

the chaff with unquenchable fire. Gehenna, hell, is described as everlasting punishment, everlasting fire, the fire that shall never be quenched, everlasting flames, eternal fire, etc. That awful word appears 12 times in the New Testament: 11 of those references come from the lips of our Saviour...Those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord cannot escape the clear, unambiguous language with which he warns of the awful truth of eternal punishment. No universalism, no annihilationism, no probation in the hereafter satisfies his word. The awful stark destiny of man is this: the soul that rebels against God and chooses to remain unrepentant throughout this life will separate himself from the kingdom of God' (p 45).

May God enable us to preach faithfully and zealously His glorious gospel which alone is able to save men and women from everlasting punishment.

Details of Journals

Themelios (TSF) and Christian Arena

38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP

Evangelical Quarterly, Evangelical Review of Theology and Theological News (World Evangelical Fellowship)

Paternoster Press, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter EX2 4JW

Christianity Today

MasterPlan Publishing, Thames House, 63-67 Kingston Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3PB

New Dictionary of Theology

The Editor

An article reviewing the New Dictionary of Theology

Editors: Sinclair B Ferguson and David F Wright

Consulting Editor: J I Packer

IVP, pp 738, 1988, £17.95

The appearance of a competent, theological dictionary is a rare event for it involves a great deal of preliminary planning, supervision, work and expense over several years. We are grateful, therefore, to IVP for their vision and initiative in providing us with this theological dictionary which now complements their **New Bible Commentary** and the **New Bible Dictionary**.

All the contributions are concise, although varying in length, but they usually provide a competent, comprehensive outline of a subject/person from both an

historical and biblical perspective. Contributors also offer a critique or, more frequently, suggest areas and ways in which evangelicals have criticised a particular theology or responded to a problem. An excellent reference system is adopted in the Dictionary and the bibliographies appended to the articles are worth their weight in gold although I have one complaint. Many of the bibliographies do not mention books published later than 1982 which means that some significant, influential publications of more recent years are not included. I appreciate some of the publishing problems involved and that the articles were written, probably, 3/4 years ago and that contributors may not have had the necessary time to read or refer to later publications. However, a final updating of bibliographies immediately prior to printing would have enhanced their value considerably!

This Dictionary is reasonably priced. Compared with **A New Dictionary of Christian Theology** edited by Alan Richardson and published in 1969, then again in 1983, by SCM at £19.50, the IVP Dictionary is a bargain at £17.95 and has 738 pages compared with 613 in the other. By contrast, Marshall and Pickering's **Evangelical Dictionary of Theology** (edited by Walter A Elwell) published in 1984 has as many as 1204 pages but is priced at £24.95. The choice for pastors and others will be between the latter and the IVP Dictionary and, because of the lower price, IVP may win. However, I am impressed by the **Evangelical Dictionary of Theology** and, apart from the bibliographies, it is often more thorough and, on issues like immortality, hell etc, more orthodox than the IVP **New Dictionary of Theology**. I will return to this comparison again shortly but I would caution readers against ignoring the **Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**.

The **IVP New Dictionary of Theology** is quite comprehensive in the subjects and people it covers. Its aim is 'to provide the enquiring reader with a basic introduction to the world of theology — its themes, both majestic and minor, its famous formulations and its important historical moments, its distinguished — and notorious — exponents, past as well as present, its sources, disciplines and styles, its technical vocabulary, its ebb and flow in movements, schools and traditions, and its interaction with other currents of thought and religion' (p vii). This aim is admirably fulfilled in many of the contributions; subjects like **ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY** will promote a greater understanding and appreciation of the problems faced by our Asian brethren. **Black Theology** is also handled well and is informative. Controversial theological subjects are also handled such as **FREE WILL** and the **EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT**. The latter subject is handled better in the IVP Dictionary than in the EDT and is certainly more reformed. G L Bray also provides a good outline of **New Testament, Classical and Modern CHRISTOLOGY** and is well worth reading. Professor Clowney writes well on **THE CHURCH** but he accepts uncritically the distinction between the 'invisible' and 'visible' church (p 141). Donald Macleod's section on **CHURCH GOVERNMENT** is useful though some would quarrel with his opening statement that 'it is debatable whether the New Testament presents us with one, final, uniform pattern of church government to serve as a norm for

all ages' (p 143). Nor does Professor Macleod appreciate or indicate the different nuances of the term 'independency' when he talks of 'an increasing number of independent churches...' (p 146).

The doctrine of the VIRGIN BIRTH is handled well (pp 708-710). Commenting on the paucity of NT passages (Matt 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38) relating directly to the subject, a fact which is used sometimes by critics, Tony Lane observes: '...the virgin birth is almost the only point in common between the two infancy narratives, a clear indication that it is based on an earlier, common tradition. It should also be noted that, in view of the gospel record, the alternative to the virgin birth is not a normal birth within wedlock...but an illegitimate birth...' (p 709).

Similarly, there is a helpful article on the ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT and a necessary reminder that ecumenism is not restricted to the World Council of Churches (eg ARCIC and other denominational discussions/mergers, etc). The main criticisms by evangelicals of the WCC are summarised: 'The imprecision of its language...; its abuse of biblical terms and concepts (starkly exemplified in Uppsala's use of "Behold, I make all things new", Rev 21:5, but frequently seen in the use of "peace", "salvation", "life", etc); its quest for consensus rather than truth, made inevitable by taking the Churches' standpoints rather than the Bible as its basis...; the subtle pervasiveness of universalist assumptions, tending to embrace other faiths in the pursuit of world community and so soft-pedal evangelism as liable to interfere with inter-religious dialogue...: political one-sidedness, with Marxist social analysis to the fore and the neglect of personal, as distinct from social, ethics; the justification of violent revolution in some forms of liberation theology; and excessive deference to feminism' (p 220).

Concerning EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY, the Dictionary tells us that 'from the middle of the 20th century, a revitalisation has been taking place within evangelical theology. British scholars have contributed a serious and scholarly exegetical approach; Americans have been hard at work in areas of systematic theology and its adjunct disciplines such as apologetics and ethics; the Dutch and the Mennonites have been developing theologies of social action from significantly diverse starting points, and the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement has been enunciating a theology of the Holy Spirit...' (p 240). There are exceptionally good contributions, for example, on LIBERATION THEOLOGY and PREDESTINATION. The conclusion at the end of the latter entry is correct but sad; 'the contemporary evangelical church has become largely Arminian often as a result of anti-doctrinal bias rather than careful theological reflection'. The contributor, Professor W R Godfrey, however, adds that 'The historical Augustinian doctrine of predestination remains biblically and theologically compelling' (p 530). Although useful and compelling reading, FEMINIST THEOLOGY was one of the longest contributions in the dictionary and only just beaten for length by the sections on GOD, JESUS and the HOLY SPIRIT! I felt that some entries were disproportionately long compared with other more important subjects. For example, the first contribution in the Dictionary is by Tony Lane on PETER

ABELARD (1079—1142) and is given well over double the space of the second entry on Abortion which is of greater contemporary relevance to us. This may be explained solely in terms of the contributors themselves and their discretion but sometimes the difference is glaring.

There are more serious criticisms, however, which I would want to make. On the APOSTLES, we are given a good, biblical assessment of their office, qualifications and work, but it does not refer at all to the Restorationists' view that there is a third class of apostles. This is a serious omission and reduces the value of some otherwise good material. I also found Dr Packer's brief treatment of BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT disappointing, and the item on the FALL was predictably lacking in conviction concerning its historicity (pp 249-250) while the WRATH OF GOD item was defective with no clear reference to the holy character of God and its relation to other attributes (p 732). BIBLE TRANSLATIONS, too, seems to have avoided one or two of the basic questions hotly disputed today while the BAPTIST THEOLOGY contribution was too brief and far from being comprehensive or satisfying. The author omits some Baptist distinctives (eg, Church-State attitude) and does not take account of the revival of Reformed Baptist theology over the last decade or two.

Allow me one other criticism. Conditional Immortality, I am sad to say, is assumed and openly advocated in some of the relevant contributions. Dealing with DEATH, M J Harris is unnecessarily brief but also vague at certain points. He clearly assumes conditional immortality then, in his contribution on IMMORTALITY, he openly acknowledges where his sympathies lie, concluding 'that the Scripture teaches conditional immortality'. Harris's statement of his position is certainly forthright and he does not do justice to the orthodox position. Stephen Travis of St John's College, Nottingham, writes on ESCHATOLOGY and, while he is a conditionalist, his treatment of the subject is reasonably fair. His personal view, however, does come across in this section. Harris writes, too, on the RESURRECTION, GENERAL and on the INTERMEDIATE STATE. On the latter subject, Harris rejects universalism and 'soul-sleep' and brings several biblical arguments to bear against it, insisting that all believers at death enjoy 'conscious communion with Christ' (p 339).

At this point, the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Marshall's Pickering) is more satisfying and orthodox when it deals with subjects such as death, immortality, eschatology, resurrection and hell, etc. I was personally encouraged and refreshed by re-reading these sections in EDT after seeing in NDT the position of conditional immortality assumed and left unchallenged. Will the IVP provide an opportunity in the future for a competent and biblical presentation in print of the orthodox, traditionalist doctrines of immortality and everlasting punishment? I hope so.

Despite these criticisms, the New Dictionary of Theology is going to be a useful tool for pastors and for those eager to obtain a better grasp of theology in general. Over 630 articles are included by 210 international contributors and there is a full cross-reference system, too, which is most useful.