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## REVIEWS

### **The New Dictionary of Theology**

J. A. Komonchak, M. Collins, D. A. Lane (editors)

Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1987; 112 pp., £50

ISBN 0 7171 1552 6

It was a strange coincidence that this publication should precede, by less than a year, a work of the same title (but modestly lacking the initial definite article) from a Press of a very different complexion. The present one is 'a dictionary of Catholic theology', as the editors' preface helpfully makes clear, yet manifesting 'an acute ecumenical sensitivity'. For the Catholic theology it sets forth is emphatically of post-Vatican II vintage; it claims to be 'the first collaborative attempt in English to take stock of the remarkable developments in the church and in theology since the Council'. Citing the Council's reference to the 'hierarchy of truths', the Dictionary is constructed around 24 topics which 'constitute the principal themes of the Christian vision of faith'. Why these two dozen are not listed or otherwise identified is puzzling.

Virtually all the articles are thematic. No individual theologians are treated, although 'Thomism' is one of several movements of thought to be included. Among these are aberrations of the early centuries – gnosticism, Marcionism, donatism, etc – as well as a selection of later developments, such as Catholicism, scholasticism and neo-scholasticism, Gallicanism, and Ultramontanism, Marxism, existentialism and fundamentalism. The last is confined almost entirely to American Protestantism, but honestly recognizes a clear analogue in Archbishop Lefebvre's 'Roman Catholic Traditionalism' – and could have encompassed some of the Marian fundamentalism rife in different sectors of modern Catholicism. Missing are treatments of Jansenism, Protestantism itself and many other significant schools and traditions. Several councils are dealt with from Nicaea to Vatican II, but not Constantinople (381), which gave us the Nicene Creed, or the Fourth Lateran (1215), which gave us transubstantiation. Although, within each topic, biblical and historical-theological material is naturally given its place, the reader has no means, such as an index, of discovering the distinctive contribution to Catholic theology of, say, Leo the Great or Bernard, or even Karl Rahner. I for one would particularly have valued brief expert analyses of a range of modern Catholic theologians. Altar and lectern both have entries, but not pulpit or font.

The general tone of discussion may be characterized as open, provisional and relaxed. It is typified by the final sentence of 'Purgatory', after several 'modern interpretations' have been summarised: 'In their general orientation, they stand within the framework of theological possibilities set out by the church's official teaching, though particular aspects of the theories may be problematic'. In similar vein, 'Homosexuality' presents five 'moral theological positions' and ends up with a bland, uncritical recognition of pluralism. (This is a particularly unhappy article in its virtual discounting of the relevance of the biblical teaching (Romans 2: 25-27 do not condemn homosexual

behaviour merely 'as an expression of idolatry'), and in swallowing the absurd view that 'early Christian church moral theology took a somewhat tolerant, though not approving, stance towards homosexuality'.)

'Infallibility' also purveys different options without adjudicating between them, although the influence of K ung's 'indefectibility in truth' is seen in the suggestion that 'infallibility in believing' may hold more promise than 'infallibility in teaching'. The article on priesthood, in effect, starts and finishes with the presbyterate, with the development of strictly priestly notions almost a hiatus. As with so many reinterpretations of the priestly character of ministry, one is left wondering why the language of priesthood is retained at all.

In general, the contributors are sympathetic towards ecumenical rapprochement. Luther's and Trent's approaches to justification, so the article concludes, 'are being seen today more and more as different expressions of the one Christian faith. . . .' The American Catholic-Lutheran dialogue is frequently cited, less often the Anglican-Roman Catholic (ARCIC). Edmund Hill's 'Church' contains some astringent criticism of the dominant papal-hierarchical model of the church and moves towards giving 'the church as local community . . . a certain priority over the church as universal'. The papacy is affirmed to be above all a spiritual office – although this recognition is vacuous unless the Pope's position as 'Sovereign of the State of Vatican City' is, at the very least, called into question (as 'Liberty, religious' begins to do). Yet the sketch of the Papal office given here is essentially the one emerging in ecumenical dialogue with Orthodox, Anglicans and Lutherans.

In 'Eucharist', 'the new notion of memory', i.e., the interpretation of anamnesis as 'a re-calling, a making present' of the past, makes its influence powerfully felt in recasting the tradition's insistence on eucharistic sacrifice. (And there is a whole article on 'Memorial'.) It is regrettable that this accompanies a caricature of the Reformers: 'they reduce the eucharist simply to a subjective commemoration of the cross . . . a nostalgic calling to mind of an event of long ago'. Transubstantiation does not detain the writer very long: 'the eucharistic change' is now found in our imperfect gifts ('simply signs of ourselves, of our self-giving') being made 'the signs of Christ's self-giving'. The net result is altogether more suggestive and elusive than common pre-Vatican II teaching.

One area, however, seems to remain impervious to rethinking. Compared to many other articles, 'Mary, Mother of God' (sic!) is positively bullish. Michael O'Carroll does his best to minimise the Marian minimalism abroad in Rome during Vatican II. If popular Marian piety did suffer a setback, it was only temporary. In a somewhat cryptic tailpiece, Catholic authorities are rebuked for their lukewarmness towards the Marian apparitions that continue to multiply at her shrines new and old. There is not a hint here of the Mary of the new model Catholic theology – the image of believing and obedient discipleship, the archetype of the church. 'Virgin Birth' not only defends the virginal conception (but not on the basis of the scripture alone without the backing of the church tradition) but gives equal prominence to Mary's virginity in giving birth (found most improbable in Matthew 12:25) and in perpetuity. In Mariology, it seems, conservatism reigns – which may suggest that Mariology lies near Catholicism's inviolable heart.

On most issues, however, this Dictionary will provide a useful resource for those who seek a brief account of current trends in the less traditional reaches of Catholic theology. The level of writing is in the main accessible to readers with a good 'lay' theological awareness – although there are exceptions, such as 'Trinity' and the unnecessarily dense 'Order and Ordination'. If, however, a pervasive tortuousness remains an abiding impression, it arises from the fundamental task contemporary Catholic theology faces – of justifying the traditional teaching of the church's magisterium, by reinterpretation, reformulation, recasting, supplementation or by a hundred other devices. For Catholic theology does not enjoy the glorious liberty of Reformation theology to reject past teachings as erroneous. Hence the feeling too often generated by this Dictionary of an uncomfortable rationalisation of what really deserves to be discarded.

The book is attractively printed, but edited with inadequate consistency. And what is the rationale behind the curiously modest 'christian' – alongside the capitalized 'Jewish, Buddhist', etc, to say nothing of 'Catholic'?!

*The Review Editor*

### **The Encyclopedia of Unbelief**

Gordon Stein (ed.)

Prometheus Press, Buffalo, NY, 1985, 2 vols., xvi+ 819 pp.,  
ISBN 0 87975 307 2

'Unbelief in what?' is bound to be one's first question, to which the Foreword's answer is 'in miracles and divine revelation, in life after death, and in any supernatural beings – gods, devils, and surrogate-deities like the Hegelian Absolute or Tillich's "Ground of Being".' Or, as the editor puts it, 'This is the history of heresy, blasphemy, rejection of belief, atheism, agnosticism, humanism and rationalism.' Nor is there any doubt where the work stands on the desirability of unbelief, although the occasional believing contributor, such as Martin Marty, has been allowed in. A more predictable author is G. A. Wells on 'Jesus, Historicity of', an article which is unparalleled in the Encyclopedia in that it argues against the historicity of Jesus rather than surveys the subject. (There is no article on, let alone against, the historicity of the Buddha, for example, or of Moses or Epicurus.) Editorial indiscipline is to blame.

The material gathered here will largely be found in other collections, such as the Encyclopedia Britannica, but surveys of unbelief in particular countries or regions are a special feature. The American focus is strong – e.g., in the article on 'Universalism', which is noteworthy for failing to mention Neoplatonism, perhaps the main inspiration of Christian universalisms for over a millennium, and for dealing only with Christian universalism. But summaries on unbelief in other religions are useful, as well as lists of organizations and literature in the appendixes. There is now even less excuse for believers not knowing the enemy.

*The Review Editor*

### **The Free Church of Scotland: The Crisis of 1900**

Alexander Stewart and J. Kennedy Cameron (1910)

## THE SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Knox Press, Edinburgh, 1989; no price given, paperback;  
ISBN 0 904422 305

In the 50 years from 1843 the Free Church was simply the Church in most Highland communities. From 1900 Highland Presbyterianism was damagingly divided between four organisations: the Free Presbyterian Church, the Free Church, the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland. Apart from the slight adjustment brought about by the union of the latter two in 1929, the situation remained the same until the very recent 'disruption' in the Free Presbyterian Church. The years around 1900 were, therefore, quite decisive for the denominational shape of the church in the Highlands during the 20th century. This book gives an account of the events of these years from an avowedly Free Church standpoint. It was first published shortly after the dust of battle had settled and while wounds were still fresh. The polemical tone is therefore not surprising and the book should be read as an apologia. As such it is an invaluable primary source and its republication will be welcomed by all students of Scottish ecclesiastical history and especially by members of the Free Church who wish to understand their denominational roots. Both classes of reader would have benefited from an introductory essay setting the events of these years in a wider historical context and assessing their significance for Christians today. Regrettably, apart from the explanatory subtitle, the publishers have satisfied themselves with a reproduction of the original.

The book begins with a brief review of the formation of the Free Church and its history up to 1890, highlighting the developments which were to prove most significant when it came to the 'crisis' of 1900. The Declaratory Act of 1893 and the Union of 1900 are treated in much more detail. There then follows an account of the organisation of the continuing Free Church after 1900 which will be a particularly valuable part of the book since the information is not readily available elsewhere. The lengthy synopsis of the legal proceedings is also helpful, though written with a certain smugness of tone. (It is one of the ironies of Scottish ecclesiastical history that the Free Church should have taken such high satisfaction in the judgment of a civil court regarding the nature of its constitution!) The details of the government intervention to divide the property form a significant part of the history of the relation between Parliament and the judiciary but recounted, as they are here, from a strictly ecclesiastical perspective, they will hold little interest for the general reader today.

The real value of the book is that it presents the theological and ecclesiastical rationale for the continuation of the Free Church in 1900: the determination of the minority not to be moved from the constitution of 1843 as they understood it. At a time of possible realignment in conservative Highland Presbyterianism it may be useful to know how the post-1900 Free Church regarded the three-way split of the old Constitutionalist party between those who formed the Free Presbyterian Church in 1893, those who entered the United Free Church in 1900, and those who formed the continuing Free Church at that time. Those within the 'mainstream' churches, while they may be unattracted by a rigid and immobile adherence to a 150-year-old constitution, might well ponder the advantages of doctrinal stability and

commitment to biblical authority at a time when the larger churches so often appear to be doctrinally at sea.

*Kenneth R. Ross  
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Chancellor College, University of Malawi*

**Circles of God: Theology and Science from the Greeks to Copernicus**

H. P. Nebelsick

Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1985, xxviii + 284 pp., £16, casebound (Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge General Editor T. F. Torrance).

This series of demanding volumes, issued under the editorship of Professor Thomas F. Torrance, is published by the Scottish Academic Press 'in association with' both the Center of Theological Inquiry (at Princeton) and the Templeton Foundation. It is essentially a series in exposition of Professor Torrance's long-held interest in the inter-relations of science and religion. The General Editor supplies a Preface which helpfully summarises his own concerns, and sets these volumes in perspective. Writing of the 'vast shift in the perspective of human knowledge' that is taking place, Professor Torrance introduces the series as addressing 'that situation where theology and science are found to have deep mutual relations, and increasingly cry out for each other'. 'The various books in this series are written by scientists and by theologians', in illustration of the need for 'cross-fertilisation between natural and theological science'.

Professor Nebelsick's particular aim is to trace the inter-relation of theological and scientific notions of the nature of the universe from ancient times up to the cosmology of Copernicus and Kepler. He argues that the main motivation of natural science was theological, and that right and wrong theological notions profoundly influenced the development and direction of scientific work and thinking. In particular – and this is where the Circles of God come in – mistaken notions of perfection led generations of scientists to insist on the circular motion of the heavenly bodies, so ensuring that observational astronomy remained in a cul-de-sac.

The story he tells is fascinating, in parts familiar, in parts not. Perhaps most fascinating of all is his treatment of Copernicus himself, so generally portrayed as the hero of the story, but – Professor Nebelsick argues – himself still the victim of the false notions he inherited. 'Copernicus sacrificed accuracy for the sake of desired elegance, an elegance that could not be substantiated either by observation or by the mathematics involved' (p. 242). That is to say, despite the revolution in cosmological thinking which his heliocentric model brought about, it was still a heliocentric model, and not – as Kepler succeeded in demonstrating – the heliofocussed, elliptical pattern that Copernicus' own observations actually required. Copernicus' failure to follow the logic of his own observations handicapped his hypothesis, and it was left to

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Kepler to rescue it by breaking with the Circles of God and acknowledging that they were not circles at all.

For theologians and scientists alike, this volume will make demanding but by no means unintelligible reading. This reviewer for one is going to return to it for a more thorough examination than has so far been possible, and is pleased to commend it to others whose interests span the inter-relation of what Professor Nebelsick simply terms the two sciences.

*Nigel M. de S. Cameron*  
*Rutherford House, Edinburgh*

### **Jesus in our Western Culture. Mysticism, Ethics and Politics**

Edward Schillebeeckx

SCM Press, London, 1987; 84 pp., £4.95, paperback;

ISBN 0 334 02098 0

The Abraham Kuyper lectures of 1986 in the free University of Amsterdam are here published in translation from the Dutch. The distinguished author and theologian presents us, in briefer than customary form, with reflections on Jesus as a man and historical figure, and some of the implications of that for theology and life today.

Convinced of the importance of Jesus as a historical figure for theology, yet not hidebound by that, the book is a rare mixture of theological writing and contemplation. Though the shortest of his books to be published, it is not a light or a quick read; indeed, it merits slow and careful reading to absorb as much as possible of the thoughts expressed.

After a brief treatment of the life and career of Jesus (though unlike any I have ever read before), the author explores some of the contemporary issues on which this has a bearing; in particular the nature and unity of the church, the church in the world, the Christian in a world of political power, and the challenge of a Christian ethic. Rejecting any reclusive, world-denying faith, yet also refusing to accept the church as the political power in the world, we read of a Christian church which interacts with the present world culture, and an ethic which runs in opposition to the prevailing spirit of the age.

This little book may be for some readers the ideal way to be introduced to the work of a theologian whose name has come to the fore in controversy within his own church. It is certainly stimulating and provocative in places, combining a perhaps deceptive orthodoxy with a semi-submerged radicalism.

*David J. Graham*  
*Bible Training Institute, Glasgow*

### **The Logic of Theology**

Dietrich Ritschl

SCM Press, London, 1986, 310 pp., £12.95, paperback, ISBN 0 334 00923 5

Dietrich Ritschl has had a fascinating career, spanning parish ministry in Scotland and America, senior academic positions in Germany and America, and teaching responsibilities across a broad spectrum from New Testament

and patristics to modern systematics and ethics. He is also, we are told, qualified in psychotherapy. In this book he attempts to draw from his varied experience and numerous publications an outline of the scope, nature and practical expression of the Christian faith. It is not a conventional book of theology, and it is even further from being concerned primarily with questions of method. Ritschl claims to find traditional academic theology tired, out of date - and even boring (p. xvi)). Anglicanism, Eastern Orthodoxy and theology from the Third World have helped this Reformed Theologian to such a conclusion!

Part I attempts a 'reconnaissance of the territory of theology'. Philosophically, the influence of modern analytical and linguistic philosophy, as exemplified by the later Wittgenstein, is very much in evidence, as Ritschl tries to cut down to size various aspects of what he discerns to be the reality of the Christian faith. He is anxious at this stage not to restrict theology to a specialism, and he ranges widely from assumptions about creation (and a consequential inter-disciplinary dialogue with natural and human science) to a digest of his earlier work upon the place of 'story' in the articulation of Christian existence. There is also a brief, and wholly inadequate, ten page discussion of biblical hermeneutics, and a concluding discussion of worship and openness to the Spirit as the basic criteria of the validity of Christian experience. The purpose of Part I is to uncover and, up to a point, identify, the 'implicit axioms' with which Church communities and individual Christians are necessarily equipped. These implicit axioms find expression in what Ritschl calls 'regulative statements'; they might include creeds and confessions, as the tip of a much larger iceberg of articulated and semi-articulated Christian claims.

The discussion in Part I is very wide-ranging and often the attempt to avoid academic precision leads only to obscurity. For example, Ritschl is convinced that the greatest mistake by the primitive Church was to separate from the life and worship of diaspora Judaism. For him Christians and Jews are equally to be considered as 'believers', and there can be no question of a mission of the Church to the Jews. These 'implicit axioms' of Ritschl's preferred theology may well have something important to say to us, but merely stated baldly they appear to beg many questions which are not addressed, let alone answered.

Part II has chapters on ecclesiology, Trinity, Christology and anthropology. Theology is seen here as an attempt to test for comprehensibility, coherence and flexibility the implicit axioms or regulative statements discussed in Part I. The focus is now upon the more scientific statements of theology as enshrined in creeds and confessions. The chapter on ecclesiology is dominated by a presentation of election along lines similar to that explored by Karl Barth and Leslie Newbigin. Following this, the Trinity is well discussed in relation to creation, but the chapter is marred by a somewhat naive, if fashionable, attack on the idea of divine omnipotence. Ritschl's Christology is centred around the claim that we must always start from the 'present Christ': Bultmann and Billy Graham are held to be at fault in starting with a past Christ who then needs to be made relevant to the present. He has a point, but over-states it, and one is left with a rather vague account of who this present Christ is, and how he might be recognised.



Part III returns to the extensive canvas of Part I, now viewed from the perspective of ethics and worship. Again, the discussion flows widely, and is very difficult to summarise: Ritschl maintains that there could never be an ecumenical consensus on ethics, and that the inevitable tensions generated in Christian living permit resolution only in worship. The discussion is rather this-worldly, which is not surprising given that the author is 'much less anxious about God's future judgment in the life after death than about the repetition of Auschwitz, Dresden and Hiroshima' (p. 253).

Although often frustrating and obscure, this book is sometimes impressive: the work of a distinguished theologian gladly whose underlying theme is the widespread failure of conventional Western theology and theological education. His concluding comment may prove to be his most important: 'I do not want to say anything to their detriment, but in the last resort I do not trust any theological teacher - except perhaps a professional in exegesis and history - who has not spent a long time as a pastor, visited the old and sick, buried children and young people and had to preach to the congregation every Sunday, even when he had no new ideas'.

*Peter Forster  
Durham*

### **When Jesus Confronts the World.**

#### **An Exposition of Matthew 8-10**

D. A. Carson

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1988; 154 pp., £3.95 paperback;  
ISBN 0 85110 7834

Don Carson is one of the foremost and prolific of evangelical writers today, and his work spans the academic and the popular. This book belongs in the latter category, originating as a series of sermons. Although these were first preached in Cambridge, the book appeared in the USA (Baker Books) one year before the IVP edition, hence the American spellings. The sub-title is a little misleading, and although the text (in the NIV) is printed in full at the start of each section, the 'exposition' often sits very lightly to the text. This is not a detailed exegesis (Carson has already provided us with that in his Matthew commentary), but a practical homily. In places, questions of exegesis are raised and answered, but the book gives us more on the general import and significance of the passages than their meaning. Occasionally there are veiled references to scholars and their ideas, but this never makes for heavy reading. Indeed, the book will be most helpful to the beginner in Christian reading.

The cover tells us that here we will discover the teaching of Jesus on various practical issues. I doubt whether the book really is about his 'teaching', or rather Carson's opinions. Nevertheless, it contains some thought-provoking sections, such as those on miracles, and pluralism and tolerance (p. 119-123; 133-137). And the frequent quotations of hymns add a sense of worship to the whole.

*David J. Graham  
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**Lollard Themes in the Reformation Theology of William Tyndale (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, VI)**

Donald Dean Smeeton

Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Inc., Kirksville, Missouri, 1987, 286 pp., no price, hardback, ISBN 0 940 474 06 9

This well-researched study is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature about Tyndale. The first two chapters contain introductory material discussing succinctly the present state of Tyndale scholarship. The author then goes on to discuss Tyndale's views about the Bible, salvation, the Church and politics. There are also three appendices, an excellent bibliography and an index.

The multiplicity of references in the footnotes bear witness to the thoroughness of the research. In that respect it will cater for the interests of specialists in the field. At the same time the lucidity of the author's analysis and literary style will make a strong appeal to all readers who are interested in the development of Protestant thought.

Very different opinions have been expressed over the years about the nature and significance of William Tyndale's thought. Thomas More saw him quite simply as a follower of Luther. In the present century this view has been endorsed by such scholars as S. L. Greenslade, M. M. Knappen, Willis Egan and W. D. J. Cargill-Thompson. These writers found little that was original in his work. On the other hand, E. G. Rupp, following B. F. Westcott and John Eadie, had reservations about this standpoint. Then Leonard J. Trinterud launched a direct attack on the theory that Tyndale merely echoed Luther, and thus opened up the whole topic.

Then again there was the question of the relationship between Tyndale and Puritanism. Trinterud saw Puritanism and its covenant theology as a tradition stemming from the Rhineland theologians and entering English religious thought through Tyndale. Jerald C. Bauer and William Haller, as well as Christopher Hill, were sceptical about this thesis. John New argued for the 'non-Tyndalian' nature of Puritanism. William Clebsch, on the other hand, insisted that Tyndale 'founded English Puritanism', and A. G. Dickens and Claire Cross have endorsed this view. Then John Yost upset the apple-cart by arguing that Tyndale never accepted Luther's doctrine of justification. He was an Erasmusian humanist and certainly not the father of Elizabethan Puritanism.

That is the point at which Professor Smeeton enters the fray. He believes that the discussion throughout has been vitiated by lack of attention to the English context of Tyndale's thinking and especially the relationship between him and the Lollards. He therefore studies closely both the relationship of Tyndale's theology to Luther's and to Wycliffe and the Lollards. His task is not an easy one because it is no simple matter to define 'Lollardy' and much of the relevant literature is still in manuscript and unprinted. Nevertheless, Smeeton is able to show the numerous convergences (as well as the differences) between Tyndale and the Wycliffite tradition.

His conclusions are of considerable interest. Tyndale asserted without qualification that justification is by faith alone. Yet he saw justification not only as a forensic change of status but also as a change of heart producing

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moral regeneration. This, says Smeeton, 'is part of Tyndale's unique contribution to the theology of the Reformation'. Good works make no contribution to salvation but they are a necessary public expression of faith in the heart. And, again, Tyndale makes an original contribution in his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Consequently, Tyndale, although influenced by Luther, was no 'uncritical conduit' of his thought. And he certainly was not a Christian humanist after the style of Erasmus. But he was indebted to Wycliffism and the flavour of the older English dissent is obvious throughout his work. Not that Smeeton would make a Lollard of him but he does argue very cogently that he 'articulated his message in ways compatible with traditional English dissent to a degree far greater than has previously been suggested'.

As to Tyndale's originality, his conclusion is:- 'It was in the Reformation issue of soteriology that Tyndale made his most truly unique theological contribution. In this matter, Tyndale stood apart from Luther, Erasmus, Zwingli, and others of his day; here Tyndale also stood beyond traditional Wycliffism. His elaboration of the work of the Holy Spirit, his understanding of covenant, his insistence on the 'lust' for God's will, and his demands for moral living illustrate theological pioneering.'

In a word, this is an important and significant study.

R. Tudur Jones  
Coleg Bala-Bangor, Wales

### From Early Judaism to Early Church

D. S. Russell

SCM Press, London, 1986; 150 pp., £4.50, paperback; ISBN 0 334 00496 9

Dr Russell is well-known for his earlier works on the period between the Old and New Testaments. His first book was a helpful popular summary of this theme, *Between the Testaments*, and this was followed by a scholarly monograph on *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*. Now he has returned to this theme in yet another survey which is meant to complement and supplement his first book but which can easily stand on its own. He is particularly concerned with those areas of Judaism which are especially relevant to the rise of the Christian church. The emphasis, therefore, is less on history and more on the development of thought. After a discussion of cultural and religious developments, he considers the place of the Jewish Scriptures, dealing with their canonicity and interpretation and the concept of Torah. This leads on to discussion of Jewish theology under the headings of prayer and mediation, demonology and the problem of evil, the secret tradition of Jewish apocalyptic and the future hope. This is a judicious selection of topics, and the treatment of them is simple, clear and readable. There have been so many survey-type books and essays on this period that a reader might be pardoned for some experience of boredom as he reads yet another; let it be said with emphasis that this was in no way my experience with this book which somehow shows a delightful freshness of treatment. The book is meant for students, ministers and other interested persons, and it should suit its audience well. The author writes with the facility of one who is

thoroughly at home in his topic, and his judgments are generally sound. It is, of course, an area in which scholars have laboured much, and no book can be thoroughly up to date. So while one would rightly expect Dr Russell to be influenced (as he is) by C. Rowland's important book on the nature of apocalyptic, *The Open Heaven*, it is not his fault that the magisterial treatment of the Jewish canon by Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, appeared too late to be taken into his consideration. Nor again could he take into account the most recent discussion of biblical interpretation at Qumran given by G.J. Brooke in his *Exegesis at Qumran*, which might have led him to a different verdict on the rules ascribed to Rabbi Hillel. Dr Russell adopts a fairly conservative attitude in matters of biblical criticism, and he is concerned to present differing views fairly and impartially. But he has no doubts that for the full revelation of that which was only partially understood in Judaism we must turn to the light given in Jesus Christ, and it is good that he is not afraid to say so.

I. Howard Marshall  
University of Aberdeen

### **Creativity in Preaching**

J. Grant Howard

Ministry Resources Library of Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1987; 112 pp., n.p., paperback; ISBN 0 310 26251 8

In this short book, the author examines four essential elements in preaching; the text, the congregation, the preacher and the act of preaching. He attempts to show how creativity (the ability to use material in new and different ways) should be involved in the whole process from beginning to end. Scottish preachers will possibly find the chapter dealing with the life-setting of the text the most helpful, with several illuminating examples given. On the other hand, they will probably find much of the later material to be corny. For example, 'as people sit in the sanctuary waiting for the service to start, their thinking could be stimulated by a quote on the overhead projector screen that reads: "Doubts are ants in the pants of faith".' (p. 97).

Martin Allen,  
Chryston Church, Glasgow

### **Evangelistic Preaching**

Alan Walker

Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1988; 110 pp., n.p., paperback; ISBN 0 310 75261 5

This small book is described as a supplemental text book for an introductory course on preaching. The opening chapter defines the purpose of such preaching as 'to win an immediate commitment to Jesus Christ'. (p. 18) the author does not spell out the content of the evangel to be preached, but does state clearly his belief that salvation is impossible apart from a person's conscious surrender. This book is more a 'how to' manual with basic hints on

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such subjects as sermon construction and delivery. The examples given, in the appendix, of evangelistic sermons are disappointingly thin, being merely a string of stories held together with the thread of a textual theme.

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Chryston Church Glasgow*

### **Sermon Guides for Preaching in Easter, Ascension and Pentecost**

C. W. Burger, B. A. Muller, D. J. Smit (eds.)

William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988; 284 pp., £9.50, paperback; ISBN 0 8028 0283 4

The contributors to this volume are all ordained ministers in South Africa, most of whom hold teaching posts in universities. The book is designed to help preachers produce, for Easter Day and the seven following Sundays, sermons that are theologically 'sound' and exegetically 'true'. Three cycles of eight sermons are suggested, 24 in total. The cycles deal with text from the Synoptic Gospels, the Old Testament and Paul's letters, and John and Peter's writings respectively. Each guideline gives exegetical, hermeneutical and homiletical analysis and suggestions. The demarcation lines between the three aspects of the sermon guides are not always clear and there was some overlap. This format does, however, provide a structure which results in a remarkably even consistency from the range of contributors. This book is an excellent aid for preachers, providing a wealth of thought-provoking insights, suggestive presentations and penetrating illustrations. The various sermon guidelines will appeal to different readers in different ways. Those that impressed this reviewer deal with the following texts: Luke 24:36-49, Colossians 3: 1-4, Acts 2:1-8, I Corinthians 15:50-58, Ephesians 1: 20-33, Psalm 87, John 20:24-29, and I Peter 1:3-9. The opening chapter, 'Preaching around the Calendar', will stimulate evangelical preachers to consider again one form of expository preaching that has never received a high profile on the conservative camp. The second introductory chapter sets out the elements of Easter proclamation in a very arresting and challenging way. The five elements are: It is real: It awakens faith: It reveals something of God: It saves us: It raises us into a new lifestyle. Those who purchase this volume will find it money well spent.

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### **A Critique of Pastoral Care**

Stephen Pattison

SCM Press, London, 1988, 210 pp., £8.95, paperback; ISBN 0 334 00280-X

'Counselling' has had a high profile of late. The Lecturer in Pastoral Studies in the University of Birmingham does not need to remind Christian pastoral carers and counsellors that these disciplines have a very tenuous place in some theological departments that are, themselves, losing ground.

Pastoral care is 'that activity, undertaken especially by representative Christian persons, directed towards the elimination and relief of sin and sorrow, and the presentation of all people perfect in Christ to God'. In this technologically progressive age, those who are carers are moved by the need for self-justification towards sharing the optimism that human beings can overcome all problems and difficulties if the right techniques are learned. Pattison wants to assert that pastoral care is undertaken by what you are as much by what you do. As such, lay and professional persons can become capable carers. This still makes difficult the justification of pastoral studies without adopting the secular world's rationale – 'ratio-technological thinking' in Pattison's terms.

The critique offered by the author quite properly reveals the way the American pastoral care scene became shaped by pragmatic concerns to concentrate upon counselling and its concomitant techniques. Evidence is offered by a survey of past literature and the changing forces are revealed by reference to current authors who seek to recover a wholistic approach. This valuable survey of current books – there are 15 pages of detailed footnotes – continues into essays on ethics and pastoral care as well as on discipline and politics.

An emphasis on compassion and acceptance combined with liberal theology has moved pastoral concerns away from ethical or justice dimensions in Christianity. Yet, all pastoral encounters embody and promote particular norms and values. Society today wants to be tolerant of the moral codes of those who differ. Pastoral care, perhaps to keep itself acceptable, has run the risk of being caricatured such that the person seeking care receives the stone of therapy, but no bread of value and meaning. Ethical confrontation, however, is being recognised as a two-way process in which the carer's attitudes and beliefs are also challenged. This reduces the dangers of authoritarianism and judgementalism which may make the pastor feel good but do not bring healing to wounded people.

Discipline has been and still is part of the perception of Christian ministry. On the one hand it perpetuates false guilt feelings, which are not related necessarily to wrong actions. Discipline comes better from the inspiration of a mutual vision rather than from coercion. The desire to hijack pastoral care to be a tool of persuasion for the highly committed has to be set aside, however, since its nature is to reach out towards the marginalised, uncertain and doubting.

The socio-political dimension, Pattison maintains, must be a concern today also. Pastoral counselling as a specific skill can give job satisfaction to a pastor, but it also can aid avoidance of the structures of society that give rise to suffering and prevent growth. Issues of power, justice, inequality and human rights are omitted from many books on pastoral care. 'The Kingdom of God cannot be built by Christians alone', asserts Pattison – a comment which invites a thorough reading of his argument.

Pattison's distrust of conservative evangelical theology is revealed in the chapter on the Bible and Pastoral Care. It is, however, essential reading and the charges made need answers. His difficulty is revealed by the gospel-centredness of his definition of pastoral care coupled with the belief that pastoral care theory and practice are not the Bible's concern. This reviewer

would agree wholeheartedly with Pattison's critique but is left with the work still to do to write a theology of pastoral theology from which the definition could be derived.

Pattison's final chapter on failure and laughter is worth the book's price alone, even if it merely underlines that the author's critique invites a proliferation of material on the recovery of pastoral care. It invites readers to have second thoughts. Pattison's use throughout of the female pronouns, however, perhaps is unnecessarily provocative in a work of this kind.

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### **How to Understand Marriage**

**J.-P. Bagot**

SCM Press, London, 1987; 96 pp., £4.50

This book, by a French Roman Catholic priest, was written to provide insight and encourage commitment to marriage in an age when it seems to be under threat. Priests find themselves 'torn between a legal demand' to marry all who ask for it, and a 'pastoral sense' which moves them to restrict church weddings to sincere Christians. The writer, who articulates well the problems felt also by ministers, is aware of the conflicts between the expectations of different generations, the pressure for 'trial marriages' (of course a contradiction in terms), the shifting values of society and the difficulty of finding an order of service which fits the situation of those who come to be married in church with little Christian commitment.

The first part of the book is a study of the teaching of the Bible. The writer's 'critical' approach is used to bring out rather than dilute the acute insights of Scripture into marriage relationships. Just one example of many insights is his comment that three out of the four women noted by Matthew in our Lord's genealogy were the victims of sexual violence, leading on to a quotation from Paul Claudel, 'God writes straight with crooked lines'.

The analysis of church history is helpful though done from a Catholic viewpoint, probably more useful before the Reformation than after. Like many modern Catholic writers, he is critical of parts of Augustine's teaching and the tradition which sees marriage as primarily for procreation. Bagot points out the lack of evidence for 'getting married in church' before the fourth century, and argues that Christian marriage is distinctive in its commitment rather than in its essential nature; only by the twelfth century was it obvious that the 'I do' of marriage must be said before a representative of the church.

Bagot explains how marriage came to be thought of as a sacrament; this section is somewhat complex, but the closing pages, including a look at the remarriage of divorced persons, give some insight into the relation of Roman doctrine and pastoral care, and how doctrine may be allowed to 'develop' in the Roman Catholic tradition. The book contains extended quotations from a variety of sources, and illustrates some of the common ground between Roman Catholic and evangelical Christians, as they wrestle with common issues posed by an increasingly pagan society.

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**The Incarnation of God: an Introduction to Hegel's  
Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology**

Hans Kung

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1987; xv+601 pp., £24.95

This is the translation of a lengthy work written in 1970 and so preceding by several years John Yerkess' treatment of Hegel's Christology. It reveals the theological wrestling behind *On Being a Christian* and *Does God Exist?*, but Kung's protagonist is less religiously daunting though more philosophically knowledgeable than was Jacob's – viz., Hegel. Yet, like Jacob's, the protagonist is no foe, as the sub-title of the work indicates. So we witness again in this work the contemporary continental theological fascination with Hegel.

Kung's strategy is to describe in chronological detail the development of Hegel's theological perspective, which is simultaneously a consciously philosophical one. He shows Hegel's early thought culminating in the speculative Christology of *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Then, after a summary of the relevant argument of this work, the three other major works Hegel published in his lifetime (the *Logic*, the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Philosophy of Right*) are briskly treated. Kung sticks to the central theological, not the philosophical, business and so Hegel's posthumously published lectures focus for us the religious points of interest in his thought. Kung has set out to demonstrate how Hegel developed an essentially theological concept along essentially philosophical lines by expounding reality as the dialectical kenosis and self-realisation of Absolute Spirit. This is 'the incarnation of God'. Kung finds Hegel theologically fruitful both when he posits the historicity of God and, more generally, the historicity of Christ, for this presages a direction out of the widely publicised difficulties of classical Christology. Kung is certainly critical, but studies to learn.

The work's main value is in its orderliness and detail; as in his other works, Kung is crisp in his treatment of the familiar, judicious in his assessment of the controversial. The central theme itself, Hegel's interpretation of incarnation as the manifestation of the idea of divine-human unity, is not surprising. Yet for all his discussion Kung refuses a really critical engagement with Hegel on this point. Hegel is defended historically as the alternative to naive anthropomorphic biblicism and rationalistic Enlightenment deism and defended theologically as the proposer of God's dialectical attributes in lieu of the awkwardness of Chalcedonian Christology on a Greek metaphysical footing. Yet Hegel's reduction of incarnational Christology to divine-human unity is not tackled; Kung prefers, e.g., to think about Heidegger's rather than Kierkegaard's response to Hegel at this juncture. So the real trouble with Hegel is arguably not exposed.

There are several errors in the text, the most serious of which perhaps is the impression given (pp. 324, 362) that Hegel's lectures on *Philosophy of History* are other than those on *Philosophy of World History*; again on p. 76 it seems as if Kant published a *Philosophy of Religion* alongside *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. On the interpretation of Hegel, it would have been clearer why he is *not* a pantheist had Kung pursued by a comparative analysis with Fichte the sense in which the world is neither contingent nor divine for Hegel. But one can always ask for more and Kung has certainly



given us enough, with time to include a memorable account of Hegel lecturing. Hegel aspired to be a Napoleon of the intellect; he probably succeeded and what we make of the latter we will perhaps make of the former too.

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**To Reach a Nation: The Challenge of Evangelism in a Mass Media Age**

Gavin Reid

Hodder and Stoughton 1987; 185 pp., £2.25; ISBN 0 340 40745 X

The purpose of this book is to see how the electronic age enables the churches to raise public awareness of the gospel and to help preaching for a verdict. It is honestly and positively written from the inside, as Gavin Reid has been involved with evangelism throughout his ministry. He charts his own course as an evangelical, then gives the background to the Mission England campaign with Billy Graham in 1984-85. A large part of the book evaluates the preparations for organisation of, and results from that major project. Then he takes up basic principles in preaching which are highlighted in a quick-information age. The final part evaluates the use of television in evangelism, drawing on lessons from American Christian TV stations. He concludes that 'In the task of reaching the nation for Christ, there is no electronic short-cut'.

This book improves as it progresses. The heart of the matter is not reached until chapter 10, 'Electronic gospel?', and the definition of the title 'To Reach a Nation' is not taken up until chapter 12. The style also becomes livelier and the whole mood more compulsive as the book reaches its climax.

The earlier part which takes up the lessons from Mission England does however have some very helpful points to make. The understanding of the accommodationist-entrenchment positions within the churches in chapter 3 shows the difficulties in organising a national mission initiative. There are good insights into the internal harmonious working of the Billy Graham team in chapter 5.

The criticism of why an overseas evangelist was used for a mission to England is answered in chapter 6 by seeing how British culture and churches have conspired against producing figurehead evangelists of our own.

The book's major contribution is in its concluding chapters. Reid prefers the British concept of broadcasting, despite the limitations of the 'public service' policy of the BBC and IBA, to the American concept of 'narrowcasting' of Christian programmes to primarily Christian audiences. The answer to the British problem is to have more committed Christians involved in the media industry. The back-to-basics approach in chapter 9 about preaching is very helpful, whether used in a church, a stadium or a studio. This emphasis on proclamation, drawn from the book of Acts, is also used to guide the reader through the different schools of thought, and the 'kingdom language' used by different evangelists today.

The socialised interpretation of Jim Wallis, and the modern-day miracle interpretation of John Wimber are both appreciated, but found to be inadequate in this light.

The lessons learnt from John 4 in chapter 12 give the basis for realistic evaluation of the work of outreach: a community can be said to be 'reached' with the gospel if there is 75% awareness of the message, and the Christian community has been increased by 20% through the mission activities. Throughout the book, the vital place of prayer and the necessity for churches to work together are both emphasised.

The reviewer was at the meeting which Reid refers to on p. 169, and agrees with his impressions about the Scottish situation. The whole book rings true with Reid's ministry and vision, and is a good contribution to this vital subject for our time.

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### **Biblical Higher Criticism and the Defense of Infallibilism in 19th Century Britain**

Nigel M. de S. Cameron

*Text and Studies in Religion*, Volume 33. The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, N.Y./Queenstown, Ont., 1987; 419pp. ISBN 0 88946 821 4

There have been several surveys of late dealing with the rise and progress of biblical criticism in nineteenth century Britain – some of them belonging to the field of Old or New Testament studies and others to that of Ecclesiastical History. This survey, the work of the Warden of Rutherford House, Edinburgh, is rather an exercise in historical theology: in an earlier form it was a doctoral thesis produced under the supervision of the Professors of Divinity and of Christian Dogmatics in the University of Edinburgh.

What Dr Cameron is chiefly interested in is the revolution undergone by biblical study in Britain between the middle and end of the nineteenth century. The reviewer has elsewhere illustrated this revolution by comparing two scholarly works by theologians in the Free Church of Scotland – Patrick Fairbairn's *Prophecy* 1856 and W. Robertson Smith's *The Prophets of Israel* 1882. The difference was that the scholars of the earlier period maintained their inherited principle of making biblical criticism subservient to the premises of biblical infallibility: what the Bible said, God said, and it was therefore true and infallible. Any critical findings which conflicted with this premiss were not to be accepted. By the end of the century the prevalent doctrine was that critical conclusions must not be foreclosed by such dogmatic considerations.

Behind this revolution Dr Cameron discerns the influence of Spinoza (in Western Europe in general) and of S. T. Coleridge (in Britain more particularly). But the chief practitioners of biblical criticism in England and Scotland were devout Christians, not rationalists, as so many of their continental predecessors had been: it appeared, therefore, that the dominant critical methods and conclusions were compatible with Christian commitment. This is evident in the case of Robertson Smith, to which Dr Cameron devotes a chapter of nearly 60 pages. However uneasy Robertson Smith's opponents felt at the positions he defended, they found it unexpectedly difficult to prove that they violated the Westminster Confession of Faith, to

which indeed Smith declared his allegiance throughout. In the event, while Smith was removed from his chair because he had lost the confidence of his church, the outcome of his case vindicated the liberty (not to say the autonomy) of biblical criticism in the Free Church of Scotland.

At this stage in the story the New Testament was almost untouched by the critical process in the theological schools of Britain. When conservatives appealed to recorded statements of Christ on such points as the authorship of Psalm 110, the others felt bound to offer a reasoned reply: they did not question the authenticity of such dominical statements, as many would do today. The Cambridge school, says Dr Cameron, 'succeeded in insulating British thought almost completely from the influence of the radical scholarship which dominated continental debate'. In some important respects the achievement of the Cambridge school has stood the test of time: Lightfoot's essay on 'St Paul and the Three' (in his case *Galatians* commentary) demolished the dogma of antithetic Pauline and Petrine first-century setting of the New Testament with evidence that stands firm a century after his death. The tradition of Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort was ably upheld by such successors as H. B. Swete, J. B. Mayor and J. Armitage Robinson, even if they 'attained not to the first three'.

There are many other things in this fascinating and well-documented work, which clamour for mention, but the limits of a review must not be exceeded. The issues with which it deals are still alive at the end of the twentieth century, and much of its substance is relevant to our own day.

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### **Jesus Risen. The Resurrection – what actually happened and what does it mean?**

Gerald O'Collins

Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1987; 233 pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 232 51727 4

The author gives us a rather 'mixed bag' treatment of the resurrection, covering biblical material, the history of views, modern theologians, as well as his own ideas on its importance. He begins with a brief review of the patristic writers, then medieval theologians, concentrating on Aquinas. Interacting with their ideas, O'Collins shows how some of these were later developed by others.

There follows a summary of the work of eight modern theologians – namely Barth, Bultmann, Pannenberg, Marxsen, Moltmann, Rahner, Kung and Sobrino. Although useful summaries and comparisons are given, he is necessarily selective in their writings chosen for discussion (as he admits), and selective also in the choice of the eight! The brevity of the treatment makes this selection of limited use, since much has to be left out of the discussion.

From these eight studies, themes are then selected which act as the backbone for the rest of the book, event, faith, revelation, redemption and hope, love, and communicating the resurrection. Although his own views are expressed, the author tends to operate by summarising the work of others,

then interacting with it. 'Popular' material is also considered, including Channel 4's 1984 series 'Jesus The Evidence'. Curiously, the Bishop of Durham is noticeable by his absence, as is Murray Harris.

Alternative theories if the empty tomb are discussed, and dismissed as improbable. An appendix is also devoted to refuting the idea that 'luminous' appearances of Jesus, such as were claimed for other ancient religions, were the primary experiences of the disciples. The author's view is quite traditional – the historicity of the empty tomb is the best explanation of the events.

But the book does not stop there, for 'the question of Jesus' resurrection cannot be solved by historical evidence alone'. A 'who moved the stone?' type of approach is regarded as incomplete, since personal experience is also evidence, and Easter faith involves commitment and confidence in the resurrection, the author proposes that a person's 'embodied history' is raised from death to new life, though he admits that this itself raises questions which he does not answer here.

The book always keeps an eye on popular ideas about the subject and particularly on Roman Catholic thought. Thus, eleven pages are devoted to 'Peter as Easter witness', including a consideration of Peter and the pope. The primary role of the pope is seen as *the* proclaimer of the Lord's resurrection. The doctrinal commitment of the author (dean of theology at the Gregorian University, Rome) does therefore affect some of the views in the book. This does not detract from its value, however, except perhaps that his originality is restrained, and we are left knowing a little about a lot of others' views, but not a lot about his. Perhaps it will best serve the interested lay person who would like a broad sweep of the subject.

At the beginning of the book, we are told that three perspectives will be used – academic, suffering and worship. The first predominates, the third is present, but very little of the second appears. This is disappointing, but perhaps another volume could be devoted to this, to explain how 'we can learn about the first Easter not only by studying in the library but also by suffering in a slum and singing in a church'.

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### **The Enigma of the Cross**

Alister McGrath

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1987, £6.95, 192 pp.

Recent months have seen the publication of several scholarly evangelical contributions on the theme of the cross; George Carey's *The Gate of Glory*, John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*, and now this book from the somewhat prolific pen of Alister McGrath. The book is, the author explains, 'an attempt to unfold the crucial enigma which lies at the heart of the Christian faith, and indicate its meaning for the life of the church'. If this seems a somewhat Herculean undertaking the author is certainly well aware of it, and indeed of the mystery which surrounds the object of investigation and renders every attempt to fathom it exhaustively futile. Nevertheless, convinced as he is that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ represent something 'given' in

God's self-revealing activity. McGrath ventures forth, equipped with both a scholarly mind and a preacher's gift for communication. The result is an eminently readable book which goes a long way towards enabling the non-theologian to relate the symbol which so dominates Christian art, literature, hymnody and architecture to the many areas of Christian faith and life from which it has all too often been notable by its absence.

The book falls into two sections. In the first of these the author seeks to establish the *centrality* of the cross for an authentically Christian understanding of God and of the world. After Calvary, he argues repeatedly, there can be no other starting point for knowledge of God, and any attempt to begin elsewhere must certainly renounce the claim to be Christian theology, since 'the criterion of what is Christian and what is not is the cross of Jesus Christ, the crucial enigma which distinguishes the peculiarly Christian way of looking at human existence and experience from all other viewpoints'. Thus this historical event which lies at the very heart of the kerygma has a significance reaching far beyond the soteriological slot normally provided for it in dogmatic text books. It tells us who God is and what he is like, as well as what he has done, and who man is and what he is like, and has profound implications for the way in which we live. In short, the cross is at the centre of all Christian thinking and cannot be avoided or qualified (no matter how much of a scandal it may prove to our previous understanding of things), without the integrity of the gospel itself being called into question.

The second part of the book develops this same theme further, exploring the *relevance* of the cross for humankind in today's world, in knowing God, in preaching and hearing the truth of the gospel, and in life in general, both individual and corporate. The 'word of the cross' is considered in its historical aspect and as part of a living tradition which cannot stand still but must ever seek to address itself to the ears of those who need to hear, while yet recognising the dangers of an uncritical assimilation of 'peripheral cultural accretions'. The reader is reminded that the cross does not need to be *made* relevant, but simply to be proclaimed effectively in its relevance for modern men and women who, like their first century counterparts, stand in need of its paradoxical message of judgment and forgiveness, condemnation and acquittal, the Godforsakenness of death and the death of death itself. The cross creates its sown point of contact within the lives of men and women in the self-revealing activity of God through the Holy Spirit, and does not need to be fitted into any convenient or congenial modern category in order to gain credibility. Every attempt to lessen the folly of the cross to the 'modern mind', therefore (such as the Enlightenment's reinterpretation of it as the embodiment of human self-sacrifice), risks emptying it of its true significance, which resides precisely in its nature as a *scandalon*, calling humanity into question in order to heal and renew it. To lose this scandal is to lose touch with the relevance of the cross.

*The Enigma of the Cross* is a helpful book which raised some important issues at a level accessible to those who spend their lives doing things other than studying or teaching theology. For this is to be commended. If it is to be criticised then it must be for its failure to hold the cross firmly in its incarnational and Trinitarian context, and its suggestion that Golgotha somehow possesses a significance for the Christian faith which outweighs and

exists independently of that of Bethlehem. To respond to these doctrines, whilst important, are not the particular focus of the book would simply be to confirm the worst, namely the utter failure to appreciate the fact that the cross can only bear the climactic and staggering significance which it does in fact bear for the Christian when it is understood from the outset *who it is* who goes to the cross for others, when it is perceived that this not a cross like any of the thousands of others which adorned the Roman empire precisely because it is *God's* cross – the cross of the Son who embraces it in obedience to the Father and in the power of the Spirit. Unless we view the event of the cross on the historical plane through the lens of the same event in the Trinitarian life of God, we shall risk serious misunderstanding of its true significance for all, and, indeed, for God himself. That *The Enigma of the Cross* does not make this point more clearly is to its detriment. Yet it remains a book worth reading for all who seek to deepen their appreciation of the crucial enigma at the heart of the Christian faith.

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### Thinking about Faith

David Cook

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, and Academie Books, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1986; 220 pp.; n.p., ISBN 0 310 44131 5

David Cook believes that too many people shy away from any engagement with issues or concerns which are given the description 'philosophical'. Sometimes they are repelled by philosophers' perversity in raising questions which do not seem problematic to anyone else; sometimes they are daunted by the complexity of philosophers' debates; and Christians in particular are anxious or fearful that their faith may be corrupted or undermined by philosophical argument. But Cook is convinced that Christians do not have anything particularly to fear. More positively, he says 'My aim is . . . to equip people for evangelism and ministry'. He is surely correct that a working-through of philosophical issues (whether a high-sounding description like 'philosophical' or 'epistemological' or 'metaphysical' is employed to describe them, and whether any philosophers' names are dropped) is an important aspect of evangelism; a refusal to consider such issues can be a faithless or uncaring refusal to take seriously the thinking of people for whom evangelism is undertaken. Philosophical questions arise, after all, from the unusually persistent and rigorous pursuing of questions which concern everyone.

In the present book the author is aware that he has scope only to sketch some basic lines of argument, together with an indication of further reading by which the topic can be pursued. He has chapters introducing these topics: Faith and Reason, Mysticism, The Paradoxical character of Faith, God's transcendence and immanence, the problems of Evil and Suffering, Prayer, Miracles, Science and Faith, Religion and Morality, traditional arguments for God's existence, language about God, and Religious Experience. There is also a concluding chapter in which Cook seems to favour our thinking of philosophy as at least clarificatory, helping Christians as well as others to a

more exact grasp and articulation of their views. Where philosophy and theology meet and overlap, there is more going on than mere clarification: a description is being offered of the way the world is. It is not made plain (to this reviewer) whether Cook thinks that the philosophy simply helps to clarify the really substantial affirmations which are, as it were, provided by theology. At least the debates discussed in Chapter 12, on Talk about God, are over whether theology can *claim* to assert anything factually significant. To argue, as Cook does, that theology can make that claim, is to go beyond mere clarification in one's philosophizing. But this is perhaps one of the many points at which the reader is prompted to take the questions further. In this case five books are suggested for study. One of the most useful of these, that by T. McPherson, is given the wrong title: this should be *Philosophy and Religious Belief*. Again, the author of *The Theological Frontier of Ethics* is W. G. MacLagan.

The 'who's who of leading and representative philosophers' helpfully identifies the key contentions of some philosophers (e.g. of Berkeley , , , 'his famous view is that "to be is to be perceived" '); it also has entries on Desmond Morris and the prophet Ezekiel, whose claim to be philosophers is thin; the entries on Adam, Julius Caesar, Maurice Chevalier, and Uzziah do seem clearly to be out of place; that on J. O. Urmson ('1915- an English Philosopher') is notably unilluminating.

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