

BOOK REVIEWS

Subverting Global Myths: Theology and the Public Issues Shaping Our World, by Vinoth Ramachandra. Downers Grove, ILL: IVP, 2008. 296pp. hb. \$23.00. ISBN-13: 978 0-8308-2885-2.

Reviewed by Chan-Woong Shin

In one of the blurbs for Ramachandra's *Subverting Global Myths*, the well-known American theologian Stanley Hauerwas says that he has read few books from which he has learned more. It would be hard for anyone, after a thorough reading of the entire book, to deny that Hauerwas cannot be exaggerating too much. *Subverting Global Myths* is a work that is worth reading from cover to cover, since it is packed with knowledge and insights derived from the author's historical Christian worldview and his profitable reading of a large number of materials, both secular and religious. Evangelical Christians who are eager to expand and deepen their understanding of some of the most important issues in our contemporary world will certainly appreciate Ramachandra for offering not the conclusive evangelical answers to them, but a solid springboard for further exploration of those answers.

The main purpose of the book is to show how pervasive and also inadequate or even dangerous, in light of Christian theology, what Ramachandra calls the "myths" or *idols* in six areas of contemporary global discourse are. Those "public, large-scale narratives that engage our imaginations and shape the way we experience the world (p. 12)" are produced and promoted primarily by the Western, secular elite and media, but they often dictate the way in which many Christians, especially in America and Britain, think and talk about such diverse issues as terrorism, religious violence, human rights, multiculturalism, science, and postcolonialism. The book consists of a short prologue and six chapters each of which deals with one of the above issues. Given the huge diversity of the areas covered and a range of topics discussed within each area, it seems impractical and unfruitful to present even a briefest summary of Ramachandra's argument. In the chapter on science, for example, he addresses not only Charles Darwin and new atheist biologists such as Richard Dawkins and Francis Crick, but also the Vienna Circle, August Comte, India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, sociobiology, evolutionary psychology, intelligent design, methodological and metaphysical reductionism, scientific research and moral issues, genetic engineering, eugenics, and post/transhumanism. And the other five chapters are equally remarkable in terms of the amount of detailed knowledge and thoughtful discussions they provide regarding their respective subjects.

Yet, particularly impressive about Ramachandra's work is how effectively he utilizes two sources—alternative (often non-Western) academic

and popular voices within each area of dominant global discourse and an incredible range of historical analysis—to reveal the short-sightedness and self-contradictions of the dominant global myths, instead of throwing random verses from the Bible to argue for the ascendancy of Christian alternatives. Take, for example, the popular notion that everything has changed since September 11, 2001. While many people dispute the wisdom of America's responses to the attacks, most of them do not question that 9/11 has opened up a new era of terrorism and religious violence, which is easily and justly attributed to the rise of militant Islam. Yet, Ramachandra convincingly shows that despite the silence of the Western media, terrorism had inflicted upon the lives of many non-Western citizens long before 9/11 and that the growth of Islamist militancy has been deliberately and inadvertently fostered by foreign military and economic policies of the Western countries. He also successfully counters the secular claim that the conflict between religions—especially between Christianity and Islam—is inevitable and they thus must be removed from the public sphere with the widely unknown history of their peaceful coexistence and interdependence and the case studies showing how religious identities overlap political, ethnic, and cultural identities and how the latter can in fact influence and even change the former. Similarly, drawing upon the works of mission scholars and church historians such as Lamin Sanneh, Ramachandra exposes the illegitimacy of the stereotyping of Christian missionaries as agents of Western imperialism, which is implicitly shared by some secular champions of multiculturalism and postcolonialism. To the contrary, he argues, it was the former, inspired by the biblical call to cultural diversity and love of the poor and oppressed, who fought hard for the protection of native peoples and their languages. As for human rights and science, it is persuasively shown that however desirable and noble the goals of their secular proponents might be, there is no way for them to fully achieve those goals unless their pursuit of human rights and science is first grounded in the proper understanding of God, man, and the world derived from the Bible.

After such deconstruction of popular myths in each chapter, Ramachandra proposes his own theologically informed ways to understand the issue at hand. Although deeply thoughtful and faithful, not all of his proposals will be received by some evangelical readers without reservations or disagreements. Discussing a biblically informed schedule of human rights, for example, Ramachandra suggests that the right to life, especially that of the poor, should take precedence over civil and political rights and the right to private property. While no serious Christian will dispute the presence of the clear mandate to help the poor in the Bible, there is disagreement among evangelical theologians and activists about whether “rights language” is the most adequate

tool for advocating for the poor and vulnerable.¹ Another possible subject for debate is Ramachandra's view of creationism and the intelligent design movement. He criticizes creationism for simply being a mirror image of evolutionism, for the former reduces the Christian doctrine of creation to the level of a scientific theory of origins. He is also skeptical of the intelligent design movement as long as it subscribes to the dichotomy between "natural world" and "designed world" and tries to fill the gaps in our contemporary knowledge of the world. For Ramachandra, evolution is an undeniable fact of life, yet it does not refute the existence of the Creator. Rather, the latter is the one who not only enables the world to evolve, but also makes the scientific study of evolution possible. Thus, Ramachandra believes that it is possible to maintain both scientific and theological accounts of creation together. Others might disagree.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that *Subverting Global Myths* is a genuine piece of evangelical scholarship rightly defined as a global enterprise. In the end, Ramachandra's counterarguments against so-called "global" ideologies are nothing but faithful reflections of the familiar, historical biblical narrative of creation, fall, and redemption. At the same time, however, his work exemplifies how that universal narrative can take on vivid life through the author's own particular experience, learning, and devotion to create a reality that all Christians as members of the only truly global community can and should live and tell. It is a unique achievement and, hopefully, many evangelical scholars will follow suit.

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Political Theology II: The Myth of the Closure of Any Political Theology, by Carl Schmitt. Trans. Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward. Cambridge, UK, and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008. ix + 158 pp. pb. \$14.99. ISBN-13: 978 0-7456-4254-3.

Reviewed by Amos Yong

The book under review was one of the last of over forty written and published during his lifetime by the (in)famous former constitutional lawyer and jurist of the Third Reich (for three years, 1933-1936), Carl Schmitt (1888-1985). Already a recognized legal theorist by the end of World War I, Schmitt produced his most provocative and (in hindsight) controversial work during

¹ See, for example, Paul Marshall, "Human Rights," in Ronald J. Sider and Diane Knippers, eds. *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 307-322.

the middle war years. Even after being defamed by opponents and then ousted from his position in the Nazi Party – for not being sufficiently in line with the Nazi ideology, even though he had defended many of the party’s legislative decisions, including those which led to the Jewish holocaust – Schmitt continued his scholarly work without any public retractions of his previous ideas. He was detained after the Second World War under charges of having provided the intellectual legitimation for the Nazi war crimes, but was released in 1947 without being indicted (for lack of conclusive evidence). Needless to say, Schmitt’s reception, both in Germany and the Anglo-American west, was very slow in coming at least through the 1950s and 1960s.

By the time of *Political Theology II* – which German edition, *Politische Theologie II*, appeared in 1970 – the complexity of Schmitt’s legal, political, philosophical, and theological contributions were beginning to be realized, even all the way across the left-right ideological spectrum. Growing interest in Schmitt’s ideas in the Anglophone world led to translations of *The Concept of the Political* (originally 1927) in 1976, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (originally 1922) in 1985, and others in their trail. The volume under review appeared as a sequel to the book with the same title first published 48 years before (English readers can be thankful to Hoelzl and Ward that the time lag between English translations of the two volumes is less than half the number of years in comparison!).

In order to appreciate *Political Theology II*, we must understand something of the first instalment of the argument as well as a bit about the circumstances that led Schmitt to revisit his thesis almost half a century later. *Political Theology I* was a peculiar book, borne out of the travails of Germany’s defeat at the hands of the Allies in World War I, as well as out of dissatisfaction with the incapable leadership of the *Deutsch Reich* (also known later as the Weimar Republic). Although not theologically trained, Schmitt insisted in this slender 1922 volume that modern politics was structured by secularized theological notions – i.e., the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* paralleled the infallible political decision that cannot be repealed or contested; theology’s omnipotent God as well as the Catholic church’s pope (Schmitt was a lifelong Roman Catholic) translated into the political monarch and lawgiver; the miraculous in religion was analogous to the exceptional political state of emergency which demanded an authoritative, even dictatorial, leadership; and the God-Satan contrast modeled the friend-enemy distinction in the political arena. This book earned Schmitt the title of, deservedly or not, “father of political theology,” at least as a modern field of academic inquiry.

Growing concerns about the Nazi regime during the 1930s, represented in part by the crafting of the Barmen Declaration in 1934 for example, motivated some critical theological responses to Schmitt. The New Testament scholar Erik Peterson (1890-1960) was one who discerned the incompatibility of Nazism and the Christian gospel, and thus sought to undermine any attempts

by Party ideologues to find theological legitimation for their political agendas. Along the way, Peterson came to believe that Schmitt's ideas were too amenable to Nazification. So, although they had known each other personally during the 1920s, Peterson came out in print in the 1930s against Schmitt, more indirectly than directly. But on one occasion, he unmistakably declared in a now famous footnote at the end of a book published in 1935 that his work had effectively demonstrated, "by a concrete example [here referencing Schmitt's *Political Theology* of 1922], the theological impossibility of any 'political theology'."

This Peterson claim, along with the concluding pages of his 1935 book within which it is nested, are reproduced as an appendix in this Heolzl and Ward translation of Schmitt's (very belated) response. Unfortunately for English readers, none of the other relevant pieces of Peterson's arguments – e.g., *Heis Theos: Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), *Der Monotheismus als Politisches Problem: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (Jakob Hegner, 1935), and a key article, "Göttliche Monarchie," in *Theologische Quartalschrift* 112 (1931) – have been translated to date.

Schmitt's *Political Theology II* is devoted to at least questioning, if not debunking, Peterson's pronouncement regarding the impossibility of political theology. In the 35 years since Peterson's interment of political theology, there were many, especially in the German scene, who assumed that the case against political theology had been made. Yet there were signs of life, especially in the emerging "new" political theology of the late 1960s spearheaded by theologians like Johann Baptist Metz. It is in this context, that *Political Theology II* answers to Peterson along at least the following four lines: 1) that Peterson had not successfully demonstrated the kind of disjunction between theology and politics (which can only be assumed in the abstract) required to foreclose the possibility of political theology; 2) that while Peterson's argument may have effectively undermined a Constantinian form of political theology (given that he attempted to make his argument historically by focusing on the first four centuries of early Christianity), this did not preclude alternative forms of either a theologically informed political stance or posture on the one hand, or a politically relevant theological vision on the other hand; 3) that Peterson's argument is flawed by an illegitimate guilty-by-association technique which questionably presumed that the fourth century bishop Eusebius' honoring of Constantine was heretical and then concluded that any other allegiances made between the church and the state – i.e., any political theology – would also be heretical; and 4) that, finally, Peterson's attempt to retrieve and reappropriate Augustine's own eschatological theology of the political, wherein only God can accomplish the redemption of the *polis* in the impending kingdom of God or heavenly city, is problematic precisely because

even Augustine's own eschatological vision had historical implications for the organization of the church amidst the earthly city.

There are, of course, multiple ways to read Schmitt's *Political Theology II*. Some will read this book because they are interested in Schmitt as a political theologian, while others will want to follow out developments in the debate engaged by Peterson and others during the interwar years. For these more historically oriented readers, this volume will prove to be captivating.

A third group of folks will be interested in more normative theological issues related to the task of political theology today. In this case, the spotlight expands from Schmitt to include his translators. Hoelzl (a philosopher at the University of Manchester) and Ward (of Radical Orthodoxy fame) were led in part through their editorial work on a wide-ranging historical anthology, *Religion and Political Thought* (Continuum, 2006), to make this important Schmittian text available to an English audience. Their informative introduction locates the importance of this volume not only in Schmitt's *oeuvre* but also amidst the wider debate in political theology especially as that was unfolding on the continent after Vatican II. It is clear that they side with Schmitt (against Peterson) with regard to the possibility, if not necessity, for political theology today. It is less clear what their own recommendations for political theology might be, and on this point, *Political Theology II*, focused as it is on simply reopening the question regarding the possibility of political theology, is less than helpful itself. Perhaps Hoelzl and Ward will, either together or separately, come out with a more constructive statement in the future. But even if not, or until then, English language readers in general and evangelicals across the political spectrum in particular will benefit from *Political Theology II* and be led to ask precisely the important questions about the future of the discussion, in light of its controversial past.

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Jesus & Justice: Evangelicals, Race and American Politics, by Peter Goodwin Heltzel. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. xxiii + 259pp. hb. \$30.00. ISBN-13: 978-0-300-12433-0.

Reviewed by Timothy Lim Teck Ngeru

Evangelicals are experiencing their spring in politics and social action, so concludes Peter Goodwin Heltzel's *Jesus & Justice*. In this recent publication, the Evangelical political-theologian Heltzel makes four significant contributions to the study of evangelicals and politics.

Firstly, Heltzel proposes "a new genealogy of American Evangelicalism" to situate the diverse evangelical political spectrum in America today. He

posits that an evangelical political history traces back to the antebellum revival where the Blacks and the whites have inherited the same legacy. Turning the spotlight from a predominantly ‘white’ approach on evangelical politics, Heltzel retraces the story of ‘Black’ and ‘White’ Christianity as two concurrent developments: the intent is to show how the two movements are integral for understanding the current trends in North American Evangelical engagement(s) in politics. He hypothesizes that evangelical politics may only be conceived after appreciating the Black (Afro-American) community’s campaigns for liberation and social justice against ‘white’ oppressions from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Especially in the latter part of the twentieth century, the two movements (Evangelicalism and Black Christianity) have complemented and supported each other indirectly as evangelicals have formed their various perspectives on political/social issues. For instance, the white churches after World War II publicly campaigned for a church freedom from state control (because of a belief in personal piety and the autonomy of faith from politics), while black Christians wanted the state enforcement to protect the rights and freedom of the black people (because of a vision for political transformation/liberation) – thus these appear as public engagement in the opposite directions, Heltzel posits that they eventually complemented each other – the autonomy of the state and church provides freedom for personal salvific transformation, while the black liberation seeks for structural transformation – both are proposals for transformation, grounded christologically, though the vision of liberation by Christ is interpreted differently.

Secondly, Heltzel examines the theological visions of Carl F. H. Henry and Martin Luther King Jr., two representative evangelical leaders, to show how Christology is central to evangelical public theology, both in the ‘white’ and in ‘black’ evangelical communities. In Heltzel’s analysis, the formation of the evangelical justice movement is a result of King’s theological interpretation of the cross as Jesus’ identification with the suffering of his “beloved community” and as a sign of God’s love and justice. This is exemplified in the Christian Community Development Association, and Sojourners. Henry’s interpretation of the lordship of Jesus through a triumphant kingdom of God motif is the ground for the conservative evangelical’s alliance with Religious Right for a robust social engagement. The Focus on the Family’s pro-life, pro-family, pro-traditional heterosexual marriage and ecological campaigns and the National Association of Evangelicals’ recent involvement in social justice and liberation for suffering people worldwide are two examples of the outworking of a Henrian evangelical political outlook.

Thirdly, Heltzel postulates an optimistic future for a more politically engaging Evangelical movement. He calls this the “evangelical social awakening” or the “evangelical spring in politics and social action,” which is

set in motion by the black struggle (216, 213). The black social location leads the underside to interpret a liberation Christology, which redirects evangelicals in their search for “its deepest gospel ideal” (207). This prophetic evangelical political Christology is a vision of God’s love and justice for all of creation. The outworkings of this vision is seen in how evangelicals engage publicly on issues of peace, justice, love, poverty, solidarity with the poor, AIDS, ecology, and so forth. Evangelicals have come of age in politics, and are become activists, both on the national front and in the global scene (217-218). This is the “new mosaic of evangelical public life” that has been unleashed in North American Evangelical Christianity in the twentieth century (206).

Fourthly, Heltzel’s book shows that Evangelicalism is not a dying faith. The prospects of a thriving future for evangelicalism is what some may anticipate if Heltzel is correct in his reading of contemporary evangelical politics and the history of evangelicalism. The twenty-first century will not be “a very secular and religiously antagonistic community” where evangelicalism will collapse (contra Michael Spencer’s prediction).² While the year of the Evangelical may have passed (c.f. *Times* magazine in 1976), Evangelicals’ influence in the public square is just in its springtime.³ If evangelicals today command some public attention and if they still have some coercive power (e.g., with the Republican Party and/or Religious Right) to redirect the course of secularism, then it will come as no surprise that evangelicalism will continue to rebound in new ways and forms to combat the threat of encroaching opponents (political or otherwise): this is true even if the giant(s) is evangelicals’ most dreadful historical enemy, liberalism – in religious ideology and in the market political-socio-economy.⁴ The “Evangelical Manifesto” (October 2008), a declaration of a nine influential evangelical leaders, a steering committee led by Timothy George: this is a recent example of how evangelicals are rebounding in response to a liberal/secular challenge to evangelicalism’s public theology.

Heltzel offers a convincing and insightful rethinking of contemporary evangelical Christian political expressions in the light of reviewing historical data. This is notwithstanding that he has glossed over a number of significant developments in Christianity in the twentieth century which has significant bearings on how evangelical engage in politics. I would postulate that evangelicals had become more assertive in their political thought and actions

² Michael Spencer, “The Coming Evangelical Collapse.”

³ “Twenty-five Most Influential Evangelicals in America.”

⁴ In theology, the battle is observed by Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson, *20th Century Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: 1997) and Gary Dorrien, “American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, Decline, Renewal, Ambiguity,” *Cross Currents* 55:4 (2005). In political-socio-economy, the struggle has been analyzed in Bruce J. Schulman, and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008).

because evangelicals perceived that they had to combat the ill-effects of liberalism encroaching into their life in society. The perceived threat of liberalism is seen in the fundamentalism-modernism controversy, the death of God movement, the Evangelical-Catholic ecumenical dialogues, the modern-postmodern debate, and in the political ideology of the Milbank-Yoderian (including Hauerwas) debates, the political views of more progressive Christians and so forth.⁵ To leave out these milestones is to ignore the crux of why evangelicals (Black and white evangelicals included) behave the way they do in the public spheres. Heltzel's construction is of course a focused investigation of evangelical political engagement between 'white' and 'black' Evangelicalism in North American Christian history. To this end, Heltzel's reader friendly *Jesus & Justice* is a must read for courses on American Christianity, North American Evangelicalism, political theology, evangelicals and politics, and practical ministry.

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Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible,
by M.D. Daniel. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008. 172pp.
pb. \$16.99. ISBN-13: 978-0-8010-3566-1

Reviewed by Emmanuel Sule

For centuries people worldwide are known to have moved either voluntarily or involuntarily to live in new territories. This experience is undoubtedly linked to the rise and fall of nations throughout human history. But the scale of recent migration across national boundaries has no precedence anywhere. It is perhaps the one irreversible social phenomenon, more than anything else that is challenging and redefining our culture, national boundaries, and sense of nationhood. Unsurprisingly it is a controversial and hotly debated matter leading to a broad spectrum of opinions. Achieving any sense of consensus on the immigration debate is a daunting task, yet it is an issue society must not give up on. Mass migration is metaphorically like a broken dam that requires urgent attention because so much is at stake.

Nowhere is this mass migration of humans more noticeable than in USA, also known in history as a land of immigrants. The author's expertise in the Old Testament and his mixed heritage (a Guatemalan mother and an American father) qualify him to write on a difficult subject with such admirable clarity and sensitivity of one who cares deeply about humans trapped in this 'cultural

⁵ See "The Progressive Christian Witness." Interestingly, Heltzel has contributed "Prophetic Evangelicals: Toward a Politics of Hope," for this coalition.

tsunami' with its devastating consequences. The book is not a textbook on mass immigration in USA; rather, it looks specifically at more than a century of Hispanic immigration to USA from a Christian perspective. While this gives a voice to the prevailing suffering of millions of undocumented Hispanic immigrants, the author hopes that believers of the majority culture, who at times are ambivalent concerning immigration issues, will use this modest research work to formulate a biblical rather than ideological response to the on going immigration debate in US (19). The author also opines that the fact that millions of these undocumented Hispanic immigrants make some claim to Christian faith (mainly of the evangelical and Pentecostal streams) makes it poignant to have an informed Christian response or divine viewpoint on immigration (19).

Christians at the Border makes easy reading because of its concrete and clear prose and ability to engage the reader. The book is made up of five logically structured chapters with extremely useful endnotes and appendix for further reading. The core chapters are 2 to 4, which present an honest overview of the biblical narratives concerning charity and hospitality with a balanced consideration of their implications for the majority culture and Hispanic immigrants. As a primer it is hoped the book will provide a more biblically and theologically informed approach to the complex immigration discourse especially in USA.

In his first chapter, which relies more on ideas and feelings rather than statistical information, the author sketches a succinct history of Hispanic immigration. This is designed to help the reader appreciate the protracted and difficult history of the Hispanic immigration, and also show the contested issue of their national identity and economic impact. Any reader interested in statistics may find Carroll's endnotes useful. As already hinted International migration with respect to the US has been occurring since the dawn of the Republic and managed by various government departments. Underlining this long immigration history is what the author describes as 'a recurring tension principally between economic concerns and different expressions of nativism' (30). Humanitarian concern did not matter as much. But as he quickly adds, this does not represent the only public response to immigration because, 'the United States has frequently been characterized by graciousness to outsiders' (ibid.).

Chapters 2 to 4 examine carefully selected biblical materials relevant to the topic of immigration. They are intended simply as a guide, aimed giving Christians, whether of the majority culture or Hispanics, godly wisdom or mind-set required in dealing with the complex immigration quandary. The Old Testament perspective of the movement of people across borders (immigration), displaced people (refugees), and exiles presented in chapter two comes from the prism of the Bible and Hispanic biblical studies. Prominence is given to the concept of being made in the image of God and its implications

for understand immigrants as people with rights and responsibilities (65-70). Those who see immigration purely in ideological terms may disagree with the author's human right approach on this subject.

In his exploration of Old Testament examples of immigration the author warns against the tendency of pre-occupation with the mechanics of a move than with an honest attempt at understanding a people's experience within a new setting (71). He seeks to demonstrate God's concern for the vulnerable and his sovereign involvement in the movements of all peoples - not only of Israel - settling in other lands, with reference to the words of the Prophet Amos in chapter 9:7 (72). God's sovereign involvement with mass movement of people across the face of the earth is a chilling statement some believers may find difficult to take on board. More textual support should have been helpful here.

Chapter three, although insightful and somewhat technical, explores the theme, virtue and semantics of hospitality in the ancient Near Eastern world, including Israel. The author reckons that 'the theme of hospitality is relevant to the immigration debate' (94). Hospitality especially to 'resident alien' (*gēr*) in the Old Testament times was, instructively, a common cultural ethic given reciprocally and sacrificially due to the treacherous travelling conditions. The examples of charity in Old Testament times, a practice grounded in the image of God and enshrined in the law as a moral requirement for the nation of Israel, may challenge the American believer of the majority culture to be open-minded and hospitable to the Hispanic immigrants and other strangers who should return the kind gesture.

Complementary materials are drawn from the New Testament and presented in chapter four. Like the Ancient Near East setting which serves as the background for the OT surveyed, this section would have benefited from some reference to the Ancient Mediterranean custom of hospitality. New Testament material includes the experience and teaching of Jesus, and the use of the phrase "aliens and strangers" in 1 Peter and their implications for the Hispanic immigration debate. As the author points out, although Jesus did not directly address the issue of immigration, nevertheless, he showed concern for the non-Jews, marginalized and vulnerable people with implications for today (123). Furthermore, Jesus' two years experience as a refugee in Egypt with his parents invariably locates the Jesus story within a movement that spans history (116). The example of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is designed to illustrate the need for his disciples and the Jews of the majority culture to be charitable and gracious in their attitude towards their Samaritan neighbours (116-119). Also Jesus' teaching (e.g. Luke 10:30-37) is given 'in part to push the boundaries of understanding of his followers' (120). What the author sees here is the need for American and Hispanic believers to leave behind them negative feelings from their cultural heritage in order to engage with one another (125).

Once again on the theme of hospitality, the author suggests rather briefly that the Lord's Supper is the consummate reminder of the need to be hospitable to others (130-131). His final comment on Christian attitude towards strangers in the New Testament is based on Romans 13. This decision to end his survey with this text as opposed to Revelation is deliberate on his part. It is maintained some people, on the basis of Romans 13, condemn undocumented Hispanic Christian immigrants for violating the law of the United States and therefore believe they should suffer the consequences of their action (131). The author advocates the need to re-examine the present legislation for improvement especially from a more personal and human level. But the starting point should not be with the law or issues of legality, but rather arise from a set of beliefs and commitments grounded in the Bible (131). It is this preference of charity over legality that informs the structure of *Christians at the Border*. The final chapter offers pastoral advice to American and Hispanic believers to forgive and embrace each other as they journey towards the full realisation of true reconciliation.

Christians at the Border will assist Christians in America and elsewhere to think through one of the most important issues of our day and how to dialogue with each other. The book should be welcomed and widely read.

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At Home in a Strange Land: Using the Old Testament in Christian Ethics, by Andrew Sloane. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008. 259pp, pb. \$19.95. ISBN-13: 978-1-59856-084-8.

Reviewed by Stephen M. Vantassel

Broadly speaking, scholars can develop biblical ethics in two different ways. With the inductive approach, theologians infer timeless ethical principles only after a careful exegesis of all the relevant passages. In contrast, those employing the deductive approach use a few foundational maxims, such as "love your neighbor as yourself, as a keystone to understand all other passages, including those that appear to contradict the plain meaning of the universal maxim. While both methods are legitimate, one's choice of a method has profound impact on the kind of ethics one sees Scripture teaching. In the inductive approach, universal rules are constrained and understood in light of the particular exceptions. With the deductive approach, the exceptions to the rule tend to be marginalized and considered timebounded rather than as blunting the power of the universal principle.

Sloane's approach to Old Testament ethics falls squarely in the deductive camp. He believes that the global view allows Christians to avoid the twin

errors of discounting the Old Testament (Marcionism) and wholesale adoption of Old Testament teaching (Theonomy). To help the reader navigate this hermeneutical balancing act, Sloane provides an introduction to hermeneutical theory and practice, while coupling it with an introduction to Old Testament culture. Sloane avoids the debate over whether ethics should be rule-based or virtue-based by suggesting that Old Testament ethics should be understood in light of their impact on relationships, a view called personalism. Sloane says personalism does not reject the importance of rules and virtue on moral living, rather Scripture's concern centers on whether or not our actions or cultural institutions help us achieve and maintain *shalom* in our communities. He then proceeds to discuss key passages from each of the major genres (Lev 19:9-10; 2 Sam 11-12; Psa 24; Mic 6:6-8; Eccl 11) to provide concrete examples of how a personalist approach to Old Testament ethical passages plays out. Once the reader grasps the overall perspective, Sloane tackles controversial (or confusing) topics, such as slavery, clean and unclean, holy war, gender relations, and the Ten Commandments. The book concludes by discussing the nature of idolatry in light of Isaiah 46 and the timely yet thorny subject of cloning.

The text has a number of commendable qualities. Christians unfamiliar with the Old Testament will benefit greatly from Sloane's excellent discussion regarding Old Testament culture and times. His treatment of the clean and unclean laws was outstanding for its accuracy and clarity. Furthermore, Sloane's writing style is both fatherly and unpretentious as he takes great care in avoiding excessive and unnecessary scholarly lingo.

Unfortunately, Sloane's assessment of several ethical issues is unduly influenced by an uncritical acceptance of Western liberal values. Take for example his reason for supporting the egalitarian interpretation of male and female relationships. He contends that Adam's naming of the animals was not an indication of dominion but of discernment. Thus when Adam names Eve, Sloane is able to deny that Adam's naming constituted evidence for his authority over Eve. The problem with this argument is that it not only confuses equality of nature with equality of position and power but it creates a false disjunctive. Adam's naming could be simultaneously an act of discernment and authority. Furthermore, Sloane neglected to acknowledge that Scripture (Rom 5) clearly teaches that humanity sinned in Adam. Never does the Bible suggest that humanity fell because of Eve's being deceived. So it begs the question, if Adam was not in charge, why does God make Adam take all the blame?

Although Sloane's positions and tone lean to the left of the Evangelical center, I believe the text has value for introductory college level classes. Sloane is careful to be fair with opinions he disagrees, making the text a good choice for instructors wishing to encourage thoughtful and discerning dialogue among their students about these emotionally and intellectually challenging

topics. The one exception to this even-handedness was Sloane's unfortunate decision to use the pejorative term "subordinationist" instead of complimentary when referring to those who espouse traditional male-female roles. Additionally, the appendices containing brief reviews of books on Old Testament and resources for topics covered in the book are quite helpful. In a day where books abound, access to these brief reviews can save readers both time and money.

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Expecting the End: Millennialism in Social and Historical Context,

Edited by Kenneth G. C. Newport and Crawford Gribben.

Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006. 319pp. pb. \$34.95.

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Reviewed by Geoffrey Troughton

Violence by late-twentieth century groups and the excitement generated by the year 2000 have spawned numerous studies of millennialism in recent years. Yet, the term can remain rather slippery. In differing contexts it is used variously to describe a phenomena, doctrine, ideology or mindset. It can also be applied to a bewildering array of movements. *Expecting the End* is a product of the Hope-Manchester Colloquium on Millennialism, and brings together experts in a range of fields. Using case studies it effectively provides a state-of-the-play overview of millennial studies. It contains some fine and illuminating essays. As the following review demonstrates, these gravitate strongly toward more contemporary Christian manifestations.

Richard Landes' "Millenarianism and the Dynamics of Apocalyptic Time" expertly introduces the volume and concept. It parcels out central terminology, but also explores the emotional and conceptual landscape of millenarian belief. Landes notes the inherent tensions and disappointments that exist within millennial frameworks, but observes that "although millennialism has always proved wrong in its apocalyptic expectations, it has rarely proved inconsequential or unproductive". This elegant and satisfying introduction concludes with reflections on the nature of apocalyptic community, and the roles of prophetic millennial "roosters" and opposing nay-saying "owls".

Chapter Two addresses debate on the causes of the millennial violence. Following Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, John Walliss discusses the role of apocalyptic beliefs, charismatic authority and "totalistic" social systems as contributing internal factors. External ones are also discussed, including the

role that “cultural opposition” plays in creating volatility within otherwise peaceable groups. On the basis of six recent case studies Walliss affirms Catherine Wessinger’s thesis that the most important cause stems from threats to millenarian groups’ “millennial goal” or “ultimate concern” whether through internal or external factors.

Notwithstanding its roots in New Age and UFO subcultures, Christopher Partridge’s chapter analyses the suicidal Heaven’s Gate movement as primarily an “idiosyncratic form of fundamentalist Premillennialism”. In particular, he demonstrates that the radical dualism, premillennial pessimism, developed demonology and exclusivist theology of Heaven’s Gate resembled some Protestant fundamentalism of the late-1970s. Partridge accepts that the movement was “not, strictly speaking, a Christian sect”. Nevertheless, he notes that various dualisms and an eccentric reading of Revelation 11 were drawn from Christianity, and provided crucial rationalisations for suicide.

Brenda Brasher’s survey of “Millennialism in Contemporary Israeli Politics” notes that the idea is deeply rooted in the history of the state of Israel, and identifies five forms operating within the current milieu. While Protestant millennialism does not feature prominently, fundamental differences between nostalgic Jewish and future-oriented Christian modes are discussed.

A chapter by Andrew Pierce on “Millennialism, Ecumenism, and Fundamentalism” is the least sharply focused or millennially oriented essay in the volume, but provides a perceptive theological reading of the emergence of fundamentalism. It argues that fundamentalism was the Other to the modern ecumenical movement. Pierce notes that theological historiography often underestimates both support for missionary endeavour and the missionary movement’s role in theological production. The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 was a crucial moment in twentieth century ecumenism, and a rich site of contemporary theological reflection. Crucially, however, Pearce argues that fundamentalists also viewed it as a symbol of “the dangers of cultural accommodationism and of seeking unity at the expense of truth”.

Two chapters framed by the *Left Behind* phenomenon follow, demonstrating the impact of late-twentieth century politicisation of American evangelicalism on prophetic expectation. Daryl Jones notes that the series effectively inverts the utopia imagined by Fabian socialists into “the tyrannical reign of the antichrist”. His chapter focuses on the books’ conservative socio-political agenda, interpreting them as jeremiads and a manifestation of American Protestant anti-intellectualism driven by a right-wing fantasy of wiping out all liberals. Something of Jones’ tone can be adduced from his characterisation of Tim LaHaye as a “crazy old coot”. Crawford Gribben also expresses concern that the mentality expressed in *Left Behind* and its successors could push evangelicals to the cultural margins with potentially explosive effects. He notes that the novels have reshaped evangelical and millennial expectations. However, his basic thrust concerns the “paradox” that

in embracing the forms of dispensationalism represented by *Left Behind*, evangelicals have also embraced apocalyptic pessimism at the moment of their greatest cultural influence.

Two chapters advance our understanding of Davidian Seventh-Day Adventism, which will forever be associated with David Koresh and the catastrophic events of 1993 at the Branch Davidian community near Waco, Texas. Kenneth Newport provides a clear overview of the convoluted history and theology of the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists from 1959 to 2004, of which the Branch Davidians are only one sect. Catherine Wessinger gives a detailed and salutary account of changes and continuities in media reporting on the Branch Davidian episode from 1993 to the present.

A chapter by Mark Sweetnam provides a useful summary of dispensational theology from Edward Irving and J. N. Darby forward. His claim that dispensationalism did not lead adherents to be “socially uninvolved” is suggestive, but needs more detailed treatment. Sweetnam effectively distinguishes classical dispensationalism from late-twentieth century date-setting prophetic sensationalism of the type popularised by Hal Lindsey and others. Nevertheless, the claim that his views are “an aberration so radical as to allow us to dismiss Lindsey as a dispensationalist” seems unduly protective.

Stephen Hunt’s review of the charismatic movement also includes reflections on various phases and emphases in the development of Pentecostalism. This allows a more textured account of impulses animating the movement, and for interpretation within a broader renewal context. One central observation is that routinisation and weakening of the charismatic movement has been accompanied by diminished excitement and millenarian hope. A final thematic chapter by Gordon Allan considers the history and doctrines of a range of millenarian sects linked to the English prophetess Joanna Southcott from 1790 to the present. The groups are small and somewhat obscure, but Allan’s lengthy and direct acquaintance with them allows a reasonably clear description to emerge. The long genealogy of the groups and their idiosyncratic but distinctive packaging of both familiar and surprising doctrines make for an intriguing case study. The volume ends with a short reflection by Crawford Gribben which highlights the diversity and continuing relevance of millennial studies in the twenty-first century.

Expecting the End is a stimulating collection. It demonstrates the diversity, pervasiveness and significance of millennialism, and maps some contours particularly well. The widespread character of millennial expectation may have been better demonstrated with a greater emphasis on examples of more populous traditions. And despite the attempt to mainstream millennialism, as it were, some of the book’s case studies leave the impression that at least some of its forms may be irredeemably odd. Yet, millennialism remains an important influence. Historically, there have been strong links with evangelicalism, and this seems likely to continue given the centrality of themes

like hope and renewal in even its less optimistic guises. Overall, the volume still amply demonstrates Gribben's concluding contentions. It provides helpful background, thought-provoking examples, and suggests productive lines for analysis and interpretation. There is much to learn from it and absorb.

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