

Publishing Editor's column

ON LOOKING THROUGH a catalogue of religious books recently, my eye caught the heading, "Zondervan Counterpoints Series". It was introduced by the words: "The *Counterpoints* series provides a forum for comparison and critique of different views on issues important to Christians. A number of authors in each volume outline the significant arguments for their position, and also respond to those with whom they differ". The individual titles are under two main subdivisions: *Church Life* and *Exploring Theology*.

No fewer than seventeen titles are listed in the series, and the number of different views covered in specific titles varies from two to six. The subjects are not trivial ones; examples are: *Four Views on Church Government*; *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*; *Four Views on Hell*; and *Five Views on Sanctification*. Four of the titles are picked out and the individual viewpoints listed. One of these titles is, *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, and the four views are stated to be:

- Normative Pluralism: all ethical religions lead to God
- Inclusivism: salvation is universally available, but is established by and leads to Christ
- Salvation in Christ: agnosticism regarding those who haven't heard the gospel
- Salvation in Christ alone.

For those who accept Scripture as authoritative there is, of course, no doubt that the last view is the right one, for the Apostle Peter declares: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Many, though not all, of the titles in the *Counterpoint* series similarly concern issues where we are quite clear from Scripture as to what is the correct view of the matter, and have incorporated it into our Statement of Faith. To take another example from the titles listed above, there is only one Scriptural view of hell. I found the list of titles quite an eye-opener. Multiplying the number of titles by the number of viewpoints, there are sixty-six different viewpoints covered altogether, a powerful reminder of how Christendom is divided.

All this is very far from the teaching of Scripture:

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one

Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6);

". . . it was needful for me to . . . exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude v. 3).

We, of course, know that Christendom is divided because of departing from the teaching of Scripture. The situation has been made much worse by the fact that the Bible is often not accepted as the inspired Word of God anyway, leading to, for example, the teaching of universal salvation referred to above.

The variety of views covered in the *Counterpoints* series are the views held in the mainstream Protestant churches; the series does not cover, for example, the very different beliefs in some respects held by the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox churches of the east. Neither does it cover the views of sects outside the mainstream churches, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons. If we were to add the various teachings of such sects and denominations to the sixty-six different points of view referred to above, far more views would have to be covered.

The existence of such a variety of views in Protestant Christendom might lead some to think that we could find churches holding sets of teachings with which we would agree. Some of the sixty-six viewpoints expressed would certainly be ones which we would agree with, such as 'salvation in Christ alone'; but finding churches holding anything like the set of beliefs which make up our Statement of Faith would certainly not be possible. This becomes apparent when we consider what topics are not discussed in the series.

In particular, one looks in vain for any reference to the two matters which have most of all attracted opposition to Christadelphians: the nature of man and the nature of Christ. It would appear that the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and of the Trinity are accepted as true, and not open to debate. Though in this more tolerant age there is less inclination to attack us for our beliefs, perhaps partly caused by us being less inclined to proclaim them vigorously, it remains true that our fundamental teachings are widely different from Christianity, whatever the variety of views now existing within mainstream Protestant churches.

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