

expose his considerable skill in philosophy, particularly as a sympathetic but searching critic of the Enlightenment.

This book lays a philosophical foundation but then turns to reflection on the doctrine of the atonement. The first part seeks, successfully in my view, to restore the validity of metaphor as a tool of rational discovery from its condemnation to oblivion at the hands of the Enlightenment up to and including Hegel. The main lesson for the theologian is that metaphor, as a primary vehicle of rationality, is an appropriate but indirect mode of exploring reality including God. Armed with that axiom Professor Gunton tackles three great atonement metaphors: battlefield, justice and sacrifice.

The author does much to place the 'battlefield' metaphor in its biblical setting and to appreciate but suitably qualify G. Aulen's celebrated case for the primary place of this idea in atonement theory. Most evangelical readers will be dissatisfied in this section mainly with the author's handling of the nature of the demonic. He sees the biblical language as expressing the helplessness of human agents before psychological, social and cosmic forces. It is doubtful if such an explanation can be squared with the NT account of Christ's ministry whilst still leaving the credibility of Jesus intact. This shortcoming, curiously, does not destroy the many helpful insights in Professor Gunton's sympathetic critique.

On the metaphor of 'justice', we are treated to some fine exposition of Anselm and P.T. Forsyth, but the author is convinced that the Western tradition, though not when at its best, has overdone the legal approach, adopting the central motif of 'demand' in which the human agent is expected to fulfil certain obligations in default of which there must be some penalty. He concedes that in the framework of the OT covenant the matter is not such a problem but does not then seem to take account of the Reformed notion of a more general creation covenant framework for all humanity. As a result the 'punitive' approach to atonement fares unduly badly in the book.

The author surprises us with a defence of the nineteenth-century writer Edward Irving as the chief substance of his chapter on 'sacrifice', but again the thrust of the section is to justify such language despite modern tastes. The book's thesis overall both upholds the value today of these biblical metaphors and curbs their individual influence. Metaphors disclose only part of the truth and do not necessarily integrate though they expound in parallel the same central idea. Many readers will be cautious here and rightly

reluctant to reduce all metaphors to the same level of importance when, in fact, integration is biblically viable around the covenant-law idea.

Perceptive closing chapters on the Trinity and the church round off a book with much to teach and encourage us even if we cannot agree with every assumption.

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From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament (Including a Response to Norman L. Geisler)

Murray J. Harris

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SUMMARY

This book is the fruit of an unfortunate controversy between the author and Dr Norman Geisler, concerning Dr Harris' belief in the physical resurrection of Christ. It is a defence and explanation of the controversy, which seems both strange and sad to outsiders.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre résulte d'une malheureuse polémique entre l'auteur et Norman Geisler, à propos des positions de Harris sur la résurrection physique du Christ. Harris se justifie et expose les enjeux de la controverse; le tout paraît bien étrange et triste aux observateurs extérieurs.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Buch ist das Resultat einer unglücklichen Auseinandersetzung zwischen Norman Geisler und dem Autor und handelt von Harris' Glauben an die leibliche Auferstehung Christi. Es ist eine Darlegung und Verteidigung der Kontroverse, die den Außenstehenden kaum interessiert.

God brings good out of evil – 'c'est son métier'. This book illustrates that happy feature of the divine activity!

I did not realise, before receiving this book for review, that its author has been the victim of one of those tasteless doctrinal witch-hunts for which certain branches of American evangelicalism show a particular *penchant*. Apparently his appointment in 1986 as Professor of New Testament exegesis and theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield,

Illinois, was not greeted with rejoicing by Norman L. Geisler, an influential member of the Evangelical Free Church of America, the parent body of T.E.D.S. Geisler was convinced (a) that Harris believes that Jesus rose from the dead spiritually, and not physically, (b) that T.E.D.S. should therefore not have appointed him, and (c) that a campaign against Harris and his view should be launched in the name of biblical orthodoxy.

Such a campaign seems extraordinarily odd from this side of the Atlantic. Just before his appointment to Trinity, while still working in Britain as Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, Murray Harris had done British evangelicalism a noted service by very competently *opposing* the view that Jesus rose from the dead merely spiritually, and not also physically. This is, of course, the view of David Jenkins, the Anglican Bishop of Durham, who caused a stir among the British churches in 1984 by propounding this view loudly and publicly. At that time, Murray Harris engaged in television debate with the Bishop, and subsequently published *Easter in Durham* (Paternoster, 1985), in which he subjected the Bishop's views to minute criticism and argued powerfully for the *physical* resurrection of Christ.

Geisler, however, is clearly blessed with the cast of mind illustrated by the wife who protested to her long-suffering husband, 'I know I'm right, dear – and no mere fact will persuade me otherwise!' Although Harris' appointment by Trinity and his views on the resurrection have been overwhelmingly approved by the responsible body, the Conference of the Evangelical Free Church of America, Geisler has continued to publish articles critical of Harris and even a book entitled *Battle for the Resurrection* (Nashville; Nelson, 1989) which is particularly directed at him.

Having maintained a dignified silence for four years, this book is Harris's response. It falls into two parts: the second (pp. 335-458) is his specific reply to Geisler, and picks up (and to some extent repeats) the first part, which is a comprehensive and masterly study of 'Resurrection in the New Testament'.

The second part is sad reading – and rather puzzling to Christians outside the culture of this particular strand of American evangelicalism. Step by step Harris describes the controversy, shows that Geisler has never had any ground for his suspicions and accusations, and irenically emphasises their common ground.

The first part, however, while motivated by the need to respond to Geisler, does not refer to

the controversy and stands on its own as a most helpful discussion of the subject. It is in effect a popularisation and re-treatment of the material to which he devoted his earlier books, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (1983), two or three statements in which prompted Geisler's opposition.

Harris is first and foremost an exegete, determined to let the Scriptures speak for themselves without preconditions or the imposition of a supposed orthodoxy to which they must conform. The first effect of this approach is a recognition of the sheer complexity of the questions raised by the New Testament evidence – in particular about the nature of the resurrection body of Christ, which appears to be both material and non-material. Murray Harris defends the view that 'in his resurrected state Jesus possessed a "spiritual body" which could be expressed in an immaterial or a material mode' (p. 142) – or, as he puts it later, 'His body was customarily "immaterial" or "nonfleshly" but was capable of temporary materialization' (p. 375). In line with this he interprets the Ascension as the visible, earthly signal of the heavenly life which Jesus already had by virtue of the resurrection.

He recognises that there are other evangelical interpretations of the NT evidence, but insists that both his view and the alternatives are equally containable within 'orthodoxy'. He is surely right – although Geisler's view, to be frank, seems further from the centre of orthodoxy than Harris's. Geisler, apparently, believes that the resurrection simply restored Jesus to earthly existence in precisely the same body, so that in the period before the Ascension he did not 'appear' to his disciples from heaven, but simply *met* them from time to time. In the history of interpretation here, this must be one of the odder options.

Harris's defence of his view is set within a wide-ranging treatment in which he describes views of resurrection and immortality in Egyptian, Greek and Jewish cultures (including a very useful discussion of the relevant OT texts), contrasts these with the distinctive features of the New Testament perspective, discusses other biblical 'raisings', defends in details the historicity of the resurrection of Christ and the reliability of the resurrection accounts, debates the connection between the resurrection of Christ and that of believers, points up the differences between resurrection and immortality, and then focuses on the nature of the resurrection body and related issues. He discusses the 'intermediate state', the resurrection to judgment and the issue of

annihilationism (which he rejects). The care of his analysis and the comprehensiveness of the treatment is impeccable – and throughout the style is relaxed and the tone is warm and reverent.

The book is very fully indexed and contains an Appendix, on 'terms denoting resurrection in the NT'. It is furnished with a foreword by Walter Kaiser, the Academic Dean of Trinity, in which he emphasises that 'orthodoxy' must contain varieties of interpretation, while the 'unity of the faith' (Eph. 4:13) is still future.

It is a shame that such a book should be occasioned by a one-man witch-hunt. But Murray

Harris' response does far more than merely vindicate himself against Norman Geisler's criticisms. It provides the church with a notable discussion of the subject which should become a resource for students and pastors for many years. God does turn our silliness into his wisdom. Perhaps when further editions are contemplated (as surely they must) it will be possible to publish Part One freed from the sad encumbrance of the 'Response to Norman L. Geisler'.

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