
Book Reviews

The Wrath of God

D. Eryl Davies

Evangelical Press of Wales 1984

68pp £1.40

Addresses given at the Bala Ministers Conference are in the nature of Applied Theology. They are not lectures and they frequently become sermons. A particular subject is studied on an exegetical base and within a doctrinal framework before being related to the contemporary situation as it affects ministers, churches and society. The contents of this book fit that description.

Dr. Davies contributed an article in issue No.13 of *Foundations* which dealt with the doctrine of Eternal Punishment in a way which complements this book. In the article, he highlighted those areas of the doctrine which have been and are being decried today and the alternatives to them which are being favoured. Sad to say, evangelicals are not guiltless in this. That article adds a dimension to this book in that it sets the doctrine of Eternal Punishment against a broader theological background but does so in a critical manner.

In this book, Dr. Davies deals with the Wrath of God, the Final Judgment and Hell. He defines wrath, relates other manifestations of God's wrath to the day of wrath and argues for this propriety of wrath in terms of sin's offensiveness to the majesty and holiness of God. Wrath is then integrated with judgment, both as something progressive and coming to a climax, in this case with

the Final Judgment. The identity of the Judge and the basis of the Judgment for believers and unbelievers are discussed. Each of these opening chapters closes with practical observations.

Three chapters are given over to a treatment of the reality of Hell. In the first, definitions of the relevant terms in the Old and New Testament are offered together with responses to these objections to the doctrine of Hell, viz. Universalism, Purgatory and Second Probation. (In the reviewer's copy, pages 43 and 44 are duplicated.) In the second, the nature and duration of Hell are studied in relation to the twin truths of separation and punishment. In this chapter, the teaching of Conditional Immortality is discussed and Dr. Davies argues for the eternity of suffering. A final chapter is given to a consideration of the challenge the doctrine of Hell makes on our belief and our preaching and praying.

This is a much needed treatment of an important — a real matter. It is to be read in association with the Bible which is so often referred to and prayed over as well. There was a time when evangelicals used to be laughed at for believing and proclaiming these things. We need to weep that this is no longer the case. Then, others who are now so secure will weep as well — and we shall all rejoice together in Jesus "who delivered us from the wrath to come".

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Creation in the Old Testament

*Edited by B. W. Anderson
Issues in Religion and Theology, 6
Fortress Press/SPCK
Paperback, 178pp, 1984, £3.50*

This book consists of a series of readings which show how modern biblical theology has dealt with the O.T. understanding of creation. After a clear and useful introduction by Anderson himself, there are nine readings which bring out very clearly how thinking has developed in the last century. An excerpt from Gunkel's "Creation and Chaos" (1895), dealing with the influence of Babylonian mythology, is followed by a piece in which von Rad developed (1936) his view of God as Redeemer being more fundamental in Israelite faith than God as Creator. Walther Eichrodt (1962) provides an examination of Gen. 1:1, and then there is a survey of creation motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry by D.J. McCarthy (1967). Assessments of various aspects of Creation Theology are taken from Claus Westermann (1971), H.H. Schmid (1973), H-J Hermisson (1978 — Creation Theology in Wisdom), G.M. Landes (1978 — Creation and Liberation), and B.W. Anderson (1983 — Creation and Ecology). All in all, this provides a useful compendium of well selected extracts, which provide a very clear impression of what is being said in this area.

However, from a conservative point of view, useful though this volume may be as a presentation of modern thinking, it does little to advance our understanding of the biblical

message. It is thoroughly critical and liberal in its approach to Scripture, and its orientation is alien to, and dismissive of, all conservative thought, which is treated as merely an outmoded relic of a past age. Genesis is rather to be interpreted as mythopoeic language (myth expressed in poetry), and the whole is to be understood not just against the background of the mythologies of the surrounding nations, but as evolving out of them. Such an approach has a very restricted conception of revelation. "A historical-critical approach makes it impossible for us to view Genesis 1 as our parents did, namely, as the memorial of a special revelation, which had been granted to the first human being. Unshakeable, however, remains our conviction that in the evolution of Israel's religion the providential will of the living God is revealed." (Gunkel, cited p.47.) This is far from a conservative view of revelation — indeed it is not revelation at all. Furthermore, as the alternative approach adopted is founded upon revisionist dating of Scripture, there are basic flaws in its methodology here also.

But the most lasting impression that this volume makes is the uncomfortable realization of how difficult it would be to compile a comparable selection of conservative writings. Perhaps the focus of our thinking has been oriented too much towards the creation-evolution controversy, and not enough towards a positive modern exploration and presentation of the significance of the doctrine of creation. The liberal approach throws up many questions that need an effective and scholarly answer. How do we ac-

count for the connections between the Genesis narratives and surrounding mythologies? Can we give an effective presentation of early history that accepts the factuality of Genesis, and accounts for the features of the degenerate religious views of the post-flood world?

There is need here for a thorough conservative investigation, and this is also the case with the O.T.'s self-understanding of creation.

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A church that refuses to declare what is vital for salvation under the pretext of achieving unity is both cowardly and unfaithful to her God-given mission of being a pillar for truth ... The scandal of the ecumenical movement is ignoring the blood of Christ as the means by which men are reconciled to God and brought into unity one with another.

J. Marcellus Kik
Ecumenism and the Evangelical, pp. 16, 118

John Calvin once wrote to Margaret of Navarre: 'A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward, if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent, without giving any sound.'

Klaas Runia
Reformation Today, p.123

'Truthful lips endure for ever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.' (Proverbs 12:19)

Be it observed to the honour of truth, that sacred thing, that if truth be spoken it will hold good and whoever may be disobliged by it and angry at it, yet it will keep its ground; great is the truth and will prevail; what is true will be always true, we may abide by it and need not fear being disproved and put to shame.

Matthew Henry

If we refuse to converse because we cannot commune, we fail to go the first mile (to say nothing of the second) towards restoration of fellowship. If, on the other hand, we commune where there is only sufficient unity for conversing, we cheapen both unity and truth and do our brother no good.

John H. Yoder
The Ecumenical Movement and the Faithful Church, 1958
