisms and describes Jesus as a 'Charismatic Magician' wherein the knowledge and art of the magician was combined with the personal force of the practitioner (pp.45-49). Twelftree notes that although there is no direct evidence in the gospels that the disciples were charged to conduct exorcisms, since the Kingdom of God and exorcisms were related and Jesus commanded the disciples to proclaim the kingdom, it may be assumed that they performed exorcisms (p.53).

Part 2: *The First Century*, deals with NT data on exorcisms: *Paul's* general silence on the subject can be explained by the epistolical and occasional nature of his letters (p.77). Similarly, in *Q*, "exorcism has a relatively low priority" (p.87). For *Mark*, exorcism plays a very important role and is "God's promised eschatological rescue of people" (p.128). *Luke* broadens the understanding of the demonic wherein all healing is seen as defeat of the demonic (p.154). In *Matthew*, preaching and teaching is central and not exorcism. But nevertheless can be seen as one aspect of Jesus' integrated ministry model to be followed (p.161). Strikingly, *John* is silent on the subject. This is due to a shift in perception of the demonic: Satan (the father of lies) is encountered in people's unbelief regarding the identity of Jesus. Thus, exorcism is not the response to demon possession; truth is its antidote (p.282).

Part 3: *The Second Century*, examines the place of exorcism in literature from the early part of that century. Interestingly, during this period, there appears to be no interest in exorcism. However, literature from the end of this periods hows a renewed interest in exorcism (p.231). This exercise of using a second century literary lens shows that the importance of exorcism was set aside by early Christians of the early second century; in the latter part of that period, they responded to the demonic in ways that were different from the initial followers and earliest traditions of Jesus (p.293) - the demonic is confronted not by exorcism but in other ways (eg.) conversion: when Jesus, the word of God takes residence in a person or when one receives the Truth, the demon is displaced (p.286).

In Part 4: *Exorcism among early Christians*, based on these varying attitudes towards exorcism in the material surveyed, Twelftree boldly concludes: “the nature of the ministry of the historical Jesus was far less determinative... for early Christian ministry than some of the Gospels writers would lead us to suppose” (p.292). Consequently, the *existence* of Jesus was of fundamental importance to Christianity, not what he did or even said. From his study, Twelftree suggests that in the contemporary church exorcisms should be such that “the demon is confronted not by words, the exorcist, the sacraments, the Lord’s Prayer, nor even the church – but by Jesus” (p.295).

While the arguments in the book are very engaging, some of the texts examined (both in the NT as well as in the second century literature) deal with exorcism only fleetingly or at best, as arguments from silence; notwithstanding, this book provides ample evidence of scholarly research. The clarity of thought makes this study highly readable for theological students, while the meticulous notes, index and bibliography will undoubtedly be appreciated by the serious reseacher. *In the Name of Jesus* will be an invaluable tool for the study of the demonic in the New Testament in particular and for the study of early Christianity in general.

*Mark Jason, The Methodist Church, The Gambia*

## **Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity**

Kevin Giles

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2006; 320pp., £14.99; ISBN-10: 0310266645; ISBN-13: 9780310266648.

With Athanasius, Giles emphatically expounds the complete and unabreviated equality of the Son with the Father, and the complete identity of being of the Trinitarian persons. He charges evangelicals like Wayne Grudem, Bruce Ware and the Moore College, Sydney faculty with a de-

viation perilously close to Arianism, in their advocacy of the Son – while fully God - being eternally in subordination to the Father in function and personal subsistence. Instead, Giles argues, the entire drift both of Scripture and the theology of the church has been to eliminate all forms of subordination, whether in being, status, power, or function. Giles has a tenacious grasp of these vital truths. With most of this book we are in full agreement. It is written at a level commensurate with this journal.

However, Giles paints people into a corner. For instance, Grudem emphatically expounds the full deity of the Son, that he is of the identical being to the Father and that “the only distinctions between the members of the Trinity are in the ways they relate to each other and the rest of creation,” which merely reflects the language of begetting and procession, no more (*Systematic Theology*, 251). Giles also cites myself (24 where I am citing someone else, 206, 243), despite my never having written that the Son is “subordinate”, and despite denials to that effect. He seems unable to distinguish between subordination (imposed) and submission (a free act of love between equals). Giles complains he has been accused unfairly by his opponents of not holding to the differentiation of the persons; he should accord the same privilege to others he expects for himself.

It seems to me that Giles falls into what Quentin Skinner calls “the mythology of coherence” whereby in the interest of extracting a message of maximum coherence, a critic discounts statements of intention that authors themselves make about what they are doing, for “no agent can be said to have meant or achieved something which they could never be brought to accept as a correct description of what they had meant or achieved.” (*Visions of Politics* 1:69-77).

Another problem with Giles is that anything that doesn't fit his thesis is “disjointed and hard to follow”, even when it comes from Augustine (229)! If it is not virtual heresy he claims it is incoherent. Discussion is difficult on this basis.

There are a number of significant historical inaccuracies. Giles believes the Grudem and Moore College line is new, provoked by the feminist movement. He misses the teaching of Reformed orthodoxy on the covenant of redemption, exemplified best by John Owen, to which I and others have raised questions. He also cites Richard H. Muller, 72, 160, 164, whose Calvin scholarship, Giles claims, is “confused, if not mistaken”! Nor is Tom Smail an *English* evangelical!

The issue comes down to Christology. Giles argument appears to require a *kenosis* of deity in the incarnation and a *kenosis* of humanity in the exaltation: in this way *nothing* can be read back from the incarnate Christ to the eternal Son. Similarly, in his exaltation, Christ leaves behind “all the limitations” that taking flesh involved (107). His opponents would

argue that the Son does not act out of character, demonstrating that the almighty triune God lovingly pursues the interests of the other. Giles seems to require a gap between the economic and immanent trinity.

Yet Giles agrees with the “irreversible distinctions” of the persons (230), which Grudem states are the basis for his position. Indeed, in the end he agrees that “the God revealed in Jesus Christ is both Lord and servant.” (103). Can anyone say it better?! What a pity Giles has an edge to his writing. His emotive language clouds the question.

*Robert Letham, Wales Evangelical School of Theology*

## **Last Things First**

J. V. Fesko

Christian Focus Publications: Fearn, Scotland; 222 pages, £11.99; ISBN-10: 1845502299; ISBN-13: 9781845502294

J.V. Fesko, in *Last Things First*, provides us with a refreshing discussion of the first chapters of Genesis on the basis that Genesis 1-11 does not deal with general world history but with redemptive history. The book is compelling reading as he sets out to show that Genesis 1-3 sets forth the theological significance of the failed work of the first Adam, which serves as the entry point for the successful work of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. The basis of his thesis is the fact that in *protology*, the patterns of the beginning, we find all the strands of Christology and soteriology.

Fesko expertly extracts all of these strands from Genesis 1-2 beginning with the creation of the first Adam in the *image* of God. He argues convincingly that the first Adam was created in a covenant relationship with God, properly called a *covenant of works*. The central point of his protology is his exegetical analysis of Biblical texts to show that the Garden of Eden was the *archetypal temple* rather than simply an agricultural garden plot, and that Adam’s responsibilities in the Garden are primarily *priestly* rather than agricultural.

The first Adam, therefore, *served* in this official capacity as the original prophet, priest and king. ‘Adam is the prophet who explains God and proclaims his excellencies; he is the priest who consecrates himself with all that is created to God as a holy offering; he is the king who governs all things in justice and rectitude’. The logical conclusion of this part of his thesis is that there are four elements in the creation dominion mandate: (i) spreading the image of God throughout the earth; (ii) extending the temple to the ends of the earth; (iii) exercising dominion through elements (i) and (ii); and (iv) accomplishing this task with the assistance of his helpmate.

Fesko completes his unpacking of the different strands in protology by

drawing attention to the concept of *eschatology*. There was, he says, 'an eschatology before there was sin'. Following in the *Biblical Theology* of Geerhardus Vos, Fesko states that 'the covenant of works was nothing but an embodiment of the sabbatical principle'. There was a terminus to Adam's covenantal labours. God's own work of six days and a seventh day of rest indicate that Adam was to emulate this pattern in his own work. 'The probation would have ended, death would no longer be a possibility, and Adam would have rested from his duties as vicegerent over the creation once the earth was filled with the image and glory of God'.

By this stage in the development of his thesis not only is the reader grasped by the now firmly identified strands of protology but the writer has managed to excite anticipation of the journey that will follow through the rest of the book. Fesko moves on from the failure of the first Adam to the work of the last Adam. The dominion mandate correctly understood is still in effect; it is fulfilled by the second Adam, Jesus Christ. As the first Adam was placed on *probation* according to the terms of the covenant of works, so the last Adam entered into his public ministry having successfully passed through his probation period in the wilderness. The last Adam carries out his substitutionary work as prophet, priest and king, the offices that have their roots in protology. He has paid the penalty for the broken covenant of works for the people of God through his death on the cross, which ends with the cry *tetelestai*, "it is finished", corresponding, says Fesko, to the completion of creation on the sixth day. Jesus' public career is to be understood as the completion of the original creation with the resurrection as the start of the new.

The last Adam rose from the dead on the third day and entered into the Sabbath rest of God. In his discussion of this eschatological rest, Fesko draws the reader's attention to the related ideas of *inaugurated* eschatology and *consummated* eschatology. The inaugurated eschatological aspect of the work of Christ is *his* entering into the Sabbath rest of creation. However, the people of God still pilgrim to the heavenly city, and so the events of consummated eschatology lie in the future.

It is in this intervening period that Fesko draws attention to the concept of *ecclesiology* and the role of the Church. The first Adam was unable to fulfil the dominion mandate without a helpmate. God created woman for man in order to carry out his temple duties. The last Adam has taken up the work of the original dominion mandate. In Fesko's thesis, the second Eve is the Church, the 'bride of Christ'. The last Adam fulfils the dominion mandate with the assistance of his bride. Fesko, of course, makes it clear that the dominion mandate cannot be fulfilled simply by procreation or by having large families. Christ takes up the work of the dominion mandate by producing offspring with his helpmate, the Church,

and creates, by the power of his Spirit, those who bear his image. The Bride-Church has a secondary role behind that of her husband as is evident in the great commission of Matthew 28:18-20.

The ideas presented by Fesko are not new. Some of them are found at least in seed form in the writings of Geerhardus Vos. Many of them are found in the writings of Meredith G Kline and Greg K Beale. But what Fesko has done is to draw out the strands that are found in these and other writings and given a concise, detailed and systematic explanation of them in relation to the saving work of Jesus Christ. *Last Things First* demonstrates the organic nature of Biblical revelation and is a valuable addition to the study of Biblical theology as well as to the study of anthropology and Christology. It focuses our minds on the fact that salvation is paradise regained. It does that whilst guarding against the misconception that Christ simply restores us to the place held by Adam in the first creation. The last Adam does more than that! He brings us to the place that the first Adam could see only on the horizon of hope. The book is an informative, instructive and enlightening read for anyone interested in God's work of salvation. It is stimulating and pregnant with ideas for those engaged in preaching the good news. I would recommend the book highly.

*Malcolm Macleod, Shawbost, Isle of Lewis*

## **The God of Love and Human Dignity: Essays in Honour of George M. Newlands**

Paul Middleton (ed)

T & T Clark: London, 2007; 224pp; \$130; ISBN-10: 0567031659; ISBN-13: 9780567031655

An exciting and respected cast of thinkers celebrates themes from the work of George Newlands, whom the book's editor hails as 'Scotland's foremost liberal theologian' (p1). While occasionally tribute books are little more than students and colleagues gratefully echoing their honoree's thoughts back to him or her, this book is far more, offering its readers a particularly profitable collection of essays.

After a discussion of doctrinal controversy at Trinity College, Iain Torrance locates Newlands among the 'Glasgow Tradition'. John Webster, always confident in the intellectual resources of the Christian tradition, and, indeed, that gospel dogmatics is the most real way of addressing contemporary issues, sets the notion of human dignity within the economy of redemption. Because 'dignity' is a gift from God, 'creaturely dignity is necessarily a task'. 'God's gift of creaturely dignity gives rise to moral culture', Webster explains (p. 30). The church *is* the said moral culture.

Whereas Webster states that Christian theology 'stands at some dis-



tance from the paradigmatically modern assertion' that autonomy is the basis for human dignity (p23), Hendrik Vroom takes his 'starting-point in the widespread Western tradition that assumes that human beings are autonomous' which is part of 'what grounds the dignity of each human being' (p. 36). Vroom broadens autonomy and so dignity by presenting a more holistic conception of human decision making. Thus, he emphasises the social dimensions of human deliberation, arguing that dignity 'is not attributed to an isolated individual but, as a concept, already has reference to the relationships in which persons live' (p. 48).

Mona Siddiqui considers human dignity in Islam, arguing that the overall portrayal of God as merciful in the Qur'an needs to be taken more seriously in Muslim societies. Richard Amesbury contends that 'there is no reason in principle to suppose that the universality of the idea of human rights is incompatible with the particularity of religion' and that religious diversity is itself a part of affirming human dignity (p. 79). Working from Newlands' proposal that Christians should build 'transformative bridges' to culture that do not necessarily seek to convert its members into traditional Christians, Wentzel van Huyssteen reflects on the great nineteenth-century German composer Richard Wagner whose work, van Huyssteen believes, retrieved deep Christian truths even while relocating them 'within a post-doctrinal, aesthetic religious context' (p86).

David Fergusson's essay is a laughing matter. In light of Newlands' developed sense of humour, Fergusson highlights the redemptive value of laughter. Laughter can be the proper response to the paradox of present human existence – *simul iustus et peccator* – as well as to the folly of human bondage to sin. But it also is a mark of gospel freedom and joy.

After essays from David Jasper, Duncan Forrester, Gerard Loughlin, Brian Hebblethwaite and Walter Sparr, the book finishes with two essays on liberal theology. While liberal theology often fancies itself as progressive and at the forefront of societal progress, Markham argues that it should not be so optimistic about its impact, especially in light of the fact that mainline denominations are dwindling. Instead it should take on the self-image of a biblical prophet who is always unwanted and is the leader, not of a society or successful movement, but of a 'faithful remnant'. Keith Ward attempts to correct the conception of 'liberal' as 'believing little as possible, or believing whatever is most radical, new and fashionable, or being so individualistic in belief that Church tradition, creeds and Bible fade into insignificance' (p191). He does so both by clarifying the nature of liberalism and by showing its Christian warrants.

The diversity of contributors as well as contributions is a testament to the generosity of Newlands' body of work. And while such diversity carries with it the inevitability of live sites for disagreements – indeed, even

these essays are at odds – there is nevertheless a rewarding wealth from which every reader can prosper.

*James R. A. Merrick, King's College, University of Aberdeen*

## **Grace and Global Justice: The Socio-Political Mission of the Church in an Age of Globalization**

Richard Gibb

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2006; 248pp; £19.99; ISBN 1842274597

This addition to the Paternoster Theological Monographs series makes a significant contribution to the re-awakening interest among evangelicals in social and political theology. In it, the author, formerly of the global business consultancy Ernst and Young and now a Baptist Pastor, tackles one of the most complex, daunting and fast-changing issues facing both church and society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that of globalization.

Gibb sets out to address two fundamental theological questions: (1) what does it mean for the Christian community to conceive of itself as a community defined by the covenant of grace? (2) what are the implications of this distinctiveness for its socio-political mission in an age of globalization?

The answers such big questions are of course by no means obvious. It is here that his selection of grace as a defining characteristic of authentic Christian faith provides an interesting and fruitful 'route into' issues of social justice connected to globalization. Gibb's specific interest in the impact of a theology of grace within the broad Reformation tradition also helps to give depth and focus to what otherwise could have been an overwhelming task.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 is on 'Methodology and Foundations'. Chapter 1 contains a very useful survey of some of the conflicting opinions regarding the church's involvement in issues of social and political concern, but it is chapter 2, 'The Church as a Grace-Defined Community' that is crucial for the rest of the book. Through engagement with biblical material, the case is convincingly argued for the holistic mission of the church arising out of an encounter with the transforming grace of God. Gibb contends that if the church is an eschatological community of grace it will pursue the advance of the Kingdom of God on earth. The church is not to be passive or pietistic (a fault of much Reformed and evangelical thought and practice), but active, empowered by the Spirit, motivated by God's grace and passionate for the justice and righteousness that lie at the heart of the God's kingdom reign.

Part 2 is an analysis and comparison of the impact of grace within the distinct political theologies of three influential thinkers within a broadly

defined Reformed tradition; Jurgen Moltmann (chapter 3), Stanley Hauerwas (chapter 4) and Oliver O'Donovan (chapter 5). The purpose of this section is to provide an informed theological framework from which to progress to Part 3, which is 'The Test Case' of how theological insights can be applied in practice to the most pressing challenges posed by globalization. Chapter 6 offers a detailed analysis and evaluation of globalization itself, what is it, how it works, and what challenges does it pose for global justice in the face of weakened nation-states and changing global power relations. Chapter 7 then brings together these interdisciplinary insights arguing that an authentic Christian response to issues of global justice will be rooted in grace and take the shape of Christians from different traditions working together as servants and 'agents of justice' on behalf of the world's poorest and most powerless citizens.

This is no 'book of woe' about the evils of globalization, nor is it an easy 'how to' guide for the Christian life in a globalized world. It is constructive, demanding, theological and clear-sighted. That Richard Gibb has succeeded in his aim of providing a valuable theological resource for the church on the challenge of globalization is evidenced by the 'who's who' of warm commendations from leading evangelicals and thinkers engaged in related fields including Richard Bauckham, David Smith, William Storrar, Richard Mouw, Alan Torrance, Chris Wright, David F. Wright, Stephen Holmes, Mark Amstutz and David Bebbington. A line up like that is hard to ignore, and quite right too. This is a serious book for a serious subject – one which we all face and which is not going to go away any time soon.

*Patrick Mitchel, Irish Bible Institute, Dublin*

## **Israel, God's Servant: God's Key to the Redemption of the World**

David W. Torrance & George Taylor

Paternoster, Milton Keynes, 2007; 224 pp., £9.99; ISBN 978184227 5542

With few exceptions, evangelicals responded in wonder to the rebirth of the Jewish state in May 1948 and at least one Dutch denomination, which had previously held that God had finished with the Jews as a nation, changed its doctrinal stance on Israel. The victories of Israel against overwhelming odds in the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and the daring rescue of Jewish hostages from Entebbe airport in 1976 served to enhance Christian admiration for the Jewish people. Israel's Lebanon campaign in the early eighties, however, proved to be a turning point for the nation's public image. The image of Israel as a vulnerable David standing up to a terrifying Soviet-backed Goliath was speedily

transformed into a reverse image, and with the publication of Colin Chapman's hugely influential work *Whose Promised Land?* in 1983, anti-Zionism began to percolate down into evangelical thinking to the point where it has since acquired a theological respectability bordering on orthodoxy.

*Israel, God's Servant* is therefore a timely and valuable contribution to the current debate in which two Reformed and Barthian scholars, present a politically, historically and theologically positive view of the Jewish people and the modern state of Israel.

The book is divided into four parts. In the first part Torrance and Taylor set forth a brief pro-Israel history of the Middle East conflict, in which they argue that the root of the enmity between Israel and its Arab neighbours is theological rather than political. Referencing Arab leaders and the Hamas Covenant, which states that 'The Palestinian problem is a religious one', Torrance and Taylor contend that it is 'folly not to listen to and accept what Muslims themselves are saying'. While acknowledging Israel's shortcomings as a nation, they argue that the ethical standards demanded of the Jewish state by the western nations are often far higher than the standards those same nations apply to themselves.

The authors tackle in a masterly manner the argument of writers such as Colin Chapman and Stephen Sizer that the New Testament is silent about Israel's claim to the land and that the earthly Jewish nation has been replaced by Christ's 'universal spiritual kingdom'. While Chapman, Sizer and pro-Palestinian authors stress the ethical and conditional demands made on Israel by the Sinai Covenant, Torrance and Taylor argue that the basis of God's relationship with Israel was not primarily legal but gracious. "It is true", say the authors, "that the enjoyment of the full blessings of the covenant were [sic] dependent on Israel's behaviour, but the fulfilment of his purposes through them and their land was not." (p 49)

Focussing on an often neglected Old Testament principle, Torrance and Taylor point to the inextricable link that exists between people and land, underlining that as it goes with the people so it goes with the land. Thus whenever the Jews have been absent from the land in their periods of exile the land has languished. In the nineteenth century, for example, prior to the first wave of Zionist immigration, Mark Twain could describe Palestine as a land of deserts and malarial swamps. It was with the arrival of the Zionist settlers that the land began to blossom and become fertile.

In the second part of the book the authors focus on the history and causes of anti-Semitism and examine the claim made by Jewish and some Christian scholars that the New Testament is inherently anti-Semitic.

The third section addresses 'Replacement Theology', the future of Israel and the issue of Jewish mission. Chapter ten sets out a strong case for why 'The Church is Not the New Israel'. However, though the arguments

are strong, they could be stronger. It will not escape the attention of some unsympathetic readers that in this crucial chapter the authors do not interact with O Palmer Robertson's *The Israel of God*, nor do they attempt to exegete Galatians 6:16, the cornerstone proof text of supercessionism. Furthermore, by accepting the assumption that 1 Peter was written to a gentile readership the authors weaken their case by conceding that "the Church" inherits some of Israel's titles and privileges. Nor is there any reference to the unconditional nature of the covenant with Abram recorded in Genesis 15.

Challenging the view of some respected commentators on Romans 11, Torrance and Taylor demonstrate that the chapter relates to the ultimate salvation of the bulk of the Jewish nation. The authors view the remarkable growth in the number of Jewish Christians throughout the world and Jewish churches in Israel as a sign that we may soon witness the fulfilment of the apostle Paul's prophecy.

The chapter on the priority of Jewish mission, while good, could have been strengthened by an exegesis of Romans 1:16 in the light of the Apostle Paul's missionary strategy in the book of Acts.

Part 4 consists of seven excellent appendices. Of particular value are the appendices 'The Refugee Problem', 'The Intifada, the PLO and Hamas', 'A Jewish View of the Land', 'Ancient Israel's Conquest of Canaan' and 'Jihad and Suicide Bombers'.

The book is marred by the fact that there is no index of Bible references and that the general index is inadequate. Nevertheless, in spite of some shortcomings and oversights, Torrance and Taylor present a case for Israel which is erudite, clear and persuasive.

*Mike Moore, Christian Witness to Israel, Kent*

## **Called to Be Saints: A Centenary History of the Church of the Nazarene in the British Isles (1906-2006)**

T. A. Noble

Manchester: Didsbury Press; 100 pages, 2006; £15, ISBN-10: 0955250706  
ISBN-13: 978-0955250705

The *Preface* indicates that the history of the Church of the Nazarene in the British Isles is still an ongoing story written by a theologian who continues to play a vital role in the story. Still, the book does not lose its critical historical balance as is evident in the first chapter. The opening chapter outlines the various early 20<sup>th</sup> century holiness movements in Great Britain (often influenced by American pragmatism) and places the origins of the Church of the Nazarene within the 'radical holiness' movement of Phoebe Palmer.

The second chapter on George Sharpe focuses on the controversy in Glasgow regarding 'radical holiness' and the eventual expulsion of George Sharpe from his Congregationalist Church, eventually placing him in the arms of the new Church of the Nazarene. This historical background continues in the next chapter with the account of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century holiness mission groups and their emphasis on lay leadership. This includes sketches of important people such as Reader Harris and David Thomas.

As the early history of the Church of the Nazarene developed problems arose including Phoebe Palmer's 'shorter way' and the 'written rules' of conduct imported from America. T.A. Noble does not shy away from these controversies since they have played a part of what has defined the Church of the Nazarene. The account given by T.A. Noble follows the Church of the Nazarene through WWI, the increased importance of 'ordained' leadership, the rise of 'modernism', the creation of Hurlet Nazarene College, and the merger of the International Holiness Mission and the Calvary Holiness Church to the Church of the Nazarene.

At this point the book changes direction and offers an historical account of British Nazarenes involved in world missions. Noble's approach centres in South Africa, Swaziland, and Mozambique. The importance of this chapter is not only the list of key figures but Noble analyses the holistic approach to missions defined by the pioneering work of Dr. David Hynd.

Few historians prefer to write history with many of the participants still alive and active, but the remaining two chapters are written with critical skill. The advent of the 70s saw the influence of the American Church Growth movement and its effect on the British Church of the Nazarene. Within the Church of the Nazarene the buzz word was 'internationalisation', although T.A. Noble sees it as 'foreign mission' outside of America. During this era change occurred in academics with a more established institution in Manchester designed to continue pastoral education with academic research. Behind all of this was the visionary contribution of Dr. Hugh Rae, Principal (emeritus) of British Isles Nazarene College, now Nazarene Theological College. Noble brings the history to a close with a final assessment on theological education.

The epilogue looks for lessons from the past in order to move into the future. Even here as the comments are directed to the Church of the Nazarene there are relevant ideas for the Church in Great Britain. An added feature of this book is the personal anecdotal stories, largely written by Hugh Rae, on various leaders involved in the growth of the Church of the Nazarene in Great Britain.

Although the names and places are familiar to people in the Church of the Nazarene the study is a worthwhile read for the account given of a

church's dedication to the cause of holiness combined with mission. The book is written with theological and historical critical skill and makes a valuable contribution to the study of a relatively small group of dedicated people to the cause of the Gospel within the evangelical movement.

*David Rainey, Nazarene Theological College*

### **The Barth Lectures**

Colin E. Gunton; Transcribed and Edited by Paul H. Brazier

T&T Clark, London/New York, 2007; xxiv+285pp., £24.99pb; ISBN 9780567031402

While Colin Gunton fruitfully enjoyed a life-long engagement with, and formation by, Karl Barth's work, produced numerous articles on various aspects of such, and lectured on the Swiss giant during most of the years he taught at King's College London, he never fulfilled his ambition to pen a monograph devoted solely to this his favourite theologian. Had he done so, these lectures (recorded and transcribed almost verbatim by Paul Brazier, complete with charts, diagrams, live-questions and Gunton's responses) would have served as the basis.

Chapters 1–3 attend to the intellectual, historical and theological background to Barth's thinking. Beginning with a focus on Enlightenment philosophy as it finds voice in Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel – all three of whom 'identified Christianity too closely with modern culture' (p17) – Gunton then turns to Barth's early theological formation in the nineteenth-century liberalism of Harnack and Herrmann, as well as to some other voices and ideas that impinged on Barth's theological development – Blumhardt (who also influenced Moltmann), Schweitzer, and Overbeck, through whom eschatology was re-confirmed on the theological radar.

Barth's engagement with existentialism (Kierkegaardian and other) and theologies of 'religion', 'crisis' and 'dialectics' are introduced in the second and third lectures, and re-appear subsequently throughout the book. Certainly, for the Swiss theologian, 'no road to the eternal world has ever existed except the road of negation' (p33). Thus when Gunton later comes to unpack something of the charge concerning Barth's 'irrationality' through the continuing influence of *Der Römerbrief*, empiricism, and Barth's 'assertive style', the United Reformed Church minister notes:

The influence of empiricism, especially on the minds of English and American theologians, cannot be dismissed. The English, or to be more pertinent, the Anglican theological mind is shaped by a philosophical tradition that does

not find Barth's approach to theology easy to understand let alone agree with ... Part of our intellectual tradition makes it hard for us to understand – particularly an Anglican tradition. Anglicans on the whole like things to be nice and middle way, the *via media*. And there is not much of the middle way in Karl Barth! ... Barth's assertive style does make it difficult for mild-mannered establishment Anglicans to cope with. (p66)

Whether critiquing Augustine, Calvin, Kant, the 'Absolutely Pagan' Hegel (p17), or the 'great opponent' Schleiermacher (p15), Gunton repeatedly identifies that the crucial question for the author of the groundbreaking *Der Römerbrief* remains 'how much of your intellectual method hangs on something foreign to Christianity?' (p42; cf. pp52–3).

To this end, Gunton also devotes an entire lecture (pp53–63) to Barth's 1931 work on Anselm, *Fides quaerens intellectum*, and to the Archbishop's understanding of the relationship between 'proof', 'reason' and 'faith'. He later writes: 'Barth is a post-Reformation thinker with the rallying cry, by scripture alone and by faith alone! Barth found in the Reformation tradition a conception of theology based on a view of God that is linked with human salvation. The problem for Barth with the Scholastic tradition is that it begins with a rational view of God – a rational idea of God abstracted from human salvation. Barth begins with scripture because the God of scripture is about salvation not philosophical argument' (p69). And on a comparison with Schleiermacher: 'the problem with beginning with religion is that it is not theological, it can be, it can lead into theology, but in essence it is not: religion is an experiential concept, not a theological concept. Barth wants a theology that is theological right from the very outset. Barth considers that Roman Catholics and Protestants such as Schleiermacher are wrong in thinking that there can be a non-theological basis for theology. Barth is a theologian you see, to the fingernails' (p69).

From Chapter 4 onwards, Gunton turns to Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, acutely aware that 'there is nothing as boring as résumés of Barth's *Dogmatics*' and that 'the way to get into Barth is to select and to read – read him, there is no substitute!' (p71). Over the next 190 pages, this is precisely what Gunton masterfully helps us do; whether on Barth's theological prolegomena, his witness to the three-fold Word, Trinity, the doctrine of God proper, election, christology, soteriology, ethics or creation, we are all along driven by the only thing of theological interest for Barth, the question 'Who is the God who makes himself known in Scripture?' (p77). 'When Barth is at his best', Gunton writes, 'he looks at the biblical evidence in detail; when he is weak he tends to evade it' (p119).



Throughout, Gunton is rousing his 30–40 mostly MA and PhD students (although the lectures were intended for undergraduates and so leave considerable ground un-traversed and engage minimally with secondary literature) to ‘read as much of the man himself’ not least because ‘the people that write about him are much more boring than he is’ (p9; cf. p39). In a sense, this is one book to ‘listen to’ more than to ‘read’. At times, it is a bit like the difference between a live album and a studio version. Not all the notes are spot on, but the energy – filled with a depth of theological and pastoral insight that betray years of wrestling with the things that matter – is all there.

Such wrestling means that whether expounding a key motif in Barth’s theology or fielding questions, Gunton reveals not only a deep indebtedness to Barth’s thought, but also points of divergence. He is upfront in the first lecture:

Not everyone buys into Barth ... I don’t, all the way along the line, as I get older I get more and more dissatisfied with the details of his working out of the faith ... over the years I think I have developed a reasonable view of this great man who is thoroughly exciting and particularly, I can guarantee, if you do this course, that you will be a better theologian by the third year, whether or not you agree with him – he is a great man to learn to think theologically with. (p10)

Clearly, Gunton is no clone of Barth. Though they are mostly unnamed, he draws upon Coleridge, Owen, Zizioulas and Polanyi as allies in order to attain a measure of distance from Barth’s theology (and that of Barth’s student Moltmann), notably on creation, trinitarian personhood (Gunton prefers the Cappadocians), natural revelation, Jesus’ humanity, Christ’s priesthood, the Word’s action as mediator of creation, ecclesiology, and an over-realised eschatology, among other things (see pp52, 74, 82, 88–90, 96, 133, 142, 148, 170–1, 186, 200, 212, 227, 236, 250, 253–4, *passim*). Gunton reserves his strongest criticisms for what he contends is Barth’s weak pneumatology (for which he blames Augustine and the *filioque*): there is ‘not enough of the Spirit accompanying and empowering Jesus at different stages of his ministry’ (p200). Again: ‘the second person of the Trinity is made to do a bit more than he does in Scripture’ (p212). However, Gunton is always cautious and respectful: Barth ‘never really forgets anything, he is too good a theologian for that. And when you are criticizing Barth it is only a question of where he puts a weight; he never forgets anything, he is too good a man for that’ (p171). Even on the Spirit, Gunton suggests that he can only be critical here because of what he has learnt from Barth already: ‘That’s the great thing about Barth: he

enables you to do other things that aren't just Barth but yet are empowered by him. Yes, that's his greatness' (p200).

While the reformed theologian is 'too-multi-layered a thinker to have one leading idea' if there is one, Gunton suggests it is that of covenant: 'that from eternity God covenants to be the God who elects human beings into relation with himself' (p149), that from eternity the triune God is oriented towards us. Gunton's chapter on Barth's revision of God's election in *CD II/2* is an astounding example of his adroitness and élan as a theological educator. Not many teachers could summarise so sufficiently and with such economy (just 12 pages!) what for Barth is the root of all things, 'creation, atonement, all' (p115), that is, election. Gunton concludes by suggesting that Barth's effort was 'a huge improvement in the crude determinism of the Augustinian tradition, which did not represent a gracious God. The Augustinian doctrine replaces grace with gratuity: God gratuitously chooses group A and not group B – this is not the God who seeks out the lost [even Judas] and does not reject them' (p121).

This volume is significantly more than merely a course on the theology of the twentieth century's superlative theologian. It is also a reminder that to read Barth attentively is to be introduced to a broader dogmatic and philosophical tradition. Moreover, it is to be led to do so by one of Britain's ablest pedagogues. A foreword by Christoph Schwöbel and a warm introduction by Steve Holmes prepare us for one of the freshest introductions to Barth available. Again, we are placed in Professor Gunton's debt.

*Jason A. Goroncy, University of St Andrews*

## **Pantheism: The Other God of the Philosophers**

John W. Cooper

Nottingham: Apollos, 2007; 358pp, £19.99; ISBN: 1844741745

Contemporary theology is vociferous in charging that classical Christian theism has been distorted by its philosophical underpinnings. Proponents of the immutable 'God of the Philosophers', so the charge goes, embarrassed by the biblical witness to a God who busies himself in history, must resort to anthropomorphic exegetical tricks; philosophical notions of divine eternity and aseity make a charade of God's loving relationship with creation; theological issues of theodicy, incarnation, and freedom further inveigh against the tradition's transcendent deity.

Especially since the nineteenth century, classical theism is being jettisoned for pantheism, an ancient conception of the divine previously detected only among mainstream theology's shadows. The belief that God and the world exist in merely qualified distinction, the world exist-

ing 'in' God ontologically, panentheism claims to be a *via media* between theism and pantheism that is scientifically credible and theologically appropriate for our era.

In what Langdon Gilkey described as modern theology's "war with the Greeks", Calvin Seminary philosopher John Cooper's *Panentheism* is a non-belligose counter-offensive. Courteous and fair in considering and handling criticisms lodged against the traditional formulation of God, Cooper maintains classical theism of a confessional Reformed variety, and aims in *Panentheism* to convince that, all things considered, panentheism is a poor replacement for it. Far from being able to claim the biblical 'high ground', panentheism too stems from Greek philosophy and, furthermore, its historical course from Plato to the present indicates that the flaws intrinsic to its origin have been exacerbated as it developed. In his historical and apologetic aims, Cooper succeeds magnificently, rendering real assistance to students, pastors, and scholars by making explicit the implicit foundation on which much contemporary theology is constructed, and doing so through patient, intelligible analysis.

A wide-ranging, historical survey, *Panentheism* first treats Plato's ambiguous analogy of a divine Soul-body for the Creator-creation relationship, and the neo-Platonic doctrine of the emanation of all things from Being, as prepotent for blurring the distinction between God and world and investing notions of participation in the divine with ontological weight. A succession of medieval and early modern thinkers who reworked these neo-Platonic tenets within Christian theology like Pseudo-Dionysius, Nicolas of Cusa, and Jakob Böhme show the skirted path panentheism took into modernity. Marks of a later, full-fledged panentheism emerge in this period: necessary creation, God's infinity as containing all opposites—even non-being, the dialectical return of all things to the Source.

Cooper locates the turning point between classical and modern panentheism in Schelling and Hegel. They tipped neo-Platonism's vertical hierarchy of being on its side so that divine emanation became historicized; now, God actualized his existence in co-operation with humankind's development. It is this 'horizontal' panentheism that attracts modern theologians by harmonizing divine transcendence and immanence and converging neatly with modern science. Indeed, Cooper argues convincingly that the issue of human freedom divides classical and modern panentheism and gives the latter genuine appeal as the only theistic option that ensures human freedom—with all the risk that entails for God's own being.

The proliferation of modern panentheism is well represented in *Panentheism*. Broad movements like process, scientific, and ecological theology join meaty individual chapters on Tillich, Teilhard de Chardin, Pannenberg (a controversial inclusion) and Moltmann. Cooper argues in

closing that Scripture and philosophical and theological coherence prefer a renewed classical theism to panentheism in explaining how we are 'in' God (Acts 17:28). Panentheism, because it blurs the distinction between Creator-creature, compromises the triune God's freedom and sovereignty, and spawns theologies hard-pressed to condemn sin and evil as truly alien or to account for the agapic nature of God's creating and redeeming love.

*Todd Statham, McGill University*

## **Communion & Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church**

John D. Zizioulas, edited by Paul McPartlan

T & T Clark, London, 2006; 315pp, £25.00; ISBN 0 56703 1489

This volume continues the study of personhood and the Church that Zizioulas began in *Being as Communion* (1985). Both collections of essays present "a relational ontology in which communion constitutes the key idea for ecclesiology as well as anthropology (xiii)." The two volumes complement and balance each other, *Communion & Otherness* emphasizing the importance of otherness for relationality and communion, and *Being as Communion* emphasizing the importance of relationality and communion for unity, but the present volume does stand on its own.

After Rowan Williams's panegyric foreword, Zizioulas offers a masterful introduction to his relational ontology and his theological method. The first chapter demonstrates the sweeping movement of Zizioulas's thought, moving from his doctrine of the immanent Trinity to Christology and ecclesiology, and then to a relational anthropology that calls for an ecclesial, ascetic and eucharistic ethos. As this chapter (composed for this volume) assumes subsequent argumentation, readers unfamiliar with Zizioulas should skip it, then read it as the conclusion.

Chapters 2-5 detail the basis for Zizioulas's relational ontology in the immanent Trinity, the doctrine of which he develops with special attention to the Eastern Church Fathers and the pneumatological dimensions of their discussions. Particularly noteworthy is chapter 3 (new for this volume), in which Zizioulas argues that the Father is 1) the source of the Trinity, and, therefore, 2) the One God. Certain to provoke objections from Western readers, this essay should be read in light of the whole work, especially Zizioulas's contention that: "God is not, logically or ontologically speaking, first one and then many; he is one in being many (11, cf. 126)." Also controversial will be Zizioulas's continued adducing of the Cappadocians in support of his doctrine of the immanent Trinity and relational ontology, though he explicitly defends the fidelity of his patristic exegesis against doubts raised elsewhere.

Next, in two standout chapters, Zizioulas treats communion and otherness in the divine economy and creation. Chapter 6, “Human Capacity and Incapacity”, remains a monumental work of christological anthropology and it is hoped that its republication will allow its voice to be heard in the nature-grace debate. In chapter 7 (newly translated), Zizioulas further clarifies the created-uncreated dialectic, i.e., the absolute difference between the Creator and his creation, by analyzing the Christology of Chalcedon. This analysis leads Zizioulas to present salvation as the restoration of right relations between others by the removal of sin’s distortion of difference into distance and division, not the abolition of radical difference—particularly that between Creator and creature. The final chapter (new for this volume) brings together the practical implications of the preceding material by outlining an “ecclesial mysticism” built not upon self-consciousness, but upon our gracious adoption into Jesus’ sonship, and our participation in the loving relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, “a relationship which allows each of these persons to emerge as utterly other while being utterly one” (306).

As with most creative theological proposals, readers likely will find much with which to disagree. Yet, if one takes the time to engage and not simply dismiss, this volume will pay handsome dividends. This is particularly true of the work’s *grundmotiv*: the free existence of divine and human persons. Alongside this crimson thread, there are a host of other themes that bear investigation, including the doctrines mentioned above, the way Zizioulas brings philosophy and theology into dialogue, and his combination of rigorous theological argumentation and pastoral priorities. Those interested in ecclesial theology will find in this volume much worth contemplating and an able dialogue partner.

*Luke Ben Tallon, University of St Andrews*

### **Judgment & Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul**

Chris VanLandingham

Hendrickson Press, Peabody, MA, 2006; xvi + 384pp, \$29.95; ISBN 9781565633988

This book, a revision of the author’s dissertation, advances two main claims. He contends that E. P. Sanders’ construction of first century Judaism as a fundamentally gracious religion is mistaken. He also maintains that many, if not most, students of Paul have misunderstood what Paul means by ‘justification’.

After a brief introduction that helpfully outlines the argument of the book, VanLandingham in the first chapter seeks to prove that post-OT Judaism did not understand election to be entirely gracious. Rather, elec-

tion is 'a reward for proper behavior' (18). This understanding of election was drawn from the Old Testament itself. The Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic, and other biblical covenants were established upon the basis of human obedience (60f.). In the second chapter, the author contends that for the Intertestamental writers eternal life should not be termed a 'gift' or 'reward' (67). Obedience, rather, was the 'criterion for survival or approbation at the Last Judgment.' (171) That meant that one could not be certain of his eternal destiny until the Last Judgment (171-74).

In the third chapter, VanLandingham asks whether Paul is in agreement or disagreement with the above model. Paul agreed with Judaism that one's eternal destiny would not be settled until the Last Judgment, and that that determination would be on the basis of his obedience (240). Consequently the believer's justification is not 'itself the declaration one will receive at the Last Judgment' (241). It does not refer to 'the verdict of acquittal a believer will receive at the last judgment' (17).

Paul's understanding of justification occupies the fourth and final chapter. The author denies that the Greek verb *dikaioo*, conventionally translated 'to justify,' is a strictly forensic term. The verb and its cognates 'embrace both the notions of (1) forgiveness, cleansing, and purification of past sins and (2) an emancipation from sin as a ruler over humanity' (331). The verb should be translated 'to make righteous' to reflect the transformative character of 'justification.' These findings impact our understanding of well-known passages. For example, he sees Paul saying at Rom. 3:21-26 that 'For the believer, Jesus' death procures the forgiveness of sins, but also so thoroughly cleanses and purifies the believer from the effects of sin that sin no longer holds the believer under its influence.' (326) The Last Judgment, VanLandingham elsewhere says, 'will then determine whether a person, as an act of the will, has followed through with these benefits of Christ's death' (335). It is that person's obedience and not those benefits that will be the basis of his acceptance or rejection at the Last Judgment.

VanLandingham is undoubtedly correct to affirm that many Intertestamental writers understood election to be grounded upon obedience. He is mistaken, however, to project such an understanding upon the Old Testament. The gratuitous and unmerited election of Abraham (Gen. 11-12) is fatal to his thesis.

The author's language concerning the role of obedience at the Last Judgment is not altogether clear. At times he frames the question in terms of judgment *according to deeds*. This doctrine the apostle Paul readily affirms. At other times VanLandingham frames the question in terms of judgment *on the basis of deeds*. This doctrine the apostle Paul strenuously

denies. Here, consistency of terminology would have lent clarity to the question VanLandingham is attempting to answer.

VanLandingham's proposed definition of justification is objectionable on at least two grounds. First, Paul does not define justification in terms of inward transformation. The handful of Old Testament and non-Pauline New Testament passages that the author adduces in order to support translating Paul's use of the verb *dikaioo* 'to make righteous' are not compelling (pp. 254-72). Paul categorically excludes the believer's performance (past, present, or future) from the basis of his justification (Gal. 2:16). The sole basis of justification is the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:10-13, Rom. 3:21-26, 5:12-21).

Second, in claiming that our present justification has no reference to the Last Judgment, the author cannot account for the manner in which the apostle inexorably links justification and glorification at Rom. 8:30. It is therefore astonishing to see VanLandingham deny that Paul delights in the certain vindication of the believer at the final judgment at Rom. 8:31-39 (326-8). It is this point, in the end, that separates Paul from his non-Christian Jewish contemporaries.

*Guy Prentiss Waters, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, MI*

## **Research for the Academy and the Church Tyndale House and Fellowship: The First Sixty Years**

T. A. Noble

Inter-Varsity Press: Leicester, 2006; 336pp, £19-99; ISBN-13: 9781844740956; ISBN-10: 1844740951

Some years ago, I resigned from the Tyndale Fellowship. I reasoned that there was no point in paying an annual subscription when I rarely managed to get to a Study Group meeting (living at the other end of the country) and when most of the articles in the *Tyndale Bulletin* were more geared to Old Testament and New Testament studies than to my own discipline of systematic theology.

Some time later, a good friend (and now Chairman of Tyndale House) Andrew Clarke told me that this had been a wrong decision and that the work of Tyndale House and the Tyndale Fellowship was very important and that I should support it even during those periods when I felt I wasn't able to fully participate. Shortly afterwards I was asked to give a paper at the next Christian Doctrine Study Group and I rejoined, having repented of my foolishness!

If I had ever again doubted the importance and the significance of Tyndale House and the Tyndale Fellowship, this book would have provided the perfect antidote. Dr Tom Noble, whose personal involvement over

many years ably prepared him to write this book, provides us here with a careful and scholarly account of the origins, development and progress of Tyndale House and the Tyndale Fellowship. One cannot read these pages without recognising the enormous achievements of the House and Fellowship over these past 60 years. Begun at a time when evangelical biblical scholarship was weak and not valued within the Academy and when there were few evangelical books available for theological students, the House and Fellowship have made a huge contribution to the present situation where evangelical scholarship is very influential and where the annual publications list of the Fellowship and of those researching at the House runs to many pages.

The story has been written on the basis of the minutes of the various committees which, over the years, have had responsibility for the work. There have been many such committees! Indeed, one of the fascinating aspects of the story is the apparent inability of those responsible to agree a final structural matrix for relating the House and the Fellowship to each other and to the parent organisation, UCCF. Having been written on the basis of these minutes, the book could have been rather stilted and formal but Tom Noble's personal knowledge of events combined with his many contacts with key people, helps bring the minutes to life.

A Biblical Research Committee was set up by what was then the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Christian Unions (now UCCF) in 1938. This Committee, including G.T. Manley, Alan Stibbs, John Wenham and Douglas Johnson, organised a conference at Kingham Hill in 1941 and it was here that the proposal was made by Dr W.J. Martin for an 'Institute and Library for Biblical Research'. There were varying perspectives on the need for such an institution, as well as disagreements on the relationship between the specialist biblical scholar and the place of biblical and systematic theology, so it was 1944 before what is now Tyndale House was purchased, with generous help from John W. Laing, the builder. The following year, 'The Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research' was established.

The book goes on to describe the slow but steady progress of the work since then (punctuated by the occasional crisis – usually financial) and lists the various scholars who served on the committees, worked at the House, led the Study Groups, gave Tyndale Lectures and so on. These names provide a litany of evangelical leadership: F.F. Bruce, D.M. Lloyd-Jones, J.N.D. Anderson, Donald Guthrie, Leon Morris, John Stott, J.I. Packer, David Wright, Howard Marshall and many others.

The development of the House itself is also a story of hard work and real commitment. The almost constant programme to upgrade and improve the facilities, the need to expand and grow the available accom-



modation, the installation of computer equipment, the establishment of a world-class biblical library linked in to the library of Cambridge University – all of this combines into a remarkable achievement.

From this distance, it is difficult to grasp just how few evangelical biblical scholars were working at university level when the House and Fellowship were established. Only when we understand the position in 1944 and compare it to the present situation can we really appreciate what has been accomplished. The aim of the work has always been to encourage biblical scholarship at the highest level, in the context of a believing, evangelical community. That has been achieved and the vision of the early founders has been realised.

This book not only tells the story of an institution and a fellowship but provides an important contribution to the overall history of evangelical life and scholarship in Britain in the twentieth century. For that reason alone, it is a valuable and useful book.

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### **Christ, Providence and History: Hans W. Frei's Public Theology**

Mike Higton

T&T Clark International, London and New York, 2004; 287pp. £40; ISBN 0567080528.

On the occasion of Mike Higton's *Christ, Providence and History: Hans W. Frei's Public Theology* inclusion in the 'Contemporary Theology Collection' module now in pre-production for Logos' popular Bible Software (Libronix), we review this 2004 book as a potential addition to electronic libraries as well as to physical collections.

*Christ, Providence and History* is a first-class treatment of an important modern theologian. Higton's conceptual framework is admirably conceived and executed without discernable deficiency. Occasionally Higton's prose is a bit jargon-laden and dense—near inevitable reflections of his primary material—but on the whole, his writing is a welcome elucidation of Frei's notoriously challenging corpus. Higton also grasps quite firmly the central concerns that animated Frei's main conversation partners, thus avoiding all manner of false tensions and superficialities. Most importantly, Higton simply understands what Hans W. Frei was about, and is able to narrate the essentially unified project that underlies Frei's work.

And what is this project? Like his fellow Yale alumnus Jonathan Edwards, Frei died before he could personally provide us with a definitive answer. But according to Higton's reconstruction, Frei took seriously the nature of the foundational narratives of the Christian faith (the Gospels)

as ‘history-like’ and inherently *public*, and, through integration with a doctrine of providence, worked out a reading of theology and history that was consistent with these commitments: ‘Christian theology is most at home in public. At its source are narratives of public circumstance, of action and interaction in public spaces; it lives by ongoing engagement with communities whose lives are never lived entirely in private; and it issues in descriptions and counsels which are applicable in the public world of politics and history’ (p1). Among other things, Higton’s *Frei* is thus positioned to supply a needed critique of the privatised Christianity that so plagues the contemporary church.

*Frei* is perhaps best known in evangelical circles for his 1974 *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, a polished wrecking ball that appears as deeply critical of Enlightenment attitudes to biblical hermeneutics and history as could be desired. He points out the consequences of the church’s abandonment of the kind of figural interpretation that formerly held the canon together. But as Higton’s highly sympathetic monograph nonetheless exposes, *Frei* is less hospitable to the evangelical perspective than this exercise in ‘ground-clearing’ might indicate. Among other problems is *Frei*’s apparent agreement with H. Richard Niebuhr on the nature of history as being ‘both *uniform* and *contingent*’ (p28). If we were to take the biblical narratives as seriously as *Frei* apparently wants us to, history would seem to be neither of these things. History is always subject to the non-uniform (supernatural) intervention of God, and is ultimately rendered non-contingent by God’s ineluctable foreknowledge and sovereign determination. No matter how *Frei* wishes to transcend or transform Troeltsch, buying into key Enlightenment presuppositions about history is to give away the game.

Higton thinks that ‘*Frei*’s work can be seen... as one long attempt to laugh at Strauss—not because he has found a way of ignoring him, but because he has learnt to defeat Strauss with Strauss’s own tools’ (p35). While I am sure that this is true to *Frei*’s understanding, such a ‘defeat’ of Strauss is more apparent than real, as evinced by Higton’s summary of *Frei*’s baseline approach to the resurrection: ‘...Christ can be more nearly “present” if it is not claimed that he has been *factually* raised from the dead’ (p114, emphasis mine). *Frei* has several other things to say on this subject, but does so in language I find evasive. If he is still somehow able to laugh at Strauss, I for one do not get the joke. We might note in passing *Frei* also finds ‘moral substitution’ in which Christ died ‘to satisfy the wrath of a literally offended deity’ to be ‘poor fare’ (p113).

In the end, we are left with a theologian whose root concerns were shaped by theological parameters not shared by evangelicals, and whose resulting project is only barely intelligible to us however laudable in-

tent. Why then, read *Christ, Providence and History*? If nothing else, it is a model of how theological scholarship ought to be done. And even if we do not like his answers, Frei is raising precisely the sort of questions evangelicals ought to reflect upon as often as possible.

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### Some Recent Commentaries

Following his massive commentary on 1 Corinthians published in the New International Greek Testament Commentary series, Anthony C. Thiselton has published *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Eerdmans, 2006, xvi+325pp, ISBN 9780802826824, \$30). It is a masterly digest of the largest work, with additional applicatory and reflective comments. It will prove much more accessible than the larger work, and a useful addendum to it.

The NIGTC series has itself been enhanced with the addition of Darrel L. Bock's commentary on *Acts* (BakerAcademic, 2007, 864pp, ISBN 9780801026683, \$49.99). Like his two-volume work on Luke, this commentary is marked by thorough exegesis and theological acumen. It opens up the sociological and historical contexts of the story of the early church, with detailed interaction with the Greek text.

Inaugural volumes in the new Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary series include James McKeown on *Genesis* (2008, 408pp, ISBN 9780802827050, £13.99) and Geoffrey Grogan on *Psalms* (2008, 502pp, ISBN 9780802827067, £13.99). This series seeks to bridge the gap between systematic theology and biblical studies, and demonstrates faithful exposition of the text followed by theological reflection on it. McKeown has some good discussion of the Genesis and science debate, and Grogan's Appendix on 'Preparing a Sermon on a Psalm' is one illustration of the practical nature of this commentary. The series promises to be fruitful and useful.

From the prolific pen of Ben Witherington III comes *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Eerdmans, 394pp, ISBN 9780802824882, £21.99). His thesis is that in these letters Paul is engaging in the transformation of existing social institutions, and he sees Colossians as a primary engagement, Ephesians as a follow-up and Philemon as personal and intimate rhetoric. While one may quibble with the general approach, there is much that is useful in this volume, not least in the historical and cultural engagement.

*Iain D. Campbell, Review Editor*

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