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# Book Reviews

## **EZRA, NEHEMIAH: WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY VOL. 16**

**H.G.M. Williamson**

Word Books, Waco, Texas 1985 lii+417 pp. No price

ISBN 0 8499 0215 0

Dr. Williamson must surely have provided us here with the genuine 'all round' commentary, a feast of good things on every level of biblical study. The 'Word' series with its standard format of Notes, Form/Structure/Setting, Comment and Explanation plainly has been aiming at this target throughout but in this present case it has triumphantly succeeded. The problems inherent in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah have attracted enough specialist studies to fill a library and in themselves are not always the most fascinating area of biblical study. With the gentlest possible touch, Williamson takes us through the world's opinions yet without losing the objective of presenting his own impressive judgment at the end. He views Ezra and Nehemiah as two parts of a single work which was intended to be complete as it now stands. Esdras is not a source for Ez-Neh but in fact a later compilation. The first move towards the present books was the bringing together of the Ezra and Nehemiah Memoirs, followed by the inclusion of the greater part of Ne. 9-12. An originally separate work, Ezra 1-6 with its distinctive elements was finally added to provide lines of continuity with the past and to justify continuing efforts to preserve the distinct identity of the people of God. The two main stages of this can be dated about 400 and 300 B.C. Williamson weighs with great delicacy the arguments on each side regarding the priority of Ezra or that of Nehemiah and concludes that since the earliest stage of the compilation of the present work, namely the combining of the two 'memoirs', happened 'little more than a generation on after Nehemiah's work . . . this clear statement of the text as it stands (i.e. the priority of the work of Ezra) should be given the greatest possible weight.' He therefore dates Ezra's coming at 458 BC and Nehemiah's at 446 BC.

As is true of every volume in this series the text notes are full—and in this case offering welcome help in detail—but—as is sadly not true in every other volume—here the 'explanations' really succeed in fulfilling the objective of noting relevance to the on-going biblical revelation. Even as seemingly unpromising material as Ne. 7:1-72 is beautifully placed in the biblical scheme of things: the Church of Christ is neither founded nor maintained by the bricks and mortar of its structures (i.e. Nehemiah's wall; but 'they who have experienced the grace of God for themselves' thus become 'members of Christ's bride, the new Jerusalem'.

It is a privilege to hail an outstanding contribution to Old Testament commenting and to salute its distinguished author.

Churchman

**EZEKIEL 1-19: WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY Vol. 28.**

**William H. Brownlee**

Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1986 xlii+321pp.

ISBN 0 8499 0227 4

At the time of Dr. Brownlee's death in 1983 he had only taken his commentary on Ezekiel as far as chapter 19. The General Editors of the Word series decided to use Brownlee's I.S.B.E. article on Ezekiel as an introduction and to publish this commentary as a memorial volume. Leslie Allen, who with Gerald Keown has edited Brownlee's notes to make them conform with the format of this series, has also agreed to complete the commentary on Ezekiel. This is a task which none would envy in the light of Brownlee's scholarship but it is made none the easier by some idiosyncratic interpretations touching on fundamental issues in Ezekiel-studies.

It is not unknown for Old Testament specialists to move the goal posts but it has fallen to Dr. Brownlee to move the pitch. The well known crux in the interpretation of Ezekiel regarding the locus of the prophet during his ministry is solved by making each reference to the captivity (*golah*) into an arcane pun on the place name Gilgal (by Jordan) where (according to Brownlee) Ezekiel was resident throughout—save when prophetic duties took him here and there: and travel he did, for Brownlee insists that the recurring phrase 'set your face towards' really means 'get up and go to'. Surely, however, the Gilgal/*Golah* solution only deserves a future in a museum of hermeneutical crotchets: one waltz with interest for Allen's view in the next volume. In other matters too Brownlee delights in the unconvincing solution: the reference to the 'thirtieth year' (1:1) he says, he has 'explained' as the missing date of chapter 37, 'placed in its present position as part of an exercise in midrashic exegesis' and the bones of chapter 37 are those of Zedekiah's army scattered on the plain of Jericho where Gilgal too is situated.

As is true throughout this series, the linguistic and lexical notes are full and useful and, unlike some of his colleagues, Brownlee does 'have a go' in the sections called 'explanation'. His comments on chapters 16 and 18 can be singled out as examples of the best work in the volume but on the whole this is not the commentary of Ezekiel we have been waiting for however much one would wish to respect the proverbial directive *de mortuis*.

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ALECMOTYER

**GOD'S PROPHET, GOD'S SERVANT** A Study in Jeremiah and Isaiah 40-55.

**J. Goldingay.**

Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1984 160pp. £4.95 pb.

ISBN 0 85364 338 5

It so happened that when I began to read this book I was also preparing a sermon on 2 Cor. 1.23-2.4 on the heart of a pastor, and was beginning to draw some parallels between the experience of Paul and of Jeremiah. It was therefore particularly encouraging to read sentence 1 of chapter 1: 'So Jeremiah is the 2 Corinthians of the Old Testament.' There is indeed a strongly pastoral flavour to the whole of these splendid studies in Jeremiah and Isaiah 40-55.

John Goldingay draws out with a great deal of insight and penetration what was involved for Jeremiah and Isaiah ('Isaiah of the Exile') in being prophets

who brought the word of the Lord, who cared deeply with pastoral hearts for God's own people, and who were greatly concerned for the honour of God's own Name. The author echoes the spirit of the prophets: he too is concerned for the spiritual wellbeing of his readers and for the glory of God. It is not surprising to read that the studies arose from his own preaching and teaching: it would be good for both authors and readers if more scholars were able to ground their written work in this way.

The five chapters on Jeremiah (subtitled 'A Burning Fire in my heart') are remarkable for the way the extensive material is handled in such a clear and uncluttered way. His studies are entitled 'What being a prophet costs', 'Who a prophet identified with' (the answer is with both Israel and Yahweh), 'What distinguished a prophet', 'What makes a man a prophet?' and 'The moment of fulfilment'. My pencil worked hard underlining the author's searching thoughts and well-turned phrases: 'To be God is to experience rejection and hostility, attack and crucifixion. Whenever men can find God in his weakness, they crucify him: from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah . . . So Jeremiah comes to his people as the representative of God, and quite naturally he is crucified' (pp.41-42). The final chapters of Jeremiah, which can seem something of an anticlimax to the casual reader, are seen in part as reflecting 'the Bible's recognition of the tragic side of human existence'. However, more than that, the author suggests that the Book of Jeremiah is not essentially about the prophet, but about the word of God, and its conclusion 'tells how events turned out just as God had said' (p.74).

If I say I enjoyed John Goldingay's chapters on Jeremiah more than those on Isaiah 40-55, it is only because his writing on Jeremiah comes across as so particularly fresh, and not because there are not many good things in the second half of the book, although the path trodden is inevitably more worn. The Servant is seen as 'chosen', 'faithful', 'blind' ('she has sight but not insight', p.107), 'persistent' and 'triumphant'. Where the servant nation fails, the prophet finds himself called to the task; where the prophet is of necessity inadequate, we see Jesus as 'the suffering and triumphant servant par excellence'. Yet to the church today is given the calling of being the servant people; nor has God finished with Israel as His servant: 'The church has seen the Jews as crucifiers of Jesus, but not as the people of God to whom God is irrevocably committed' (p.113).

At the beginning of the book the author states, without arguing, his critical position. In Jeremiah 'the passages printed in ordinary prose . . . may well be later sermons preached on texts from Jeremiah's words . . .' (p.10). He argues that 'while God *could* have revealed the messages in Isaiah 40-55 two centuries before the exile, it is difficult to see why he *would* have done so.' I suspect such views have wider implications than perhaps John Goldingay himself admits. Nevertheless, as regards these particular studies, buy the book, let it minister to your mind and soul as it brings you to the word of God, and let it enrich your own preaching of these utterly relevant parts of Scripture.

**THE SPIRIT AND THE CONGREGATION: STUDIES IN 1 CORINTHIANS  
12-15 R.P. Martin**

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids: 1984 (distributed Paternoster, Exeter)  
168pp. £10.60 hb.

ISBN 0 8028 3608 9

This work deserves to be classed among the most useful exegetical studies on the later chapters of 1 Corinthians. Typically, Dr. Martin's concern is that the lessons learned from coming to grips with these chapters should contribute to our own modern discussions about the church and especially its worship. But this book is by no means easy to read. The exegetical work is very detailed with numerous quotations from other scholars which, at times, add little to the points made by Dr. Martin himself. Greek and Hebrew appear in the text but always with careful explanation. Most of the important problems of translation are discussed, while the New International Version forms the basic text for citations.

The author takes these chapters section by section and deals with each from a thematic viewpoint. Thus, for example, 14:1-25 is taken as a unit entitled 'Prophecy, Praising, Praying'. The importance to the whole passage of 'upbuilding' is emphasised and then the 'positive contribution of Paul's teaching' is analysed: a) there is a need for the Spirit's control, b) there is a need for social responsibility in worship, and c) there is a 'special ministry' in corporate worship that brings a 'dignity and decorum different from our worship, as individuals, family members, or even as parts of subgroups in the Christian society' (p.64). The three areas mentioned are then examined exegetically. It is particularly interesting to see Dr. Martin consistently defend an exegesis of 12:31a, and 14:1 in which he sees ζηλοῦτε ('seek' or 'you are seeking') as a present indicative, and as stating the *Corinthian* position. This is no new opinion and this reviewer has been convinced of such an understanding of 12:31a for some time: in other words, 'But you are seeking the higher gifts and I will show you a more excellent way . . .'. 14:1 is more problematic, for the verb 'seek' governs the last part of the verse as well. Thus Dr. Martin asks us to read 'Make love your goal; yet 'you are striving for spiritual gifts' [a *Corinthian* quotation], but [I say] rather than you should all prophesy'. This seems to put an almost unbearable strain on the conjunction δέ (but/and), and it uses ἵνα as an imperatival clause—possible but very rare. The position is certainly attractive theologically, making Paul emphasize one example of an 'upbuilding' gift as opposed to the *Corinthians* who strive and seek after gifts for their own sake. But I remain unconvinced.

Also of interest is Dr. Martin's examination of 14:33b-36 where women are told to keep silence. While acknowledging the recent work of Thrall and Hurley suggesting that women are forbidden to judge (i.e. have authority over other *prophets*), he prefers to return to the view that women were practising glossolalia in a disorderly way, and adds to this that they were wrongfully seeking to be 'teachers of men'. Whether this gives as much weight to the 'silence' required of women as Thrall's and Hurley's exegesis does remains an open question.

The exegesis of chapter 15 is as interesting as the remainder of the work. Although it is here that Dr. Martin's 'reading between the lines' (as he calls it, p.96) goes further than many would accept. Paul's emphasis on the resurrection is needed, he says, because the *Corinthians* probably believed

they had 'a present immortality, and they may have expected never to die' (p.95).

A final, and all too brief 'postscript' to the book lists some of the points that Paul might have expected to see in a 'healthy' church. Many of us in the church these days would do well to ponder these points and the careful exegesis of these fascinating and topical chapters. The book is well worth the money.

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PAUL D. GARDNER

**THE MESSAGE OF JAMES Alec Motyer**

(Bible Speaks Today Series)

I.V.P. Edinburgh, 1985 214 pp. £4.50

ISBN 0 85110 744 3

Eighteen years ago the author produced some studies in the Epistle of James given at the Filey Christian Holiday Crusade. Two years later these were followed by further studies published by I.V.P. as *The Tests of Faith*. These are now superseded by what is virtually a fresh approach to the text which provides a valuable addition to this excellent series by I.V.P.

Alec Motyer writes not only as a competent theologian but also as an experienced Christian who has learned many of the lessons shared here in the disciplines of daily Christian living. Exposition is clarified at several points (for example, pp.12, 13, 108, 134 and 174) with diagrammatical analysis of James's style and argument, which is extremely helpful. There are also a number of studies within the study, for example, on *death* (pp.53-4) and its relation to sin, while the section in chapter 2 on faith and works receives exhaustive treatment, correcting Peter Davids's recent statement that Jesus is arguing for 'faith and works' with a suggestion that his position is more clearly expressed as 'faith productive of works'.

There are many telling turns of phrase which give much food for thought: for example, on p.131, 'plainly the Word of God and the ways of many move along different paths and in opposite directions'; and p.175, 'the tight corner and the loose tongue went together' (on Peter's denial). On chapter 5 there is also a balanced treatment of God's rôle in *all* healing, though not all readers will be happy with the author's argument from silence that 'no present-day elders who seek to minister to the sick according to James 5:14-15 should include the laying-on of hands in their ministry' (p.196). The author is, of course, strictly correct, but it is hard to believe that New Testament elders exercising such a ministry would have felt inhibited by James's words from laying-on hands, perhaps on the afflicted part of the body, as a further or complementary expression of their concern for the sufferer.

The author's genius for summarising the stages and progression of argument in the Epistle makes the book immensely readable (see, for example, pp.53 and 100), especially as the Bible text (R.S.V.) is printed at the head of each section. We are told in the conclusion that 'the local church of which James speaks is a fellowship of concern', and the careful study of the Epistle with this commentary could lead other Christians to develop a similar concern for their fellows.

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DAVID WHEATON

**1 & 2 THESSALONIANS, 1 & 2 TIMOTHY, TITUS: The Communicator's Commentary Vol. 9 Gary W. Demarest**

Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1984 333pp. \$14.95

ISBN 0 8499 0162 6

**HEBREWS: The Communicator's Commentary Vol. 10 Louis H. Evans**

Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1985 259pp. \$15.95

ISBN 0 8499 0163 4

With a hardback binding that in Britain would be reserved for rather specialist commentaries, this series (judging from these particular volumes; aims at a decidedly popular appeal. The tone is chatty, even chummy: 'I have made a will . . . By the way, do you have a will?'; 'When our children were small, it was our custom after dinner to have a rough-and-tumble time . . .'; 'I'll never forget my last visit with my father . . .'. Examples could be multiplied.

Once through the somewhat fulsome introductions of the General Editor, describing the commentaries as 'magnificent', 'impelling', 'stunning', and 'outstanding' what we have is basic exposition with a very generous larding of illustrations and anecdotes. I found that the problem was the text itself could get lost amidst the authors' desire to apply and illustrate, and the style seemed garrulous.

Both authors are leading Presbyterian ministers, who have influential pulpit ministries, and who write from a broad evangelical standpoint. There are indeed some helpful comments, as on the 'rest' of Hebrews 4: 'Those who find the rest of God are those who discover the strategy of God, submit to his timing of events, and appropriate the resources God provides . . .'. Some comments are likely to be more controversial, as this on 1 Timothy 2.12: 'Were these only local situations that needed the drastic remedy Paul prescribed, or was Paul setting forth a universal rule to be applied in all churches, in all places? I prefer the former . . .'.

There is clearly a place for this kind of commentary in America, but in this country a similar need is likely to be served (rather better, I think) by series such as *The Bible Speaks Today*, or indeed by daily Bible reading notes.

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TONY BAKER

**THE WORLD OF ST. JOHN E.E. Ellis**

Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1984 (Distributed Paternoster, Exeter)

96 pp. £4.40

ISBN 0 8028 0013 0

This volume contains a wealth of information on, and insight into, the background and context of John's writing. The book is, in fact, a reprint of a work published in 1965, and there are places where it might have been updated. However, this is not a great draw-back to the work.

The book is well written in a reasonably 'chatty' style. In chapter one the religious context in which John wrote is examined. Ellis believes 'John' was the Apostle John but, for various reasons, excludes *Revelation* from his corpus. A brief but clear contrast between John's views and the teachings of Gnosticism is given (pp.20-24). John's indebtedness to Old Testament and Jewish thought is examined, and a brief comparison is made with the Qumran documents. Ellis is convinced that the dominant background for John's writing is to be found in Palestinian Judaism.

Chapter two looks at John's purpose in his writings, believing the recipients

of the Gospel and the epistles to be mixed Jewish and Gentile Christians living in Asia Minor. Thus the intended readership is Christian and not, as some have said on the basis of Jn. 20:31, non-Christian (p.34). Three important themes are discussed here in quick succession: the true Israel, the incarnate Lord, and the Last Hour. The latter is most extensively dealt with, and excellent for those new to the theology of this Gospel.

In the next three chapters there is a brief introduction to the character of the Gospel and Epistles and their exposition. A section here (pp.51ff.) on the relationship between history and theology is weak. It leaves one wondering whether 'interpretation' excuses historical errors. This is not, I think, the intention of the author (either to imply that there are historical errors or to excuse the differences between John and the synoptics), but at best this section seems blurred. The exposition is valuable, but obviously very brief.

This book is useful for those beginning to study John's writings for the first time. It suffers from brevity, and most especially from a total lack of footnotes and bibliography. It is also expensive.

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PAUL D. GARDNER

**THE CROSS D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.**

Kingsway Publications Ltd, London, 1986 221 pp. £5.95

ISBN 0 86065 407 9

For those who desire to know Lloyd-Jones at his best as an evangelical theologian and biblical preacher these nine sermons on 'The Cross' are essential reading. The addresses are analytical, incisive, inspired utterances, and hold the secret of his vibrant ministry. If at times repetition creeps in this arises from their sermonic nature, but they are replete with spiritual nuggets that remain in the mind and move heart and will. So many printed sermons make dull reading but these sparkle as fresh as the time they were given. They are a masterly exposition and application of the text, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ', (Galatians 6:14). According to Lloyd-Jones, to glory in the cross is 'the acid test' of what it means to be a Christian. For him, it is 'the heart and centre of the Christian message . . . the whole of the scripture' without which 'there is no saving event.' Thematic in these sermons is a consciousness of two vital elements in human life. First, the fact of evil in the heart of man; secondly, the impossibility of men of the world to bring a final conclusion to mankind's problems. For the author there is one answer to both, the Cross—for in it he sees revealed God's character of wisdom, love, and triumph, and through it the sinner's peace, new nature and freedom. To arrive at this point he describes his sermons as 'a walking round the cross', and surveying in it a triumph for the sinner and mankind.

In his view the Cross deals with man in himself, his relationship with a reconciled God, sin and its punishment, judgment and forgiveness. As the 'lynch pin' of Christian truth, he bids the reader repent and be pardoned. His magisterial applications are summed up in the question, 'What do you see in the Cross?' Only those who glory in the Cross have for him the prerogative of calling themselves Christian. But he does not leave the matter there. He goes on to point out that the Cross is for sanctification as well as justification.

These sermons live, as few other printed sermons do. As a master of



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homiletic technique and a true physician of the soul, he has the ability to make profound truth simple and meaningful to ordinary people. Within them is passionate oratory, tender yearning, and a convincing desire that all should see the Cross as he does. Prayerfully read, they will humble the sinner, support the struggling, and thrust forward the spiritual to new heights.

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ARTHUR BENNETT

### **THE FAITH WE CONFESS—An Ecumenical Dogmatics**

**Jan Milic Lochman**

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1985 274 pp. £14.95

ISBN 0 567 09367 0

The Professor of Systematic Theology and Rector at Basel University aims in this exposition of the Apostles' Creed, a translation from the German original of 1982, to provide a modern and succinct exposition of the Christian faith in today's era of 'tumultuous change and therefore of widespread perplexity' especially in the light of the pressures on the Church and its inner sense of security (p.ix). One can only agree with his analysis and applaud his response. Lochman is convinced that dogmatic theology is possible today, given intellectual rigour and the spirit of worship (p.xi). He serves up a basically orthodox trinitarian fare to match his menu, much spiced with existential and social concerns. He draws from a wide range of theological tradition, making use particularly of Barth, Bonhoeffer, and Cardinal Ratzinger, as well as weaving in his own special insights from Marxist/Christian dialogue.

His treatment of faith in God is heavily marked by the influence of Barth: to believe in God is to believe in the particular revealed God of Jesus not in some universal necessity. The divine involvement in the world runs along the line of non-violent love. Omnipotence is defined christologically. Belief in Christ is explained in terms of salvation history: Jesus the anointed one 'himself becomes the victim of Israel's disobedience, but by his own faithfulness he bridges the gulf between God and his people'. (p.80) The covenant *history* between God and man controls the theological exposition in an unobtrusive way. Lochman insists that, 'if Christ is only *like* God, His history is not God's exodus towards us . . .' (p.92), but he does not take us further in wrestling with the triune sonship. Indeed he majors on the practical and ethical application of Jesus 'lordship' rather than on such metaphysical theologizing.

The virgin birth and resurrection cannot, for Lochman, be reduced to myth or symbol: the main purpose of the former is to point to Jesus' humanity, the latter *is* historical but more importantly is kerygmatic and is the 'detonator' of hope. I liked his treatment of the ascension especially, as having some fresh insights: 'the ascension makes it clear . . . that Christ is not raised from the dead simply in the heart of the believer . . . It is precisely because of his *heavenly* connection that Christ also has an *earthly* connection.' (p.167)

The cross and divine judgment are treated as meeting human misery and suffering and this is Lochman's emphasis soteriologically. Jesus died in the position of the world's forgotten failures and oppressed and 'the history of Jesus takes up into itself the history of those who suffer—promising them a

justice beyond any they have ever known in human history'. (p.175) Lochman seems to be restating a Barthian type of universalism, the judge being simultaneously the merciful Lord. He would have aided clarity by treating sin at this stage, rather than postponing it until the section on Baptism and the Church. There he follows Käsemann's category of 'possession' to define the mysterious nature of sin. (p.226) Are we saved from our situation or from our sins? What is the relation between these two? Lochman fails adequately to discuss this.

The Czech influence comes out interestingly in his treatment of the Church, where we are told that the Bohemian Confession of 1575 adds the following to marks of the Church: obedience to the gospel, suffering for the truth and Kingdom of God, and disciplined Church order. This is again typical of Lochman's insistence on the inherently practical nature of Christianity and theology.

Professor Lochman has given us a well-written, fresh treatment of Christian faith for a modern readership. Our thanks must again go to T. & T. Clark for keeping the English-speaking world abreast of high quality German scholarship.

Trinity College, Bristol

TIM BRADSHAW

### **ALL THINGS FOR GOOD Thomas Watson**

Banner of Truth Trust 1986 127 pp. £1.50

ISBN 0 85151 478 2

Within the covers of this short book you will find solid meat prepared, in typical Puritan fashion, for easy digestion. *All Things For Good* was first published under the title 'A Divine Cordial' in 1663, a year after the Great Ejection of some two thousand ministers (including the author) from the Church of England. In nine succinct chapters Thomas Watson provides us with a first class exposition of Romans, chapter 8 and verse 28. One cannot speak too highly of the author's expository gifts. Those fortunate enough to possess his *Body of Divinity*, *The Ten Commandments*, *The Beatitudes* or *The Lord's Prayer* (available from the same publisher) will have first hand experience of his style, method, preaching and writing already. As in those volumes so in this, the author is thoroughly scriptural, spiritual and practical. In the brief introduction we are acquainted with the great privilege of which this text speaks.

In the chapters that follow, this precious promise is faithfully and most helpfully expounded. First, Watson shows how both the best (the promises and mercies of God; the graces of the Spirit; the intercession of Christ; and the prayers of the saints) and the worst (afflictions; temptation; and sin) things work for the good of those who love God. The reasons why they do are explored in chapter three, whilst the subject matter of chapters four to six is the love of God. The nature and character of God's love is described. This is followed by an examination of the question, How can I know that I am numbered amongst those who love God? The author's consideration of this subject is concluded with a moving and searching exhortation for Christians to grow in love for God. Here you will find no less than twenty motives for loving God as well as the four signs by which Christians can discern whether they have lost their first love. The next two chapters, seven and eight, contain

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an excellent summary of the Biblical doctrine of Calling. Those unclear as to the distinction between the outward and inward call will do little better than to start their enquiry of this topic here. The exposition is concluded with an all too brief chapter on God's purpose. However, within the space of just three pages Thomas Watson lays the Biblical foundation upon which we are all to build.

If you are not familiar with the Puritans then this gem of an exposition can serve as an invaluable introduction to them. It is compulsive reading. It ought to be compulsory too. In this day of small things we desperately need to attain the scriptural knowledge, spiritual stature and preaching expertise that the saints of old, like Thomas Watson, displayed. This keenly priced and easy to read book deserves as wide a circulation as possible. Buy it; commend it; distribute it and use it.

St. Stephen's Vicarage, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

GEORGE CURRY

### **FAITH IN DIALOGUE A Christian Apologetic**

**Jerry H. Gill**

Waco, Texas, 1986 159pp. \$12.95 (cloth)

ISBN 0 8499 0495 1

This is yet another book concerned mainly to explore the relationship between faith and modern knowledge. It is presented in the form of a series of essays which cover such topics as natural science, social science, the humanities, the arts and world religions. At each step of the way the author rejects the crude confrontationalism which he sees as having been characteristic of both sides in the great debates about these issues, and opts instead for what he terms the 'dialogical' approach, which aims to synthesise the valid insights from both sides of the discussion.

In each of the areas he has selected, Dr. Gill detects a limitation which can even be called a sickness in that particular discipline. He understands faith, and in particular Christian faith, as a medicine which can heal and restore an intellectual world starved of the grace of God. The book is written primarily with students in mind, and it is to those who are still trying to work out their basic orientation in life that this book is likely to have its greatest appeal.

In many ways it can be said to cover the ground explored by the late Francis Schaeffer, though there is little sign that the author knows or appreciates his work. The theological world he moves in is somewhere to the left of that, though it is difficult to know quite how far he goes in that direction. The series is meant to be 'evangelical', though it is disturbing to see the work of John Hick, for example, so highly commended by one writing under that label! Nevertheless, for those who are prepared to stick to the main point of the argument and learn from it, this book will be a very valuable aid towards reflecting on a synthesis of knowledge in our time.

Oak Hill College, London N.14

GERALD BRAY

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF DOGMATICS Hendrikus Berkhof**

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1985 114 pp. £7.95

ISBN 0 8028 0045 9

Berkhof's essay on dogmatics is an attempt to introduce a wider public to the issues which confront anyone trying to write a systematic theology today. The

author is not to be confused with his namesake, Louis Berkhof, whose *Systematic Theology* is widely used in the English-speaking world. This Berkhof is altogether more liberal, and more in line with the ecumenical thinking of the World Council of Churches. At the same time, he should not be confused with the average English liberal, for whom dogmatics is either a waste of time or just a branch of secular philosophy! The author remains closer to his Reformed roots than the superficial reader might think, and he offers us an approach which puts the Bible and the traditions of the Church very much at the centre of his thinking.

Because his purpose is descriptive more than persuasive, there is ample room for discussing theological approaches different from the author's own, and it is clear that his knowledge of the subject is vast. At one point he offers an illuminating survey of European theology, from a Dutch point of view, which treats the isolationist Germans and British alike. Unfortunately, he tends to shy away from anyone to the right of him theologically, and he regards Geoffrey Lampe and John V. Taylor with approval as the leading Anglican theologians!

As an introduction to what is involved in the study of dogmatics this is a helpful book, but the reader must be warned not to swallow the author's own theology! It ought therefore to be read with care, and compared with other, more conservative, Reformed works, not least those emanating from Holland.

Oak Hill College, London N.14

GERALD BRAY

**THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HERMENEUTICS** Roger Lundin, Anthony C. Thiselton and Clarence Walhout

Paternoster, Exeter, 1986 129 pp. £7.95

ISBN 0 8028 0029 7

This relatively short book is a connected series of essays hammered out over a year of co-operative research and reflection at the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship. Two of the co-authors are Professors of English in the U.S.A.; the third has recently become Principal of St. John's College, Nottingham, and is well-known for his earlier writings on hermeneutics.

The authors recognise that hermeneutics has become a bit of a scare-word in theological circles, and are concerned to point out that the issues it raises have been around for a long time. They give brief, but sympathetic consideration to the hermeneutical tradition of Conservative Reformed Protestantism, though they contend that it can no longer be regarded as an adequate synthesis of human knowledge today.

The book deals at great length with the theories put forward by a number of literary critics who are famous within their discipline but probably little-known outside it. These include figures like Northrop Frye, Jacques Derrida (a particular favourite) and Paul Ricoeur, in addition to the philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer. They are acutely sensitive to the problem of cultural contextualisation, though perhaps it is fair to say that they are not particularly open to the suggestion that a great literary text creates its cultural milieu, as much as it is shaped by it.

What one thinks of a book like this will obviously depend to a great extent on what one thinks of the basic philosophical issues which have caused its authors to write as they have. At the beginning, they set up a divide between Augustine and Descartes, claiming that most of us act like the former but try to think like the latter. How true is this? Can any Christian really adopt a detached attitude to the Scriptures? Would he even want to try? Here we are on controversial ground, and most Conservative Protestants will probably find themselves dissenting from the approach this book makes.

Nevertheless, it is a challenging piece of work which deserves to be read carefully and taken seriously by anyone concerned with the great task of Biblical Interpretation. Sadly, the style will be off-putting to many, as it is very technical and hard to follow in places. This in turn raises another question to which the authors might turn in a future symposium—does the study of hermeneutics have to be wrapped in a cloak of academic jargon to be intellectually respectable? Or is it something which can and ought to be packaged for the marketplace, in straightforward language everyone can understand? A really interesting project would be a series of sermons using the kind of principles outlined here. How different would they be from what we have been accustomed to hearing from great men of God over the years?

Oak Hill College, London N. 14

GERALD BRAY

### **BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND THE CHURCH: Text and Context**

**Edited by Don. Carson**

**Paternoster Press, Exeter 1984 240 pp. £6.95**

**ISBN 0 85364 380 6**

This interesting collection of eight essays is produced by the 'Faith and Life' study unit of the World Evangelical Fellowship. Don Carson's Preface describes the mandate given to the group by the Theological Commission of W.E.F.: 'to explore some of the hermeneutical issues that bear on the tasks of world-wide missions at the end of the twentieth century' (p.7).

What a fascinating and compelling task! Carson himself recognises that the group could not hope to do justice to it. But I cannot suppress a feeling of disappointment that they did not manage to do *greater* justice to it. The mandate urges them clearly in the direction of missiology. And with a wonderfully 'international line-up' of contributors (seven countries represented among the eight of them), the potential would seem to be enormous. And indeed, from the point of view of academic competence and exegetical and theological insight, the potential is certainly realised. But the concerns of 'missions' come a definite second best to some of the more usual preoccupations of Western theologians when they give their minds to hermeneutics.

This is not true of all the essays. Two of them (by Emilio Nunez from Guatemala and by Russell Shedd from Brazil) are concerned with Liberation Theology, which is a pressing issue for South American missions. The essay by Shedd, in particular, ('Social Justice: Underlying Hermeneutical Issues', pp.195-233) is a penetrating analysis of the whole question of Christian involvement in the world, with special reference to South America. The little

essay by Tite Tienou from Upper Volta ('The Church in African Theology: Description and Analysis of Hermeneutical Presuppositions', pp.151-165) belies its pretentious title by being a judicious wrestling with a specifically African problem, how to relate the doctrine of the Church to traditional ancestor-veneration. It is the most interesting essay in the book and fulfils its apparent aim perfectly.

The other essays all contribute this and that to the overall problem of hermeneutics, especially as it is felt by theologians of the West, but not (I would think) by those who are engaged in mission. Don Carson introduces the volume with a measured consideration of some of the 'Factors Determining Current Hermeneutical Debate in Cross-Cultural Contexts' (pp.11-29), and Dick France looks again at the Biblical notion of 'the Kingdom of God' in the light of the loose use of the expression by some evangelicals (pp.30-44). Gerhard Maier examines the use of the expression *ecclesia* in Matthew (pp.45-63), and the longest essay in the book examines the 'Biblical Models of the Church' (by Edmund Clowney) and considers the use of the metaphor in the Bible and today (pp.64-109). Then Peter O'Brien looks at 'Principalities and Powers' in the New Testament (pp.110-150).

This last-mentioned essay typifies my problem with the whole book. It is an *excellent* survey and assessment of the New Testament debate, with obviously fantastic potential for missiological application both to the whole question of Christian social engagement and to ministry in the face of demonic powers. But in the end he reaches no judgment about the relationship between principalities and powers and societal structures and forces, and ends on a purely personal, devotional note ('The Christian's Present Responsibilities', pp.143-147).

Despite these reservations, however, the essays are individually of great value, and I look forward to further productions from this 'study unit'.

The book is marred by many avoidable proof-reading errors (a particularly disastrous one makes a nonsense of p.93), and the binding on my copy is giving way.

The Vicarage, Albury, Ware, Hertfordshire

STEVE MOTYER

### **COVENANT AND CREATION: an Old Testament Covenantal Theology**

**W.J. Dumbrell**

Paternoster 1984 217 pp. £6.95

ISBN 0 85364 346 6

The subject of God's covenants continues to attract great interest from Old Testament scholars, even after the parallel with the ancient vassal treaty, first pointed out by G.E. Mendenhall, has been so fully explored. Since 1980 no less than three evangelical scholars from the U.S.A. or Australia have produced weighty works on the covenant theology of the Old Testament, two of them being O. Palmer Robertson (*The Christ of the Covenants*, Baker) and T. E. McComiskey (*The Covenants of Promise*, Baker), and the third being W.J. Dumbrell, in the work here reviewed.

In some ways this is the most thorough book of the three. It works steadily through the main Old Testament covenants in chronological order, dealing with critical as well as exegetical questions (though concentrating on the latter), and not confining its attention to the contexts where the actual word

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'covenant' is used, but dealing also with the related concepts which are important at the relevant stages of biblical revelation.

The significance of the title of the book is that Dumbrell (like Robertson) maintains that by the very act of creating the world God entered into covenant with it. The idea is that the covenant with Noah was simply the renewal of an earlier covenant made at creation, which is held to be the implication of the phrase 'establish my covenant' (Gen. 6:18; 9:8 etc.), i.e. confirm a covenant already made. The way the same phrase is used in Ex. 6:4 must put this interpretation in considerable doubt. The theory is not the same as that of older covenant theologians, who held that there was a 'covenant of works' between God and man which Adam violated at the Fall, but it is similar in attempting to carry back the covenant idea to the very beginning of the Bible.

Latimer House, Oxford

ROGER BECKWITH

## **ISLAM AND THE DESTINY OF MAN C. LeG. Eaton**

George Allen & Unwin and The Islamic Texts Society 1985

242 pp. £12.95

ISBN 0 04 297047 4

Who better could there be as an interpreter of Islam to western Christians than an English convert to Islam? The author, Gai Eaton, was educated at Charterhouse and King's College, Cambridge, and worked as a teacher and journalist in Jamaica and Egypt, where he embraced Islam. He later joined the British Diplomatic Service, serving in India, Africa and the Caribbean, and since his early retirement, has been working as consultant to the Islamic Cultural Centre in London. He often speaks on the radio, for example, on *Thought for the Day*, (B.B.C. Radio 4).

This book covers all that one would wish to find in any introduction to Islam: the life of Muhammad, the development of Islam under the Successors of the Prophet, the division between Sunni and Shiite Islam, law and art, mysticism and the spirituality of Islam etc. The great value of the book, however, is that the writer succeeds so well in his aim 'to show what it means to be a Muslim'. So, for example, his discussion of polygamy and the Prophet's wives ends with a sentence which is typical of the way he constantly seeks to help the outsider to appreciate Islam 'from within': 'The tense and delicate balance between the glory of Muhammad's prophethood, his closeness to God and his visionary gifts, the Herculean task he undertook and accomplished in the world, and the warmth and liveliness of his household is at the heart of the Muslim view of life; if this is understood, Islam is understood.' (p.123).

Another unique feature of the book is that it contains so much of the kind of apologetic which is needed to commend Islam to a western audience. It should therefore be required reading for Christians whose knowledge of Islam comes only from the media, or from material written by Christian missionaries or by western orientologists. The author states that he is writing 'for those whose minds have been shaped by Western culture', and he explains his own conversion to Islam as 'an act of acceptance which carried with it no corresponding rejection other than the rejection of the secular,

agnostic world of thought in its entirety'. As one, therefore, who has spent much of his life explaining Islamic belief and practice to sceptical westerners, he knows all the sensitive points where a convincing apologetic is needed—like the marriages of the Prophet, the slaughter of the men of a Jewish tribe, and the *houris* (wide-eyed maidens) of Paradise.

If he succeeds in communicating with the *secular* mind of the west, does he succeed in communicating with the *Christian* mind? Aspects of Islamic belief and practice are constantly explained by comparisons of this kind which often prove to be most helpful: 'For Christians the Word was made flesh, whereas for Muslims it took earthly shape in the form of a book, and the recitation of the Qur'an in the ritual prayer fulfils the same function as the eucharist in Christianity . . .' (p.65). It is not quite so helpful, however, if we find it hard to identify with what the writer takes to be a fair summary of Christian belief and practice. For example, '. . . although in traditional Christianity, sexual intercourse is permitted for the sake of procreation, this permission is granted, as it were, with regret, and sexual intercourse for its own sake is condemned.' (p.48). 'So far as his spiritual life is concerned, the Christian depends upon his priest or upon the abbot of his monastery. Since Islam has no priesthood and no monasticism, the Muslim is inwardly alone with God, face to face with the absolute Reality without meditation, (or should it be mediation?)' (p.34).

The Christian should warm to the Islamic invitation to a totally integrated world view which sees everything in the universe coming under the lordship of the one God. We ought also to be challenged by seeing how a modern Muslim diagnoses some of the decadence of western Christianity ('the European Renaissance was, from the religious point of view, a rebirth of the paganism which Christianity had supplanted' p.12). But if the Muslim apologist has any desire to communicate his faith to committed Christians in the west, is not something more required than simply pointing out where Christianity differs from Islam? To illustrate the point, it can be noted that Kenneth Cragg is quoted twice in the book—but only for his accurate and fair descriptions of aspects of Muslim belief and practice. Nowhere in the book is there any attempt to wrestle with the kind of questions which Cragg in his many books has addressed to Muslims.

Why is it that this kind of dialogue with Christians does not seem to come easily to Muslims to-day? Part of the reason may be that, as Eaton says, the Muslim sees it as a sign of 'weakness or of imbecility' to think himself 'under an obligation to justify the Prophet in accordance with the criteria of a different religious dispensation and a different culture.' (p.122). The Christian can hardly expect the Muslim to justify his Islamic beliefs in accordance with Christian criteria. But is it too much to hope that more Muslims and Christians will seek to advance beyond polemics and apologetics and engage in genuine dialogue with each other? To this end, can we look forward to another book from Mr. Eaton, in which he seeks to commend Islam not so much to a *secular*, post-Christian audience, but more specifically to a committed, but open-minded *Christian* audience?



**RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION** William R. Estep

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1986 331pp. \$19.95

ISBN 0 8028 0050 5

At first sight this book may appear to many to be yet another exposition of the Reformation with little to add that is new. This impression is understandable, especially as the book devotes the major part of its space to the major Reformers and the politics in which they were involved, and says little about them which is not readily available elsewhere.

Yet it would be a mistake to underestimate this book's value just because it covers the familiar ground at undergraduate level. It is intended as a textbook for students, and its great merit is that it sets the Reformation within the wider context of the political and social developments of the time. Whole chapters are devoted to the age of discovery; the meaning of the Renaissance; the situation of the Papacy; and the development of social institutions in medieval Europe before we come to Luther. By giving his readers this kind of background, the author succeeds in enriching our appreciation of the Reformation even if he may not greatly add to our store of factual information about it.

The book is also important because it devotes adequate space to the Anabaptists and the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation. These movements tend to get short-changed in discussion of the Reformation, and it is encouraging to see a textbook which takes into account the more sympathetic reassessments of them which have been taking place in recent years. The book concludes with an account of the Reformation in England and Scotland, with the famous picture of John Knox admonishing Mary, Queen of Scots adorning almost the very last page. The book is lavishly illustrated throughout, but in a way which is both tasteful and helpful to the memory.

Omissions are few, though some may find them irritating. There is no discussion of how the Reformation spread to Scandinavia, nor is anything said about the Eastern Churches or the Turkish menace, which weighed so heavily in the calculations of Charles V. More could also have been said about the impact of Spanish American silver on Europe at this time, and the difficulties which the Papacy had with its supposedly loyal followers at the French and Spanish courts. Nevertheless, these omissions are peripheral.

Mr. Estep has given us an excellent textbook for college use, and it will make lively and absorbing reading for anyone interested in the Reformation period.

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GERALD BRAY

**RELIGION IN THE LIVES OF ENGLISH WOMEN 1760-1930**

**Gail Malmgreen and Others**

Croom Helm Ltd, 1986 295 pp. £25.00

ISBN 0 70099 4612 0

Take seven females and four males and allow them to write on one aspect each of English women and their religious activities over a given period and the normal results would be disunity and contradiction. But through Malmgreen's book runs a singularity of purpose and treatment by specialists in women's studies that, in her words, seeks 'to open up a new vista across

disciplinary lines'. What has emerged is an outstanding comprehensive study of female contribution to English Christianity on its public, social, and moral level. Hymn writers, Quakers, Methodist revivalists, Sisterhoods, Deaconesses, and Jewish women receive close attention. A strange omission is the parochial and rescue work of Church Army Sisters, while Salvation Army 'lasses' receive full attention. In setting forth female philanthropic, social and moral religious work the book gives the lie to the view that Christians are only concerned with saving souls. In these essays certain key elements stand out, such as the valuable survey of Christian work amongst one parent families, Victorian women's Temperance activity, and the origins and development of the Deaconess Order. But in such a well researched and informed book the authors can hardly be excused for assuming that Deaconesses are ordained to the Diaconate. They are not. In the Anglican Church the term is used of males being made Deacons. Females are non-clerical. The male Diaconate is not a perpetual Order as is that of Deaconesses. It is also unforgivable to describe evangelicals throughout the book as 'Low' churchmen, when historically this designation applies to liberal Broad Churchmen, the Latitudinarians.

The contributors have given an objective panorama of women's struggle for Church recognition in their own right, and the steady and painful growth of their acceptance in Christian ministry. How much of that may be due to the influence of Queen Victoria upon the English female can be adduced from the detailed examination of the Queen and her religion, which forms one of the best essays in the book. Of much interest is the claim that the establishment of Anglican nunneries owed much to the rise of 19th century feminism that revolted against the confining of women's duties to the home. Similarly, a link is seen between the female political suffrage movement and women's attempts to win a place in the Church's Councils in face of male chauvinism. Gail Malmgreen's book has a vital contribution to make to the present debate on the Movement for the Ordination of Women. Supporters will find in it much armour for their guns, while their opponents will see points of value to strengthen their case, though the question of women's ultimate ministerial careers in the Anglican Church is not finally answered.

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ARTHUR BENNETT

### **EVANGELICALS ON THE CANTERBURY TRAIL**

**Robert E. Webber and Others.**

Word Books, 1985 174 pp.

ISBN 0 8499 0402 1

This unique book is a convincing apology for Eucharistic worship in the episcopal Church, and a rationale why Free Churchmen are attracted to the Anglican liturgy. Its author, a one-time fundamentalist-schooled Baptist, ex-Presbyterian minister, and now a layman-Professor of theology in an evangelical college, and an episcopalian, movingly relates the soul-agony a Free-Churchman faces in uprooting himself from one religious tradition to another. The purpose of his book, he says, is to explain why evangelicals such as he and six other contributors have taken this trail. All give a forceful panorama of spiritual pilgrimage without disavowing their evangelicalism.

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Webber claims that their pilgrimage is part of an American movement away from fundamental churches into mainline ones. For himself, he claims to have found in Anglican worship and sacraments a sense of mystery other than intellectualism and arid expressions of systematic theology. He spells this out in terms of 'historic identity, an ecclesiastical home, and a holistic spirituality', that he searched for and found in Anglicanism, particularly in what he styles 'eucharistic spirituality'. In sharp contrast to 'evangelistic worship', and services that excite an 'entertainment mentality', and 'narcissism', that he has known, he has discovered in the Book of Common Prayer a form that directs worship to God, glorifies Christ, provides full Scripture readings, a pattern of spirituality, and an evangelical content. The six contributors to his book write in similar strains.

The danger of this sort of approach is that it tends to put the church, not the Bible, in the centre. It opens the door to the Catholic acceptance of the seven sacraments, auricular confession, and the sacrifice of the Mass, as it does in Webber's case, and is but a small step into the Roman church. It may please Anglican High-Churchmen, but can hardly satisfy orthodox evangelicals who take their stand on the Reformation and their 18th century forbears, and the pure biblicism of the Christian faith and experience. It is notable that Webber and his six Pilgrims are all intellectuals able to weigh and assimilate the nature of Eucharistic worship. It would be helpful to know whether the rank and file of American Christians are moving in the same direction. There is no evidence that English evangelicals are taking this trail. Nevertheless Webber has made a valuable contribution to an understanding of why some evangelical Anglicans in time become Anglo-Catholics and finally Romanists as did Cardinal Newman. What is important in his view is that in moving from an evangelical background into a rich liturgical tradition there is no need to forsake evangelical insights and truths such as personal conviction, simple gospel trust, credal statements and scripture integrity. In this the book makes a helpful contribution to ecumenicity.

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ARTHUR BENNETT

## **SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM A Ragaz Reader**

Edited and translated by P. Bock

W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1984 (distributed Paternoster, Exeter)

127 pp. \$7.95 pb.

ISBN 0 8028 1986 9

The debate currently raging about the nature of the Kingdom of God is far from new. Those who have studied anything of Reformed Theology, or of recent Political Theology, will know that at the heart of discussions about *how* people should regard this world are issues to do with the Kingdom of God. From a Reformed perspective the work of Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands set the scene at the end of the last century for the coming to political power of an essentially Calvinistic party (The Anti-Revolutionary Party). It was as long ago as 1939 that Eerdmans first published *Lectures on Calvinism* by A. Kuyper that included the famous lecture delivered in 1898 at Princeton University: 'Calvinism and Politics'. While *Signs of the Kingdom* represents an altogether different political theology, it is good to have some of Leonhard Ragaz's work now available to us in translation.

Ragaz was a leader in the first three decades of this century in Swiss religious socialism. This book introduces the reader to the man and his ideas in an interesting but brief Introduction. There follows a series of essays lectures and articles arranged in three parts: 1) The Kingdom in Social Movements: 1887–1914; 2) The Kingdom and Violence, 1914–1932; 3) The Kingdom in the Bible: 1933–1945.

The earliest essay here was given in 1906 at a pastor's conference in Basel. It is interesting to note that Ragaz was, even at this early stage, a strongly committed Christian-socialist. He argued that capitalism was *non-biblical*, while socialism was true to biblical theology. He asks: 'Does the capitalistic system embody the way of life of the gospel . . . My answer is a very decisive: No. It contradicts it so much that it strikes one in the face. It must be replaced with something better if the demands of the gospel are to be realized among men' (p.4).

Time and again, however much the positions he espoused may be questioned, the reader cannot but be impressed with the evident desire of Ragaz to see commitment to God reflected in this world. His reaction, like Kuyper's some thirty years earlier, was theologically against pietism of the most 'other-worldly' sort, and politically against the horrors of the harshness of late nineteenth century liberalism (i.e. what today we would probably call right-wing conservative politics of a *laissez-faire* economy).

For Ragaz the First World War was judgment on a church in Europe which was 'religious' but not Christian: 'We don't need religion; we need the Kingdom of God' (p.33). His interest in personal ethics is also evident in this selection of writings: 'Libertinism—is it not the product of a period that has thrown aside all moral norms and forms in order to achieve unbridled self-enjoyment? Is it not simply the *laissez-faire* principle carried over from the economic world to the ethical world?' (p.89).

Ragaz sees himself as thoroughly indebted to the Reformed Church 'in whom still dwells a trace of the spirit of Zwingli and Calvin' (p.19). His criticisms, both political and theological, of the church and society of his day sound surprisingly modern. Whatever biblical answers we may suggest, the criticisms themselves are relevant, and it would benefit the whole Christian community today if they were raised again in our own evangelical circles. Kuyper, I believe, remained truer to Reformed theology than Ragaz. If I were to single out one particular doctrine on which Kuyper and Ragaz would disagree and that perhaps more than any other opened up socialism to Ragaz, it would be the doctrine of original sin. Here Kuyper remained biblical; Ragaz, I fear, did not.

What remains fascinating to me, and yet causes sadness, is that England has never really had this deep, Reformed, analytical examination of society (at least since the 1650's!). This book is thought-provoking and well worth reading. Perhaps, for some, it will encourage a re-thinking of their own position. However it is believed that Christianity should be worked out in day-to-day life, the biblical concept so carefully defined in Reformed theology of a 'world and life view' is missing in most English evangelicalism. Surely at least we can agree with Ragaz: 'If a man has found God, then he feels irresistibly impelled to see him in real life. He wants to recognize his rule in all that exists in his own life and in the life of the world' (p.19).

**CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM: New Understanding, New Relationship.**  
**James Atkinson.**

Latimer Studies No.17, Latimer House, Oxford, 1984 56 pp. £1.25 ISBN 0 946307 16 4

This monograph should make a significant contribution to current Christian thinking about Christian-Jewish relations. Atkinson's starting point is two significant events in 1983: the quinqucentenary of the birth of Martin Luther with all the questions raised about his anti-Semitic views, and the speech of Hugh Montefiore, Bishop of Birmingham, a Jewish convert, in which he argued that the beginnings of anti-Semitism are to be found 'right at the heart and centre of the New Testament writings'.

Atkinson has little difficulty in defending the New Testament against this charge, and argues that this kind of exposition is 'the worst type of eisegesis'. There then follow the three longer and most helpful chapters which look in some detail at Christian writing about Jews and Judaism in the Patristic Period, the Mediaeval Period, and the Reformation. After a chapter dealing with the Post-Holocaust Period and the Establishment of Israel, the final chapter outlines Practical Proposals and Guidelines Towards True Relationships.

The most valuable part of the monograph must surely be the exposition of what John Chrysostom and Martin Luther said and wrote concerning the Jewish people. If we have all learnt to blush with shame at some of the things they said about the Jews (Chrysostom's 'plague of Judaism' and Luther's 'set their synagogues on fire . . .'), few of us have understood the context in which they spoke. While Atkinson does not seek to defend these outbursts which have left such a terrible legacy for the Christian Church, he does enable us to appreciate the special challenges which Chrysostom and Luther faced and the motives behind the rhetoric which sound so utterly unacceptable to our ears today.

It is a pity that space does not allow the writer to discuss the implications of the founding of the State of Israel at the same depth. The final chapter is a well-argued plea that 'God's ancient people the Jews are in a special category on the grounds of their historical calling, and also, because they have suffered much injury from Christians'. Where we may need further guidance is how to relate this new understanding to the different kinds of Jewish-Christian relationship called for by organisations like The Jews for Jesus Movement, The Council for Christians and Jews, The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, and The Selly Oak Centre for the Study of Judaism.

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COLIN CHAPMAN

**THE QUEST FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS—An enquiry into Ethics and Christian Ethics** Ian C.M. Fairweather and James I.H. McDonald

The Handsel Press, 1984 xi+275 pp. £17.50

ISBN 0 905312 27 9

The authors of this book are two Scottish ministers, one on the staff of the Jordanhill College of Education and the other a lecturer in the Divinity School of the University of Edinburgh. The book itself is a comprehensive and thorough account of its subject, divided into four sections. The first, *Moral Decision Making*, discusses the *measure* of right decision: is it the

nature of the act, its consequences, or the motive behind it? Then comes *From Morality to Christian Ethics*: what is the relation between morality and religion, faith and morality, and (secular) ethics and Christian ethics? Next, *The Re-making of Christian Ethics* is concerned with the place of Natural Law in Moral Theology (a chapter much taken up with mediaeval thought); Learning from the Reformers; and finally, Some Twentieth Century Re-shaping. The last section, *Proposing a Model for Christian Ethics* is taken up with an exposition of the Personal Model, ethics as based on the relations between persons.

The book as a whole is an excellent introduction for the student to the 'problematic character of Christian ethics'. It is anything but superficial, yet its aim is clearly to be comprehensible to any intelligent reader. Its claim is that 'building on philosophical and theological discussion in the past, it pursues the quest for Christian ethics into the present and seeks a new shape that is at once culturally relevant, biblically informed and theologically sound'. Does it justify this claim? My answer can hardly be an unqualified 'Yes'. I gained a great deal from reading this book, but the impression I was left with was that its biblical anchorage was quite inadequate. For instance, it takes no account of the profound significance of the giving of a primeval command to Adam '... of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat'. Nor is there reference to the great Old Testament principle 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom', emphasised afresh in the opening phrases of the Lord's prayer. The Ten Commandments with their postscript 'and He added no more' are never explicitly discussed, nor is our Lord's reference to them as never to be relaxed. In fact throughout, reference to the Bible is quite minimal. In the final chapter where the authors are attempting to establish a 'model' adequate for our culture (the 'Personal Model'), they are naturally concerned with establishing what is meant by personhood. They reject the suggestion influenced by 'existentialism, or at least . . . Martin Buber', 'that the person is a subject . . . not to be treated as an object . . . the I who can enter into relation with the Thou'. Their own definition is that 'minimally a person is someone capable of communication'. This seems a good start; but are not animals capable of communication? 'Yes', they would probably say, 'but not in the way we mean'. What way do they mean? Surely, by *verbal* communication, by speech. For it is by man's power of speech that he is most clearly distinguished (on the observable level) from the animals. But at this point a difficulty arises for the authors' position. For God, they agree, is personal; how does *He* then communicate with men? Surely it must be conspicuously with *words*. If so, this would seem to mean that Revelation must take place importantly in *propositional* form. Yet in their listing of the biblical *motifs* which inform their proposal the recognition of this seems to be entirely absent, even denied. 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin'. This links ethics firmly with faith, and faith comes by hearing the preached message. Christian ethics makes sense therefore only in the context of discipleship. One would have liked to have seen this recognised more explicitly.

The book is attractively written, and well-produced.

**BACK FROM THE BRINK: The Battle against Permissiveness**

**James F. Pawsey M.P., Dr. Rhodes Boyson M.P. and the Revd. Dr. David N. Samuel**

Church Society, 1986 15 pp. £1.00 (£1.30 by post)

On 10 October 1985 Church Society sponsored a public meeting at Blackpool during the Conservative Party Conference to alert all classes to the threat to national well-being posed by our grave declension from Christian moral standards. Three addresses were given: a brief opening one from James Pawsey, M.P. for Rugby; a longer one from Dr. Rhodes Boyson, M.P. for Brent North, ex-headmaster and at that time parliamentary spokesman on Northern Ireland; and a comparable address from the Revd. Dr. David Samuel of Church Society. Together the alarm was sounded from the points of view of politics, education and theology. And indeed the alarm needs to be sounded, for if Scripture is any guide there comes a time when drastic divine judgment on society is all that can be expected: witness the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the 'iniquity of the Amorites' and the Captivities. Men of goodwill must therefore unite to 'turn back the battle at the gates', and Church leaders who have not succumbed to the permissive theological spirit of the age must insist again that the Gospel does not 'relax one of the least of these commandments' but rather demands them as the only way to escape a sick society. These are forceful addresses and have been published together to introduce a programme of action entitled *The Next Step*. They deserve wide publicity.

Wantage, Oxon.

DOUGLAS SPANNER

**LIFE IN THE BALANCE: Exploring the Abortion Controversy**

**Robert N. Wennberg**

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids; Paternoster, Exeter, 1985 184 pp. £7.95 ISBN 0 8028 0061 0

I am glad I have read this book. It is by a Professor of Philosophy (Westmont College, California) who writes out of the 'evangelical Protestant tradition'; but it is far from being merely an exposition of that tradition's viewpoint. It is in fact a very fair, lucid and capable examination of the whole abortion question, a *vade mecum* for those who wish to know the positions taken up by various thinkers on the issue (both secularist and Christian), and the best arguments which can be put forward for them. It is well-written and well-referenced. While it deals fairly adequately with biblical texts relevant to such questions as the status of foetal life (e.g. Exod. 21.22-25) the treatment is certainly not over-weighted with appeals to biblical authority; for the most part it uses arguments which would commend themselves to most persons of honesty and good-will, whatever their religious convictions. Reading this book would probably help very many to clarify their thinking. Arbitrary killing of a human being is agreed by all to be wrong. At what stage from conception onwards does it become wrong? And why? Is it transgression of another's 'right to life'? Or is it contempt for a 'unique centre of value'? Has a woman an absolute right to 'bodily self-determination'? And does that right cover the death of the foetus (which, the author asserts, is what most women who demand abortion really want)? Should Christians seek to make abortion a criminal offence, or should they concentrate rather

on moral dissuasion? Thinking through these questions could be a valuable exercise, and this book a valuable guide. The author's own conclusion, modestly stated, is that already at conception the zygote has special value and a right to life because of its *potentiality* of attaining personhood. But these attributes increase by stages throughout individual development till they become final (sometime after birth) with the actual attainment of personhood. Thus abortion at an early stage, for reasons judged morally adequate, may be the best course. But while abortion is always an evil, the complexities of the issue seem to him to rule out the advisability of trying to stem the tide by making the practice criminal—(even at a late stage?). As with divorce, we should concentrate on moral advocacy, perhaps with legal (e.g. financial) encouragements to go through with the pregnancy.

Not everyone will agree with the author's conclusions; but few would disagree with the verdict that this is a valuable contribution to the debate.

Wantage. Oxon.

DOUGLAS SPANNER

### **THE COURAGE TO BE CHASTE Benedict Groeschel**

Paulist Press, distributed in U.K. by Fowler Wright Books, Leominster, 114pp. £3.95.

It is a strange comment upon the decline of the Christian moral ideal that a book on chastity should appear radical, innovative and challenging. And yet that is the case with this American book, written by a Capuchin friar.

In many ways this is the most satisfying volume that this reviewer has ever read on chastity. Originally it was to have been addressed to the homosexual community but the theme has been expanded to cover many aspects of Christian life in so far as it is dedicated to purity.

Here is a book which will prove to be of inestimable help to almost any single person whatever their sexual orientation. It is a volume which will challenge the married to re-think the nature of their vocation and it will also be a most valuable resource for the pastor and counsellor.

Here there are no vague perceptions but practical advice about making friendships, overcoming temptation, the problem of dreams and so much else.

The position taken by the writer is wholly Scriptural and the fact that he is Roman Catholic is not unduly obtrusive. It is interesting that in his downright espousal to the call to chastity, the writer excludes even auto-eroticism, which is, to say the very least, an unfashionable view today.

Here is a book which will be an invaluable resource to many people and for which profound thanksgiving will be offered to the Lord. It is illuminated by many 'case studies' provided by permission of the people concerned.

The exciting message is that chastity and purity are possible for anyone who will put God first. Groeschel's light touch conceals a wisdom which is world-affirming. Perhaps one of his best 'bons mots' is this: 'It's amazing how few people are tempted to sin during a fire alarm'.



## **THE EXPECTATION OF THE POOR**

### **Latin American Basic Ecclesial Communities in Protestant Perspective**

**Guillermo Cook**

Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1985 316 + xix pp. \$13.95 ISBN 0 88344 209 4

An important challenge to traditional theological thinking is presented by Liberation theology. This starts from the observation (which would be taken for granted in the sociology of knowledge but has only recently been taken account of by the churches) that the agenda and the priorities for theology have always been set, even if unconsciously, by those who have practised it—that is, those who are relatively well educated and secure . . . In Latin America a vigorous Church life has emerged in what are called 'base communities'. These conduct their own form of theological reflection which is not determined by the traditional academic and catechetical patterns of Church teaching but which has proved its validity in nourishing and enlarging an authentic Christian witness, spirituality and mission.

So *Faith in the City*, the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, published at the end of 1985. 'The Pope has said that the "theology of liberation" as practised in Latin America "is not only opportune, but is useful and necessary. It must become a new stage in our theological thinking."' So George Armstrong, reporting in *The Guardian* from Rome in June 1986.

Speakers and writers 'for' and 'against' *liberation theology* and the *base communities* have been making their case for some time. Yet I believe very few of us outside Latin America and perhaps Africa really have much idea what these related movements mean and signify. We should therefore do well to read Guillermo Cook's real contribution to missiology today. For once, the blurb can be said to echo the reactions of a reviewer: 'serious . . . painstakingly researched, extraordinarily well-written . . . a new bench mark for understanding . . . inclusive.'

Guillermo Cook was born in Argentina of missionary parents and has lived and worked in Brazil and Costa Rica. He brings depth of passion and a wealth of experience to his subject. The only criticism I can apply is to his sometimes quirky theological appraisals; however these are relatively few, occurring usually where the relationship between catholic and protestant hermeneutics and mission theologies is being scrutinized.

The book falls into four parts: the first three dealing, respectively, with the base communities in the perspective of history, renewal and theology; the fourth exploring the significance of the grassroots communities for protestant mission today. The latter ends with a perceptive and sympathetic concluding chapter on the challenges of the base communities for both Protestant mission and Roman Catholicism and the future of the communities in Latin America today.

What I find so useful about Cook's work is his attempt to define and explain the base communities in the theological, sociological and geographical contexts of Brazil and against the historical background both of Latin America and of the Church throughout the ages. And in his relating of the communities to protestant mission in Latin America and worldwide he treats most illuminatingly the origins of many of Latin America's Protestant

mission churches in 'grassroots', 'dissident', 'sectarian', 'protest' movements of the past such as the pre-Reformation Brethren of the Common Life in the Netherlands and the post-Reformation Methodists in England. The lesson to be learned is that those who would distance themselves from the base communities now mistakenly or conveniently forget whence they came. And the impetus is not only always onwards towards institutionalization but in the case of pietistic protestantism, relentlessly, mobilely, upwards, towards the middle class.

The concluding chapter's section on a typology of mission lifestyles gives a fair summary of the author's and the book's position: Christ redefines 'royal mission' (from the top down involving monologue, paternalism and tradition) as *service*, 'priestly mission' (sensory, ideological and total) as *self-sacrifice*, and 'prophetic mission' (from the bottom up, participatory, involving dialogue and grassroots communities) as *incarnation*. These lifestyles represent Jesus' new holistic model for Christian mission. And the base communities stamp a radical question mark on Protestant church doors because by these lifestyles they question the structures, actions and witness of Protestant churches and their mission.

Diocese of Liverpool

MYRTLE LANGLEY

**THE EVANGELICAL-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE  
ON MISSION 1977-1984: A Report  
Basil Meeking and John Stott (ed.)**

Paternoster/Eerdmans, 1986 96 pp. £2.95

ISBN 0 85364 437 3

This is a remarkable, perhaps unique, book. It is the product of three conferences between an international group of Roman Catholics and an international and interdenominational group of Evangelicals, consisting in each case of missiologists and theologians. The Roman Catholics were appointed by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, so were presumably responsible representatives of their church (though one notices that the report carries no *imprimatur*, and that no Roman Catholic press co-operated in issuing it). The Evangelicals, for their part, were no light-weight ecumenical fellow-travellers, but included such hard-headed controversialists as Peter Beyerhaus and such outspoken critics of Roman Catholicism as David Wells and John Stott.

There are seven chapters: 1. Revelation and Authority; 2. The Nature of Mission; 3. The Gospel of Salvation; 4. Our Response in the Holy Spirit to the Gospel; 5. The Church and the Gospel; 6. The Gospel and Culture; 7. The Possibilities of Common Witness. It will be clear from this that the participants address themselves to the Christian message and the basis of the Christian message quite as much as to the proclamation of it (mission). Indeed, the main chapter on mission (ch.2) is the weakest in the book.

There is a stress throughout on the final authority of Scripture (affirmed on p.17 to be 'without error') and on the Christian message as the exposition of the teaching of Scripture, and local joint Bible study is recommended as the best way of carrying on the work of the dialogue (p.86), now that it has

formally come to an end. On this basis, it is perhaps less surprising that the participants are able to affirm together so much that is important on revelation, Christology and salvation, and even on sensitive issues, e.g. that 'the Church needs to be reformed' (p.25) and that 'baptism must never be isolated, either in theology or practice, from the context of conversion' (p.57). At the same time, they do not shrink from drawing attention to continuing disagreements, e.g. on the authority of the church (pp.21–25), original sin (p.40), the atonement (p.43), the salvation of unbelievers (p.46), justification (p.47), the rôle of Mary (pp.48–52), the claims of Rome to be the one church of Christ (p.59) and the sacrifice of the mass (pp.61, 88). It would be beneficial if discussion of these topics could be taken further, on the same basis of the final authority of Scripture, since, if 'the Church needs to be reformed', it is not enough to be frank about differences without scrutinizing them to see whether Scripture has been contradicted or added to on one side or the other.

There is a lesson here, too, for the A.R.C.I.C. discussions, in which (comparatively speaking) there has been a marked reluctance to admit continuing disagreements.

Not surprisingly, the final chapter expresses a good deal of reserve about the possibilities of common witness. Evangelism is the area in which Evangelicals have traditionally found co-operation hardest, and if it is hard with Liberals, it is not going to be easy with Roman Catholics either. However, the investigation was well worth undertaking, even if it only results in showing that this is so, and why.

So there is food for thought in this report for Evangelicals as well as for Roman Catholics. The Evangelical participants did make the attempt to be self-critical, particularly for over-emphasis on individual responsibility at the expense of the doctrine of the church (ch.5). They could perhaps have gone further, and considered whether there has also been an over-emphasis upon the church invisible at the expense of the church visible, and upon the national church at the expense of the universal church. Why was it that the Reformers were never able to unite among themselves? Why have there been so many other schisms among Protestants since? Why is the Evangelical school of thought necessarily interdenominational, so that at this very dialogue they had to put up an interdenominational team, and to admit certain denominational differences among themselves, viz. on infant baptism (p.57) and on the use of the Apocrypha (p.83)? Certainly, attention to the doctrine of the church is not going to solve forthwith such long-standing practical problems. Certainly, reform must come before unity. But without attention to the doctrine of the church there will never be *adequate* reform, and a subject so neglected since the days of Calvin and Hooker, even by their spiritual heirs, cannot safely be neglected any longer.

Latimer House, Oxford

ROGER BECKWITH

### **A VISION FOR MISSIONS Tom Wells**

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1985 157 pp. £1.95

ISBN 0 85151 433 2

'Our God is too small'—to rephrase J.B. Phillips—is my immediate response to this book.

For many months now I have been exploring in my own theology and spirituality a variety of issues surrounding our 'images and concepts of God' and for that reason alone I was disposed to welcome the opportunity to read once again something on the subject from a reformed source. And in many ways I was not disappointed. For Tom Wells's treatment displays both the strengths and weaknesses of a Calvinistic approach. Moreover, because the chapters read like sermons I found myself at times responding in gratitude and faith to a God worthy of worship and to a vision of Christian mission rooted in the nature of the Gospel.

Tom Wells's God is definitely not 'utilitarian', there for people to use and manipulate at will; *He* is self-sufficient, sovereign, wise, righteous, gracious, faithful, glorious, seen most fully in the face of Jesus Christ, but also to be seen and emulated in the lives of such missionary giants as David Brainerd, William Carey and Henry Martin. And it is the very nature of God and his movement towards us in Jesus Christ which constrains the Christian to go forth as a missionary (incidentally, always apparently used in the sense of 'foreign') and is therefore the main motivation towards mission. I agree; and this I consider the book's strength.

Yet, one cannot help feel that Tom Wells's God, although gracious and loving with a wounded Son, is set in a strait-jacket of traditional philosophical theology, of a Hellenistic kind. There were times as I read when he appeared to me rather distant (transcendent, not immanent), unfeeling (static, not dynamic) and despotic (powerful, not suffering). I yearned to be moved by the image of a warm and loving God, distinct from, but also thoroughly involved in, this world; its joys and sorrows entering into his inner being as they did into the living and dying of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son. I am captivated by that 'powerless almighty father' who puts limits on naked power by so loving his prodigal son that he lets him go, and puts himself at risk for the sake of the self-righteous elder brother by leaving the banquet for the darkness outside. There, outside, too, is where we find Jesus and behold the face of God. Perhaps Tom Wells will give us another series of sermons on this kind of God and what a vision for missions will then be ours!

Diocese of Liverpool

MYRTLE LANGLEY

**MISSION BETWEEN THE TIMES C. René Padilla**

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1985 199 pp. + xi no price

ISBN 0 8028 0057 2

There were times while I was reading the first essay in this collection written over a decade, when I was so struck with the familiar that I almost decided to skim or skip the pages. So much of the biblical and theological sources quoted (many apparently without acknowledgement) were well-known and well-tried from my own theological reading while a student in the sixties. Moreover, the relation between evangelism and social action and the discussions on 'secular Christianity' and 'culture Christianity' were well-worn topics. Then I became interested: this first essay had had its initial airing at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1975. Consequently, what I was reading must have played a seminal rôle in changing the face of evangelicalism towards the more radical gospel proclaimed by such

luminaries as Jim Wallis today. All of which leads me to lament the fact that the publishers did not engage a missiologist, for instance such as Gerald Anderson or Harvie Conn (both of whom are quoted in the blurb), to write a preface introducing and assessing the author and his significance, particularly for evangelical mission theology in the period 1975–84.

Each of the nine essays has already appeared elsewhere. They deal respectively with: evangelism and the world; spiritual conflict; the nature of the gospel; the contextualization of the gospel; Christ and Antichrist in the proclamation of the gospel; the fullness of mission; the unity of the church and the homogeneous unit principle; New Testament perspectives on simple lifestyle; and the mission of the church in the light of the kingdom of God. It is most useful to have them between the same two covers.

Four stand out. I shall, however, confine detailed comments to three because the case argued for in the first essay, on evangelism and the world, has largely been won: evangelicals nowadays on the whole take the world seriously; witness for instance the insistent voice of Bishop David Sheppard on the English scene and Jim Wallis in the United States of America.

'The Contextualization of the Gospel' is a timely reminder of the significance of 'cultural awareness' in any proclamation and reception of the gospel. What needs to be heard loudly in Britain today, as theologians, particularly post-*Faith in the City*, begin to speak and write of 'an indigenous church' and 'an indigenous theology', is that all too-often indigenization remains a static rather than a dynamic concept. Contextualization, however, with its proper emphasis on the living tradition of the present as well as the perceived 'fixed' tradition of the past has much more to offer. Let us not be put off, as so many have, by the jargon-sounding term. 'The truly indigenous church' claims Padilla 'is the one that through death and resurrection with Christ embodies the gospel within its own culture. It adopts a way of being, thinking, and acting in which its own cultural patterns are transformed and fulfilled by the gospel. In a sense, it is the cultural embodiment of Christ, the means through which Christ is formed within a given culture. The task of the church is not the extension of a culture Christianity throughout the world but the incarnation of the gospel in each culture.'

'The Fullness of Mission' calls for models of mission fully adapted to a situation characterized by a yawning chasm between rich and poor. If there is to be partnership in world mission then the church of the underdeveloped world so-called must be freed from permanent dependence on the affluent West. Models of mission need to be created which will be centred in a prophetic lifestyle, pointing to Jesus Christ as the Lord over the totality of life, to the universality of the church, and to the interdependence of human beings in the world.

'The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle' is a timely reminder of the universality of the gospel. The gospel, Padilla affirms, is intended for all races, all classes and both sexes—all are one in Christ Jesus. On the principle of a Gentile mission Paul was willing to confront Peter and stake his apostolic reputation. And we should not settle for less. It is this universality which above all else must inform our understanding of 'church growth principles' as expounded by Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner. And indeed much else of what Padilla has to say points in the direction of my own reservations about 'church growth': it is far too easy, before too long, to

find oneself preaching church rather than kingdom!

All in all a welcome and useful primer.

Diocese of Liverpool

MYRTLE LANGLEY

**AN ADOPTED SON: THE STORY OF MY LIFE Norman Anderson**

I.V.P., 1985 301 pp. £3.95 pb.

ISBN 0 85110 474 6

This is not an easy book to review, especially when one has had the privilege of knowing its subject and respecting his fine Christian witness in the face of great personal tragedy. Originally it was intended as a meditation on one of his favourite Biblical verses (Heb.2:10, on which this reviewer remembers him preaching an O.I.C.C.U. sermon in the early fifties), but in illustrating the theme from his own experience the author ends up by giving us (to quote his own words on p.13) 'an autobiography with intermittent digressions and meditations, and with a very grateful testimony to the fact that God has always kept his side of the covenant, even when I have failed to keep mine'.

Some might feel that it could have been better for the material to have been presented by a biographer, who could have been more objective and less modest, and would not have appeared in places to be name-dropping or giving an endless list of travels. But this is unkind, as Sir Norman enlivens these travels with illustrations showing how he could and did use them for Christian witness, and another person would have found it hard to assess them in the same way.

Undoubtedly this book will be of great significance for future generations seeking to know how, by setting up an Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, London University has been able to exercise an influence throughout the legal world. Similarly it sets on record for posterity the way in which a distinguished evangelical layman worked out the Keele principle of fuller involvement in the Church of England by becoming the first Chairman of the General Synod's House of Laity.

Most moving of all, however, is the account of the untimely loss of all three greatly-loved children. To write of this as Sir Norman does cannot be easy, but even in this trauma the author is able to tell how he and his wife have subsequently been able to share their God-given comfort with others.

On the theological side, the author's reflections come at timely points in the narrative, and the chapter on holiness (ch.9) makes some significant points about the various forms of 'second blessing' teaching that have been around in U.C.C.F. circles during the past half-century. The author's penultimate sentence gives a useful summary of his position—'as sons, our supreme concern should be our Father's glory and his will, rather than being absorbed in ourselves, whatever form that absorption may take'.

Finally, one hopes that in any reprint the publishers will note that Hartford in Connecticut is not spelt with an 'e' (p.155), Archbishop Hand is in the singular (p.246), and there is a verb missing on p.104. One hopes that there will be a reprint, as this book ranks as a must for the Christian student's bookshelf, to show the great influence for good a Christian academic can have.

**THE PATH TO PERFECTION W.E. Sangster**

S.P.C.K. 1984 211 pp. £5.50 pb

ISBN 7162 0405 3

In approaching this book the reader should ask two questions. First, Is sanctification an act or a process; an instantaneous supernatural change into spiritual and moral perfection, or a life-long growth into Christlikeness, in which the subject of it works out his own salvation as it is worked in him by the Holy Spirit? Secondly, Did John Wesley experience and teach the former, or has he been misinterpreted by those who hold the latter? These queries run through the whole book, and it is the author's aim to deal with them. He admits that those who hold the Reformed doctrines of grace would find it impossible to adopt the former views, and confesses to recoiling from them as a hindrance to true spirituality, yet he believes that there is a 'penetrating power of personal holiness' imparted by the Holy Spirit above that enjoyed by normal Christians. The problem as he sees it lies in the connotation and whether scripture justifies a two-stage salvation by super-natural acts in response to faith. This he minutely analyses from the Bible, theology, and psychology, finally re-stating Wesley's teaching on holiness which he believes became the revivalist's chief pre-occupation from 1725 until his death in 1791. The conclusion to which he comes is that Wesley taught entire sanctification as an act whereby the heart is completely cleansed from sin, leading to moral victory over conscious sin.

Sangster himself prefers the phrase 'love-perfection' rather than 'sinless perfection'. Thus, he believed it is possible to have a 'moment by moment' Christian life, but not by the eradication of sin. In his view, nothing can prevent the inflow and outflow of God's love from the sanctified heart, and on this he rests the Methodist doctrine of assurance by experience. It would have been helpful if he had assessed at length the principle of concupiscence for, if in Wesley's definition, sin is 'a voluntary transgression of a known law', sin becomes a matter of wrong actions rather than bad reactions or attitudes, as in the case of the Elder Brother in Christ's parable, and leaves aside sins of ignorance, which Sangster finds difficult to accept. Such teaching raises the further questions, can a Christian be without sin, know he is without it, and should he tell others so? By quoting Scripture texts and the English Liturgy the author suggests that there is some ground for holding Wesley's views, but with some reservations.

Sangster's book is even more important to-day than when it was first published in 1942 in view of certain trends in holiness in circles of the modern Charismatic Movement. It is a clear, scholarly, sensitive approach to the nature of Scripture sanctification, and reveals as much of the author's honest reservations as of his understanding of, and faithfulness to, Wesley's teachings. Not all will agree with Sangster's interpretations and conclusions, but not one who reads his thesis will lay it down without being deeply stirred to see the heights of Christ-likeness which he holds out to the reader. The fault as he sees it lies in living below the Christian ideal of holiness; the lack of a goal of perfection; and a limited view of the work of the Holy Spirit. Where a person follows Wesley's teaching on love-perfection he believes he can live as near to Christ as God desires, and reflect his glory entirely. Few would deny him this case, but wish he had raised more fully the call to

repentance.

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ARTHUR BENNETT

**THE BEGINNINGS Paul Helm**

Banner of Truth Trust 1986 141 pp. £2.25

ISBN 0 85151 470 7

This little book should be read and re-read by every minister and by all who are concerned to see the Church of Jesus Christ prosper. The author, a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Liverpool, enjoys a clear grasp of fundamental Biblical truths (for example, the sinfulness of man; and the nature and necessity of regeneration); and entertains a profound concern that all of us, believer and seeker alike, should have a correct understanding of the Biblical doctrine of Conversion. He sets the scene in the Introduction.

In our generation, Paul Helm argues, the terms 'regeneration', 'conversion' and 'effectual call', all of which have precise meanings in the Bible, have been superseded by 'Take Jesus into your life' and 'Give your heart to Jesus'. This change is neither insignificant nor merely verbal. Vague and indefinite language, says the author, is invariably accompanied by vague and indefinite experience. The need today, then, is for us to recover the Biblical doctrine of Conversion. The aim of this volume is to help us to do just that. Paul Helm does not labour in vain. He tackles his subject carefully, clearly and concisely. Each chapter—there are five in all—begins with a brief summary of that which precedes it, and each is concluded with a resumé of the argument developed within it. This methodology proves helpful as well as refreshing. It also widens the appeal of this book to those who have not had a theological education. Three suppositions undergird all that the author says. They are: conversion is the work of God; conversion is by means of God's truth; in the work of conversion the Holy Spirit uses both the law and the gospel. Throughout, Paul Helm is always careful to confine himself to only that which the Bible asserts or allows. He consistently refuses to set up a system or to lay down a pattern that must be followed. Instead, he isolates, describes and explains the three strands that the Bible insists are the essential ingredients of true Christian conversion. These are an awareness, or conviction, of sin; repentance; and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each is dealt with in turn in the first three chapters. Using both Scripture and, to a much less extent, Church history and everyday life illustrations, the meaning and implications of each strand are worked out. The objectives and difficulties that can be encountered are dealt with in chapter four. Such issues as the setting-up of a system for Christian discipleship (legalism); the relationship between faith and assurance; the nature of irresistible grace, and the place of the law in preaching, are debated here. In chapter five the way a proper understanding of conversion affects our appreciation of the relationship between justification and sanctification is discussed, as is its effect upon Christian piety and spirituality. The false dichotomy between the Word and Spirit, that so many evangelicals have unwittingly imbibed, is exploded. So too is the radical view that the Christian faith needs to be demythologised.

In the Epilogue the author ends up where he began. Scripture must control



## Churchman

our thinking and experience. We need to, and must, think our way back into, what Paul Helm calls, the basic Biblical categories. On them alone can true Christian experience be built. This book helps us to do that. It is superb. It represents a vitally needed corrective for today's Church. Neither author nor publisher can be thanked or praised too highly.

St. Stephen's Vicarage, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

GEORGE CURRY

### **THE CHURCH: GOD'S AGENT FOR CHANGE**

**Edited by Bruce J. Nicholls**

Paternoster, Exeter 1986 299 pp. £7.95

ISBN 0 85364 444 6

The Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship has begun to produce a series of studies which look as if they may be trend-setters in the Evangelical world, at least until the end of the present century.

The book on the Church is a symposium of different themes drawn together from around the world. It starts with the New Testament picture of the Church, and works from there to examine a number of case studies. Unfortunately, for the work of a Theological Commission, not many of the contributions are theological in the strict sense. The outstanding exception is Peter Kuzmic's essay on the Church and the Kingdom of God, which ought to be reprinted and widely read in Evangelical circles. Otherwise, there is little that is new or profound, and the case studies would be more appropriate in a book on mission.

The tendency is to take the experience of particular congregations, which is interesting but seldom applicable to other places. British readers will not be impressed to discover that the church selected for study is St Michael's, York, whose exceptional character is only too well-known! More serious than this, though, is the failure to get to grips with the non-Evangelical understanding of the Church. Where are the Roman Catholics or the Eastern Orthodox, who have written on this question at far greater depth than Evangelicals have? There should be some interaction with the Ecumenical Movement at least, even if only to disapprove of it!

In sum, it can be said that much of what this book contains is interesting, but it fails to look beyond the walls of the Evangelical laager, and suffers accordingly. Perhaps the contributors to the symposium should have decided what they mean by the church, and got someone to defend the proposition that a semi-spontaneous, more-or-less Baptist congregationalism is the ideal model, before launching into a series of studies which mostly take that for granted! The sad result is that this is not a book for Anglicans, who cannot afford the luxury of such an ecclesiology, however sympathetic we may be to many of the points which different contributors raise.

Oak Hill College, London N 14

GERALD BRAY

**A COMPANION TO THE ALTERNATIVE SERVICE BOOK****R.C.D. Jasper and P.F. Bradshaw**

S.P.C.K., 1986 500 pp. £19.50

ISBN 0 281 04202 0

This is a noteworthy book. Up to now, there have been two main commentaries on the A.S.B., the popular Collins volume, with its evangelical contributors, and the more sober *Commentary by the Liturgical Commission* (published by C.I.O.), which had the advantage of being out of the horse's mouth, so to speak. Now, the ex-chairman of the Liturgical Commission, aided by another distinguished liturgiologist, has supplied us with a much fuller commentary, three times the length of the Liturgical Commission's earlier production. It not only provides introductions to the various parts of the A.S.B., but also supplies notes on a great many points of detail. Any user of the A.S.B. will find it worthwhile to have this book by him.

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer is still the normative liturgy of the Church of England, to which the A.S.B. is simply a permitted 'alternative'. Under the terms of the Worship and Doctrine Measure, the Prayer Book differs from the A.S.B. in three respects—in being one of the doctrinal standards of the church, in having permanent not temporary authorization for use, and in having a prescriptive right to be used at the regular Sunday services if there is disagreement between the incumbent and the P.C.C. about which liturgy to employ. To this extent the position of the Prayer Book is protected, and any P.C.C. can demand its use. It is particularly reassuring that the Prayer Book is still a standard of doctrine, for, though different schools of thought used to pull it different ways, its 'original, natural and intended sense' was the reformed and biblical sense which evangelicals attributed to it. The A.S.B. has been deliberately framed in much vaguer doctrinal terms, and is therefore usually reckoned by Anglo-Catholics (and Roman Catholics) much more patient of their own ways of thinking. It also contains less to offend Liberals.

The authors of the present volume are both men of Catholic sympathies, but they could scarcely have written their book in a less partisan manner. It is also very readable. It might be possible to fault it on some points of detail, but in general it is informative and reliable. The sight of a companion to the A.S.B. on the same scale as earlier companions to the Prayer Book might suggest that the authors expect the A.S.B. to supplant the Prayer Book and to be permanent, but here too they show their usual moderation:

In November 1980 the services and other material in The Alternative Service Book were authorized for use in the first instance for ten years. Since then the General Synod of the Church of England has extended that use for a further decade. It is clear, however, that by the end of the present century all the contents of the book will have to be examined in the light of experience with a view either to improvement or to replacement. Inevitably there will be some change: that is as it should be. Liturgy must be flexible. But come what may, the book now has a place in the liturgical history of the Church of England: and whatever form future services may take, they will be a continuation of, development from, or reaction against those which now exist (p.vii).

**REJOICE IN THE LORD A Hymn Companion to the Scriptures**  
edited by Erik Routley

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1985; Paternoster Press, Exeter. Words and music 640pp.

£12.50

ISBN 0 8028 9009 1

At first sight, the American Reformed Church's new hymnal is of small importance for others. Two factors change that: a 'Bible order' arrangement which earns the subtitle 'A Hymn Companion to the Scriptures', and the name of Erik Routley.

Its chief editor and architect died before publication. The genius of the book is his, but its committee, chaired by Howard Hageman, just had time to reverse some of Dr Routley's decisions. So there is no words-only edition; no surprise in America, but earlier publicity had promised one. That cancellation leaves every worshipper clutching a two-and-a-half pound music book.

So while we possess the crowning achievement, long-pondered, of a supreme hymnologist, the master-hand was in the end nudged by others. This collection looks back in gathering up a fine tradition, and forward in pointing to several new directions.

New tunes are chosen for 'essential singability' rather than 'aggressive originality' (good); for the very latest, the committee confess to 'prayerful guessing about what will last' (good again!). There is plenty of the old; Genevan Psalmody and American folksong are well-used. Caswall's *O Jesus, King most wonderful* deserves better than LAND OF REST, but *O happy band of pilgrims* starts making sense with the tune provided here. Some partnerships of words and music sound strange to English ears: *Awake, my soul* to HERONGATE; *Ride on, ride on* to THE KING'S MAJESTY or ST. BARTHOLOMEW; *O for a heart* to JACKSON; *Come let us join* to RICHMOND. In putting AZMON to *O for a thousand tongues* and HOLLINGSIDE to *Take my life (Jesus, lover of my soul is absent)* the editors are of one mind with their Episcopalian neighbours.

Allowing for the printing of words between staves (up to six stanzas) the music is clearly printed and masculine—seldom rising above top D. *Hark, the herald-angels* is in F. There is no dearth of long lines; metres have been found for numerous ten- and eleven-syllable lines.

The arrangement of contents in Bible order is a noble scheme. It provides an easily-accessible mini-Psalter (nos.81–143) including a resurrected Sternhold paraphrase of Psalm 18 with an equally robust tune, Daniel Meeter's contemporary version of Psalm 87 *Jerusalem, the city of the mountain*, and some (notably 116 and 118) hardly worth their places.

It is strong on history, rich in cross-reference; sadly, Ascension is lost in Resurrection, the 'Scripture' section itself is desperately weak, and between Genesis one and seven we might expect a few more animals to show up.

The total of 624 items includes repeats, since every tune has its own number, and shorter pieces like the four 'Glorias'—seven syllables each. In giving due weight to some topics, the editors lean heavily on Isaac Watts; but since Doddridge, Montgomery and others have been squeezed by newer entrants like Fred. Pratt Green, the book has quite a different flavour from *Congregational Praise*—also Routleyan and Reformed. Among rediscoveries are Nos.56 and 66 (both Doddridge, however) and 234—Keble's original

*Blest are the pure in heart* alongside the established version, better known but less pure. Among those less worth reviving are 361 and 434.

Some weaker new hymns (307, 344) are more than balanced by finds like the translation *No saint on earth*, inspired by Romans 14; Brian Wren's *Lord Jesus, if I love and serve my neighbour*, which only this generation could produce; and Routley's own *O mighty God* to the 'How great thou art' tune. I am glad to see Vanstone's *Morning Glory*, Bland Tucker's *The great creator*, and many more from our own time.

But these days the changes in words are as significant as the selection of hymns. *All things bright and beautiful* now includes great lakes and prairies; *If thou but trust in God* has removed 'suffer' from a misunderstood first line. Harder to take are the alterations to *Away in a manger*, *To God be the glory*, and *It happened on that fateful night*; a hard night, clearly, since no-one noticed the rhyme-scheme they were wrecking!

Archaisms do not worry the editors much; but Mrs. Alexander loses stanzas wholesale, while the section 'Enthroned Eternally' suffers the sharpest scissors. For whatever reasons, 596 now has no second coming, 447 no judgment, 268 no hell and 456 no heaven.

Sometimes there are additions: *Child in the manger* has four stanzas well worth singing; *Come, we (sic) that love the Lord* is not so happy with its alien borrowings, and No.609 even less so. No.208 could have used its author's own revision; 176 is altered by omission and misprint combined.

But the largest area of change is in the area of 'inclusive' language to avoid unnecessary male words referring to human beings. The Introduction explains that some unchangeable stanzas are starred to warn off the more thoroughgoing feminists. So Chesterton loses 'that comfort cruel men'; the refrain 'God in man made manifest' is carefully adapted; 'Son of man' elsewhere becomes 'woman's son', and *Hark the herald-angels* now reads:

Born that we no more may die,

Born to raise us from the earth . . .

Our attitude to such changes depends on how we understand the issues; few now regard original texts as sacrosanct. But we all have blind spots; can it help the cause to apply major surgery to male language while almost ignoring the hymns women have written? Some 20 per cent of hymns in the *Anglican Hymn Book* are written or translated by women; in this book the figure is around twelve per cent. Gone are Auber, Herklots, Rossetti, and Steele; Catherine Winkworth alone is worthily represented, including two fine Baptism hymns 529 and 530.

And how can they claim 'inclusiveness' who sing of 'our plenty, wealth, prosperity and peace' (621), let alone the doctrines in 346, 349, and the appended Communion Service which 'Reformed' Christians might decline to share?

Agree or not, however, there is wealth here for singing or study. Ascriptions of authorship are suggestive at 450 and 578, inadequate at 605, 619 and 620; some names are incomplete. Scripture references and further thematic indexing are excellent; so is the compilers' realism in admitting that local supplements are inevitable. This is not a book for British congregations, but no editor, hymnologist, or writer can ignore its international impact.

## In Brief

### **SCRIPTURE INDEX TO THE NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY** David Townsley and Russell Bjork

Zondervan 1985 distributed by Paternoster Press 320 pp. £10.95 ISBN 0 85364 429 2

Those who use Colin Brown's excellent revised English edition of Coenen's *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, published in three volumes by Paternoster in 1975-8, will know that it contains indexes of Hebrew and Greek words and a subject index but no indexes of biblical references or ancient literature. This lack has now been supplied in the present volume. The compilers conclude with two pages of Errata, containing corrections of the mistakes that their researches have uncovered in the references given in the original three volumes. Altogether it is a useful companion to a very worthwhile book.

The compilers have been led into a few mistakes themselves in their index of ancient literature. Misinterpreting what is perhaps a page reference to some edition of Philo, they give his treatise *De Specialibus Legibus* a fifth book (p.310). Though they usually follow the modern titles of Philo's treatises, and the short sections, in at least one case they do the reverse, by citing *De Exsecrationibus* 6 (p.306). This passage would normally be cited as *De Praemiis et Poenis* 152. They also allow one passage of the Mishnah, Berakoth 2.2, to stray into the Babylonian Talmud (p.315).

Latimer House, Oxford

ROGER BECKWITH

### **A TWIG OF EVIDENCE Does Belief in God Make Sense?**

**R.J.W. Bevan**

Churchman Publishing, Worthing 1986 149 pp. £5.95

ISBN 1 85093 032 5

R.J.W. Bevan is a Residentiary Canon of Carlisle and has 'pursued extensive research in Reformation Theology and Christian Spirituality'. This is a book of philosophical theology written in what, to the reviewer, could have been a more lively and gripping style. The book began in the 'Honest to God' era, and the author seeks to take the reader through the arguments for both belief and unbelief, attempting to show (without much biblical reference) that one 'can come down honestly on the side of belief'. The manner is gentle and scholarly; it hardly aims at building-up a logically-compelling case. It is discursive rather than exploiting a single train of thought, and sometimes leaves the reader wondering where it is going. At the end the author sums up by quoting something written by David Jenkins in his younger days: 'To put it bluntly, people believe in God because people believe in God, and if God does not keep people believing in Himself, that will be the end of the matter'.

A book for gentle and scholarly enquirers; well-produced.

Wantage, Oxon

DOUGLAS SPANNER

**I AM NOT ASHAMED** Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Hodder &amp; Stoughton 1986 £5.95

ISBN 0 340 38922 2

There are not many, if any, who could in their ministry preach 11 sermons on the same text. So, I believe, this is for a select group of admirers of such preaching and of the author. Undoubtedly this type of preaching was attractive to some and encouraged many in their later ministry to preach biblically. Your reviewer, however, found it difficult to see its relevance for the minister in the ordinary pastoral situation—at least in the Church of England.

It is certainly a book that can be read, although it retains its form as sermons. I understand that the 'Doctor' used a different form for his evening sermons and that these are typical of this type.

Some may find a model for their preaching. Others may find it more useful for devotional reading.

Stamford, Lincolnshire

JOHN BOURNON

**RUNCIE: THE MAKING OF AN ARCHBISHOP** Margaret Duggan

Hodder Christian Paperback 1985 320 pp.

ISBN 0 340 37318 0

First published in 1983, the book has now been reissued, updated with a postscript covering the two years to 1985, years which have seen some fairly momentous events in the life of the Church of England. Inevitably, as Archbishop, Dr. Runcie has had a part to play in these events, but the postscript simply records the events, rather than analysing them, a feature of the book in general.

Because the book lacks any critical analysis, it sometimes has the feel of hagiography, and is far from assessing the strengths and weaknesses of Dr. Runcie's Archiepiscopate. Nevertheless, reading this book will provide an illuminating background to the appointment, work, and thinking, of the present Archbishop.

Emmanuel Church, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire

SIMON COX

**CHOOSING AND USING HYMNS** Lionel Dakers

Mowbray, Oxford 1985 96 pp. £2.25

ISBN 0 264 67034 5

Lionel Dakers is well known as the Director of the Royal School of Church Music and also as an author in his own right. This book draws on his wealth of experience in the area of selecting, playing and singing hymns. As he points out, hymns are a part of virtually every service of worship and yet 'the choice and performance of hymns often leaves much to be desired, simply because so many opportunities are missed'.

Lionel Dakers aims to rectify this in his book, and puts forward a number of ideas and practical suggestions. The simple and yet vital things are dealt with here—emphasising words; selecting a good musical balance of hymns; timing between verses and playing with a good sense of rhythm. The book has an Anglican 'flavour' and is not really an expert's manual. Nor does it concentrate on charismatic worship. It is simply about choosing and using hymns, something that most churches do very badly. For just over £2.00 I can

## Churchman

think of no easier or more pleasant way to learn how to choose and use hymns better.

Oak Hill College, London N.14

STEPHEN JAMES

## **FUNERALS AND MINISTRY TO THE BEREAVED: A HANDBOOK OF FUNERAL PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES**

C.I.O., London, 1985 34 pp. £2.00

ISBN 0 7151 37042

This is a report by the Joint Group (i.e. ecumenical) on Funeral Services at Cemeteries and Crematoria, chaired by the Bishop of Dorchester. Its purpose is to offer guidelines in view of the pastoral problems occasioned by the increasing (in some places almost total) use of secular cemeteries and crematoria for the disposal of the dead and the increasing distances between the home and the venue of the service. These problems are far from new, and it is surprising that nothing has been done before this to provide such a handbook.

It is also intended to encourage closer consultation and co-operation between all those involved in this field—ministers, funeral directors and cemetery and crematorium authorities. In its brief compass it raises in a workmanlike fashion most of the issues needing consideration and provides useful information concerning official institutions concerned. The only obvious omissions were advice on dealing with the disposal of stillbirth remains and suggestions for the clergy (often hospital chaplains) who are asked to make arrangements for or accompany next of kin viewing bodies in a mortuary or mortuary chapel.

Christ Church, Ware, Hertfordshire

DAVID WHEATON

## **THE COLLECTED POEMS OF RANDLE MANWARING**

Fortune Press, 1986 364 pp. £9.50 hb.

It will be generally agreed that there are far too few Christian poets writing in our time. It is all the more encouraging to be able to welcome Randle Manwaring's complete verse. A wide variety of styles and subjects is represented here. There are some potential hymns which cry out to be set to music but much of the material is not explicitly religious. It is a collection to keep by one's side for stimulation and for raising our eyes to heaven.

34 Milner Street, London SW3

JOHN PEARCE

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**Banner of Truth** E. Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales*, 1986, £9.95

**Cambridge University Press** A.T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology*, 1981, £15

**James Clarke** E. Fuchs, *Sexual Desire and Love. Origins and History of New Testament Christian Ethic of Sexuality and Marriage*, 1983, £9.95

**Eerdmans, Paternoster** N. Walterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, 1983, £11.30

**Fortress Press, S.C.M. Press** J.M. Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*, 1983, £5.50

**Manchester University Press** St.J.A. Robilliard, *Religion and the Law*, 1984, £22.50

**S.C.M Press** M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity*, 1983, £6.95; R.H. Preston, *Church and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1983, £8.95; S.R. Sutherland, *Faith and Ambiguity*, 1984, £5.95

# Oliver O'Donovan

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