Book Notes

Diarmaid MacCulloch. *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. New York: Penguin Books, 2009. 1184 pp., with index and "Further Reading" bibliography. $45.00 (hardcover), $25.00 (paperback).

MacCulloch's *Christianity*[1] is "emphatically a personal view of the sweep of Christian history" (p. 11). It is also remarkably rich in detail and is polished and urbane. This wonderful book might serve as a kind of handbook for Latter-day Saints interested in the details on Christian peoples and events. There is no pretense of detached neutrality in *Christianity*. Instead, MacCulloch recognizes that a reader "has a right to know" (p. 11) how an author understands his endeavor. In a candid introduction (pp. 1–15), MacCulloch indicates that, coming from a devout Anglican family, he can even now remember "with affection what it was like to hold a dogmatic position on the statements of Christian belief" (p. 11). He is, however, now puzzled at "how something so apparently crazy [as the Christian faith] can be so captivating to millions" of people (p. 11). He now sees himself merely "as a candid friend of Christianity" (p. 11).

The author does not make direct pronouncements about the truth of Christianity even though he admits that, unlike Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which might be "true" in some ordinary prosaic sense, "Christianity's claim to truth is absolutely central to it over much of the past two thousand years, and much of this history is dedicated to tracing the varieties of this claim and the competition between them" (p. 11). He feels that one trained to write history simply cannot address the question of the soundness of the crucial founding truth claims. But even his denial that historians can assess the

1. A six-part BBC series entitled *A History of Christianity* is based on this book and is narrated by MacCulloch. It aired in 2009 and 2010.

founding truth claims is a subtle way of denying that, for example, the story of the empty tomb in Jerusalem is true, since it and other elements of the founding story are profoundly historical. To claim that the truth of such stories cannot be addressed brushes them aside as something other than genuine history.

MacCulloch thus sees every version of Christian faith as a chimera—a glorious, charming, or hideous delusion with which people have consoled or perhaps tormented both themselves and others. Yet he also insists that some of the stories he tells are really moving (p. 5). This explains why he hints that he is apophatic—that is, that the truth about divine things can only be set out in negations. This is not a fatal flaw. A careful reader can easily sense his position and also enjoy his irenic style. In addition, he has surveyed an enormous mass of secondary literature upon which his account is made to rest. His way of portraying the Christian past can assist those more partisan and hence concerned with defending their version of Christian faith to see how others less certain or even quite uncertain can tell the plethora of often- convoluted and tragic stories.

The book addresses the question of where Christianity really began. Was it in Athens and not Jerusalem? Or was it in Constantinople, or later in Rome? And how and why were the creeds and confessions created? In addition, he provides rather detailed accounts of the often-ignored Christian communities in Africa, India, China, the Americas, and the South Pacific. MacCulloch even begins his narrative by tracing some of the background of Christian faith in Jewish and Greek history and culture (pp. 19-73). (This explains the strange subtitle for his book—"The First Three Thousand Years.")

MacCulloch sets out what he sees "as the good in the varied forms of Christian faith, while pointing clearly to what . . . is foolish and dangerous in them" (pp. 12-13). To accomplish this task, he draws upon his professional training in an effort to discipline his "strong feelings of both affection and anger towards [his] own [Anglican] inheritance" (p. 12). He admits that "it is always difficult to stand inside a religion and view it objectively; worse still to judge what is 'true' about a package of ideas which has shaped one's own identity. Those who try are liable to be unpopular with their fellow believers and equally open to ridicule from those who have no sympathy with the belief-package and feel that the effort is not worthwhile." He also insists that "religious belief can be very close to madness. It has brought human beings to acts of criminal folly as well as to the highest achievements of goodness, creativity and generosity" (p. 13). He is, however, far too restricted in his notion of what constitutes "religion." If we understand that vague label in an expansive way—as the deepest, controlling concerns of individuals and groups, including even or especially those who no longer stand inside some circle of Christian faith—then the National Socialist and Communist regimes, as well as other equally demonic movements (many of which are overtly atheist in ideology), most certainly should be included in his anathema against the madness of religion. This is not, however, to discount the fact that at least from the age of Constantine, Christian faith has been deeply embroiled in execrable acts of "criminal folly," often involving worldly power politics and ideologies. Be that as it may, the vice of faith, which presumably no longer afflicts him, is, he thinks, having answers to questions (p. 2), or perhaps having what he considers the wrong answer

to a crucial question. At some point MacCulloch refused Anglican ordination, a stance that seems to be deeply enmeshed in a sophisticated and "faithful" form of unfaith, though he is not the village atheist since he recognizes that, despite his own situation, much good flows from faith in the Christian God. And one of the tasks he sets himself is awarding blue ribbons where he thinks they are merited.

MacCulloch traces the links between ancient Greek philosophy/classical theism and creedal Christianity. There is, of course, a controversy over whether these two sources of "wisdom" are compatible, and if so, on whose terms and to what degree. Jews, who had long faced misfortune, retained faith in a God concerned about their responses to the covenant they made with him. They also believed God to be concerned with all human beings. Greek philosophers, on the other hand, had in mind a quite different God—a supreme being or First Thing whose reality could be discovered by human reason, and hence also a being "immune to change and devoid of the passion which denotes change" (p. 2). Though MacCulloch does not use the label, what he describes is the complicated confrontation of what others have called the wisdom of Jerusalem with the wisdom of Athens. The subsequent quarrels over, for example, the details of the Trinity indicate to MacCulloch that, for the first five centuries, Christianity was "in many respects a dialogue between Judaism and Graeco-Roman philosophy" (p. 8). Hence much of Christianity is not grounded in scripture but was born, instead, of traditions reaching back to pagan sources.

Varieties of Christian faith have been able, it seems, to survive and flourish in part because what was believed was adapted or compromised or somehow just mutated. There is no such thing as that which has always been believed everywhere by every Christian. MacCulloch stresses the variety of beliefs and practices and also how little any of the competing faith traditions have their roots in the Bible, despite what the Reformers and their various followers claim (pp. 8–9). For example, he calls attention to "one of the most numerically successful movements of modern Christianity, Pentecostalism" (p. 6), and notes that it seems to prosper despite the fact that it embraces "speaking in tongues, which was severely mistrusted by Paul of Tarsus and which (despite the understandable claims of Pentecostals to the contrary) has very little precedent in Christian practice between the first and the nineteenth centuries CE" (p. 6).

MacCulloch stresses what he believes are absurdities, crimes, excesses, contradictions, and endless quarrels that tend to constitute the stories of Christian faith. Christianity in all its many forms is thus heavily integrated with politics, cultures, economics, migrations, diseases, and almost everything in addition to some version of the teachings of Jesus. The Crusades and the Roman and Spanish inquisitions were not unique but were major manifestations of a tendency among believers whose passions had run wild. MacCulloch addresses the propensity of peoples through the ages to use the sword to settle even minor issues in Christian theology. An example can be found in his summary of the events that took place with Constantine and what is called "the Imperial Church":

> The emperors were deeply involved not so much because of their own religious convictions . . . , but because so many other people cared so much about the issues. Naturally clergy were passionately involved, and it is difficult to disentangle

> their righteous longing to assert the truth from their consciousness that the clerical immunities and privileges granted Christian clergy by Constantine and his successors were only available to those who had succeeded in convincing the emperors that they were the authentic voice of imperial Christianity. The play of forces was in more than one direction: emperors had no choice but to steer the Church to preserve their own rule, while few in the Church seem to have perceived the moral dangers involved when mobs took up theology and armies marched in the name of the Christian God. It may seem baffling now that such apparently rarefied disputes could have aroused the sort of passion now largely confined to the aftermath of a football match. Yet quite apart from the propensity of human beings to become irrationally tribal about the most obscure matters, we need to remember that ordinary Christians experienced their God through the Church's liturgy and in a devotional intensity which seized them in holy places. Once they had experienced the divine in such particular settings, having absorbed one set of explanations about what the divine was, anything from outside which disrupted those explanations threatened their access to divine power. That would provide ample reason for the stirring of rage and fear. (pp. 221–22)

When addressing the "sheer variety" of stories of Christian faith (p. 9), and especially what he calls the expansion of Christian identity, in addition to recent movements like "American conservative Protestant evangelicalism" and Pentecostalism, "its vigorous and unruly cousin," MacCulloch notices Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.

> In nineteenth-century America, marginal Christians created a frontier religion with its own new sacred book, the basis of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons). The astonishing growth of the Mormons is as much part of the modern story of Christianity as that of Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism or Protestantism, however fiercely conventionally conceived Christianity may deny the Mormons the name Christian. (p. 10)

MacCulloch has tried both "to synthesize the current state of historical scholarship across the world" (p. 12) and then to reflect cautiously on what he has fashioned. His is not, however, "a work of primary-source research" (p. 12), for such a thing is simply impossible. *Christianity* is limited by, among other things, its author's choice of secondary sources, which is also, of course, true of all those scholars, whether Latter-day Saint or not, who write about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saints will find MacCulloch's treatment of the Church of Jesus Christ, including Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon (pp. 906–8), dependent upon a narrow slice of often-flawed secondary literature. He relies, for example, on Fawn Brodie's biography of Joseph Smith, though he mentions in passing Richard Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (p. 1088 nn. 102–8). MacCulloch's selection of secondary literature led to some embarrassing mistakes. For example, Joseph Smith was not, as MacCulloch claims, "the only person definitely to view the plates" (p. 906). This should be a warning to all of us when we yield to the urge to opine about complicated, controversial historical matters, and especially when

we do so about versions of Christianity not our own. With these cautions, I highly recommend MacCulloch's book to those who want more information on, and understanding of, the vast sweep of Christian history.

Louis Midgley

Kenneth J. Stewart. *Ten Myths about Calvinism: Recovering the Breadth of the Reformed Tradition*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic (an imprint of InterVarsity Press), 2011. 301 pp., with name index, scripture index, and appendix ("The Earliest Known Reference to the TULIP Acronym"). $24.00 (paperback).

In *Ten Myths about Calvinism*, Professor Stewart seeks to demythologize Calvinism by debunking claims made by recent critics of Calvinism as well as myths held tenaciously by some ardent Calvinists. His primary goal is to rescue Calvinism from extremist ideologues—that is, those who advance what he considers stereotypes, misconceptions, and misrepresentations of sound Calvinism. In so doing he strives to save Calvinism from Calvinists, or to reform Reformed theology, and thereby take some of "the swagger and certainty" out of certain Calvinists (p. 12). He grants that the "Calvinist strain [of Christianity] has a tendency to generate its share of extremists. Call them high-flyers or ultras if you like, but Calvinism has its share" (p. 12). I believe that Latter-day Saints who encounter countercult critics like James White will agree with Stewart's assessment. And those who encounter other, less belligerent critics of the faith of the Saints, such as Norman Geisler, John MacArthur, or Al Mohler, may appreciate an effort to tone down the harsh, crusading, inquisitorial elements in contemporary Calvinism.

The most important part of Stewart's book is devoted to urging Calvinists to cease advancing the "Four Myths Calvinists Should Not Be Circulating (But Are)" (pp. 11-120). He clearly seeks to correct some of the confusion he finds in contemporary contentious Calvinists. My own experience is that Calvinists of whatever brand are guilty of more than one of the mistakes Stewart identifies. These four myths include the following:

1. One man (Calvin) and one city (Geneva) are determinative (pp. 21-43).
2. Calvin's view of predestination must be ours (pp. 45-72).
3. TULIP is the yardstick of the truly reformed (pp. 75-96).
4. Calvinists take a dim view of revival and awakening (pp. 99-120).

Stewart insists that John Calvin did not provide a creed and that, fortunately, there is more to Calvinism than merely Calvin's teachings. Despite the narrow opinions held by some cranks and crackpots, Calvin's legacy is somewhat messy, with much mixing and matching with other ideologies and strains of Protestant religiosity. Stewart strives to rescue Calvinism from those he considers extremists. He does this by sacrificing or challenging some of its much-vaunted coherence and consistency. Calvinists are not, he holds, stuck with Calvin's understanding of predestination since there is a host of different understandings of this key concept among Calvinists. Thus, according to Stewart, "today's Calvinists ought, at the very least, to have observed that predestination as addressed in the major confessions of the Reformation era is shorn of some excesses attached to Calvin's own views" (p. 71).

Stewart targets TULIP, the famous five-point Calvinist acronym. He argues that TULIP does not necessarily capture the Calvinist five points as set out in the famous Synod of Dordt (1618–19), when Dutch Calvinists responded to threats posed by Arminianism. He reveals that the now-famous TULIP acronym turned up in print only in an American weekly political newspaper in 1913, and even then not in the exact terms with which it is now commonly associated (p. 79). Stewart identifies an item by William H. Vail entitled "The Five Points of Calvinism Historically Considered"[2] as the first published source for TULIP. Vail was merely reporting that TULIP was mentioned in a lecture by the Reverend Cleland Boyd McAfee before the Presbyterian Union in Newark, New Jersey, in 1905.

Stewart insists that TULIP is not a kind of Calvinist shorthand creed (p. 93). His own dogmatism about what should and should not be understood as core Calvinism is itself a kind of caricature of those who summarize Dordt's response to the Arminian five points with the TULIP acronym. He is troubled because there are Calvinists who are more concerned about the acronym than about the specific doctrines. There is, however, no standard way of setting out or understanding the Calvinist five points (p. 79). He provides a chart (pp. 93–95) showing which prominent five-point Calvinists use or do not use TULIP as a benchmark for their version of Calvinism. Of the fifteen prominent defenses of five-point Calvinism he examines, nine make use of TULIP in one way or another, and all of these without the realization that the acronym first appeared in print in 1913.

2. William H. Vail, "The Five Points of Calvinism Historically Considered," *The New Outlook* 104 (1913): 394.

In addition to striving to moderate Calvin's view on predestination, Stewart is eager to downplay if not flatly reject the idea of limited atonement. In his view, only those who are belligerent, strident, or contentious really stress limited atonement. Stewart's book is endorsed by folks like Richard Mouw, who in his book *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport* explains that because limited atonement for him is incomprehensible, he puts it "on the shelf." And yet Mouw sees himself as a "card-carrying Calvinist." Stewart seeks to accommodate those who would like to think that there is potentially hope for everyone and who need a reasonable justification for witnessing to sinners. He seeks an understanding of the atonement that allows for potentially everyone to be saved. Stewart inveighs against those who do not see the "capaciousness," as he calls it, of an atonement "sufficient for everybody" (p. 89). On this issue he seems to me to advance a kind of mellow semi-Arminian ideology. He also asks whether revival is an event or a process and whether it necessarily "descends from heaven" or can be generated by our own efforts on behalf of lost souls. He answers that it can come from either source, which entails a radical revision of the notion of predestination and extreme understandings of divine sovereignty.

There are, it seems, schools of Calvinism, each of which is at war with the others. The contending views of moderate Calvinist Norman Geisler and five-point Calvinist James White exemplify such rifts. One of these schools holds the TULIP acronym sacrosanct, while at the other end of the Calvinist ideological spectrum are those who, as in the case of Richard Mouw, are painfully aware of problems inherent in the TULIP rubric while remaining chained to it as the supposed authentic expression of biblical Christianity.

Stewart lists but does not situate some of the "new Calvinists" in a fine chapter entitled "Recovering Our Bearings: Calvinism in the Twenty-First Century" (pp. 270–90). His is a kind of reverse history of Calvinism in which he begins with the latest crop of Calvinists, including John Piper, Mark Driscoll, and C. J. Mahaney (pp. 272–74), while mentioning in passing Mark Dever, Al Mohler, and Wayne Grudem (p. 273 nn. 7–8). He works backward uncovering wave after wave of Calvinist "revivals" beginning with Martyn Lloyd-Jones (pp. 274–75, 280, 288), J. I. Packer (p. 276), and Francis Schaeffer (p. 276), and then further back to C. H. Spurgeon (p. 276) as well as other large figures in the Calvinist past. Stewart mentions the formation in 1795 of the London Missionary Society (p. 287), which should be of interest to Latter-day Saints who have encountered the remnants of this endeavor in the South Pacific. This historical account of English-speaking Calvinism is the most interesting and useful part of Stewart's book.

There are two curiosities in Stewart's efforts to address the myths raised by critics of Calvinism. One is his effort to rationalize Calvin's involvement in the 1553 burning of Michael Servetus for heresy (pp. 187–89). Calvin was, we are told, less brutal since he only wanted Servetus's head removed. Stewart's way of dealing with this matter is to argue that everyone, both Protestants and Catholics, was doing that sort of thing. But this does not explain away the ideological buttresses for hounding heretics, which fit within Calvin's overall ideology and even now turn up in the strains of Calvinism that Stewart seeks to exorcize.

The other curiosity involves the alliance of Protestants of various stripes with corrupt and corrupting princes and kings. These compromising bargains were presumably made in desperate efforts to survive and then prosper. In an effort to challenge the myth that "Calvinism promotes Antinomianism" (pp. 151–70), Stewart tells the story of the capitulation of various large figures in the Protestant Reformation to the demands made by Philip I of Hesse (1504–1567). Also known as Philip the Magnanimous, Landgrave of Hesse, this prince insisted that if he was not allowed to take a second wife, he would withdraw his support from Luther. Philip was not asking the leading ecclesiastical figures merely to wink at his conduct; he needed and demanded and got their public approval for bigamy, or what we would call polygamy (pp. 151–52, 154). This seems to indicate that, in a pinch, moral rules can be brushed aside—or so these early Protestants decided. It is, however, not exactly clear what this has to do with Calvin or Calvinism, since this is a problem for Lutherans faced with serious threats from Catholic princes and hence much in need of princes who would protect them.

Ten Myths about Calvinism is a useful Calvinist critique of some versions of Calvinism and should be of interest and use to Latter-day Saints faced with belligerent Calvinists. It also opens a door for those curious about the contentions and foibles of theologians and churchmen.

Louis Midgley

John W. Welch and Donald W. Parry, eds., *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity*. Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2011. xvi + 280 pp., with selected bibliography, citation index, and subject index. $23.99 (paperback).

Lehi's vision of the tree of life, together with the expanded explanation revealed to Nephi, contains many essential elements of Latter-day Saint theology. But the tree of life as a symbol of

faith is not unique to Mormonism. It is found in many religions and cultures, all celebrating the mystery of life and renewal.

Following a successful symposium held at Brigham Young University, John W. Welch and Donald W. Parry have assembled papers focusing on the tree of life from diverse perspectives. Eleven authors discuss how the tree of life is used symbolically in the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, and the Qur'an; in ancient Maya and Catholic traditions; in the art, folklore, and traditions of Asia; and finally in Book of Mormon art. Many beautiful illustrations enhance these studies (see the seventy-one figures listed on pp. vii–xi and the sixteen color plates identified on pp. xi–xii and inserted between pages 128 and 129).

It would be hard for a single volume to contain a full survey, but as an introduction to the tree of life as a persistent religious symbol, this book fulfills its purpose. Without going into each of the eleven excellent articles, I will just highlight three that I particularly enjoyed. Daniel C. Peterson ably presents insights into the Islamic tree of life tradition (pp. 193–216). With his brief introduction to the Qur'an as a preface, Peterson opens up this important world to the lay reader. Equally, Andrew C. Skinner leads us into the use of the symbol in the perhaps mystical world of later Jewish thought, as well as the more traditional Hebrew Bible (pp. 25–54). John W. Welch takes us from the world of the New Testament to early Christianity (pp. 81–107).

It would not be fair to dismiss the other studies by Donald W. Parry (pp. 1–24), Margaret Barker (pp. 55–79), C. Wilfred Griggs (pp. 109–27), Charles Swift (pp. 129–49), Allen J. Christenson (pp. 151–70), Jaime Lara (pp. 171–92), John M. Lundquist (pp. 217–40), and Richard Oman (pp. 241–60), as well as Daniel B. McKinlay's useful selected bibliography of Latter-day Saint sources (pp. 261–64) and non–Latter-day Saint sources (264–68), since time spent with this volume will expand our knowledge and understanding of the tree of life and help us put in context Lehi's vision, both through the written word and visually through artwork from around the world.

Alison Coutts

Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays, eds. *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic (an imprint of InterVarsity Press), 2011. 294 pp., with subject index and scripture index. $24.00 (paperback).

Previously I have called attention to the commotion generated by N. T. (Tom) Wright, prominent contemporary Anglican New Testament scholar and erstwhile churchman, in certain conservative Protestant circles over his rejection of "justification by faith alone." He holds that the Protestant understanding of salvation rests on a grave misreading of Paul.[3] His detractors, who are essentially ideologues from the Reformed camp, are deeply troubled by his understanding of justification. But Wright has also addressed what in England is known as the historical Jesus controversy. This endeavor, which has yielded what he calls the Big Picture of Kingdom, Cross, and Resurrection, has made him popular with evangelicals. His views on these matters have been set out in a massive 2,016-page series entitled *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, which consists of three volumes: *The New Testament and the People of God* (Fortress, 1992), *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Fortress, 1997), and *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Fortress, 2003).

3. See, for example, reviews of Wright's *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (2005) and *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (2009) in *FARMS Review* 20/1 (2008): 260–63 and 21/1 (2009): 216–20, respectively.

His opinions on these themes should be of interest to Latter-day Saints, and *Jesus, Paul and the People of God* provides an excellent introduction to his perspective on both Jesus and Paul. This fine book also constitutes a kind of *Festschrift* for Wright.

Jesus, Paul and the People of God consists of the papers read at the 2010 Wheaton Theology Conference by Tom Wright's friends who gathered to assess his contributions to the debate over the historical Jesus as well as his views on the apostle Paul. Following a useful introduction by Nicholas Perrin (pp. 7–17), the first part of this anthology consists of papers on the topic "Jesus and the People of God" by Marianne Meye Thompson, Richard B. Hays, Sylvia C. Keesmaat and Brian J. Walsh, and Nicholas Perrin. Each paper is followed by a brief, highly irenic response by Wright, who in a long essay also reviews and restates his views on the historical Jesus and its meaning for Christian faith (pp. 115–58). The second part, entitled "Paul and the People of God," contains papers by Edith M. Humphrey, Jeremy S. Begbie, Markus Bockmuehl, and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, followed by brief responses by Wright, who then restates his rejection of the Protestant notion of justification by faith alone (pp. 262–81).

Wright's views on the historical Jesus have made him something of a favorite among sophisticated evangelicals. The reason is that he has taken seriously the challenge posed by some posthumously published fragments written by Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) about an "ugly ditch" that presumably separates historical reality and Christian faith. Eventually made public by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, these so-called fragments generated a *Fragmentenstreit* (quarrel). Much like Albert Schweitzer, Wright describes Reimarus as "the great iconoclast" who had hoped to "destroy the Christian faith" by removing its crucial historical foundations. Marianne Meye Thompson puts the matter bluntly: "Reimarus wants the real Jesus of history, the Jesus without dogma, without the church, Jesus *wie er eigentlich gewesen* (as he actually was)" (p. 25). Wright has taken up the challenge by attempting to grasp the intentions and self-understanding of Jesus, as well as his teachings and ministry as he seems to have understood them, and hence also his reasons for moving relentlessly toward a brutal death, followed by his resurrection. All of this should be of special interest to Latter-day Saints.

Wright's somewhat more recent contribution to what is known as the "New Perspective on Paul" (NPP) has deeply troubled some evangelicals. The reason is that he challenges the stance on justification taken by Augustine and then later appropriated by Luther and Calvin. Justification, of course, is the essential core claim upon which, it is often said, the Protestant Reformation either stands or falls. Wright's position on this matter has deeply troubled those who cannot countenance a reformation of the Reformation's primal premise. Wright's primary target is the slogan "by faith alone" and its dogmatic underpinnings. He denies that justification consists of the imputation of an alien righteousness to the totally depraved sinner at a moment of conversion. He argues that there is, instead, the paradox of a possible present temporary justification and also a future, final justification since justification is both already but not yet. Faith must necessarily yield faithfulness and hence deeds and not merely words—that is, the genuine disciple must submit to being sanctified, purged, purified, and cleansed. The disciple must be faithful to a covenant with Christ. The

ultimate justification takes place only when the final judgment of one's deeds (or works) takes place and certainly not merely on a primitive, preliminary confession of faith.

Jesus, Paul and the People of God provides a fine introduction to both of the central themes in Wright's writings as well as an opportunity for him to address questions and objections.

In his introduction, Nicholas Perrin claims that, unlike many or most conservative Protestants, Wright is not constrained by theological tradition (p. 9). Wright thus annoys Calvinists by insisting on *sola scriptura*—that is, his own reading of the Bible over against some of the fatuous formulae of the Reformed tradition. So we find Wright asserting that when the faithful die, they do not go to a disembodied heaven. It is a mistake to assume that the Holy One of Israel entered human history so that his disciples could end up in a heaven where they do nothing except praise God for eternity, understood as timelessness where nothing really happens. Instead, this earth is the home of humans, where they await the resurrection to continue turning this place into Zion and a garden park. The resurrection is, for Wright, "life after life after death" (where we then do something). Wright also sees the future glory as set out in 2 Corinthians 2–5 as essentially the idea behind *theosis*. He does not shy away from future deification (see the comments on *theosis* at pp. 169, 178, 182). In his famous prayer for unity (John 17:21), Jesus is actually pleading for his disciples to have Christ in them. This is evidence for a belief in *theosis*. All of this, too, should attract the interest of Latter-day Saints.

In stressing that Jesus was a real historical being, Wright also has much to say against the myth of objective history and historians (pp. 116–17; compare p. 155). He also seems distressed by what he considers the ahistorical understanding of the fundamental message of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God, which yields, in Perrin's words, a kind of covert docetism. In Wright's view, Jesus was primarily one who announced the kingdom of God (e.g., p. 140). The entire story of his ministry is thus crucial. His death is the climax of his setting up his kingdom. He is the victorious king—the Lord (YHWH) of the Old Testament—who has vindicated a new and properly constituted Israel (p. 149). And the task of kingdom building necessarily involves telling the kingdom story. What we have in the New Testament are stories told about a group of devout Jews with their scriptures in their heads and hearts (p. 151), who are busily building the kingdom of God (p. 152).

We must, according to Wright, shift back to the historical Jesus and not be confused by the picture of Christ found in later confessions. The creeds (and especially the one fashioned by the Council of Chalcedon) are, from his perspective, efforts of later Christians to wash Christian dirty laundry—that is, to clean up and iron out quandaries and quarrels. The New Testament, according to Wright, knows nothing of divinity but much about Jesus vindicating Israel as its king. The later focus on the question of the humanity and divinity of Jesus distorts the content of the Gospels, where Jesus as king clearly announces and vindicates his kingdom. Hence Jesus did not go around thinking of himself as or proclaiming himself the second person in the Trinity or wondering how his divine and human nature work together so harmoniously. Instead, his announcement of the kingdom meant that at last the long-expected return of YHWH to redeem Israel was taking place right then and there (pp. 135, 274, 277; compare the

commentary by others on this theme at pp. 28–29, 37, 50, 99, 162, 174).

But unfortunately, from Wright's perspective, attention has subsequently been shifted away from the Jesus of history to the Christ of the great ecumenical creeds. Theologians have invented a different Jesus—that is, fashioning an ahistorical idol (p. 157). They have done this by seeing the Gospels as merely the chips and dip before the real meal, which they picture merely as the death of Jesus. But the Christ, when properly understood as king, is resurrected and hence alive and should be in his disciples as they seek now to build Zion before their own death and resurrection.

From my perspective, Tom Wright is right about some crucial matters that tend to separate Latter-day Saints from many contemporary conservative Protestants. I highly recommend *Jesus, Paul and the People of God* as an introduction to Wright's contributions to an understanding of both Paul and Jesus.Ω

Louis Midgley

N. T. Wright. *The Resurrection of the Son of God.* Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. xxi + 817 pp., with indexes. $40.00 (paperback).

N. T. Wright, noted Anglican biblical scholar, offers a comprehensive and useful study of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Written from an unmistakable position of faith in the literal reality of a bodily resurrection, his book affords not only a comprehensive review of the New Testament accounts and evidences but also a sweeping look at the concept of resurrection as witnessed as an actuality by the early Christians. It places the bold Christian message in perspective and contrast with other views of the afterlife in the ancient world, in Old Testament and intertestamental times, and in the New Testament setting. Wright's biblical considerations are thoroughgoing, while his research goes well beyond the canonical texts, providing insights from many sources.

Wright stresses the vital importance of the resurrection as a basic Christian claim and belief, developing the idea that only a literal resurrection and unwavering confidence in it can explain the determined actions of the early Christians and the phenomenal growth of the church. Wright engages many of the arguments pro and con that have been made about the resurrection. With rich documentation of sources and references to an extensive literature, this volume provides a very substantial resource for anyone studying the resurrection.

Latter-day Saints should find Wright's study commendable, readable, helpful, and insightful. They will, of course, have some distinct views based on the Book of Mormon and other scriptures that contain much important additional information and understanding about the resurrection. For example, Latter-day Saints tend to take the references to revival of the "dry bones" in Ezekiel 37 as allusions to a literal bodily resurrection, while Wright sees it as "the most obviously allegorical or metaphorical" of passages (p. 119), referring to the restoration of Israel. However, that text could reflect the spiritual aspects of a restored Israel, which can also be viewed as a "resurrected" Israel in both senses, witnessing by a whole people in the very sweep of history the reality of the resurrection of the Son of God and the consequent resurrection of all mankind.Ω

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James P. Eckman. *Exploring Church History: A Guide to History, World Religions, and Ethics*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008. 335 pp., with glossary, three bibliographies, no index. $19.99 (paperback).

Exploring Church History consists of three previously published booklets: *Exploring Church History* (pp. 7–108), which appeared in 2002; *The Truth about Worldviews* (pp. 109–237), which was published in 2004; and *Biblical Ethics* (pp. 239–335), also published in 2004. I will focus attention primarily on the first booklet.

Eckman, retiring president of Grace University in Omaha, Nebraska, believes that "most Christians are abysmally ignorant of their Christian heritage" (p. 9). He claims that the study of church history, including the "diversity and the contributions many individuals and groups have made to the church," actually "produces a tolerance and appreciation of groups with which we may personally disagree" (p. 9). However, as the last five chapters of "Book One: Exploring Church History" (pp. 67–102), as well as all of "Book Two: The Truth about Worldviews" (pp. 113–230), demonstrate, he does not manifest much tolerance towards versions of Christianity that do not fit snugly under his sense of Protestant orthodoxy. For example, he stresses the "church's struggle with the modern world" (p. 9), which he sees as doing battle with an array of challenges, including the Church of Jesus Christ (see pp. 202–4).

Eckman insists that Paul advanced a "free-grace Gospel," which is code language for "justification by faith plus nothing" (p. 15). We learn that after the apostles labored to establish the Christian church, their deaths "produced a leadership vacuum in the church" (p. 19). The devotional writing style of the early apostolic fathers (Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp), including that of the *Didache* and the "bizarre work of five visions" by the Shepherd of Hermas, yielded to "a more apologetic style as the [subsequent] leaders combat[ed] theological error creeping into the church" (p. 22). This was necessary because "both inside and outside the church false teaching and error abounded" (p. 23). The church faced Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and Neoplatonism (pp. 23–24), and also heresies such as Marcionism, Ebionitism, and Montanism (pp. 24–25). But help came when Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Origen "began to systematize theological truth. Through their work the church reached consensus" (p. 29).

Eckman goes on to explain that "about the year 300, the winds of theological change were blowing through the church" as theological disputes "caused the church to systematize its beliefs and reach consensus on what the Scriptures taught" (p. 31). Eventually Constantine created the imperial church. And a series of great ecumenical councils followed, beginning at Nicea (AD 325) and ending with Chalcedon (AD 451). Constantine made Christianity part of the administrative apparatus of the Roman Empire, and the church had taken on regal trappings (pp. 32–36).

Eckman's hero, Augustine (AD 354–430), the great "theologian of grace" (p. 37), "formulated the doctrines of election and predestination that would powerfully influence Luther and Calvin centuries later" (p. 38). Augustine "saw the God of the Bible as an eternal [that is, not contaminated by space and time], transcendent, infinite, and perfect triune God. In defining God as a Trinity in one essence, his work constituted the capstone of centuries of theological thought on the nature of God. There was little debate on the nature of the Trinity after Augustine" (pp. 38–39).

After Augustine and others systematized a Christian theology, unfortunately then came the

medieval church, which "became corrupt and ineffective" (p. 41). Protestants, Eckman claims, tend to date the beginnings of Roman Catholicism to AD 590, when Gregory I was installed as bishop of Rome (p. 41). The papacy brought in the "veneration of Mary, purgatory, an early form of transubstantiation [a.k.a. "Real Presence"], and praying to departed saints" (pp. 41–42). However, theologian giants like Anselm (AD 1033–1109) and Thomas Aquinas (AD 1225–1274) got some things right. For example, Anselm "gave reasonable proofs for God's existence" (p. 47), and Aquinas defended classical theism, creation *ex nihilo*, and the resurrection. Unfortunately, he also defended the veneration of Mary, purgatory, and the role of human merit in salvation (pp. 46–47).

Then Martin Luther (AD 1483–1546), Philip Melanchthon (AD 1497–1560), Ulrich Zwingli (AD 1484–1531), and John Calvin (AD 1509–1564) got the crucial matters sorted properly (pp. 51–55). They revived the traditional theological *consensus* (p. 39, also pp. 29, 31, 37). Calvin, with his stress on predestination and election, led others to systematize a God-centered system of theology that is now "often summarized with the acrostic [*sic*] TULIP"—that is, **T**otal Depravity, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace, and **P**erseverance of the Saints (p. 55). Unfortunately, Calvin participated in the execution of Michael Servetus, and this "contributed most to the image of Calvin as an extremist" (p. 55).

Both Protestants and Roman Catholics eventually faced the challenge posed by the rise of modern science (pp. 67–70), as well as both skepticism about truth and confidence in human reason (p. 74)—that is, the Enlightenment (pp. 73–76). Protestants were challenged by the rise of a "liberal Protestantism" (pp. 76–78). The first book ends with a very brief account of the rise of the modern missions movement—that is, the effort to carry out Christ's great commission to take the gospel to all the world (Matthew 28:19–20), something that the Protestant denominations have "not always taken . . . seriously" (p. 79).

The second book is an effort to describe and respond to challenges to Eckman's Protestant faith. As such, it covers postmodernism, naturalism (or Secular Humanism), Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Judaism, Islam, the New Age movement, and finally Christian cults, in which category, following Walter Martin and others, Eckman places the Church of Jesus Christ (pp. 113–208). In addition, his own brief account entitled "The History of Christianity: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and the Origin of Protestantism" (pp. 210–15) is similar to my own summary of his first book. He complains that Roman Catholics and Orthodox differ from Protestants in what they do and believe (pp. 215–19). For example, he is troubled by the Orthodox belief that the ultimate destiny of faithful Christians is deification (*theosis*)—that is, to be united with and hence become like God. Though he cites 2 Peter 1:4 (p. 218) and quotes Orthodox interpretations of this passage, he does not really confront the claim that the gospel offers very "great and precious promises" that eventually make possible our participation in "the divine nature." Though he is aware of C. S. Lewis, he seems unaware that Lewis stressed deification. This very old, clearly biblical teaching is foreign to his religious world where attention is focused solely on justification understood as an event in which an alien righteousness is imputed to totally depraved humans rather than as a long and difficult process (see p. 216).

Eckman sketches an essentially Protestant understanding of church history. He begins by

bemoaning that Christians are ignorant of the Christian past, and he also complains that "we live in a world where religious cults are threatening orthodox truth at every turn" (p. 37). His account then attempts to illustrate how that is true. Eckman's reliance on a tiny sampling of the most dreadful countercult literature for his misunderstanding of the faith of the Saints, as well as his mishandling of a tiny sampling of Protestant accounts of the Christian past, is actually useful because it illustrates the way an educated and devout person can stumble when he tries to manage the future by controlling the past. In addition, this book should serve as a dire warning to Latter-day Saints to avoid expressing facile but poorly grounded, oversimplified opinions about the faith of others.

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