

land/city in Hebrews 11; the object of his search was not Canaan, but New Creation, New Jerusalem and eschatological rest. On this reading, Justin's comments (*Trypho*, 113.3-4) may be a sound reading of the New Testament. A focus on Jewish inheritance of Canaan could distract from the New Testament's explicit interest in Abraham's one family inheriting the world.

Although I am not persuaded (at present) by Willitt's thesis, the critical attention given here is not intended as a dismissal of his thesis, but to indicate its importance for a number of both well-known and neglected themes, and to invite further reflection by Willitts and others. There is a fair bit of sound judgment in this work, and one hopes that Willitts turns his attention and scholar's intuition toward such topics again. I myself will certainly turn to this thesis again, which would be a worthwhile addition to any library concerned with Matthew, Messianism, geographic and territorial concerns in early Judaism and Christianity, and early Christian mission.

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The Question of Providence

Charles M. Wood

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008, v + 120pp.,

£10.99, pb, ISBN-13: 978-0-664-23255-9

SUMMARY

Charles Wood's book has been written with the author's understanding that the traditional doctrine of providence has not only 'fallen on hard times' but has become irrelevant for a majority of Christians in the Western world. This short work (116 pages) seeks to address why this may be the case. Wood looks again at certain features of the traditional understanding of providence in assessing their accuracy and helpfulness and offers some suggestions which he hopes will re-shape our thinking on the doctrine. His objective in this process is to offer a fresh understanding of what it means for God to work within the world in a way which complements the gospel message and is Trinitarian in nature.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Charles Woods Buch wurde in der Überzeugung des Autors geschrieben, dass die traditionelle Lehre von der „Fürsorge“ Gottes nicht nur „schwere Zeiten erlebt“, sondern für die Mehrheit der Christen in der westlichen Welt irrelevant geworden ist. Die kurze Arbeit (116 Seiten) widmet sich der Frage, warum das wohl der Fall ist. Woods schaut sich zum wiederholten Male bestimmte Merkmale des traditionellen Verständnisses von der Fürsorge Gottes an. Er bewertet die Richtigkeit dieses Verständnisses, fragt, wie hilfreich es ist und bietet einige Vorschläge, von denen er sich eine Neugestaltung unseres Denkens über diese Lehre erhofft. Sein Ziel in diesem Prozess besteht darin, ein frisches Verständnis von dem anzubieten, was es für Gott

bedeutet, innerhalb der Welt auf eine Weise zu wirken, die die Botschaft des Evangeliums ergänzt und von ihrem Wesen her trinitarisch ist.

RÉSUMÉ

Charles Wood aborde le sujet de la providence divine avec l'idée que la doctrine traditionnelle de la providence, non seulement « n'a plus trop la cote », mais a perdu toute pertinence pour une majorité de Chrétiens occidentaux. Dans ce petit ouvrage (116 pages), il réfléchit sur les raisons de cet état de choses. Il reconsidère certains éléments de la doctrine traditionnelle pour en évaluer la justesse et l'apport positif et il offre quelques suggestions dans l'espoir de remodeler notre approche de la doctrine. Il vise à renouveler la compréhension de l'œuvre divine en ce monde d'une manière qui enrichisse le message de l'Évangile en prenant en compte la nature trinitaire de Dieu.

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Charles Wood's overall aim in his short book is to 'contribute to the renewal of reflection on the Christian doctrine of providence' (xii), and he proceeds to do this in a two-fold manner. Firstly, he looks at how this doctrine has historically been expressed. Secondly, he is 'proposing a reorientation of the doctrine around the central Trinitarian and christological commitments of Christian faith and indicating what such a reorientation may involve' (xii), as he is not satisfied with the traditional understanding of the doctrine.

Wood questions whether the historical understanding of providence as expressed in such documents as the Heidelberg Catechism is necessarily the correct Christian view. In answering this question he includes a brief discussion of what doctrine, teaching, faith and confession consist and what particularly makes a Christian doctrine 'Christian'. His key point is it is legitimate and necessary to question whether or not historical Christian doctrine is actually Christian. Wood says, 'The basic affirmations of the Heidelberg Catechism regarding God's providence remain embedded deep within the understanding of a great many Christians. At the same time, fundamental questions have, for many of those same Christians, rendered those affirmations so problematic as to leave them nearly useless' (20). Therefore there is scope to critique the traditional understanding of providence.

Wood proceeds to examine William Sherlock's *A Discourse Concerning the Divine Providence* (1694, Sherlock was an Arminian Anglican) with the aim of providing a clear understanding of the traditional view of providence, and includes a helpful discussion on the use of the term 'providence.' This chapter was for me the strongest of the five chapters because it engaged at the greatest depth with the doctrine of providence. In the final two chapters Wood begins by identifying his position with Barth's critique of the doctrine of providence (76), that historically this doctrine has been lacking what would make it most Christian – a Christological and Trinitarian understanding. Wood believes that the traditional doc-

trine of providence appears as if God is manipulating everything to fulfil his divine plan but this view would be transformed if viewed within a Trinitarian framework, and more precisely, 'Trinitarian talk about God's ordering of creaturely affairs must take its bearings decisively from what is disclosed of God's manner of working in Jesus Christ' (89).

I thought the book suffered from two major weaknesses. Firstly, Wood does not engage to any great extent with the biblical texts that have provided the backbone for the traditional doctrine of providence to be held by so many for so long. Secondly, his choices of works to engage with were quite obscure. Aside from Sherlock's work as a representative of the traditional doctrine, these are the Calhoun Commission, a study of the Federal Counsel of the Churches of Christ in America entitled '*The Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith*,' and the ideas of the non-Christian American poet Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962). Wood suggests the Calhoun Report to be 'the most valuable brief articulation of the Christian doctrine of providence produced during the past century' (94), even though on the next page he adds, 'The word "providence" appears only rarely in the document... The traditional terminology of the doctrine is likewise scarce, but the substance is unmistakable' (95).

In summary, the author is clearly dissatisfied with the traditional doctrine of providence. In such a brief work however, the fresh proposals he brings for discussion, fail to provide, in my view, convincing enough arguments to reject the traditional doctrine of providence. However, the book is welcomed as an attempt to examine the best way to express how God is said to act in and with the world.

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***Participatory Biblical Exegesis:
A Theology of Biblical Interpretation***

Matthew Levering

Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2008, ix + 302.

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SUMMARY

We do not read the bible like we used to read it and this, according to Matthew Levering, is not necessarily a good thing. Something has been lost in the way we do exegesis and Levering argues that our exegetical practice has suffered under the strain of a faulty and unbiblical understanding of reality. Levering offers a helpful approach to exegesis without becoming bogged down in overly-complicated hermeneutical theory.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wir lesen die Bibel nicht mehr so, wie wir es gewohnt waren, und das ist laut Matthew Levering nicht notwen-

digerweise eine gute Sache. In der Art und Weise, wie wir Exegese betreiben, ist etwas verloren gegangen, und in *Participatory Biblical Exegesis* argumentiert Levering, dass unsere exegetische Praxis unter der Belastung eines fehlerhaften und unbiblischen Verständnisses der Wirklichkeit gelitten hat. Levering bietet einen hilfreichen exegetischen Ansatz an, ohne sich in einer überkomplizierten hermeneutischen Theorie zu verzetteln.

RÉSUMÉ

Nous ne lisons plus la Bible comme on la lisait autrefois et, aux yeux de Matthew Levering, ce n'est pas nécessairement heureux. Nous avons perdu quelque chose par notre manière de faire de l'exégèse et notre pratique exégétique souffre à ses yeux d'une compréhension de la réalité erronée et contraire à la Bible. Il propose de façon salutaire une autre approche de l'exégèse, sans se perdre dans des théories herméneutiques trop compliquées.

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We don't read the bible like we used to read it and this, according to Matthew Levering, is not necessarily a good thing. Something has been lost in the way we do exegesis and, in *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, Levering argues that our exegetical practice has suffered under the strain of a faulty and unbiblical understanding of reality.

As the argument runs, exegesis today is almost entirely informed by a linear-historical perspective that views reality as a sequence of moments unrelated to God's reality. The consequence of such for Scripture is a view that regards the biblical text and its interpretation as ends in themselves and thus closed off from hearing the voice of God or referring to realities beyond the text. Levering grants that while moment follows moment in succession, these moments are not atomistic, 'but rather constitute an organic web of interrelation' (p. 1). This is so, he argues, because 'the intimate "vertical" presence of the Trinity's creative and redemptive action suffuses the "linear" or "horizontal" succession of moments' (p. 1). This appeal to doing exegesis under the governance of the divine economy is not, however, something new but is in fact a call to return to a patristic-medieval model of interpretation that sees the text as more than simply a product of natural processes.

The harvest of findings gathered in from literary and linguistic studies, from archaeology, philology, the study of origins and so forth is found to replace those participatory tools that include doctrines and practices. These participatory tools had been commonplace throughout church history and, for Levering, it is not simply a matter of making use of one set over the other, but rather both sets of tools are required to enter fully into the realities taught in the biblical text.

In the second chapter Levering traces the gradual decline of a participatory model by examining the exegetical practice of ten prominent Catholic interpreters and their treatment of John 3. 27-36, ranging from the thought of Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) to 'the full-