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1996

## Review: Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation

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### Recommended Citation

Morrison, John D., "Review: Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation" (1996). *LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 53.

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*Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation.* By Donald G. Bloesch. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994, 384 pp., \$24.99.

The anticipation with which I approached the reading of this book turned, at least in measure, to frustration. In this the second of the projected seven-volume *Christian Foundations*, it seems that Bloesch has sought to walk the *via media* between what he perceives to be the theological pitfalls of fundamentalism and liberalism on Holy Scripture. This is the dialectical structuring found on almost every page. Yet Bloesch does far more as he endeavors to lay bare and point the way into the twenty-first century on this truly foundational issue for the Church of Jesus Christ, evangelical, catholic and reformed, from a position much informed by his own Reformed pietism and emphases in neo-orthodoxy.

Though *Holy Scripture* is comprised of nine developmental chapters, the book actually falls into two parts. The first four chapters, which focus on the current crisis in Biblical authority, the nature or meaning of revelation and the meaning of Scriptural inspiration, set forth Bloesch's theological and epistemological bases, including two (of his five) stimulating and helpful appendices. The second half of the work builds from these bases to deal with questions more immediately related to the intended effect and nature of Scripture in, of and to the world. Herein Bloesch's timely discussion of issues is elucidated in ways that are usually accurate, useful and, at crucial points, somewhat disturbing. Included are Scripture and the Church, the hermeneutical problem, the continuing effect of Bultmann, the Bible and myth, and the question of the nature of truth. While this second half contains much that is excellent in every chapter, it is upon the first four foundational chapters that we will focus discussion. Here what appears disturbing or questionable throughout the work has its grounding.

In the early chapters on Biblical authority, revelation and inspiration, Bloesch makes it clear that he intends a unity or unification of Word-Scripture and Spirit-Scripture, which are all too often left separated. Bloesch's healing intention extends not only to the relatedness and expression of what God has disclosed but also to those parties within the believing Church separated over these issues. Bloesch understands God's revelation to be objective (in the sense emphasized by Barth) and to refer not only to God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ but to the dynamic and effectual meaning and significance of such. Bloesch, in his own way, affirms verbal inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit.

Yet for all this, I was regularly frustrated (as well as oft delighted) by much of Bloesch's revelational-bibliological discussion. I shall mention only a few points of concern. Bloesch creates what is largely a straw man of "fundamentalism," forcing such to assert things that this reviewer has never heard and that most would surely disaffirm so that Bloesch's own position can claim the title "true evangelical." In the very way that he lightly chides Rogers and McKim for inadequately expressing the bibliological views of both the fathers and Reformers, Bloesch too seeks to underline minor points to the end that he has Augustine, Calvin, Luther, and the Puritans (among others) apparently disaffirming the full truthfulness of Scripture and the view that Scripture, by the Spirit, *is* the Word of God in written form. Further, Bloesch does little actual theologizing and, with regard to exegesis, there is none to be found. Rather, he regularly drops concise position statements at crucial places in the texts. Of signal importance is that while Bloesch criticizes "neo-Orthodoxy" for a Nestorian view of Scripture (fundamentalism for a docetic view), he makes it clear that his position, despite some advance, is almost wholly formed by Barth, Brunner, Forsyth and, at points, K ung. This reviewer has much appreciation for the thought of Barth, but a formative role given to Barth's theology creates problems. As a result, Bloesch's position on Word and Scripture is almost as "Nestorian" as that variously expressed

in neo-orthodoxy, but, additionally, it is also "adoptionist." Because of an underlying tendency toward split thinking—indeed, dualism—Bloesch cannot allow that Scripture is the Word of God. The result is similar to what Thiselton has critiqued as "Word magic." Admittedly, "Word of God" is used with much contextual variety in Scripture. Scripture is not the Word of God in the same sense or at the same level as Christ the Word, he who is by nature the eternal self-disclosure of God. Also, Scripture is the God-given witness to Christ. The Scriptures, by the work of the Spirit via inspiration, in, of, from and to Christ, are derivatively the Word of God. But by God's grace they are the Word of God. It is at this crucial place that Bloesch, like Barth, Brunner *et al.*, fall into a dichotomous way of conceptualizing the Word in a neo-Platonic fear that an affirmation of such historicity will tarnish the Word.

All of this is not to say that it is not a fine work. In many ways Bloesch has given us (and is in the process of bringing forth in volumes to come) much that is profitable, the heart of many years of effective theological reflection. So much of what Bloesch says will be (or at least ought to be) received by students, theologians and leaders in evangelicalism. But I have deep concerns about issues at the very basis of his project that might keep it from becoming all that some, including myself, thought it would be.

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*Evil and the Evidence for God: The Challenge of John Hick's Theodicy.* By R. Douglas Geivett. Philadelphia: Temple University, 1993, 276 pp., \$44.95/\$18.95.

This book evidences Geivett's expertise in philosophy while addressing an extremely important theological topic: the relationship between (1) evidence for the existence of God and (2) the problem of evil. One purpose of the book is to critique J. Hick's theodicy. But the scope of the book extends well beyond a mere extended position review.

Geivett does not dive immediately into Hick's view of theodicy. In fact, one might say that a critique of Hick is not his main point. This book intends to set forth an appropriate response to the problem of evil from within the Augustinian tradition. Geivett begins by discussing the problem of evil for Christian theology and then by summarizing several positions from two competing traditions in Christian theodicy: the Augustinian (which Augustine, Aquinas, Leibniz, and Geivett follow) and the Irenaean (a form of which Hick follows).

The second portion of the book, accounting for almost half its pages, addresses religious epistemology, or inquiry into the justification of belief in God, utilizing natural theology. "A major thesis of this book is that an adequate response to the problem of evil depends upon the possibility of natural theology, or of providing good evidence for the existence of God" (p. xi). Geivett endeavors to provide such evidence using modern scientific data and the existence of a nonnatural reality to show that God not only exists but is personal, powerful, and good. Once Geivett's natural theology is established, evil fits within the system rather than being its conqueror. According to Geivett, the existence of God and the problem of evil are related but logically separate. If one tackles the former (as the Augustinian tradition proposes), then the latter's force diminishes significantly.

Hick's position is not ignored. While addressing various topics Geivett discusses Hick along the way. Nevertheless, it is not until the third section that he directly critiques the bulk of Hick's position. Hick advocates that God's purpose for evil is to



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