Hurley’s theological position did not only bring him into conflict with the previous South African state, but also with the Calvinistic Afrikaans-speaking Churches. In 1960 Hurley spoke out against these Churches with the following argument:

The Afrikaner is concerned not only about his colour but also about his nation and is involved in a ceaseless campaign of national preservation and self-assertion. Religion plays an important part in that struggle. Afrikaner Calvinism is an ingredient of the national spirit, providing it with a sense of divine mission. The man who sets his face grimly to do what he understands to be God’s manifest will for his race is capable of swallowing any apartheid horror with a clear conscience. That is the tragedy of political Calvinism (p 8).

Hurley is fair in his analysis of the social problems of apartheid South Africa. He does not blame the Afrikaners as a group for all the problems of apartheid, because he is prepared to analyse apartheid against the background of Anglo-European colonisation and admit the guilt of his own Church in this regard. He says: “We are hypocrites if we condemn apartheid in South African society and condone it in our own institutions” (p 10). The solution he proposes for apartheid is “a national policy based on human rights, the common good and the dignity of man rather than on sectional interests” (p 11).

This very short resume of the relation between the fundamental theological thought of Hurley and his critique of the South African society is no more than an attempt to stimulate interest in the texts published in this volume. This publication is aimed at Roman Catholic readers in the first place, but it will also appeal to a wider audience. Anyone interested in contemporary thought in the Roman Catholic Church, social critique in South African society and ecumenical theology will find the book interesting. Protestant theologians might as well take note of Hurley’s writings. Denis Hurley is surely a remarkable man who confronts his readers with real problems and often impressive solutions to these problems.

Plevnik, J 1997 – Paul and the parousia: An exegetical and theological investigation


Reviewer: Dr G J Malan

In this study Plevnik grapples with the frequently neglected subject of the parousia, in search of the Pauline understanding of the theme. His approach is a reaction to Rudolf Bultmann’s program of demythologizing, as he tries to reclaim the “spiritual riches and the theological significance of the parousia” which Plevnik sees as lost in Bultmann’s approach.

The book has two parts. The first part (chs 1-7) deals with the fundamental concepts and imagery in Paul’s presentations of the parousia and with the exegesis of the key texts on the subject. The second part (chs 8-13) deals with the theological issues connected with the parousia. The notions discovered in the first part are here assembled and located within the wider context of Paul’s thought. Theological issues are
raised under such topics as hope, judgment, the antagonistic aspect of the parousia, living with Christ, the church and the parousia, and Paul’s apocalyptic theology.

The study is not restricted to the term “parousia” as such, but includes relevant terms used in Paul’s imagery about the parousia. A welcome and relevant inclusion is the discussion of the “day of the Lord” in the Pauline texts. Plevnik demonstrates that the concept of the parousia and its terminology derive [from the Jewish apocalyptic tradition rather than that of the Hellenistic “comings” of the kings.]

Plevnik sees the following as the key Pauline texts dealing with the parousia: 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18, 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28, 50-55; Philippians 3:20-21. To these texts he applies the somewhat dated historical critical exegetical method, as this book is a 1991-1992 reworking of his doctoral thesis from 1971. Therefore the text abounds with historical aspects as well as textual cross-references. It is evident from the list of more than three hundred short titles that he refers mostly to somewhat dated works. There are fewer than twenty references to works from this decade, while about fifty works mentioned are from the eighties. From a historical point of view it is nevertheless a thorough explication of the theme and could as such be useful to pastors and students.

In the concluding chapter, which is about Paul’s apocalyptic theology, Plevnik gives his critical views on Bultmann’s programme of demythologizing. In fact, there seems to be little if any common ground between Plevnik and Bultmann. Plevnik is critical about Bultmann’s use of Heidegger’s existential philosophy for hermeneutical purposes, Bultmann’s departure from “objective knowledge” about salvation to a subjective stance, his definition of myth, and the demythologizing programme, itself. As far as hermeneutics is concerned, Plevnik is at home with Karl Rahner, whose principles he proposes. Regarding the parousia in Pauline literature, Plevnik sees Bultmann’s method as a reduction of eschatology, and stresses with Beker the role of the apocalyptic in Paul’s theology. For him, hope has a specific object, and apocalyptic supplies the framework for this object. In the last five and a half pages Plevnik gives his own “rephrasing” of Paul’s apocalyptic imagery for modern people. Actually, he never lets go of the apocalyptic and mythological world-view, but simply states its “meaning”, which is not very helpful to people who do not accept the apocalyptic world-view. In view of his immense criticism of Bultmann, one would have expected much more. It is in the hermeneutical field that Plevnik fails the modern and more critical reader.

Van der Horst, P W 1994 – Hellenism-Judaism-Christianity: Essays on their interaction

Kampen: Kok Pharos. 300 Bladsye. Prys: Dfl 69,90

Resensent: Prof Pieter Craffert

Hierdie agtste volume in die reeks Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology bevat sestien artikels deur Van der Horst waarvan die meeste reeds vroeër gepubliseer is. Die groot verskeidenheid van die artikels en die hoeveelheid temas wat aangesny word, maak dit onmoontlik om enige breë tema of onderwerp te identifiseer vir bespreking. Daarom sal ’n kort oorsig oor die inhoud van die artikels afgesluit word met twee korter opmerkings oor die titel van die boek en oor die waarde van die publikasie vir leser van hierdie tydskrif.

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