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# Book Reviews

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## The Great Exchange

Philip H Eveson

Day One Publications, 1996, 227pp, £7.99

**D**ay One and the FIEC have again hit the bulls-eye of an issue crucial to maintaining the faith once for all delivered to the saints (See also *Only One Way* by Hywel Jones and other books in the FIEC *Facing the Issues* series). It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the topic indicated by its sub-title, "justification by faith alone in the light of recent thought". The book itself combines spiritual insight, relevance, accessibility and a considerable degree of scholarship.

Philip Eveson writes for the thinking Christian not just the specialist or minister, yet does so from a well-informed acquaintance with scholarly opinion and with a fair amount of interaction with it, especially in the footnotes. If you want to know *where* Tom Wright, Alistair McGrath, Krister Stendahl, James Dunn and E P Sanders say their various pieces (much of it with a tendency to rewrite the heart of Protestant theology), you can find out here.

The book is in four clear sections, one on the Biblical evidence and teaching, the second on the relationship between Protestant and Roman Catholic views, especially recent RC teaching and evangelical interaction with it, the third on the current scholarly revision and the final section on how and why it is so important to get justification right.

Eveson's position is essentially that although Sanders, Wright et al may have discovered a bit more of the *corporate* dimension and implications of being a

Christian than our Western Protestant forefathers, the current revision is wrong: to be justified is not to be vindicated as a member of the covenant people but to be counted righteous before a holy God and his righteous law. It is fundamentally forensic and judicial, as Luther understood.

One of the great services this book performs is to show in a gracious and rational way that a number of prominent evangelicals are foolishly behaving as though the RC church should now be treated as a gospel-teaching church, whereas in fact her position has not changed an iota on the central matter of justification since the Reformation period. Eveson quotes extensively from the new RC catechism. This is necessary because something very subtle is going on: much of the *language* of grace is being used, and a number of perfectly good gospel statements are being made by various representatives of the RC church, and yet on closer inspection justification by faith *alone* is being studiously avoided. Thus people are still being taught to trust themselves and the church. Sad to say, even Alistair McGrath wants to widen our working definition of justification in such a way as to blur the distinction between the Protestant and RC teachings of it. He is also tending to take an anti-propositional, existential view of truth, which would make it easier to ignore old battles.

The other great thing achieved by the book is to present clearly and to refute thoroughly the effect of modern Pauline studies on the doctrine of justification by faith. A number of scholars, especially since the publication of E P Sanders' book *Paul And Palestinian Judaism* in 1977, including some so-called evangelicals,

have been teaching that the Jews of the first century and the people Paul was concerned about when he wrote Galatians were not legalists, they were “covenantal nomists”. They obeyed God’s law in the context of his gracious covenant, trusting him not their works but regarded their keeping of the Mosaic law as the way of *staying* in the covenant and of showing their national distinctiveness as his people. It is the Jews’ idolatry of national privilege that Paul is worried about; trying to merit salvation and having a guilt-ridden conscience are just preoccupations of Western culture. To be “righteous” according to Wright is not a matter of having Christ’s righteousness imputed to us, after our sins have been imputed to him, but it is a matter of our having covenant membership.

From almost every quarter imaginable Eveson demonstrates the falsity and danger of this teaching. He shows that people in early Judaism *were* often legalistic and that Paul’s contrast between faith and works demands a more comprehensive exclusion of all obedience from having a part in our justification than Wright wants. From Luke 18 he shows that people were convicted of sin and guilt before the 16th century and that this teaching cannot make sense of the cross and Christ’s work as described in the NT for it ignores God as our righteous Judge. The whole thing is too relational rather than judicial, given the essential justice of God.

This then is a very timely book, real “must reading” for ministers and all thinking Christians. It is so because of the vital importance of the topic, the subtlety of the attack upon it, and the rational, heart-felt and encouraging way the truth is put across.

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*Christopher Bennett, MA*

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## **God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul**

*Gordon D Fee*

*Hendrickson, 1994, 967pp, £29.99*

**T**his significant book is divided into two major parts, with a smaller section of some 38 pages preceding them. This section consists of an Introduction and a chapter on Paul’s usage of the Greek word *pneuma* and its cognates.

The main section of the book, Part I Analysis, comprises detailed exegesis, in assumed chronological order, of every reference and allusion to the Holy Spirit in the Pauline corpus, beginning with the Thessalonian Epistles (Fee holds to the late date for Galatians) and concluding with the Pastorals. This is a rich seam of material for pastors to dig in, and in future all who care about their exegesis will want to turn to this section “to see what Fee says,” though obviously not all will agree with every one of his conclusions. For example, it is a minor point but, if a flea may be permitted to disagree with an elephant, the present reviewer remains unconvinced by Fee’s argument that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is “neither original to this letter nor authentic to Paul” (p. 272f). There is, however, a massive amount of learning here with many passages illuminated by Fee’s insightful comments.

Part II Synthesis, draws together Fee’s conclusions and consists of five chapters. Chapter 12 deals with the Spirit as “Eschatological Fulfilment.” This chapter covers a variety of themes, some of which are only vaguely related, but are conveniently gathered under this heading. For example, metaphors for the Spirit, such as down payment, first-fruits and seal, resurrection, promise and fulfilment, covenant, Torah, flesh and Spirit, etc.