

BOOK REVIEWS

A Critical Concordance to the Letter of Paul to the Romans: The Computer Bible, Vol. 13. By A. Q. Morton, S. Michaelson and J. David Thompson. J. Arthur Baird and David Noel Freedman, eds. Wooster, Ohio: Biblical Research Associates, Box 3182, The College of Wooster, 1977, x + 337 pp., \$21.00 softcover.

This is the first volume in the Computer Bible series to employ computer-generated Greek script, a vast improvement over previous transliteration schemes. It is to be hoped that technology such as this will yet provide us with breathing marks and accents in the future. The ten pages of introduction by Thompson provide a good explanation of how the concordance might be put to profitable use alongside the Biblical text of Romans itself. Yet the concordance is more than just a reference tool in that the key-word-in-context format allows for a wide variety of syntactical, linguistic and grammatical studies. Further, phrase identification is made much easier and the NT vocabulary is likely to receive greater attention in matters of philological detail that bear on style and authorship. Each lemma is printed as a separate entry above the occurrence(s) of that same grammatical form as a key-word-in-context. The number of occurrences is given adjacent to each lemma.

Six categories are included. The standard forward key-word-in-context concordance lists occurrences of every word of text under its respective lemma. Occurrences are arranged alphabetically based on the word immediately following the key word and not just in text sequence—thus the idea of “forward.” The reverse concordance lists key words alphabetically from right to left, with a view to possibly gaining insight into morphological habits of the author and their meanings (if any). A reverse index and word count is included for similar purposes. The forward index and word count may likewise serve to identify verbal habits, while the word frequency list and frequency profile table can be studied to yield valuable statistics about word use and style that are more scientific than casual impressions about a writer’s language. Naturally all of these various detailed observations of Paul’s vocabulary in Romans that might be made with the aid of this significant volume will be relative to other such studies and statistics of other epistles in the Pauline corpus. Therefore we can eagerly await the completion of more excellent research tools such as this.

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Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation: Essays Presented to Everett F. Harrison by His Students and Colleagues in Honor of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday. Edited by W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, x + 331 pp.

David A. Hubbard’s “Appreciation” introduces us to a scholar who is above all a dedicated teacher and a shining example to his pupils, and Hubbard’s evident affection and sense of gratitude for his teacher and colleague is clearly shared by the 19 other writers in this useful volume, which will surely give genuine pleasure to Harrison. The essays, grouped rather artificially under the three nouns of the title, rightly focus on Biblical exegesis and the use of the Bible in the Church. They include much that is solidly helpful, if predictable, and some significant contributions to contemporary theological debate. I hope I may be forgiven for singling out for mention some of the latter, as they seem to me.

Ronald Y. K. Fung, now back in Hong Kong teaching at the China Graduate School of Theology, contributes an exegetical study of Rom 7:14-25 that is surely a model of how to write an article. Clear, careful, concise, yet thoroughly researched and documented, it argues that Paul, having depicted the situation of the non-Christian in vv 7-13, turns in vv 14-25 to the carnal Christian—i.e., the man who, though converted, is still trying to live

under the law, before describing the truly Christian life in the Spirit in chap. 8. Those who reject a "Christian" exegesis of vv 14-25 should ponder this article well.

Robert H. Mounce, eschewing footnotes and all the paraphernalia of scholarship (as only the author of a major commentary has the right to do), contributes an exciting study of the text of Revelation 5. A syntactical analysis followed by a rhetorical analysis lead to the conclusion that John's Greek, far from being barbaric, is a literary masterpiece transcending the pedantic rules of grammar and enshrining the highest possible Christology. Splendid reading—not only for its exegetical insights but also as an example of the fresh approach to Scripture so often lost beneath our accumulation of scholarly bric-a-brac.

Jack B. Rogers gives a detailed and passionate apologia for Berkouwer's approach to the inspiration of Scripture via its function rather than its nature. He presents this Dutch view (that also of Kuyper and Bavinck) as a "third alternative" (I was always taught there could only be two!) over against the "either/or" of liberalism or "Reformed scholasticism" (Warfield *et al.*). He writes with an eye to those who accuse Berkouwer, with his dislike of "inerrancy" language and his emphasis on the human as well as the divine origin of Scripture, of selling the pass. Those who prefer the Warfield approach will not enjoy being dubbed "rationalists" (p. 87)!

Leon Morris writes on the composition of John. I wondered what more there was for him to say—and was delightfully surprised. He asks us to take Luke's mention of "many" accounts seriously (Luke 1:1) in the context of the early preaching of the gospel. Sermon notes, John's own and others', are suggested as the raw material of the gospel of John, with a fair degree of cross-fertilization between the various preachers. The gospel thus emerged not later than A.D. 70, with the apostle John regarded as the most likely author, and shadowy redactors banished forever. Morris comes very close to John Robinson's *Redating* and adds powerful support to his case for a rethinking of the whole process of gospel-writing as the textbooks portray it.

David W. Wead, under the forbidding title "The Centripetal Philosophy of Mission," draws attention to the centrality of Jerusalem in the early Christian mission: Foreigners came to Jerusalem to hear the good news and themselves took it back to their homes. The "sending out" pattern was a later and subsidiary development. The article does not apply its insights directly to the modern missionary pattern, but it suggests some potentially radical rethinking—if this early "centripetal" pattern can be regarded as in any way normative. I hope Wead will tell us what he thinks about this one day.

George Gay tackles the sheep and the goats once more and not only identifies Christ's "brethren" as specifically Christians (an increasingly accepted exegesis) but further restricts them to a special group within the Church, the "little ones" of Matthew 10 and 18, the humblest believers who are in fact the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. All this in the context of a valuable overview of Matthew's central theological interests.

William Sanford LaSor introduces the debate on the *sensus plenior* of Scripture and brings some light into it by pointing out that to speak of a fuller meaning in Scripture than its human author was aware of is another way of recognizing the progressive nature of revelation. He is alert to the dangers of an uncontrolled reading into Scripture of whatever the interpreter cares to find there but believes that God's developing purpose brings out new significance in earlier revelation that could not have been grasped in the original historical context, a fuller meaning that goes beyond the author's intention without going against it. A sensitive essay that I hope will be given the respect it deserves by those to whom *sensus plenior* is like a red rag to a bull.

There is much more of solid worth in this volume and little that is lightweight. I hope all evangelicals involved in Biblical studies, and especially in debate on the authority and interpretation of Scripture, will make a point of being aware of what it offers.

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Essentials of Evangelical Theology, Volume One: God, Authority, and Salvation. By Donald G. Bloesch. New York: Harper, 284 pp., \$12.95.

Some of my systematic theologian friends have expressed excitement regarding this first volume of Bloesch's *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*. And with good reason, too. For having now read the book I can join the chorus, although I cannot claim to be quite in perfect tune with these others.

Bloesch has certainly made an outstanding contribution to the subject, so much so that his work must become indispensable for all those concerned with the teaching of theology. Most of what he has to say is so much in line with my own stance that I could well have supposed that it was written by myself; only, of course, it would not have been half so finely done as Bloesch has done it. Or I might have thought that he had sat in on my class in systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, a few years ago—but I know he had not had that misfortune!

The book does not purport to be itself a formal textbook of systematic theology, and it is all the better for that. Bloesch allows that he stands within the Reformed tradition and writes from that perspective. But unlike many tomes from that quarter Bloesch's is marked by a warm devotion and openness. Too many tomes of systematic theology seem to imprison God in their all-too-tidy scheme. And those that most emphasize the sovereignty of God restrict him to a neat schedule.

In this the first of two projected volumes under the subtitle of "God, Sovereignty, and Salvation," Bloesch seeks to uncover what are here the essentials for an evangelical theology. He deals with the sovereignty of God, total depravity, the primacy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, salvation by grace, faith alone. Each of these themes is dealt with in fine style and in a way in which every informed evangelical will want generally to concur.

Although his treatment of the so-called relative attributes of God is necessarily limited, what he has to say is specially illuminating. On the divine omnipotence, for example, he states that this does not mean that God is "the direct or sole cause of all that happens; rather he is Lord over all that happens" (p. 28). The implications of this statement one would like to see worked out. Does this not mean, as I myself believe, that there are certain "happenings" that take place almost by "chance" for which God is not responsible? Of special significance, too, is the statement that "although God knows the future before it happens, he does not literally know the concrete event until it happens" (p. 29). I might myself go further than this and suggest that Scripture seems to support the contention that there are "happenings" that take place that are only known to God as and when they "happen." But God is sovereign enough to take such events and control their outworking to the furthering of his overall purposes.

Bloesch has written an excellent chapter on the subject of total depravity. He makes clear that man was not created a sinner or for sin. Although he does not quote P. T. Forsyth at this point he stresses, with him, that sin is not integral to but an intrusion upon human nature. He seems to accept the Anselmic idea of "the voluntary appropriation of depravity" in his affirmation that original sin is not a biological taint but a spiritual contagion that in some way is passed on through biological generation. "Yet it does not become rooted in man until he assents to it and allows it to dominate his whole being" (p. 107). Bloesch does not declare himself a traducianist—Anselm was a creationist—but such an exposition of original sin would seem to require his acceptance of Tertullian's view. Apparently wishing to line up as close as possible with Augustine, Bloesch suggests that man is responsible for and condemned for his original evil state. But I do not think that to accept the theory of the voluntary appropriation of depravity requires this, nor indeed do I believe that Scripture teaches it. It only follows if the realist thesis of Augustine, that each man was actually and literally "in" Adam and sinned actually and literally in his sin, is accepted. But Augustine's exposition of Rom 5:12 is hardly valid.

While Bloesch says explicitly that at the "fall" the "image" of God in man was distorted

or corrupted, he does not state what specifically is that image of God. But a fuller discussion of this subject is surely required, so varied are the ideas on this and the conclusions that follow. For my own part I take the "image" to be that of "sonship"—man was created as "son of God" (Luke 3:38), or more precisely after the image of that relationship that existed from eternity between the Son and the Father. What was lost at the "fall" was "sonship," so that man was excluded from fellowship with God and expelled from the garden. From then on each person was born "outside the garden"—outside fellowship with God, and this is what it means to be involved in the sin of Adam and to be without God in the world.

I am not sure if Bloesch will carry all evangelicals with him in his chapter on the primacy of Scripture. He asserts inerrancy emphatically, but does not want it made a test of orthodoxy. He says he is unable to affirm with some of his evangelical brethren "that an unbiased investigation will disclose that the Bible does not err" (p. 68). He adds, however, that "only an investigation made by faith and to faith will disclose that the Scriptures are indeed the infallible and inerrant Word of God" (ibid.). The juxtaposition of these two statements might suggest that, while reason may apprehend that there are errors, faith can declare that this is not so. This would seem to advocate a dangerous sort of fideism and be an extraordinary example of "blind faith." At any rate Bloesch's stance on the issue of Scripture does allow him scope to admit "certain legendary elements in the Virgin Birth stories as contained in Luke and Matthew" (p. 131; cf. p. 105) and that the "fall" story is in some sense "mythological" and "symbolic." On this last issue Bloesch has explained his position so carefully that few will want to demur.

While treating the subject of the person of Christ, Bloesch goes out of his way to stress the reality of the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus. "There is," he says, "an identity of God the Son and the Person of Jesus, but this identity is veiled by Jesus' true humanity. The perfect manhood of Jesus was not assimilated into deity but instead was made its chosen vessel" (p. 129). In seeking to secure the unity of Godhood and manhood in the one person of Christ he adopts the enhypostatic formula of Leontius of Byzantium and consequently declares that "Jesus is humanly personal but has no independent human existence, since the center of his being is the Word of God, the second Person of the Trinity" (ibid.). God is the acting subject of his existence, so that his manhood is the predicate of the Godhead. But the problem is whether this historic solution of the unity of the two natures in the one person of Christ does not, however qualified with assertions to the contrary, still leave us with a Christ not quite human. It is hard to get away from the feeling that he is an Apollinarian mixture. If we cannot say that he is *a man*, as well as *man*, have we got clear of docetism? Maybe we have to settle for the conclusion that "the picture of Christ that the New Testament presents is incontestably enigmatic and paradoxical" (p. 126).

Bloesch has a good deal to say from the historical point of view on the ancient problem of divine grace and human freedom. He wishes to make clear that salvation is altogether of God and yet man is taken up into a responsible and a "responsible" (Brunner) way by grace. Is it however just from a desire to be true to his heritage that he defends the idea of "irresistible" grace? (p. 205). The word hardly suits the "I-Thou" character of religious experience. It is after all an analogy drawn from the cause-and-effect sequence of the physical world and tends to an idea of the divine omnipotence conceived a priori, an arbitrary sovereignty divorced altogether from God's love. God's grace is not something like a force or a fluid operating in the area of the subpersonal. God's grace is his love operating within the terms of personal conscious relationships. Grace does not prevail the more impersonal it is but succeeds because it is intimately personal. Perhaps as John Donne long ago advised such a word as "irresistible" in relation to grace should be handed back to the schools from whence it came.

One subject strangely omitted by Bloesch is that of the resurrection of Christ. This certainly belongs to the essentials of an evangelical theology. For as Wolfhart Pannenberg so rightly observes, "Christian faith would be in a bad state if the resurrection of Jesus were not an historical fact." Indeed, "only because Jesus' resurrection is an historical fact has

faith in the God who raised him a stable foundation" (*Faith and Reality*, pp. 72-73).

None of these observations should be allowed to detract from this volume by Bloesch. He has done us well and provided for us a rich menu. He who is hungry needs food, and he who is wise will sit at his table and eat that which is good.

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Essentials of Evangelical Theology, Volume Two: Life, Ministry, and Hope. By Donald G. Bloesch. San Francisco: Harper, 1979, 297 pp., \$14.95.

Bloesch's first volume focused on the themes of God, authority and salvation. This second and concluding volume discusses in successive chapters "The New Birth," "Scriptural Holiness," "The Cruciality of Preaching," "The Priesthood of Believers," "Two Kingdoms," "The Church's Spiritual Mission," "The Personal Return of Christ" and "Heaven and Hell." Bloesch concludes his constructive theology with both a summary of evangelicalism's distinctiveness and a challenge to recover a Biblical faith. He understands many evangelicals to be presently underplaying crucial doctrines while focusing on peripheral issues. Thus his goal is the reformulation of evangelical distinctives "in the light of Scripture and with an ecumenical sensitivity."

Bloesch succeeds well in his attempt at a catholic, evangelical theology—one that is open to the insight of the whole Church past and present as well as one that is grounded in and authorized by the Word of God. Each chapter begins with a Scriptural foundation, and controversial issues are adjudicated in light of Biblical teaching. Though his discussion operates from out of a basically Reformed orientation, Bloesch has been open to other Christian traditions as they correct or add richness to his evangelical faith.

In his chapter on the priesthood of believers, for example, Bloesch first summarizes the concept of priesthood in the Bible and then moves on to a Biblical discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He then surveys the Church's teaching, noting not only Luther's rightful emphasis but the distinct contributions of the pietists (in giving the doctrine tangible expression) and the pentecostals (in recovering the charismatic dimension of NT Christianity) as well. He also recognizes the validity of Roman Catholicism's stress on ministerial offices. In ways such as these Bloesch seeks to carve out a theological position that evidences both a Biblical fidelity and a catholic balance.

Readers of volume one will find it interesting that Bloesch returns in this volume to recapitulate and clarify some of his previous discussion, particularly that which is related to revelation, Biblical authority and inerrancy. Bloesch's opponents continue to be evangelical rationalists on the one hand and liberal experientialists on the other. Instead of viewing Scripture either scholastically or subjectively Bloesch opts for a sacramental approach, seeing "revelation essentially as God in action" and Scripture as "a divinely-appointed means of grace." Viewed in this light "Scripture is inseparable from the revelation which produced it and which flows through it but . . . the words of Scripture in and of themselves are not divine revelation."

Bloesch seeks a middle ground between fundamentalism and liberalism. Some will feel that this middle ground is too reminiscent of Barth's "neo-orthodoxy," and certainly Bloesch is appreciative of and dependent on Barth's creative thought at a number of points. But Bloesch is also his own person, and particularly in this second volume he is clear in his divergences from Barth as well (cf. Bloesch's notions of preaching as a means to reconciliation, of the kingdom of Satan as real, of secular orders not being subsumed under a Christocracy, of the eternity of hell, and of salvation history as distinct from universal history).

The mediating nature of Bloesch's theology has not only to do with its formal position between fundamentalism and liberalism but also with its substance. The author, for example, seeks to avoid being either nonpolitical or politicized in regard to the Church's spiritual mission. With regard to eschatology he seeks to hold in tension the opposite pulls of realized and futuristic viewpoints. Bloesch often concludes his chapter discussions paradoxically, as

when in his treatment of the final judgment he asserts the universal salvific will of God, the sovereignty of grace, and yet the reality of condemnation. Heresy, according to Bloesch, occurs when Christians try to overcome the tensions and paradoxes of the faith by making it univocal. Quoting Richard Hooker, Bloesch remarks, "Heresy is more plain than true, whereas right belief is more true than plain."

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Developing a Christian Mind. By Nancy B. Barcus. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1977, 103 pp., \$2.95 paper.

This study examines the debate on the acceptance of revealed truth as against the intellectual pursuit of knowledge. The former is not necessarily uncritical nor the latter agnostic. The Christian is frequently accused of holding a faith that rules out real thought. If it does so, it is not truly Christian: "You shall love the Lord your God . . . with all your *mind*" (Luke 10:27). So our volume deals with "*developing* a Christian mind." The mind of a Christian is by definition a *Christian* mind; but it must be developed and not allowed to wither from lack of exercise, retiring through timidity from withstanding the stress of the intellectual marketplace.

What should be the Christian's position? He must recognize its strength—and its bounds. He must recognize the limits of the authority of the "experts"—and of his own. His judgments must be *reserved* judgments, for "our interpretations are fragile, God's judgments are not." From general principles Barcus proceeds to survey some modern trends in science, nature and humanism.

Science used to offer all the answers; the world of knowledge seemed a closed system until too much was asked of it and it burst into fragments like an overfilled box. A. N. Whitehead and Max Planck saw possibilities yet of belief in God; pessimists like Jacques Monod saw, despite the exciting DNA chemistry, life as meaningless and purposeless. Nature was "a church to walk in" (Thoreau), or "red in tooth and claw." But nature without revelation is a "mute gospel." Humanism, which regards the world as come of age, ignores realities like Auschwitz and Hiroshima and sees with biologists like Julian Huxley and psychologists like B. F. Skinner perfection brought within reach by genetic and behavioral engineering.

A final chapter sums up: The faith of the gospel is a reasonable life-stance, but it comes only to those who seek hard, "enduring the pain of the quest . . . and expecting light in the morning." Barcus' theme is persuasively argued, and the newcomer to this field will find also a valuable general introduction to contemporary thinking. An index might make it even more valuable.

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God and the Astronomers. By Robert Jastrow. New York: W. W. Norton, 1978, 136 pp.

If you are looking for a brief, simple, well-illustrated summary of how contemporary astronomy confirms the truth of the first verse of the Bible, then this is just the book. Beginning with the first chapter Jastrow documents the demise of the steady-state theory and the almost universal acceptance of the big-bang theory, which is in amazing accord with the creation account in Gen 1:1.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the book is the documented reluctance of astronomers to yield to the evidence for the big-bang creation of the world. The fireball radiation glow, which is the lingering radiation from the original explosion computed to be some 15 to 20 billion years ago, is the first point in case. Ralph Alpher and Robert Herman pointed to this in 1948, but it has been more recently (1965) measured in the exact pattern of wavelengths expected through the work of Penzeas and Wilson. This, says Jastrow, "has convinced almost the last doubting Thomas," and the remnant of "supporters of the Steady

State theory have tried desperately to find an alternative explanation, but may have failed" (p. 15). At the present time, Jastrow continues, "the Big Bang theory has no competitors. Theologians generally are delighted with the proof that the universe had a beginning, but astronomers are curiously upset." Why are they upset and how do they respond to this new evidence that Gen 1:1 was right all along? Their reaction, says Jastrow, provides "an interesting demonstration of the response of the scientific mind—supposedly a very objective mind—when evidence uncovered by science itself leads to a conflict with the articles of faith in our profession [that is, in astronomy]." For "it turns out that the scientist behaves the way the rest of us do when our beliefs are in conflict with the evidence. We become irritated, we pretend the conflict does not exist, or we paper it over with meaningless phrases" (p. 16).

Even the nearly venerated Einstein is an almost classic example of the simple mistake a brilliant mind can make when blinded by faith that is contrary to reality. As early as 1913 Vesto Melvin Slipher had discovered the "red shift" evidence that the universe is expanding and, hence, leaving this red trail as celestial objects move outward at speeds of up to two million miles per hour. Meanwhile Einstein developed his general theory of relativity, which he published in 1917. Einstein, however, failed to recognize that an expanding universe was both a conclusion from his own theory and a solution to one of his own puzzles. But Alexander Friedmann, a Russian mathematician, "found that Einstein had made a schoolboy error in algebra which caused him to overlook the additional solutions. In effect, Einstein had divided by zero at one point in his calculations" (p. 25). Strangely enough, Einstein was quite put out by Friedmann's discovery of his mistake and not only refused to accept it but wrote a defense in which he gave a proof that was wrong. Finally in 1923 Einstein admitted "my objection rested on an error in calculation. I consider Mr. Friedmann's results to be correct and illuminating" (p. 27). Just how and why could such a brilliant mind make such a simple mistake that kept him from seeing that the universe was "created" by a gigantic explosion at a point of time some measurable years ago "in the beginning"? Part of the reason, at least, lies in the fact that Einstein's God was a pantheistic God who is identical to the universe but not a creator beyond it. In 1921 a rabbi sent Einstein a telegram asking, "Do you believe in God?" to which he replied, "I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists" (p. 28). But Spinoza's God did not create *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing") "in the beginning." Rather, Spinoza's pantheistic God created *ex Deo* ("out of God") eternally and allowed no miracles. In view of this belief Einstein understandably wrote "this circumstance [of an expanding universe] irritates me." In another letter he said, "To admit such possibilities seems senseless" (p. 28). Jastrow pointedly comments on Einstein's reaction: "This is curiously emotional language for a discussion of some mathematical formulas. I suppose that the idea of a beginning in time annoyed Einstein because of its theological implications" (p. 28). No doubt it did—and rightly so, for the evidence continued to mount for an expanding universe.

By 1925 Slipher and others had clocked the velocity of 42 galaxies, nearly all receding from the earth at tremendous speeds. Even in 1919 the British astronomer Eddington organized the eclipse experiment that verified the correctness of Einstein's theory and of the expanding universe. Hubble's observations of the speeds and distances of the galaxies finally convinced Einstein of the expanding universe, and shortly before his death (1955) Einstein told a visitor that he fully accepted the idea of "a beginning" (p. 38).

By the time Hubble had published (c. 1930) the model of an expanding universe there was added the supporting evidence of the second law of thermodynamics, which indicates that the universe is running down like a clock. The natural conclusion from this is that something or someone must have "wound up" the universe at a given point in time.

Jastrow provides an interesting answer to those who would speculate that when the universe runs down completely it will "rebound" and "begin" all over again. This, he claims, is not possible, since "fresh hydrogen is the essential ingredient in the plan; it is the main source of the energy by which stars shine, and it is also the source of all other elements in the Universe" (p. 109). Once the hydrogen has been burned within a star and converted

to heavier elements it can never again be restored to its original state. The steady-state theory had postulated that fresh hydrogen was being spontaneously created out of nothing (which would seem to demand a creator!). This theory, however, became untenable with the discovery of the cosmic fireball, which is a kind of radiation "echo" of the original creation.

In the final chapter Jastrow summarizes his conclusions. "Three lines of evidence—the receding of the galaxies, the laws of thermodynamics, and the life story of the stars—pointed to one conclusion: all indicated that the universe had a beginning" (p. 111). In view of this a few scientists bit the bullet and dared to ask, "What came before the beginning?" Edmund Whittaker, a British physicist, concluded: "There is no ground for supposing that matter and energy existed before and was suddenly galvanized into action." He conceded, "It is simpler to postulate creation *ex nihilo*—Divine will constituting nature from nothingness" (p. 112). Some were even bolder and asked, "Who was the prime mover?" Edward Milne, the British theorist, wrote a mathematical treatise on relativity, saying, "As to the first cause of the universe, in the context of expansion, that is left for the reader to insert, but our picture is incomplete without Him" (p. 112).

But despite the overwhelming scientific evidence for creation (as recorded in Gen 1:1) many scientists strongly resisted the inevitable conclusion. In 1931 Eddington wrote, "I have no axe to grind in this discussion," but "the notion of a beginning is repugnant to me. . . . I simply do not believe that the present order of things started off with a bang. . . . The expanding universe is preposterous . . . incredible. . . . *It leaves me cold*" (p. 112). The German chemist, Walter Nernst, wrote, "To deny the infinite duration of time would be to betray the very foundation of science" (p. 112). More recently Phillip Morrison of Massachusetts Institute of Technology said, "I find it hard to accept the Big Bang theory; *I would like to reject it.*" Even Allan Sandage of Palomar Observatory, who established the uniformity of the expansion of the universe, said, "It is such a strange conclusion. . . . It cannot really be true" (p. 113).

As Jastrow observes, these are strange and emotional reactions from scientists. Why? Because, concludes Jastrow, "there is a kind of religion in science; it is a religion of a person who believes. . . . Every event can be explained in a rational way as the product of some previous event; every effect must have its cause; there is no First Cause" (p. 113). But this religious faith of the scientist is being upset by his own scientific discoveries. But reluctant as they may be, scientists are coming face to face with the beginning that started with a bang—with Gen 1:1. Jastrow's concluding analogy is a powerful indication of the reluctant but inevitable conclusion to which astronomers are coming. He writes: "For the scientist who has lived by faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries" (p. 116).

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Solomon's Sword: Clarifying Values in the Church. By Robert Meyners and Claire Wooster. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977, 144 pp., \$4.95.

Solomon's Sword is an attempt to apply techniques akin to analytic philosophy to social and moral issues in the context of the Church. The authors seek to help church people identify the values they hold and compare them with other possible ones.

The strength of this work lies in the techniques of group dynamics that Meyners and Wooster describe. Many of these are worthy of adaptation to situations in Christian education where moral absolutes of God's Word are brought into juxtaposition with contemporary issues. Christian education leaders investigating group dynamics will find much that is suggestive here. The second and last chapters deal with such strategies. The other four chapters offer discussions of various issues followed by suggested ways of implementation.

The issues dealt with are "Christ and Culture," women's rights, the Christian and ecol-

ogy and "The Right to Life and the Right to Death." Of these topics this reviewer found the chapter on abortion and euthanasia most helpful, the one on women's rights least so.

The definite weakness of the book, from an evangelical viewpoint, is the authors' assumption that there are no moral absolutes today. They write: "Nowhere is the authority available to priest or prophet by which the values that might save us could be proclaimed. Theologians and Christian leaders cannot tell the rest of us what opinions we should hold. Even their advice on issues of private morality is less than fully welcome. Questions of sexual morality were once a clear province for ecclesiastical advice. Now, even this issue involves so many technical questions relating to psychological and physical health, world population, hunger, and economic justice that moral pronouncements are strangely inadequate" (p. 13).

Several typographical errors and a defective binding mar the book.

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Armageddon Now! The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917. By Dwight Wilson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977, 258 pp., \$4.95.

Since the Balfour Declaration and the Bolshevik revolution, "Armageddon now" has been the premillenarian cry. It has engendered a "loose literalism," historical determinism and evangelistic opportunism. Premillenarian pragmatism has exploited Armageddon as an evangelistic "tool of terror" to scare people into the kingdom.

As a result of this utilitarianism, premillennialism has a credibility problem, writes Dwight Wilson, a minister in the Assemblies of God and professor of history at Bethany Bible College, in the first full-length study of this facet of American chiliasm.

The standard twentieth-century premillennial response to Russia and Israel has been amoral deterministic support of Israel and a belligerent prejudice toward a demonic Russia. The author examines this underlying philosophy of premillennial eschatology and asks, "What is the paramount question with regard to eschatology, prophecy or justice?" If Israel has the right to exist, what is just for the Palestinians and displaced Arabs? What international ethics are incumbent upon Israel (and indirectly the Christian community) as Israel fulfills Biblical prophecy? According to Wilson the situation demands that decisions be made on the basis of justice rather than the scholastic grounds that it fulfills prophecy.

Wilson strongly criticizes the insensitivity of the premillennialists at this point by asking where is the "fairness doctrine" in premillennial Christianity. These unique chiliasts have pursued the prophetic demise of the planet earth with something akin to sadistic fervor. Wilson warns that premillennialists should not hail Armageddon as a "wonderful" event ushering in the end time and affirming their superior eschatological knowledge. Rather it should be lamented as a dreadful but necessary event from which no one will profit.

History has vindicated neither premillennial faith nor forecasts. Premillennial speculation regarding the end has just not jibed with historical facts. For instance, 1948 was hailed as a year of divine intervention precipitating the "latter rain" of the end times. But meteorological data show this to have been a period of minimal rainfall!

Speculation on the Antichrist has alternately included Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler and Henry Kissinger. All in all, writes Wilson, premillennial precision has been no more accurate than the figurative interpretations of which premillenarian literalists have been so critical.

This historical inaccuracy has stemmed from the fact that a sneeze in Israel constitutes a fulfillment of prophecy in the premillennial scheme of things. The "current crisis" of any given era always signals the end, and premillennial history is replete with individuals who interpret things according to what is "right in their own eyes." These indiosyncratic excesses have created an "everyman-his-own-prophet" syndrome that has led others down

the blind alley of date-setting and built up a remarkably diversified catalog of "wait-watchers."

Armageddon Now is based on research in the past sixty years of premillennial periodicals. It is derived from an impressive bibliography of both published and unpublished research on the subject. It has no index, a lamentable deficiency for this milestone in premillennial historiography.

It does, however, suffer from the same mistake of most literature on premillennialism by premillennialists. It makes little delineation between political and religious Zionism. Scant attention is given to Theodor Herzl, founder of the Jewish state. This most vulnerable point in the premillennial ordering of events is the assumed synonymity of these antipodean systems. Modern Zionism is not the Biblically-restored Israel. The Balfour Declaration, which paved the way for the present nation of Israel to come into existence, was not a spiritual renewal movement among Jews looking for the Messiah.

Ironically, premillennialism has become a victim of its own historical bigotry. It has cried "wolf" for so long, and no wolf has appeared. The "false alarms" have discredited the premillennial view to the extent that many sincere and serious eschatological scholars and laypersons no longer consider it a viable millennial model. The movement is guilty of what C. S. Lewis called "chronological snobbery" and, like its post- and a-millennial counterparts, it will be "surprised by joy" at what does happen "in the end."

Premillennialists have been so busy looking to the future that they have not profited from the past. They stand to profit more than any others from this monograph, which demonstrates that there is neither Biblical nor historical predication for premillennial pontification.

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Understanding Bible Prophecy. By Morris A. Inch. New York: Harper, 1977, 151 pp., \$3.95 paper. *Biblical Prophecy for Today*. By J. Barton Payne. Grand Rapids: Baker, 93 pp., \$2.95 paper.

The arrangement of these two volumes differs, giving the reader complementary perspectives in approaching prophecy. Though each author has provided a short, nontechnical and very readable treatment of the subject, Inch's volume is more informal in style and somewhat conversational in tone. He interweaves Scriptural quotations with a variety of personal anecdotes and illustrations while dealing with various aspects of Biblical prophecy, including its nature, context, leverage, predictions, appeal and psyche.

Though *Understanding Bible Prophecy* contains no bibliography, footnotes or indexes, it does provide an excellent series of questions for study and discussion at the end of each chapter. These questions alone are worth the price of the book. They supply a useful catalyst for group discussion and likewise serve as summary guides for the contents of each chapter.

Another commendable feature of Inch's approach is that of balance. He avoids the sensationalism often associated with those who view prophecy to be "simple prediction," opting rather to stress its character as the "revelation of God" (p. 11). Despite being of premillennial persuasion, Inch is not interested in pressing the details about Israel's future (chap. 9). In addition he does not give undue attention to certain of the more unusual *charismata* (chap. 11). Rather, he sees prophecy tied to the down-to-earth social issues of justice and everyday life. In a word, "prophecy never hangs suspended in midair" (p. 21).

The book contains several minor flaws including a wrong reference (p. 61), a misspelling (p. 89) and an inaccurate mention of the prophet Ezekiel (apparently Inch intends Jeremiah; cf. Jer 24; p. 61). In addition, there are a good number of Scriptural quotations found outside the prophets that tend at times to detract from the main focus of the book. On the whole, however, Inch succeeds in accomplishing his goal of making prophecy more under-

standable. And that in itself is no easy task.

J. Barton Payne's work is a concise handbook that discusses 72 prophecies that concern the Church age through the time of the second coming. Actually these correspond to the prophecies numbered from 591 to 662 in Payne's magnum opus, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Harper, 1973).

Payne's premillennial approach is both methodical and precise. Hundreds of Scripture passages are given to support his conclusions. In addition Payne includes special notes on Bible verses, indexes of subjects and Scripture references, and two charts. Continual reference is made to the appendix, where Payne includes a succinct listing (by numbers) of the 72 prophecies. Some of these, such as no. 7 ("Rechabites will survive to worship God") and no. 39 ("the archangel Michael will protect God's people during the tribulation"), are likely to be well known only to a few. For this reason, Payne makes his readers think and react to his analysis because he touches on some of the more obscure details of prophetic literature.

Like Inch, Payne is to be commended for using restraint in certain areas of interpretation. For instance, he refuses to speculate about the identity of the Antichrist and does not insist that the temple must be rebuilt (pp. 23-25). On the other hand, some may react negatively to Payne's popularizing of certain chapter titles, such as "It Could Be Worse—and Maybe Is" (chap. 2) and "The Hope of the Wor(l)d Is Jesus" (chap. 3). In a similar vein, at times Payne's style is hortatory, even evangelistic (see pp. 49, 50, 52, 65, 66, 78).

Despite several typos (see pp. 32 and 36), for the person who wants a succinct chronological outline of events surrounding the close of this age written by a scholar who devoted much of his life to the topic, Payne's book is well worth the reading.

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Jeremiah. By Ernest D. Martin. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978, 77 pp., \$1.95 paper.

By its own designation, this slim volume is not to be ranked with the commentaries on *Jeremiah*. It is a "study guide for congregations." There are 13 chapters designed as lessons that do not cover every chapter of the book of *Jeremiah* but allow an adequate and stimulating insight into its message.

Every chapter begins with a focus, a listing of the *Jeremiah* passages to be studied, and a prayer. Martin presents every lesson clearly and concisely, challenging the users of the study guide with searching questions to think through the issues. Everyone is expected to use this book with pen and Bible in hand. In view are obviously intelligent people from youth to old age who will form discussion groups to share their experiences with and insights into the Word. Martin's emphasis is placed on understanding the text and obeying its message. Here is a valuable model for pastors and group leaders on how to prepare Bible studies that are factual and captivating.

The reviewer's preference for the *NASB* and *NIV* taints Martin's choice of the *RSV* as the underlying text. But this is insignificant for most. An interesting theological question, however, is posed by some prayers—viz., should our prayers today be addressed to "Yahweh God"? The reader of this review will have to find the answer for himself.

On page 10 there seems to be a confusion in the first line ("*Jeremiah's* call" surely belongs in the third column). On page 27 Martin deals somewhat harshly with prominent "born-again" people in entertainment, politics and sports. Ought there not to be room in our hearts for the immaturity of new believers whose lifestyle will change only gradually as the Holy Spirit instructs and leads? (Note also spelling error, last line, p. 27.) On page 36 the choice of "sensible" to describe "popular" wisdom is unfortunate, since the outstanding characteristic of wisdom is its sensibleness. The list of Scripture passages concerning sacrifices on page 37 defies any sense of order. Interesting is the coining of "extra-verbal" and "para-verbal" for well-known nonverbal communication (p. 43). Martin claims that "the meaning of Pashhur is not clear" (p. 45), but if the lexica are correct the pun in *Jer* 20:3 is very effective—viz., Pashhur, "quiet on every side," becomes Magor-missabib, "terror on

every side." For the final questions on page 57 it would have been helpful to indicate some NT references to guide the users in their search for answers, as Martin usually does. On page 66 the user will be unable to cope with the RSV text of 31:22 ("a woman protects a man") without either more explanation or a better translation (e. g., "a woman will cling to a man" in contrast to the wandering, unfaithful daughter of that verse). Martin's eschatological trumpet sound on page 68 needs some modification in the light of some NT references. It also seems to the reviewer that his suggestion to conclude Lesson 11 "with a communion service" needs very careful ecclesiological evaluation and/or preparation.

It seems superfluous to add that this study guide is highly recommended for getting into this important book of the Bible and applying its message to our lives today.

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Jesus in the First Three Gospels. By Millar Burrows. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977, 304 pp., \$11.95.

For relaxation the hearty climb Mount Washington, the gifted create epics, and the suicidal try to piece together the broken strands of the synoptic gospels. Burrows, famous for his outstanding work on the Dead Sea scrolls, falls into the last category.

It is a monumental task. Even before he starts, Burrows is in a no-win situation. He will be attacked from the right for not harmonizing the minute discrepancies in the gospel records; he will be lambasted from the left for presuming to construct a historical Jesus. Yet in a nontechnical, evenhanded fashion Burrows does chronicle the myriad events from the annunciation to the ascension.

But in some ways he fails. His style is a bit too cautious, his command of the sources satisfactory but not overwhelming, his text too repetitive of the gospels themselves. He draws on intertestamental literature, he sheds light from Egyptian papyri, he makes parallels to Qumran scrolls—but never often enough to rivet our attention. Also, Burrows follows a tried and true chronology rather than exploring new channels on his own. *Jesus* is a textbook and, as such, adequately demonstrates the numerous synoptic problems without too quickly trying to solve them.

Not a few evangelicals will be put out by Burrows' skepticism concerning miracles and his concessions to liberal scholarship (i. e., legend versus history). But my biggest objection concerns the book's intended audience. Why did the book need to be written at all? It is a lazy man's guide to the synoptics, a book any seminary student or minister should be able to write for himself with a good harmony of the gospels and a few exegesis courses under his belt. Was it not Nietzsche who said, "A sedentary life is the real sin against the Holy Ghost"?

Finally, I wish the publisher had given Burrows space for a more extensive bibliography and an index, often the most useful segments of any textbook.

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