

BOOK REVIEWS

Lang, Bernhard. *The Hebrew God: Portrait of an Ancient Deity*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.

One of the most informative and controversial books of the 1990s in the field of Old testament studies was Mark S. Smith's *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990). By comparison, this new volume by Bernhard Lang is more balanced, readable, and theologically sophisticated. As a "portrait of an ancient deity," this volume presents a history of the religious concept of "God," attempting to survey the development of Israel's Yhwh (or "Yahweh," the LORD) from small beginnings in the cult of a remote and politically insignificant group of pastoral nomads. Eventually this deity became the sovereign Lord of ancient Hebrew Scriptures, and ultimately the object of worship in Christian monotheism.

Lang brings an astounding breadth of knowledge to the task. He demonstrates a complete grasp of ancient Near Eastern data, both textual and iconographical, which he balances with insights from religious, anthropological, and cultural studies in a way few authors could do. These are, in fact, his two stated beginning assumptions, which "underlie and inspire [his] presentation": the indebtedness of the Hebrew God to the ancient Near Eastern civilization (perhaps "embeddedness" is better), and the value of anthropological theory (pages *viii-x*). By the latter, Lang refers to the theories of a celebrated French scholar of Indo-European religion and folklore, Georges Dumézil. Dumézil's view of the "tripartition" of ancient Indo-European society (priests, warriors, and food producers) reflects a corresponding tripartition of the pantheon into sovereign gods, war deities, and divine providers of wealth, as well as other tripartite applications in mythology, medicine, folklore, and law. Lang denies that this approach is unique to ancient Indo-European civilizations, expands the paradigm and applies it to biblical religion. Thus the three divine functions, or divine gifts, are used by Lang as images for studying the character of the Hebrew God as "Lord of Wisdom," "Lord of War," and "Lord of Life." The third image is subdivided into "Lord of the Animals," "Lord of the Individual," and "Lord of the Harvest."

This book is a bold, innovative, and energetic accomplishment; impressive for its sweeping portrait of the history of God. In Lang's adept hands, the ancient Near Eastern data are appropriately applied and the anthropological model he has adopted is useful. While the general portrait is compelling, the specifics are

occasionally less persuasive. At times the tripartitioning anthropological system of Dumézil seems artificial, as in the discussion of the four throne names of Isaiah 9:6 [Hebrew 9:5] (page 10). In general, this is the case in Lang's acceptance of an Israelite royal enthronement ritual, in which the king was asked three questions corresponding to the three answers: wisdom, victory, and long life (9-10). Any sociological or anthropological model, no matter how heuristic in its effects, has limits to its explanatory powers. Its applications to specifics are often helpful but may appear forced at some points of the discussion, even doubtful at others.

So for example, in using Dumézil's model to reconstruct the role of El and Hothmah in early Israelite thought (pages 24-28), we have moved into a highly speculative enterprise. Likewise, the volume tends elsewhere to visualize and reconstruct early Israelite polytheism on the premise that the few vestiges of polytheism present in the Bible can be supplemented by Ugaritic and Babylonian religious conceptions to arrive at an accurate portrait of early Hebrew polytheism. But as with Smith's book over a decade ago, there is much that is speculative and theoretical in such reconstructions, which stand on less *terra firma* than frequently admitted.

The volume concludes with two appendixes, one on the names of the Hebrew God (pages 198-208) and another surveying the cultural history of the ancient Near East (209-15). These are surprisingly rich on content for their brevity, and due to Lang's clarity and command of materials; these appendixes are alone worth the price of the book.

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Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 3, *Companions and Competitors*. New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2001

In his much-anticipated third volume, John P. Meier widens the scope of his critical and historical microscope from an examination of Jesus only (as in volume 2) to an examination of Jesus from the vantage point of his relational context. The purpose is to understand more about the historical Jesus vis-à-vis his relationships: friendly and intimate, and confrontational. Using the same methodology and criteria that he applied to biblical and non-biblical texts in the previous volumes (discontinuity, coherence, embarrassment, multiple attestation), here Meier examines Jesus in his immediate social context, and particularly honing in on the "essentially Jewish nature of these relationships." The chapters can be read and understood by a variety of audiences, and they conclude with technical footnotes appropriate for scholarly study.

Meier distinguishes between three groups of people who surround Jesus relationally, who, by degrees of intimacy, form concentric circles around Jesus. The groups are categorized in this way: first, the outer-most circle of crowds that followed Jesus in a physical sense; second, the middle circle of disciples whom Jesus called to follow him

in both a physical and spiritual sense; and finally, the inner circle of the Twelve. Meier readily recognizes that members of each group fluidly move between those three circles, and that especially with the first, outermost group, the task of nailing down precisely composed the crowds in Palestine ca. 28-34 AD is both difficult and speculative at best. The innermost circle is the most clearly defined, with only two names disputed, Thaddeus and Simon the Zealot. Meier analyzes Jesus' enterprises in the context of Israel's history: the Elijah-like prophetic and miraculous ministry, and the choosing of the Twelve Disciples—echoing the Twelve Tribes. Meier's focus on those who are typically posited antagonistically toward Jesus (and vice versa) is particularly limited to Jewish religious and political groups. Namely, they include the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and Qumranites, Herodians, Samaritans, scribes, and Zealots.

As for Meier's methodological application to Jesus' social milieu, he is both rigorous and comprehensive in application to Jesus' social milieu, he is both rigorous and comprehensive in application. One example of the strength of his work is in the lengthy critique of Josephus. Josephus claims relationship and identity with the Pharisees, and Meier essentially dissects Josephus' writings about the Pharisees to reveal the impact that relationship with them has had on his historical recounting. It proves to be a compelling and illuminating insight both to the Pharisees, and to Josephus himself. In the same way, the reader comes away from the volume with a clearer feel for the life and times of Jesus, that is, the interpersonal dynamics that reflect mutually on Jesus and the individuals and groups that both shaped and were shaped by his life and message.

Meier carefully categorizes people and groups in terms of relevance to understanding Jesus: on the one hand, Jesus' interaction with those favorable to his ministry and message, proceeding to those most intimate with him; and on the other, his interaction and verbal sparring with opposition groups. Meier deftly examines the evidence available and makes appropriate inferences of the political, religious and personal characteristics of Jesus and his message. By covering a vast amount of ground in the biblical narratives and non-biblical sources, Meier produces a detailed, richly historical, and plausible landscape in which to understand Jesus. In the volume's concluding chapter, Meier recounts and underscores the particularly Jewish nature of these interactions and the Jewish nature of Jesus and his message.

One critique that may be appropriately leveled against the methodology of this volume is that of selective omission. At the end of Meier's concluding chapter, he underscores his position as an historian: he cannot appeal to the resurrection as a compelling explanation to social dynamics and historical events because it is, in his definition, an exclusively "theological explanation." That is, resurrection inherently is not an explanation for social forces that can be subject to empirical verification and mutually agreed upon by "any and every fair-minded observer, believer and non-believer alike." In light of the prior two volumes, and all the work of peeling theology from events involved here, I was baffled and disappointed that Meier would rigorously engage many other major (and minor) controversial issues, yet here resolutely relegate the resurrection to solely a theological event entirely outside the limits of his methodology. To disregard the plausibility of the resurrection, and thereby ignore the religious and social impacts of it, not to mention the personal price paid by

those intimately acquainted with Jesus, simply because it is theologically thorny seems out of character at the least. Apparently the stakes of even probing the plausibility of Jesus' resurrection, though dripping with theology, are too high for "any and every fair-minded person" to agree.

Finally, the book as a whole is a rich resource for the social context critical for a sound hermeneutic for theological study. Though there is great debate between those who necessarily disinfest theology from history, and those to embrace theology to better understand history, Meier's work provides a fresh view of Jesus who is firmly seated in his historical and social context. We are provided with an opportunity to more adequately see Jesus, and furthermore, we have the message of Jesus about a kingdom that relevantly engages its contemporaries. With this clearer picture we are afforded an opportunity to interact with Jesus and his message that still smells of first century Palestine, which, in sum, provides fresh and engaging starting point, from where we can set the theological trajectory in congruence with history.

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Witherington, III, Ben. *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001

Witherington has written a full-dress research commentary on Mark that manages to participate in contemporary technical discussions, offer original contributions to scholarship, and provide an accessible resource for pastors and educated laypersons.

Witherington proposes that Mark was composed to be *read* by individuals rather than proclaimed to early Christian communities, and that its primary aim is "molding and shaping those who are already disciples" (11). He argues that the Gospel was likely written by John Mark, who knew both Peter and Paul, who composed it for Gentile believers in Rome in the aftermath of Nero's severe persecutions. Accordingly, the Gospel's presentation of Jesus as one who suffers for humanity's salvation provides a model for Christian believers in their own distress. Moreover, he emphasizes Mark's historical reliability over against its literary and theological creativity, though he acknowledges that the Gospel presents some sophisticated and effective literary strategies.

In addition to his claim that Mark was written for private reading, Witherington offers other provocative arguments. He maintains that Mark 16:8 is not likely to be the Gospel's original ending, and that the basic outline of that lost ending may be found in Matt 28:9-10, 16-18. He also rejects the notion of a Messianic Secret as a literary or theological devise, suggesting that Jesus himself may have sought to avoid misunderstandings concerning his messianic mission. In both cases, Witherington appears more comfortable with attributing difficult problems in Mark to historical circumstances rather than to Mark's possible literary artistry. (Indeed, when he rebuts

certain kinds of narrative and reader-response criticisms, the author will seem persuasive only to those who already agree with him [56-59].) Witherington also stresses the apocalyptic and revelatory dimensions of Mark in helpful ways, noting that for Mark trustworthy knowledge requires revelation and that perception of God's realm subverts conventional power configurations.

The commentary's structure is both innovative and helpful. Sections of the Gospel receive a brief introduction followed by an original translation. Then Witherington offers detailed comments on smaller units. These comments include helpful excurses, including issues such as "Sickness and Sin in the Ministry of Jesus," "Echoes of Isaiah 53 in Mark 10:45?" and "A Brief Guide to Those Perplexed about the Meaning of Mark 13." Each major section of the commentary concludes with "Bridging the Horizons," a helpful integration of theological, literary, and homiletic concerns.

On some important issues this reviewer does not share Witherington's sensibilities. Witherington at once acknowledges Mark's subversive political potential, but in comparison with other commentators he also downplays it. With respect to Jesus' abrupt treatment of the Syrophoneician woman in 7.24-30, Witherington acknowledges that Jesus' speech is shocking, but he softens its effect. And, as we have seen, Witherington repeatedly chooses historical reliability over literary design. In my view his arguments appeal to evidence that is strong, deep, and creative, but he sometimes does not fully acknowledge the evidence to which his opponents appeal.

In short, this commentary is a valuable and accessible resource for pastors, interested laypersons, and scholars. Its author clearly loves Mark's gospel, sometimes to the point of noting when Matthew or Luke smooth over Mark's precious rough edges. Moreover, Witherington's erudition is no less than admirable, engaging the full breadth and depth of scholarship to offer his own passionate and informed interpretations.

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Volf, Miroslav. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Trans. Doug Scott. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

Miroslav Volf's *After Our Likeness* has become a frequently cited source in current ecclesiological discussions since its publication in 1998. It is full of important insights, but has a couple of flaws, particularly in biblical interpretation, that need examining.

"The church's fellowship is always in transit between the historical minimum and the eschatological maximum of the correspondence to the love in which the trinitarian persons live" (p. 207). This is a key idea in Volf's rather dense book on church and Trinity. His intention, he says, is "to make a contribution to the trinitarian reshaping of Free Church ecclesiology" (197).

After Our Likeness may be described (reflecting the author's personal background

and theological formation) as a charismatic trinitarian theology in the Free Church tradition. It is a key work in systematic ecclesiology, for several reasons. Because it brings three great ecclesial traditions into dialogue—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Free Church—it makes an important ecumenical contribution. It is refreshing to see the likes of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, John Zizioulas, John Meyendorff, and Vladimir Lossky brought together with such Free Church theologians as Gordon Fee, Robert Banks, Gilbert Bilezikian, and especially John Smyth (with plenty of Moltmann and Pannenberg thrown in). This has never been done before.

Volf, formerly professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theology Seminary and now at Yale Divinity School, places his Free Church perspective in dialogue with Roman Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiologies through an analysis of the writings of Ratzinger and Zizioulas, his principal dialogue partners. *After Our Likeness* is the inaugural book in Erdman's *Sacra Doctrina* series. It is a translation of the original 1996 German edition, though the publication data at the front of the book does not make this clear.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I consists of two long chapters: "Ratzinger-Communion and the Whole," and "Zizioulas: Communion, One, and Many." In the second, somewhat longer part Volf elaborates his own ecclesiology in five chapters: "The Ecclesiality of the Church," "Faith, Person, and Church," "Trinity and Church," "Structures of the Church," and "The Catholicity of the Church." Part II could in fact stand alone as Volf's own ecclesiology, though all along the way he cross-references to Ratzinger and Zizioulas. (In classroom use, a professor might consider assigning Part II only, after giving a summary of Part I.)

To grasp the central thrust of the book, it helps to understand what the book is *not*. It is not a biblical exposition, though Volf does in the latter part make strategic use of the New Testament, particularly Paul's writings, in establishing the charismatic nature of the church. The book is not written for a popular audience, nor does it make many practical applications, though implications for church practice abound. Rather surprisingly, Volf hardly references Karl Barth, even though Barth's fundamental ecclesiology parallels Volf's at a number of key points.

Positively, this book is an important corrective to traditional ecclesiology, whether Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant (including popular Evangelical). Over the centuries most ecclesiology has largely ignored or misunderstood the biblical nature of the church, grounding it more in tradition than in Scripture and the trinitarian nature of God. *After Our Likeness* is a persuasive theological justification of the trinitarian and charismatic nature of the church; a significant defense of biblical ecclesiology.

Volf is relentless in ferreting out contradictions in the ecclesiologies of Ratzinger and Zizioulas. Here the discussion has to do primarily with the relationship between the one and the many in the church (with attendant issues of authority, structure, and office). Volf effectively uses theological reflection on the Trinity (following especially Moltmann and Pannenberg) to point out the difficulties and inconsistencies in classical Orthodox and Roman Catholic ecclesiology.

Volf notes that despite general acceptance today that "ecclesial communion should correspond to trinitarian communion," yet surprisingly "no one has carefully examined

just where such correspondences are to be found" or "where ecclesial communion reaches the limits of its capacity for such analogy." The result, he says, is that trinitarian reflections on the church often say nothing more than the platitude that unity cannot exist without multiplicity nor multiplicity without unity, or they demand of human beings in the church the (allegedly) completely selfless love of God. The former is so vague that no one cares to dispute it, and the latter so divine that no one can live it. We have as yet no detailed examination of the correspondence between Trinity and church. ..My goal [is] to sketch out the trinitarian foundation of a nonindividualistic Protestant ecclesiology within the framework of a critical discussion with Ratzinger and Zizioulas (191).

Volf begins by positing "faith as a simultaneous incorporation into both trinitarian and ecclesial communion." Here is "the initial cornerstone of a trinitarian understanding of the church, since only by already understanding the initiation process itself in a trinitarian fashion, and only by understanding the church as more than just a fellowship based on will can one arrive at the notion that the fellowship of Christians should reflect the trinitarian unity of God." Volf maintains that "those assembled in the name of Christ, even if they number only three, can be an *εικων* ('image') of the Trinity" (197). Though "this thesis may seem radical, it is not new," Volf maintains. He quotes Tertullian, and of course Matthew 18:20 is the underlying biblical foundation. In fact Matthew 18:20 functions as a key ecclesiological text for Volf (as it did for Barth), together with John 17:21, Galatians 2:20, and 1 Corinthians 14:26, among others.

Volf is aware of the limits of analogy when basing ecclesiology on trinitarian categories. In particular, one must be alert to "the difference between the historical and the eschatological being of Christians." He writes insightfully,

For a *sojourning* church, only a dynamic understanding of its correspondence to the Trinity is meaningful. If the church remains at a statically understood minimum of correspondence to the Trinity, it misses possibilities God has given it along with its being; if by contrast it reaches for a statically understood maximum, it risks missing its historical reality, and certainly if it claims to realize this maximum, its self-understanding turns into ideology .. The ecclesologically relevant question is how the church is to correspond to the Trinity *within history* (199f; emphasis Volf's).

The second half of the book explores this question. Volf's sixth chapter, "Structures of the Church," is particularly important because here the practical implications of the author's proposals become evident. Volf discusses the charismatic nature of the church by reflecting on the relationship between charisma and Trinity, drawing out lessons for ministry, ordination, and institutional forms.

Volf fully exposes the contradiction inherent in any hierarchical understanding of the Trinity (and hence of the church). The Trinity is "a community of perfect love between persons who share all the divine attributes", thus any "notion of hierarchy and subordination is inconceivable." Ratzinger and Zizioulas are both wrong: "The structure of trinitarian relations is characterized neither by a pyramidal dominance of the one (so Ratzinger) nor by a hierarchical bipolarity between the one and the many (so Zizioulas), but rather by a polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many" (217).

This, then, is central to Volf's understanding of the church as image the Trinity: The church is a polycentric community of symmetrical reciprocity. Volf therefore advocates a "polycentric participative model of the church" as the only theologically coherent and biblically sound way of understanding the church in light of the reality of the Trinity.

This reasoning leads then to Volf's central argument: "The symmetrical reciprocity of the relations of the trinitarian persons finds its correspondence in the image of the church in which *all* members serve one another with their specific gifts of the Spirit in imitation of the Lord and through the power of the Father. Like the divine persons, they all stand in a relation of mutual giving and receiving" (219; emphasis Volf's). Here Volf's trinitarian charismatic understanding of the church is clear.

Volf discusses at length the question of ecclesial structure and institution, based on this trinitarian-charismatic model. Trinitarian logic must be carried through to the level of structure: "The essential sociality of salvation implies the essential institutionality of the church. The question is not *whether* the church is an institution, but rather *what kind* of institution it is" (235; emphasis Volf's). But Volf is careful to define what he means by "institution." Institutions, he says helpfully, are "stable structures of social interaction." In this sense, one can note a correspondence between Trinity and church. "The institutionality of the church can be conceived in correspondence to the Trinity only because the Trinity is in a certain sense an 'institution,'" though "only analogously." For this reason, the church's structures and institutions "should. . . correspond to the Trinity as well. That they are able to do this derives from the character of the charismata that structure the church" (235). Or, as he says later, "Trinitarian relations can serve as a model for the institutions of the church because the triune God is present in the church through the Holy Spirit, shaping the church in the image of the Trinity" (239).

Given this understanding of institution and the fact of the charismata, Volf can say,

The members of the church do not stand over against the church as an institution; rather, their own actions and relations *are* the institution [sic] church. Although the institutional church is not their "product," but rather is a "product" of the Spirit, the church does not stand over against them as a kind of objectified, alien entity, but rather is the manner in which they relate and behave toward one another (241, emphasis Volf's).

Thus in the broadest sense, the church of course is an institution. Volf adds new insights here, pointing out that the very "structural" dimensions of the Trinity have implications for structuring the church. Yet the nature of the Trinity and of the freedom of the Spirit mean that charismatic relations and charismatic ministry cannot be formalized into church law, which would be over-objectivity and restrict the ministry of the Spirit through persons and the charismata. Volf argues that "any legal formalization of spiritual activity would result in a false liberation of people", "church law can provide religious certainty only by tethering religious life" (242). Volf means by this (at least in part) that charisma cannot be hardened into ecclesiastical office or other formalized structures that limit and purportedly guarantee the effective operation of the Spirit.

Volf is here working especially with 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. He writes, "Exercising charismata is essentially *an open ecclesial process*. It cannot be the purpose of legal regulations [i.e., canon law and formalized structures] to restrict this process, but rather to protect its openness" (243, emphasis Volf's). This has clear implications for all church structure. Only structure which "protects the open ecclesial interaction" of all believers and gifts can "do justice to the church itself and be commensurate with the fact that the pluriform ecclesial ministries actually derive from the sovereign Holy Spirit present both in individuals and in the congregation as a whole as the firstfruits of the eschatological reign of peace" (243).

So far, so good. But here Volf introduces a problem which he doesn't resolve. This has to do with his understanding of "office" and "laity." He writes, "The church lives through the participation of its members, that is, the laity and the office holders, and is constituted through them by the Holy Spirit" (222). But why this categorization, this distinction between "laity" and "office holders"? Volf has laid no adequate basis for it, and the drift of his discussion of charismata would argue against it. Surprisingly, Volf never gives a biblical or theological definition of "laity." In his discussion of Ratzinger and Zizioulas, he uses "laity" in the traditional bipolar clergy/laity sense. Volf criticizes the clergy/laity "bipolarity" in Zizioulas (116); one would have thought therefore that he would directly confront this unbiblical (and theologically unsustainable) bipolarity later. But he doesn't. He says forcefully, "The church is not a monocentric-bipolar community, however articulated, but rather fundamentally a *polycentric community*" (224, emphasis Volf's). But in fact Volf never really overcomes the clergy/laity bipolarity. This seems inconsistent with his "polycentric participative model" of the church.

Remarkably, Volf begins his treatment of ordination by saying, "In the preceding discussion, I have simply presupposed 'office' and 'ordination.'" He notes that he is here "following the long Protestant and Free Church tradition which, apart from a few exceptions such as the Society of Friends or the Plymouth Brethren, has not questioned the institution of office as such." He is following in particular John Smyth who, Volf notes, was "by no means hostile to ordained office," being in fact deeply "indebted to the Reformed tradition, which held the institution of office in high esteem."

Volf acknowledges that there is really no biblical basis here, so he attempts "to ground the institution of office and ordination *theologically*" (245; emphasis Volf's). Volf, however, merely assumes what is to be proved. He asserts, with no biblical support, "'Offices' are a particular type of charismata" (246). There is "no difference in principle between officeholders and other members", the distinction "does not divide the church into two groups." But of course it does. Volf says "all members of the church, both officeholders and 'laypersons,' are fundamentally equal." The argument fails, however, because Volf has made them unequal by inserting the more restricted category of "office," or what he calls (with no biblical support) "charismata of office," thus by implication limiting the meaning of "laity." This is like saying: Men have authority over women, but of course in principle they're equal.

Volf affirms that "office can be based on no other [authority than]... the authority of Christ," and "emphatically cannot be hierarchical" (246, footnote). Precisely. So where is this authority specified or given? This is a mere theological assertion; Volf

does not show biblically or even logically how office could be based on Christ's authority, and his theological argument begins by assuming what needs to be proved: That there is such a thing as "charismata of office."

Volf supports his assertion of office with purely pragmatic or functional arguments. He admits that "office really does not belong to the *esse* of the church"; a congregation with "no official officeholders can be a church in the full sense." But officeholders are necessary pragmatically (or sociologically). "In this limited sense, (ordained and nonordained) offices are a necessary part of ecclesial life" (248). If Volf were merely saying that every church needs and will have leadership, fine. The New Testament doctrines of the charismata, universal priesthood, and Christlike servanthood provide for that. But Volf is asserting much more when he associates "office" with "charisma." This confuses the issue since there is in fact, as Volf admits, no biblical doctrine of "office." Volf reifies "office" in a way that is not warranted by the New Testament and not necessary theologically.

Volf thus comes down on the side of tradition over Scripture here. At this point he is closer to Ratzinger and Zizioulas than to Paul or other New Testament writers. In fact, he fails to carry through the logic of the trinitarian and charismatic models he has been working with. The drift of his logic would have been to say: There is no biblical (or necessary theological) distinction between "office" and "laity"—first of all because "laity" means *all* the people of God, including *all* the charismata without exception, and secondly because the New Testament simply does not address the question of office.

What is lacking here is definitions of "laity," "office," and "charismata of office." Since Volf is so careful to define everything else, it is rather surprising that he merely assumes and does not define these crucial categories. As nearly as I can discern, by "charismata of office" he means essentially the equipping charismata of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher (Eph. 4:11). But he gives no justification for his assumed distinction between gift (or gifted person) and office. (Theologically, one could posit here a sort of grid of possible options, ranging from a hard-and-fast total identification or merging of office and charisma, on the one side [classical Roman Catholic ecclesiology] to a total rejection of office or recognized particular leadership on the other [something like Plymouth Brethren ecclesiology]. But a number of in-between options could be posited, and evaluated biblically.)

Volf ends his book with a fine discussion of the catholicity of the church. He notes that although the Reformed tradition posits catholicity as a quality of the *invisible* church, it is a mere "ecclesiological platitude to say that the invisible church is catholic." The decisive question is how catholicity can be ascribed to "concrete, visible churches" (270; emphasis Volf's).

Volf's answer is that catholicity must be understood eschatologically, as "an anticipation of the still outstanding gathering of the whole people of God, albeit an anticipation in which communal eschatological salvation is experienced concretely." He believes that "the catholicity of the concrete local church" cannot coherently be understood "as a realization of the existing universal church" but only as its anticipation. "The catholicity of the local church is a historical anticipation of the eschatological catholicity of the people of God in the totality of God's new creation" (272).

A local church is catholic in this anticipatory sense because it now partakes of the fullness of God's salvation, including what Volf calls "the catholicity of charismata." In the Free Church perspective, Volf argues, "each congregation contains *all* ministries within itself necessary to mediate salvation" and "the totality of its members is the bearer of these ministries. Here catholicity means *the fullness of spiritual gifts allotted to the local church* (273; emphasis Volf's). A true local church is catholic, in other words, because it partakes of the fullness of grace for its own life and witness and thus anticipates the eschatological fullness of God's plan in the new creation.

Is this then a catholicity that has no practical relevance beyond the local church? In other words, is this merely another form of a platitudinous invisible (because totally future) catholicity? Volf's reasoning would seem to lead in this direction. However he insists, "A church cannot reflect the eschatological catholicity of the entire people of God and at the same time isolate itself from other churches" (275). He therefore posits three "identifying marks of catholicity" (though it is not clear how these derive from his preceding argument): (1) openness to all other churches, (2) loyalty to the apostolic tradition, and (3) universal openness to all Christians, irrespective of race or social class—what Volf calls "the creational dimension of catholicity."

"There can be no catholicity," Volf maintains, "without a willingness to accept other Christians and other churches precisely in their otherness (see Rom. 14:1–5:13)!" This is only "the minimum of catholicity," however; churches "should strive to reflect historically the eschatological shalom of the whole people of God through positive integration (not assimilation!) of the entire breadth of cultural wealth within God's rich creation" (278).

Rather strangely, though understandably given his defense of the Free Church tradition and his critique of Ratzinger and Zizioulas, Volf limits catholicity to the *local* church. He says (in what may be an overstatement) that in Free Church ecclesiology one can "speak only about the catholicity of *local churches*. The reason is apparent enough, since in the strictly theological sense this ecclesiology allows for no other church than the local church" (emphasis Volf's). He admits that this is "the Free Church dilemma of catholicity," for how can any one local church be catholic? Volf attempts to resolve the dilemma by using a "qualitative understanding of catholicity" rather than a quantitative one, appealing to the "manifold grace of God" in 1 Pt. 4:10 and to the church's "encounter with the richness of creation" (270).

But why limit catholicity to the local church? This is not necessary either biblically or theologically. Here it seems Volf is overreacting to Roman Catholic and Orthodox views, positing too sharp a split between the local and universal church. Interestingly, while Volf *assumes*, with insufficient biblical basis, charismata of office, he misses a structural element of New Testament ecclesiology for which there is some biblical evidence, and which points beyond this extreme emphasis on the local church: translocal networking. Certainly denominational structures as such have no biblical basis, but the New Testament does not portray simply a scattering of local congregations, each totally independent and autonomous. Rather, Acts and other New Testament books picture active, largely informal networking among the various congregations. We read of frequent, vital interconnection between the hundreds of local church bodies, utilizing the comings and goings of the apostles and their

associates and many hand-carried letters and oral messages. The experience of the early church was one of interdependence and vital interconnection. The New Testament gives numerous hints of this, most notably in references to the many persons who traveled with, or were sent back and forth by, Paul and other apostles and leaders. The many letters to the churches that form so rich a part of the New Testament are themselves evidence and examples of such networking. In this sense, the body metaphor of 1 Corinthians 12 legitimately applies to the whole church, not just to local churches. Theologically this would seem to imply that the proper answer to the vexing issue of catholicity is not global organizational unity, unbridled denominational proliferation, nor local church autonomy, but rather functional, organic forms of translocal networking regionally and worldwide (as I have argued in *The Community of the King*, rev. ed., 2004).

Despite these limitations, *After Our Likeness* is a landmark work in ecclesiology and a significant contribution to ecumenical debate. The most obvious gap is the absence of any dialogue with the Wesleyan (or for that matter Anabaptist or Dutch Reformed) tradition. An author cannot of course be criticized for not doing what he or she never intended. Volf, helpfully and audaciously, set out to dialogue with Orthodox and Roman Catholic perspectives, not others. It is worth noting, however, that John Wesley did something similar, though less systematically. In his ecclesiological reflections Wesley was creatively in dialogue with Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Free Church (principally Moravian) traditions—precisely the main dialogue partners in Volf's work.

The book closes with an affirmation that is also a call to discipleship: "The Spirit of communion opens up every person to others, so that every person can reflect something of the eschatological communion of the entire people of God with the triune God in a unique way through the relations in which that person lives" (282). This affirmation combines and nicely summarizes all the essential themes of the book.

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Dorsey, David A. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.

A book entitled *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* arouses anyone who, like this reviewer, studied Bible at Roberts Wesleyan College and/or Asbury Theological Seminary. David A. Dorsey, like many newcomers to the OT, was "struck by the apparent lack of order within many of the biblical books" and avows "I would never write a book, an article, or even a private letter with such carelessness of arrangement" (9). Fortunately, this initial impression goaded Dorsey to investigate ancient Hebrew literary conventions. He asserts that three organizational patterns uncommon in modern writing, chiasmus, parallelism, and sevenfold structures, commonly occur in the Hebrew Bible. By description and diagram, Dorsey seeks to salvage the OT from any charge of carelessness.

This volume, appropriately arranged in seven units and refined into triune form (20), studies the internal structures of each biblical book and considers the connection between a book's structure and its meaning. Part one (chapters 1-5) explores introductory issues. Part two (chapters 6-38) structures each biblical book. Part three (chapter 39) summarizes and suggests further study.

Part one identifies the problems awaiting the modern reader of the OT, such as the lack of graphic structural indicators and the inherent foreignness of ancient Hebrew literature. Dorsey lists three steps to study the internal composition of the final form of a biblical book: (1) identify the constituent parts or units; (2) analyze the arrangement of the parts; (3) consider the relationship of structure to meaning. These actions echo the work of Traina, and his "trainees," who have taught students to survey units, to detail the interrelationships of parts, and to interpret the meaning of the structured text.

Dorsey begins his overview of investigations into biblical structure with early efforts, such as the v and a , and S. Langston's chapters. He reviews the British School, inspired by R. Lowth, and the Continental School, exemplified by D.H. Müller. Finally, Dorsey notes J. Muilenberg's influential 1968 address, "Form Criticism and Beyond." Despite this activity, there is no comprehensive guide to Old Testament literary structure, a deficiency this book intends to correct.

In Unit 2. Book of the Law of Moses, Dorsey argues for an original Hexateuch. He trifurcates the text: (a) historical introduction to the treaty (Gen. 11-Exod. 19:2); (b) the treaty (Exod. 19:3-Num. 10:10); (c) historical conclusion to the treaty (Num. 10:11-Josh. 24). The heart of the Torah lies in Exod. 34:29-40:38, the report of Yahweh inhabiting the tabernacle.

Dorsey encapsulates each book of the Hebrew Bible, outlines the larger and smaller text structures, and reflects on the significance of the structuring of the material. Generally, Dorsey suggests helpful ways to view the text. His outlines, using varied typefaces are clear.

For future work, Part three proposes (1) exploration of the smaller units of the Bible; (2) investigation of the interplay of structure and genre; (3) determination of how much of a composition's structure an audience as expected to perceive; (4) study of author intentionality; and (5) study of structure and meaning. Dorsey champions, "Certainly it is time for surface-structural analysis to take its place among the important disciplines within biblical studies" (327). This final call, to study both the form and the meaning of ancient texts, is the most valuable part of this work.

With all the helpful guidance this book offers, however, there are gaps in its critical coherence. Three areas stand out: 1) a dearth of older sources in the bibliography; 2) imposition of modern literary sensibilities onto ancient texts; 3) schemes that appear too neatly packaged.

Throughout this text, persons acquainted with inductive Bible study method will marvel that a book dealing with the structure of biblical material and the relationships of parts to wholes never refers to R. Traina, nor to names like Palmer, Thompson, or White, or biblical Seminary. In fact, with rare exceptions, the bibliography lists virtually nothing before 1969. This neglect seems myopic and misguided.

Occasionally the author lapses into thinking that modern literary conventions are superior to ancient, or attempts to read the minds and preferences of ancient peoples.

To mitigate against subjectivity, Dorsey lists *Perceptibility to ancient audience* as one of his safeguards (25). He notes that readers should bring three inestimable personal qualities to the interpretive task (1) common sense; (2) intellectual integrity; and (3) “a hardy aversion to imposing one’s own scheme on the text” (25, fn 27). This caution does not avert Dorsey from writing. “This [linear] pattern is the one most easily grasped by modern readers because it is most familiar to us. It was probably the most comfortable scheme for ancient listeners as well” (27). This specious estimation ignores that even in a modern context learners exhibit varied learning styles and abilities. Perhaps the ancient hearers were also diverse in this regard.

Sometimes, perhaps due to the breadth of the work, the outlines seem stilted. For example, regarding the book of Amos, Dorsey rightly suggests, “The book is a masterpiece of rhetorical skill; and it is carefully and effectively structured” (277). But, he suggests, *à la* J. Limburg’s study of sevens, that Amos contains eleven, no twelve more sevens. Despite the obvious use of numerical structures in this text, this extension to twenty-three sevens seems specious. Dorsey does not address how disparate parts have been subsumed to the sevens. He focuses solely on the canonical text, but students of Amos might want to address this issue.

Regarding the conundrum of the minimum material required to connect units via repetition, Dorsey queries, “could the ancient audience have perceived and appreciated the echo?” (33). But how can a modern reader determine the minimum requirement for an ancient reader or hearer? Dorsey also notes the problem of enthusiasm in outlining the Bible, but he sometimes succumbs to this passion. Perusing the pages of the final product produces a plethora of palistrophes proclaiming the persistent problem of put-on appraisals. Sevenfold patterns emerge with seven-times seven frequency.

This book is a useful contribution for students of the Bible. Dorsey has boldly outlined his views.

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Hess, Richard S., and Gordon J. Wenham, editors. *Make the Old Testament Live: From Curriculum to Classroom*. Eerdmans, 1998.

In this practical volume, thirteen authors, connected by Tyndale Fellowship, tackle topics ranging from introducing the Old Testament to novice undergraduates to supervising doctoral dissertations. Occasionally they attain their goal of offering “fresh perspectives on teaching the Old Testament today” (Back Cover). Sometimes fervor for content supplants superior student centered approaches. The book ends with an annotated bibliography.

In *Bringing Alive the Old Testament: Its Role in the Wider Curriculum* (3-18), Richard S. Hess suggests three ideals for teaching in a theological college: modules, gradual progression, and integration with other theological disciplines. Unfortunately, Hess’s

mode of instruction is traditional and uninspiring—lecture, quiz, final. The ‘coach’ metaphor he employs for Hebrew instruction would have inspired his other modules.

Craig G. Bartholomew begins *A Table in the Wilderness: Towards a Post-liberal Agenda for Old Testament Study* (19-47) with the query: “Is Old Testament studies in its present state bread or stones?” (19). One might answer, “stoned wheat.” Postmodern questions might slacken the unhealthy ties that liberal, also evangelical and conservative, Christianity has to modernity. “Christians ought to allow the Word to frame and interpret our world rather than our understanding of the world framing and interpreting the Word” (26). This quixotic quest for induction is laudable.

A Theological Approach (48-60) by James McKeown recognizes the challenges of creating a comprehensive and coherent OT theology for students. He calls OT educators to “help students to shake off the shackles of uncritical approaches to the Hebrew Bible” (50). He emphasizes connecting the OT message with the Church. He advocates highlighting main OT themes. McKeown combines Hogenhaven’s historical approach with Dyrness’s thematic design, to show the OT “as a record of the living encounters of individuals and of a nation with God in the rough and tumble of everyday life in the Middle East before the coming of Christ” (60).

Paul Barker, in *Correctly Handling the Word of Truth—Teaching the Old Testament as a Christian Book* (63-79), aims at integration and interpretation. In a theological college one must integrate the OT with the NT Biblical theology, though dead, still speaks because the “old covenant acknowledges its own impotency and that it awaits the new” (66). While Barker isolates points of pathology, he offers little balm for the ills diagnosed. And though his comparison of the Bible with an Agatha Christie mystery is entertaining, the NT cannot be confused with Poirot cracking an otherwise unfathomable case.

Robert L. Hubbard, Jr.’s *A Star-Spangled Old Testament: Teaching in the American Seminary* (80-92) focuses on teaching OT in an evangelical seminary. His profile of average “American evangelical seminary students” includes their increasing biblical illiteracy. What shall an OT professor do to train these pragmatic, latter-day Marcionites? Hubbard’s simple recipe for a balanced diet is “enough criticism to stretch the mind, enough devotion to stir the spirit” (88).

A Religious Book in a Secular University (93-100) traces the challenges of teaching OT where there is the lingering Enlightenment exaltation of human reason. T Desmond Alexander comments that academic freedom abates when one notes that the OT is “a text which anticipates a response from those who read it” (96). Alexander considers balancing primary and secondary sources, methods of reading the Bible, and ignorance of biblical world.

Gordon J. Wenham, *Teddy-Bear Sacrifices: Selling the Old Testament in a Religious Studies Department* (101-110) considers OT teaching where a “detached” approach reigns. Biblical claims of inspiration and exclusivity brings problems here. Aptly, Wenham does not begin with an offensive, but with a “spoonful of sugar.” “One of the first tasks of the teacher should be to make the students actually read and enjoy the Old Testament” (103). Wenham recognizes the potential challenges of knowing the students and knowing what they have read.

Rebecca Doyle instructs the Ph.D. plebe: "Beginning, Throwaway sanity to start" (112). In *From Student to Scholar: Surviving as an Old Testament Ph.D. Student* (111-121), Doyle deals with (1) The Department, (2) The Process, and, notably, (3) The Life. "How does one count the cost? Time, money, emotional and spiritual elements all make it add up to a very expensive venture" (118). Noting the inherent isolating nature of Ph.D. work, Doyle commends the support of church and cronies.

From the other side of the desk, Hugh Williamson, *From Scholar to Student: Supervising Old Testament Ph.D. Students* (122-130), begins, "my hope that I carry my Christian concern for people over into my graduate supervision, just as I try to love my neighbor in every context" (122). Principally, Williamson recognizes his own limitations. By serving no more than six scholars, he remains accessible and affable. This is but one of his many levelheaded suggestions!

Ida Glaser, *Teaching the Old Testament in the Context of Islam* (131-143), concludes that one cannot separate the divine and human elements of the Bible. Students should develop their own competence in reading the OT rather than mimic the teacher. She describes several "games" for teaching the OT in a Muslim context: comparison, understanding another faith in light of one's own, questions of origins, Islamic apologetics, dialogue. Glaser invites Christians to enter the story of Muslims by means of the OT.

In *Perspectives on Teaching the Old Testament from the Two-Thirds World* (144-157), M. Daniel Carroll R. tries to "help readers to globalize their appreciation of biblical studies" (144). He discusses the pragmatic focus of education in the Two-Thirds World. He notes that the evangelical churches and institutions of the Two Thirds World offer an alternative to the liberationist approaches the First World often tenders. The next challenge is the development of Latin American evangelical OT literature.

David W Baker's *Studying the Original Texts: Effective Learning and Teaching of Biblical Hebrew* (161-172) recognizes that most students never gain facility in Hebrew because they have "less-than-adequate exposure to it" (162). Perceptive professors must adapt for pragmatic pupils; providing a compelling motivation for language mastery. "Perhaps the small sip will show enough of the delicacy of the drink to convince that further quaffs will not only be beneficial, but enjoyable. We need by any means possible to assist in getting the students intoxicated by their very first sips" (163). Baker emphasizes induction versus rote memorization.

Finally, we arrive at Clive Lawless' chapter, '*Let the Wise Listen and Add to Their Learning: Modern Education and an Ancient Book*' (173-190). In reviewing the previous essays, Lawless lingers most on "What are the determinants of learning?" These include previous knowledge, learning skills, emotions, intellectual development, and approach to learning. He affirms shifting away from the customary "students as sponges" approach to the faculty person as facilitator for lifelong learning, because "Immuch of what students learn will date, but skills as learners will endure" (190).

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Schwarz, Hans. *Christology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

For Readers hoping to find a biblically and historically informed introduction to the major questions and issues in Christology, this is the book. Synthesizing centuries of insights, Schwarz offers less a definitive statement than a presentation of the boundaries that define faithful Christological reflection. His one central commitment is that history matters—primarily the history of Jesus, but also that of the church's witness.

The book is divided into three major sections, which reflect Schwarz's method. The first involves the question of the historical Jesus. Clearly, for Schwarz evidence concerning the historical Jesus is essential for contemporary theology. "If," he claims, there is no theologically perceivable continuity between the two, we are not proclaiming a living Christ who can make a claim on our lives today" (p. 71). And yet this section presents a history of research without venturing a specific proposal.

The second section presents a critical synopsis of Christological reflection throughout history, from the New Testament witness to the modern era, and it is here that Schwarz sketches his view of the historical Jesus. Thus, Schwarz acknowledges both the continuity and the distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. His solutions are sometimes tentative, and they require fine distinctions. For example, Matthew and Luke regard the virginal conception as historical, while their "main intent" in relating it is theological, and Schwarz leaves open the question of whether the tradition is historical or not (pp. 84-86). And while Jesus apparently did not identify himself as Messiah (p. 106), he did regard himself as the "direct and final self-disclosure of God" (p. 110). Schwarz, who has taken the admirable trouble of familiarizing himself with Jesus research, occasionally falls out of touch with that discipline. For instance, he attributes Jesus' death to the agitation of the Jewish authorities, while most NT scholars would emphasize the role of the Roman authorities (p. 95).

The second section also includes Schwarz's brief reviews of NT Christology and of the history of Christology. Apparently this survey serves two primary functions: it outlines the appropriate boundaries for contemporary theology, while Schwarz also gleans myriad potential insights. This survey, however, ends somewhere in the 1960s, and it does not engage the contributions of contemporary theologians from Asia, Africa or central and South America. (A later attempt at constructive engagement with feminist Christology seems disconnected from the rest of the book [pp. 277-87].) One major commitment emerges: Schwarz is more interested in seeing how Christology emerges in human particulars—primarily the historical Jesus, but also among those who grapple to understand him—than in theorizing Jesus based upon given philosophical principles.

It is from this principle that Schwarz's third section develops. He takes seriously Jesus' Jewishness, but he recognizes that faith in Jesus separates Christians from Jews. He also seems to judge Jewish messianic expectation as a sort of tragedy, creating what appears to be a patronizing attitude toward Judaism (pp. 218). But his clear emphasis is upon Jesus as "word and deed," as revelation of God for the world. Christology begins not with human philosophical conventions or theological traditions, but with the specificity of Jesus. And yet Jesus' words and his deeds do not

simply stand-alone; they are defined by his death and resurrection. Jesus' death reveals the full potential of human evil; God embraces this reality and through the resurrection transforms it to bring life and healing. Reflecting upon "Christ's presence and Future," Schwarz embraces the possibilities that salvation may transcend the way of Christ and that Christ's salvation may extend beyond the boundaries of the church. He also argues that an ecclesiology that takes Jesus seriously will never identify God's reign with a particular institution or structure. And refusing to imagine what the parousia will look like, he emphasizes what the parousia means for the present over the mechanics of the future.

This is a valuable book for its critical engagement with history and for its commitment to discuss difficult issues. While Schwarz is not strong in venturing specific proposals, his major commitment—that contemporary Christology should be in continuity with the witness to Jesus—nourishes a vibrant vision for believers and the church.

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Witherington, Ben. *New Testament History: A Narrative Account*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001

Witherington begins his account of New Testament History with a prolegomena on the nature of history in the ancient world. In particular, he distinguishes between the ancient genres of history and biography (or lives) and places Matthew, Mark, and John in the category of ancient biography and Luke-Acts in the category of ancient history. The next sixteen chapters trace a chronological path through history from Alexander the Great's conquest of Jerusalem in 332 B.C. to the reign of Domitian at the end of the first century A.D. This chronological path is woven from multiple sources, including the New Testament, to create a tapestry of knowledge around the events, customs, and people of the first century.

The first chapter is a broad sweep of the period beginning with Alexander the Great and ending with the conquest of the Roman general Pompey. In this chapter, Witherington begins the helpful dialogue boxes that he will continue throughout the book. For example, in one box in this first chapter, he discusses the effect and extent of hellenization on the people of Palestine. There are also helpful timelines given throughout the book. These make for easy references to otherwise complex historical details. In addition, most chapters contain sections entitled "A Closer Look" that address one element in more detail, as in his discussion of "Pharisees" in chapter one or his discussion of Paul's possible imprisonment in Ephesus in chapter 11. Each chapter also contains captioned pictures that illustrate either people or places or other aspects related to New Testament history.

The second and third chapters deal with the rise of the Herodians and the time of Jesus up until the beginning of his ministry and therefore address larger time periods

than the remaining chapters. The chapters that follow are mostly in 3-5 year increments and deal with events such as Jesus' ministry, the birth of the church, the movement outward from Jerusalem, the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, the movement west, periods of persecution, and the reign of Domitian. As before each chapter continues to rely upon multiple sources. Witherington has to make decisions about the dating of the New Testament epistles in order to use them in his chronological account of history. One example is his argument for the early dating of Galatians in which he states, "This letter is the earliest extant Christian document" (238). While he gives good arguments to support his position, it would be helpful if there were acknowledgement given that these are not universally agreed upon positions.

There are two weaknesses in the book. First, the prolegomena should include more analysis of the meeting between ancient and contemporary historiography. Much progress has been made in the study and writing of history in the last two centuries, some of which is reflected in Witherington's approach, and some brief reflection on this would strengthen our understanding of the historical task as we undertake it in the twenty-first century. Second, the book is titled "A Narrative Account." Again, a brief description at the beginning of the book about what constitutes a "narrative account" over against other types of historical recountings would make this a stronger work.

Despite these weaknesses, this is an excellent book. It is highly accessible and engaging—at several points it becomes a page-turner that is difficult to put down—a high compliment for a work of scholarship. The recounting of history is vivid and has the potential to draw the reader into the world of the New Testament in a way that makes the time period come alive. Such an introduction will make excellent reading for classroom use or for the general reader.

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Ciholas, Paul. *The Omphalos and the Cross: Pagans and Christians in Search of a Divine Center*
Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003.

Christianity did not burst forth on the world stage full-grown from the head of God, but entered quietly through the birth of a child in a land steeped deeply in tradition. The first Christians were Jews with a history and culture as old as Mesopotamia and Egypt, or one could say, from Abraham to Moses. But, as odd as it may seem, early Christianity as a religion spread through the pagan world much faster and with a greater impact than it did among its Hebrew brethren. The world of early Christianity was encapsulated in Greco Roman polytheism represented by Apollonian religion, and in the words of the author, "The cult of Apollo was often singled out for attack, for it was viewed as the most enticing promise of divine providence in the midst of misfortunes and historical threats" (p. 174). It is in this foggy world of

seeming contradictions that Paul Ciholas masterfully charts the readers' course through the endless maze of interdisciplinary documentation to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of man's search for a religious center, as in cohesion.

The book follows a logical progression of religious thought from the old to the new, from Ge to Apollo to Christ. In his introduction, the author gives his *raison d'être* for the writing of the book, "A recent archeological trip through Greece and Israel provided the background for this study. I lingered in Delphi and Jerusalem, sites symbolic of two religious worlds that in historical times and for specific reasons claimed supremacy. Each of these sites boasts of having been a divine center with messages that shaped the religious and cultural outlook of their faithful" (p. 1). His panoramic descriptions of both Delphi and Jerusalem are very useful as sources for understanding the ancient Greek relationship between topography and religious devotion.

In chapter one, the author sets forth his thesis that both pagan and Christian religions looked to geographical and historical focal points for their authority: Delphi, represented by the omphalos; and Jerusalem, by the cross. This chapter also gives copious background material for readers not familiar with ancient Greco-Roman mythology. Chapters 2-4 expand on the Apollo myth, explain its prominence in the life of the faithful, and conclude with the decline of the oracle. As a bridge between Apollo on one side and Christ on the other, in chapter five Dr. Ciholas introduces the Sibyl and Sibylline oracles and the role prophecy played in Greco-Roman society, Jewish religion, and early Christianity. It is most interesting to note, seeing that the early Christian apologists viewed Apollo as an evil demon, that the early church showed some respect to the Sibylline oracles (p. 132). The author writes, "Apollo figures prominently as the source of inspiration for both the Pythia and the Sibyl" (p. 131). It appears that contradiction at some level did not seem to bother the early Christians.

The rise of Christ and the spread of the Christian movement (chapters 6-11) are handled expertly showing the author's knowledge of Christianity, Patristic literature, theology, history of the ancient, late antique, and Byzantine eras, and culture and civilization. In chapter 8 the author establishes the cultural background of pagan religions, the pagans' philosophical understanding of the gods and of creation, and their response to the emergence of Christianity. In the words of the author, "Religion without transcendence defined the Greek outlook. The cosmos operated according to its own laws, unrelated to any divine participation. Later on the same page he said, "It took the rise of Christianity to revolutionize the concept of divine providence by linking it to divine creation" (p. 243). Near the end of the chapter under the sub-headings of, "The Age of Constantine," "The Age of Julian," and "The Age of Theodosius," Paul Ciholas demonstrates the tug-of-war that existed between pagans and Christians as the emperor Constantine declared himself a Christian, followed by Julian who tried to revitalize paganism, only to be followed by Theodosius who publicly professed Christianity. Though it looked like Christianity had finally won under the protection of Theodosius, paganism was yet to exist side-by-side for several more decades.

Unlike many books on ancient history, culture, civilization, and religion, *The Omphalos and the Cross* was written mainly from primary source material making it a

gold mine of important information without the hundreds of years of interpretation attached to it. This approach to scholarship demonstrates the author's mastery of numerous languages (Greek, Hebrew, Latin, French and German) as well as a deep understanding and broad-range knowledge of the available literature from the ancient world. Even though the book clearly shows a unity of thought from chapter 1 to 11, each chapter could stand alone in its own right as a mini essay. The casual reader will be drawn to Dr. Ciholas' clear and concise English prose style whereas the scholar will be more than rewarded for his/her efforts by examining the extensive footnotes, the appendixes, and the voluminous bibliography. Paul Ciholas has surely written a book that in time will prove to be a classic. Anyone interested in the rise of Christianity in the milieu of the ancient world will find this piece a veritable storehouse of priceless information.

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Powell, Samuel M. *Participating in God: Creation and Trinity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

In *Participating in God*, Powell has endeavored to understand the world intellectually in a manner that is both faithfully Christian and scientifically responsible. He comes to his task with two basic assumptions: (1) the Christian faith is true, and (2) the world image as it is known by the natural sciences is reliable (xi). His effort, therefore, is to present a systematic theology of the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of the Trinity as they intersect with the current understanding of the universe within which we live. He understands that the doctrine of creation has historically been understood based upon the current philosophical and scientific understanding of each historical period. The 21st century then is no different from those centuries that have preceded it.

Today we too are in need of understanding the doctrine of creation as it intersects with our world-view. Since Powell sets forth his understanding of how creatures participate in the Trinitarian life of God, he finds that this concept ties the doctrines of creation, the Trinity, and the new creation tightly together in a manner that preserves the systematic character of theology. In doing so he approaches his task by situating the doctrines of the Trinity and creation in their historic Christian setting. In developing his understanding of the universe in a Trinitarian fashion, he utilizes a paradigm that encompasses an understanding of the physical universe, the biological world, human existence, the conditions of finitude, and the kingdom of God. He weaves all of these into his systematic theological approach and from the output of this study develops an understanding of the Trinitarian ethical dimension of the doctrine of creation. The primary contribution of this book is to establish a close linkage between the current scientific understanding of the universe and its intersection with the doctrines of creation and the Trinity as they together create a human ethical response for the 21st century.

The book is divided into three sections each dealing with a core element that leads the reader on to its final conclusions. In *Part One: Creation and Trinity*, Powell summarizes the historical development of the doctrine of creation as well as its regulative dimension. In so doing he establishes certain basic premises: (1) the creator is the triune God attested to in the Bible; (2) this triune creator is the basis of creation alone; (3) the triune creator is distinct from world that has been created; and (4) the triune creator's relationship to the created world is compatible with this last distinction. Thus there is a regulative dimension that is historically dynamic. Powell traces the hermeneutic dimension of the doctrine of creation through the Bible and the history of its understanding by the church and arrives at an understanding that there is a participation by created beings in the Trinitarian life of God. This participation by creatures is based on a life that embraces identity and difference. Just as the triune God is based on the identity of the three persons as one, so it is also based on the differences that are present in each person of the Trinity "The participation of the universe in the Trinitarian life means that the dialectics of identity and difference appears in creatures. Naturally, this dialectics does not appear in creatures in precisely the way in which we find it in God, for the world of creatures is finite, not infinite .. Creatures participate in the life of God in ways that are appropriate to their modes of being" (56). He reminds the reader that the kingdom of God has appeared in the midst of human finitude and sin. Although the kingdom does not overcome the effects of finitude since creatures including humans remain creatures and do not become divine, it does overcome the distortions of finitude under the condition of sin.

In *Part Two: Understanding the Universe in a Trinitarian Way*, Powell masterfully interweaves a clear and concise understanding of the natural world in both its physical and biological aspects with his understanding of the doctrines of creation and the Trinity. He engages the reader in a dialogue directed at providing an understanding of the persistence and change in time. This discussion results in our understanding that "in the kingdom of God, we receive our identity through receiving a new past and a new future. As a result death is not the decisive event... that determines the meaning of our lives" (84). Due to the generic and individual features that mark the universe both physically and biologically, there is a similar aspect to the human condition of finitude. This plays itself out in our understanding of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is the Christian symbol for the ideal community in which the generic aspects of human existence become truly universal without threatening the quest for authentic individuality. In the kingdom of God, generic identity is conceived of in terms of Jesus Christ. To be in the kingdom means to be in the process of becoming conformed to the image of God, Jesus Christ. In the eschatological kingdom, all humankind comes to have the qualities of Jesus Christ. Yet the kingdom is not the end of individuality. On the contrary, as the New Testament's teaching about spiritual gifts shows, the unity that God seeks is a unity fully consistent with individual diversity (98).

A key component of understanding the kingdom of God is recognizing that it is God's response to the distortion that sin produces in the world. The issue of finitude is one that appears in the whole-part relationships that govern human existence. "If we consider the individual person as a psychological whole that strives for an ideal unity of constituent parts, then the finitude of the person shows itself in the failure to attain this ideal unity" including humans. This relatedness occurs because of the web of relations in which everything in the universe stands, thus nothing in the universe can be considered as ultimately real except through its interconnectedness to all of the other realities. This, according to Powell, is the meaning of the finitude of creatures.

In *Part Three: A Trinitarian Ethics*, Powell considers the ethical dimension of the doctrine of creation from both an historical point-of-view and with a consideration for its meaning today. He finds both a tendency toward world transcendence and toward world participation. "The impulse toward world transcendence rests on seeing the world as something over which the believer must win a victory and that is or contains an obstacle to salvation, even as it remains the good creation of God" (165). Throughout Christian history world transcendence has taken various forms, which have been highly dependent on the cultural situation in which the church, depending on who has conceived "the world." "Whereas the impulse toward world transcendence expresses the problematic nature of the world and the individual's need to go beyond it in the quest for salvation, the impulse toward world participation expresses the importance of the world as the context of ethical action" (173). It is interesting that Powell finds that our encounter with the creator leads us as humans to consider our finitude and therefore our place in the world God has created. In leading up to an ethical understanding of the doctrine of creation today, Powell comes to a significant conclusion in which he states that we are always faced with the temptation to interpret the doctrine of creation as a theory about the our natural world and its origins. Thus the doctrine is not a theory but a definite way of being in the world; i.e., a practice of life in the world. "The ethical dimension reminds us of the connection in the Christian faith between verbal formulations of doctrine and the practice of doctrine" (180). Powell brings the book to a close with a strong call to live out the doctrine of creation by recognizing that an ethical transcendence of the world is a call to surrender the consumer-culture which is a modern form of narcissism, which reduces humans to consumer status and everything else to a commodity. "The world transcending impulse takes the form of overcoming the world of consumer culture. The world participating impulse takes the form of loving concern for the natural environment on the basis of our identification with it" (xiv). Thus Powell brings his discussion of the doctrines of creation and the trinity to a specific 21st century close by demonstrating the practical application of these doctrines as expressed in *Participating in God*.

Powell has provided a highly useful and thoughtful approach to the doctrine of creation by grounding it in the doctrine of the Trinity. All too often in the 21st century, concern for the doctrine of creation revolves around issues of contrasting scientific and biblical accounts of the act of creation itself Powell has provided a significant corrective to this misappropriation of the intersection of science and theology. He has chosen instead to direct his attention at the coalescence of 21st

century natural science as it interacts with the doctrine of creation. As he develops his argument, he clearly demonstrates that there is no incompatibility between the two. Their coalescence results in a clear expression of the understanding that when the doctrine of creation is looked at through the lens of science and vice versa, the Christian is enabled to use the doctrine of creation as an approach to understanding the immensity of the goodness of what God has created and thereby understand its impact on the ethical decisions each Christian makes in the 21st century.

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McCann, J. Clinton. *Judges. Interpretation Commentary Series*; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002.

In this "Interpretation" commentary, McCann tackles the difficult task of providing "the Church" with both a fuller understanding of this material as well as an appreciation for stories that on their face are filled with violence, criminal activity, and faithlessness. As he notes from the beginning, "the book of Judges has a bad reputation" (p. 1). However, the relevance attached to themes such as civil and ethnic strife, spousal abuse, moral confusion, and the uncertainty of gender roles in today's society cannot be disputed and they are very much in evidence in Judges. Thus as McCann discusses the place of Judges within the Canon, he suggests that the book provides a "crucial feature of God's sovereign work. . . that the universal God works particularistically" (p. 14). Although it is up to the Israelites to be faithful to their covenant with God, the question raised in Judges is how God will respond when Israel proves to be unfaithful.

While giving some attention to "editorial stages" that went into the development of the text, McCann emphasizes a canonical reading of the received text. For example, the issue of God's "testing" Israel by leaving Canaanites in the land, providing the means to train the Israelites in war, is seen as a form of "ironic humor" in which the Israelites do learn the art of war, but only so they can fight among themselves in chapters 19-21. Furthermore, this canonical reading notes the "royal function" of warfare and the consequence failure of the kings to provide justice and righteousness to their people, which leads to the conclusion that war does not contribute to the "establishment of God's will" (pp. 38-39).

The importance of the "justice and righteousness" as divine attributes as well as God's desired condition for the people can sometimes get lost in the midst of the violence in these stories. Ehud's murder of Eglon and Jael's murder of Sisera, while shocking, are revealed to be part of God's saving act. The angry reaction of the villagers to Gideon's "hacking" down their altar to Baal is turned into a challenge to the Canaanite deity to react if he can. In these cases, the positive side can be seen. However, as the book progresses, McCann insists the level of disobedience, lawlessness, and pure anarchy rises to a crescendo (p. 81).

While the deterioration begins toward the end of Gideon's period as a judge, it becomes most evident in the stories that start with the warlord Abimelech and end with the anti-hero Samson. Even as the reader is repulsed by bloody battles, massacres, human sacrifice, and self-indulgent behavior, McCann makes the telling point that God's faithfulness to these unfaithful people remains a constant. Just as the prophetic literature explores this apparent "mystery," the Judges material in fact "affirms God's abiding presence and commitment amid the messes that God's people make" (p. 94).

The final stage of total deterioration and terror occurs in the last four chapters. Lacking even the dubious leadership of a judge, the people lurch from idolatry to rape and dismemberment to civil war. Rather than emphasizing the role of the book as a precursor to the establishment of the monarchy, McCann once again draws on prophetic literature in which "the horribly violent results of unfaithfulness...function... as a call to repentance and as an expression of hope in God's faithfulness" (p. 118). He also argues against the idea that these chapters are disparate stories added to the book and aligned together because of their common themes and setting. They are simply the culmination of the "downward spiral of events that began with Gideon" (p. 119). The book as a whole can thereby serve as a warning that idolatry and self-assertion "ultimately and inevitably produce violence" (p. 137)—a theme that is very timely and a propos to our 21st century world.

This commentary is a valuable treatment of the literary character and social issues raised by the book of Judges. It is cogently written, filled with theological insights, and will prove helpful in changing the minds of anyone who has ever thought that Judges has no place in the pulpit or in Bible study. While it may be editorial policy for this commentary series not to include maps, charts, or inset material, these would have been welcomed as a means of illustration and instructional aids. Subject and scriptural indices also would have made this volume more accessible. Despite these structural caveats, I would recommend this commentary as an excellent addition to any personal, church, seminary, or university library.

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Callen, Barry L. *Clark H. Pinnock: Journey Toward Renewal: An Intellectual Biography*. Published in Cooperation with The Wesleyan Theological Society. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 2000.

"The Openness of Clark Pinnock" would be an apt title for this review, for Pinnock's life and theology have certainly been marked by openness. Barry Callen, University Professor of Christian Studies at Anderson University and prodigious editor of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, does useful service in providing this narrative analysis of Pinnock's theological journey. Written and published with Pinnock's

cooperation (and in collaboration with the Wesleyan Theological Society), the book surveys the Canadian theologian's theology up to the year 2000.

The approach is primarily chronological, highlighting key themes in Pinnock's writings at different periods. Chapter 3, "The Certainty of Revealed Truth," focuses on Pinnock's work on Scripture, and the last two chapters deal mainly with free-will theism (the "openness of God" debate) and Pinnock's pneumatology, especially as reflected in *Flame of Love* (1996). As appendices Callen provides key excerpts from Pinnock's writings, each with a candid reflection by Pinnock (written for this book) on "How My Mind Has Changed." The book itself grows out of Pinnock's contacts with the Wesleyan Theological Society in the late 1990s.

The overall theme (reflected in the title) is that Pinnock's theological pilgrimage has been an ongoing quest for the renewal and vitality of the church's theology and witness. Pinnock's work is renewal-and-mission driven. Pinnock admits candidly, "More like a pilgrim than a settler, I tread the path of discovery and do my theology en route" (a 1998 *Christianity Today* comment, quoted on p. 132). As Robert Rakestraw wrote in *Baptist Theologians* (1990), Pinnock's theological work is marked by "a thirst for God and His truth wherever that may lead and regardless of whose theological system it may violate" (quoted by Callen, p. 78f). Much of Pinnock's more controversial writings seem to have been offered to the public with a rather winsome naiveté as to the heated reactions they could provoke.

Pinnock, born in Ontario in 1937, began his theological work as a fundamentalist, though earlier influences were diverse. His paternal grandparents were British Methodist missionaries to Nigeria who eventually switched their affiliation to the (U.S.) Southern Baptists when their understanding of baptism changed. Clark's grandfather Samuel Pinnock was both a missionary and a scholar, and his grandmother Madora Pinnock was a key influence in Clark's own conversion in 1950. His home church (Park Road Baptist in Toronto) was fairly liberal theologically, but through such influences as Youth for Christ and fundamentalist and dispensational radio broadcasts, Pinnock began "his Christian life and theological formation in the context of post-World War II fundamentalism" (p. 19). Callen observes that while Pinnock was a "loyal Baptist," in fact his "primary ecclesial identity was parachurch in nature" (p. 20). Since Pinnock's theology has so clearly been shaped by his own story, one wonders whether the relative lack of a focus on ecclesiology in his theological work owes something to these roots.

Pinnock did his doctoral dissertation under F F Bruce at the University of Manchester, focusing on Paul's understanding of the Holy Spirit (1963). The "battle for the Bible" was raging as Pinnock began his published theological work, so it was natural that his major early books focused on biblical authority as he taught first at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (where he switched disciplines from Bible to theology), and then at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1969-74). It was Pinnock's gradual shift away from defending biblical inerrancy that first made him controversial. Callen suggests that the latent influence of Bruce (and also reading C. S. Lewis) meant that Pinnock would never be fully comfortable among the inerrantists. At this stage Pinnock's journey intersected briefly with that of Dewey Beegle who in

his 1973 *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* critiqued Pinnock's defense of inerrancy and who himself got into difficulty with his own Free Methodist Church (and reluctantly left the denomination) when he was attacked by Harold Lindsell and others for his views.

Callen describes Pinnock's theological project in the 1970s as "Unraveling Reformed Scholasticism" (the title of Chapter 4). Reviewing the Western theological tradition in the light of Scripture, Pinnock discovered "the insight of reciprocity"—that God's sovereignty is not to be understood in such a one-sided way as to exclude the possibility and significance of real human response to God, and God's response to humans. Here Wesley's understanding of prevenient grace appears to have been helpful. Pinnock's writings as he explored the implications of "reciprocity" for the doctrine of God would eventually lead to his being accused of "neotheism" and "extreme Arminianism."

As background to Pinnock's work in "revising classical theism," Callen briefly mentions the case of Asbury Seminary professor Claude Thompson in the late 1940s. Though there is no direct connection with Pinnock, Callen draws a parallel between Thompson's views (and those of his Drew mentor, Edwin Lewis) and Pinnock's later critique of the Augustinian/Calvinist understanding of God. Lewis, Callen notes, questioned "the Calvinist reliance on the absolute sovereignty of God as the right assumption" for resolving the problem of evil. Thompson's views could not be tolerated at Asbury at the time, Callen says, because "influential elements of the North American Wesleyan-Holiness tradition associated with Asbury seminary [sic] had begun looking toward" post-war evangelicalism rather than their own Wesleyan sources as "primary theological paradigm." Callen argues that the Thompson case pointed to "the need for a fresh openness in theology that champions key elements of the Wesleyan theological tradition in contrast to a rigorous and rationalistic evangelical alternative" (pp. 138-39). This is what Clark Pinnock has done.

Pinnock's Political Theology

Callen traces Pinnock's "pilgrimage in political theology" (as Pinnock later called it) in the early 1970s, shortly after Pinnock went to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Pinnock came into contact with Jim Wallis, the Trinity student who was soon to launch the *Post American* (now *Sojourners*). Pinnock was captivated by the issues of social justice and countercultural community embodied by Wallis and his compatriots and was soon writing for Wallis' magazine, warning of "pseudo-disciples who can hardly distinguish the cross from the flag" (quoted, p. 111). The political-theological debate here, Callen notes, was a sort of replay of the "debate that raged between sixteenth-century Anabaptism and Calvinism. Pinnock had been nurtured in the latter and now was moving toward the former" (p. 109).

The sojourn was brief, however. In a candid essay in Ronald Nash's 1984 book, *Liberation Theology*, Pinnock renounced his "leftist convictions" (as he called them) and re-embraced political conservatism. He described this period as "one enormous zigzag" in his career. Pinnock in fact bounced from the right to the left and then back to the right again, politically speaking.

The episode is instructive. Pinnock's adoption of radical Christianity was emotional and wholehearted—"a paradigm shift—a total transformation", "a heady experience which intoxicated me and many others" (Pinnock, "A Pilgrimage in Political Theology," in Nash 1984, p. 106). Yet before long Pinnock swung back to the right, becoming enamored of the likes of Milton Friedman, George Gilder, and even R. J. Rushdoony. His political theology (at least in the 1970s and 1980s) seemed incapable of transcending the socialist/capitalist divide to imagine other options; the rhetoric is that of right versus left. Pinnock gives little evidence of thorough *theological* probing of either option. His so-called "Pilgrimage in Political Theology" is perhaps the least theologically profound thing he has published. He seems to have overreacted at both sides of this "zigzag." Perhaps if Pinnock had in the early 1970s endorsed or adopted a more nuanced and biblically grounded version of radical Christianity he would not have reacted so strongly back in the other direction, adopting a political viewpoint that (in my view) clashes with the gospel at key points. It is remarkable that Pinnock could describe his rightist political views as "the center"—even if that is the self-evident assumption of many *North American* evangelicals. Pinnock asserted in *Three Keys to Spiritual Renewal* (1985), "There is a problem of ideology in contemporary Christian social ethics, but it lies more on the left than on the right" (p. 63).

Here, obviously, context is important, as Callen notes. The heady 1970s were not the 1990s. But one wonders what might have happened if Pinnock had engaged Anabaptist and liberation theology with the sympathetic but cautious depth of his later dialogue with process theology and other traditions. In his theism, Pinnock has arrived at a position that is closer to Wesleyanism than to Calvinism or Augustinianism—something of a mediating position, with a quest for balance. Had Pinnock sympathetically engaged the more conjunctive Wesleyan and Arminian perspectives earlier, his "political theology" (and implied ecclesiology) might have been more profound and biblically prophetic.

The ecclesiological issues here seem to carry through into Pinnock's later work. Pinnock has a fine chapter on ecclesiology in *Flame of Love*. The theme is that a balanced ecclesiology is both sacramental and charismatic. This is good, but incomplete. Pinnock says, "The church is an extension not so much of the incarnation as of the [Spirit] anointing of Jesus" (*Flame of Love*, 114). But why not both? A three-dimensional ecclesiology that is charismatic, sacramental, and incarnational is biblically sounder than Pinnock's two-dimensional model. In discussing the sacramental aspect Pinnock does helpfully insist on the value of material and physical things, but the emphasis is more on sacramental signs than on the church's calling to incarnate the life and justice of God's kingdom here and now. Though Pinnock ends the chapter with a call to servanthood and "caring for needs" (p. 144) he scarcely mentions the key biblical stress on justice. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to witness effectively to the justice as well as the mercy of God's reign (e.g., Isa. 61, Lk. 4). This broader understanding of the church in relation to the kingdom is largely missing in Pinnock. The reason perhaps traces back to the "zigzag" of the seventies.

Divine Openness and Foreknowledge

Wesleyans (as also a number of Pentecostal/Charismatic theologians) seem generally to have welcomed Pinnock's affirmation of free-will theism because of its compatibility with a Wesleyan understanding of God, Christian experience, and Scripture. In *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (published in 2001, subsequent to Callen's book), Pinnock commented that the "open view of God continues the much older debate between theological determinists, like Calvin, and free will theists, like Wesley," but "makes the choices even sharper and clearer, being itself a more coherent alternative to Calvinism than Arminians have presented" (p. xii).

Does Pinnock go too far, however, in his view that divine foreknowledge must be understood as limited if human freedom is real? Clearly this is the most contentious issue in Pinnock's openness theology, as Callen points out. Pinnock himself says in one of his postscripts, "I suppose that the most controversial aspect of my re-thinking is my openness to thinking of divine knowledge as *present* knowledge, the view which affirms omniscience but not exhaustive *foreknowledge*" (p. 243; emphasis Pinnock's). God voluntarily limits his foreknowledge in order to give humans genuinely free choice. Pinnock does not agree with Norman Geisler that a biblical understanding of divine sovereignty necessarily means "complete control of all things," including the future. As Callen puts Pinnock's view, "Complete control certainly lies inherently within the divine capacity; but the question is whether God chooses to function in this manner in relation to humans" (p. 106).

Is this consistent with Scripture and with Wesleyan theology? Pinnock's strong rejection of predestination is much like Wesley's; both rejected it because it impugns the moral character of God. Wesley however did not reject belief in divine foreknowledge, while Pinnock argues that rejection of predestination necessarily implies a limitation of exhaustive foreknowledge on God's part. Callen notes that both Pinnock and Wesley hold "a concept of divine foreknowledge that does not imply determinism", thus "it probably is better to say that human choices to accept divine grace enter God's knowledge because they take place rather than that they take place because God knew (and presumably determined) them in advance" (p. 157). Wesley himself said, "God, looking on all ages, from the creation to the consummation, as a moment, and seeing at once whatever is in the hearts of all the children of men, knows every one that does or does not believe, in every age or nation. Yet what he knows, whether faith or unbelief, is in no wise caused by his knowledge. Men are as free in believing, or in not believing, as if he did not know it at all." Wesley insisted however that "when we speak of God's foreknowledge we do not speak according to the nature of things, but after the manner of men. For if we speak properly, there is no such thing as either foreknowledge or after knowledge in God," since God is not limited to time (Sermon, "On Predestination," Par. 5).

Wesley was content to leave it at that—in the realm of mystery due to our temporal limitations. Pinnock however rejects the "eternal now" view of God's knowledge as unsatisfying theologically and philosophically. Yet one may question whether Pinnock deals adequately with the time/eternity issues involved. His (and Callen's) discussion here is full of time references—decisions "not yet made," for instance. An adequate

treatment would have to explore in depth the nature of space and time as dimensions of God's multi-dimensional world and existence. Clearly the very idea of "foreknowledge" is a human construct, as Wesley said. Pinnock does not fully deal with this issue in the writings examined in Callen's book.

Philosopher William Hasker does discuss the time/eternity issue in his chapter in *The Openness of God* (1994). Like Pinnock and other free-will theists, Hasker rejects divine timelessness or the "eternal now" view of God. His view is that "God is temporal—that he lives and interacts with us through the changes of time." What he really means, however, is not that God is captive to chronological time but simply that "God experiences changing mental states." Physical time did not exist prior to the physical creation, but (Hasker argues) we can affirm that "a change of state, and therefore of time, does exist in God, who is thus present in every 'now' of time rather than in the 'eternal Now'" (*Openness of God*, 128, 194f). This seems to mean that God experiences time in some physically atemporal, or supratemporal, sense.

Pinnock briefly explores time and timelessness in *Most Moved Mover*. Sticking close to Scriptural language, Pinnock argues that God is everlasting but not eternal. God is a "temporal agent" who "is above time in the sense that he is above finite experience and measurement of time but he is not beyond 'before and after' or beyond sequence of events" (p. 96). Pinnock speculates that perhaps before the physical creation "God experienced a kind of timelessness because there was nothing to measure temporally"—that "God is timeless without creation and temporal subsequent to creation" (p. 98). But what is this if not the affirmation of mystery and seeming paradox? Pinnock appears in fact to affirm that God is *both* temporal and timeless, admitting that these two affirmations cannot be fully harmonized rationally given our state of knowledge and earth-bound existence. Here theologians inevitably sound like two-dimensional creatures trying to describe a three-dimensional world. Rather than saying that God is "temporal" or "not timeless," we might better speak simply of "God's time," in the process agreeing with God: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways" (Isa. 55:8). When does the quest for intelligibility and rationality cross the line of the knowable within a space-time world and become nonsense? (which perhaps is more the issue than is heresy). It is neither incoherent nor intellectually unsatisfying to admit not only the limits of our knowledge but also of our (present) intelligible rational categories.

In fact Pinnock seems not really to be denying that God is eternal, but only that he is not timeless. He affirms in effect that God is timefully eternal, not timelessly eternal. Eternity for God is everlastingness, not timeless changelessness. This however is certainly in some sense to speak analogically or metaphorically, abstracting from our own temporal experience to dimensions of existence we don't understand and only with difficulty imagine. In the final analysis, it appears to me that Pinnock's position is not hugely different from Wesley's. Both finally resort to analogy and mystery. Pinnock goes further than Wesley (which he thinks logically necessary) in questioning exhaustive divine foreknowledge, but in the end both admit that in this area we are speaking beyond what we know or understand. We can agree with Wesley that properly speaking "there is no such thing as either foreknowledge or after knowledge

in God” without buying the philosophical view of an “eternal now.”

In the final analysis, it seems to me that Wesley—despite the differences of time, culture, and theological project—provides a better critique of Pinnock than Pinnock does of Wesley.

Not only does Callen’s account of Pinnock’s “journey toward renewal” give us comprehension of Pinnock’s theology, attitude, and motivation. It also serves as an informed primer on post-World War II evangelical theology in the context of larger cultural and theological currents.

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Callen, Barry L. *Radical Christianity: The Believers Church Tradition in Christianity’s History and Future*. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1999.

In 1968 Donald F. Durnbaugh published a classic study, *The Believers’ Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (Macmillan). Barry Callen’s *Radical Christianity* in some ways brings that important discussion up to date and makes a useful companion to Durnbaugh. Durnbaugh’s treatment was primarily historical while Callen’s is more theological, though also providing historical perspective. Both books, as well as the volumes growing out of a series of Believers’ Church conferences over the past several decades, are highly ecclesiological: What does it mean not only to believe in Jesus Christ but to embody that faith in social form—in responsible Christian communities of genuine discipleship? (In an appendix, Callen lists sixteen Believers’ Church conferences held in the U.S. and Canada since 1955.)

This book is particularly relevant for Wesleyans because it provides a sort of synthesis of Wesleyan and Anabaptist perspectives, in the process reminding us of a dimension of authentic Wesleyan theology that is too easily lost as we interact with other (e.g., Reformed, Lutheran, Anglo-Catholic, Eastern Orthodox) traditions. Callen does not try to make Wesley into an Anabaptist—far from it—but he does highlight common elements in Wesleyan and Believers’ Church theology and practice. The Wesleyan call to holiness and the Believers’ Church call to radical discipleship need each other.

As University Professor of Christian Studies at Anderson University, Callen (an Asbury Seminary alumnus) in recent years has published a series of theological studies on topics ranging from the nature of God to eschatology. His own denomination (Church of God, Anderson) has roots in both the Wesleyan and the Believers’ Church traditions. In this book Callen prefers the form “Believers Church” (rather than “Believers’ Church” or, worse, “Believer’s Church”) in order to emphasize not only community but also the church’s fundamental identity. Callen deletes the apostrophe, he notes, “to avoid the subtle suggestion that the church is somehow the possession of its members” (p. xii).

Callen defines the Believers’ Church tradition rather broadly. He writes, “Among

today's denominational families recognizing themselves as largely within the general Free or Believers Church tradition are the various Baptist and Brethren bodies, the American Campbellite tradition of the Disciples, Christian Churches, and Churches of Christ, the Church of God (Anderson) and other Wesleyan/Holiness bodies, the Society of Friends, Mennonites, Pentecostals, and others" (p. 9f). For some of these groups the connection is historically direct; for others it is a matter of "commonality of certain Christian perspectives and practices" (p. 10). Callen does not discuss the Salvation Army, perhaps because of its views on baptism, but in many ways it also fits within the tradition. It is interesting that Callen does not mention Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whom Durnbaugh included in his discussion of radical Protestantism.

The irony, of course, is that many of the groups Callen cites do not recognize their own parentage (or partial parentage) because so much Protestant theology, including ecclesiology, reflects a Reformed or Lutheran perspective. Callen's book is thus an important corrective, extending and continuing the ground-breaking work of George H. Williams, Methodist Franklin Littell, and others in the 1950s and 1960s. Callen documents the resurgence of Radical Reformation studies over the past half-century which to some degree has corrected the negative stereotypes that predominated within more politically connected Protestantism for 400 years.

Callen also points out important differences between the Believers' Church tradition and contemporary American evangelicalism. Many evangelicals, for example, assume that substitutionary atonement is the only orthodox understanding of the meaning of Jesus' death for us. Callen points out the preference of various Believers Church theologians for the Christus victor model which, Callen argues, is more compatible with Scripture and more relevant today than the substitutionary theory.

Does Callen define "Believers Church" so broadly that his portrayal of the tradition blunts the costly, countercultural discipleship edge of authentic radical Christianity? Possibly so, if one looks at actual expressions of this tradition in contemporary North America. But *Radical Christianity* is really a call to recover this tradition of costly discipleship as the church moves into the future. Toward the end of the book Callen summarizes what this must mean today. He argues, "The Believers Church offers a third way for our time. It calls for rigorous discipleship, experience with the Holy Spirit's power, biblical critique of contemporary culture, and the strategy of a new-community model of the church as a fundamental aspect of a holistic witness to Christ in the world" (p. 175f).

Callen's book now becomes an essential source not just for those who want to understand the Believers' Church tradition but also, more broadly, for understanding and living the biblical vision of faithful Christian witness and discipleship today.

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Vahle, Neal. *The Unity Movement*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2002.

As the author admits on page 405, the movement known as the Unity School of Christianity, founded by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore in the latter part of the 19th century, has received staunch doctrinal criticism from many, including those within “mainstream Christianity,” since its beginnings. Growing out of Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science religion, Unity is best known to evangelicals for what it denies (all essential Christian doctrines) rather than what it affirms.

Neal Vahle, who holds a Ph.D. in American History from Georgetown University (and has worked in the publishing field, serving as editor of *Unity Magazine*), has for the most part written this book as a historian, providing a source for those wishing to learn of the teachings, organization, and growth and development of Unity.

The book (xvii, 485 pages) is divided into two parts, with chapters 1-5 documenting “The Unity Teachings: Yesterday and Today” (title of Part 1). Part 2, “The Growth and Development of the Unity Movement,” explores in part the financing of Unity, its development, some spiritual practices (such as “spiritual healing”), and various ways in which members participate in the movement. Of interest to me in Part 2 were chapters on “Unity and New Thought,” “Unity and the New Age [Movement],” and “Perspectives on Unity: Commentaries from Other Spiritual and Religious Vantage Points.”

In the introduction Vahle documents the teachings of the Fillmores: “God is not a person,” “Divine nature and human nature have the same characteristics,” humanity can rise above “faults and shortcomings... by complying with Divine Law and the Will of God... by activating twelve faculties of the mind or centers of consciousness,” Jesus was “not the incarnation of God... did not die on the cross to save humankind from its sins,” and is “an exemplar for humankind” (p. 2). Vahle then continues to put flesh on these introductory remarks in chapters 1-5 (see, for example, pp. 76-83, 106-108, 108-16, 67-70, respectively), admitting that teachers within Unity have criticized “traditional Christianity for its inaccurate interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus” (p. 67).

The strong point of the book is Vahle’s ability to synthesize a tremendous amount of doctrinal and historical material into his volume (though the size of the book will be too massive for some).

One weak point occurs in chapter 16, titled “Perspectives on Unity: Commentaries from Other Spiritual and Religious Vantage Points.” In this chapter Vahle dichotomizes between “Representatives of Mainstream Christianity” (pp. 405-14) and “Scholars in the Field of American Religion” (pp. 415-22). The “representatives,” it seems, are those who sharply criticize Unity for its unbiblical teachings, while the “scholars,” it seems, are those who are less polemic in their remarks and take on a more reporting nature to their writings. Yet, interesting to me is that Vahle places Dr. James Teener—who according to Vahle “wrote a Ph.D. dissertation in American religious history on Unity in 1939” and who wrote that Unity takes biblical teachings and interprets them with Hindu notions—in the “representatives” group, stating that “Teener viewed Unity from his position as general presbyter for the Kansas City Presbytery, rather than from his role as a scholar and academic” (p. 406, emphases

mine). Is the assumption here that any polemic against Unity is by definition not scholarly? Further, I fail to see how Dr Gordon Lewis, professor of Christian Philosophy and Theology at Denver Seminary, with a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Syracuse University, and well known for his several books on religion, should simply be cast into the "representatives" group.

After documenting in the same chapter some observations by Non-Unity New Thought teachers (pp. 422-24) that are sympathetic to Unity, Vahle closes the book with "Challenges to Be Met" by Unity. For example, in question form he asks, "can Unity School of Christianity: 3. Provide a work environment that fosters high employee morale? 4. Efficiently organize and administer its internal operation to gain maximum benefit from its financial resources? 6. Operate a publications program, both books and magazines, that serves to inform and inspire Unity students, attract new people to the Unity teachings, and sustain itself financially?" (p. 425). These are insightful questions.

He further asks, "Can the Unity movement at large: 1 Present its goals, purposes, and teachings in such a way that traditional Christianity will view Unity as falling within the broad spectrum of its teachings rather than as a cult or heretical sect?" (p. 426). Speaking as one within traditional Christianity who has been a relatively long-time critic of Unity, my answer is that I certainly hope and pray so, but that in order for Unity to do so it would have to "do," as common parlance has it, "a 180." It would have to affirm and believe, for starters, that Jesus is exclusively the Christ, is God the Son incarnate, is the only way of salvation, was crucified on the cross and shed his blood for the forgiveness of the sins of all who call upon his name, was raised bodily from the dead, who now and forever reigns as God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, and who is our great high priest and mediator that will come again to judge the living and the dead.

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