

The Message of the Word of God

Rt. Rev. Henry Paltridge

Rt. Rev. Henry Paltridge reviews *The Message of the Word of God* by Rev. Dr. Tim Meadowcroft.

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Rev. Dr. Tim Meadowcroft (IVP, 2011, 284 pp
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Tim is Senior lecturer in Biblical Studies at Laidlaw College, Auckland Campus, and the son of Canon John and Monica Meadowcroft, former NZCMS missionaries, who also ministered in NZ parishes. This title in the Bible Speaks Today series recently published by IVP looks at this theme in four major parts. Each part has five subheadings, where a particular portion of Scripture is expounded. God speaks, God speaks in the written Word, God speaks in Christ, and God speaks today are the headings.

The book has a study guide at the end, to help groups or individuals work through the passages referred to in the text. Tim notes on page 267. "Even if you are studying on your own try to find another person to share your thoughts with."

The author's preface on page 11 reminds us of the way that the message of the Word of God comes real. "As I wrote I found my mind often going to four men who played significant roles in further shaping my own perception and experience of God speaking. Paul Davidson, my boarding master for a number of years as I grew up in West Pakistan, helped to form the habit of regular personal Bible reading, and taught me that life is an adventure and risk is part of the life of faith, Bob Robinson, my pastor in student days, opened a door through which I glimpsed the possibilities of academic theology, and taught me much about the comprehensive role of Christ the Word, Don Corban my pastor, nurtured in me a call to pastoral ministry, and the late Francis Foulkes, my teacher, modelled for me an academic commitment placed at the service of the church." In a sense Tim is wearing the mantle of these men in the NZ church today.

Tim has resourced material to explain Biblical phrases, such as on page 94 about being "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (1 Peter 1.21), he quotes Bede's comments from the eighth century. "Some interpret Peter's words to mean that the Spirit inspired the prophets in much the

same way as the flutist blows into his flute, so that the latter were no more than mechanical instruments in God's hands, saying what the Spirit told them to say without necessarily understanding it themselves. This is ridiculous." (Cited in Gerald Bray's Commentary on James, 1-2 Peter & 1-3 John, Jude)

In the John 2.13-25 section concerning the scriptures and the resurrection of the Word, Tim introduces the term 'suspense account'. On page 139 he explains this term. "In their encounters with Jesus, the disciples had many occasions on which to use a suspense account. They encountered many things that they did not understand, and that only became clear to them in the light of the resurrection."

Tim also seeks to relate the NZ scene in the introduction to many sections. For example on page 244 beginning the section about the Spirit of Truth and Love on John 14.15-26 he wrote. "One of the struggles of the New Zealand church, the context from which I write, is the image of the church held by wider society."

For those with a special interest in word studies Tim has given background to various biblical words from both Testaments with a wide appreciation of meaning. For example on page 254 in notes on John 14, verse 21 the whole scope of the word from which 'emphasis' is based has been wonderfully unfolded.

The Message of the Word of God is a useful book for anyone in biblical ministry.