

27:25 (“his blood be on our heads”) within the whole gospel and the question of what it means to love one’s enemies. Though I am uncertain about his conclusions about openness to dialogue with enemies in the former case, I find his argument that many (the crowds, religious leaders, Roman officials, disciples) share responsibility for Jesus’ death as an important proviso in the crowd’s asking for Jesus’ death. It seems only the women at the cross escape guilt. Nolland’s work gives us much to consider. I would add that the hint at the end of Gurtner’s essay about the gospel’s presentation of Jesus as prophet may also prove helpful in the discussion of anti-Semitism, an issue I have had under consideration for a while and hope to find raised more often in the discussion of the anti-Semitism in this gospel.

That said, it appears that this volume is destined mainly to rest on shelves in libraries and perhaps among the books of the rare scholar with money to buy most of the latest works of Matthean scholarship. The fact that mostly scholars and graduate students will refer to a particular essay in this book for their own work does not mean the book has no value, but it seems unfortunate coming from a publisher that aims for a broader readership among educated Christians.

Dallas, TX

ROBERT FOSTER

God’s Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship, by KENTON L. SPARKS. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. 416 pp. \$28.00.

Critical biblical scholarship has long seemed only to undermine the authority of the Bible in the minds of both critical and evangelical scholars. This is particularly difficult for evangelicals because it often calls into question such sacred ideas as inerrancy. Many evangelicals simply ignore critical scholarship or deny its conclusions as incorrect. Evangelicalism is ready for another option. Kenton Sparks’s new book, *God’s Word in Human Words*, calls for a fresh look at critical scholarship by the evangelical community. Sparks’s thesis is that critical scholarship can inform evangelical faith and, in fact, must if the church is to take Scripture seriously on its own terms—acknowledging inaccuracies, tensions, and diversity in the text. He argues that evangelicals must accept three fundamental presuppositions in order to articulate a believing criticism: epistemological humility, a theology of accommodation, and sensitivity to the Bible’s theological trajectories.

Chapter 1 argues from an epistemological standpoint for what Sparks calls practical realism. This challenges the Cartesian certainty that is prevalent in evangelical circles, calling for humility but recognizing the abilities of humanity. Here Sparks provides a history of Western epistemology, but unfortunately he neglects some of the valuable epistemological insights of Eastern Orthodoxy.

Chapters 2–7 articulate many of the hotly debated issues from within critical scholarship (mostly citing examples from the OT), putting them into

conversation with various responses to each. In these chapters, Sparks openly argues that critical scholarship offers the better reading. Thus, for example, he affirms many of the contributions of redaction criticism and comparative literary readings of Genesis. Sparks argues that God accommodated his inerrant message to an errant humanity by embracing our often-flawed understanding of reality. Sparks goes to great lengths to show that this theology of accommodation is nothing new. Especially in chapter 5, he appeals to patristics, the Reformation, and other modern scholars (most notably Wolterstorff) as his theological forerunners, while noting acute differences between the ancient and modern theologians.

Chapters 8–9 bring an interdisciplinary approach to biblical hermeneutics. Sparks sees this as an essential element in healthy interpretation because it pays close attention to the “whole” context of Scripture and its interpreters. These chapters, while helpful, often veer off course into verbose treatments of sub-points, creating discontinuity with the earlier sections of the book.

Chapter 1 integrates practical realism and accommodation into a hermeneutical discussion that seeks to articulate the theological trajectory of the canon. He applies his thesis to several issues but gives his most thorough treatment to the roles of women in the church. Chapter 11 summarizes the book, remarking on its applicability in various Christian institutions.

My main critique of the book has to do with its scope. It was at times too broad (the *Enuma Elish* and the ordination of women being discussed in the same book) and at other times too narrow. Sparks limits his discussions to critical issues related to the OT. The subtitle of the book, *An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship*, is misleading: there is very little on critical issues from the NT. More on the nature of the gospels, for example, would have been helpful. Also, in a book that is as thorough as his, I would have expected a history of biblical criticism. Sadly, none was given. Another difficulty with the book is its terminology. Sparks seems to use “historical criticism” synonymously with “critical biblical scholarship.”

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of *God's Word in Human Words* is the sensitivity it shows its evangelical audience. The book's evangelical stance and tone make it a non-threatening critique of the ways evangelical scholars have typically viewed critical scholarship. Sparks remarkably walks the fine line of approaching both the text and his readers on their own terms—which is why his work has the potential to be important. This book simultaneously argues for embracing inerrancy and the formative nature of the text while encouraging intellectual honesty with evidence related to biblical criticism.

The book is clearly written and well documented, representing a wealth of resources. Sparks anticipates challenges to his thesis and articulates helpful clarifications. Although at times a bit repetitive, frequent summaries keep the reader aware of the issues at hand. This volume will be a healthy addition to discussions about the nature of Scripture and the role critical scholarship should play in the evangelical faith—both in the academy and in the church.

Its vocabulary and the familiarity it assumes with critical discourse might discourage the undergraduate, although it could prove helpful for advanced students. This book is best suited for the graduate classroom and in this context will be an invaluable conversation partner.

Henderson, TN

MATTHEW EMILE VAUGHAN

Evangelical Disenchantment: Nine Portraits of Faith and Doubt, by DAVID HEMPTON. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 256 pp. \$30.00.

This book is a must read if you know someone who has left the Churches of Christ. Hempton, the Alonzo L. McDonald Family Professor of Evangelical Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School, has crafted a sensitive, portrait of the lives of several prominent evangelicals from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who eventually left evangelicalism, including such diverse folk as George Eliot, Francis W. Newman, Theodore Dwight Weld, Sarah Grimke, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Vincent Van Gogh, and James Baldwin.

What emerges in Hempton's account is a constellation of struggles among these artists, social activists, and public intellectuals as they wrestled with the evolution of their initial attraction to evangelical faith. Hempton writes sensitively of the appeal of and the ultimate exodus from evangelicalism in each case study. While the exiles from Churches of Christ have produced their own literature, and that literature has its own value to be sure, the value of Hempton's study is that he illuminates a broad array of evangelical issues such as the mistreatment of women, complacency in the face of social injustice, the neglect of race, stultifying Victorian morality, and many more that led the subjects to seek greener pastures elsewhere.

The final chapter is a primer on the conditions that breed evangelical disenchantment and exodus. As he puts it, disappointment and frustrated idealism were the seedbeds of much evangelical discontent. This book is not a textbook on how to prevent people from leaving church, yet it is an eerily accurate map of the intellectual terrain traversed by the countless people, including thousands in the Churches of Christ, who have ultimately chosen to move on. It provides much to ponder for those who are charged with the spiritual care of others and for those interested in the emergence of lived religion as a category of historical scholarly work.

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SHAUN CASEY

Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology, by MATTHEW LEVERING. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004. 254 pp. \$42.95.

In "Academic Theology in Pastoral Perspective," Ellen Charry writes that theology needs to reclaim its sapiential vocation, which not only concerns information about God imparted to the believer but also develops the believer's capacity to share in God. Charry bemoans the fact that theology's sapiential vocation was lost beginning with the rise of Scholasticism when thinkers such