

its pronounced dualism and eschatological vision. Crawford speculates that in this tradition an emphasis on written Scripture, to the exclusion of oral tradition, led to an ongoing need to perfect, clarify, and expand the Scriptures as seen in the documents under study, while claiming for these works divine inspiration as part of an unbroken chain of authoritative exegesis stretching back to antediluvian times.

*Rewriting Scripture* is a pleasure to read, with a straightforward and clear presentation of the argument in each chapter and footnotes that explain its technical aspects. At each step sizeable passages are reproduced from the scrolls themselves to allow the reader to evaluate the argument rather than depend only on the author's summaries of the literature. Crawford's thesis, that these texts were accepted as authoritative, is hampered however by the lack of clarity as to what it means to be authoritative and the range of ways that a text can be treated as such. Yet, whatever one thinks about her theory of priestly-levitical interpretation and written text at Qumran, her examination of the rewritten Scripture texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls is valuable and thought-provoking.

Andrews University

TERESA REEVE

D'Elia, John A. *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 271 pp. Hardcover, \$36.00.

John A. D'Elia presents a fascinating and poignant biography of George Eldon Ladd, who has been ranked as the most widely influential conservative evangelical NT scholar of the twentieth century. Ladd first introduced the notion of the kingdom of God as having both present (already) and future (not yet) aspects. He is also considered the most prominent supporter of historic premillennialism and did not believe in a pretribulational secret rapture, even though he grew up under the influence of dispensationalism, the dominant theological system in conservative evangelicalism during his early life. His *A Theology of the New Testament* is considered near or equal in significance to John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

In chapter 1, D'Elia traces Ladd's family background, his early life, conversion, and academic preparation. Ladd is depicted as a joyless, troubled man who had a cold relationship with his father and who was envious of his younger brother, a bright, handsome, athletic young man favored by their father. D'Elia unflinchingly but sympathetically describes how Ladd's unhappy childhood negatively affected his later life, especially his marriage and family relationships. After his conversion experience, brought about by a sermon by Cora Regina Cash, Ladd decided to devote himself to God's business. The financial difficulties he had in his youth were deeply connected to "his inferiority, obsession with status, and his desperate need to be heard" (4). He married and had two children, but could not have a happy family. Rather he immersed himself in his studies, which led to alienation from his wife and children. After studying for his first degree at Gordon College (today

known as Gordon-Conwell) and serving several Baptist churches in New England, Ladd earned a Ph.D. from Harvard University. Though his doctoral studies were under the supervision of Henry J. Cadbury, a liberal advisor, Ladd retained his evangelical faith and sought to create a scholarly work from a conservative evangelical perspective that even liberal critics would have to appreciate. This period of time prepared Ladd for the rest of his life and his contributions to the academic world.

In chapter 2, D'Elia describes Ladd's first five years at Fuller Seminary and the development of his research strategy to confront dispensational theology, the predominant conservative view of the day. As a part of his strategy, he began a conversation on *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* with John Walwood, a spokesman of dispensationalism who had "a defensiveness toward the potential impact of Ladd's work" (49). Ladd also participated in several collaborative projects with colleagues at Fuller Seminary in which he played a leadership role, but most of them ended without blossoming. In the meantime, Ladd found himself settled as a scholar-teacher at Fuller Seminary. In spite of his personal achievements at Fuller and in the academic world, Ladd's family suffered tremendously from relocation and barely functioned.

In chapter 3, Ladd is depicted as an established leader in the progressive evangelical movement to gain recognition from the broader theological world for conservative evangelical scholarship. He knew the weaknesses in evangelical scholarship and wanted to improve its content and image through engagements with the broader academic world. He also challenged the dispensational concept of the pretribulation rapture, arguing for liberty in eschatological interpretation and published *The Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture*, thereby affirming posttribulation, premillennial faith. He now found himself "as a leading evangelical scholar, at least among evangelicals" (73). During this period of time, Ladd had to face many family-related issues such as his estranged relationship with his wife, his son's worsening disease, his daughter's hatred of him because of his lack of affection toward his son, his mother's death, and the loss of his hearing. With these personal problems related to his family and pressures from his pursuit for achievements in the academic world, Ladd began to drink heavily; it became worse during his stay in Germany. His physical and moral/ethical condition also deteriorated.

In spite of the seriousness of Ladd's personal issues, his sabbatical stay in Germany made him turn his attention back to his strategy to contribute to broader theological scholarship. He now began to submit his "articles to major journals outside the conservative evangelical world" (86). His expanded focus is found in *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, in which he mainly employed European critical scholarship. In this book he showed the implicit challenges against the dispensational understanding of the doctrine of the kingdom.

In chapter 4, D'Elia shows that Ladd's great turning point from his focus on American evangelical issues to issues in continental theology came as a result of his sabbatical studies in Germany. He began to communicate with Rudolf Bultmann on the issue of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. Through this dialogue, he broadened his strategy to participate in theological debates

beyond his own conservative evangelical sphere, becoming “an important interpreter of Bultmann’s work to the evangelical audience” (98). In spite of Ladd’s progress in academic achievement, his personal life grew worse. His drinking problem prevented him from socializing and “the relationships closest to him were failing, but he could still—in his eyes—prove his worth by creating quality scholarship” (94).

In chapter 5, D’Elia traces what happened when Ladd finished his magnum opus, *Jesus and the Kingdom*. Ladd spent more than a decade in producing *Jesus and the Kingdom* and expected to have positive scholarly recognition from outside the evangelical world. Instead, he received bitter criticisms from scholars such as Walvoord and British theologian Norman Perrin; unfortunately, he took no note of more positive reviews. Perrin’s harsh and cruel review of *Jesus and the Kingdom* especially drove Ladd into humiliation, painful frustration, and alcohol abuse. He would not be consoled by his friends, colleagues, or family. He considered his life and work to be a failure. Then he abandoned his so-called “fool’s dream” (145), which had hoped for “an intelligent conservative theology to gain a respectful hearing” (149).

In chapter 6, D’Elia draws the final stage of Ladd’s life. Ladd continued drinking uncontrollably and in despair considered himself a loser who failed in his mission to have evangelicalism recognized in the wider academic world. Ladd’s reputation as a recognized scholar was in peril when his private struggles became known to the public. Nevertheless, he maintained his reputation by publishing *A Theology of the New Testament*. Even though he was widely recognized as a great biblical scholar in conservative evangelicalism at his retirement, his alcoholism caused his suspension for a year from Fuller Theological Seminary. After his wife’s death, Ladd had a stroke and spent the last two years of his life in a nursing home, where he died in 1982.

In conclusion, D’Elia evaluates Ladd’s life and achievements, noting that “George Ladd remains a pivotal figure in the postwar evangelical resurgence in America, and its most important biblical scholar” (176). He insists that Ladd “set a standard that later evangelical scholars would have to reach or exceed if their work was to find acceptance in the broader academy” (182).

D’Elia highlights Ladd as a champion of the concept of the Kingdom of God, but as a person who could not enjoy the blessings of it in his own life. Ladd never truly understood this. He played an important role in opening doors for a number of evangelical scholars actively participating in academic life beyond their own borders. It is worth noting that Ladd’s best works were produced when he was suffering the most heartbreaking torments in his life.

*A Place at the Table* is not an ordinary biographical sketch, but a composite of Ladd’s life and a critical analysis of the theological issues of the time. Thus those who read this book will have a clearer picture of the current theological perspectives of the time. D’Elia did an excellent work of presenting Ladd’s legacy of intellectual and spiritual benefits. I recommend this book without hesitation to those who wish to see how God makes good things come out of human weakness.