

Sider, Ronald J. *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 253 pp. Paper, \$13.00.

Ronald J. Sider, Professor of Theology and Culture at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, is also the president of Evangelicals for Social Action. In his book *Good News and Good Works* (previously published as *One-Sided Christianity? Uniting the Church to Heal a Lost and Broken World*), he develops a biblical "theology for the whole gospel" that affirms "both personal and social sin, both personal conversion and social salvation, both Jesus as a moral example and Jesus as a victorious substitute, both orthodox theology and ethical obedience" (10).

He argues that a holistic understanding of the Bible is needed to overcome the inadequate and limited concepts that have robbed the church of its potential to be an agent of change and a witness to God in the world.

The book is divided into five parts. The first is entitled "A House Divided," in which the author recounts his own "pilgrimage" and calling to social action (15-25), but then shifts quickly to analyze the current distorted situation in churches today. He suggests that

most churches today are one-sided disasters. In some suburban churches hundreds of people come to Jesus and praise God in brand-new buildings, but they seldom learn that their new faith has anything to do with wrenching, inner-city poverty just a few miles away. In other churches, the members write their senators and lobby the mayor's office, but they understand little about the daily presence of the Holy Spirit, and they would be stunned if someone asked them personally to invite their neighbors to accept Christ (26).

For Sider, churches are dealing with the question of evangelism and social responsibility in four different categories. The first he calls "The Individualistic Evangelical Model" (33-36). In this model, "evangelism is the primary mission of the church" (33). Some believe that the church must challenge racism and work to improve society, but the primary focus of the church is on the salvation of individuals and not social justice (33). Sider contends that this model finds "exclusive attention to inner conversion [as] adequate" (36). Biblical passages concerning social justice are neglected.

The second, the "Radical Anabaptist Model," is where "the primary mission of the church is simply to be the corporate body of believers" (36). This model emphasizes "living as converted individuals and thereby offering society the church as the [only] way to change the world" (37). Evangelism is important, but there is little if any place for political engagement or social expression.

The *Dominant* "Ecumenical Model" (38-44) claims that conversion of individuals and the political structuring of society are both central parts of evangelism and salvation (38). Sider warns that there are groups in this category of churches that would deemphasize sin and salvation, while others would support that "all political action is evangelism" (40).

Finally, Sider analyzes the "Secular Christian Model" (44-45). He contends that in this model "evangelism is merely political and salvation is only social justice" (44). In this model sins are merely offenses between people and within societal structures, but not against God. Conversion, therefore, and evangelism,

are not necessary. The objects of evangelism are social structures, and the "gospel" is shared through social and political "progress." Thanks to the Age of Enlightenment, this model is still with us and abounds in Western secularism.

After analyzing these four models, Sider develops (chaps. 3-8) his fifth model, which he labels the "Incarnational Kingdom Model." He says that this "is the kind of wholistic mission that is both biblical and effective . . . [because it] is fully grounded in . . . biblical study. It also combines the strengths and avoids the weaknesses of the other four models" (158).

To understand Sider's "Incarnational Kingdom Model," we have to review some of his definitions in chapters 3-8. The "kingdom" concept is central here. In the book of Exodus, Moses shows us how God established a kingdom by showing how to worship him, how to do justice, enact fair laws, and maintain strong families. The prophets looked beyond the mere restoration of living in right relationship with God to God's concern for the poor, weak, and marginalized (53).

The kingdom of God was also central in the life of Jesus. For him, it is not only present in his person; it is also a future reality. The Pharisees hoped for a kingdom brought forth by obedience to rules and laws. Revolutionaries during the time of Jesus expected to bring about the kingdom through political revolution and social action. For Jesus, the reality of the kingdom was experienced as a gift by accepting God's forgiveness, which would lead to a restoration of all relationships. The kingdom that Jesus introduced must be a forgiving community, grounded firmly in Jesus' forgiveness at the cross. This kingdom reality becomes visible in the church (57-59) when it is living according to Jesus' preaching. As the church is waiting for God's new world to come, it is not to wait passively, but is to be filled with Christian care for the concerns of this world. This relationship between social action and evangelism was demonstrated by Christ himself when he commissioned his followers to proclaim his kingdom message to the whole world, but also to remind them to care for the poor (chap. 4). However, at the same time Jesus made it clear that the wholeness of the kingdom will become visible only when he returns.

Sider is clear that the world needs the new kingdom community of Jesus and the complete message of forgiveness. But it also needs to hear about the reconciled and reconciling community in which people can find love and nurture. For Sider, "the proper way to distinguish evangelism and social action is in terms of intention. Evangelism is that set of activities whose primary intention is inviting non-Christians to embrace the gospel of the kingdom, to believe in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, and to join his new redeemed community" (163). On the other hand, "social action is that set of activities whose primary goal is improving the physical, socioeconomic, and political well-being of people through relief, development and structural change" (ibid.). But the question for him is, how "can you have Christian social responsibility without having Christians" (165)? The answer is that "biblical evangelism calls on people to repent of sin—all sin, not just some privatized list of personal sins. A biblically faithful evangelist will call on people to repent of involvement in unjust social structures" (173). In this way, wholistic preaching of "the gospel creates new persons whose transformed character and action [will] change the world" (174). A group of such genuinely

converted people will "break through sinful barriers of racism, class prejudice, and oppression [, and] its very existence has a powerful influence on society" (175).

For Sider, the separation between social action and evangelism is not only unbiblical, but also ineffective. Evangelism without social action is empty and implausible; social action without evangelism is shallow because it does not cause true transformation. In essence, "church people think about how to get people into the church, while kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people think about how the world might change the church; while kingdom people work to see that the church changes the world" (75). In the final analysis, Sider's *Incarnational Kingdom Model* suggests that "evangelism and social action are inseparably interrelated. Each leads to the other. They mutually support each other" (180).

Although Sider's suggested model might appear new to some, it is actually an old biblical model. The challenge is not so much for Christians to understand it as to practice it. A "right relationship with God, neighbor and earth" (190) is essential for the success of Sider's model. But what happens if there is no healthy relationship with oneself? This problem is most prevalent among those who have been lied to, marginalized, and kept in systems of poverty. What about those who are living in affluent societies and have material wealth, but who are lonely and "poor"?

Sider's book is an excellent wake-up call for (evangelical) Christians to start living the gospel in their daily lives.

Andrews University

RUDOLF MAIER

Van der Toorn, Karel, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, 2d rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Boston: Brill, 1999. 998 pp. Hardcover, \$120.00.

Eerdmans presents the revised edition of *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* as "the only major work describing the gods, angels, demons, spirits, and semi-divine heroes whose names occur throughout Scripture." First published in 1995, the present work has been expanded to include thirty new articles, while more than 100 articles from the first edition have been updated to reflect current research.

The impressive list of 100 contributors include such international scholars as Hans Dieter Betz (Chicago); Paolo Xella (Rome), Klaas Spronk (Amsterdam), and Wolfgang Röllig, (Tübingen) to name a few. The original impetus for such a work came from Michael Stone (Jerusalem), who desired to create a dictionary that would include all deities and demons of the ANE religions. However, this "ambitious project" was eventually limited to include only those gods and demons specifically mentioned in the Bible (xviii). As a result, major ANE gods are described along with lesser characters. For instance, although the god Euphrates plays a lesser role in ANE culture than does the Babylonian Marduk, both are presented because of their presence in Scripture. Other gods, despite their importance to ANE religions, are not separately listed. However, this imbalance is often corrected through cross-referencing, such as when Anu, the Mesopotamian god of heaven, is discussed under the subtitle "heaven" (xv).

Each article discusses the meaning of the deity's name, its religio-historical background, provides relevant biblical passages, and presents informative