

## Foreword

Andrew Walker is one of the most remarkable scholars I have met across the years.

We first met by accident. I had been in Dallas for a year or so and had been invited to speak in a series of talks in a small town south of Dallas with the wonderful name of Waxahachie. Earlier in the week I had run into Dr. Bernice Martin, whose husband David Martin had come to an endowed chair at Southern Methodist University. Bernice noted that she had two English academics coming to stay with her on their way to a major conference in sociology in Boston. When she identified them as Dave Docherty and Andrew Walker I immediately recognized the first name, as we had met before. Andrew Walker, however, was new. When she added wistfully that having the two of them together for several days would be a “handful,” I suggested that I take Andrew with me to Waxahachie and thus afford her some relief. She agreed immediately. It was a memorable weekend. Before it was over I managed to get Andrew to share in some of the speaking responsibilities. It was a sterling performance on his part, as he was in his element as an intellectual with extraordinary skill in public speaking.

When we met, we hit it off immediately, despite our radical differences in terms of ethnic identity, church membership, and scholarship. We quickly discovered, however, that we had a shared interest in all things American, in Pentecostalism, in Orthodoxy, and in Christianity in Britain. As both of us were new to Texas we were also fascinated by what we encountered in the United Methodist congregation in Waxahachie. Texas is a world of its own. It is not the South but the Southwest of the United States; and sorting out its sense of independence and how that plays out in its religious sensibility and history is a tall order. Aside from sharing our own peculiar journeys into Christianity, then, we found ourselves trying as best we could to get our initial bearings on the new section of planet earth on which we had landed. As I often drive past the motel on the highway south of Dallas where we

stayed, I ponder anew the joys of many years of friendship that started so serendipitously in Waxahachie.

Pursuant to this initial encounter we also developed our relationship as colleagues in the Doctor of Ministry program at Perkins School of Theology. For several years Andrew joined us for intensive courses in the summer. These events were full-scale, no-holes-barred doctoral seminars with a network of first-rate students from across the country. Students read a series of texts in advance, wrote substantive critical reviews, and took their life in their hands in day-long conversation. Andrew was in his element as a teacher. Many of these students have stayed in touch with him and benefited thereafter from his wisdom and erudition, including Andy Kinsey, the editor of this volume.

As a thinker, I would characterize Andrew more as a fox, rather than a hedgehog. His training in sociology was really his point of entry into the life of the mind. Once in, he had a sharp nose for making telling observations on a host of issues that did not initially show up in his training. Changing the metaphor, you never knew where his intellectual ball was going to bounce once he hit it with all the freshness of a new player. However, one followed the ball knowing that a unique new insight would emerge. This made any conversation with Andrew something of an adventure. Readers will see this in the wide-range of issues in the essays that constitute this book. Even on matters that are deeply person-relative he can stand back and survey the landscape in a way that gives us strikingly new perspectives.

On a personal level, then, Andrew always displayed an honesty and even brashness that was stimulating in the extreme. We quickly got to the point in our relationship where we could say absolutely anything to each other. This is rare in academia, and when it happens it is a wonderful antidote to boredom and sterility. Due to personal circumstances over the years, however, we have not been able to keep up the conversation to the degree we would both cherish. We know, though, that whenever and wherever we meet we can pick up exactly where we left off without the usual throat-clearing that is natural in renewed interchange. And yet, on a professional level as an academic, Andrew has displayed amazing fortitude and resilience. The obstacles have been formidable, but the work seems to keep pouring out of his fertile intellect. Whatever subject he tackles somehow becomes the spur to a fresh outburst of energy and imagination.

It is a great pleasure, therefore, to see this collection of essays brought together as a single volume. All of them are fascinating. However, if I were to pick out one for its originality and insight it would be the essay, "The Third Schism." It is worth the price of the whole work. We all know that the divisions within Christianity over the last two hundred years are far from easy to

pin down in a non-polemical and illuminating manner. We also know that they cut across standard ecclesial lines, as the current flap over the proposals on divorce and remarriage developed by Cardinal Kasper in the Vatican make clear. It is entirely superficial to see the debate as a debate between conservatives and progressives or between modernists and postmodernists. These are not exactly useless concepts, but they have grown stale and tend to suffocate conversation. The concept of a third schism, however, tackles the problem of naming what is going on in a whole new way. Once it is in place we can then begin to sort out a set of critical questions that we can approach from a whole new angle. We are given a fresh set of proposals to ponder and evaluate. In fact, even if the whole idea is rejected we have been given a new vista from which to look at the present nasty divisions across Christendom.

Those who know Andrew Walker will be delighted to welcome this volume as summing up a lifetime of truly original scholarship presented in a clear and engaging manner. Those who are new to his work are set for a stimulating adventure down trails that will awaken curiosity on topics that deserve extended attention in the current academic arena.

William J. Abraham

Albert Cook Outler Professor of Theology and Wesley Studies  
Southern Methodist University