

# Book Reviews

Noll, Mark A. *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*. Society of Biblical Literature Confessional Perspectives Series. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. i-xiv. 255 pp. Select Bibliography. Index. ISBN 0-0606-6302-2.

In this work, Wheaton historian Mark Noll traces American Evangelicalism's stormy relationship with biblical criticism. After defining his key terms and approach, particularly the definition of "evangelical" (chap. 1), Noll moves into a chronological account of evangelical involvement in critical biblical scholarship (chaps. 2-5). After an initial period of vigorous response to criticism in the late nineteenth century, evangelical biblical scholars steadily withdrew from the arena of critical study and forged an uneasy alliance with populist revivalism until around 1935. Assisted by their British counterparts, American evangelicals began reentering the scholarly arena, with the publication of Lane's *Mark* in the NICNT series serving as a milestone, since it was the first American contribution to that series. Noll then analyzes the present situation (chaps. 6-8) and offers a series of suggestions and projections for the future. The history is heavily documented and well told, and provides an insightful analysis of the lovers' quarrel between evangelicals and professional biblical criticism. Evangelical biblical scholars, especially, will find this story helpful for assessing their own attitudes and aspirations. Lay readers will profit from a broader awareness of the historical context in which a distinctive American evangelical biblical scholarship arose and within which it functions.

Despite its obvious quality and value, certain limitations characterize the work. First, the author is a historian, not a biblical scholar, and does not evaluate the quality of evangelical scholarly arguments, but looks only at credentials--a dubious criterion. The crucial issue for the key players in the debates was, however, the effectiveness of the arguments. Many believe evangelical conservatives at the turn of the century simply failed to answer the emerging critical theories adequately, and thus justifiably were excluded from subsequent debate. Again, the author seldom differentiates "higher" criticism from text-critical, linguistic and artifactual study. Evangelicals usually supported and excelled in the latter, but seldom touched the former, except for polemics. In OT studies, ancient Near Eastern languages and archeology constitute the competence of most evangelicals who,

nevertheless, address higher-critical questions in their publications. But is the study of, say, Punic inscriptions really preparation to evaluate source, form and redaction criticism? Are "credentials" equated with qualifications? Very few of the Old Testament professors in Noll's survey studied at institutions where engagement with critical, hermeneutical and theological questions formed an inescapable aspect of graduate study. This gap in preparation could explain the continuing problem specifically in evangelical Old Testament studies and in evangelicals' failure to deal with the substantive theological and hermeneutical difficulties described in the final chapters.

While Noll's book is an excellent survey and analysis of the presence and absence of evangelicals in critical biblical scholarship, only a deeper probing of the underlying higher-critical issues and arguments will finally reveal the reasons underlying the fluctuating marginal status of evangelical biblical scholarship.

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Morris, Thomas V., ed. *The Concept of God*. Oxford University Press, 1987. vi, 276 pp. \$36.00, cloth; \$13.95, paper. ISBN 0-1987-5077-3.

The main relevance of this book to readers of this journal is suggested by the following line from the Introduction: "In recent years, numerous philosophers have talked about God with a degree of confidence which, interestingly, is not to be found amongst many professional theologians" (p. 10). The essays which follow are an impressive demonstration of this claim and represent an important development which has significant implications for the future of theology.

In the past few decades, philosophers of religion have focused on what Morris calls "broadly epistemological" issues such as arguments for and against God's existence and the rationality of religious belief. Lately, however, many philosophers have turned their attention to matters more specifically theological. Much of this work is being done by philosophers committed to the orthodox Christian tradition. These philosophers are exploring afresh many

of the topics treated by classical theologians and are producing updated defenses of traditional doctrines.

In this volume, Thomas Morris has brought together some of the outstanding recent work dealing with the divine nature. Some of the topics treated here have been largely neglected or abandoned in contemporary theology. For instance, there is the doctrine of divine simplicity, a popular doctrine in medieval theology, which maintains that God has no "parts" or components of any kind. In his essay entitled "Simplicity and Immutability in God," William E. Mann argues that the doctrine of divine simplicity can help us understand how God can be both immutable and active. The doctrine of simplicity is highly controversial and has been criticized by a number of other philosophers, including Morris. Mann's essay is a good entry into this discussion.

Most of the essays deal with more familiar themes such as divine goodness, omnipotence and omniscience. All these attributes have generated puzzles and difficulties for traditional theism and a number of the essays address these difficulties. Robert M. Adams's important paper "Must God Create the Best?" makes the case that God need not create the best possible world He could create in order to be perfectly good. The claim that God is omnipotent seems to entail the theologically unacceptable consequence that God is able to sin. In "Maximal Power," Thomas P. Flint and Alfred J. Freddso articulate a rigorous account of omnipotence which avoids this problem. And, in a typically masterful paper entitled "On Ockham's Way Out," Alvin Plantinga defends divine foreknowledge against the common charge that it is incompatible with human freedom.

Not all the essays, however, are written from the standpoint of traditional theistic belief. In his contribution, David Blumenfeld maintains that the attributes of maximal power and maximal knowledge are incompatible, so the traditional concept of God is contradictory, and hence, not possibly true. And, in a fascinating piece entitled "Does Traditional Theism Entail Pantheism?," Robert Oakes returns an affirmative answer to the question he raises. His title, however, is somewhat deceptive, for what Oakes ends up claiming is that traditional theism entails Berkleyan Idealism.

The volume is a recent addition to the well-known Oxford Readings in Philosophy series. It contains twelve essays in all, as well as a very helpful Introduction which clearly summarizes the current debate about the nature of God. A few of these are rather technical and would be hard going for those without a philosophical background. However, the sections which include difficult papers also include more accessible ones which facilitate understanding of the more difficult.

The book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in disciplined thinking about God. It would be an excellent text not only for courses in philosophy of religion, but also systematic theology.

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Froehlich, Karlfried, ed. and trans. *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church. Sources of Early Christian Thought.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. viii, 135 pp. \$12.95. ISBN 0-8006-1414-3.

The series, *Sources of Early Christian Thought*, seeks to provide students with access to texts crucial for understanding the development of the Christian tradition. Froehlich, Benjamin B. Warfield Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Princeton Theological Seminary, has contributed a concise introduction to early Christian exegesis and illustrated that analysis with selections from the following texts: (1) Sifra-The Exegetical Rules (Middot) of Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Hillel; (2) Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora* from Epiphanius's *Panarion*, 33; (3) Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Bk. 4.26.1-4; (4) Origen, *On First Principles*, Bk. 4.1.1-4.3.15; (5) Papyrus Michigan Inv. 3718, a list of "standard" Christian allegorizations of biblical texts including Matt 19:24, Matt 13:33, John 2:1, Luke 3:8, Prov 13:14 and other miscellaneous proverbs; (6) Diodore of Tarsus, *Prologue to the Commentary on the Psalms*; (7) Diodore of Tarsus, *Preface to the Commentary on Psalm 118*; (8) Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Galatians 4:22-31*; and (9) Tyconius, *The book of Rules*, 1-3.

The introduction (pp. 1-29) surveys the history of Christian exegesis during the patristic period and comments on the selected illustrative texts. The presentation of the issues and the interpretation of the various writers are cautious and conservative. The essay does not reflect, for example, the ongoing debates about the position of Marcion and his canon in the history of Christian thought, and retains the somewhat too rigid bifurcation between Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis. On the other hand, Froehlich does an admirable job of suggesting relationships between the diverse schools of thought and regions of the Empire. Unfortunately, this does not extend to the Syriac-speaking church. For example, although Ephrem of Syria thought carefully about the

methods and uses of exegesis, his work is not discussed.

Other issues which might have been addressed are those of the genre in which exegetical results are presented, and the socio-ecclesiastical function of the genre within the Christian community. Both form and function were influential in the development of hermeneutics.

These suggestions are not intended to detract from a very useful volume. At last, theological students have available a succinct, reliable, well-written and inexpensive introduction to the complexities of early Christian exegesis. The well-chosen bibliography will serve as a guide to further reading.

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Dayton, Donald W. *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. \$19.95. 199 pp. ISBN 0-310-39371-X.

For the general reader, this volume will set the Pentecostal movement in its theological context within an extremely complex nineteenth-century American religious history. Such an exercise is especially critical for a proper understanding of evangelical revival movements, because so frequently they regard themselves as having come into existence *de novo*. The tendency for such movements to ignore or even deny their historical and theological rootage is more common in America than elsewhere. Our experience as a nation of immigrants and our consequent separation from old homelands and cultures fuels an emphasis on the "now" among us which in turn generates the sense of "historylessness" of which Sydney Mead has reminded us so forcefully.

No American revival movement has been more prone to this "historyless" understanding of itself than Pentecostalism. And no feature of the movement lies more at the crux of this *de novo* claim than the essential character which it gives to the witness of glossolalia as the only valid sign of Spirit Baptism--a phenomenon so new to the whole of Christian history that efforts of Pentecostal scholars to establish any regularity, even of its exceptional practice, remain unconvincing. Therefore, when Dayton makes this feature a matter of non-consideration in his treatment of the movement, he is striking at the heart of the hermeneutical problem. Only in this

way can he get at the legitimate historical and theological roots of the movement within the complex of American Revivalism in the nineteenth century.

This procedural device, however, creates the greatest weakness in the book in that Dayton does not explicitly come back to tie in the significance of this most distinguishing characteristic of the movement to the main interpretive categories he has utilized throughout the volume. He is on solid ground when he claims that all late-nineteenth century Evangelicalism was only a "hair's-breadth" from Pentecostalism, but he fails to indicate how radical a step those holiness and higher-life advocates took who crossed that thin line and made glossolalia the necessary and only authenticating sign of Spirit baptism. The Pentecostal pioneers' unique claims for this sign-gift radically transformed the dynamics of the complex of historical theological categories, contained within the "Four-fold Gospel," from the way that complex operated within the context of the Holiness Revival where it first arose. The change was so critical that the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement was the first to sense an abrupt historical and theological disjunction between itself and the new Pentecostal Revival.

It is at this pivotal point, the witness of glossolalia, that we arrive at the essence of the movement's *de novo* understanding of its place in Christian history. At that juncture, the early Pentecostals--some consciously and others unconsciously--broke with Christian history. Their understanding of the "Four-fold Gospel" became so much more radically restitutionist and eschatological that most of their fellow "Four-fold Gospel" advocates failed to relinquish their more reformationist, historically-focused sense of mission to follow them. It is the former mind-set, or the lack of it, which created the strong theological tensions which have existed between the historical churches and Pentecostalism. These tensions, unfortunately, have become more bitter than those between Pentecostalism and many other bodies. This antagonism arose more because of common roots than in spite of them.

One indication of the critical role which glossolalia plays as the sole sign for Spirit Baptism in this analysis is the difference found in the self-understanding of those adherents of the more recent charismatic movement who regard the witness of the gift of glossolalia as only one of a number of identifying signs. Such a stance allows a much broader historical and theological self-understanding. Hence, there seems to be an easier accommodation of persons in that movement to other evangelical groups, who accept some aspects of the current charismatic focus upon gifts of the Spirit, but not their tendency toward accommodation to

traditional Pentecostalism. The more pluralistic charismatic understanding is utterly unacceptable to traditional Pentecostalism because it would irreparably dissolve its critical point of distinction from its holiness and higher-life familial rootage.

Dayton's excellent analysis of nineteenth century revivalistic theology, however, serves the student of the Holiness Revival just as well as the person who seeks an understanding of Pentecostalism. He reminds us once again of what is now almost a truism--that the roots of the latter movement lie, in the main, in the nineteenth-century Methodist Holiness Revival. As a result, the essay represents the most comprehensive and definitive presentation of the theological development of the Holiness Revival which we have to date. With clarity and plausibility, the account wends its way through the intricacies of the complex theological influence and counter-influence between American New School Calvinistic Revivalism and Methodist Holiness Revivalism. It contributes especially to a better understanding of how extensively Methodist Arminianism and Perfectionism permeated all American religion in the nineteenth century, especially through the holiness/higher-life revival.

There is a consistent leit motif in the presentation which will be as interesting to Wesleyan scholars as is the central theme of the work. It plays out in Dayton's constant comparisons and contrasts between Wesley's positions and those subsequently adopted by the myriad of Holiness, Higher-Life and Pentecostal Holiness movements which recognize him as father or, at least, as grandfather. Dayton's interpretation of subsequent theological developments among these Wesleyan kinfolk attempts to determine the extent to which they modify, or contradict, Wesley's own purported positions. Limitations of space obviously make any extensive analysis of the stance of either party at any given point difficult at best. The lack of evidence at many points provides illusive hope for any more informed conclusions than have already been reached. Nevertheless, the impression persists that Dayton too readily separates Wesley from what seem to be the logical consequences of his own often radical positions. The degree to which he committed himself, within the confines of his own religious milieu, to positions very parallel to related positions taken by his namesakes, in the context of their own later milieu, may be too readily diminished in the effort to suit a thesis of radical modification.

In summary, the volume effectively represents the conclusions of Dayton's own twenty years of scholarship in the area of American Wesleyan/Holiness/Pentecostal studies in interaction with others in the field with whom he has been in intensive dialogue over these

years. The result is a book that incites new discussion equal in intensity to that surrounding the older questions it helps lay to rest. Pentecostals and Wesleyans, as well as all students of American religion, must take his thesis into account in any further meaningful analyses of nineteenth-century religious history and the Wesleyan revival movements which today comprise such a large sector of Protestant Evangelicalism.

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