

Book Reviews

Reading Isaiah

Edgar W Conrad, 1991
Fortress Press, Minneapolis
Pp xiv + 183

Ed Conrad's study of Isaiah is a bold foray into the minefield of biblical methodology. Ed is part of a new movement using the tools of contemporary literary theory located primarily in the process of reading. He consciously moves beyond, and offers a critique of, the old categories of historical criticism in an attempt to establish a new mode of criticism which is more accessible to the average reader.

This mode of analysis takes into account the literary features of the work as an integrated whole, the function of the implied audience encoded in the text, the orientation of the reader as an agent making meaning from the text and the alien nature of the textual world addressing the reader. While the reader recognises a propensity to find what he or she is seeking in the text, the text belongs to another time, space and set of values which are likely to confront the alien rather than confront the familiar. Even God will not be portrayed as we might expect.

As a methodological work Conrad's study is an extremely valuable prelude to any serious biblical theology based on the book of Isaiah. Conrad's work is a significant milestone in the interpretation of Isaiah which needs to be taken into account by future readers of the text.

All of this means that the now traditional way of reading Isaiah as two or three separate Isaiahs from different times and authors is set aside. I must admit that Second Isaiah is so firmly established in my mental canon that this move is hard to make. I also find it difficult, after years of calling students 'back to the text and its historical context' to recognise that much of the meaning they discern is not located 'in the text' as such but is created by the reading process and the context of that process, a context which includes the methodology.

So I struggle, after a lifetime of claiming to do 'exegesis' to confess with Conrad that in fact every reading is an 'exegesis', a reading of meaning into the text. Yet this is the fundamental challenge of this approach which is admirably exemplified in this volume. Even so, when I read this volume I discern the techniques of a fine exegete and discover few places where the eisegete - an American lecturing in Australia - surfaces as such.

The specifics of Conrad's analysis focus especially on the inner literary structures of Isaiah which, he argues, reflect a textual unity which historical critics who begin with an assumption of separate sources dare not entertain. Conrad offers five studies relating to Isaiah as a unity including an analysis of the Royal Narratives, the language of military strategy used in the book, the 'we' passages and

their relevance for understanding the implied audience, and the overall vision of Isaiah.

The book closes with a summary of what a literary reading of Isaiah as a unity might mean. He concludes that chapters 1-5 and 40-66 are the given literary framework for the reception by an implied audience of the vision of Isaiah in chapters 6-39. This ancient vision of Isaiah was not accepted by the original readers. Is. 40.6 is a renewed command to read Isaiah's vision to a new and receptive audience. This implied audience, as reflected in the text, is a community of survivors with minority status. This community as royal servant is a community that suffers. Its vision of a radical new age of world peace is grounded in the original vision of Isaiah.

Conrad contends that the vision of Isaiah, which is derived from an alien world, can be read afresh along with its implied audience as a meaningful theology for the future. The ideology of a 'democratised kingship in which the people are addressed as kings and informed that their warfare is ended', contends Conrad, 'is not a world that is remote from the experiences of twentieth century survivors' seeking 'people power'.

I strongly recommend this volume both as an exploration of methodology and an overture in biblical theology. Whether this method, with its dialectic between the remoteness of an ancient text and the meaning making of the present reader, will be that readily accessible to the average reader remains to be seen. For the serious biblical student, however, the contribution and the implications of this approach are far reaching.

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**The Cambridge History of Judaism.
Vol. 2 The Hellenistic Age**

W D Davies and Louis Finkelstein (eds)
Cambridge Uni. Press, Cambridge. 1989

The Cambridge History of Judaism is designed to cover the period from 539 BCE to 250CE, with this second volume focusing on the Hellenistic period under a threefold theme: The encounter of Judaism with Hellenistic thought through Israel; the effort of Jews to counter this influence and establish their own state; the resulting Jewish literary activities and ideologies. This innocuous sounding theme disguises a significant set of conclusions. As stated by the editors, 'this second volume...puts in question the validity of long-standing dichotomies often made in scholarship and literature between Judaism and Hellenism, Pharisaism and Apocalyptic, the Hebraic and the Hellenic. In the Hellenistic Age the Hebraic and the Hellenic so interpenetrated that Judaism survived only by adopting much from Hellenism and using it in its own interests' (:ix). Those of us interested particularly in the intertestamental period have tended to dichotomise Judaism and Hellenism, seeing Paul as a great exemplar of a Hellenistic Judaism that was not the norm and that led to a large extent to the full establishment of a philosophically distinctive Christianity. To the extent that we are convinced otherwise by this masterful volume, our teaching will have to change - certainly my undergraduate lectures will never be the same!

The eighteen papers in this collection range from the expected (Palestinian archaeology, socio-political history, Jewish literature) to the delightfully unexpected (leadership of the Great Synagogue, Jewish-Greek literature, the matrix of apocalyptic, the growth of anti-Judaism). The authors are without exception leading

scholars: James Barr, Marten Hengel, Louis Finkelstein, Paul Hanson, Harry Orlinsky, James Purvis, etc.. While the quality of writing is naturally uneven, the editors could well have imposed greater order on the content by the consistent use of headings and subheadings, repeating these in an extended table of contents. Purvis' informative essay on the Samaritans, for example, contains only two main headings, one of which contains two subheadings. At the same time, however, each paper is adequately referenced and there is a sound bibliography. There are also appropriate monochrome maps plus an excellent index.

Overall the papers present a thorough study of the period. Most notable in this respect are Halpern-Zylberstein on archaeology, Hengel on political and social history, Hegermann on the Diaspora, Goldstein on the Hasmoneans. Literature and linguistics form a major concern of the collection: Barr on languages, Delar on Jewish literature, Walter on Jewish-Greek literature, Ginsberg on Daniel, Orlinsky on the Septuagint, Le Déaut on the Targumim, Delar on the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. Taken together these papers alone cogently argue the conclusion quoted above; they do so at a level for advanced students and their teachers.

That this volume is a major contribution to the history of Judaism cannot be denied. Individual chapters will be required reading in advanced undergraduate and postgraduate classes, and scholars will want access to the work both for its exciting insights and its reference value. This will require purchase by academic libraries, as at A\$220 it is beyond the means of most Australian academics.

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Encyclopedia of Early Christianity

Everett Ferguson (ed.)

St James Press, London. 1990

ISBN 1-55862-104-0, xx + 983pp, cloth, unpriced

Taking as its time frame the period from the life of Jesus to about 600CE, this encyclopedia covers people, places, doctrines and practices, art and history, heresies and schisms of the early church. It contains 977 signed entries from 135 contributors, all of whom are listed together with their affiliations at the beginning of the work. It is a fully ecumenical work incorporating the views of Protestant, Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox scholarship. The Preface provides an excellent description of the rationale, content and arrangement of the work; this is followed by a General Bibliography, Abbreviations, Contributors and Chronology, and the entire work concludes with a thirty-seven page index. The entries themselves follow a standard format: definition or identification; antecedents if applicable; chronological or topical development of the subject in early Christianity; main patristic sources; and selected recent studies. The editors state that this work is addressed to 'general readers, students and professionals in other fields who want information about early Christianity. The articles, therefore, avoid technical language as much as possible, and where such is necessary provide definitions or explanations' (:vii).

Entries can be as short as five lines (Anianus of Celeda, Hegemonious) or as long as several pages but for the most part are appropriate to the significance of the individual or topic. A major entry, such as that on Christ/Christology, extends to seventeen columns and provides very concise and clear summaries of doctrinal development during that period. Fortu-

nately retreats into confessionalism occur rarely. On the Apostles' Creed (four columns), for instance, the entry is carefully balanced and avoids any dogmatic position unacceptable to mainstream scholarship. This balance extends to the entry's bibliography, which lists works by Rufinus, Kelly, McGiffert, de Ghellinck, Crehan, Holland and others.

A particularly noteworthy feature of this compilation is the inclusion of major modern scholars of early Christianity, giants such as F C Bauer and Harnack, as well as such notable encyclopaedists and editors as Leclercq and Quasten. The excellent index then includes all references to such individuals in other entries, even if they are only bibliographical.

Overall one can say without fear of contradiction that the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* is a carefully executed reference volume that clearly targets its non-specialist audience and provides detail appropriate to the entries. It succeeds in summarising difficult concepts and movements without sacrificing accuracy or colour - an admirable achievement. Any private or institutional library which possesses *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* will want a copy of this encyclopedia.

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**A Remarkable Absence of Passion:
Women address the Catholic Church**
Nora McManus (ed.) David Lovell,
Melbourne. Paper \$16.95

These reflections of passionate women addressed to unpassionate men, embodied in the biretta and lace bedecked cleric hiding behind the grille of the confessional, gathered by Nora McManus present the reader with a great variety of personal ex-

periences and a not so wide range of attitudes to the Catholic Church. For those whose religious experience was within the context of the Roman Catholic expression of the Christian tradition the cover will be all too familiar. However, it is not the whole story of the relationship of many individuals with the Catholic Church and so I tend to have been put off by the selective memory implied on the cover. This I fear was also how some of the stories affected me.

No doubt the title is meant to imply that there is in the Institution of the Catholic Church a remarkable absence of passion; this is not so in the lived experience of these women who address the Catholic Church, sometimes in anger, sometimes in sadness and sometimes, from how this reader hears it, with a deal of projection which does the cause of bridging the gap between the 'faithful' (a Scottish friend applied this title to the ordinary catholic and in the light of these reflections I think it is a very apt compliment) and the Institution no good at all. In some reflections, there seems to be an equation of passion with anger. Nora McManus says 'for them a **balanced** religious was someone who did not react with passion in the face of blatant human evil. Passion or anger...were seen as wrong'. Karen Donaldson in her reflections believes 'such anger (in the face of injustice and human degradation) is dear to the heart of God'. The writers who seemed to me to redeem this narrow understanding of the word passion were Jayce, Elizabeth, Niki and Anne. In their stories I sensed a balance and a verification of what Rosemary Haughton holds as the power of Passion; it 'has the potential to open up one's personality (like many other women in the Catholic tradition we dearly hope that this is possible for **corporate personalities** also), to

lead towards fuller self-knowledge, and to contribute to the creation of a new self'. These women were frank in the recording of their experiences but they also left this reader with the sense that they were taking some responsibility for their stand or movement away from the Institution.

There were in the pages of this small book some challenging and some affectionate images of the church. One writer called it a circus tent and we all know the role played by clowns in a circus! We are all aware that the ringmaster thinks he (and it always seems to be a he) should be obeyed blindly. The animals or lesser members of the circus team are not always treated with respect. Karen Donaldson creates the image of the Church as a holey boat 'built partly of beautiful, well-seasoned timber, and partly of planks that are rotten to the core. Even some of the good timber has holes in it: the boat is leaking fast. But the captain and professional crew keep rationalising about its structural faults and keep calling "All aboard!"' After expressing her hope in the Third World and some of its Bishops she concludes that maybe the Australian and Western Church is really more like a tired old ferryboat. How does one re-vamp a tired old ferryboat? Some of these women have decided to jump overboard and take the consequences; others have jumped but continue to blame the Institution; and others have stayed and work assiduously to renew the planks and the captain.

Anne McKinnon's image was quite sensitive and coming after her comments on the irony of the title of Holy Mother Church it was even more poignant in that it was created in an attempt to share with her own children some of the aspects of the Church that had nourished her faith journey. The image was an attempt to

hand on to her children some positive 'feel' for the Church and she likened it to a family where one is aware of some aunts and uncles who are **part of us** but whom we know to be odd and in being with them on occasions we learn to respect them though we do know that they are still odd.

Nora's story was known to me but the rape details reinforced the Catholic 'masculine' stupidity of a policy that says that three hours after rape 'yes' to a curette, four hours after 'no'! Whose God calculates in hours? So much of the religious life she revealed is part of many people's experience but her deep respect for her companions of 24 years added a balance that was lacking in some other accounts in the book.

Hera writes of her schizophrenic God and at times I felt that way about her reflections. At one time she is railing against the Religious brother she is besotted with and on the other hand she is admitting to having to take responsibility for her own life. It seems that the Institutional Church can not do much about the fact that some celibate people fall in love with lay people and visa versa. The fault is not in the vow of Celibacy but possibly in the poor training of those offering themselves for this life-style. Maybe she is projecting onto men some of the hidden agenda of the feminist movement which need not necessarily be her own.

Karen Corbett's story is a poignant comment on the incapacity of parochial structures (which most people associate with the masculine and rightly so) to see the injustice of their priorities. Her epilogue comment 'Somewhere between Pooh Bear and the toast I met another god, a less organised, less efficient god, a quiet god, a voice I recognised from childhood, a god who encouraged me, like the

blade of grass to grow through the concrete' reveals the sadness some people feel in the face of the insensitive Institutional Church. Why should the Church of Jesus of Nazareth, that community of equals, be experienced as concrete by so many people and women in particular?

Jayce addresses the Church in letter-form and seems to address CC as a person with whom she once had a relationship but from whom she walked away six years ago and to whom she sadly says 'You've gone nowhere in six years'. Maybe the Institutional Church could do some worthwhile reflecting on her other comment 'Change is what you fear most and acting out of fear is what you've always been on about'. Her series of 'maybe' statements are respectful and hopeful of change and the one that I resonate most with, but which I suspect is most threatening to CC, is her penultimate suggestion that 'maybe you and the rest of the boys will discover the goddess in your God and you'll start getting things right'. She signs herself Yours Passionately and in keeping with the notion of passion quoted above she has somehow come to that place of self-knowledge that leads to a new creation.

On the whole these passionate women do have some right to address the Catholic Church in the way they do in this book. Most of them have found elements of real love in some of their years in the 'holey' boat. All they are asking is that the men who dominate in the structure pay them the respect of listening to them and believing in the Spirit activated in each of them in Baptism. This Spirit is free and she breathes where she will, not only in structures and over men!

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'Christian' England: What the 1989 English Church Census Reveals

Peter Brierley

MARC Europe, London 1991

ISBN 1-85321-100-1, 254pp + maps,
£10.99 paper

'My colleague, David Longley, ...emerged very excited from a session on the computer. "Two-thirds of the churches in Tunbridge Well are growing," he said. Great news! The percentage of growing churches certainly varies across the country, as Figure 25 indicates' (:129). Anyone who emerges excited from a session at the computer probably need hospitalisation. Also, not much else happens in Tunbridge Wells, so I can see no cause for excitement. Most important, this weak attempt at sounding 'chatty' irritates more than it helps, yet it occurs from beginning to end of this volume. It is an attempt to overcome the view expressed by Sir John Boreham: 'not enough statisticians talk or write in a way that makes listening or reading a pleasure, not a duty' (:11). Well our own Philip Hughes and Tricia Blombery in their Christian Research Association publications succeed admirably in this regard, and one wishes that they had been asked to write this report on the English Church Census.

The Census was conducted in 1989 for reasons which are clearly specified in the report. It must be noted that MARC Europe is an affiliate of an evangelical Protestant organisation and that some of the objectives may be open to the charge of bias, for example to 'confirm Christianity is still very much alive' and 'affirm that people matter more than things' (:22). To be fair to this report, though, there is every indication that the survey, data collection and analysis have been undertaken in such a manner as to avoid bias. The ten chapters cover background

to the census, overall results, churchgoing by region and denomination and by age and gender, attendance by location (inner city, suburb), growth and decline (comparing 1985 and 1989 figures), how beliefs are practiced, age of churches, Third World giving, likely future trends. An appendix explains the census program, and there are useful colour maps following the index. Each substantive chapter opens with a brief statement of facts and figures and concludes with a useful summary; in between is a collection of tables, graphs, charts and maps together with narrative interpretation of the facts and figures. The tabular and graphic display are well chosen and legible throughout. Brierley regularly refers to related studies to give the commentary depth and comparison, and this is a particular strength. Each chapter contains much significant statistical data which Brierley for the most part handles ably and clearly.

Conceptual and presentation shortcomings aside, *'Christian' England* contains much useful data which makes interesting reading, especially when one juxtaposes the information with that reported in the CRA publications derived from the Combined Church Survey for Faith and Mission. Libraries and individuals who have acquired the CRA publications and do not yet possess the fuller MARC Europe report by Brierley, *Prospects for the Nineties* should acquire a copy of *'Christian' England*.

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Effective Preaching: How to Prepare Good Homilies Today

Dan Hook

E J Dwyer, Newtown 1991 139pp \$16.95

As a former Methodist minister, I was trained to be a preacher. As a present lay reader in the Anglican church, preaching is still my most significant liturgical activity, or at least the one where I am most exposed. My training was in a tradition where it was the responsibility of the preacher to choose the subject week by week. This led frequently to a form of self-indulgence in the preacher, 'favourite subjects' or to a resort to endless boring series of themes or biblical analysis which had to be endured by both preacher and congregation to their bitter end. The star performer, however, had a marvelous time.

I now preach in a eucharistic tradition where the lectionary provides the material for the sermon. In this tradition the preacher is disciplined by the lectionary and the seasons. There is no room for the development of any continuity over a period of time. The teaching sermon is rarely heard. On the other hand, some hard topics must be confronted. It was with very mixed feelings that I recently heard read St Paul's admonitions to wives to obey their husbands. I knew how some of the women in the congregation would respond to them. I was pleased that I was not the preacher, but I was sorry that I could not have a try to make something of the reading.

With this background I came to Dan Hook's book. It is written for the tradition in which I now preach, not the one in which I was educated. It thus partakes of both the opportunities and limitations of the tradition. I found that his advice about how to prepare for preaching by reading the lections for the day, by gaining a clear

understanding of their meaning, and by understanding the community context for the teaching corresponded almost exactly with what I do. I am not quite sure how a reviewer should treat such a discovery. It seems rather pretentious to congratulate the author for being so perceptive. The fact is that this is the best part of the book.

It also seems to me that few preachers are able to relate the text to the everyday life of the congregation. The temptation is to make the sermon some kind of public affairs commentary attached to the exegesis. But people are as often confused by the public affairs as by the theology. Neither seem to relate to what they actually experience. Apparent social relevance is not a substitute for deeper understanding of this type of experience. This needs to be understood by those who follow Hook's methodology.

I almost never anticipate those features of my sermons which most touch the hearers. By that I mean that the comments of the congregation afterwards frequently surprise me. Sometimes it appears that they heard a different sermon! Sometimes they appear to hear something in my words which 'was hidden from me. I suppose that to be the Holy Spirit at work. It certainly points to the necessity to be open in one's attitude to the task.

Overall, I liked this book, although some of the language is trendy. How could he use 'nuance' as a verb? It should be of use to beginning preachers as long as they use it to enhance their freedom, not as a formal guide. It would also be useful to hearers who want to sharpen their listening capacities.

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The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possession in Brazilian Candomblé.

Jim Wafer

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1991

xiii + 219pp. Paper \$US12.95.

When African slaves were transported to Brazil, from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, they lost freedom and most did not live very long. But their Spirits and religious cults survived the crossing, rather latitudinarian Catholic evangelisation and the mortality of the slaves. From the beginning, the spirits responded to changes in the lives of those who carried them into the new world. Initially to disguise them, the great warrior spirits, the kings and princesses of several African 'nations' were given second names, Christian names. Xangô, legendary Dahomeyan king and spirit of lightning, received in some areas of Brazil the second name of St. John the Baptist and in time subtle changes in identity; Iemenjá, a wife of Xangô and spirit of the seas became, variously, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.

By the twentieth century other changes, consistent with the African spirit religions remaining living, popular religions, had taken place. Afro-Brazilian spiritism has long since provided meaning, identity and magic beyond the population of the descendants of slaves. The pantheon of spirits has come to include not only the original West African *orixás* like Xangô and Iemenjá but a vastly diversified class of their 'slaves', the *exus*, and other classes of spirits like the *caboclos*, who are primarily forest Indians but also include cowboys and Brazilian folk heroes.

The diversification and the Brazilianisation of the spirit religions is also re-

flected in variety of practice and ritual life. One way of being a Brazilian spiritist is to attend, as a client, a sort of séance, where a 'white table' medium, schooled in the European spiritism of Alain Kardec, will pass on advice and instructions for surmounting the problems of life from *caboclos* and *exus*. Another is to find a congenial 'parent in the saint' who will divine the spirits of your head, educate you in the right mode of relating to the spirits, and induct you into the life of a *terreiro*, the centre in which your parent and brothers and sisters receive their spirits in trance and pay their obligations to them. Your choice of a parent in the saint will usually mean that you become adept in a particular form of Afro-Brazilian spiritism - more Afro (Candomblé) or more thoroughly Brazilianised (Umbanda); if more Afro, more of one or other of the 'nations', Ewe (Gege), Bantu (Angolan), and Queto (Yoruban). But there is much borrowing between forms and much variation within any one of them: these are living, growing religions, and weak Federations have not been able to freeze creative syncretisms into orthodoxies.

Jim Wafer provides us with much of this sort of basic information about Afro-Brazilian spirit religion, and more besides. But retailing information is not his central concern, and this is no text-book. He eschews the business of 'fact production' - so that, even when focussing most narrowly on the phenomenon of trance in that one type of Afro-Brazilian spiritism known as Candomblé, he has avoided methods of investigation and reporting that would gel real-world fluidities of boundary between spirits and bodies, the remembered dead and the remembering living, the outsider anthropologist and the

insider father of the saint, into the confessions of reported fact.

More positively, his aim has been to record and present a very personal and at the same time a social testament of what it is to be in the local world of particular Candomblé *terreiros* in and around the great city of Salvador in Northeast Brazil. It is personal in the sense that Jim Wafer's experience, becoming an initiate in the *terreiro* of his father in the saint Marinalvo, and relating to his brothers and sisters in and out of trance, constitutes the central body of data. It is social in the sense that Wafer presents spirit possession in Brazilian Candomblé in the form of conversations - between his own social selves (doctoral researcher, patron, client and friend, seeker of meaning and of love), between his participant-observer research assistant Archipiado and himself, between members of the *terreiros* in which he was involved.

Wafer is at once self-conscious about the need for congruence between aim, research methods and writing and extremely skilful - or perhaps the word is artistic - in achieving it.

The people of Candomblé do not have a systematic theology of their spirit world or a codified ethics of spiritism but acquire and communicate religious knowledge by means of narratives that weave the spirits into the fabric of the social context in which they and their listeners are participants. Such narratives rarely attempt to reproduce faithfully an authoritative body of knowledge. Mostly they are creative endeavours whose purpose is to relate to the immediate situation the teller's personal and often contradictory experiences with the spirits, in a way that makes those experiences meaningful to both narrator and listener.

It follows, for Wafer, that he should adopt a similar procedure.

That is not at all a simple thing for an Australian born, American trained anthropologist and seeker after truth about personal destiny and the human condition to do. Given the aim of 'locating particular instances of trance within the events of daily life, and attempting to reproduce the interaction of reason and imagination in the way trance was interpreted by those involved in the events, including myself' (p.106), and the commensurate method of radical participant observation, the writing must have presented enormous challenges. Wafer has to integrate into a coherent, if post-modern, text all the voices he believes we must hear if we are to re-constitute the reality of being in Candomblé. There is the ethnographer's voice trying to get in as much as possible of the narratives of the Candomblé people and their descriptions of their experiences. There is the voice of a very competent language teacher showing us what is happening as we translate these accounts and the songs of ritual into English. There is Wafer's academic voice reflecting on the arguments of Michel Maffesoli and epistemological issues or considering the aptness of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque to Candomblé myths and practices. There is the voice of the academic sceptic who has seen how he has been manipulated by his father in the saint into becoming a sort of paying patron helping to maintain a rather camp social club. And this voice is often at odds with the confessional voice whose tone is of a poet's journal of the soul.

I have quoted passages in the academic voice. Here are samples of other voices. Wafer describing his experience of seclusion during his initiation:

This afternoon I feel like a child. People bring me my food, remove my chamber pot, wash me. I am helpless, and therefore tempted to feel innocent. But when I look at myself in terms of the events of the last few days, I see just another member of a species that is unique in its rapacity, its cunning, and its capacity for self-deception.

Later, his experience of being anointed with the blood dripping from a sacrificial dove:

I think I had expected to get a mild thrill of moral indignation or disgust from this experience. What shocked me instead was that I found it so sensuous...It violated all the boundaries that make me separate from the rest of creation, and like creation, it was beautiful in its profligacy. A god had just been dismembered, as a sacrifice to itself. A universe had died. The universe continued.

The ethnographer, presenting Corquisa, one of the female *exus* of Taís, a friend and major informant:

It was a few days later that Corquisa first revealed herself to me. I had gone to visit Taís at Edivaldo's where he was living....Edivaldo had been going about the household tasks of a father-of-saint. Suddenly he received his caboclo, who, like Taís's, is called Tupinambá. Shortly afterwards Taís quivered and closed his eyes. The head that had been Taís's tilted back, and another being looked out through half-closed lids. Corquisa had descended, and let out a horrible laugh. 'Good day, my lady', I said, kissing the hand that she proffered. She said she had some important matters to discuss with

me, but first I had to get her something to drink...

In my view, Wafer succeeds in weaving his different voices into a coherent evocation and interpretation of the Candomblé spirits in the lives of the Candomblé people of a particular place. One reason for his success can be divined from these quotations: he is a gifted and polished writer, and he has crafted his book superbly so that its structure reflects his aims, keeps faith with his methods of investigation and analysis, and helps express his interpretations.

A 'pre-text' of quotations or 'perspectives' from Kenneth Burke and others alerts us to the boundary-crossings we are about to encounter, as the author/researcher did, on the way to entering the world of Candomblé. The text itself is divided into three parts, each one named after the class of spirits whose characteristics and dealings with the human world are the focus - first the *exus*, 'because in this Brazilian religion every major undertaking or ritual has to begin with them' and because they are closest to the contemporary human world; then the *caboclos* and finally the more remote, but most decisively powerful African *orixás*. Within each of these parts there is an artful movement backwards and forwards from accumulating narrative of Wafer's own entrance into the social networks of his Candomblé friends, to introductions to the spirits as he encounters them in ritual and the everyday lives of the families-in-the-saint, to epistemological and interpretative reflections. Only once did the artistry of his authorial boundary-crossing fail me, when I lost the thread of the narrative of his initiation in chapter 7.

There is no conclusion summing up arguments and interpretations as we might

expect in a more conventional academic study. Wafer is anxious not to privilege his interpretations as a mere participant in a game of interpretations. He wants to avoid any final objectification of Candomblé not only in the radical form of reducing it something else (an opium of the people, an ideology of hegemonic rule) but even in the humbler forms of codifying beliefs and generalising about the consequences of living Candomblé for other areas of life. To conclude along any of these lines, would be unfaithful to the Candomblé he has reconstituted by the end of the book. In the *terreiros* he has been describing, all the boundaries that are the basis for objectification and generalisation - the boundaries between the living and the dead, between subject and object, between self-hood and other-hood, between male and female, between an empirical and a super-empirical realm, are forever being crossed and negotiated. To freeze the boundaries in conventional interpretation, is, for Wafer, to kill living Candomblé and its people, living and dead.

Nevertheless he does interpret. Certain metaphors seem apt to him. The game - though not the game of game theory - is obviously one. Candomblé is 'an interplay of identities that are constantly being tested, circulated, transformed. The only goal of Candomblé is to 'live the intensity' of the game itself...' (p.182). Bakhtin's carnival is another. For Bakhtin carnival was public play in which there was no distinction between actors and audience, no proscenium arch; and in that play there was a temporary suspension or even inversion of hierarchy and the rules of normal order. For Wafer, Candomblé stands against official order and hierarchy as a sort of continuing carnival; and he relativises the notion, seeing within Can-

domblé a series of carnivals over against more formal and structured elements. Underlying this image is perhaps another, of a universe that is constantly becoming out of chaos. The last sentence of his epilogue returns to the theme of the fluidity of all boundaries in his *terreiros*. 'Apparently substantial entities were constantly being removed from the contexts that gave them fixed identity, and rearranged in patterns that were as fantastic as the clouds of swirling gas that form the heavens, the galaxies, the sun, and the other stars.'

I have argued that Wafer succeeds wonderfully in matching aims, methods and exposition and that we have, as a result, a rich description of what for some particular people in a particular place it is to be Candomblé people. In a very rapid conclusion, I want to suggest that the achievement comes at a certain cost. Aim, method and interpretative metaphors conspire to suppress certain questions. The game of Candomblé is an open one: it is studied as one, it is found to be one. None of its players achieve closure, determining the game for others or having it determined for them: it would be death to Wafer's Candomblé were they caught at it, having overcome the essential carnival. So Wafer cannot entertain certain questions that traditional social science puts to any religion. First class ethnographer that he is, he notes instances of power play, successful attempts by patrons and clients of Candomblé to manipulate spiritist fears and beliefs to achieve influence or control over others. But he does not (cannot?) push the questions, how open, how liberating is the living of Candomblé? Are the games of identity and boundary-crossing played on a level playing field, or is the field tilted, such that the rich and powerful, through their power over the spirits,

shape the life-chances of the little people of Candomblé even as they play with freedom in religious carnival? But the game must go on, and Wafer does not even note the work of Renato Ortiz and others who argue (too sweepingly for me) that the game is rigged in favour of whites over blacks and rich over poor.

Reliance on personal knowledge and exclusive focus on particular, personally engaged in *terreiros* also has its costs when, as the sub-title of the book suggests, something as widespread as spirit possession in Brazilian Candomblé is being addressed. Wafer is a radical participant observer in that, privileging his personal, experientially acquired knowledge, he excludes most of the comparative data that would enable readers not familiar with the rich case-study materials available, to locate the particular groups and individuals whom he has chosen or been chosen to know. So we cannot, for example, locate the homosexual predilections and games of Wafer's Candomblé people on a general map; and that limits our ability to know what it is we have come to know about Brazilian Candomblé as it is lived by millions of Brazilians.

Of course these are 'costs' of brilliant achievement from the perspective of more traditional social science. Another way of viewing the book is in terms of its title rather than its social-science sub-title. If the whole point of the thing is to taste the blood of Candomblé, to become vicarious initiands through Jim Wafer, then these 'costs' must seem slight indeed. The taste once acquired - and, because Wafer is such a good and ruthlessly honest participant observer and an exceptional writer, it almost certainly will be - the reader will be moved to do the comparing and contrasting and to put the newly meaningful traditional ques-

tions to a wider body of literature. What more could we demand of an ethnographic monograph than that it should allow us to taste the blood of the living?

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**Ascetic Figures before and in Early
Buddhism: The emergence of Gautama
as the Buddha**

Martin G. Wiltshire

Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990

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This book deals with the class of Indian renunciant termed *paccekabuddha*. (Other scholars have translated the term as 'silent Buddha', 'solitary Buddha', 'independent Buddha', etc. Wiltshire leaves it untranslated.) The author sets out 'to show that the *paccekabuddha* is an ascetic figure of crucial importance to our understanding of the origins of the Buddhist religion' (p. 292).

Wiltshire affirms, early in the book, that *paccekabuddhas* were not, as some have suggested, a mere classificatory abstraction; they did exist as a class of renunciants in the period preceding the emergence of the Buddha Sakyamuni. He examines how *paccekabuddhas* related to other types of ascetic of the time, in particular to the Buddha himself and his followers. He concludes that they represent 'the common ascetic tradition out of which the Sramanic Movements of Buddhism and Jainism emerged as sectarian manifestations' (p. 293). In addition, he argues that the *paccekabuddha* came to be contrasted with the *sammāsambuddha* (fully enlightened Buddha) and the *sāvaka* (disciple of a *sammāsambuddha*) as part of a process of self-definition undertaken within the Buddhist 'cultus' as it

entered its early proselytising phase. These are important issues and important conclusions regarding a crucial period in Indian religious history.

The main primary sources used for this study are the earlier sections of the Pali canon together with some relevant Buddhist Sanskrit materials. The corresponding Chinese texts, which would certainly also yield relevant data, are not examined, presumably for practical reasons.

The analysis of this material is presented in three of the book's four main chapters, entitled 'The *Paccekabuddha* as *Isi*', '... as *Samana*', and '... as *Muni*'. These cannot but be fascinating to any reader with an interest in the phenomenon of renunciation in ancient India. Much interesting information emerges regarding the various ascetic types and regarding the meaning of the term '*paccekabuddha*'. As for the author's conclusions, one is left with mixed feelings. No difficulty surrounds the conclusion that the term '*paccekabuddha*' was 'the canonical and post-canonical designation for the category of persons who, in the period prior to the advent of the Buddha, were regarded ... as "enlightened ones"' (p. 296). Less persuasive, one feels, is the author's theory about how the *paccekabuddha* was later demoted to a status inferior to that of the Buddha, Sakyamuni. This entails that later followers of the Buddha introduced various doctrinal innovations designed to affirm the uniqueness of the Buddha's enlightenment experience and teaching. This essentially reasonable proposition is not presented at all convincingly. In particular, no evidence is adduced that the doctrinal points in question were not part of the Buddha's teaching from the outset. For example, the author's proposal that 'the *anagamin* category' was such an in-

novation (p. 264) surely requires a discussion of the likelihood that the doctrine of four grades of supramundane attainment (the *anagamin* is the third grade) was not part of the Buddha's own teaching. But no such discussion is offered.

The book has many defects of style and presentation. It is not very well written. Malformed sentences occur frequently enough to constitute a serious distraction to the reader. Further distraction is caused by rather frequent misspellings, particularly of Pali and Sanskrit terms and proper names. Recurring examples are *nimmita* for *nimitta*, *putthujana* for *puthujana*, and Mogallana for Mogallana. Misplacing of diacritics is also

widespread. Simple omission of a diacritic is forgivable; but consistently supplying one where it does not belong is an error of a different order.

All this creates the unfortunate impression that the work has been put together carelessly and in haste. Nevertheless, readers who can manage to disregard such distractions should find this an interesting book, one that has some important things to say about the Indian *sramana* tradition around the time of the Buddha.

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