

One of the most valuable chapters in *The Disappointed* is "Millerism and Madness." Up to the present, the historiographical debate on the topic has centered on Sears' derogatory book on the one side, and Francis D. Nichol's apologetic *Midnight Cry* (1944) on the other side. Seeking a better understanding of the topic, the essay addressed the question of "Why did so many contemporaries, including some Millerites, believe that Millerism caused insanity?" (p. 94). The ensuing discussion provides an excellent background perspective on religious enthusiasm as it related to religion in general. Such a perspective should be helpful in enabling modern students to evaluate the seemingly extreme statements of nineteenth-century commentators on those things that could lead to madness—statements that are difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend in a more secular culture. The essay's conclusions, while buttressing the belief that "Millerites seem to have been no more prone to mental illness than their neighbors," also brought some needed correctives to that orientation as expressed by Nichol. The authors found that the movement did attract "some marginally and poorly functioning persons to its fringes, Americans who might have gravitated toward any religious fad" (p. 105).

Butler's article, which traces the evolution of Millerism's single-minded otherworldliness into established Seventh-day Adventism, is both insightful and readable. Being highly interpretive, however, a reader is left with the conviction that his interpretation is not the only explanation for much that he is seeking to explicate. The sociological explanations he utilized provide one possible mode of coming to grips with a phenomenon; they should not be confused with a full understanding. It is easy for scholars to confound *a priori* methodological assumptions with the truth of history. While Butler's explanations are often helpful, the present reviewer is left with the uneasy feeling that a one-sided sociological explanation of the development of Millerism into Seventh-day Adventism may not be much more helpful than a one-sided "religious" explanation.

The Disappointed is a major contribution to the study of Millerism. Unlike many books growing out of conference presentations, all of its chapters are well written and make significant contributions to an understanding of the field. The book will undoubtedly set much of the agenda for Millerite studies in the foreseeable future.

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Poythress, Vern S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987. 137 pp. Paperback, \$7.95.

Vern S. Poythress, himself a covenant theologian, has written an insightful and helpful introduction to the understanding of the theological tensions between dispensational and traditional Protestant theologians.

Instead of the usual attack mentality, Poythress attempts to analyze the essential theological differences: "We will be trying to understand other people, not just make up our minds" (p. 8). His approach is to survey some of the past and present forms of dispensationalism (chaps. 2-3) and to compare modified dispensationalism with modern modified covenant theology (chap. 4). He then suggests a strategy for dialogue (chap. 6). His challenge to the dispensationalists is: "Make a good case for the long history of the idea that Israel and the church have parallel-but-separate roles and destinies, if such a case can be made" (p. 11). He proposes that the term "dispensationalism" is, properly speaking, "an inaccurate and confusing label" and might better be replaced by the term "Darbyism" or "dual destinationism" (p. 12). In addition, he observes that many contemporary dispensationalist scholars have "now modified considerably" the classic form of dispensational theology, as defended by Darby, Scofield, Feinberg, Pentecost, Ryrie, and Walvoord. The continuity exists basically only in the theory that national Israel is still expected to enjoy the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises of the land in the millennial period (p. 12).

Poythress points out that the relation of OT prophecy to the church is a key point in the dispute (p. 29). He notices that Scofield dispensationalism often postulates "two levels of meaning to a single passage," as in Joel 2:28 and Matt 5:2, and tries to preserve the hermeneutic of absolute literalism by calling the fulfillments of OT prophecy in the church mere "applications" or "illustrations," while reserving the term "actual fulfillments" for "Israel" as the Jewish nation (pp. 28-29). With regard to Christ's Sermon on the Mount, he distinguishes between "hardline" dispensationalists (who refuse to apply it to Christians) and "applicatory" dispensationalists (who regularly make applications of it to Christians). He concludes from this: "Applicatory dispensationalists should recognize that some nondispensationalists are closer to them in their practical use of the Bible than are the hardline dispensationalists" (p. 33). Poythress's basic norm for evaluating dispensationalism is Rom 5:12-21. That passage "excludes in principle the idea of two parallel peoples of God, because the corporate unity of the people of God derives from their common representative Head" (p. 43).

He discusses the complexity of defining unambiguously the concept of "literal interpretation" (chap. 8). The term "grammatical-historical interpretation," he insists, is much less ambiguous (p. 86). On the other hand, he cogently reasons that more than a grammatical-historical interpretation is needed to do justice to OT prophecy (chap. 11). Grammatical-historical interpretation "shows how prophecy also has an organically unified relation to New Testament believers. Typological relations cannot merely be dismissed as a secondary application" (p. 115). His major challenge to the dispensationalists, consequently, is "to be willing to enrich the results of

grammatical-historical interpretation with insights that derive only from considering earlier and later Scriptures together" (p. 116), especially within OT prophetic passages.

Chap. 12 is especially valuable since it deals with Heb 12:22-24 as one of the crucial, yet often neglected, passages in the discussion with dispensationalism. The author shows that the option of either "application" or "fulfillment" in the church cannot be sustained in Heb 12, although the glorious apocalyptic fulfillment is still future. All believers will enjoy one common destiny.

Reasoning from salvation through justification by faith in Christ, Poythress concludes that "one cannot now contemplate splitting apart the new humanity that is under one head, under Christ," in the coming millennium (p. 129). Also Rev 21:1-22:5 does integrate heaven and earth as the one destiny for the united people of God in all dispensations.

A helpful bibliography (pp. 133-137) is added at the close of the book for further study. It was a joyful surprise to discover that a conservative Protestant Bible scholar arrived independently at basically the same evaluation and conclusions as the present reviewer had described earlier in *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Andrews University Monographs Studies in Religion, vol. 13 [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983]).

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Ross, Allen P. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988. 744 pp. \$29.95.

Among the numerous works on Genesis, this book is unique. It is not a new commentary, theological essay, or methodological introduction. It does not convey new information nor bring out new insights. It is essentially the pedagogic concern of the author that makes this book different.

Of the four parts of the book, the first is an introduction to the author's method and the book of Genesis itself. Various methodological approaches (literary-analytical, form-critical, traditio-historical, rhetorical) are discussed. Their strengths, weaknesses, and specific contributions are pointed out. Then, against this background and in dialogue with these approaches, the author defines his own. On the "delimited text," the author proposes a "close-reading" approach which would take into consideration the philological, grammatical, syntactical, and literary data without ignoring critical matters. This step-by-step analysis is designed to ultimately produce an exegetical and theological synthesis which can serve as the basis of the homiletic exposition.