though he insists upon maintaining firm convictions, in a chapter on “Defending Christian Civility” he argues that Christians have failed to understand the gentleness in God’s nature.

In the Christian’s attempt to live at peace with all men, he is confronted by many difficult issues. Mouw wrestles with many of these situations. What should the Christian’s attitude toward a pluralistic society be? How can we be civil in dealing with the sexual attitudes and values of modern society that so obviously clash with our own belief system? How shall we approach the issue of legislat ing on issues like obscenity or homosexuality? What kind of dialog can Christians have with other religions? How can evangelicals preach about hell without appearing to be uncivil? In dealing with these issues, Mouw calls on Christians to shun an unbecoming triumphalism, to maintain a humble spirit, a correct motivation, a willingness to wait upon God’s providential plan to work its purposes rather than demanding instantaneous perfection.

This book offers needed counsel for modern evangelicism. It is time for reformers, crusaders, and pulpiti eners to step back and ponder their tactics, rhetoric and most of all their heart attitude. There are sins such as abortion or sexual perversion that seem to cry out for prophetic condemnation — but have we confronted these evils with the kind of compassionate spirit that should characterize those who follow Jesus Christ?

Reviewed by Richard L. Niswonger, Professor of History, John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR 72761.

BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Barnett covers his topic geographically by tracing the spread of Christianity from Bethlehem to Patmos. In between these two places, he pegs his thoughts on Nazareth, Jerusalem, Antioch and Rome. Although following a geographical progression, Barnett also includes in his account the wider social, political and historical background of the Roman Empire. Barnett wrote this book because he believes that the story line of the New Testament is hard to follow, that the New Testament lacks a political and social context, and that the accuracy of the historical aspects of the New Testament need emphasis. Barnett writes intelligently, clearly, and winnily.

Barnett’s book qualifies as a book on apologetics when discussing such topics as Jesus’ genealogy, virgin birth, and resurrection. This is reminiscent of the question Barnett dealt with in his previous book, Is the New Testament History? Barnett believes that the New Testament contains very reliable history. He delivers this message to secular as well as religious audiences in his lectures at a secular Australian university. Presently, Barnett serves as a bishop in Australia. This book was previously published in Australia by Hodder and Stoughton. It is recommended for those who could benefit from a succinct overview of the background and growth of Christianity.

Reviewed by Richard Ruble, John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR 72761.


Morris is associate professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. His previous books include Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology (Notre Dame Press, 1986), and Philosophy and the Christian Faith (Notre Dame Press, 1988). This is an elementary introduction to philosophical theology. Morris attempts to provide an example of how some simple, straightforward philosophical methods of thinking can shed light on theological matters which might otherwise remain obscure. This book does not cover the whole field of theology; it only deals with the theology proper—theology of God.

In Chapter 1, Morris outlines his approach as a focus on the philosophically rich tradition of Christian theism which is grounded in the biblical revelation. His primary task is to investigate whether a conception of God can be articulated which is both philosophically plausible and biblically faithful. The possibility of theology and our grounds for proceeding are based on the belief that human beings have been created in the image of God and the doctrine that we have been created by a perfectly good and loving God for the purpose of having communion with him.

In Chapter 2, Morris explains the rationality of perfect being theology and creation theology as the methods for conceiving of God. The perfect being theology focuses on the intrinsic properties of God, whereas creation theology emphasizes the actual and potential relations holding between God and all else possible. God’s goodness is explained in Chapter 3. Morris understands that God is not only wholly good, but He is also necessarily good. God is so firmly entrenched in goodness, that it is strictly impossible for there to be in him any sort of flaw or defect. Morris refutes the objection that if God’s goodness is a necessity, then He does not have morally significant freedom, or moral duties, and hence not praiseworthiness. God’s omnipotence is addressed in Chapter 4. It is derived from the conceptual and intuitive resources of perfect being theology. Even though God cannot sin, it does not negate his omnipotence. In Chapter 5, God’s omniscience is discussed. Morris concludes that, at the present time, there is no consensus among Christian or theistic philosophers, or among theologians, concerning which is the best response to the argument from foreknowledge to the nonexistence of free will.
In Chapter 6, the question is raised about what sort of being God is. The thesis of spatial simplicity (God is without any spatial parts) and of temporal simplicity (God is without any temporal parts) is accepted by Morris. God’s eternity is discussed in Chapter 7. Morris explains the difference between the temporally everlasting of God and the atemporally eternal. The former means that there is in the life of God a past, present, and future, as in the life of his creatures. But unlike any of his creatures, God is everlasting, and necessarily so. The latter means God does not in any way exist in time. There is no temporal location or duration in the life of God. Morris concludes that either view can be held and defended by a Christian seeking to articulate a reasonable idea of God.

In Chapter 8, the relation between the creation and the Creator is explained. The philosophical and metaphysical doctrine of creation is different from a scientific theory. The creation is purposive and ex nihilo, and God was free to refrain from creating and free to create something other than what he did choose to create. The creation also depends on God both directly and absolutely. The omnipresence of God can be understood as his perfect knowledge and power extending over all and not as something akin to physical location.

In the final chapter, “God Incarnate and Triune,” a unique Christian theology is explored.

According to Morris, in understanding the doctrine of the Incarnation, the challenge is to secure the unity of the person of Christ while at the same time acknowledging the real distinctness of his two natures. In understanding the doctrine of the Trinity, the challenge is to balance the distinctness of the persons with the real unity of the divine nature, a unity sufficient to justify the Christian insistence that monotheism has not been abandoned. In each case we can construct alternative, intelligible models or theories which offer interesting interpretations of initially paradoxical ideas.

This is a useful book which fulfills its purpose as an elementary introduction to philosophical theology. It can be used as supplementary reading in a college course on Christian philosophy. Morris is biblical, objective, and tolerant. He challenges his reader, stimulating deeper thinking about one's Christian faith.

Reviewed by T. Timothy Chen, National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, MD 20892.