

texts under the authority of feminist experience, Ogden argues, "If a feminist interpretation of the Bible is justified, it is so, not only or primarily because the experience and struggle of women demand it, but also and first of all because it is a demand of faith itself" (*Doing Theology Today*, 239). Only if we can show that a feminist interpretation of the Bible is a demand of faith itself do we give this development the support it needs. For these reasons renewal, appropriately conceived and thoroughly carried out, is the best means to achieve the goals that Cobb pursues.

But whether or not we agree with the specifics of his proposal, this slim volume exemplifies the religious scholarship for which John Cobb is well-known. It examines an issue of theological and ethical importance from a perspective that exhibits philosophical sophistication and great personal concern. We must thank him for frankly confronting a pressing need in the church today and helping us to think more carefully about it.

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Crossan, John Dominic, William F. Buckley, William Lane Craig. *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan*. Ed. Paul Copan. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999. 208 pp. Paperback, \$14.99.

Several years ago, a rather extraordinary debate took place at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago between evangelical philosopher-theologian William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan, the cofounder of the Jesus Seminar. It became a rare exchange: a conservative Christian apologist versus a radically liberal revisionist, the face-off moderated by William F. Buckley Jr., who clearly sided with Craig. The topic was the Jesus of history: Was he or was he not the same as the Christ of faith? Are the scriptural reports of his words and deeds to be interpreted literally or metaphorically?

Craig led off with a spirited defense of traditional creedal Christianity, with particular focus on Jesus' resurrection. While stressing the identity of the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, he defended two main contentions:

- I. The real Jesus rose from the dead in confirmation of his radical personal claims to divinity.
- II. If Contention I is false—that is, if Jesus did not rise—then Christianity is a fairy tale which no rational person should believe (25).

Crossan, however, identified "the real Jesus" as the Christ of faith and larger than the historical version, whose written records have been expanded in layers of creative tradition, so that the language of the Gospels must be understood metaphorically or symbolically rather than literally.

Throughout the debate, Crossan, who loves to rattle conservative cages, seemed strangely subdued, dropping none of his trademark bombshells, such as: After the crucifixion, Jesus' body was most likely eaten by dogs. Craig was prepared to take on Crossan's other idiosyncratic notions as well, such as the priority (to the four Gospels) of the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter*. Crossan, however,

failed to surface these, perhaps because no other ranking scholar supports such extreme opinions.

Four responses to the debate are included in this volume. The first, by Robert J. Miller of Midway College in Kentucky, supported Crossan in pointing up the variations in the Gospel accounts of the empty tomb and Matthew's very problematical reference to the resurrection of the saints on Good Friday (Matt. 27:51 ff.). Along with the original ending of Mark's Gospel, this does indeed remain a *crux interpretorum* for conservative NT scholars.

After suggesting overstatements in Craig's presentation, Craig L. Blomberg of Denver Seminary nevertheless supported the biblical record on the resurrection—variations do not prove falsification—and argued that Crossan's "pure fideism" left him with no rational reason to worship the historic Christian Jesus. Rather, the historical evidence on Jesus is crucial in narrowing our necessary leap of faith, which, *contra* Kierkegaard, is never absurd.

Marcus Borg of Oregon State University predictably supported Crossan, his Jesus Seminar colleague, calling the empty tomb "irrelevant" and claiming that the resurrection of Jesus had nothing to do with his corpse. Crossan's metaphorical interpretation of Jesus and the Emmaus disciples, for example, was clearly preferable to Craig's literal rendering. Citing Crossan's aphorism, "Emmaus never happened. Emmaus always happens," Borg also enlarged on Paul's "spiritual body" in 1 Cor 15.

Finally, Ben Witherington III of Asbury Seminary, after sawing some air, provided a conservative interpretation of the Pauline concept, posited a lost ending to Mark's Gospel (rather than its ending at 16:8), and defended the historicity of the first Easter through evangelical arguments, including the criterion of dissimilarity with Jewish expectations and the surprising role of women in the resurrection accounts.

The book concludes with a brief reflection on the debate from its principals. Crossan stated his respect for Craig's literalism over against his metaphorical position, but utter disdain for what he deemed a third group of contemporary theologians who "talk the talk" of metaphor while "walking the walk" of literalism. Always bristling with witty phrases, Crossan concluded: "If Jesus made up parables about God, why can his followers not make up parables about Jesus?"

Craig provided a *much* longer concluding response, pointing up—correctly—that Crossan had answered none of his main contentions about Jesus' resurrection. Having quite obviously done his homework prior to the debate, Craig came armed with a plethora of citations also from other authorities and seemed disappointed that Crossan had unleashed none of his wrongheaded broadsides against traditional Christianity. No fundamentalist, however, Craig agreed, for example, that the Matthean reference to the resurrected saints on Good Friday was less than historical but denied that this impinged on the historicity of the resurrection.

This debate suffered from some predictable problems: there were overstatements on both sides and some talking past each other. Moderator William F. Buckley Jr., admittedly less than impartial, sometimes led the debate into theological cul-de-sacs. The four respondents, moreover, while well chosen, might have had their material benefit from some judicious editorial surgery. But with a topic as central and arresting as this one, who can really blame them for expatiating?

Beyond all debate, editor Paul Copan and Baker Books are to be commended for publishing this dialogue and the attending responses. This was a rare and extraordinary confrontation between the two principal schools of NT interpretation: the conservative versus the liberal, the literalist versus the figurative, the traditional versus the revisionist, the evidentialist versus the fideist. Obviously, there are many more shades of color than this in today's theological spectrum, but these are the principal polarities.

It almost seems as if Crossan and the liberal commentators tried to come halfway in this encounter, while Craig and his defenders conceded very little. Was this generosity on the liberal side? Inflexibility on the part of the conservatives? Or, as some might argue, the testimony of truth?

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Douglass, Herbert E. *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998. 586 pp. Hardcover \$29.95.

Herbert Douglass, lifelong student of the writings of Ellen White, during his professional career taught religion at Pacific Union College and Atlantic Union College, and also served as academic dean and president at the latter before becoming associate editor of the *Adventist Review* and later book editor at Pacific Press. He earned a Th.D. at the Pacific School of Religion and has authored a number of books. His last post before retirement was as president of Weimar College.

In 1955, T. H. Jemison authored the first comprehensive study of the life and work of Ellen G. White, *A Prophet Among You*, and it has served as the standard Seventh-day Adventist college textbook for the last forty-three years. However, an expanded and updated replacement was long overdue, and the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, along with the General Conference Department of Education and the Board of Higher Education of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, asked Douglass to prepare it. The result, *Messenger of the Lord*, is nearly encyclopedic. Douglass organized the forty-seven chapters of the nearly six-hundred-page book into five sections: "God's Communication System," "The Real Ellen White," "Messenger to the Church," "How to Listen to the Messenger," and "Continuing Relevancy of the Messenger."

After presenting an overview of how God has communicated with his messengers throughout history (chaps. 1-3), Douglass intentionally includes nine chapters introducing the reader to Ellen White as a person before dealing with her as a prophet. The information is rich with little-known information and insights, and helps us to see Ellen White as human, vulnerable, and fallible—devoted to her husband and her children while at the same time driven by an urgency to be a faithful "messenger of God."

Over one-third of the book (nearly 240 pages) introduces us to her as that "messenger"—tracing her reception of the messages, their content, and the theological, doctrinal, and organizational impact they had on the developing church. Her influence in molding denominational thinking and action toward health and education receive particular emphasis.

Of especially significant importance—in the light of the recent decades of