

neurs" (152). His critique of the megachurches is in some ways unfair. Though in some of those churches it is true that psychology has replaced the Word of God, it is also true that in other megachurches people come to hear sermons grounded in solid evangelical truth.

The solution for this "tragedy," as Wells calls the interference of modernity with evangelicalism, is "the recovery of an appropriate vision of God" because the alternatives that evangelicalism is presenting to the world are destructive. This vision of God has to be centered on the cross, because "the cross is not only the place where salvation is found: it is also the place where evil has been judged and where God's triumphant holiness has been revealed" (184). The final appeal of the book is to go back to the Westminster Confession as the faith of North American evangelicals.

The book as a whole can be classified as good in the sense that it calls our attention to the tensions existing in the evangelical movement regarding the place of 'modernity' in the church today. The language is clear and leaves no doubt as to the author's own theological leanings. The book is an easy one to read, free from complicated theological arguments, making it easy for lay people without extensive theological background. In terms of content, however, there are some important flaws. One is the generalization of certain problems that are not so general in the North American evangelical community. Second, is the denial that the church can work *within* the culture in an effort to bring Christ to the modern man/woman. Third, there is the important misconception that a turn towards a seventeenth-century confession of faith—the Westminster Confession—is the solution for the "religious void" that Wells perceives as the most serious threat to the evangelical movement. It is true that contemporary evangelicalism needs some important refocusing in the areas of ministry and evangelism, but the solution lies not in adapting the movement to the Westminster Confession, but in adapting Westminster to the realities of the modern world—without sacrificing the integrity of Truth.

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***Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross.* By Stephen D. Moore. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994. ISBN 0-8006-2599-4. Pp. vii+143.**

This short, didactic volume is an introduction to poststructuralist currents as they apply to the interpretation of New Testament texts. Easy to read, it exposes the New Testament scholar (and other educated readers) to the basic tenets of this movement and to the multiple directions that it is currently taking. Stephen Moore also leads us through his own creative applications of two poststructuralist methods, those of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, to New Testament passages and themes. The result is a radical critique of certain New Testament concepts and of their classical interpretation.

Leaving aside for the moment a number of useful and informative sections, such as the short history of poststructuralism in the introduction (1–9), the “Further Reading” section (119–27), and the “Glossary of Terms” (129–33), the book is essentially divided into two major parts. The first part treats Derrida and the deconstructive method, the second, Foucault.

The first chapter of Part I explains how Derrida’s program is rooted in the analysis of language of Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of modern linguistics (a handy ‘crash course’ on Saussure can be found on pages 14–7). The point of departure is the Saussurian intuition that words do not refer to “real things out there,” but to concepts present in our mind. Furthermore, these concepts do not exist in themselves, but are determined solely by other concepts from which they are distinguished. Derrida takes this one step further: if a word (signifier) refers to a concept (signified) “without positive terms” (Saussure), then there is no real meaning to the signifier/signified distinction. Derrida calls into question this binary distinction and all “binary thinking” in a general sense, i.e., thinking in opposite poles, such as good/bad, spiritual/material, man/woman, and so on (25–6). These are all words in an enormous array of words. Moreover, these opposite pairs, so characteristic of Western thinking, are necessarily hierarchical and oppressive. They must be subverted, or *deconstructed*.

In the second chapter, Moore uses the deconstructive eyeglass to read chapter four of the Gospel of John, “The Woman at the Well.” In the discussion between Jesus and the woman about what real thirst is, the text establishes a binary opposition between the spiritual and material realms. Moore then topples this opposition by recourse to other passages where material and spiritual are so intertwined in Jesus’ own life that the distinction becomes blurred. With a further twist, Moore shows how a feminist brand of deconstructive reading can turn John 4 completely upside down: the woman becomes the teacher of Jesus!

Part I ends with a lucid analysis of where deconstruction fits in the family of contemporary biblical criticisms: not only a cousin of old historical criticism and of some newer literary criticisms, but in some real sense the logical outcome of their presuppositions.

Part II is devoted to Michel Foucault’s analysis of power, both as a social reality shifting throughout history, and as something created by texts. Chapter Four recounts Foucault’s evolution from structuralism to an approach of his own, a descriptive historiography of power. It is applied in Chapter Five to the Pauline texts on the crucifixion. Moore analyzes how the punitive power of God is “created” by the New Testament discourses on the execution of Jesus. This power resembles that of ancient despots who used public torture as a means of exerting authority over the masses. Furthermore, Paul’s muting of the scandal through the spiritualization of the cross is critiqued, for the shift from public spectacle to a spiritualization through the “crucifixion of the flesh” opens the door to a more insidious form of power. The believer then becomes predisposed to the “discipline” of “pastoral power.”

The second part ends with a clarification of the inescapable and tenacious bond Moore perceives between historical criticism and poststructuralism: the latter is the former’s “id, the seat of its strongest antiauthoritarian instincts—histor-

ical criticism unfettered at last from the ecclesiastical superego that has always compelled it to genuflect before the icons it had come to destroy" (117).

Moore's approach to the subject matter is creative in several ways. First, he weaves into the flow of otherwise difficult topics a delectable strand of autobiographical material. This includes a history of his own wrestling with poststructuralism, as well as with his Roman Catholic past. Second, Moore employs a generally pleasant style, bouncing with metaphors and puns, embodying the playfulness of the poststructuralist 'spirit' it seeks to embrace. (I say 'generally', however, because there sometimes appears to be no boundary between the humorous and corny, the tasteful and crude.) Third, as mentioned earlier, the book is systematically user-oriented: there are short, enlightening segments on Lacan, Saussure, source criticism, even negative theology; they can be valuable for future reference. Fourth, Moore's *applications* of the new methods are personal and creative. He masters Derrida, not only in his ability to simplify him for the reader, but also in his emulation of the careful, intricate deconstructive text analysis that Derrida performs. And finally, he draws important thought-provoking connections between poststructuralist approaches and other literary theories.

However, in the midst of experiencing Moore's eloquence and methodological assurance, one is left wondering whether the weaknesses in argumentation at certain critical moments of demonstration originate with Moore, or whether they derive from flaws in the methods themselves. For instance, Moore's Foucauldian critique of "pastoral power" in Christianity seems impaired by the Foucauldian axiom itself: that power relations *simply must and do exist* in all societies (90–3). Will ridding a society of "pastoral power" not simply open the door to new criticizable structures of power? Moreover, the deconstruction of the spirit/nature opposition in John 4 will remain unconvincing to the reader who does not share the Derridean presupposition that the metaphysical assumptions of the Bible are in urgent need of being toppled. The tensions and ambiguities between spiritual and natural realms in the life of Jesus in the gospels are not new problems; Christology has been grappling with them for centuries. The traditional understanding of the *incarnation*, despite all its nuances and its ultimate recognition of mystery, will nonetheless satisfy many as a more useful hermeneutical vantage point from which to approach this type of passage. Finally, Moore himself mentions the vulnerability of the methods of Derrida and Foucault to being "recuperated" by political or ideological agendas, something that both authors have sought to avoid in principle (74, 92).

For all its strengths and weaknesses, I recommend the (critical) reading of this fine book to any person wanting an introduction to poststructuralist biblical interpretation. It is especially designed for those who are unacquainted with the methods as well as with the philosophical world from which they stem.