



Good BOOKS

Inter-Varsity Press is to be congratulated for putting out a slender paperback which packs a powerful punch. Philip Sampson's *Six Modern Myths Challenging Christian Faith* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000) touches a raw nerve in a number of ways. *First*, from a totally non-theological, yet pertinent, angle he points out the postmodern predilection for myths, as seen in the popular Disneyland cinematic version of Hercules. Is this a painful retreat from reality, a testament of our battered psyche? *Second*, from the standpoint of biblical studies we see that the previous generation of scholars bred on the Bultmannian *Tendenz* to demythologise the New Testament, together with the parallel Old Testament *Tendenz*, has done biblical studies a disservice. *Third*, he enters the fray, hammer and tongs on sensitive issues such as the Green Movement, mission and colonialism, feminism, etc.

What interested me particularly is that Dr Sampson writes as a layman, rather than a theologian, following the excellent example of J. N. D. Andersen (of All Souls Church, London). We at BGST are always glad to find examples of theologically-literate lay persons who can serve as models for our students. Dr Sampson is a Family Court Adviser, a Research Fellow in the Social Sciences, and is also trained in the natural sciences. His book deals with six myths:

- Galileo – was he a hero of science against a hostile church?
- Darwin – was his story of origins an attack on the Christian faith?
- The environment – is the Bible at the root of global exploitation?
- The missionaries – was Christian mission a vehicle of colonial oppression?
- The human body – is Christianity essentially repressive and 'anti-body'?
- The witches – how true was the witch-hunt as an 'example' of the subjugation of women?

The writer comes out solidly in defence of the position that the Bible must be read historically and is absolutely reliable. He is well-read and his knowledge of the literature of the ancient and modern world is breathtaking. His indictment against those who 'worship' science is convincing and serves as a valuable counterweight. His point is that these six modern myths "distort history and truth" (p.159). A final word: it is always a joy to me to relish a book with a charming command of the English language

(Dr Quek Swee Hwa).



Jesus's Secret Service and His Public Service

Christians focus on the night Jesus was betrayed, and rightly so. There was the amazing washing of the disciples' feet, the Last Supper, the revelations on the way to the Father and the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the sermons on the Vine and the Branches and on the Work of the Holy Spirit, and those wonderful prayers Jesus prayed for himself, for the disciples and for all believers. Then came the high drama of Jesus's arrest in the garden of Gethsemane and his ordeal in the house of the high priest (John 13, 14 & 15).

But what about the part of the day before the Last Supper?

Matt 26:17 tells us that sometime that day, "the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?'" Jesus instructed Peter and John to go into the city, Jerusalem, where they would see a man carrying a jar of water as they entered (John 8-10). It was early morning, before Jesus left the Mount of Olives to go to Jerusalem (Luke 21:37) and the usual time for drawing water from wells and streams.

But why was the man carrying water? Weren't such activities the work of women at that time? Wasn't a man carrying a water jar an unmistakable recognition sign?

Who was the unnamed man with the water jar? Well, the disciples were in full public view, so we can call them Jesus' Public Service. Then the man with the water jar, if he was not an angel, was one of the many people in Jesus' "secret service"?

Those were the unsung heroes and heroines who secretly did chores for Jesus. Today, millions of them volunteer to clean church premises, play musical instruments, ferry children to church, fold the church bulletin, usher, man the audio console, and do a hundred other tasks, often unseen and unknown. Yet, without them, could the churches function well today? Isn't it nice to see that one of these helpers is mentioned in the Bible?

Of course, his name is not mentioned. But which secret service publishes the names of its people?

What were Peter and John to do when they saw the man? Jesus said, "Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, 'Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there (Luke 21:10-12).'"

"Follow him to the house?" Wow. This is the stuff of

thrillers and spy stories. But now we see how essential the water jar was. With throngs of people in Jerusalem for the Festival of Unleavened Bread, how would the disciples follow a man from a distance and not lose sight of him? But if he carried a tall water jar on his shoulder, would the water jar be easily seen above the crowd?

Why would the disciples follow from a distance?

Weren't they on a secret mission? It would not do for the Pharisees and Temple guards to find out where Jesus was going to eat the Passover meal, and capture Jesus and all the disciples in one swoop.

Let's turn our attention to the house owner. He had already furnished the upper room and was waiting for Jesus' disciples to come and prepare the Passover supper. He could easily have betrayed Jesus. So he must have been someone Jesus trusted?

Are you someone who would be trusted by Jesus? Wouldn't it be nice to be trusted by Jesus?

Because Jesus was trying to avoid arrest, the house owner must have been a person not openly associated with Jesus? Another member of Jesus' "secret service"!

Now, the Bible tells us: "Each day Jesus was teaching in the Temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the Mount of Olives" (Luke 21:37). This means that Jesus was in the public eye from early morning until evening. How then did he make secret arrangements with the house owner to let him use the upper room? Isn't it intriguing, like a spy thriller? Unfortunately, Luke did not reveal Jesus' methods, or *modus operandi*, as I believe they are called.

Jesus's Secret Service – those were the days when Jesus needed to keep his movements and plans secret. After Jesus went back to heaven there was no need for the secret service. In the post-departure epistles of Paul, Peter and John, and the Book of Acts, the names of numerous believers were freely mentioned. The secret service had become public. So we can all count ourselves as public servants in the kingdom of God?

This is Mickey Chiang's final contribution for "Thinking Points". We thank him for his pungent humour and fresh look at the biblical narratives. It may not command agreement by all, but it certainly stimulates us to look more closely at the biblical text and its meaning. (QSH)



Chapel Notes

Chapel last week (20 Feb) was led by Mr Walter Edman. He spoke on the Great Commission (Matt.28:16-20), highlighting four important points: the authority of Jesus as the basis of this Commission; the scope of the Commission is the discipling of all nations, i.e., every people group; the urgency of the Commission ("Go!"); and the dual emphasis of baptism and teaching.

Chapel speaker for this week (27 Feb) is Rev Samuel Goh, Assistant Pastor of Mt Carmel Bible-Presbyterian Church. Rev Goh will be speaking on 'Salt and Light: Being Culturally Relevant'. Come, join us at the usual time, 12 pm.

NEWS BITS

1. **BGST THIS WEEK.** Please note two important matters. **First**, we would like to remind students at BGST that as important announcements are sometimes placed in BTW, it is their duty to read this weekly newsletter of our School. Often these announcements come in the form of cancellation of lectures or tutorials or last-minute changes concerning the venue of a class. So do remember to refer to BTW, which should appear weekly between Mon and Wednesday morning each week. **Second**, as part of our efforts to be better stewards of resources, we would like to encourage those of you who are currently receiving your copy of BTW by mail to have future BTWs sent to you via email if you have an email account. In this way, not only will you receive the email copy earlier in the week, it will also help us to reduce our expenses in printing & postage. However, we recognise that some of us would prefer to receive printed copies rather than electronic copies. As such, we will continue to send you your copy by post till we hear from you. So for those of you with an email account, please send us an email with the subject "BTW by email" to bgst@pacific.net.sg and we will do the rest. We look forward to your support in this exercise.

2. **Change of Phone Numbers.** With effect from 1 Mar 2002, with the launch of the 8-digit number format, our telephone and fax numbers will be 63538071 and 63538072 respectively.

3. **NT 311 (Romans)** will meet this Saturday, Mar 2, at its usual time and place, 8.30-10.00 am at Room 302. None of the rest of Dr Quek's classes and tutorials on Mar 2 will meet.

4. **NT101 (NT Foundations 1)** will resume on Monday, March 4, 7.00pm (tutorial) and 7.30-10.30pm double lecture, in the main sanctuary, of our Bishan campus.

5. **Faculty News.** A *Dinner Party* was held on Tuesday, Feb 25 to welcome the newest teaching members of BGST. *Mrs Leong King Teng* will be away from Singapore for ministry. *Walter Edman* leaves on Friday, Feb 28, for the USA to complete his doctoral studies. *Dr Quek Swee Hwa* was away last week in Indonesia for two days to attend to some mission matters. He participated this week in the 1st Asia Pacific Regional Conference of the Scripture Gift Mission. This was held at the office of SGM East Asia at Pasir Panjang Hill Brethren Chapel. Do continue to pray for *Dr & Mrs Philip Satterthwaite* during their sabbatical leave at Tyndale Hall, Cambridge, UK.

Wishing you God's blessings on your Birthday!



Mr Henry Yeong 02/28
Mr Ravi Shankar 02/28
Mrs Sharon Quek Li Shan 03/01
Mr Lim Kheng Hai 03/02
Dr Ng Hwee Hin 03/03