ANTHONY THISELTON

Anthony Charles Thiselton

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by

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An ordained priest and academic theologian, Anthony Thiselton combined a life of prolific scholarship with significant contributions to the life of the Church of England and the institutions of higher education in which he served, most notably the University of Nottingham. Author of thirty-three books, he possessed an unrivalled erudition in philosophical hermeneutics (both continental and analytic), New Testament scholarship, and systematic theology. Broadly evangelical in his sympathies, Thiselton displayed an awareness and sympathy with alternative positions and approaches in Biblical and theological interpretation, his work consistently adopting a mediating and eirenic tone.

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Personal and professional life

Born in 1937 in Woking, Anthony ('Tony') Thiselton was the son and only child of Eric and Hilda (*née* Kevan). His early education was undertaken at the City of London School during the war years. Upon leaving school, he entered King's College London, graduating BD (1959) before commencing a curacy at Holy Trinity Church, Sydenham (1960–63). His outstanding academic ability was soon recognised by appointment as Lecturer and Chaplain at Tyndale Hall (later part of Trinity College), Bristol (1963–67), and then Senior Tutor (1967–70). During this time, he assisted John Wenham with his well-known elements of Greek grammar. From Bristol, he proceeded to the nascent Department of Biblical Studies at Sheffield University under the leadership of James Atkinson and subsequently John Rogerson, the department increasingly renowned for its pioneer approaches to methods of Biblical study and interpretation. From Henry Stephenson Fellow (1970–71), he advanced to a lectureship in Biblical Studies (1971–79), later being promoted to senior lecturer (1979–86). Confirming his continued capacity to bridge church and academy, he served as Principal of St John's College, Nottingham (1986–88), and later St John's College with Cranmer Hall, Durham (1988–92). Returning to Nottingham in 1992, Thiselton held the Chair of Christian Theology at the University of Nottingham until his retirement in 2001. This was the most productive and successful phase of his academic career. Under his leadership, the department attained international eminence in several areas of study, excelling in the research assessment exercises and in recruitment of graduate students. (He would surely have been disappointed had he witnessed the recent assimilation of its staff members into the Department of Philosophy.) Thiselton's years of 'retirement' proved highly productive in church service, academic involvement, and publishing. From 2003, he held a part-time Research Chair in Christian Theology at the University of Chester (2003–2008), while also returning to Nottingham in a part-time capacity (2006–11). He served as Canon Theologian at Leicester Cathedral (1994–2011).[1]

These brief biographical data scarcely capture the unusual range of Tony Thiselton's multiple contributions. He served on numerous church bodies and government committees, including the General Synod (1995–2010), the Doctrine Commission (1976–90, 1996–2006), the Working Party on Women in the Episcopate (2001–06), the Crown Nominations Commission (2000–2010), and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (1995–99). Earlier periods of research and teaching were undertaken in the USA – Calvin College in Grand Rapids (1982–83), Fuller Theological Seminary in

[1] A short account of Thiselston's contribution can be found in Stanley E. Porter and Matthew R. Malcolm, 'The Life and Work of Anthony Charles Thiselton', in Stanley E. Porter & Matthew. R. Malcolm (eds), *Horizons in Hermeneutics: A Festschrift in honor of Anthony C. Thiselton* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013). The essay also contains a comprehensive list of Thiselton's publications until 2013.

Pasadena (1984 & 2002), and North Park College and Seminar in Chicago (1984). He taught in twelve countries across four continents. The inaugural *Scottish Journal of Theology* Lecture Series was delivered in 1994 at the University of Aberdeen. Honorary doctorates were awarded by Lambeth (2002) and Chester (2012). A *Festschrift* appeared in 2013 edited by Stanley E. Porter and Matthew R. Malcolm.

Thiselton's marriage to Rosemary Harman in 1963 established the bedrock upon which his career was established. Throughout his life, Rosemary provided invaluable support both domestically and professionally, including service as his driver and regular proofreader. He and Rosemary had three children – two sons (Stephen b. 1964 and Martin b. 1969) and one daughter (Linda b.1966), and later six grandchildren. Rosemary's name appears unfailingly in every set of acknowledgements as a faithful co-worker in preparing materials for publication.

A consequence of his premature birth followed by meningitis as a two-year old, Thiselton suffered throughout his life from poor eyesight – this prevented him from driving which proved a perpetual frustration. At an early stage of his education, he was considered unsuitable for theological training. A pre-ordination medical report in 1958 stated: 'This man will never be able to read enough books to exercise a useful parish ministry.' Happily, the Bishop of Southwark chose to ignore the doctor's opinion. Though he always required a magnifying glass to read Hebrew, it is hard to imagine a better-read Biblical scholar and theologian.[2]

In a memoir published in 2015, Thiselton wrote about his life and work in church and university. A strong conviction of divine providence allied to his sense of humour marks these recollections. He survived serious health issues in childhood and in his career successfully overcame the challenges of chronically poor eyesight. His remarkable recovery from a major stroke in 2007, after which he authored numerous books, was also attributed to the prayers of friends and the grace of God. In reading these reminiscences, one senses that Thiselton was most comfortable on the boundary between church and university. His strong evangelical faith remained constant, but he valued his friendships with people across the theological spectrum, including David Jenkins, the Bishop of Durham, with whom he collaborated on the Doctrine Commission. Colleagues have described him as 'politically astute and persuasive'. With its opportunities for periods of intense research and teaching of graduate students, he relished his involvement in university life. He also contributed significantly to the administration and management of the institutions in which he laboured. He appears to have enjoyed friendships with several Vice-Chancellors, especially Colin Campbell in Nottingham. And, given his additional commitment to sundry church bodies, it is surprising that Tony Thiselton published so prolifically, his outputs accelerating at even greater pace upon his retirement from full-time teaching in 2001.

[2] This story is narrated by Thiselton in the preface to *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), p. xii.

Of the various posts he held, only the Principalship of St John's College in Nottingham appeared to frustrate him. Complaining of an 'extreme charismatic element', he found its worship unappealing and the pastoral work too time-consuming. 'Whereas I had begun with a vision for the college, I felt that it was virtually impossible to implement it. With expectations that all staff had an equal vote on introducing new ideas or emphases, I knew that I was powerless to influence the juggernaut! In my view, the college had tended to become somewhat inbred.'[3]

He writes with obvious enthusiasm about the friendships established in the Doctrine Commission and the General Synod of the Church of England in which he convened the Evangelical Group from 1999–2004. Thiselton was a good mimic. On one occasion at Synod, he expounded with evident relish on the Commission's report on *The Mystery of Salvation* by recounting a two-hour seminar he led on a train from York with a group of three London youths who had consumed around 30 cans of lager. They demanded to know more about this 'Meest'ry of Sa'vation stuff' and Thiselton was evidently happy to oblige.[4]

Neither Thiselton's ecclesiastical location nor theological position can be easily categorised.[5] An evangelical by conviction and background, he had a deep love of liturgy and church music. He served for over 30 years as an assistant minister in St Mary's Church, Attenborough, preaching there on a regular basis. Informality and carelessness in the preparation of worship, especially preaching, offended him – this may explain in part his frustrations at St John's Nottingham. Yet these more catholic commitments were balanced by an evangelicalism that maintained a high view of Scripture, of personal confession and devotion, and an adherence to the central doctrines of the Christian faith. This blending of high and low church tendencies of catholicity and evangelicalism was matched in constructive ways by a crossing of boundaries in his published work between Biblical criticism and doctrine, and philosophy and theology. The practice of both faith and academic rigour remained a constant animating force for work that resulted in a stream of academic publications which continued until shortly before his death. After suffering his major stroke in 2007, he made a full recovery which facilitated a decade of productive scholarly activity and travel. Remarkably, he wrote a further 20 books during this period, several also appearing in translation.

[3] *A Lifetime in the Church and the University* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2015), pp. 59–60.
[4] Ibid., pp. 83–4.
[5] In his comprehensive study of Thiselton's hermeneutics, Robert Knowles characterises him as a 'self-critical, moderate, conservative evangelical' who remained a 'loyal son of the Church of England' in his ecclesiology and adherence to Reformation doctrine. Given the breadth of influences upon his work, it is hardly surprising that some evangelicals would accuse him of 'liberalising' tendencies. See Robert Knowles, *Anthony C. Thiselton and the Grammar of Hermeneutics: The Search for a Unified Theory* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), pp. 54–9.

Hermeneutics

Thiselton's academic reputation was initially established by his first monograph *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (1980),[6] which represented the published version of his Sheffield PhD thesis (1977). In this work, Thiselton describes a range of hermeneutical options that are generated for Biblical scholars by the philosophical work of Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Heidegger and Bultmann. The scrupulous attention to detail, the study of primary sources in their original language, and an almost exhaustive coverage of secondary literature were to remain features of Thiselton's scholarship. Extensive footnoting and comprehensive indexing are evident in almost all his publications.

Drawn from Gadamer, the title of this early study reflects its overarching conviction that historical-critical work belongs together with constructive theological interpretation. The horizon of the text must be considered in its original setting, though this itself is a creative exercise on the part of exegetes who ineluctably import their own horizons of meaning – the manner in which the writers of the New Testament read the Old Testament is already an instance of this procedure. But as text and interpreter interact in this process of reading and understanding, a fusion of horizons becomes possible. Through this interaction the reader can be changed by the text, the subsequent horizon of meaning displaying its fused character. Many of the most significant conclusions established in this work are critical. Nineham's scepticism about the overcoming of historical distance is seen to be overdrawn; already here Thiselton reveals his growing affinity with Pannenberg. Heidegger's philosophy when assimilated by Bultmann reduces theology to individualised human self-description through an understanding of myth that is excessively capacious. Bultmann is the one theologian on whom Thiselton concentrates in this study. Much of the critique of Heidegger is actually directed towards its impact upon his erstwhile Marburg colleague, though Thiselton perceives correctly that Bultmann's position had already developed and become fixed prior to his use of Heideggerian conceptuality. Wittgenstein, whose later work emerges as a more fruitful philosophical influence, offers insight into the logic of different conceptual grammars. This enables us, for example, to understand why Paul and James may not be conflicted in their different descriptions of the relationship between faith and works. These insights are rapidly generated through Thiselton's engagement with a range of key philosophical and theological writers.

There may be two related risks here – one is eclecticism, and the other is adopting a set of philosophical postures to entrench a broadly evangelical position that represents

[6] *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980).

the start and end point of the study. Yet the scholarly sophistication of this work and its careful consideration of rival positions reveal a subtlety and richness which could be appreciated by those who reached different conclusions whether exegetical or theological. Its perceived difficulties, however, concern the interpretive dividends of such arduous hermeneutical labour. Does it generate fresh Scriptural insights that could not otherwise have been obtained from a less theoretically conscious approach? And, to what extent does it yield a distinct authorial position? These questions would also beset his subsequent work.

Following the positive reception of *The Two Horizons*, Thiselton produced a sequence of later studies of hermeneutics throughout the 1980s and 1990s. These included *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* (1985) co-authored with Clarence Walhout and Roger Lundin following a period of collaboration at Calvin College (1981–82), *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (1995), *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self* (1995), and *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (1999).

The work undertaken in these volumes represents a series of developments in Thiselton's approach. Deliberately eschewing any single totalising theory, he aims to draw upon a breadth of philosophical insights to assist productive and faithful readings of the text. *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* was a project emerging from the Calvin Center for Christian Studies.[7] Thiselton contributed the last of three chapters. Arguing that the parables of Jesus were intended for at least four different audiences – the twelve disciples, larger groups of followers, opponents, and crowds representing these opponents – he criticises views that propose a single conceptualisation of the parabolic genre. The parables function in different ways for distinct audiences. In order to understand them, both historical and literary analysis are needed. Although there is scope for audience and reader reception, the latter especially needs to maintain its connection with historical approaches. His conclusion draws upon the later Wittgenstein's account of meaning as variable, the different uses of a concept reflecting family resemblances that are susceptible neither to closed generalisations nor to unconstrained possibilities of interpretation. The parables of Jesus should be seen as relative to their audience, some of them even offering different interpretative strands within the same story, e.g. the famous parable of the father and his two sons. The act of reading and appropriating these texts will benefit from philosophical and literary assistance, but we should avoid becoming captive to a single hermeneutical perspective that will flatten differences of genre and multiple levels of meaning.

[7] Roger Lundin, Anthony C. Thiselton, & Clarence Walhout, *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). Thiselton's contribution to this volume was later excerpted in his collection, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: The Collected Works and New Essays of Anthony Thiselton* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 397–416.

Thiselton's later reflections on hermeneutics, particularly through the 1990s, displayed an evolution in his thought, this reflecting the internal dynamic of his output as well as the changing intellectual landscape. A concern to integrate belief and practice, already apparent in *The Two Horizons*, came to the fore. To this end, he increasingly drew upon speech-act theory. In engaging postmodern philosophy, he charted a route that accommodated diversity and novelty in critical readings of texts while also resisting capitulation to a relativism in which anything goes. This took him into further theological territory where the categories of tradition and the promissory became increasingly evident. In faithfulness to God's promissory actions, the church situates itself within a living tradition generated in significant ways by the text of Scripture. Through engaging the text in new and altered circumstances, fresh meanings can emerge. Yet these must belong and cohere with the Bible and the traditions of the church. Yet what criteria we have for this 'belonging' and 'cohering' are unclear. This led one reviewer to complain about an ambiguity of approach. Do we have new insights into 'a determinate potential of meaning in the text', or is meaning merely the endless sequence of encounters of the two horizons of text and community?[8] Is the sense somehow there already, waiting to be mined? Or can fresh meanings be generated by the interaction of text and interpreter? Here we are in the neighbourhood of Reformation and Counter-Reformation polemics about Scripture and tradition. Thiselton might have replied that in the absence of a single, decisive meta-criterion, new readings of texts have to be tested for their faithfulness and applicability with all the tools at the disposal of critics and community. Yet questions about whether meaning is discovered or created would continue to haunt much of his subsequent work, particularly in New Testament criticism.

Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self (1995) is a lively theological engagement with several philosophers including Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, none of whom had featured prominently in Thiselton's earlier work. (Theorists of suspicion, including later feminist and post-colonial critics, are generally offered much less coverage in his writing.) The published version of The Scottish Journal of Theology Lectures in 1994, this volume offers a series of reflections on the possibilities and limitations of postmodernism for the Christian theologian. In the face of the postmodern 'decentering of the self' through social, economic and psychological forces, Christian theology can welcome many of its strictures surrounding the ideal of the autonomous, deracinated subject of liberal individualism. There is much here, he says, that ought to be recognisable by the pastor and the counsellor. Attacking Don Cupitt and the Sea of Faith Network in uncharacteristically polemical tones, he describes the impossibility of both valorising the free autonomous subject while also deconstructing the self in face of myriad forces. 'It needs to be publicized widely that one cannot simultaneously wave the flag of

[8] Kevin Vanhoozer, 'Review of *The Promise of Hermeneutics', Theology Today*, 57:3 (2000), 406.

"modern" autonomy, as if the self were the heroic active agent of the late nineteenth century, *and* promote postmodern perspectives about the self as a passive product of language, history and society.'[9]

And yet there are ways in which theological resistance to postmodern nihilism or playfulness needs to be articulated. The self is sustained, redeemed and reoriented by being recentred through the work of God. The theology of the cross offers its deconstruction of power for the sake of divine self-giving love. Thiselton here invokes recent Trinitarian theologies – Moltmann, Pannenberg and Gunton are all cited – with a grammar of hope that avoids modernist triumphalism and postmodern despair.

Divided into twenty-four short chapters this became one of his most readable works, combining to good effect his acumen as an exegete with a formidable knowledge of contemporary philosophy and theology. Thiselton's take on postmodernism provoked accusations of a selectivity of texts and the exercise of a Christian apologetics to which he might happily have pleaded guilty as charged. His critique of Cupitt was generally regarded as the most successful feature of the work.[10]

In 2007, he published a major volume on *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* which further extended his explorations in this field. From philosophy to exegesis, he proceeded here to Christian doctrine. (This had been largely completed before his major stroke on 4 August.) Over 600 pages in length, the volume traverses all the major themes from creation to eschatology. The vitality of doctrine for Christian practice and belief is affirmed in a holistic context. Its transformational effects are stressed for communal formation. This arose from a concern about the marginalisation of doctrine while working with ordinands and clergy. For many, doctrine had been reduced to a set of boundary markers distinguishing true from false belief. As a theoretical system, it had little practical impact. The introduction of philosophical hermeneutics to the study was intended to remedy this through engagement with thinkers such as Gadamer and Ricoeur. With their stress on listening, communal understanding, transmitted tradition, and the reshaping of the self by the other, philosophical hermeneutics had the potential not only to reinvigorate readings of Scripture but also the reception of Christian doctrine.

Another formidably erudite work, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* first establishes a framework for exploring the nature of belief and communal formation before mediating between systematic coherence and a richer if untidier polyphonic approach. As with *The Two Horizons*, an array of analytic and continental philosophers is engaged, these now including Betti and Lakatos. The third and largest part explores in thirteen chapters the major doctrinal themes. In this work, a centrist evangelical position is outlined often

[9] *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning, Manipulation and Promise* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 107.

[10] See for example the review of Linda Woodhead in *Modern Theology*, 13:4 (1997), 537–539.

in dialogue with contemporary Protestant thinkers, especially Pannenberg and Moltmann who remained the two strongest theological influences upon his work. The approach to Trinity, creation, incarnation, atonement and pneumatology are recognisably orthodox in orientation though with attention to affect and practice. Much of this is irenic and eclectic. For example, in dealing with the atonement, the substitutionary themes of Anselm and Calvin are retained alongside an Abelardian stress on divine love and a Moltmannian inflection of the cross as a reconciling event in the history of the triune God.[11]

Thiselton's own ecclesiastical orientation is evident in his fine treatment of Word and sacrament. These are held together, the ministry of the Word of God neither being confined to didactic modes of communication nor subordinated to sacramental celebration. As with other speech-acts, the speaking and hearing of the Word can fulfil a variety of functions for the worshipping community. 'Both word and sacrament witness to Christ and to the gospel as *eventful enactments or actions* … No less a sense of *expectation of an eventful happening should belong to the liturgy of the word* than in the liturgy of the sacrament, whether it be Eucharistic or baptismal.'[12]

Despite its massive learning, however, this volume did not achieve the impact of his earlier doctoral study. Its almost exhaustive surveys of recent literature prevents the authorial voice from being clearly heard. Instead of developing a series of constructive positions, much of the material appears to summarise, excerpt and mediate between rival accounts. A further difficulty may have been the steady decline of interest in Moltmann's work after the 1990s, much of this appearing overly speculative and rhetorically inflated, particularly with respect to the inner life of God and Moltmann's post-Holocaust approach to divine suffering. By contrast, the significance of Pannenberg would steadily increase in the theological world, this resulting in further contributions from Thiselton to the reception of his work.

Through his sustained focus on hermeneutics, Thiselton developed an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of continental philosophy. In relation to establishing the meaning of a text, this vast literature offered important theological possibilities though it was also freighted with some problems. Committed both to rigorous Biblical criticism and constructive theology, Thiselton recognised this potential early in his career. If the reading of an ancient text was not merely (or ever) a recovery of its original meaning, but a generation of new interpretive possibilities for a different context, then there are some attractive options for the theological interpreter of Scripture. A text can illuminate a new setting in fresh and unforeseen ways. This aligns with the theological conviction that the Bible as the Word of God can speak afresh through the work of the Spirit. It does so as an original and normative witness to divine revelation, the meaning of which is

[11] *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 375.
[12] Ibid., p. 517.

never fully exhausted. But here some problems lurk. Is the contemporary interpretation in any way constrained by the original historical, linguistic and religious setting of the author? Or is today's meaning only tangentially if at all related to yesterday's? As a Biblical exegete, Thiselton clearly wishes to avoid a relativism of interpretation or an unbridled freedom being offered to each interpreter. And yet contemporary meanings are not merely a reassertion or repetition of what has always been there in the text and apparent to earlier generations. There is a constant promise of actualising the text to address us again and again, albeit by reference to the original. The 'here and now' reposes upon the 'there and then' of the apostolic witness. This is a condition of the contemporaneity of Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit. Though arguably hampered by a latent conservatism, something like this position appears to be the theological default for Thiselton's work and it is facilitated through engagement with philosophy. But how does one select the most appropriate philosophical ally and by what criteria should this be assessed – by its own internal coherence and philosophical plausibility, or solely in terms of its theological utility? Some answers to these thorny questions emerge at several points in Thiselton's writing, especially in his shorter essays.

The summation of his mature approach to hermeneutics was offered in a significant essay prepared for the 2006 publication of his collected work.[13] Several features of his voluminous output here come into sharper focus, these revealing the underlying theological nature of his project. They might be presented as follows.

(i) Hermeneutics enables us to understand how the ways in which the reading and hearing of texts can be transformative. The Biblical text does not merely impart information, record past events, or express the beliefs of its authors. As readers, we can be transformed in a holistic encounter that engages body, mind and heart. In this respect, the use of speech-act theory drawn from Austin and Searle became increasingly important for Thiselton in articulating the expressive nature of faith. Illocutionary acts declare the disposition of the speaker while perlocutionary acts seek to influence the hearer. The Biblical writings perform multiple speech acts, e.g. praise, evaluation, call, invitation, proclamation, thanksgiving, warning and promise. These are communicated through different genres that engage speakers and hearers in a multiplicity of ways. Such speech acts presuppose a relational and covenantal setting in which speakers and hearers are located. 'If a performative (speech act) is to constitute an illocution rather than merely a perlocutionary act of persuasion, it is fundamental that the agent or speaker of the utterance makes a self-involving commitment, or at least takes an appropriate expressive stance, in relation to the utterance.'[14]

[13] 'Resituating Hermeneutics in the Twenty-First Century: A Programmatic Reappraisal', in *Thiselton on Hermeneutics*, pp. 33–50.
[14] *The Promise of Hermeneutics*, pp. 224–5.

(ii) A proper attention to hermeneutics will alert us to strategies that attempt to control or manipulate the text – here the unmasking so redolent of post-modernist reading techniques provides an important corrective in approaching Scripture. The parallels between postmodern culture and the challenges facing the early Christian communities would prove significant for Thiselton's commentary on 1 Corinthians. We neither own the text nor ever comprehend its full meaning. The Bible has the capacity to address us and to offer fresh understanding. Characteristically Protestant in emphasis, this describes the way in which Scripture can confront and transform the church. Here he invokes Luther's notion of Scripture as 'noster adversarius'.

(iii) Exploration of the history of effects (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and reception history (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*) alert us to ways in which we assimilate texts in the company of previous influences and readings. We work ineluctably within traditions of interpretation, our own efforts being significantly shaped by those of ages past. These generate influences (effects) in relation to our understanding of characters, stories, concepts and doctrines. Closely related to these effects are the major interpreters and confessional standards in whose slipstream we find ourselves. A naïve commitment to *sola Scriptura* should be avoided in exegesis. The work of Jauss is commended for recognising the ways in which successive readings of a text must differ from the first encounter. A history of effects becomes a determining factor, this generating a 'horizon of expectations', or after a period of forgetfulness an 'aesthetic distance' which creates the possibility of surprise and revitalisation. While Jauss's analysis is primarily intended for classical texts, Thiselton identifies useful insights for Scriptural exegesis.[15]

(iv) Recent hermeneutical techniques should be viewed as complementing rather than competing with well-established historical critical methods. Thiselton is at pains to stress the necessity of linguistic and historical approaches that establish the best translation of the text together with an understanding of the cultural and religious setting in which the author wrote. He rebuts any suggestion that the adoption of new hermeneutic techniques is an avoidance of the heavy lifting of close historical and textual work. Describing his work on 1 Corinthians, he writes, 'I engaged at every point with issues of Greek lexicography, syntax and grammar, and sought to establish a sound text on the basis of careful textual criticism … I evaluated, and not merely replicated, the flood of research literature on the culture, social life and theology of the church in Paul's Corinth, together with research monographs and papers on particular passages or Greek words.'[16] This does not commit the 'genetic fallacy' which assumes that meaning is equivalent to

[15] See Mark W. Elliott, 'Hermeneutics or Versions of Biblical text interpretation: the Hermeneutics of A.C. Thiselton', in Benyik György (ed.), *Hermeneutik oder Versionen der Biblischen Interpretation von Texten, I–II* (Szeged: Szegedi Nemzetközi Biblikus Konferencia Alapítvány, 2023), pp. 503–18. Elliott questions this reading of Jauss.

[16] 'Resituating Heremeutics in the Twenty-First Century', p. 35.

authorial intention. Nevertheless, historical-critical work is necessary to prevent a complete disconnect of interpretation from the original context. Appeal is made to Schleiermacher who charts a route between 'nebulist' accounts that lack historical discipline and the 'pedantry' arising from those who perceive historical commentary as the only legitimate end of interpretation.

(v) Meanings are polyphonic rather than contradictory. Already we have observed a trend in Thiselton to mediate between tensions in the Scriptural witness. Criticising Räisenän's claim that the New Testament cannot be used as a source for Christian doctrine owing to its internal contradictions, he argues that its different voices give rise to a polyphony of readings. A parable, for example, may have different meanings, each requiring to be indexed to a different context. 'Multiple voices can communicate theological insights that spill over the limits of what any single writer or "school" can convey.'[17] His use of terms such as 'can' and 'usually' here may suggest that Thiselton remains open to there being some genuine contradictions in the Bible that need to be eliminated rather than accommodated. But this point remains unresolved.

(vi) Hermeneutics must remain an independent discipline to prevent its becoming selectively co-opted to serve established theological interests. Appealing again to Schleiermacher, Thiselton criticises an 'instrumental' or 'regional' approach that offers self-affirmation without transformation. But, as Mark Elliott notes in a critical essay, this generates the problem of criteria of assessment. How are we to judge which theories of interpretation are most appropriate and useful to the theological task?[18] Is there not already an eclectic approach underway in Thiselton which adopts the most useful strategies for the vocation of the Biblical interpreter as he already understands this? For example, the preference for the work of Jauss and Ricoeur appears to follow this practice. The danger here of an inherent circularity is adverted to in several critical reviews of his work.[19] The best response might be in terms of two considerations, though both are not without their difficulties. First, the theologian cannot avoid a critical appropriation of philosophy. But before engaging in this task of selection, some effort should be made to assess its coherence and plausibility in the responses of other philosophers. A theory may be useful for the theologian, but if it is riddled by self-referential incoherence or

[17] Ibid., p. 44.

[18] See Mark W. Elliott, 'Hermeneutics or Versions of Biblical text interpretation: the Hermeneutics of A.C. Thiselton', 509–12.

[19] See for example the highly critical review by A.K.M. Adam of *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* in *Modern Theology*, 10:4 (1994), 433–434. A robust defence of Thiselton against this and other criticisms is offered by Robert Knowles, *Anthony C. Thiselton and The Grammar of Hermeneutics*. In his foreword to Knowles' work, Thiselton praises the author for showing the originality (as opposed to the eclecticism) of his work, while also exposing the failings of his critics. Rather dyspeptically, he writes, 'Some criticisms are flagrantly unjust because they have missed the point that I had tried to make, or because they arose from over-hurried or careless reading' (p. xviii).

inadequacy of explanatory power, then we should avoid it. Secondly, the theologian will inevitably work with a prior understanding of the subject matter. To this extent, an interpretive theory will be preferred insofar as it enables this subject matter to be more fully expressed in ways that are fruitful for the life of the church in the world. The charge of circularity cannot entirely be evaded here, but these considerations suggest ways in which the theologian can proceed while also recognising that most things are contestable.

New Testament commentary

In addition to his substantial output on hermeneutics, Thiselton produced several works of New Testament interpretation, these appearing after 2000 and focusing on the Pauline letters. His major contribution was the commentary on 1 Corinthians in the *New International Greek Testament Commentary Series*, a shorter sequel following in 2006.[20] At almost 1450 pages and written during a busy period as Head of Department in Nottingham, this is a formidable work, especially for the intended wider audience of the series, i.e. 'students who want something less technical than a full-scale critical commentary'![21] The preface suggests indeed that the final version was reduced on the recommendation of I. Howard Marshall, the series editor. The result is that the more comprehensive material drafted on the reception history of the text appears only in abridged form.[22]

Thiselton's 1 Corinthians commentary combines traditional linguistic and historical methods of study with 'philosophically informed and theologically directed exegesis'.[23] The volume opens with an extended introduction on the Corinthian context, the significance of the Christian community there, issues around dating and epistolary unity, and discussion of Paul's intention and style. This is followed by the main body of the work which offers translation of the Greek text, verse by verse commentary, and the aforementioned post-history of each chapter.

Thiselton's blended methodology arguably sets it apart from many other commentaries, and is deployed to good effect both in delineating the social and religious context of Corinth and Paul's response. The apologetic thrust of the work is evident from the outset in the parallels drawn between aspects of contemporary culture and the situation confronting Paul in Corinth, a strategic centre for Christian mission. 'Corinthian culture has

[20] *First Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).
[21] 'Foreword' to Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. xv.
[22] See also the comment in 'Resituating Hermeneutics in the Twenty-First Century', p. 35.
[23] Alexandra Brown, 'Review', *Interpretation*, 56:1 (2002), 104.

much in common with the social constructivism, competitive pragmatism, and radical pluralism which characterizes so-called postmodernity as a popular mood'.[24] The craving for status, applause, and success subverts the proclamation of the gospel, both then and now. Various resemblances between Corinth with its self-sufficient, self-congratulatory culture and our own are 'embarrassingly close'.[25] Paul's strategy is to counter this with plain words and to avoid any claim for his own prestige. 'He would earn his keep as a tentmaker and proclaim the cross of Christ.'[26] The temptation of an 'over-realised eschatology' is countered by recognition of sin and struggle together with insistence upon discipline and order.[27]

Though generally well received, a question raised by reviewers of the work is whether this dual reading of Corinthian context and Pauline intention establishes too simple a binary in which a uniformly distorted culture is confronted by an unalloyed gospel.[28] An immediate risk of so forcefully assimilating Corinthian to postmodern culture is the distortion of the particularities of each. Differences in context then become eclipsed. And might the unqualified valorising of Paul's message to the Corinthians prevent the raising of some critical questions? Does this strategy impede or at least too readily mitigate any possible criticism of the apostle or early Christian tradition, particularly in his comments on women (14:34), on those who have fallen sick while partaking unworthily of the sacrament (11:30), or the practice of receiving baptism on behalf of the dead (15:29)? At any rate, Thiselton's own views on these passages are cautiously expressed and not readily discerned amidst the careful sifting of the voluminous secondary literature. The attempt at comprehensiveness may also have contributed to the commentary's wider limitations. While the summation of the field may have seemed appropriate in 2000, this aim inevitably dates the study as new work appears. And, although its length undoubtedly imposed demands upon readers – hence the production of a short sequel – a more serious concern surrounds the integration of its various component parts: hermeneutics; exegesis; and reception history. What criteria surround the selection for the study of earlier work, and how do these contribute to a contemporary reading of the text? Amidst a surfeit of material, Thiselton's own voice is sometimes hard to discern.

Two further commentaries apply the same approach to other Pauline letters. Published in 2011 in the Blackwell 'Through the Centuries' series, his study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians deals initially with the socio-historical context in Thessalonica and the reception history of the texts, before proceeding to detailed exegesis. The discussion of each chapter is

[24] *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 14.
[25] Ibid., p. 17.
[26] Ibid., p. 21.
[27] Ibid., p. 358.
[28] For example, David Horrell, 'Review', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 121 (2002), 183–6. See also Horrell's review of the shorter commentary in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 59:1 (2008), 187–90.

appended with an account of its reception history. Asserting the likely authenticity of 2 Thessalonians as Pauline, Thiselton finds the arguments against to be unpersuasive. There is sufficient commonality for us to accept that both letters come from the same hand. 'We simply do not know the exact date of the Second Epistle, but it contains sufficient echoes of the First to assume that Paul wrote both within a very short period, but after enough time had elapsed for some new problems and questions to have arisen in the church.'[29]

In many ways, the aims of the series were ideally suited to the method already established by Thiselton in the magisterial 1 Corinthians commentary. His capacity to comprehend several centuries of reception history is impressively displayed. Writers as diverse as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, Bede, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Hooker, Edwards, Wesley, Jowett and Lightfoot are cited. Many literary figures also feature, e.g. Dante, Donne, Coleridge, Keats, Dickens, and Yeats. But the obvious question presented by this array of sources is what purpose does reception history serve? While it may disclose some enduring effects that become present in subsequent readings of the epistle, the reader is more likely to be struck, even overwhelmed, by the diversity of material on display. This in itself may serve a purpose in pointing to the absence of a single stream of interpretation. Yet, in representing the aims of the wider series, such volumes might become, in the words of one reviewer, 'little more than an erudite Cook's tour of a selection of readings of biblical books'.[30] We are offered a rapid exposure to earlier interpretations of the text, but how far does this enable contemporary theological understanding?

A later work, *Discovering Romans*, appeared in 2016 in the SCPK series for an audience lacking specialism in Greek.[31] The intention and methodology recall the earlier work on 1 Corinthians. Three approaches are presented as essential – historical, rhetorical and social-scientific – these being supplemented by a further nine methods of enquiry which have an auxiliary contribution to make. The additional approaches include reader-response theory, liberation hermeneutics, and pre-modern exegesis. The Romans commentary is largely a synthetic work which blends the findings of Cranfield, Dunn, Wright and Jewett, amongst others. Attention is given to 'the new perspectives' on Paul, though these are adopted only with qualified support. The views of Sanders and Wright appear to be endorsed to the extent that participation in Christ provides the perspective from which the transition from law to faith is to be understood. These categories are primarily concerned with the conditions for living in the covenant community. Unlike the standard Lutheran view, justification by faith is not presented as the solution to the

[29] Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 & 2 Thessalonians Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 15–16.
[30] James Carleton-Paget, 'Review', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 64:1 (2013), 121–3.
[31] *Discovering Romans: Content, interpretation, reception* (London: SPCK, 2016).

failure of righteousness by works. This offers a distorted legalist view of Judaism, while ignoring the role that the law continues to exercise for Paul in the life of the church. The argument needs to be reversed – Paul begins with the fact of salvation in Christ and then proceeds to consider what this must mean for the role of Torah in Judaism. Yet, while acknowledging this point, Thiselton insists in his comments on Romans 4:3 that the antithesis between works and grace is clearly affirmed by Paul. He quotes Jewett to the effect that a 'politically correct theology of mercy' should not be allowed to obscure this point.[32]

Elsewhere his commentary moves steadily across the different sections of Romans, in each case offering a succinct account of the different positions adopted by recent commentators. His discussion of the reception history of Romans 13 is particularly useful. Here he shows how modern commentators have proceeded more cautiously in assigning a blank cheque to the governing authorities. The text cannot be used to justify the criminal acts of a totalitarian government. Yet, against more negative readings, including those that view this passage as a later addition, he insists that appropriate obedience is owed to the civic authorities for the welfare of society.[33] Following the interpretations of O'Donovan and Wright, a middle way is negotiated, between separation from an irredeemably corrupt empire and uncritical acquiescence to the regnant authorities.

Systematic theology

The apologetic and theological intentions of Thiselton's output were already on display throughout his work on hermeneutics and New Testament interpretation. In late career, he devoted himself to several more explicitly theological works.

Written shortly after recovery from his stroke, the study of eschatology (2012) tackles the main themes covered in traditional accounts of the last things. Given its personal context, it is surprising perhaps that there is so little reference to his own near-fatal illness. Yet several elements of his approach are worthy of note. The performative nature of divine promise, generally in Scripture and particularly in its expression of the resurrection of Christ and the sacraments, enables us to trust God for the future. This mode of knowledge is personal and self-involving, and thus to be distinguished from more scientific approaches. Employing a distinction borrowed from Wittgenstein, Thiselton differentiates the waiting that generates a state of heightened psychological suspense from the more practical disposition of preparedness and readiness.[34] Christian hope

[32] *Discovering Romans*, pp. 117–18.
[33] Ibid, pp. 52–4, 228–31.
[34] *Life after Death: A new approach to the last things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), pp. 53–67.

conforms to the latter rather than the former. He quotes with approval Luther's aphorism about planting an apple tree today upon learning that the world would end tomorrow. Though Marx is not explicitly mentioned, this distinction also offers a way of responding to the complaint that eschatology is both a consoling and demobilising ideology.

Gilbert Ryle's paradox of observer and participant discourses provides a further philosophical tool to accomplish other eschatological moves.[35] The dispositions of the faithful participant require descriptions of the future that may make much less sense from the more detached perspective of the observer. Yet these are complementary rather than in competition with one another. In this way, we can offer a positive construction of the concept of the millennium in Revelation 20 without committing to detailed predictions about the course of world history. Salvation can be characterised both in terms of an experienced now but awaited in the future. Christians are both *simul iustus et peccator* – from one perspective (the observer) that may seem nonsensical, but from another (the participant) it captures a central feature of Christian existence. Our final resurrection may not take place until the end of time and so remains a very distant prospect to the observer, but to the participant it will have an immediate and instantaneous quality.

Thiselton is at pains to argue that his approach is distinctive in several respects. (Did he worry that his massive output had been characterised merely as a series of synthetic summaries?) Four points are enunciated.[36] (i) The life to come is dynamic not static, reflecting the action of the living God. (ii) Resurrection of the body, whatever else it means, involves the retention of our individuality, as opposed to our absorption into some greater reality. (iii) Our relationship to God and to others will be transformed. (iv) The spiritual body is one that is animated by the Holy Spirit. In assessing the temporal status of the new creation, Thiselton postulates, somewhat elusively, a transformed and multi-dimensional time, as opposed to present duration or mere timelessness. Whether these are novel claims is debatable, but they do delineate a vision of the eschaton that stands in contrast to other accounts of eternal life.

A recurrent feature of his writing is the claim that neither Jesus nor Paul definitively predicted an imminent end of the world. Passages that appear to lean in this direction are to be interpreted again via Ryle's paradox of observer and participant perspectives. For example, 1 Thessalonians 4: 15–17 should be understood in terms of a perpetual readiness for what is to come, though from an observer's perspective one can conclude that this may or may not be soon. Hence, passages that appear to suggest an imminent Parousia are to be read as conditionals only. 'In place of "imminent" we should substi-

[35] Ibid., pp. 68–88.
[36] Ibid., pp. 111–15.

tute "at any time". In place of "expectancy," we should substitute "readiness".'[37] This might offer a way of saving the text, but as a reading of Paul's intention it remains a minority position.

Finally, with respect to theories of universal salvation, Thiselton appears to draw back from the position advanced by Moltmann. Following N.T. Wright, he seeks a path between a 'dogmatic universalism' and a commitment to 'eternal torment'. The love of God should be affirmed as the dominant note in Christian proclamation, but darker warnings in Scripture about the misuse of human freedom cannot altogether be ignored. Yet the hope of universal salvation persists. 'On this subject, we can only commit our uncertainties to God in his sovereign love.'[38]

Thiselton's one-volume *Systematic Theology* (2013) was intended to fill a gap in the textbook market through offering a more concise and accessible treatment of its subject than some of the multi-volumes either produced or in preparation. Interestingly, Thiselton recalls advice he was offered at an earlier stage of his career to avoid becoming a 'jack of all trades'. His teaching across philosophy of religion, New Testament studies, and systematics stretched his expertise, with the result that the initial pace of publications was slow.[39] Now, fifty years later, a comprehensive text on Christian doctrine is attempted. One distinctive feature is the extent to which it includes many of his earlier hermeneutical themes, while also exploring areas of study that feature more prominently within courses on philosophy of religion, for example the problem of evil and the origin of atheism. The product is characteristically Thiseltonian, with each of the twenty chapters averaging around one hundred footnotes in expounding a multiplicity of historical and contemporary figures. Unfortunately, the volume labours under the weight of excessive scholarly coverage, with the result that it has proved a less accessible text to students than alternatives such as the multiple editions of McGrath or Migliore.[40] And once again the authorial voice can be difficult to capture.

Yet there remains much of interest for more advanced students willing to assimilate his material. The discussion of God as neither personal nor impersonal but 'suprapersonal' follows a neglected distinction of the philosopher C.A. Campbell. The concise exposition of angelology in the different Christian traditions is a model of clarity. The relevance of life of Jesus research is extended following a useful survey of the three quests. 'The positive side of all this research for the Christian is not only that it confirms

[37] *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 354.
[38] *Life after Death*, p. 158.
[39] Ibid., p. 15.
[40] Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017); Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding,* 4th edn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023). One reviewer suggested that Thiselton's volume would work best in a one-semester Masters course at a Protestant seminary. See James M. Arcadi, *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, 23:2 (2016), 216–18.

aspects of historical inquiry and continuity with the OT, but also that it underlines the full humanness of Jesus of Nazareth.'[41]

Throughout his *Systematic Theology*, his doctrinal dispositions remain consistent with a broad evangelical and ecumenical outlook, though at the end of lengthy summaries of a range of positions one is often left guessing as to his precise commitments. Much is made of the importance of holding together the connotations of expiation and propitiation in the translation of *hilastērion*, and of connecting salvation as God's pure gift with our need to appropriate this through decision and action. An early high Christology is defended as a precursor of the Chalcedonian formula – the progress of dogma is viewed as essentially linear. The reaction and counter-reactions of the modern era are grouped (somewhat idiosyncratically) under three headings – (i) liberal Protestant, (ii) Catholic, and (iii) Moltmann and Pannenberg. The selection of these latter two thinkers reflects Thiselton's own sympathies throughout much of this work. On most subjects, they are regularly cited with approval, in part for their capacity to mediate between the classical and modern worlds, and in part owing to their convictions about the practical significance of Christian doctrine. In particular, their Scripturally-based narrative account of the Trinity appeals to Thiselton over against more metaphysical and analogical approaches. More recent scholarship would challenge this disjunction between the historical and the metaphysical. Can metaphysics ever be avoided?[42] The God who acts is occasionally contrasted with the God who is, but should not act and being be held in conjunction rather than set in contrast?[43] An ontology of action or event still remains an ontology, albeit not in the language of substance.

A second monograph *The Holy Spirit: In biblical teaching, through the centuries, and today* appeared in the same year (2013). This was dedicated to a historical exploration of Christian teaching on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, a theme already expounded in his *Systematic Theology*. It received a Christianity Today Book Award in 2014. Presumably based on earlier teaching materials, the treatment of the Spirit is commendably clear and comprehensive. Ranging from the Old Testament to the 21st century, Thiselton covers the main concepts, controversies and movements. Shorn of footnotes, the final chapter is a balanced discussion of contemporary issues generated by the rise of global Pentecostalism, a movement which he recognises as offering much vitality to the other churches, 'if only … shared sensitively'.[44] Thiselton affirms the personhood and divinity of the Spirit. Impersonal pronouns should be avoided. The Spirit is not an 'it' – one senses here a preference for traditional nomenclature of masculine grammatical gender. He appears open to the continued relevance of glossolalia, but relegates their

[41] Ibid., 246.
[42] *The Holy Spirit: In biblical teaching, through the centuries, and today* (London: SPCK, 2013)
[43] This distinction is drawn but never fully developed. See *Systematic Theology*, p. 40.
[44] Ibid., p. 482.

significance below that of prophecy which is broadly identified if not exhausted by Christian preaching and teaching. Anyone preparing a set of student lectures on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit would do well to have a copy of Thiselton's book on their desk.

Remaining indefatigable in these final years, Thiselton published several works of reference, exposition, and introduction, these intended for a wider student and church audience. A desire to reach a more popular readership was a feature of his evangelicalism from earlier times, perhaps also provoked by criticisms from within that same constituency that his work on hermeneutics was too recherché.[45] Whatever the stimulus, he produced a flow of publications reflecting the breadth of his knowledge in New Testament studies, philosophy of religion, and theology.[46] Most striking perhaps is the volume exploring faith and doubt, in which he notes different Scriptural approaches to doubt, claiming that some of these are integral to faith. While his conclusions remain elusive in places, he suggests that difficulty and doubt are ineluctable elements of walking by faith rather than sight. 'A measure of pluralism, distortion, and relative ignorance in the present should not take us by surprise.'[47]

Published in 2018, his introduction to Pannenberg's theology confirms the longstanding influence of Thiselton's German colleague upon much of his output.[48] Recalling their initial encounter in 1969, he describes how he maintained contact with him until Pannenberg's death in 2014.[49] Pannenberg is the most frequently quoted theologian in Thiselton's corpus. His breadth of expertise matched Thiselton's own – philosophy, history, Bible, systematics and ecumenism are all to the fore in this study. The ways in which Pannenberg parted company with the dominant figures of the previous generation – Barth and Bultmann – evidently appealed to Thiselton. His willingness to engage positively with philosophy, anthropology, natural theology, and historical revelation represented a development in the field welcomed by Thiselton, as did his stress on the physical resurrection of Jesus, and his dynamic account of the Trinity with its strong pneumatological inflection. Pannenberg's relative conservatism on social, ecclesial and ethical issues may also have resonated with Thiselton. His introduction to

[45] He refers to a sceptical quip from David Watson about Professor Hermann Neut at the National Evangelical Anglican Congress in 1977. See *A Lifetime in the Church and the University*, p. 42.

[46] These include *A Shorter Guide to the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016); *Approaching Philosophy of Religion* (London: SPCK, 2017); *Approaching the Study of Theology* (London: SPCK, 2017); *The Power of Pictures in Christian Thought: the use and abuse of images in the Bible and theology* (London: SPCK, 2018); *Puzzling Passages in Paul: Forty Conundrums Calmly Considered* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2018); *Why Hermeneutics? An Appeal Culminating with Ricoeur* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2019); *Colossians* (Eugene OR; Cascade, 2020); *Promise and Prayer* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2020); *2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2020).

[47] *Doubt, Faith and Certainty* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), p. 139.

[48] *Understanding Pannenberg: Landmark Theologian of the Twentieth Century* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2018).

[49] See also *A Lifetime in the Church and the University*, pp. 31–2.

themes in Pannenberg largely takes place through exposition of his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, though earlier texts are also cited. While surprisingly little attention is devoted to the critical reception of Pannenberg's work or to assessing its enduring significance, Thiselton nevertheless succeeds in offering an admirable introduction to his theology.

Author of thirty-three books, Thiselton was one of the most productive scholars of his generation. His expertise and erudition in philosophy, theology and New Testament, allied to a capacity for clear communication, were rare if not unique, especially during a time of increased scholarly specialism. He stands firmly within a British tradition that sought to show the consistency of evangelical theology with rigorous historical scholarship. Though his oeuvre generally displayed a synthetic quality, he could be accused neither of superficiality nor lack of scholarly depth. And, while his research productivity remained consistently high, he continued to find time for wider collegial contributions to the life of the Church of England, to his students, and to the academic institutions in which he laboured, especially the University of Nottingham. Thiselton's theology remained broadly within the evangelical wing of the Church of England, though he was consistently alert to insights and challenges from other quarters, and always ready to appropriate these in a conciliatory manner. To this extent, he may be judged to have successfully mediated between rival theological factions without ever abandoning his own deeply held convictions and valued friendships. His support and encouragement of younger scholars are widely attested by many now serving in church and university across the world.

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