

order to make “a theological statement about the conflict between human evil and God” (ibid.). But if one is identified historically, why not the others? Why are they only “theological statements”?

Longman writes with the passion of a pastor and the care of a scholar. While I do not agree with several of his positions (e.g., that the timetables of Dan 8 and 9 “are impossible to penetrate” [178]; or that the prominent horn of chapter 8 refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes [189]), I think that pastors, teachers, and students can benefit from a careful reading of this commentary.

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McClendon, James Wm., Jr., with Nancey Murphy. *Witness: Systematic Theology*, vol. 3. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000. 446 pages. \$30.00.

Christianity is Christ and the church is the people who follow Christ. As this theme came through in the first and second volumes of the late James Wm. McClendon’s astonishing trilogy, it now comes through in the third. Completed just before the author’s death, this work applies the Radical Reformation perspective, which has informed his writing from the beginning, to the theology of culture. It is about the church confronting the world through mission; in a simple word, it is about witness.

In his *Ethics*, written first, McClendon introduced the idea of “prophetic,” or as he more often says, “baptist” (note the small *b*) vision. Thinking of today’s Adventist, Baptist, Brethren, Mennonite and similar church bodies, he argued that for Christians with roots in Anabaptism and the Radical Reformation—what he means by small-*b* “baptist”—the “prophetic vision” is the key to faithful reading of the Bible. In prophetic light, the church today is the early or “primitive” church (1:33), much as the Acts 2 church *was* (Acts 2:16) the community Joel envisioned centuries before. The prophetic church looks for and lives out the plain meaning of the whole biblical story that culminates in New Testament Christianity. At the same time, the prophetic church looks for and lives out the plain meaning of the eschaton. Like the story from the past, the Bible’s vision of the end—of what lasts and what comes last—shapes prophetic thought and practice in the present. As the author says in his summarizing formula, “this is that” and “then is now.” True Christian existence, in other words, reflects today both the past and the future, the first and the final, ideals. And thus true Christian existence—the crucial point—refuses to bend its convictions to the pressures and fashions of the moment.

In his *Doctrines* McClendon turned from how the church may truly *live* to what it may truly *teach*. Again, the story—the whole Bible’s record of what has happened and vision of what will happen—is decisive. Because Jesus bestrides both the story and the vision, true Christian doctrine “begins and ends with the confession *Iesous Kyrios*, Jesus is Lord” (2:64). And as before, the point is that the church may live aright. Doctrine is secondary, a means to faithful practice and to the grand goal of a new “corporate humanity” centered in Jesus Christ (2:33). The paradigmatic Christian scholar is the newly sighted Bartemaues, who in McClendon’s reading of Mark 10 unites in one life both reflection on, and

enlistment in, the cause associated with God's Kingdom. The church must teach what truly assists this cause. And when by intent or oversight it falls short, and the ensuing practice violates the cause, true Christian scholarship renovates its own teaching. Authentic doctrinal study is always self-corrective.

Witness asks how followers of Jesus may bear a faithful witness among those who live by other lights. After Christendom, when even the church's "homelands" are "mission fields," this involves "cross-cultural engagements" (3:19, 21) and requires the church to ask always "where and how" to take its stand among the many peoples and perspectives of the wider world (3:34).

Aside from Scripture itself, McClendon draws primarily from church life before Constantine and from the aforementioned Radical Reformation. As for twentieth-century writers, he attends in particular to the "line of direction" that proceeds from Paul Tillich through the often-overlooked Julian Hartt to John Howard Yoder (3:49). Standing on these broad shoulders, as well as those of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, McClendon argues that true Christian witness means Christ-shaped dialogue with others. The dialogue allows for believer fallibility, acknowledges the barriers thrown up by cultural diversity, and recognizes the priority of practice over mere profession. Still, it proceeds in the confidence that persuasion across convictional lines is possible, even though difficult. And in the course of the dialogical give-and-take, the church finds reason not only to learn about others but also to learn about itself, and to craft again and again a fresh and more faithful telling of its own story. When the dialogue attracts new members and at the same time betters the existing ones, it fulfills what McClendon calls "(non-imperial) mission aimed at conversion" and so carries out the Gospel Commission (3:301).

In all this the aim is ever-wider embodiment of God's will on earth. When the church bears faithful witness, it supplies vision that is otherwise lacking and helps the surrounding culture grasp its own true destiny. Small gains up to now do not annul the larger goal, but invite its more adept pursuit (3:165). And that means Christian involvement in the vision-shaping dimensions of culture. Volume 3 devotes lengthy chapters, therefore, to religion, to science (where Nancey Murphy's coauthorship comes in), to the various arts and (now over three chapters, with a wider purpose) to philosophy. For each of these fields, he tells some part of its own story, then weighs in with "gospel critique" (3:65), now affirming, now disaffirming, intending always to shed Christian hope and light.

From the gospel standpoint, the issue, as McClendon puts it in his reflections on art, is whether "the Great Story" of God in Christ is "answered in earthly story" (3:162). Does a novel or a work of music, a metaphysic or a worship service, see what is plainly visible, yet reach beyond it? Does it acknowledge failure and even horror in human life, yet move past anger to hope? Does it assert or at least imply a trajectory for human renewal? Under gospel light, such questions guide both criticism and participation in the vision-shaping dimensions of human culture.

The volume, like the entire trilogy, defies the conventional expectation that Anabaptist sensibility comes down to irrelevant withdrawal. McClendon acknowledges, of course, the Christian disagreement about how the church should relate to the wider culture. He even suggests that the ongoing "contest" among

Christian groups can enhance the church's overall achievement in the end. But he is steadfast in arguing that the "master story," the biblical narrative with its resurrection climax, determines truly faithful witness. Disciples are like athletes who "follow" the game—track the goings-on, relate them to the outcome, and play better for their "attentive perception." What disciples follow, though, is the master story; when they track these goings-on and live in their light, they witness best to the grand vision of God's will expressed on earth (3:353, 356, 362).

McClendon's systematic theology is the finest contemporary manual for following the story from the Radical Reformation standpoint. Catholic and Protestant readers will find much to challenge them and much, no doubt, to disagree with. But that goes, too, for Adventists, Baptists and others who inherit the radical standpoint. This trilogy, not least its last volume, crackles with jarring, passionately-defended insight, revealing much that denominations with roots in the Radical Reformation have repressed or denied.

Readers will find here an academic style that is at once elegant and compact. The latter necessitates straight-backed attention, and the preface to each (!) of the three volumes urges readers to proceed slowly. Those who refuse will likely fall by the wayside, but those who persist will find insight and inspiration for both theology and theology's point, the faithful practice of the Christian life.

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Moo, Douglas J. *The Letter of James*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xvi + 271 pp. Hardcover, \$28.00.

Douglas Moo's new commentary *The Letter of James* is an outstanding addition to scholarship on this brief but crucial biblical text. Moo, a Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is one of the best younger conservative evangelical scholars and is known for his commentary on Romans in the New International Commentary series and a number of other books.

Moo's work on James is the sixth volume of The Pillar New Testament Commentary series, which is aimed at pastors and teachers. Like other authors of this series, Moo is familiar with the whole range of scholarly debate on the text, but his aim is exegesis and exposition without too much technical detail. It is not the book for those who are primarily interested in what others have said on a verse in question, nor for those who want a word-by-word exegesis of the Greek. D. A. Carson writes in the Series Preface:

The rationale for this approach is that the vision of "objective scholarship" (a vain chimera) may actually be profane. God stands over against us; we do not stand in judgment of him. When God speaks to us through his Word, those who profess to know him must respond in an appropriate way, and that is certainly different from a stance in which the scholar projects an image of autonomous distance. . . . If the text is God's Word, it is appropriate that we respond with reverence, a certain fear, a holy joy, a questing obedience. These values should be reflected in the way Christians write (viii).

Those who disagree will not want to read Moo's volume. Those who agree will