

## BOOK REVIEWS

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## OLD TESTAMENT

*Jeremiah and Lamentations*. (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Edited by Donald J. Wiseman.) By R. K. Harrison. Downers Grove: IVP, 1973, 240 pp., \$5.95.

The eminent professor of Old Testament from Wycliffe College, Toronto, has made a solid, scholarly contribution for the study of *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, which admirably combines with lucidity and brevity the newest advances in evangelical scholarship. His expertise in archaeology and ancient Near Eastern history shows in every passage how such background information might enrich the understanding of the Hebrew text.

In a commentary of such modest dimensions Harrison wisely refrains from discussing by name the opinions of earlier scholars, whether he follows those opinions or dissents from them. But he shows an awareness of the various theories which have been proposed in recent times regarding the composition and teaching of the 52 chapters of *Jeremiah*, often suggesting good reasons for rejecting views which emanate from humanistic bias. Consistently and convincingly he maintains an attitude of respect for the received text and all of its internal evidence pointing to the genuineness and unity of the first fifty-one chapters as an authentic work of the historic Jeremiah.

One of the outstanding characteristics of Dr. Harrison's exposition is his frequent inclusion of NT parallels, wherever the Gospels or Epistles quote from Jeremiah, or allude to portions of his prophecy, or even present analogous teaching which enriches the understanding of the Hebrew text. His underlying assumption seems to be that the same Divine Author guided the composition and teaching of both Testaments, and that they therefore have a very definite relevance to each other. Because of this frequent reference to NT analogies or elaborations of thought, this commentary furnishes a perfect handbook for the pastor who wishes to preach a series of messages from Jeremiah,

or for the Bible class teacher who undertakes a survey of the doctrine of this important OT prophet. Not that Harrison follows a policy of reading Christian thought back into the intention of the Hebrew author; occasionally he goes to considerable pains to develop the prophetic teaching from earlier writings in the OT. Thus in his discussion of the New Covenant passage in Jer. 31:31 ff. he construes the essence of the *berith hadashah* ("new covenant") as consisting of a personal appropriation of the covenant of Divine grace on the part of the individual Jewish believer, as opposed to the earlier conception of a national covenant. On p. 140 he states that this new form of covenantal relationship "changed the older concept of a corporate relationship completely by substituting the individual for the nation as a whole." To this reviewer such an interpretation runs counter to the implications of the sacrificial system set forth in the Mosaic Law, which provided for burnt offerings and sin-offerings to be presented by individual Israelites in atonement for their personal sins (rather than being content with the state sacrifices offered by the priests for the nation as a whole). The stand taken by Joshua in Josh. 24:15 ("as for me and my household, we will serve Yahweh") seems to imply as personal commitment as any discoverable in the pages of the NT. The same can be said of David's penitential Psalm 51, and many other expressions of personal faith. Psalm 119 is permeated throughout by the same attitude of individual response and commitment, as evidenced by the familiar, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (119:11). A far more satisfying interpretation of the promise of Jer. 31:33 ("I will put My law in their inward parts and on their heart I will write it") may be found in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the believer according to Christ's promise in John 14:27, as a permanent resident within the heart.

Be that as it may, the Harrison commentary is of unquestionable value and may be recommended without reservation for the use of pastors and Bible teachers. His handling of the critical problem of the shorter text and different chapter order in the Septuagint version of Jeremiah is beyond reproach (p. 43) and raises no serious question about the reliability of the Massoretic Text or the integrity of Baruch as the editor of the final edition of Jeremiah's prophecies.

The same unreserved commendation is deserved by the appended commentary on *Lamentations*, of which Harrison says: "While the authorship of the work must necessarily remain unknown, it seems highly improbable that anyone other than Jeremiah would have been moved to such depths of elegiac expression ..." (p. 198). He discounts arguments against Jeremian authorship based on resemblances to the last 27 chapters of Isaiah (which all Liberals date in the late sixth century or post-exilic period) by the observation: "This argument is seriously weakened by the entirely unwarranted assumption that parts of Isaiah do not in fact belong to the eighth century B.C., a position for which there is no factual evidence whatever" (p. 198). The exposition of the five chapters of *Lamentations* is marked by unusual sensitivity to the emotional and spiritual anguish of the Hebrew author as he

contemplated the utter ruin of the holy city of God after the Chaldean invasion. The progress of the thought is clearly and helpfully developed in each successive chapter, with a good outline for purposes of analysis. An excellent piece of work.

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#### NEW TESTAMENT

*New Dimensions in New Testament Study.* Edited by Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974, 386 pp. \$8.95.

Whoever thought of the title?! This volume contains 24 papers presented at the twenty-fifth annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society at Wheaton in December 1973. Their quality is almost uniformly high, their doctrinal stance soundly evangelical, and their subjects mostly of central importance in current NT studies. All this adds up to a most worthwhile publication. But where are the "New Dimensions"? Nearly all the essays tread well-trodden paths in quite conventional ways, some historical, some critical, some exegetical, some doctrinal. They have important contributions to make to ongoing debates all over the field of NT studies. But few, if any, are likely to make a stir. Few break new ground (except perhaps in details) or initiate exciting new ways of studying the NT, and that is what I would take "New Dimensions" to mean. Indeed, perhaps this title points up by its very inappropriateness one of the major weaknesses of contemporary evangelical biblical scholarship. We do not make the running. Radical scholars, usually German, come up with the daring new ideas, and evangelical scholarship comes along behind, evaluating, criticizing, sorting out the grain from the chaff, and shoring up the battered structure of orthodoxy. All this we must do, and we are doing it better all the time, as the essays in this volume effectively demonstrate. But when will evangelical scholarship coin new ideas and approaches? Must our conservative theology always restrict us to conservative methods of study? Where are the "New Dimensions"?

Apart from the title, with its unfulfilled promise, I have little but praise for this impressive collection. The papers are not light-weight, but explore their chosen subjects in depth, with full documentation. (Their average length is little short of 10,000 words.) A review of such a volume can only pick out a few highlights and must pass over many excellent contributions.

F. F. BRUCE ("New Light on the Origins of the NT Canon") probes one of our weakest points, and suggests that the traditional defense of the canon on grounds of apostolicity will not do; rather we should appeal to the witness of the Holy Spirit *in the Christian community* from the first generation on. Many will feel that, though historically correct, this could prove a shaky foundation for our whole theological edifice. There

is an urgent need for further evangelical discussion of this question. GORDON D. FEE ("The Myth of Early Textual Recension in Alexandria") demonstrates the close relationship of the major Alexandrian manuscripts to P75, and argues that B represents not a third/fourth century recension, but a careful preservation of the text from the second century, thus justifying a return to something like the Hort estimate of B.

ROBERT H. GUNDRY ("The Literary Genre 'Gospel' ") criticizes recent views of the Gospels as *logoi sophon* or aretalogies, and concludes that they belong to no recognized *genre*; his case is now strengthened by G. N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in NT Preaching* (Cambridge, 1974; SNTS Monograph 27), with its insistence on missionary preaching as the natural locus for an interest in the life and character of Jesus. HAROLD H. HOEHNER ("The Year of our Lord's Crucifixion") argues convincingly from a wide variety of data for an AD 33 date (though can John 2:20 be taken to mean that the building has been *complete* for 46 years without destroying the force of the argument?). WILLIAM L. LANE ("*Theios Aner* Christology and the Gospel of Mark") trounces the conflict theory of T. J. Weeden, and in the process gives the uninitiated a useful bird's-eye view of what this *theios aner* business is all about. J. RAMSEY MICHAELS ("The Temple Discourse in John") sees John 7-8 as a careful theological structure replacing the Synoptic accounts of Jesus' last week of teaching and the Sanhedrin trial, and emphasizing the rejection of Jerusalem and the Temple.

I. HOWARD MARSHALL (" 'Early Catholicism' in the NT") lustily attacks a German sacred cow, and finds no *Frühkatholizismus*, as normally defined, in the NT at all. There is no "canon within the canon," but a unity of perspective throughout the NT writings. W. WARD GASQUE ("The Speeches of Acts: Dibelius Reconsidered") shows that Dibelius' understanding of the practice of ancient historians, on which so much later criticism of Acts has been based, was faulty, and points out the contrast between Luke and Josephus, who *did* invent speeches for his heroes. (If not a "new dimension," this paper at least redirects the study of Acts out of a backwater where it has been stuck for far too long!)

RICHARD N. LONGENECKER ("Ancient Amanuenses and the Pauline Epistles") sheds a lot of light on the amanuensis habit in non-Christian literature, and points out what is too often forgotten, that the recognition of Paul's use of amanuenses makes nonsense of attempts to dispute Pauline authorship on grounds of "unconscious style," and demands caution in drawing Pauline theology out of verbal details. What he does not establish, and surely this is crucial to his case and to Pauline studies at large, is what degree of freedom an amanuensis might be expected to be allowed in the phrasing (if not more) of the master's message—another subject demanding further study. ANDREW J. BANDSTRA ("Did the Colossian Errorists need a Mediator?") argues that the heresy, far from being Gnostic, was a Jewish mysticism which insisted on *unmediated* contact with God. By a careful selection of texts he builds up a case for such a strain in Jewish thought which, if it is unlikely to appeal to many students of Colossians, does perhaps open up a "new

dimension" in the study of first-century Judaism. W. HAROLD MARE ("The Pauline Work Ethic") tackles a theme of contemporary importance, without providing any new dimension, except perhaps in his assumption that Hebrews is Pauline! MERRILL C. TENNEY ("Some Possible Parallels between 1 Peter and John") does not argue for a literary dependence, but his paper illustrates the value of a fuller exploration of the unity of the different strands in NT thought, in contrast with the fashionable emphasis on their diversity.

These are only half of the contents of this significant book. It should certainly be in any respectable theological library. And at what is these days quite a bargain price (where else will you find such solid, responsible scholarship at 25 words a cent?) it should not be beyond the means of individual scholars and students, who will find it a valuable investment. I shall be consulting it frequently.

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*The Theology of the New Testament.* By Werner Georg Kümmel. Nashville: Abingdon, 1973, 510 pp., \$14.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper.

Kümmel's name has long been associated with original New Testament research. This latest volume from his pen will certainly appeal to a wider audience than his previous works. Here is a relatively painless way to get acquainted with current critical thinking in New Testament biblical theology. The book is popular in style and structure. There are no footnotes, no technical exhibitions to confound the unprepared reader, and only occasional citations from other scholarly works.

The author operates on the methodological assumption that the unity of the New Testament writings can be discerned only after their diversity has been explored. Of course, he further maintains that the New Testament documents can be made to speak only by way of historical research. However, unlike many of his colleagues, Kümmel recognizes the limitations of a purely historical approach. It is not the historian, but the believer, who determines that the Christ event is divine truth and not human fantasy. "In Jesus God, the Lord of the world, has come to us. But this coming of God can become a personal reality for us only if we allow ourselves to be grasped by God's love."

Chapter I presents the witness of Jesus according to the synoptic gospels. Here Kümmel's critical conservatism is obvious. He differs from many other contemporary biblical theologians of Germanic origin in his insistence that the person and proclamation of Jesus are both the presupposition and beginning of the theology of the New Testament. And he is more optimistic than they of the scholars' ability to gain an historically comprehensible and unified picture of Jesus.

While Kümmel agrees with modern scholarship's almost unanimous voice that the kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus, his portrayal of Jesus' message has some distinctive features. Unlike those

who see the kingdom as both a present and future reality, Kümmel understands it to be primarily the future eschatological rule of God. Yet this end-time kingdom is also present, but exclusively in the working and preaching of Jesus, not in the circle of his disciples. The problem of how the kingdom can be both future and present seems to be solved by the fact that Jesus is the salvation-bearer of the end-time and in his deeds the future kingdom has already dawned.

The miraculous element in Jesus' deeds must not be discounted as unhistorical datum on the grounds that such occurrences are contrary to our experiences and are not rationally explicable. Although it is not altogether clear how Kümmel distinguishes the real from the legendary, the essential point is that in a reliable report from Jesus' life "Jesus, and not simply a miraculous event, is set before the gaze of the listener."

Kümmel doubts that Jesus demanded belief in his own person. Instead, belief in God is what Jesus called for. Nevertheless, Jesus regarded a believing encounter with his actions and his teachings to be the sole basis for the encounter with God's eschatological kingdom. What role then does Jesus ascribe to himself? Kümmel either rejects or considers inadequate the titles of "prophet," "Messiah," "Son of David," and "Son of God." Jesus adopted the Jewish apocalyptic expectation of the endtime "Man." He then connected it with the announcement of God's kingdom and with his own person.

In what sense did Jesus incorporate his death into his divine commission? In Kümmel's view Jesus saw himself as the suffering servant of God. Jesus did not however adopt this figure from the Judaism of his time. He simply reckoned on his violent death and combined the claim to be the "Man" sent from God with the anticipation of suffering.

In chapter II the author briefly discusses the contribution of the primitive community. For Kümmel it is not the disciples' experience of the resurrection that forms the ground of the church's witness. The resurrection only confirmed God's actual activity in Jesus which is the true basis of our proclamation. The new title given to Jesus by the primitive community was the naming of him as "Lord." Yet even this title was predicated on a term of respectful address used for him in his lifetime. It was Hellenistic Christianity that contributed the conception of Jesus' physical sonship to God and of his virgin birth.

In chapters III and IV Kümmel presents the Pauline and Johannine theologies in traditional fashion. It becomes particularly evident in his treatment of Paul that Kümmel may well be characterized with the *Heilsgeschichte* school. Even the Philippian hymn is considered a "history."

In his view, John's gospel reflects a mitigated kind of gnosis. It carried with it the danger of an incipient docetism, but this was kept in check by constant reference to the historical realities. Also, John, in his view, teaches a moderate sacramentalism, but at the same time the sacraments constitute no major emphasis for John.

The author concludes that the "heart of the New Testament," and the central message of its three major witnesses, is the Christ event. In

the Christ event, God began his salvation promised for the end of the world. And in Christ, God encounters us as the Father who seeks to rescue us from imprisonment in the world and to free us to love.

Of course, some of Kümmel's conclusions will not be accepted by all evangelicals. Nevertheless, here is a valuable addition to our understanding of New Testament theology that must not go unrecognized. An excellent volume on the same subject, but from an evangelical perspective, is G. E. Ladd's *New Testament Theology*. A comparative study of these two volumes would yield rich rewards for the pastor, layman or student of the New Testament.

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## THEOLOGY

*Man as Male and Female*. By Paul K. Jewett. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, 192 pp., \$3.45 paper.

Women are inferior to men. They have less ability to withstand temptation. For this reason Eve was tempted rather than Adam. For this reason also women should not occupy leadership positions in the church. This, writes Paul Jewett, is the classic position of the Christian church. He writes in order to show how unbiblical this view is.

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). The clear implication of this verse, contends Jewett, is not woman's inferiority to men but her full equality with men. By using this verse where *Man* is created in the image of God male and female, Jewett makes a case for the full equality of men and women.

Man's creation in the divine image is so related to his creation as male and female that the latter may be looked upon as an exposition of the former. His sexuality is not simply a mechanism for procreation which Man has in common with the animal world; it is rather a part of what it means to be like the Creator. As God is a fellowship in himself (Trinity) so Man is a fellowship in himself, and the fundamental form of this fellowship, so far as Man is concerned, is that of male and female. This view of Man's being, I argue, implies a partnership in life; and the proper understanding of the account of woman's creation from and for the man is in every way compatible with such a theology of sexual partnership.... My own conclusion is that the case for hierarchy, in the last analysis requires one to argue not only for the priority but also the superiority of the male.... According to the creation ordinance, man and woman are properly related when they accept each other as equals whose difference is mutually complimentary in all spheres of life and human endeavor.

Jewett feels that he must argue in this fashion because it is

impossible to divorce female subordination from female inferiority. Since females are not inferior to males, they cannot be subordinate to men just because of their sex.

The concept of hierarchy, to be sure, does not in itself entail superiority and inferiority, but only that some are over, others are under; some exercise authority, others submit to it. But how can one defend a sexual hierarchy whereby men are over women—not just some men over some women, but all men over all women, because men are men and women are women—without supposing that half the human race which exercises authority is superior in some way to the half which submits?

Jewett's arguments for the full equality of men and women are excellent. Nothing in the New Testament should be interpreted to prevent women from exercising full equality with men in life in general and the church in particular. They occupy prominent positions. We see for example Phoebe the deaconess in Romans 16:1. There are the women who prophesy in I Cor. 11. There are the deaconess's qualifications in I Tim. 3. In making his case Jewett utilizes the European source material better than any other American author. He deals not only with the familiar Barth, but with men often unread like Leupold and Baltensweiler. His omission however of the significant work of Else Kahler, *Die Frau in den Paulinischen Briefen* (Zurich: Gotthelf Verlag, 1960), which is a major study of subordination in the New Testament is an important oversight.

But though his book presents an excellent argument for the general equality of men and women his treatment of the apostle Paul is inadequate.

The question of Paul the former rabbi versus Paul the apostle of Christ is explored with the help of the distinction between his perception of the truth and the implementation of it in the Greco-Roman world of the first century.

How is it possible to make this distinction?

There are four possible ways of approaching Paul's statements about the subordination of wives to their husbands. You can say Paul is wrong, which is the approach of much liberal scholarship. You can selectively emphasize various passages, either those forcing women into the background (Ryrie, *The Place of women in the Church*) or those emphasizing their equality (Stendahl, *Women and the Bible*). You can construct a reconciling principle, such as the one that women are subordinate only to their husbands and must not exercise authority over them. Or you can argue that Paul's statements are culturally conditioned (as with the kiss of greeting) and therefore inapplicable today.

Jewett attempts to argue that Paul's statements are culturally conditioned.

The apostle Paul's ... thinking about women—their place in life generally and in the church specifically— reflects both his Jewish and his Christian experience.... So far as he thought in terms of his Jewish background, he thought of the woman as subordinate to the man for whose sake she was created (I Cor. 11:9). But so far as he thought in terms of the new insight he had gained through the



revelation of God in Christ, he thought of the woman as equal to the man in all things, the two having been made one in Christ, in whom there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28)... Because these two perspectives—the Jewish and the Christian—are incompatible, there is no satisfying way to harmonize the Pauline argument for female subordination with the larger Christian vision of which the great apostle to the Gentiles was himself the primary architect.

Paul could not completely overcome his rabbinic training in his treatment of women. This failure led him to misinterpret the Genesis 2 creation account. (Jewett here comments concerning I Tim. 2:9-15, "It hardly seems that the apostle Paul could have been the direct author of this passage, for, to his credit, he never speaks elsewhere of the woman in such a way.") Paul's misinterpretation of the Genesis 2 creation account, corrected by Jewett ("So far as Genesis 2 is concerned, sexual hierarchy is a reading into the text of something not required by the text."), provides the basis for rejecting Paul's statements about a wife's subordination to her husband. While Jewett attempts to argue that Paul's statements are culturally conditioned, it would appear that he is saying Paul is wrong.

This is a carefully written book. It is a weighty book. The audience appears to be ministers or professors. It should be read by all as the best available evangelical book on this subject.

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## PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

*Philosophy of Religion.* By Norman L. Geisler. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974, 416 pp., \$7.95.

One of the major challenges confronting Evangelical Christianity is to penetrate the arena of contemporary philosophy, to grapple with philosophical complexities from a Christian perspective, and to present the relevance of obedient belief in God within that context. Geisler recognizes this as an urgent necessity, and is to be commended for his effort. His book deals with four of the most contentious areas of philosophy of religion: religious experience, theistic proofs, religious language, and the problem of evil. In each of these areas, Geisler attempts not only to bring the reader to an understanding of the importance of the problem, but also to present a solution favorable to the theistic world view.

Geisler also presents a generous bibliography to facilitate further study; and the range of names which appear on it bears out the witness of the text itself to the author's thorough acquaintance with religious and philosophical thought from antiquity to contemporary existentialism. Conspicuous by their absence, however, are some of the most influential contemporary analytical philosophers of religion:

Durrant, Nielsen, Hepburn, Mitchell and Martin are completely absent, Penelhum and Flew receive only one entry each in the bibliography and never appear in the text. Yet these authors address themselves to crucial problems in the philosophy of religion, problems which Geisler almost entirely ignores, yet which are logically prior to the questions to which he does address himself. A case in point is the current discussion of the consistency of the very concept of God. Nielsen, for instance, believes that the concept of God is either utterly vacuous, so that it literally means nothing, or else hopelessly anthropomorphic and thus irreconcilable with sophisticated theism. (See, for instance, his *Scepticism* [Macmillan, 1973] and his *Contemporary Critiques of Religion* [Macmillan, 1971].) But if indeed there is irresolvable inconsistency in any non-vacuous concept of God, such that the notion of God is on a level with the notion of square circles, then *no* amount of proof or evidence could be adequate to make it rational to believe in His existence, just as no amount of proof or evidence could make it rational for us to believe that there are square circles. Geisler, in his discussion of religious language, does not so much as mention this as a problem, yet the success of his whole enterprise depends upon its satisfactory resolution.

One of the most penetrating insights of Geisler's book comes in his discussion of the thought of many writers chorusing together man's longing for the transcendent. Geisler points out that Freud, Marx, and others are much too hasty if they deny the truth of Christianity simply because it adequately meets man's need for God. From the fact that man has a felt need for something beyond himself, it does not follow that the postulation of a transcendent Being who would meet that need has no objective validity. Freud and Marx would wish us to believe that subjective desirability of the existence of God should lead to objective suspicion of the truth of the postulate. Geisler points out that this need not follow, and indeed that the universal longing for God should lead us, not to skepticism concerning His existence, but rather to a concerted search for Him. To be sure, a longing for God does not in itself prove that God exists, and Geisler recognizes this very clearly. But it is refreshing to find that the subjective longing can be taken as a basis for optimism with as much justification as for pessimism regarding the objective existence of God.

Geisler's laudable desire for thoroughness leads him to list many different presentations of the same argument: he gives, for instance, no fewer than seven formulations of the ontological argument. This would be quite in order if his intention were to give a history of its development; however, in a book whose aim is to see whether the argument holds, it would seem desirable to simply state it in its strongest formulation and proceed directly to analysis and evaluation. It is disconcerting to find so many presentations, yet relatively little coming to grips with the validity and soundness of the arguments. The account of Aquinas' objection to the ontological argument is a case in point: Geisler simply states, "Aquinas, too, had the concept of a necessary Being and yet he did not seem to appreciate that Anselm argued that this very concept (however one arrives at it) logically demands that one

affirm that such a Being really exists." It is at least arguable that the lack of appreciation is not on Aquinas' part but on Geisler's. The standard interpretation of Aquinas on this point is that while he certainly agreed that if there is a necessary Being, then that Being must exist, one cannot simply arrive at the postulation of the actual existence of such a Being by an analysis of the concept as Anselm did, but rather must show independently that there is in fact a necessary Being. (See F. C. Copleston, *Aquinas* [Penguin, 1955], p. 111 ff.) If this can be shown, then (of course) this Being exists; that was hardly the point of contention between Anselm and Aquinas.

Perhaps because of the enormity of the enterprise of writing on so many hotly contended subjects in the scope of one book, Geisler makes some unsupported statements and sometimes shows downright lack of scholarship. A minor example is drawn from his summary of the teleological argument, where he identifies, without further argument, Hume's opinion with that of Cleanthes. This identification is at least highly debatable, and is in fact rejected outright by major scholars of Hume. (See James Noxon, "Hume's Agnosticism" in V. C. Chappell, ed., *Hume* [Doubleday Anchor, 1966]. Noxon gives a good account of the differences of opinion with respect to the identification of Hume.) Another example can be drawn from his discussion of the problem of evil, where he contends that the presence of suffering is a necessary tool for the development of moral qualities. Geisler cites the example of Jesus who was made perfect by learning obedience through that which He suffered. Then Geisler says, "In the final analysis obedience to God is the ultimate lesson to learn. And the very best way to learn it is by disobedience to God...." This does seem to have rather startling implications, not the least of which is that Jesus also learned obedience through disobedience. It is obvious that Geisler would himself be unhappy with that conclusion and would reject it; the point is that lack of care in presentation of arguments can have rather uncomfortable consequences.

There is more than one major argument in Geisler's book with which one might well take issue, but perhaps the most contentious is his presentation of the cosmological argument which he believes to be sound as a proof for the existence of God. In this argument, Geisler places much weight on the concept of being, contrasting contingent, limited beings with an infinite necessary Being. Many complaints could be raised at this point. In the first place, Geisler is excessively unclear in his usage of key words: a case in point is his equivocation on the notion of "being," sometimes using it as a noun (as in "Tom is a contingent being") such that it designates an object or a person, and sometimes using it as a synonym for existence (as in "Tom has being"—that is, Tom exists). To illustrate this complaint: Geisler says, "Any being that undergoes a change of its being (i.e. either gains or loses it) cannot be a necessary Being." (p. 193)

Secondly, Geisler indulges in crucially illegitimate reification. To make the point of his second premise, he says, "Whatever changes in its very being must be composed of both a potentiality for that change and

an actuality that actualizes or effects the change ... no being can actualize its own potential for existence" (p. 194). From this he goes on to say that changing beings are composed beings, as contrasted with God who is a simple Being. What is the meaning of "composed" here? To treat actuality and potentiality as articles which go into the composition of all things is (at least) a treatment which requires some defense: To say that my glasses have four components, lenses, frame, actuality and potentiality, is odd, to put it mildly. The strangeness comes out even more clearly when we realize that according to Geisler it is necessary for a thing to have at least one of these components, namely potentiality, even before it exists: but to speak of an attribute or a component of an as yet nonexistent thing is absurd.

Thirdly, Geisler rests his case on a distinction which he wishes to draw between the principle of sufficient reason, which he agrees founders as a basis for the cosmological argument, and the principle of existential causality, which he believes to be adequate to support its weight. In at least one passage, he asserts that existential causality is concerned with the present continuation of things rather than with their initial coming into being (p. 197), and this is indeed a plausible reading of Aquinas. Unfortunately, this does not prevent the principle of existential causality from collapsing into the principle of sufficient reason. For the principle of existential causality simply requires that for every existing thing there must be a cause adequate to account for its existence. But this is just what the principle of sufficient reason also requires. Geisler wishes to draw a distinction between a verbal explanation and a genuinely existing cause, seeming to imply that the principle of sufficient reason calls for only the former (p. 186, p. 190). But if this is indeed his position, then it rests on misunderstanding of the principle of sufficient reason, which in its simplest historical formulation is just "Nothing comes from nothing"—some cause is necessary for the existence of anything (See Terence Penelhum, "The Cosmological Proof" in his *Religion and Rationality* [Random House, 1971].): which is just what Geisler intends as the meaning of his principle of existential causality. But that the principle of sufficient reason thus understood is inadequate to bear the weight of the cosmological argument has been amply demonstrated in philosophical literature, and there is no need for me to repeat it here, but only to emphasize that the criticisms cannot be avoided by rebaptizing the concept.

Finally, Geisler wishes to show that only a necessary Being can be a sufficient cause, ultimately, for the existence of contingent beings. This is questionable in more than one respect; let me restrict myself to examining the notion of "necessary Being." Geisler says, "If all limited or caused beings are contingent or possible beings ... then the unlimited or uncaused Being must be a noncontingent or necessary Being (i.e. one which must be). That is, all beings whose essence is not to exist depend on one whose essence is to exist" (p. 203). The immediate impulse here is to dismiss the whole argument as dependent on the ontological argument which is commonly regarded as invalid. But Geisler hastens to assure us that he is not using the phrase "necessary Being" in the sense

of “logically necessary,” but rather in the sense of “required to account for the existence of contingent things.” Thus a Being which “must be” is not a Being the denial of whose existence is contradictory, but rather a Being called for by the principle of efficient causality. Leaving aside the inadequacy of that principle, let us observe that although Geisler states that this Being is not logically necessary, it is nevertheless crucially contrasted with contingent beings—that is, beings whose existence is *not* logically necessary. Now, either the necessary Being is logically necessary, or it is not. But if it is *not* logically necessary, then it is itself a contingent being and is as much in need of explanation as any other contingent being. On the other hand, if it *is* logically necessary, then Geisler has fallen into the ontological argument in spite of himself. In either case, his rendition of the cosmological argument is undermined.

In conclusion, let me commend Geisler for his effort, and urge that much more thought must go into the resolution of the issues which he has raised.

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