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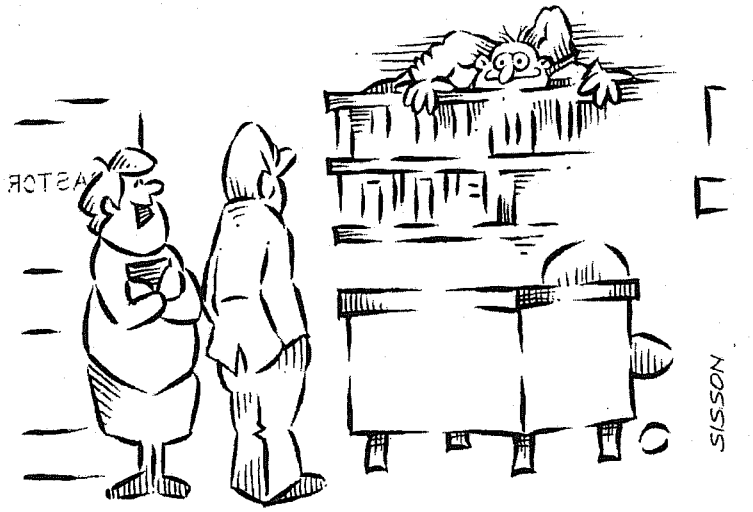

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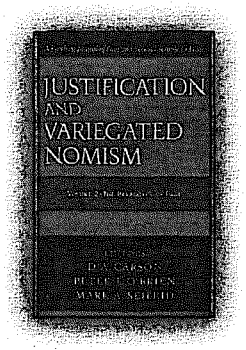
Book Reviews



Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume I. The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism

D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, editors
Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001[1]
619 pages, paper, $49.99

If it is a truism that there is no end to the making of many books (Ecclesiastes 12:12), then Qoheleth's famous complaint would appear to be uncommonly appropriate in the face of the unending flow of books, dissertations, and articles that have kept the presses rolling ever since the entrée of the "New Perspective" on Paul in his relation to Second Temple Judaism. Appearing in rather close conjunction with certain other responses to the New Perspective,[2] the study under review seeks to shift the paradigm away from the "Sanders/Dunn trajectory," as Moisés Silva calls it,[3] back to a more traditional Reformational reading of Judaism, especially as it impacts on the doctrine of justification by faith.

In order to clarify the *raison d'être* of this book, it will be helpful to summarize the position to which it takes exception, as encapsulated by E. P. Sanders' now famous phrase "covenantal nomism."[4] Sanders himself explains:

> Covenantal nomism is the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its

> commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression. . . . Obedience maintains one's position in the covenant, but it does not earn God's grace as such. . . . Righteousness in Judaism is a term which implies the maintenance of status among the group of the elect.[5]

Additionally, N. T. Wright epitomizes Sanders' work in these terms:

> His major point, to which all else is subservient, can be quite simply stated. Judaism in Paul's day was not, as has regularly been supposed, a religion of legalistic works-righteousness. If we imagine that it was, and that Paul was attacking it as if it was, we will do great violence to it and to him. Most Protestant exegetes had read Paul and Judaism as if Judaism was a form of the old heresy Pelagianism, according to which humans must pull themselves up by their moral bootstraps and thereby earn justification, righteousness, and salvation. No, said Sanders. *Keeping the law within Judaism always functioned within a covenantal scheme.* God took the initiative, when he made a covenant with Judaism; God's grace thus precedes everything that people (specifically, Jews) do in response. The Jew keeps the law out of gratitude, as the proper response to grace—not, in other words, in order to *get* into the covenant people, but to *stay* in. Being "in" in the first place was God's gift. This scheme Sanders famously labelled as "covenantal nomism" (from the Greek *nomos*, law). Keeping the Jewish law was the human response to God's covenantal initiative.[6]

In the midst of all the debate over these issues and the inevitable confusion on the part of some, Dunn calls to mind that the phrase "covenantal nomism" does indeed consist of two parts: covenant and *nomos* (law).

> It is important to note . . . that Sanders did not characterize Judaism solely as a "covenantal" religion. The key phrase he chose was the double emphasis, "covenantal nomism." And Sanders made clear that the second emphasis was not to be neglected. The Torah/law was given to Israel to be obeyed, an integral part of the covenant relationship, and that obedience was necessary if Israel's covenant status was to be maintained. Even if obedience did not earn God's grace as such, was not a means to *"get into"* the covenant, obedience *was* necessary to maintain one's position in the covenant, to *"stay in"* the covenant. So defined, Deuteronomy can be seen as the most fundamental statement of Israel's "covenantal nomism." Given the traditional emphasis on Judaism's "nomism" it is hardly surprising that Sanders should have placed greater emphasis on the "covenantal" element in the twin emphasis. But in his central summary statements he clearly recognized that both emphases were integral to Judaism's self-understanding.[7]

While it is true that Sanders was hardly the first to espouse such an avenue of approach to the sources, it may be safely said that his work represents a watershed in the history of interpretation. Since the publication of his book in 1977, Sanders' assessment of pre-destruction Judaism has become increasingly popular among historians of religion and New Testament scholars. This not to deny, of course, that there are notable exceptions to the growing consensus, as evidenced conspicuously by the volume herein reviewed.

The actual phrase, "New Perspective," was coined by James Dunn in his Manson Memorial Lecture of 1982, entitled "The New Perspective on Paul."[8] Dunn builds on Sanders' construction of pre-destruction Judaism, but levels the criticism that "Sanders' Paul hardly seems to be addressing Sanders' Judaism."[9] In other words, the Paul of Sanders takes his countrymen to task for precisely the same reason that Luther did! Dunn thus distances himself from Sanders' Paul by defining the apostle's phrase "the works of the law" not as a generalized principle of obedience for the purpose of earning salvation, but as those works done in response to the covenant in order to maintain the bond between God and Israel (the works of "staying in"). Dunn does maintain that "the works of the law" encompasses the whole Torah, but within the period of the Second Temple certain aspects of the

law became especially prominent as the boundary and identity markers of the Jewish people: prominently circumcision, food laws, purity laws, and sabbath.

Dunn is frequently misrepresented on this point, as though he restricts "the works of the law" to the "boundary markers," without allowing that the whole Torah is in view when Paul employs the phrase. But just the opposite is the case. He states, in point of fact, that circumcision and the other ordinances were *not* the only distinguishing traits of Jewish self-identity. However, they were the focal point of the Hellenistic attack on the Jews during the Maccabean period. As such, they became *the acid tests of one's loyalty to Judaism.*

> In short . . . the particular regulations of circumcision and food laws [et al.] were important not in themselves, but because they focused Israel's distinctiveness and made visible Israel's claims to be a people set apart, were the clearest points which differentiated the Jews from the nations. The law was coterminous with Judaism.[10]

It is to just such an appraisal of ancient Judaism and Paul's response that *Justification and Variegated Nomism* takes exception.

This book is the first of a two-volume project, the primary purpose of which is to reevaluate Sanders' identification of the "pattern of religion" of pre-destruction Judaism as "covenantal nomism." In point of fact, the end in view is to shift the paradigm back to a "pre-Sanders" reading of the Jewish sources. The editors have chosen to proceed much as Sanders himself did: volume one is entirely devoted to the study of Jewish literature in close chronological proximity to Paul, while volume two will be devoted to reading Paul in light of this freshly evaluated literary context.

The motivation of the project is spelled out clearly in the introduction: Sanders' work has been enormously influential, particularly in the way it constitutes the foundation, or at least the touchstone, for the "New Perspective" on Paul. The editors rightly claim that the work of New Perspective scholars

does not represent one monolithic perspective on Paul, but that they generally share an appreciation for the way in which Sanders exposed the biases underlying the study of Paul. Sanders attempted to provide a historically grounded picture of ancient Judaism based directly on the Jewish sources within which Paul is to be situated. The present book thus sets about to test whether Sanders' notion of "covenantal nomism" adequately characterizes the Judaism of Paul's day.

What strikes the reader immediately is that no "party line" is taken in this book; neither is it uniform in the way each author approaches the literature and relates the question of covenantal nomism to the texts under discussion. While the lack of uniformity might be perceived as a problem of methodological consistency, the diversity of approaches is illuminating in its own way. Had the issue of covenantal nomism been treated with precise uniformity in each chapter, this book would have been entirely predictable, not to say needlessly repetitive.

In the main, the essays are well written, handle the subject matter responsibly and evenhandedly, and attempt to update and build upon Sanders' work rather than dismiss or defend it simplistically. In many cases, updating or building on Sanders' work has meant evaluating literature that Sanders did not include in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Most of the authors recognize the complexity of bringing a modern agenda to ancient writings that may have had a completely different agenda and, consequently, may not easily yield answers to the questions posed. Also, most recognize the complexity of the literature itself and are appropriately cautious in drawing anything resembling sweeping conclusions.

Nevertheless, the volume as a whole has a few drawbacks. First, in the years since the publication of Sanders' seminal work, the amount of material evidence respecting Jewish history, archaeology, and theology that has come to light is enormous. And yet a notable amount of this evidence has apparently gone unnoticed. One is left with the impression that at least several of the essays were written in some haste. To be fair, the volume claims to be surveying Jewish literature and

not Jewish history generally. Still, because the work aspires to be a comprehensive assessment of whether covenantal nomism is the dominant "pattern of religion" for ancient Judaism broadly speaking, it would have been greatly enhanced by at least some reference to this material.

Second, D. A. Carson, along with a few of the other contributors, makes mention of Sanders' failure to analyze certain works in light of the concept of covenantal nomism, and he implies that Sanders' selective use of texts skewed the argument. Carson, for example, is perplexed as to why Sanders did not make use of Josephus (522). But Sanders did in fact specifically write that one of his "chief aims" in writing *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* is "to argue a case concerning Palestinian Judaism (that is, *Judaism as reflected in material of Palestinian provenance*) as a whole."[11] Thus, Sanders did not claim to be providing an exhaustive study of all relevant Jewish literature; his exclusion of Diaspora literature was quite intentional. What is indeed perplexing is that his clearly stated intentions could have escaped the notice of the editors of this book.[12]

Third, Carson's summaries and conclusions are conspicuously at odds with the majority of the essayists enlisted by him.[13] Most of the contributors actually affirm that "covenantal nomism" is an adequate designation of the Jewish understanding of the relationship between Israel and her God. Carson acknowledges that several authors give qualified validation to covenantal nomism but concludes that "the fit isn't very good" (547); or that, while "Sanders is not wrong everywhere . . . he is wrong when he tries to establish that his category is right everywhere" (543). But in view of the fact that Sanders limited his corpus of documents, and since he himself recognized the diversity of expression in this varied literature, Carson's criticisms are too severe and too polemical.

Even more remarkable is that his conclusions do not coincide with those drawn by the majority of the authors, whose critiques of Sanders are considerably more nuanced and far less aggressive than his own. As Eisenbaum comments, the incongruity is most apparent when Carson calls covenantal nomism "reductionistic" and "misleading"—a

charge that might well be leveled against him in relation to the body of work he purports to be summarizing! With some justification, then, Dunn can query:

> Was Carson reading a different version of the essays he then published? He complains that the phrase ["covenantal nomism"] is "too doctrinaire." But it seems to be he himself who so regards it; I am not aware of advocates of "the new perspective" who treat it so. Perhaps by presenting it as something rigid it becomes easier to attack. The findings of most of the contributors to his volume are [saying] in effect that "covenantal nomism" serves well as a summary phrase, so long as one recognizes the variations in emphasis, depending on different styles and circumstances—"variegated *covenantal nomism*"![14]

In spite of my own disagreements with the conclusions drawn by Carson and some of the contributors, the volume comprises a very useful contribution to scholarship. Irrespective of Carson's personal biases, the essays as a whole demonstrate that "covenantal nomism" remains an appropriate category for assessing Second Temple literature. A case in point is Richard Bauckham's appraisal of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*. Sanders conceded that *4 Ezra*, as a conspicuous exception to the "rule" of covenantal nomism, lapses into out-and-out legalism, although *2 Baruch* already undertakes to correct the outlook of its author.[15] Bauckham, by contrast, thinks that these two documents represent a variety of covenantal nomism that places extra stress on law-obedience.[16]

As regards this book's applicability to Paul's theology, we must await volume two. However, we may anticipate that book by posing what would appear to be a piece of presumptive reasoning, as this first installment is meant to lay the groundwork for the second. To judge from what one may piece together from the editors' intentions, it would seem that the argumentation is as follows: Second Temple Judaism was diverse; therefore, there were legalists in Paul's day; therefore, Paul is arguing against the "legalists" (as opposed to the "covenantal nomists"). Time will tell how the editors intend to pursue this

apparent agenda. But at this stage of the game, one senses that the entire enterprise may well prove to be reductionistic.

It is fair to say that scholars generally acknowledge that the Judaism of the Second Temple period was diverse. In fact, it is normally taken for granted that one should speak, these days, of Judaisms rather than Judaism. Even so, we may legitimately continue to speak of the "four pillars of Second Temple Judaism," which provided an element of unity amidst all the diversity.[17] Thus it is possible to overwork the diversity angle. But even granting to this volume that pre-destruction Judaism was diverse, its real title, as Dunn proposes, should have been *Justification and Variegated Covenantal Nomism*![18]

Mark Seifrid's essay, "Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism," is of particular interest because it brings us to the heart of the recent debate respecting justification and related issues. I have replied to Seifrid at some length in the full review article.[19] Suffice it to say here that the nub of Seifrid's paper is its downplay of righteousness as covenant fidelity. According to Seifrid, we have been misled by scholars who equate the "righteousness" word-group with "covenant." He is convinced of this because, on his count, there are only seven passages in the Old Testament in which the terms come into "any significant semantic contact" (423). The passages are Nehemiah 9:32–33; Psalm 50:1–6; 111:1–10; Isaiah 42:6; 61:8–11; Hosea 2:16–20; Daniel 9:4–7. Seifrid concedes that a full explanation for the infrequency of the convergence of these terms would have to be quite detailed, and that the relation of righteousness to covenant may be approached from historical and theological perspectives rather than of lexical semantics. Such matters, however, lie beyond the scope of his concern.

It is to be acknowledged that Seifrid's study is of positive value in that it (re)establishes that "righteousness" possesses decided components of a righteous status and norm, and that the notion of retributive justice cannot be dismissed, as too many scholars are prepared to do. Seifrid has argued for a renewed appreciation of righteousness as retributive justice, in keeping with the Old Testament portrayal of God as a king

and judge. To the degree that he has been able to redress the balance in favor of a neglected dimension of righteousness, we are in his debt. Certainly, he has raised a number of issues that deserve to be weighed carefully; and it is always good to have our assumptions subjected to careful scrutiny.

Having said that, the downside of his essay far outstrips its positive benefits. Methodologically, he starts off on the wrong foot. By confining himself mainly to lexical matters, excluding for the most part biblical-theological concerns, Seifrid has cut himself, and his readers, off from the single most valuable source of information respecting righteousness. Surely, any resolution to the current debate on righteousness and justification must be pursued on the basis of exegesis, an exegesis informed by the panorama of salvation history. Symptomatic of Seifrid's approach is his mere listing of passages in which righteousness and covenant come into "any significant semantic contact" (his words). Had these texts been expounded to any degree, it would have been seen that their function is that of a conduit through which broad streams of covenant theology are allowed to flow. As it is, we are presented with a myopic conception of righteousness.

To the degree that theological motifs are pursued, Seifrid is eager to bifurcate creation and covenant. By so doing, he is able, at least to his satisfaction, to shift attention away from righteousness as covenant fidelity and shift it onto the component of retributive justice. The motivations for such a dichotomy remain to be seen. Until these are clarified, perhaps in volume two of this undertaking, it certainly appears that Seifrid is guilty of driving a wedge between categories that overlap, interpenetrate, and exhibit reciprocity to a considerable degree, as though we were forced to choose between one or the other. Even where he concedes that righteousness and covenant are found in combination, the relevance of such data tend to be submerged in favor of righteousness as retribution. What Seifrid has failed to realize is that retributive justice itself is relational in terms of covenant relationships, even in the case of peoples outside of Israel, who live in contradiction to the ideals of the creation covenant. The bottom line is

that his linking of righteousness with creation to the practical exclusion of covenant is misleading in the extreme.

While one appreciates the necessity of limiting the materials under examination, especially in a symposium such as this, the fact remains that Seifrid's handling of the sources is very one-sided indeed. Scant attention is paid to texts that support the relational component of righteousness, especially as they might bear on justification and kindred issues. The effect is a reductionism, which, ironically enough, is just Carson's complaint against Sanders!

Author

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His publications include: *'The Obedience of Faith': A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991); *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994); *Exegetical Essays* (3rd ed.; Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2003); *An Exposition of Galatians: A New Perspective/Reformational Reading* (2nd ed.; Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2004); *In Defense of the New Perspective on Paul: Essays and Reviews* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

Notes

1. I have provided a full-scale review article of the book, with special attention devoted to Mark Seifrid's contribution, in two places: *In Defense of the New Perspective on Paul: Essays and Reviews* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 59–105; and online at *www.thepaulpage.com.*

2. P. Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001); A. A. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001); S. Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origins of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); S. J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); S. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

3. Silva, "The Law and Christianity: Dunn's New Synthesis," *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 341.

4. The New Perspective has been surveyed many times, but a very accessible summary is provided by M. B. Thompson, *The New Perspective on Paul*, Grove Biblical Series (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2002). Thompson helpfully applies New Perspective principles to the interpretation of the New Testament and seeks to allay the unfounded fears of many evangelicals. Thompson's booklet is available through Reformation & Revival Ministries.

5. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 75, 420, 544; see also page 422.

6. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 18–19 (first italics mine).

7. From Dunn's review of *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Trinity Journal* 25NS (2004): 111.

8. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65 (1983): 95–122. The article is reprinted in Dunn's *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 183–214.

9. Dunn, *New Perspective*, 121.

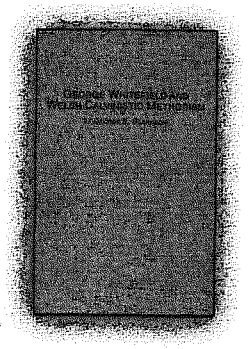
10. Dunn, "Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10–14)," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 526 (this essay is likewise reprinted in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law*, 215–41). See further his "Yet once more—'The Works of the Law': A Response," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46 (1992): 99–117. Dunn justifiably issues a note of protest in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 358, note 97.

11. This is the fourth of Sanders' six "chief aims" stated on page xii (italics mine). He goes on to make his intentions even more clear when he adds that this particular goal, together with the sixth (namely, "carry[ing] out a comparison of Paul and Palestinian Judaism"), "constitute the general aim of the book."

12. The criticism that Sanders limited the scope of his investigation is oft-repeated and to a degree well taken. In fairness, though, it would have taken a multi-volume work to canvass *all* the relevant sources. I

attempted to fill a gap as far as the Apocrypha is concerned in my *'The Obedience of Faith': A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/38 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991). That limitations to any study are in order is illustrated by the thesis of Mark Seifrid, one of the editors of this volume, who confined his study of justification mainly to the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *Psalms of Solomon* (*Justification By Faith: The Origin and Development of A Central Pauline Theme*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 68 [Leiden: Brill, 1992]).

13. An observation made by a number of reviewers: Dunn; P. Eisenbaum, J. Byron, and I. W. Scott in *Review of Biblical Literature* (an online journal from the Society of Biblical Literature, available at *www.bookreviews.org*); C. Blomberg, *Denver Journal* (accessible at *www.denverseminary.edu/dj/* the home page of Denver Seminary); M. Bockmuehl, in a Cambridge Ph.D. seminar, accessible at *www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/Tyndale/staff/Head/J&VN.htm*.
14. Dunn, *Trinity Journal*, 113. Dunn relates the sagacious counsel of C. F. D. Moule that statements may vary quite strikingly in emphasis due to the very different circumstances to which they are addressed.
15. Sanders, *Paul*, 427–28.
16. With regard to *4 Ezra*, Bauckham makes several points. (1) Salvation is not represented as the result of weighing an individual's deeds, but as the reward for the kind of life the righteous person has led in faithfulness to God and the Torah. (2) It is a false alternative to posit that there is an inconsistency between God's grace and keeping the law. God gives salvation to those members of his elect people who have kept the terms of the covenant. (3) *4 Ezra* illustrates how the basic and flexible pattern of covenantal nomism could take forms in which the emphasis is overwhelmingly on salvation by obedience to the law; *2 Baruch* endorses essentially the same outlook. My only qualification is that Bauckham applies the term "merit" to the process of keeping the terms of the covenant. I would say, rather, that keeping the terms of the covenant is "righteousness."
17. J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press International, 1991), 18–36. Note as well J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 401.
18. Note again Bauckham's appraisal of covenantal nomism as flexible enough to accommodate even an extra-heavy stress on law-keeping (*Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 174). In the case of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* in particular, account must be taken of the circumstances of their composition, i.e., in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem. Bauckham quotes J. J. Collins to the effect that the pessimism of *4 Ezra* "springs not so much from its lofty standards as from historical experience" (*Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 174).
19. See note 1 above.



George Whitefield and Welsh Calvinistic Methodism[1]

It is a brave soul that attempts a monograph on matters Welsh without a working knowledge of the language. In his book, *George Whitefield and Welsh Calvinistic Methodism*, George E. Clarkson is just such an author, whose love of Wales and evident admiration for Whitefield enabled him to persevere with this study. In his preface, Clarkson draws attention to the words of a Canadian newspaper reporter who interviewed Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones during his first visit to Toronto. When Lloyd-Jones stated that he was a minister of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church (WCMC), the interviewer considered this title to be "a civil war in language" (i). This book seeks to trace the roots, and explain the meaning, of this seeming contradiction. It is Number 12 in the Welsh Studies series published by Mellen Press.

The book's seven chapters follow the dealings of Whitefield with Welsh leaders in the Awakening, John Wesley, and the Countess of Huntingdon. A bibliography, six illustrations in black and white, and an index are also included. The closing chapter briefly follows the subsequent history of the WCMC, and by way of an appendix, Whitefield's sermon on Philippians 3:10 is given, together with a statement of faith issued by the WCMC. The author's aim is to seek out Whitefield's "special relationship to Wales and the extent to which he influenced Welsh leaders with his Calvinistic thinking" (iv).

The opening chapter, "Notes on Whitefield's Life," provides the reader with a general biographical overview. While Clarkson covers ground that is familiar to students of the

Great Awakening, he sets the book's direction by emphasizing Whitefield's love for Wales, for Methodism, and for the doctrines of grace. Allowing for differences in circumstances and gifts, the Welsh counterparts of Jonathan Edwards and Gilbert Tennent in America were William Williams and Daniel Rowland. Howel Harris, the other prominent leader, was a layman who refused Episcopal ordination four times (Clarkson mentions three, 59), who was both powerful in his itinerant preaching and pioneering in his organizational ability. It was with Harris that Whitefield would become most familiar.

After his first visit to Wales, Whitefield could testify that crowds flocked to his meetings as if "a member of Parliament was coming along," and concluded, "Wales is a noble soil for Christianity."[2] Whitefield already had contact with Wales apart from the fact that his birthplace, Gloucester, was near its southeastern border. Sir John Philipps of Picton Castle, Pembrokeshire, had been one of Whitefield's benefactors while he studied at Oxford, and gave further financial support on his returning there in 1736 "to superintend the affairs of the Methodists."[3] Furthermore, it was no small constraint upon Whitefield's affections that his wife was from Abergavenny, often referred to as "the gateway to Wales." Whitefield would make some twelve visits to the principality, preaching without fail and with much success on each occasion.

Methodism, Calvinist and Arminian, shared several characteristics. Chief among them were an insistence on the new birth, the expectation of an enjoyed and not merely mental assurance, repeated seasons of revival, and a soul-nurture that flourished in the context of fellowship and mutual discipline. Such experiential aspects were accompanied by sustained dependence on the Holy Spirit to make preaching effective, holding to the centrality of Christ and his cross along with the public offence and personal self-denial that that involved, and the conviction that saving faith excludes the merit of human effort. Those who took such a position were opposed as the "enthusiasts" of the day, an emotive term for what was regarded as the most dangerous religious fanaticism.

At Oxford University during the time Whitefield and

Wesley were there, Methodism was seen as "the Holy Club," with its conscientious attitude to matters religious, and its "method" and order and discipline. But with the success that attended Whitefield's preaching and, shortly afterward, that also of the Wesley brothers in England, and with similar manifestations of spiritual life, vigor, and power in Wales, "Methodism" soon took on another aspect. Consider, for example, what Whitefield wrote from the Welsh town, Llandovery, in 1749:

> Think you to put that in practice, and shun being called a Methodist? You might as well attempt to reach heaven with your hand; for, blessed be God, such an honour has he put upon the Methodists, that whoever renounces the world and takes up Christ's cross, and believes and lives the doctrines of Grace, must be stiled [sic] a Methodist whether he will or not. Formerly it was, "You are a Puritan," now it is, "You are a Methodist."[4]

It is in the book's second and third chapters, "Sources of Whitefield's Calvinism" and "Whitefield and the Wesleys," respectively, that the issue of election is debated. Whitefield's Calvinist roots, Clarkson claims, "were in his interpretation of Scripture and one particular article of religion in the *Book of Common Prayer*" (29). Whitefield also mentions *The Preacher* and *Veritas Redux: Evangelical Truths Restored*, by the Puritan writer, John Edwards; Elisha Coles on *God's Soveriegnty*; and Benjamin Jenks's *Submission to the Righteousness of God, or the necessity of trusting to a better Righteousness than our own, Opened and Defended in a Discourse upon Rom. x. 3*, another Puritan work.[5] A spate of letters from Whitefield's pen, dated November 10, 1739, bear witness to the powerful effect of the doctrines of grace upon his soul. One of these letters, written to Howel Harris, affirms the kinship of the two leaders in these matters: "Our principles agree, as face answers to face in the water. Since I saw you, God has been pleased to enlighten me more in that comfortable doctrine of *Election*, etc. At my return I hope to be more explicit than I have been." This

refrain is repeated elsewhere in the other letters:

> Was there any fitness foreseen in us, except a fitness for damnation? I believe not. No, God chose us from eternity, he called us in time, and I am persuaded will keep us from falling finally, till time shall be no more. Consider the Gospel in this view, and it appears a consistent scheme, though directly contrary to the natural man.[6]

Clarkson demonstrates that Whitefield's "Calvinism did not prevent him from being a powerful preacher"; on the contrary, it "was heavily coloured with his passion to save souls" (27, 29). Whitefield himself sourced the power and the passion to these very doctrines: "They fill my soul with a holy fire, and afford me great confidence in God my Saviour."[7]

In spite of this, or indeed because of it, Whitefield was deeply troubled by the controversy initiated with the publication of John Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace," in which a contrary position was advocated.[8] Each respected the other's Methodism, and yet both held tenaciously to their doctrinal positions. Clarkson gives a full and sensitive account of the issue. It was inevitable, if not necessary, for Whitefield to reply in print. Wesley's salvo had been delivered while Whitefield was in America, and by the time he returned to London, a third edition was just coming off the press. That Wesley's Arminianism was causing confusion is without doubt. Witness the letter of "Jenny, a servant maid at Bristol," to Whitefield as early as May 1739. She was concerned for his sister's soul, who, on her coming to London, would be exposed to Wesley's teaching.

> I have no self end in this, no prejudice against Mr. Wesley, for I love him dearly. . . . Mr. Wesley tells her and all people in his sermons the best may finally fall away . . . we might be in Christ [today] and out tomorrow. . . . Another of Mr. Wesley's objections is against an election according to grace. He says all the world is elected alike. . . . Mr. Wesley has preached three or four sermons against the seventeenth article of our church.[9]

On this issue, Daniel Rowland and Howel Harris in Wales were solidly behind Whitefield. In fact, they were Calvinists before Whitefield, Harris tracing his conviction in 1737 to John 6:37: "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away"; and in the following year, to a sermon of Rowland's on Proverbs 8:32: "And now, my children, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways."[10] Clarkson maintains that Whitefield established "a theological viewpoint that has coloured Welsh church life ever since" (2). Certainly when Harris and Whitefield first met, Harris had his "soul filled with heaven," and found that he and Whitefield "agreed about election." William Williams, the hymn-writer, preacher, and soul physician of the Welsh Great Awakening, in his elegy to Whitefield, refers to him as "one of the most orthodox, active, and faithful ministers of Christ in the British dominion," and "the man whom heaven did adorn with glorious gifts," who "loudly published gospel peace and grace, procured in full unto the chosen race."[11] However, it was to Williams in his Welsh hymns and prose, to the sermons of Daniel Rowland, and later to the writings of Thomas Charles, that the Welsh Methodists looked for sound theological guidance.

Theologically, the doctrine of election may have been a fault line between Whitefield and Wesley. But their Methodist priorities, the recognition of spiritual life, fervent zeal for the salvation of souls, and a passion for close personal dealings with God kept charitable, brotherly affection alive between them. Shortly after their public debate in print, Whitefield wrote to Wesley:

> I find I love you as much as ever; and pray God, if it be his blessed will, that we may be all united together. For some days, it has been upon my mind to write to you, and this morning I received a letter from brother Harris, telling me how he had conversed with you and your dear brother. May God remove all obstacles that now prevent our union! Though I hold particular election, yet I offer Jesus freely to every individual soul. You

> may carry sanctification to what degrees you will, only I cannot agree that the in-being of sin is to be destroyed in this life.[12]

"The Message and Hiraeth" is the title of the fourth chapter, and the author hastens to attempt a translation of the Welsh word.[13] He acknowledges the difficulty involved in conveying the intense pining involved, "a sense of separation that makes us want to be united" (59). By using this word he intends the reader to understand that the pristine Welsh Methodism, almost exclusively Calvinist, was a mind-set, a way of life, spiritual in its essence, ardent in its intensity. Clarkson is right: this Methodism was not just an orderly movement or a set of intellectual propositions, however doctrinally orthodox. These surely were involved; but the priority and the dominant feature was its spiritual life, its appetite for more of God, and its close dealings with God and his people. This is what was encouraged in the little fellowship groups, the "societies" that mushroomed across the land as a result of revival. Their members were asked questions like:

> As to the clarity of their witness . . . does the Holy Spirit bear witness with their spirit that they are the children of God? Do they possess these things? Are they conscious of more spiritual light within? Is their conscience more tender? What new lessons has the Lord taught them of late?[14]

It found typical expression in what Whitefield admired in Harris: "I wanted to catch some of his fire," and in the question he asked him when they first met, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven?"[15]

When dealing with "some Welsh leaders" in chapter five, Clarkson concentrates on the work of Griffith Jones. In many ways, he was mentor to the other leaders, and in his home at Llanddowror he had provided counsel if not tuition for ministerial candidates. Jones had experience of revival and was able to exercise a measure of constraint on the Methodists. He certainly had misgivings about Harris's lay ministry.[16] In the same chapter, Clarkson relates the setting up of a seminary at

Trefeca in 1768 by the Countess of Huntingdon. Harris had desired such a project, probably in imitation of Jones's activities at Llanddowror. In 1740 he prayed, "O! Lord wilt Thou grant me this that Trefeca may be made a little nursery for learning." In 1744 he spoke of "a little seminary for God," and in 1749 he "had special freedom to cry for a school at Trefeca to train young men to the Lord."[17] In his elegy on Whitefield, Williams addresses the countess thus: "let your College gracious striplings train, To preach the Victim for transgressors slain."[18] The college's main contribution was to supply preachers for the Countess of Huntingdon's churches in England, although some of the students did itinerate in Wales.[19] After the death of the countess in 1791, the college was removed from Trefeca, initially to Cheshunt in Hertfordshire, and then in 1915 to Cambridge. Its existence was at least an acknowledgment that Calvinistic Methodism deemed the Christian ministry worthy of due instruction and training.

Whitefield's influence on Harris and on the Welsh leaders is discussed in chapter six, although Clarkson admits to having "said too little" of the latter. This accounts for the scanty coverage afforded to Daniel Rowland, regarded by one contemporary as "the greatest preacher in Europe," and by J. C. Ryle as "one of the spiritual giants of the eighteenth century."[20] William Williams, likewise, has only brief mention, one reason being the fact that the majority of his literary output was in Welsh.[21] There is, however, an account of the division that developed between Harris on the one hand, and Whitefield, Rowland, and Williams on the other. Doctrinal issues were involved, as were clashes of personality, but Clarkson omits any reference to the unwise reliance by Harris on what he believed were the prophetic insights of a woman named Sidney Griffith.[22] Welsh Calvinistic Methodism survived the trauma, even though the converts were split for a time between "Rowland's People" and "Harris's People," with the latter being in the minority. Truly, no revival is free of blemish, and no work of God proceeds without hindrance.

The concluding chapter, "The Development of the Calvinistic Methodist Church," briefly brings the story up to date.

Ordination and separation from the Anglican Church was delayed until 1811, a decade after the deaths of Rowland and Williams. A Confession of Faith and Constitution followed a decade later again. The nineteenth century witnessed expansion, sustained powerful preaching, and times of revival—the period of Calvinistic Methodism's most widespread influence. Sadly, the twentieth century has witnessed its decline, leading Clarkson to say, "their latest statement on faith is clearly universalistic," and the church is currently "strong in its social emphases" (110, 111). Liberal theology and ecumenism have eroded the church's witness, and its viability is being seriously questioned.[23] God's church is not only to be reformed, it is also to be reforming.

The reader will find in Clarkson's work a useful introduction to the subject. Today, the characteristics of early Calvinistic Methodism touch raw nerves: What is genuine Christian experience, and how is the work of grace best nurtured? How necessary is revival? What are the priorities for church life and witness? In the eighteenth century, Calvinistic Methodism was powerful enough to transform a nation's soul, and significant enough to be part of that century's international Great Awakening.[24] It was also personal enough for Welsh colonists to transplant it to America, as Clarkson briefly notes in his concluding chapter (112–13). If its strength lies in the past, its significance to all who are concerned with vital Christianity is an abiding challenge.

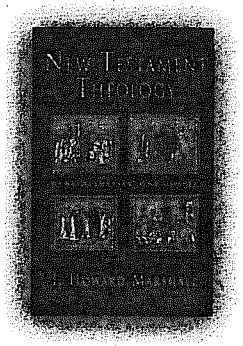
Author

Dr. Eifion Evans is a contributing editor for *Reformation & Revival Journal*. He is the author of a number of books on the subject of revival, including *Revival Comes to Wales: The Story of the 1859 Revival in Wales* (1959); *The Welsh Revival of 1904* (1969); *Revivals: Their Rise, Progress and Achievements* (1961); and *Two Welsh Revivalists* (1985). He lives in Llanelli, Wales, and continues to research and write on the subject of revival.

Notes

1. George E. Clarkson, *George Whitefield and Welsh Calvinistic Methodism* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1996).
2. *The National Library of Wales Journal* 27, no. 2 (Winter 1991): 197.
3. *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 67, 69–70; Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton,1890), 42–43, 55 (letter to John Wesley). Griffith Jones, an evangelical Welsh clergyman highly esteemed by Whitefield, had been presented to his first parish by Sir John, and had married Sir John's sister.
4. *A Select Collection of Letters of the late Reverend George Whitefield*, vol. 2 (London, 1772), 263.
5. Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, vol. 1 (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 405, 575.
6. *A Select Collection of Letters of the late Reverend George Whitefield*, vol. 1 (London, 1772), 87, 90, 101.
7. *A Select Collection of Letters of the late Reverend George Whitefield*, vol. 1 (London, 1772), 79.
8. Iain H. Murray gives the background to the controversy in *George Whitefield's Journals*, 564–68; Dallimore's treatment is found in *George Whitefield*, 2:55–62, "Whitefield's Reply to Wesley's Sermon." For a discussion in Welsh, see Griffith T. Roberts, *Dadleuon Methodistiaeth Gynnar* (Abertawe: Gwasg John Penry, 1970), Pennod III, "Etholedigaeth," 70–129.
9. *The National Library of Wales Journal* 17, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 299, 300.
10. Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 60–61; Richard Bennett, *The Early Life of Howell Harris* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), 114–15, 134, 145.
11. N. Cynhafal Jones, *Gweithiau Williams Pant-y-celyn*, vol. 1 (Treffynnon: P.M. Evans & Son, 1887), 652, 658.
12. Tyerman, *George Whitefield*, 537–38.
13. Clarkson does not always succeed in his efforts to transcribe Welsh words. Neither "Ffrwwth (*sic.* Ffrwyth) diwygiad grymus, dros ddwy ganrif yn ol, yw Methodistiaeth Galfinaidd Cymru" (97), nor "Croeso i Remsen" (113) are translated ("Welsh Calvinistic Methodism was the fruit of revival two hundred years ago," and "Welcome to Remsen," respectively). Place-names can also be difficult: "Camarthen" (8, 10, 102) should be "Carmarthen," "Llanddrvfrdog" should be "Llandyfrydog," and "Llanbrynmuir" should be "Llanbrynmair" (103), "Tregaran" should be "Tregaron" (106), and "Pen y Canerau" should be "Pen y Caerau" (113). Picture captions need to be corrected too: "Colege Trefeca" should be "Coleg Trefeca" (77, also in the text on iii and 89), and "Llanddower" (63) should be "Llanddowror."
14. William Williams, *The Experience Meeting* (London: Evangelical Press, 1973), 39–40.

15. *George Whitefield's Journals*, 229; *Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales*, 12:1 (March 1957; The Trevecka MSS Supplement, Series 2): 145; Evans, *Daniel Rowland*, 83–84.
16. Clarkson has missed references to Jones in John Wesley's *Journal*, (60). They are found in volume 2, pages 171 and 181, recording his meeting with Jones at Bath and Bristol. Jones's schools were not Sunday Schools (98), but "Charity Schools," intended to teach people of all ages to read.
17. Tom Beynon, ed., *Howell Harris's Visits to Pembrokeshire* (Aberystwyth: Cambrian News Press, 1966), 34, 158; and Beynon, *Howell Harris's Visits to London* (Aberystwyth: Cambrian News Press, 1960), 43. See also Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Significance of Trevecca College 1768–91* (London: Epworth Press, 1969).
18. N. Cynhafal Jones, 1:654.
19. See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "The Students of Trevecca College, 1768–1791," in *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (London, 1968), Session 1967, Part II, 249–77.
20. A. C. H. Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, Volume II (London, 1844), 118; J. C. Ryle, *The Christian Leaders of England in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chas. J. Thynne, 1902), 181. See also Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland*.
21. Williams wrote some English hymns, and to date three of his major works have been translated into English. These appeared under the titles, *A View of the Kingdom of Christ*, translated by Robert Jones and published in London, 1878; *The Experience Meeting*, translated by Mrs. Lloyd-Jones and published by Evangelical Press, London, 1973; and *Pursued by God*, translated by Eifion Evans, and published, with a survey of Williams's life and work, by Evangelical Press of Wales, Bridgend, 1966.
22. See Eifion Evans, "Dividing Times," in *Howel Harris, Evangelist 1714–1773* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974); and Geraint Tudur, "The Prophetess," in *Howell Harris From Conversion to Separation 1735–1750* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).
23. For the Confession of Faith, see Eifion Evans, "The Confession of Faith of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists," *Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales*, 14:1 (March 1974): 2–11. For the church's decline, see Eifion Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1969), 187–90; and Evans, *A Presbyterian Album: South Pembrokeshire Presbyterian Churches 1913–1999* (Cardiff: South Pembrokeshire Presbytery, 2000), chapter five.
24. See David Ceri Jones, *A Glorious Work in the World: Welsh Methodism and the International Evangelical Revival, 1735–1750* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004); Solomon Griffiths, *A History of the Calvinistic Methodists in Utica*, originally published in Welsh by T. J. Griffiths in Utica, New York in 1896, was translated by Phillips G. Davies and published in 1991 (Ames, Iowa: Sigler Printing and Publishing).



New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel

I. Howard Marshall
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004
765 pages, cloth, $40.00

We have waited, it seems, a long time for this erudite yet useful and practical work on the New Testament by the (now) Honorary Research Professor of New Testament at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Marshall, a student of F. F. Bruce, and for many years the most outstanding British New Testament scholar, has given us the benefit of his vast research and learning in this magnum opus.

Marshall emphasizes a number of times that he is not "attempting a history of the development of thought in the New Testament" (31, 184), but is dealing with the two tasks of a theology of the New Testament: (1) to investigate how the deposit of theological thinking in the documents came into being, and analyzing the theologies of the various documents; and (2) to ask whether there is a possible synthesis, bringing out the common beliefs expressed in the documents, and to demonstrate how these documents (as well as groups of documents) have developed these concepts in different ways, looking for both harmonies and discords.

While he sees the obvious binding factor to be the person of Jesus and the repercussions of his activities, Marshall finds it helpful to recognize the writings as "the documents of a mission" (34). Thus the theology of the New Testament is "essentially missionary theology." This springs out of a double mission: first, the mission of Jesus, as he inaugurated the kingdom; and, second, the mission of the disciples/followers of Jesus, who called people to faith, resulting in the growth of the church.

Along with fairly full chapters on introduction (chapter 1)

and conclusion (chapter 31), Marshall has considered the subject in four main parts. First, Jesus, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts (chapters 2–7); second, the Pauline Letters (chapters 8–19); third, the Johannine literature (chapters 20–24); and fourth, Hebrews, James, 1–2 Peter and Jude (chapters 25–30).

He makes a strong plea for the relevancy of the historical Jesus to New Testament theology. This is counter to the famous work of Rudolph Bultmann (*The Theology of the New Testament*, 2 volumes, SCM, 1952–53) who placed Jesus' teaching to one side as a "presupposition of New Testament theology" rather than as an element of its content. Marshall sees this relevancy at three levels: (1) Jesus' activity and message formed and shaped the church; (2) his activity forms the starting point for the entire Christian movement; and (3) he is the subject of reflection in the Gospels. It is the affirmation of our author that the Synoptic pictures of Jesus are adequately near to historical reality for use in understanding his mission and message. There is more on this theme in chapter 2 of Marshall's study.

In dealing with the Synoptic Gospels and the book of Acts each chapter contains the "theological story"—a kind of summary of the narrative—followed by a detailed topical analysis of each book's theological teachings. Then each chapter concludes with a listing of the "significant elements" in the theology of the respective books. (This is a helpful feature for scanning the treatment in each of these chapters.) Thus, one is presented with a fine overview of the development in each of the narratives, along with a judicious summary of the theological themes. In keeping with the announced aim of the volume, Marshall pretty well avoids attention to historical and critical questions.

For some scholars this is a questionable route to follow. N. T. Wright, Bishop of Durham, for example, insists (in his writings) that historical issues and theological themes must be considered together. The historical is regarded as a framework and a context for the theological. But Marshall shows that he is neither unaware of, nor anti-historical. It is a matter of perspective that is at stake, and the former really serves as a

background for the latter without intruding on it for this study.

When summing up the theology of the Synoptics and Acts, Marshall finds an extensive range of "agreement in the broad structure and detailed content" of the four books, and affirms that "they belong harmoniously together" (205–6). One finds a great difference here from many other approaches to these books which have majored in the contrasts and distinctions between them. To take an example in the case of Luke–Acts, we read in some sources that Luke's perspective belongs to "salvation history" and to "early catholicism." Marshall finds such a view inappropriate to Luke who is uninterested in church organization and office; rather, Luke, like the other Evangelists, is committed to telling the story of how the church began.

In treating the letters of Paul, each being dealt with separately, then comparing them with the Synoptics and Acts, Marshall argues for a theology that is using categories, drawn from the Old Testament, and using frequent scriptural citation and allusion. Yet he describes a Christian theology which is common to both—vastly elaborated in Paul, but "recognizably the same kind and shape of theology" (487). When John is added to the mix, the comparison shows that in Paul and John there are two expressions that evidence "essentially the same basic structure" and agree in many respects in details of content (601). The diversity of the final epistles (Hebrews–Jude) seems obvious to the reader, yet Marshall attempts to show value in that very diversity.

Finally, in a lengthy conclusion (chapter 31), a strong restatement of the purpose of the book is given, along with an extensive exposition of the theme of "mission." Marshall ends by noting that he recognizes a unity that is expressed through diversity. He affirms that an element in the inspiration of Scripture for Christian readers is that the text continues to speak in new ways to people in various times and places—even with the same message. This results in an ongoing encounter with the same God who has spoken in Scripture.

In closing, it might be noted that Marshall has included

both a general bibliography (11–13), and, except for chapter 2, a bibliography at the conclusion of each chapter in the volume. There are listings of New Testament theologies in each case, followed by various commentaries and thematic studies pertinent to the book under discussion. This is a tome worthy of careful perusal, and could well serve for an ongoing reference work for all theologians.

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