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REVIEWS

The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance

Thomas Schreiner and Ardel Caneday

InterVarsity, Downers Grove, Ill., 2001; 344pp., £14.99; ISBN 0 85111 551 9

The stated goal of this book is to wrestle anew with some of the most pressing and perennial questions facing the believer: Can one gain eternal life and then lose it? What about those who don't persevere in the faith? Can a believer really be assured of having eternal life? Such questions have called for answers in every generation.

Schreiner and Caneday's objective is to present the biblical passages relevant to forming a 'biblical theology' of perseverance and assurance and then help the readers integrate these into a 'coherent and consistent whole' (p. 11). Their mode of discourse is intentionally irenic and pastoral, yet with a rigorous attention to exegesis.

The book begins with an introduction that lays out the plan for the book. Following this, chapter 1 surveys four interpretive schemes that have been used to explain the difficult issues of faith, perseverance, assurance and rewards. These are labelled (1) Loss-of-salvation view, (2) Loss-of-rewards view, (3) Tests-of-genuineness view, and (4) Hypothetical-loss-of-salvation view. These first three correspond generally (though not exactly) with the views held by many within Arminianism, Dispensationalism, and Calvinism respectively. The last view is not a widespread view, but one advocated by B. F. Westcott from the interpretation of Hebrews.

The first view argues that the warnings in Scripture are 'real' warnings and that the believer who does not persevere may indeed lose their salvation. The second view rejects the possibility of 'losing one's salvation' and instead interprets warnings as threats against a believer losing his or her heavenly rewards but not eternal life. The test-of-genuineness view interprets the warnings of Scripture as directed not toward true believers, but toward the false or disingenuous believer, the one who professes faith but who does not really possess salvation. The warnings prompt us to test ourselves to see whether our faith is real. The

fourth view sees the warnings (especially in Hebrews) as addressing genuine believers 'to correct the wrong idea that apostasy is not serious... lest they flirt with such apostasy' (pp. 35-6). In each case, Schreiner and Caneday deal fairly and accurately with these opposing views.

They conclude chapter 1 by presenting a fifth view, which they adopt. And herein lies the unique contribution of this book. Rather than trying to interpret the warnings of Scripture in light of one's other theological commitments (as in the case of the four views above), Schreiner and Caneday ask a different question: What is the relationship between the biblical warnings and the biblical promises? Rather than choosing between the promises or the warnings, pitting one over against the other, the authors posit that both the promises and the warnings have distinct roles in God's salvation. The promises function 'to establish belief in the God who keeps his promises and to assure us that he is faithful to his people' while the warnings 'serve to elicit belief that perseveres in faithfulness to God's heavenly call on us' (p. 40). In other words, both the warnings and the promises are real and work together as the means God uses to save his people.

The remaining chapters seek to ground this view in an impressive way through thorough exegesis of key texts. Chapter 2 lays the vital foundation by arguing for the centrality of the 'already, not yet' category as applied to soteriology. The authors explore a number of different metaphors used in Scripture to describe the multifaceted reality of salvation. These metaphors taken together show that salvation is both now and yet in the future. Chapter 3 argues that true faith is an obedient faith, *i.e.* it is seen by faithfulness, yet this is not to be misunderstood as a works-righteousness. The lengthy and crucial chapter 4 gets right to the heart of how warnings function in Scripture. The argument is that exhortations and warnings (in addition to promises) are God's means used to accomplish his persevering purposes in us. They are like road signs that project real warnings of various hazards: they warn of *conceivable* but not *probable* consequences. They must be heeded but they do not communicate the likelihood of such an accident occurring. They are means of grace to keep us on the road of faith. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss biblical examples of those who did not persevere (*e.g.* Judas) and those who did (*e.g.* Peter). Chapter 7, leaning on the work of G. C. Berkouwer, argues that assurance is not only possible in light of warnings, but is also an indissoluble part of saving faith. Assurance of salvation is to be had through the three-fold means of the fruit of the Spirit, the witness of the Holy Spirit, and especially, through the promises of God. The final chapter wrestles with the biblical tension of sovereignty and human

responsibility and concludes that the only ground for perseverance is God's unconditional election. The book concludes with a short appendix responding to William Lane Craig's 'Middle Knowledge' view, followed by extensive author, subject and Scripture indexes.

How should we evaluate this book theologically? Schreiner and Caneday's thesis regarding the co-operative function of warnings and promises is truly insightful. They acknowledge this idea is not unique to them, but comes from Berkouwer and could in fact be called 'classically Reformed'. Nonetheless, in today's theological landscape this idea of warnings and promises as means of grace together is a new and helpful way of speaking to the Calvinist-Arminian debate on perseverance. Yet this insight does not remove all the old tensions. Indeed, at times in the book (notably, chapters 5 and 6), the argument seems to falter by slipping back into the 'test-of-genuineness' view. Nonetheless, by framing the issue with a new question, the authors have provided another way of thinking that is worthwhile.

But there is another deeper theological issue being debated today with which this book overlaps. Several evangelical scholars today are questioning whether the Reformation definition of justification is too narrow to accommodate the whole scriptural witness. The nature of justification, forensic and/or transformative is being debated anew. While this is not the thesis of Schreiner and Caneday's volume, their arguments at times connect with this debate. For example, chapter 3 is subtitled, 'The Necessity of Obedient Faith' and they argue that true faith looks like faithfulness, though this is not to be misunderstood as works-righteousness. Likewise, chapter 2 takes pains to show that forensic justification is *only one of the many* metaphors that Scripture uses to speak about salvation. In both of these instances I think they are right. Nonetheless, confusion may occur for the reader who reads this book with that contemporary debate as the main issue; it is only secondary to their thesis in this volume. This potential problem is exacerbated by the fact that Dr. Schreiner has in fact written rather provocatively on the issue of justification in recent years. Some reference to this debate and the authors' position on it would have cleared up potential problems in this area.

I offer one direct critique of this volume: the question of the intended audience. The style and ethos of the book seem geared toward the thoughtful layperson. There are nice diagrams at the beginning and technical language is avoided. Significant space is devoted to explain concepts that would not likely be familiar already to the layperson (*e.g.* the 'already, not yet' idea). The stated intention is 'pastoral'. Yet the level

of detailed exegesis at points seems more than most laypeople would have the interest or ability to handle. Likewise, the chapters are at times quite long. (Chapters 3 and 4 weigh in at 55 and 72 pages respectively.) I am by no means advocating ‘dumming down’, yet from a pragmatic standpoint, I question whether the vast majority of the people in the pews who could benefit from this book would ever make it through chapter 4. More realistically, it seems the bulk of this book is best suited for a seminary student or pastor. If this is the intended audience, then some elements of the book could be revised. On the other hand, if the layperson is the audience, then much of the detail needs to be removed. The authors obviously wanted to present a well-grounded argument. This they have done. But along the way they have fallen somewhere between two intended audiences.

Overall, I think the readers of this journal will greatly benefit from the model of careful scholarship in this book as well as the real contribution this volume makes to the theological discussion.

Jonathan T. Pennington, St Mary's College, University of St Andrews

Shaping A Theological Mind: Theological Context and Methodology

Darren C. Marks (ed.)

Ashgate, Aldershot, 2002; x+144pp., £15.99 (pb); £37.50 (hb); ISBN 0 7546 0617 1

One of the contributors to this book apologises that autobiography is the lowest and most mendacious of the art forms. That is as may be, but for one reader at least the more autobiographical the essays were, the more interesting and revealing they were too. In the context of today's hermeneutical debates, it is refreshing to have access to the mind of the author.

Marks describes himself as a youngish would-be theologian, fresh out of graduate studies, wanting to ask questions that reading texts alone would not permit. The contributors to the book were invited to reflect on their theological pilgrimage, and thus to show something of the confluence of their experiences and education with their theological writings. The hope was also that the collection would provide a theological state-of-the-union by cutting across denomination, gender, specialism and location. Most of the essays fulfil the former aim, but the book is too short to realise the latter ambition.

The editor provides a preface, and a brief concluding chapter entitled, rather grandly, ‘Method as Creative Fidelity: *Habitus* and the *Sensus*

Communis'. In between, there are 12 essays. I will say something about each of them but will give more space to some.

The first is by James H. Cone, Professor of Theology at Union Seminary, who takes us back to Bearden, Arkansas, the place where he says he first discovered himself as *black* and *Christian*. He grew up in the 1940s and early 1950s, attending segregated schools, drinking water from 'coloured' fountains, watching movies from balconies, and when absolutely necessary greeting white adults at the back door of their homes. His Christian identity was shaped at Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church where he encountered Jesus through rousing sermons, fervent prayers, spirited gospel songs and passionate testimonies. He was always puzzled that the 'Welcome' signs outside white churches beckoning visitors to join them did not include a black person like him.

He was also disappointed with the black churches, which seemed to promote anti-intellectualism as whites promoted racism. 'It was as if the less one knew and the louder one shouted Jesus' name, the closer one was to God. I found it hard to believe that the God of Jesus condoned ignorance as if it was a virtue.' And so he tells the story of the search for a reasoned faith in subsequent theological study, and then of the turn to *blackness* in his theology, which he describes as an even deeper *metanoia* experience than his previous conversion. Much of what he says is humbling and convicting, and much of his anger is justified; racism is a contradiction of the gospel, and the racist theologian is a heretic. But while he is right to use the black experience as a perspective, it seems at last that experience becomes the touchstone for theology.

The second essay is by Edward Farley, Emeritus Professor of Theology at Vanderbilt, and is entitled 'Ecclesial Contextual Thinking'. In summary, 'The prevailing trends and movements of both churches and theologies ever call to the theologian to think against and to think past.'

In too brief a chapter, Colin Gunton, Professor of Christian Doctrine at King's College, London, provides a neat introduction to his work. He pays tribute to a Christian upbringing, steeped in the words of Scripture in family and church, and to education in the literary classics of English, Greek and Latin. He was studying 'Greats' at Oxford when Robinson's *Honest to God* appeared, and this he says introduced him to the excitement of systematic theology; by 'systematic' he means something concerned with the meaning of the Christian faith that also engages with the philosophical mind. In training for ordination he remembers with appreciation the weekly sermon class presided over by John Marsh, where the emphasis was that sermons were to be good news, and the wonderful

teaching of George Caird, whose teaching still shapes those who were inspired by it then. How important our theological teachers can be!

Writing *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* took a long time, itself important in Gunton's development. He contrasts that with today's ridiculous pressure on young academics to publish before they have had time to mature. He then turns to his interest in trinitarian theology and the stimulus afforded by John Zizioulas and the Cappadocian formulation. He concludes with reference to his ministry in 'a very ordinary church.... Nonetheless, it is generous and loving, and has taught the lesson that right theology begins here, where the Gospel is proclaimed by word and sacrament and lived out in the company of others.'

Alister McGrath's chapter is also brief, and concentrates on his work in theology and science. The Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford recounts his boyhood interest in the natural sciences, and then his studies in chemistry at Oxford, the period during which he also discovered that Christianity was more intellectually resilient than he could ever have imagined. He says from then he was determined to work at the integration of Christianity and science. He offers a quick survey of his career before returning to this theme, and the series of works on which he has recently been engaged, under the running title 'A Scientific Theology'. His expressed aim is to plot a trajectory for theology that maintains its academic and spiritual integrity while encouraging a direct and positive engagement with a scientific culture. His role model in all this is T. F. Torrance, 'unquestionably the greatest British theologian of the twentieth century', and he asks that these three volumes (2001-2003) be treated as 'landmarks in the expression of my theological mind'.

He ends on an intriguing note. While a 'scientific theology' is his major issue for the next decade, there are other agendas too. There is the relationship between theology and literature, and in particular the possibility of theology through literature. 'Why do theologians not write novels, aiming to express theological notions in a narrative manner? There are excellent philosophical models to hand in the novels of writers such as Iris Murdoch.' Does McGrath intend to write novels?

The fifth essay is by Wayne A. Meeks. The Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies at Yale is surprised to find himself in theological company, 'for my work has privileged non-theological descriptions of the early Christian movement'. In passing, the minister he remembers best from his Bible Belt youth was a Scotsman trained at Edinburgh, whose sermons were filled with quotations from the British poets.

The next chapter is by John Milbank, Professor of Philosophical Theology at the University of Virginia. 'The Last of the Last: Theology, Authority and Democracy', is long and difficult compared with the other essays, and is the least personal of any of them.

The seventh contributor is Jürgen Moltmann, Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology at Tübingen, and his is a thoroughly autobiographical chapter. In July 1943, when he was seventeen, he survived the firestorm that destroyed his hometown of Hamburg, but on the last night of the bombing his friend, Gerhard Schopper, was blown to pieces at his side. 'That night I cried out to God for the first time: "Where is God?", "Why am I not dead too?" and "What am I alive for?" These questions are still with me today.' He tells us about his studies, his pastorate, his academic career and his writing. He was never sure about the wisdom of the move to full-time academia. 'I was not cut out to be a professional pastor, but I liked being confronted with the whole breadth and depth of life – children and old people, men and women, the healthy and the sick, birth and death. I should, in hindsight, have liked as a theologian to remain a pastor.'

Moltmann suggests that his 1999 book, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, can be read as an introduction to his theological thinking. Having begun his major writings with eschatology, he rounded them off with *prolegomena*, or, as he puts it, *epilegomena*! Towards the end of the essay he writes movingly about his commitment to theology: 'Theology is a passion that one pursues with all one's heart, all one's soul and all one's strength. If one cannot do that, better to leave it alone altogether.' He continues: 'Theology comes from the passion of God, from the open wound of God in one's own life.... Theology springs from unbounded joy in the presence of God's Spirit.... God's pain and God's delight, consequently, are the two experiences between which theology is kept in suspense.'

The eighth chapter, by Gerald O'Collins, Professor of Theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, is frustratingly short. He pays tribute to his teachers, including Moltmann. He insists on scholarship with faith. For example, he recalls that Ernst Käsemann's lectures on Romans 'showed how outstanding biblical scholarship incorporated and required deep Christian faith and theological reflection'. And then at Cambridge, Charles Moule modelled the same. Thus, 'biblical scholarship that lacks faith will be as shallow as literary criticism that is not fuelled by a passionate love for literature. The scriptures were born of faith, aim to give rise to faith, and should be interpreted with faith.' O'Collins gives a

brief survey of his writing career, especially his lifelong concern with the resurrection.

The next two chapters are by women. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Professor of Feminist Theology at Berkeley, gives her intellectual autobiography. The topics that have interested this liberal theologian range over racism, sexism, international militarism, imperialism and ecological devastation.

Then Kathryn Tanner, Professor of Theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School, tells us how she and her generation have moved from methodological to substantive preoccupations, not talking about how to do theology, as many of their teachers did, but actually doing constructive theology, reworking Christian themes to address the issues of today's world. She argues: 'The need is not so much to show the meaningfulness of Christianity in today's world but rather what Christianity can contribute to making the world a better place.... Theology's warrant now centres on the question of whether theologians have anything important to say about the world and our place in it.' She believes they have, but as she insists later, this means being honest about the complexities of Christian lives, and taking seriously what disciplines such as sociology and anthropology reveal: 'the often messy, ambiguous and porous character of the effort to live Christianly'.

The penultimate chapter is by Keith Ward, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, who is happy to belong squarely in a theological tradition that began with Schleiermacher. He believes that the most basic religious belief is, in a rather vague sense, agreed in most of the world's religious traditions. He accepts that his theology is tentative and provisional.

Finally, John Webster writes on 'Discovering Dogmatics'. The Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford is soon to move to the Chair of Divinity at Aberdeen. He remembers the excitement of discovering theology at Cambridge, setting before him 'an immense store of texts, concepts and language of extraordinary power, a whole imaginative and intellectual world'. He recalls the presence in the Faculty of 'the great troubled genius' of Donald MacKinnon, 'who regarded dogmatics with utter seriousness and growled at anyone who did not'.

In many ways Webster found himself as a theologian when he went to teach in Canada. He learned the art of running a text seminar and spent a good deal of time inching his way through classic and contemporary texts with groups of graduate students. He also decided to teach confessionally. That meant, first, resolving to work on the assumption of the truthfulness of the Christian confession, rather than responding to its

critical denials. Second, it meant structuring the content of teaching in accordance with the logic of the confession expressed in the creeds. 'Thus my survey of Christian doctrine was (and remains) simply a conceptual expansion of the Apostles' Creed as a guide to the Gospel that is set out in Holy Scripture.'

For Webster, in the articulation of the gospel, the key theological tasks are exegesis and dogmatics. It is refreshing to hear him insist that exegesis is primary. 'Exegesis, the attempt to hear what the Spirit says to the Churches, is that without which theological reason cannot even begin to discharge its office. To this primary activity of theological reason, dogmatics is complementary but strictly subordinate.' He concludes on the operation of theological reason as an exercise in mortification, possible and fruitful only through the Spirit of Christ. 'And it is for this reason that theology must not only begin with but also be accompanied at every moment by prayer for the coming of the Spirit, in whose hands alone lie our minds and speeches.'

This is an interesting book, and in the main an easy read. It is good to learn a little more about theologians whose work has been important to us, and also to be stimulated by those whose theology is very different from ours but who can at the very least give us new questions even when they don't satisfy us with their answers. So, when theologians expound gospel truth, I want to breathe deeply. And when their connection with Scripture is more problematic? Well then I read, but I don't inhale.

Alasdair I. Macleod, Free Church, Leith

The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550-1682

Crawford Gribben

Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2000; 224pp., £39.50; ISBN 1-85182-5770

Interest in Puritan theology has experienced a remarkable twofold renaissance in the last 60 years. At one level the experiential character of its reformed orthodoxy has attracted many new readers of J. Owen, R. Sibbes, T. Goodwin and others. Meanwhile in the academy there has been increased interest in the role of eschatology in Puritan thought – an eschatology which may well shock those familiar only with the individual soteriology of the Puritans. In this respect Puritan literature throughout the period abounds with an end-time consciousness and what now appears as speculative apocalyptic exegesis. With the Reformation still within living memory and the working presupposition that the

Papacy was antichrist, many were inexorably drawn to a detailed historicist reading of the Apocalypse. Here we have a healthy reminder that, at least historically, 'the reformed position' on any doctrine (including eschatology) is by no means monochromic. The reformed tradition too has had its disappointed apocalypticists – a not insignificant factor in the later Puritan psyche.

As the subtitle suggests, Dr Gribben's approach is broad brush and covers the entire Puritan period. He begins with a valuable survey of the historiographical *status quaestionis* (pp. 11-25) and the development of the Puritan reading of the Book of Revelation (pp. 26-56). But this breadth is balanced by the series of detailed studies which follow (chapters 3-8) in which he traces the development of apocalyptic thought from the time of the Marian exiles, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563) and the Geneva Bible. There follow cameos of the Episcopalian-puritan James Ussher and the brilliant young Scottish commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, George Gillespie. Milton's well-known reaction to the theology of the Westminster Divines is then discussed (chapter 6). Chapters on the radical John Rogers and on John Bunyan complete the gallery of individual studies. As so often in the history of the church, so here, the reaction to the theological pyrotechnics of one age is indifference and caricature in the next. As Dr Gribben notes in his well-worded conclusion: 'Within half a century, the ideology which had underpinned a revolution was dismissed as folly. For the puritan remnant, better days were yet to come' (p.198). *The Puritan Millennium* thus tells a salutary and, in parts, sad story of hopes and expectations destined for disappointment.

To those already familiar with Iain H. Murray's *The Puritan Hope* (Edinburgh, 1971), or Peter Toon (ed.), *Puritans, the Millennium, and the Future of Israel* (Cambridge, 1970), Dr Gribben's work will provide a further broadening of horizons and deepening of understanding. Like them, but unlike the bulk of contemporary Puritan studies, the perspective here is thoroughly sympathetic to the evangelical principles of the Puritan movement. That said, Dr Gribben also seeks to take serious account of contemporary interest in the importance of hermeneutics. Potential readers should be aware that the subtitle (*Literature & Theology*) is significant and the vocabulary as well as the discussion straddles hermeneutical as well as dogmatic and historical interests. Those interested exclusively in 'pure theology' may find this either frustrating or stimulating, but hopefully both.

Sinclair B. Ferguson, Glasgow

Understanding Theology, Vols 1-3

R. T. Kendall

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, Vol.1: 1998, 530pp., £15.99, ISBN 1-85792-4290; Vol.2: 2000, 542pp., £16.99, ISBN 1-85792-5378; Vol.3: 2001, 503pp., £16.99, ISBN 1-85792-5815

When I was a student, a relative gave me a multi-volume New Testament commentary by E. W. Barnes. It was not up-to-the-minute in terms of modern scholarship, but it had one outstanding virtue: it never failed to get to grips with difficult passages. Problems ignored by some other commentators, even most prestigious ones, were always confronted by Barnes. You might not always agree with him but you could not say he shirked the difficulties of his task.

These three volumes remind me somewhat of Barnes, for they do in the realm of Systematic Theology what he did in New Testament studies. Again, you may not always agree with the author, but he makes you think.

These studies are based on Dr Kendall's classes in his School of Theology at Westminster Chapel, London. Each is succinct, but they do not simply give headings plus a few texts. They truly wrestle with theological issues and force you both to study Scripture and to think. They also introduce the reader to major theological debates in Christian history. Their succinctness means they cover an immense amount of ground and can function as useful reference works. Those in Volume 1 were chosen by the author, while those in Volume 2 were chosen by William Mackenzie and Malcolm Maclean of Christian Focus Publications, a selection which has the author's enthusiastic approval. It is not clear who chose those in the final volume.

They are simple. Dr Kendall says that the aim of his Friday programme is to make theology simple and he certainly does this. He has obviously worked hard at making sure every sentence is crystal clear and yet he is also concerned with economy of language, for all are comparatively brief. His gift for clear expression is outstanding.

They are practical. A fine theological teacher whom I know has as his slogan, 'Theology is ethics or it is nothing.' I think R. T. Kendall would agree with that. He makes us think hard but he refuses to let us treat theology simply as an academic discipline. Great biblical truths always have practical implications and we are made to face them. A number of the topics handled in Volumes 2 and 3 belong more to Ethics or Practical Theology than to Systematics, but this is an enrichment of the volumes rather than the reverse.

Inevitably the books deal with issues that are contentious among evangelical Christians today. How could he possibly avoid them? You may find him coming to different conclusions from yourself on some of them, but he will send you back to the Bible and make you look at each of these issues again. That's got to be a good thing.

Who should have these books? Buy them for lay preachers and Sunday School teachers known to you. They will be immensely helped by them. If you are a minister or somebody else with theological training, you may think them too simple for your own bookshelves, but are you really sure of that? I have had the privilege of teaching theology for 52 years but I am very glad to have these now as additions to my own library. I may keep a book-shaped gap next to them, in case there is a fourth volume!

Geoffrey Grogan, Glasgow

The Shape of Sola Scriptura

Keith Mathison

Canon Press, Moscow, Idaho, 2001; 364pp.; ISBN 1-885767-74-9

If you want to read the best recent overall introduction to the doctrine of Scripture, a good contender would have to be Keith Mathison's *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*. Mathison offers as his basic argument that much modern Evangelicalism gravely misunderstands what the Reformers meant by 'Sola Scriptura', Scripture alone. This is treated by many present-day Evangelicals as though it meant that an individual could sit down in isolation with a Bible and deliberately ignore everything that Christians have ever said the Bible means, so as to get the Bible's message 'fresh' and 'uncontaminated' by churchly interpretation. Mathison lampoons this attitude as 'Solo Scriptura'.

Against this, Mathison argues (convincingly, in my opinion) that the 'alone' in Sola Scriptura referred *not* to the isolation of Scripture from all necessary contexts of interpretation, *but* to the specific attribute of 'infallible authority'. That is, only Scripture has *infallible* authority. But it is equally true that the Reformers never thought the isolated individual could rightly understand what the infallibly authoritative Scripture means *if he extracted himself from the framework of historic Christian belief*. The latter view was, Mathison contends, the view not of the Protestant Reformers but of the Radical Reformers (often popularly called 'Anabaptists').

In particular Mathison argues that the Reformers recognized in the patristic 'Regula Fidei' (Rule of Faith), summarized in the Western

Church in the Apostles' Creed, an indispensable norm of scriptural interpretation – the proper interpretive context for grasping the message of Scripture. The Reformers saw a reciprocal relationship between Scripture and Creed, the latter having *always* been accepted in the Church, from earliest times, as a summary of the contents of the former.

Mathison endorses what a number of historians have pointed out, *viz.* that there were broadly *three* attitudes to tradition in the religious controversies of the sixteenth century:

Tradition 1: Critical reverence for history and tradition. This was the position of the Protestant Reformation, including the Reformed constituency. The Church's theological tradition was treated with care and respect, although not given a blind or uncritical allegiance. In particular, the great creeds of the early Church were all strongly affirmed.

Tradition 2: Authoritarian reverence for history and tradition. This was the position of most if not all Roman Catholics. The theological tradition – or as the Reformers claimed, a biased reading of it – was elevated into untouchable status. No development of doctrine was permitted to undergo critical scrutiny, and therefore nothing could be corrected. Mathison plots most interestingly the evolution of this Tradition 2 concept from the twelfth century onwards (Tradition 1 having been the general orthodoxy prior to this).

Tradition 0: Total contempt for history and tradition. This view tended to be quite prevalent among many in the Radical Reformation. Any appeal to the wisdom of the past was in principle rejected. To see Tradition 0 in all its naked glory, let us consider the views of one of the greatest of all the Radicals, Sebastian Franck. Franck expressed in a sharp, shocking manner the view that lay hidden at the heart of many an Anabaptist:

I believe that because of the breaking in and laying waste by antichrist right after the death of the apostles, the outward Church of Christ, including all its gifts and sacraments, went up into heaven and lies concealed in the Spirit and in truth. I am thus quite certain that for 1400 years now there has existed no gathered Church nor any sacraments.

So for Franck, there was simply no history of the Church's understanding of Scripture. The believer was thrown naked on the Bible, as if it had been written yesterday. Franck saw this as a wonderful privilege. The results demonstrate that it was a disaster of the first magnitude, as Franck

himself and all too many other Tradition 0 Anabaptists repeated one early Church heresy after another.

I warmly commend Mathison's book. It is a well-written, well-researched, timely reaffirmation of the real Reformational tenet of *Sola Scriptura*.

Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Given For You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper

Keith Mathison

P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, 2002; xvii+370pp.; ISBN 0-87552-186-X

Keith Mathison's book, *Given For You*, is a clear, step by step introduction to the Calvinist or Reformed doctrine of the Lord's supper. Mathison laments that too many modern 'Reformed' churches have ditched the real Reformed doctrine in favour of what he calls 'symbolic memorialism'. This is the view, often labelled 'Zwinglian', which sees in the supper little more than an opportunity for meditating thankfully on Jesus' death. Mathison has no trouble in demonstrating, with a breathtaking avalanche of evidence, that this view was passionately rejected by all the major Reformed theologians of the sixteenth century (apart from Zwingli).

The authentic Reformed view, found in all the classic Reformed confessions, teaches something very different from symbolic memorialism: namely, that in the Lord's supper, the risen Christ truly gives himself to his people as the life-giving nourishment of their souls. There is a 'real presence' of Christ in the Supper. He is present here in a special way, making the eating of bread and the drinking of wine into spiritual vehicles of his self-giving to believers. We really receive Christ by eating and drinking. If an unbeliever takes part, even to him Christ offers his body and blood; but the unbeliever lacks the means to receive them (faith).

Mathison also establishes beyond reasonable doubt that the majority Reformed view in the sixteenth century saw the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, not merely as visual signs of a communion with Christ that the believer is always enjoying, but as effective instruments in the Holy Spirit's hand for actually conveying Christ's body and blood to the believer – something that obviously happens only in the supper (nowhere else can we receive Christ by eating or drinking anything, or by any similar physical action). A minority, led by Heinrich Bullinger, had a

slightly weaker doctrine here, preferring to interpret the bread and wine, less as instruments, more as signs of the constant daily self-communication of Christ to believers. But even that is far above symbolic memorialism.

What comes across practically from Mathison's survey is just how *central* the supper was for sixteenth-century Reformed Christians. It was the holiest treasure of Christian worship. No wonder Calvin wished it to be absolutely integral to all normal Sunday gatherings. After all, if Jesus really gives himself to us in the supper, who would not wish to experience this every Sunday?

While I heartily commend Mathison's important study, there are a few little blemishes that could be rectified in any future edition. On page 64, he interprets the Augsburg Interim as a 'settlement' between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. It was actually an imposition by the emperor Charles V which the majority of Lutherans defied. On page 143, Mathison thinks that John Nevin (one of his great heroes – and mine) was referring to the New England divines when he spoke of 'Puritans'. Surely he was using the term more broadly to include the English Puritans? After all, Nevin cites John Owen as the archetypal Puritan. Again, I am slightly puzzled by Mathison's choice of theologians in his survey of views; for example, he omits all treatment of the illustrious Robert Bruce in his survey of eucharistic thought in the later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century British divines (whom he calls 'English': when will Americans learn that Scotland isn't in England?). Strangely, there is a complete omission of Anglicans, many of whom in that period were thoroughly Reformed in their theology, especially on the eucharist. In the eighteenth-century section, Mathison seems to rely entirely on Nevin for his quotations from Jonathan Edwards. The debate over whether real wine should be used in the Lord's supper is not limited to America, as Mathison seems to indicate; it is here with us in the UK too. Finally, the book has no subject index.

Given For You is the essential modern handbook on historic Reformed teaching about the Lord's supper. If, having read this, you remain a 'symbolic memorialist', you will at least know that you are declaring war on the view of the supper that lay at the very heart of sixteenth-century Reformed churchmanship, worship, and piety – the view enshrined in all the classic Reformed confessions (Baptists, see the 1689 Confession 30:7). In this reviewer's opinion, you are also impoverishing your own spiritual life. Christ has something better for us than merely 'remembering' him.

Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

A Faith To Live By: Understanding Christian Doctrine

Donald Macleod

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 2002; 343pp., £15.99; ISBN 1 85792 428 2

This book by Donald Macleod, Principal of the Free Church College in Edinburgh where he has taught Systematic Theology since 1978, is a reissue of a volume first published in 1998, now enhanced by the inclusion of new two chapters on 'Justification' and 'The Trinity'. The book has its origin in two series of lectures delivered by Macleod in Glasgow in 1988-89 and 1990-91. The 26 chapters discuss many of the fundamental biblical doctrines including, 'The Deity of Christ', 'Divine Pre-Ordination', 'The Covenant', and 'The Lord's Supper'.

As the (successful) aim of the book is both to lead ordinary Christians to come to a better understanding of what they already believe, and to contribute to the rekindling of a passion for the rigorous and reverent study of Christian truth, it is very difficult to think of any Christian who would not benefit from reading it. Here is a theologian who listens to the Word and scrupulously follows where it leads. He listens also to the world; never allowing it to shape his theology, but acutely aware of the context within which he ministers that Word.

In each chapter the relevant biblical texts undergirding the topic being discussed are identified and expounded, followed by informed interaction with our rich reformation heritage in general, and with some of the now sadly neglected Scottish theologians in particular.

Macleod is fully aware, of course, that there is no consensus on many of the most basic Christian doctrines such as the nature of Scripture: 'Our view of the Bible is not the only one on offer, as all of you know... there are at least three which are widely current and deserve a brief notice.' There follows a helpful exposure of the inadequacies of the modernist, the Barthian and the neo-orthodox views in comparison with the evangelical understanding of Scripture. As many of the formulations of the Westminster Standards are utilized (and warmly commended) it is a pity that they do not figure in the index.

Perhaps the best way of describing this volume is to say that it is the modern equivalent of A. A. Hodge's *Evangelical Theology*. Macleod, like Hodge, teaches the knowledge of God with the learning of a scholar and the enthusiasm of a loving Christian, addressing contemporary issues from the standpoint of an assured confidence in the abiding relevance of historic Christianity.

If the book is rich in content, how does it read? What was said of John ('Rabbi') Duncan can equally be said of Macleod. 'He was, with all his stern regard to truth, an artist in his theologizing. He strove to give his thoughts a certain chaste beauty of form.'

From the opening chapter on 'The Inspiration of Scripture', to the concluding chapter on 'Heaven', the reader, we feel sure, will find this to be not only a veritable theological feast, but a delight to read.

John Scoales, Edinburgh

Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era

Stanley J. Grenz

Baker, Grand Rapids, 2000; 351pp., \$23.99; ISBN 0-8010-2239-8

This is a both fascinating and frustrating book. Fascinating in its mapping of the route that evangelical theology has taken and its description of the crossroads that it presently finds itself in and frustrating in its loss of direction beyond this junction.

Grenz begins with an historical survey of the origins of evangelicalism and defines its genius in the fusing of Puritanism and Pietism in 'convertive piety', which leads him to locate the heart of evangelicalism in the conversion experience rather than doctrine or practice. He then charts the development of American evangelicalism through fundamentalism and neo-evangelicalism to the critical point at which it finds itself today. He is, perhaps inevitably, selective in choosing the representative figures who have shaped its recent path: contrasting Carl Henry vs. Bernard Ramm and Millard Erickson vs. Clark Pinnock. As a result you may be more surprised by the exclusions from his list of influential figures than his inclusions. However Grenz still offers a teasing taster of important issues and highlights the main contours of the ongoing debates.

Grenz's journey moves one step further as he raises his concern, a concern that ultimately represents the challenge and value of the book. The 'new evangelicalism' was based on modernist foundations and now in the postmodern world of new science and globalization, these foundations have shown themselves wanting. This is the strength of the book: challenging the next generation of evangelical thinkers to set out on a quest for a 'post-foundationalist' theology. Grenz himself begins the exploration taking the reader with him through the fertile and productive country of faith and science with a valuable excursion into the nature of

world religions. Whilst these are essential to his conclusions they are worthy of reading for themselves as a source of apologetic material and confirmation of the value of the implications of modern physics for epistemology (it 'chastens our rationality').

Grenz's destination, however, is less than satisfying (or even clear!). For Grenz theology is a mosaic construction which is validated by an internal coherence and is formed in conversation with tradition and the Christian community whilst listening to the narrative of the Scriptures. The impression left is that theology is simply a postmodern social construction without any connectedness to any external reality. Taking his cue from scientific endeavour it was disappointing that he was unable to utilize the more expectant language of scientific models which form signposts to, or approximations of, more profound or complex realities. He attempts to make a connection to reality in eschatology: *i.e.* reality in its fullness is still to come as God brings things to finality in Christ. Theology's task is to show a vision of this coming reality and to describe how it can be manifest in the community of Christ which is the sign of the age to come. Thus community building (even outside of the church) is an indication of this coming reality and thus we must be motivated for a renewal of evangelical ecclesiology and of Christian community.

This is where this reader became frustrated. Grenz describes the history and diagnoses the present in a stimulating (albeit contentious) way but his remedy is at best imprecise and at worst questions the need for any evangelical theology. Certainly a new evangelicalism which is unleashed from the shackles of modernism is required to engage with the changing climate of postmodernism. For Grenz convertive piety returns as his rallying point for the new way (the 'center' of the title) arguing for a 'believer ecumenism' as a grass roots movement of those who are joined by a common 'convertive piety'. This he anticipates could make evangelicalism a renewing agency for the whole church. Sadly the reader is left wondering if this posits the disappearance of evangelical belief altogether to leave an experience and an attitude which many who would not designate themselves as evangelicals would share, thus robbing the church of a distinctive prophetic voice.

Read this book to face the challenges posed for evangelicalism and to pick Grenz's irenic attitude of generous orthodoxy – we need it. Grenz may not offer a clear guide to the journey we face but he does challenge us to be good companions in uncharted territory.

Iain Macaulay, Newcastle-on-Tyne

Reasonable Enthusiast. John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism

Henry D. Rack

Epworth, London, 2002 (3rd Edition); xxi+662pp., £19.95; ISBN 0 7162 0552 1

The reviewer, who is no specialist in eighteenth-century studies, approaches this work with some diffidence. John Wesley is a monumental figure and this is a monumental volume, the 3rd edition of a book which was acclaimed on its first publication in 1989. It is a product of vast erudition and prodigious reading – the select (!) bibliography extends to 12 pages and there are 82 pages of endnotes. Thoroughness of treatment is Dr Rack's hallmark; all the fascinating details are here. From the fire in Epworth rectory to the Latin inscription on Wesley's coffin, nothing is missed. It is impossible to do justice in a short review; a mere reproduction of the Table of Contents would be impressive.

It is doubtless a truism to say that John Wesley was a complex figure, with many paradoxes and tensions in his beliefs and behaviour – hence the appropriate title. Dr Rack is essentially a meticulous historian, whose own theological stance does not intrude. He is neither an apologist nor a critic, though in the introduction he expresses some regret that he has 'perhaps dwelt too heavily on the less attractive aspects of Wesley's character' and failed to emphasise his 'very real charm and geniality'. This may be so; the overall impression left with this reader is of Wesley the authoritarian.

The Introduction (like an operatic overture) sets out the themes which will be subsequently developed. Wesley was an enigmatic personality, an old-fashioned High Churchman whose activities were subversive of church order, an advocate of the 'perfection' which he had not himself attained, an 'untypical evangelical' with a 'Catholic' side.

The book is admirably structured in three sections: The Young John Wesley (1703-38), The Rise of Methodism (1738-60) and The Consolidation of Methodism (1760-91). There is a Prelude, two Interludes and a Postlude. The Prelude is a masterly essay on social and religious conditions in the early eighteenth century, with much fascinating statistical detail. There are judicious appraisals of the Church of England, of Dissent (for which Wesley had a 'lifelong distaste') and of Roman Catholicism.

In Part 1 we follow the well-trodden path from Epworth to Oxford, Georgia and Aldersgate Street. Wesley's entire life was coloured by the influence of his remarkable parents, the conscientious, impecunious

Samuel and the pious, strong-minded Susanna. And of course there was 'Old Jeffrey', the famous poltergeist, with his Jacobite sympathies! The atmosphere of eighteenth-century Oxford is well described. We read of the Christ Church undergraduate, his subsequent ordination and Fellowship at Lincoln. A theme which appears for the first time (but by no means the last) is the question of Wesley's confused relationships with women. And what of the famous Holy Club? Was it 'a futile exercise in trying to obtain salvation by works'? Dr Rack is not so sure.

'Serpents in Eden' is the intriguing title of the section recounting Wesley's ministry in Georgia. Later he was famously to write in his *Journal*: 'I, who went to America to convert the Indians, was never myself converted to God.' Was Wesley's self-criticism unduly severe? Dr Rack's assessment is more cautious. Georgia also saw the beginnings of Methodist hymnody, Wesley's relationship with the Moravians and his ineptitude in the disastrous episode of Sophy Hopkey, 'the worst of all the serpents in his Eden'.

After Georgia comes 'The Road to Aldersgate Street, the great watershed of 24 May 1738 with its "much-quoted climax" of the "heart strangely warmed"'. The interpretation of this experience depends very much on the point of view of the analyst. Dr Rack suggests that 'the conversion of 1738 was neither a temporary hiccup in an otherwise Catholic-style pilgrimage of holiness, nor an all-determining rejection of that model in favour of a simple Protestant evangelical pattern of justification by faith'.

The first 'Interlude' is a general survey of the Evangelical Revival, with many well-known figures passing before us: Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Nicolaus Zinzendorf, Howell Harris, William Grimshaw, Lady Huntington. The origins of the revival, we are told, were influenced by 'ecclesiastical geography', social, economic and political factors. 'Early evangelicals... tended to see the Revival as a mysterious act of God.' Some readers may pause to ask: Could the evangelicals, after all, have been correct?

The story in Part 2 is one of remarkable expansion. It begins with a description of Wesley's physical appearance and goes on to recount his visit to the Moravians in Germany. There is a full discussion of George Whitefield and the celebrated predestination controversy. Other disputes involved the Moravians and 'stillness', the Anglicans and the whole matter of church order and lay preaching. We have the vexed question of 'convulsions' and other strange phenomena. All the while the zealous itineration continued: the London-Bristol-Newcastle triangle in England, with developments in Wales and Cornwall, Scotland and Ireland. The

emerging structures are described, societies, circuits, quarterly meetings and Conference, though Dr Rack concludes that 'In the end it was Wesley's authority, with or without the Conference, that mattered' and 'Despite a degree of power-sharing, then, Wesley kept holding the reins in his own hands to the end.'

The chapter aptly entitled 'Brothers in Love' paints a picture of that 'uneasy colleague' Charles Wesley, his personality, his hymns, his happy marriage and notably his 'bustling intervention' in the whole matter of his brother and Grace Murray, as 'a deliberate if well-intentioned wrecker'. This tortuous episode is expertly chronicled by Dr Rack, who describes it as a debacle. An unsympathetic observer might see elements of pantomime, but in the end Wesley's unsatisfactory marriage to Mary Vazeille, though not on the rebound we are assured, became 'one of the black legends in the Wesley canon'.

It is impossible here to do little more than list some of the topics which are addressed in Part 3, the major issue of Perfectionism, Wesley's preaching style, his attitude to culture, his views on education as seen at Kingswood school, his political opinions. The great themes pass under review: justification, holiness, faith and works, Calvinism and Arminianism, assurance, antinomianism, final perseverance, church and sacraments. All are handled with a sure touch. And Dr Rack poses the intriguing question: why did Wesley, who advocated as Methodism's special testimony 'Christian perfection' or 'perfect love' or 'entire sanctification', never himself claim to have attained it? Was he excessively self-critical?

There is a full discussion of Methodist religious experience, conversion, assurance and doubt, prayer, visions and dreams. A chapter is given over to the later phase of the Calvinist controversy, with Fletcher of Madeley on one side and on the other the learned but vitriolic Augustus Toplady, who had plenty of mud to sling at Wesley, the 'old fox'. Dr Rack sees the controversy as inevitable, with the protagonists left in their original entrenched positions. But he succeeds admirably in penetrating the 'fog of vituperation'.

Finally we have the culmination of Wesley's 'irregularities', his decision to ordain presbyters and 'superintendents', partly in response to the situation among the 'needy sheep' in America. The 'controversial and suspect' Thomas Coke figured largely here, to the horror of Charles, who felt that Coke had taken advantage of John's senility and considered that 'ordination is separation'.

There is a moving account of Wesley's last days and his death. His travelling and preaching continued until his final illness. He died on 2

March 1791, in his eighty-eighth year. 'The best of all is God is with us.' There was to be no hearse, no pomp.

In his 'Postlude' Dr Rack presents his final assessment of John Wesley's personality and piety. 'To penetrate the inner springs of this personality is not easy', he confesses. It is in this section that we come closest to Wesley the man, and savour the opinions of the earliest biographers. There was his early rising, incessant travelling, fastidious neatness, his routine of prayer and meditation. Did he pursue power for its own sake or in order to hold his movement together? Was he insensitive to ordinary human feelings? There are some surprises here, not least in the 'astonishing confession' to Charles in 1766.

Much has been omitted in the review of this notable work. There may be more light yet to break forth on the subject of John Wesley but it is difficult to believe that this masterly and closely reasoned survey will be superseded, though the experts may disagree with some of the conclusions reached. It is recommended to all who wish to dig deeply, and rewardingly, into eighteenth-century church history. Those who prefer conventional hagiography, 'emollient portrayal' as Dr Rack calls it, or who need some light bedtime reading, had better look elsewhere.

Robert Thompson, Belfast

The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 years of Pentecostal and Charismatic renewal, 1901-2001

Vinson Synan

Thomas Nelson, Nashville, Tennessee, 2001; xi+484pp.; ISBN 0-7852-4550-2

On any reckoning this is an ambitious work; thorough, detailed and full of information not otherwise easily accessible. Vinson Synan, a pastor and academic, has assembled a team of mainly American contributors to chronicle 'the century of the Holy Spirit'. The preface identifies Pentecostal and charismatic renewal 'as the most important religious movement of the entire twentieth century'. The book sets out to try to explain the different streams that have emerged among both Pentecostals and Charismatics.

Chapters 1 and 2 cover introductory material; chapter 1 giving an overview of the century and chapter 2 tracing the roots of the movement, finding these especially in Wesley and the teaching on the 'Second Blessing'. These chapters, by Synan himself, are inevitably summary but have many interesting insights.

Subsequent chapters deal with various aspects of the renewal movement. Chapters 3-6 focus on Pentecostal and later charismatic churches. Chapter 3 tells of the Azusa Street revival where, in 1906, a significant explosion of charismatic gifts occurred. Pen portraits are given of significant figures such as W. J. Seymour and W. E. Durham. The significance of the 1910 World Missionary Conference is referred to in the global expansion of Pentecostalism, as is the spread of the movement in Russia in spite of persecution and its growth in Africa and Latin America.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the emergence of holiness movements in the Pentecostal Churches, and significant figures such as C. Mason and C. P. Jones are considered. There is a useful treatment of the famous evangelist, Aimee Semple McPherson.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 cover renewal movements in the mainline denominations. Figures such as Dennis Bennett, Alexander Boddy and Oral Roberts are noted. Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists and Mennonites and new developments such as the Church of the Nazarene are sketched. Chapter 9 deals with renewal in the Catholic Church and the significance of events in a retreat house in Pittsburgh in 1967. This is one of the better chapters of theological reflection, including a brief note on the significance of Alpha courses.

Chapter 10 speaks of the significance of women in the renewal movements and of the significance of women for these movements. There are portraits of such important figures as Agnes Ozman, the young holiness preacher, Hannah Whittall Smith and Aimee Semple McPherson. More recently the impact of women in the media and in scholarship is noted.

Chapters 11 and 12 take up the story of African and Latin American Pentecostalism. Black Pentecostalism and Neopentecostalism and their significant figures are covered. The diversity of Latin American Pentecostalism is emphasised.

The final three chapters concentrate on the post World War II scene with study of healers and televangelists and the contemporary scene. The 'three waves' of renewal are outlined and statistics provided about the current strength of the various communities. An appendix – beginning somewhat arbitrarily in 200 BC – provides a chronology of renewal in the Holy Spirit. A colour outline provides a timeline and genealogy tree. There are numerous insets dealing with particular figures and many illustrations. Each chapter is followed by suggested reading.

This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to know more about the history of renewal movements in the past hundred years. It is

well documented and readable although, as with all symposia, the chapters vary in interest and cogency. For this reviewer, however, there are a number of weaknesses.

Two minor points can be made. The first is that there is sometimes tedious overlap between some of the chapters; more careful editing might have eliminated some of this. The second relates to presentation; many insets are hard to read because of the fairly light printing on grey paper.

More seriously the book seems to lack overall balance. The chapters are written by enthusiasts, in itself a good thing but there is little attempt to evaluate the experiences described. The book is history rather than theology but there is too much description and too little analysis. In particular, biblical and theological discussion is very thin and there is little attempt to relate renewal movements to other things happening in the twentieth-century church.

The emphasis is mainly American but Synan recognises this in his preface and sees the need for another book ranging more widely. It is a book to read but one to read with care and discernment.

Bob Fyall, St. John's College, Durham

Niebuhr and His Age

Charles C. Brown

Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 2002; 333pp., ISBN 1-56338-375-6

Niebuhr was part of an entire movement towards a more social and caring world. A world which though hard won through world wars, local wars and cold war may be on the verge of being lost in our time. It is pleasing therefore to greet the republication of Charles C. Brown's work *Niebuhr and His Age*. Although at times a little hagiographical in style this does not detract from a wonderful and a full-blooded account of the man and his work. A man who gave to the vast ranks of the church the prayer which begins, 'God grant me the serenity...'

It is very important especially at this time to keep in focus those who lived through the Great Depression, the end of empires, the rise and fall of the Third Reich, the Cold War and the 60's revolutions. Niebuhr's work remains contemporary because of the issues he grappled with. His constant plea that we might see secular issues from the perspective of the nature of God revealed through his justice is still central to the way we may perceive politics.

At the heart of his work is his pursuit of ethics. Central to this were his views on the fallibility of humanity and its need of a saviour. It is not easy for someone who lived through the Second World War and the horrors of Holocaust and nuclear attack to accept with ease the liberal positive attitude to sinful humanity and now its postmodern replacement of, 'We're all OK!' For Niebuhr, his Christian Realism was the only true answer in a century of anxiety and indifference.

For the student, Niebuhr clearly stands in the Neo-orthodox stream of theological enquiry. However his experience of social need was informed by the understanding of Gandhi's experience and writing. His visits to Germany before and after 1939-45 gave his theology its strong basis in reality, as did his experience in Detroit. Space does not allow for his academic abilities to be commented on or his involvement in founding the World Council of Churches.

The writer gives a clear survey of all the historical and social issues of Niebuhr's life. This is a great book if you know nothing of any of these issues because although these matters are not treated lightly, they are communicated in a clear and easy way.

For the scholar, Charles C. Brown attempts to improve upon other works, particularly that of R. W. Fox's *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (1985), and in this he succeeds. In his Appendix B he clearly states the areas in which he has chosen to do this. This appended essay is good reading for those interested in the development of the study of Niebuhr.

There is much pleasure and stimulation to be had in re-visiting this material and especially his copious quotes. Brown is without doubt a fan, but what a fine fan. He is refined and insightful, generous to all including those with whom he disagrees. There is a possibility with the production of a second edition that this work may become the classic work – which distinction some American reviewers already claim for it.

In this book there are good summaries of the vast corpus of his writings. These are succinct and pleasurable to read. The quotes are well chosen and although at times lengthy this does not detract from the flow of each chapter.

Having said all this I am not surprised that the publishers decided to make this book once again available to the many and varied readers of theology.

Robert Pickles, Chaplain, Strathallan School

A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition

Oliver Davies

SCM Press, London, 2001; 376pp., £25; ISBN 0 334 02833 7

Anyone buying this book to obtain a practitioner's guide in pastoral care or mission practice is in for a big shock. Be not deceived by the main title. The 'long-awaited' book by Oliver Davies is stern stuff and primarily a work of systematic theology in the modern sense. It plunges into an engagement with key linguistic philosophers and also tackles a whole range of weighty topics starting with classical ontology, a constructive ontology of the self, epistemology, Trinity, incarnation and eucharist. The latter two get much lighter treatment than the others. Showing considerable compassion himself, the author has constructed the book so that the intricate philosophical analysis can be leapfrogged (80 pages in all) straight into his own work of reformulation without feeling too much of a jolt on landing.

Underlying everything is the conviction that classical metaphysics and its abstract objectifying of 'being' is well past its sell-by date, but that we can, and must, hang on to our perception of the self as a continuous transcendent 'I' or 'being'. Only because of the reality of this self and its recognition of other such 'selves' can there be 'compassion' – the opening up of the self in vulnerability and self-risk to another self. 'In so far as this affirmation includes kenosis or self-emptying and self-giving, the existence of I is dialectically intensified.'

Also central to this reconstructed metaphysic is the notion of speech as the medium of being. Davies wants to move beyond theologies of 'being-as-relation' into a theology that can sit more comfortably in the postmodern world of critical linguistics. So language is key, and it begins with God and the 'silence' of the Trinity. But out of silence 'God spoke and the speaking was his Son'. Trinitarian life is a 'multiple, perichoretic dialogue of Persons in relation with Persons'. Like Moltmann, the author is committed to the public nature of the Trinitarian life, a life that is opened up and made manifest to us in the personal interactions of the Trinity. Human compassion, the dispossessing of the self, is the yielding of the self into this creative flow of Trinitarian speech. It is primarily the Trinitarian dimension which carries the book well beyond philosophy into theology and makes it a serious engagement of theology with postmodern thought.

Davies achieves all this without being a pushover for postmodernism. He strongly reaffirms the 'self'. He takes the debate about language and

text seriously but does not allow linguistic analysis to determine the nature of self. And doctrines such as Trinity and incarnation are central. But it is just here that the limitations of such a wide-ranging study appear. Although the possibilities for, say, Christian mission could be enormous, the subject is explicitly handled in only one page. The incarnation fares little better and the ecclesiology could easily expand. But we may be bleating too soon. For the last page announces a planned second volume. Hopefully, that work will develop the wider promise of the impressive Trinitarian theology of compassion formulated here.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College/ Cardiff University

Christianity in a Post-Atheist Age

Clive Marsh

SCM Press, London, 2002; 149pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 334 02869 8

Clive Marsh is a white, heterosexual, Protestant, working-class male from Liverpool, married to a Methodist minister, who has travelled a long way from his evangelical origins. Much of his own Christian life and academic endeavour, he says, has been spent exploring the tension between what preachers were saying and what his open Bible actually said.

Marsh points out that religion today has not simply become privatised, but channelled into a host of other activities; these have in fact had their own political and social impact. He also observes that the primary Christian groupings of the future may be theological movements and spiritual traditions rather than denominations.

This book is packed with nuggets of common sense, truth painfully discovered, and controversial judgements. Examples of the last might be: you cannot be political without being party political; or, as soon as you give someone a theological education, you turn them into a liberal. But to be fair, Marsh is often using 'liberal' in its proper 'Christian humanist' sense.

Marsh still sees himself as essentially a 'chastened liberal' in theology, and Schleiermacher is one of his heroes. But he is not doctrinaire. In spite of pluralism, he recognises that religion must be concerned with the Absolute, even if a religion errs when it claims it has found it. Here it would be useful for Marsh to engage in dialogue with a more conservative position, and examine what in fact is meant by 'knowing' and 'finding'.

To be viable today, Christianity must show that it works, and connects with people's lives. Marsh is advocating a 'new Christian liberalism' which will accept the public role of Christianity. He identifies consumerism as one of the gods of our age. He affirms that faith and theology matter for society.

He advocates a 'new protesting Christianity' which puts God first, and a 'new Puritanism' which is an invitation to 'serious living'. But he accepts also that this form of Christianity may appeal more to people of his psychological type. This illustrates how Marsh very seldom actually engages with Christian doctrine. Most of his energy is spent on engaging, competently enough, with trends in society and across the churches.

But occasionally he speaks his mind, and it is a liberal mind. He believes in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it would not trouble him if the body of Jesus was simply destroyed by dogs. He is more comfortable with the immortality of the spirit than the resurrection of the body. He sees Christianity as a 'spacious and inviting thoroughfare, even if not a broad highway'.

Marsh does not wish to exclude the 'agnostic onlookers' and the 'theological non-realists' from the Christian search for God. He recognises that churches are in fact full of both kinds! While more conservative Christians might wish to come at this issue in a different way, it would be wrong to respond simply by writing off such enquirers, as happens all too often.

This book engages at a popular level with almost anything you might read about in one of the more serious Sunday papers. It is unclear, however, on what he bases his conclusions and prescriptions for the refreshing of the churches. You will search in vain for underlying doctrine, and I think Marsh would not expect such a searcher to join his 'new Liberal' movement. At the same time he is obviously comfortable with his job as secretary of the Methodist Faith and Order Committee to help oversee the doctrine and worship of the Methodist Church in Great Britain.

Marsh's main question is, 'Why should anyone be bothered with Christianity?' rather than 'Is Christianity true?' – though he does not deny the importance of the latter. To this extent, some readers will be left unsatisfied, while others will be challenged. Appendix 1 lists the main points of the book in the form of '95 discussion starters'.

Jock Stein, Tulliallan and Kincardine Parish Church

With the Grain of the Universe

Stanley Hauerwas

SCM Press, London, 2002; 249pp., £13.95; ISBN 0 334 02864 7

The Gifford Lectures are supposed to deal with natural theology, in practice often somewhat widely construed. Stanley Hauerwas decided to devote his series to a conversation with three distinguished predecessors, William James, Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth.

Hauerwas sees James's concern with the will to believe, with its pragmatic consequences for life, as a sign that for him theology was really anthropology. He believes that Niebuhr then simply 'christianised' the arguments of James. Hauerwas thinks that 'the revelation that is required for us to know Niebuhr's god is but a reflection of ourselves'. For him, the focus was on the Jesus of ethics and not on a high Christology. Enter then Karl Barth, the hero of Hauerwas's tale, 'the greatest natural theologian of the Gifford lectures'. This judgement, that many would find paradoxical, is held to be possible because what is truly required is not argument but witness. In his concluding chapter, Hauerwas cites the Mennonite John Howard Yoder and Pope John Paul II (an intriguing pair of yoke-fellows) as outstanding witnesses of our time.

There is much to challenge and attract in this book, as Hauerwas seeks a close alignment of belief and practice, worship and thinking, so that, for him, 'theology is but a series of reminders to help the Christian pray faithfully'. Yet, while it is no doubt true that 'natural theology divorced from a full doctrine of God cannot help but distort the character of God', we are too often faced in this book with a fideistic take it or leave it. Hauerwas prophesies against what he calls 'evidentialism', but truth-seeking people are surely entitled to ask for motivations for belief. Of course, these motivations will never have the force of 'coercive arguments', or be free from the degree of circularity that goes with believing in order to understand. (The same is true in science.)

In fact, there is a place for both natural theology (hints of deity in general experience) and a theology of nature (the universe in a Trinitarian perspective). Hauerwas does not distinguish sufficiently between these two approaches. The former can help to put the question of God onto a modern or postmodern agenda. The latter can help believers to take science seriously and without fear. It is striking that both James and Niebuhr felt, quite mistakenly, the anxiety that science had imposed on us the picture of a closed universe, devoid of meaning.

The book makes quite considerable demands upon its readers, especially in its discussion of Barth's concept of *analogia fidei*. There is a

substantial (literal) subtext, contained in the lengthy footnotes in which Hauerwas conducts often illuminating conversations with contemporary thinkers. A particularly significant interlocutor for him is Alasdair MacIntyre. Overall, the text is as provocative and stimulating as one would have expected from its author.

John Polkinghorne, Queens' College, Cambridge

Max Weber in Theological Perspective

Thomas Ekstrand

Peeters, Leuven, 2000; 235pp.; ISBN 90-429-0944-7

The great German sociologist Max Weber thought there were two general problems for religion in the modern world. First, modern cultures were 'rationalized'. He did not mean by this that our thoughts and actions were reasonable or pleasant. Rather he meant that science, with its stress on evidence and rational argument, was so dominant that claims to knowledge based on revelation and concerning the supernatural were increasingly unpersuasive. The plausibility of revelation was further reduced by his second problem: pluralism. From their own travels and from second-hand accounts, modern people know very well that other people serve other Gods. More than that, modern people are themselves divided between competing revelations. It is thus impossible to believe naively, simply taking for granted what everyone else believes. Modern people are forced to be 'heretics': having to choose their religion in a context where choice is not the easiest option.

There are three possible theological responses to Weber's depiction of modernity. John Milbank represents one of them: simply reject as inaccurate such descriptions of the problems facing belief. For Milbank, social science descriptions are no more compelling than any other set of ideas. Social science relativises by showing the social origins of belief. Social science is itself a matter of belief. It too has social origins. Hence it is no more compelling a source of descriptions of the world than are the Brothers Grimm. So Christians can ignore sociologists such as Weber and carry on as before: an option that may be personally satisfying but does not address the fact that the continuing steady decline in church adherence rates since 1945 suggests Weber was right.

Naturally the Milbank option did not occur to Weber. The choice he imagined lay between simply throwing yourself into the bosom of a particular religious tradition and re-shaping religion so that it did not struggle against modernity. As you cannot evaluate the truth claims of

religious propositions as conventionally presented, you might as well take a deep breath, pick an option and embrace it wholesale. If you cannot thus abandon your critical faculties, then you need to reconstruct religion.

Thomas Ekstrand's book is his doctoral thesis. It lays out those parts of Max Weber's social science that depict the problem of modernity in a fashion that is admirably clear given that English is not his mother-tongue. He is particularly good on the late nineteenth-century German philosophical background to Weber's thought and on his epistemology. Being a Christian who is not willing to abandon his reasoning powers in favour of unquestioning loyalty to some church, Ekstrand is determined to find some space in Weber for Christianity and some encouragement to theology. He appreciates that the loyal embrace response to modernity is limited. It is all very well for someone who has been positively raised in a particular religion to prefer submission over critical evaluation but such a strategy is unlikely to impress outsiders. It does not offer a viable apologetics or evangelistic programme. Given the fact of religious diversity, people have to be offered some good reasons to prefer one religion to another.

The strength of the book is in its first part: the elaboration of Weber's thought. Ekstrand says: 'I focus on such interpretations that make his texts maximally relevant for my integrative purpose. I shall show that there are ideas in Weber's thought which make it possible to accept certain forms of revisionary theologies without opting out of the cultural conditions of modernity' (p. 4). The weakness is that it takes him so long to get to outlining those theologies (basically the final chapter) that we get little more than programmatic advertisement. As he admits: 'I hint at a direction in which I think such revisions should go if they should be compatible with Weber's understanding of modernity' (p. 202).

Ekstrand is far clearer than Milbank but arguably no closer to reconciling Christianity and modernity. One problem of his sketch of the elements of what he calls 'Christian utopian realism' ('utopian' because theology should point to the good life; 'realism' because we need to distinguish ends from adequate means to achieve those ends) is that his desirable features of a theology will not produce a single product. Although his approach rules out certain sorts of belief, it does not result in a single best option. The second problem is that I am not sure that a good theology in Ekstrand's view would be particularly Christian. Indeed, given that most of what Christians have traditionally believed and enshrined in the credal statements of their various churches is outlawed by Ekstrand, it is a bit hard to see why he wants to retain the adjective 'Christian' for his utopian realism.

Academic theologians should find much of benefit in Ekstrand's work but I fear there is little in it for the Christian looking for confirmation of Christian orthodoxy or the evangelist looking for arguments that Christianity is especially well-suited to the modern world.

Steve Bruce, University of Aberdeen

Who Is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense

Leander E. Keck

Fortress, Minneapolis, 2001; x+207pp.; ISBN 0-8006-3170-6

This volume is a recent addition to the series 'Studies on Personalities of the New Testament' edited by D. M. Smith.

The title of the book might lead the browser to believe that this is simply another contribution to the 'quest of/for the historical Jesus'. Keck, however, believes that his book belongs in a somewhat different category (p. 2). The clue to understanding Keck's particular approach is found in the word 'is' in his title and then in his somewhat cryptic subtitle. Keck draws on Greek grammar for the concept of the 'perfect tense'. The ancient Greeks, he tells us, 'used the perfect tense of a verb to distinguish the ongoing import of completed action from its sheer occurrence in the past' (p. 1). Drawing on this metaphor, then, Keck admirably sets out to do justice both to the fact that Jesus cannot be understood apart from the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth and to the fact that he also has ongoing significance for Christians.

The book is divided into five chapters. After the introductory chapter, Keck considers 'Jesus the Jew'; 'Jesus the Teacher'; 'Jesus' Death and the Living God'; and 'Jesus in the Moral Life'. Throughout these chapters there is plenty of helpful comment on the text of (primarily) the Synoptic Gospels read against the background of the OT and other non-canonical Jewish literature and in conversation with a substantial volume of recent scholarly literature. Most of the discussions are fairly standard fare for a modern book on Jesus, such as the helpful section on the kingdom of God. More distinctive and interesting – though entirely hypothetical – is the section on 'the Jew Jesus might have been' (pp. 52-5). Many readers will not be entirely satisfied with Keck's reading of the cross and the resurrection, but may be somewhat heartened by the extent to which he does read these events both historically and theologically.

In general, Keck adopts a positive approach to the reliability of the biblical text, distancing himself from more outlandish views. However,

he seems rather uncomfortable with the similarity of N. T. Wright's portrait of Jesus to the Christ of Christian faith (p. 46) and he regards some portions of the Gospels as substantially the result of the redactional creativity of the evangelists (e.g. pp. 89-90 on Matthew's discourses).

With respect to the 'contemporary significance' aspect of Keck's book, this is sometimes understood primarily in terms of the application of the words and actions of Jesus to the situations of the early Christian communities (e.g. pp.103ff.). At other times, however, he goes some way towards drawing out the significance of the biblical accounts for contemporary issues, such as Jewish-Christian relations (p. 62) and a substantially non-western Christian church (pp. 63-4). Sometimes one is left with the feeling that he has not dealt with some of the harder questions. His concluding reflection on what it means to live 'for Jesus' sake' is particularly potent.

In short, this book is a useful survey of the synoptic material from a constructive, though not evangelical perspective, which will provide the reader with a useful, though not entirely satisfactory, orientation to study of Jesus as a figure of history with more reflection on his ongoing significance for Christians than is normally found in such works.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

The Practice of Theology: a Reader

Colin E. Gunton, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (eds)
SCM Press, London, 2001; 484pp., £15.95; ISBN 0-334-02816-7

With only one serious drawback, this is a magnificent book. It is a collection of source readings, not in practical theology but in theological method. The editors, from the University of London, have made a quite admirable selection. An illuminating essay introducing each section surveys the issues at stake and there is a three-line introduction to each reading guiding us what to look for.

There are three main sections: Sources for Theology, The Nature of Theological Claims, and Doing Theology Today. Each section has 3-5 subsections with divisions; in each division there are several examples of influential writers in that field on the timeline 180 AD to the present. Thus we end up exploring:

- Where do I go to talk about God: Scripture, tradition, reason, experience?

- Can we know anything about God anyway? How do we know what we know? The nature of religious language. Neutral and committed knowledge.
- What's special about doing theology in our day? Modernity and postmodernity. 'Local' theologies: liberation theology and feminist theology are the examples taken. Christian theology in a multi-faith world.

A fourth section is an extended essay by Colin Gunton on doing theology in the modern western university. Three useful appendices provide details of authors and sources of documents, a basic timeline from Plato to Vatican II and a glossary of technical terms used.

There is collected here in one volume a most expertly chosen selection of the germinal things so many of us probably remember vaguely and can now find easily, thanks to Gunton *et al.* Origen putting the allegorical interpretation of Scripture in a perfect four lines; the particular contributions of Barth, Torrance, so many. And the balance is admirable. Here are Jonathan Edwards, Warfield and Newbigin as well as Anselm, Feuerbach and Mary Daly's feminism. The passion for theology, moreover, shines through every editorial comment: the conviction that the Jesus event changes everything. And all (well, nearly all) clearly explained.

The range of authors selected is immense. Of course one could carp. The emphasis is western. From the sixteenth century there are only Luther, Hubmaier, John of the Cross and Calvin: not Beza, Bucer, Cranmer, Knox, Latimer, Tyndale. Of scholastics we have Aquinas and Duns Scotus but not Boethius, Lombard, Bonaventura. But what impresses is not what is omitted but how much has been included, and how wisely.

The only disappointment is the lack of an index. In a work of this sort the omission is unconscionable. However, this book is an absolute gem: an education in theological method in one volume.

C. Peter White, Sandyford Henderson Memorial Church Glasgow

For the Beauty of the Earth – A Christian Vision for Creation Care

Steven Bouma-Prediger

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2001; 234pp.; ISBN 0-8010-2298-3

This book forms part of the 'Engaging culture' series edited by William A. Dryness and Robert K. Johnston. The series 'is designed to help

Christians respond with theological discernment to our contemporary culture'. This volume does just that, and in part is a response to the many Christians the author has encountered who see no connections between theology and ecology. The book succeeds in its two stated aims: to put Christian theology and contemporary ecology into dialogue, and to persuade convincingly that authentic Christian faith requires ecological obedience. To care for the earth is integral to Christian faith, is the author's central claim.

The first chapter enchanted me. Inspiring descriptions of three very different habitats: forest, mountain and lake, succeeded in instilling a renewed wonder and awe at the beauty and intricacy of the natural world. There is also an emphasis on the importance of identifying our place, as a starting point for caring for the earth.

After detailing the standard list of environmental woes, the book goes on to a very lengthy rebuttal of the argument that Christianity is to blame for our current environmental crises, while admitting that 'while the Christian faith is not necessarily anti-ecological, we have too often acted as if it were'. The next 97 pages propose a theology and ethic of earth-care in great depth and detail.

This book offers a very thorough treatment of the theology of creation care. It presupposes no previous knowledge, and is therefore suitable for newcomers. However, its sheer length and depth ensure that the main readership will probably be theologians, theology students or committed lay readers. Although most theological terms are explained, not all are, and there is frequent use of Latin terms which are not translated, leaving this particular reader frustrated.

The author quotes from other authors at length, often using three or more quotes to illustrate each point. While this offers a useful window onto the relevant literature, it adds to the wordiness of the book and contributes to a loss of momentum. Contemporary and historical ethical positions on creation care are also explained in perhaps more detail than necessary.

This book is ideal for those who want a detailed theology of creation care. However, for those seeking a more succinct, but equally persuasive, treatment, a range of other books are available, such as 'Greenhouse Theology' by Ron Elsdon. Elsdon's book has the added attraction of addressing the question of what we can do as practical out-workings of this theology and illustrates the good work that some churches and Christian organisations are already doing. These areas are not covered by Bouma-Prediger. Lastly, the context of the book is American, and it will therefore appeal especially to an American readership, but I have no doubt

that it will both inspire and inform anyone new to the theme of creation care.

Victoria Beale, Society, Religion and Technology Project

The End of the World. A Theological Interpretation

Ulrich H. J. Körtner

Westminster John Knox, Louisville, 1995; 367pp., \$31; ISBN 0 664 25631 7

Do not be fooled. This book is not what the title makes it seem. There is not too much theology, at least as the word is normally understood in Britain and America. And it does not shed too much light on the end of the world either. Instead it is a dialogue with the idea of 'apocalyptic'. Why is there a genre called apocalyptic? What function does it perform? What are its merits for today?

The author's sourcing reveals his sympathies. We frequently see the names of Hegel, Kierkegaard, Schelling and Heidegger – with Jasper, Tillich and Sengler bringing up the rear. The most common word inhabiting the discussion? 'Anxiety'. We are looking at a typically German approach: erudite, critical and dialectical. Körtner is happy to wear his existentialist sympathies clearly on his sleeve – and on his buttonhole and bonnet as well! He reveres the whole tradition right up to and including Bultmann. Even the formidable combination of Fuchs, Ebeling, Käsemann, Conzelmann and Bornkamm is not enough to overthrow the wisdom of Bultmann (p. 236)! Bultmann's scepticism on the New Testament takes its toll on Körtner's confidence in a traditional Christian apocalyptic. Moreover, the author spends more time with non-Christian apocalyptic, especially in Judaism, than with the New Testament versions.

All this may sound completely unpromising for traditional believers looking for more light on a dark subject. However, it *is* an illuminating study, though not recommended for the casual reader. Körtner forces us to take 'the end of the world' seriously. Western society has become accustomed to the myth of progress. That is, a 'bad end has not been figured in'. Again and again he kicks away our supports, insisting that we face the chilling fact: the human race is now at last capable of self-destruction in but a few moments. What should theology be like in such a time? It should be the theology of apocalyptic. Apocalyptic is designed to challenge this easy optimism in a day when any awareness of catastrophe, after a while, vanishes away. Apocalyptic draws our attention

to that which is beyond history and now is the hour for us to make this journey.

At the heart of apocalyptic is anxiety (which the author analyses repeatedly). Apocalyptic is primarily two things: 'pastoral care for those plagued by anxiety' and exhortation 'to repent or to transform one's behaviour and life'. Wisdom for all of us – even though we cannot, like Körtner, go on to emasculate the concept of apocalyptic into a way of handling anxiety Christianly.

This is a deep and haunting book but strictly for the patient enthusiast. For such a reader it will yield many fruitful and sobering thoughts – but you will need to be willing to think as the German philosophical tradition thinks and to suspend frustration at Körtner's fairly chronic and disappointing scepticism towards the New Testament!

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College/ Cardiff University

Reluctant Saint? A Theological Biography of Fletcher of Madeley

Patrick Streiff

Epworth Press, Peterborough, 2001; 406pp., £19.95; ISBN 0-7162-0546-7

This study of the life and work of John William Fletcher of Madeley (1729-1785), a Swiss-born Anglican clergyman and the leading figure of the second generation in Wesleyan Methodism, has been produced, appropriately, by a Swiss theologian. Patrick Streiff is Lecturer in Modern Church History at the University of Lausanne and a minister of the United Methodist Church. A revised version of his doctoral dissertation (University of Bern, 1983) and translated from the original German by G. W. S. Knowles, this is a work of careful and lucid scholarship. Streiff provides us with an authoritative and fascinating account of Fletcher's development as a Christian, pastor and theologian and, in doing so, makes a significant contribution to an understanding of eighteenth-century Methodism. Extensive use is made of primary sources, including many previously unpublished letters of Fletcher. In an appendix is listed, with sources, all letters from and to Fletcher and all his written works. This work will be indispensable for future Fletcher research.

Streiff divides his material into five chronologically ordered parts. Part I traces Fletcher's early years (1729-1750) from his birth as Jean Guillaume de la Fléchère, in the town of Nyon on Lake Geneva, to his departure for England in 1750. Particular attention is paid to the enduring

influence on him of his theologically minded uncle, Théodore Crinsoz de Bionens, and of the 'reasonable orthodoxy' (the form in which the Dutch-English early Enlightenment had come to fruition within the church) to which he was exposed while studying at Geneva.

Part II deals with Fletcher's first ten years in England (1750-1760). His service as private tutor in the Hill family, his early contacts with the Methodists and growing friendship with the Wesleys, his deep spiritual struggles and experience of grace in conversion, are all recounted in gripping detail. Unpublished letters to his family shed new light on Fletcher's life during this period.

Part III covers his first ten years as Vicar of Madeley in Shropshire (1760-1770). Opposed by some for his 'Methodist' style of preaching, Fletcher devoted himself to the task of bringing the gospel to the entire population. His patent sanctity made a deep impression. Many people came to faith through his Christ-centred preaching. John Wesley, who had disapproved of Fletcher's taking this position, made repeated but unsuccessful attempts to persuade him to leave Madeley to play a national leadership role in the wider Methodist movement. Nevertheless, Fletcher associated with the itinerant Methodist preachers in Shropshire and with efforts to form unions of Anglican clergy who were close to Methodism. He was successfully persuaded by Lady Huntingdon to take general oversight of the new theological college at Trevecca, as duties at Madeley permitted. The college was open to both Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodists and Fletcher, who saw himself as mediating between these two streams, hoped to be able to promote an ecumenical spirit and greater understanding between the two.

Part IV is the most theologically meaty part of the work. Here, Streiff deals with Fletcher's contribution to the controversies which developed in the 1770s between Arminian and Calvinistic Methodists. Fletcher's theological position fundamentally reflected that of John Wesley whose teachings it was his aim to defend. While Fletcher emerged as the leading theologian of Wesleyan Methodism, his constant aim was reconciliation between the two groups. The conflicting understandings of soteriology, in particular the place of human responsibility in the process of salvation, which he saw as central to the controversy were not, he believed, of such a nature as should undermine the fellowship of Christian believers. The dispute over the doctrine of perfection he understood as due to mutual misunderstanding of the differing frames of reference within which either side approached the subject. The irenic spirit in which he conducted his polemics is notable.

In Part V attention is given to Fletcher's last years (1778-1785), including a three-year convalescence in his home town of Nyon. His later literary activity, various projected theological works and his continuing, though limited, work among the Wesleyan Methodists are described. John and Charles Wesley both judged him the right man to take over leadership of the movement. In the event, however, Fletcher predeceased them both. Although tensions existed in their relationship, John Wesley regarded Fletcher as unequalled among all he knew in devotion to God. It was thus inevitable that 'against his will John William Fletcher became the saint of Methodism' (p. 299).

This scholarly yet accessible study will appeal to a wide range of readers and should do much to rescue from neglect a life whose true greatness earlier hagiographical treatment perhaps tended to obscure. A fine bibliography and index enhance the usefulness of the work.

Angus Morrison, St Columba's Old Parish Church, Stornoway

Holiness to the LORD: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus

Allen P. Ross

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2002; 496pp., \$32.99; ISBN 0-8010-2285-1

'Preached any good series of sermons recently? How about a series on Leviticus?' No, I did not really think you would have, but here is just the book which might whet your appetite for such a task by its lucid and insightful focus on how to discern the contemporary application of Leviticus. Though Ross shows that he is well acquainted with recent literature on Leviticus, his aim is not to provide an exhaustive commentary. Instead he focuses on the more neglected but nonetheless vital task of examining how the move should be made from the Old Testament text to a modern, Christian exposition and sermon derived from on it. The author does this in traditional fashion by close analysis of the text in its original context with a view to identifying in the wider setting of the whole of Scripture the timeless theological ideas that are expressed in the particular passage being examined. For the purposes of this analysis Leviticus is divided into 44 major sections, and after the theological core of each section is identified, a general summary of the passage is provided along with a detailed outline. This is not a sermon outline as such. The objective is not to short circuit sermon preparation, but to show how the passage should be analysed with a view to

identifying its significant features. There is then discussion of how the text should be expounded before concluding observations set out a succinct thematic summary of the passage and its relationship with other Scriptures and especially with the development of corresponding themes in the New Testament.

The task undoubtedly presents a great challenge because of the distance between the modern reader and Leviticus. Ross again uses the technique he had employed to good effect in his earlier study on Genesis, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker, 1988), and he continues to apply it here with the same consummate clarity and skill.

However, Leviticus is undoubtedly a theological book, and commentaries of any sort have to set out conclusions on a variety of controversial matters. I found it surprising that more was not said about atonement – a key theme in Leviticus. The subject is first discussed at length on pages 54-6 and then later in passing on pages 92-4, but Ross does not discuss the view that the verb *kipper*, 'to atone', is denominative and that the basic idea is derived from the noun *koper*, 'ransom'. He prefers to link the root with an Akkadian term 'to wipe off' and identifies its ritual use as a term for expiating the potential wrath of God, not for appeasing his kindled wrath. The emphasis on the need for a substitute to purge the guilty through the shedding of blood is clearly and repeatedly brought out.

One expository model that Ross develops to bring out the parallels between Leviticus and modern situations operates at three levels (p. 214). At one level applications refer to the people of God who are portrayed in both Testaments as a 'kingdom of priests', and at another level the connection between Aaron and Jesus as high priests is employed. These are both uncontroversial, but the third level of correspondence based on the priests – who are identified as Israel's hereditary priesthood and the church's divinely appointed ministers – is an unusual Protestant analogy which needs to be carefully formulated and which might well be misapplied by less careful hands. Ross makes clear what he intends by it when in his treatment of Leviticus 8 he summarises the key theme of the chapter as 'Those who lead the congregation in spiritual service must be fully consecrated to the LORD'.

Another area where Ross's understanding of the text departs from the traditional reformed view is as regards the Sabbath, where he rejects the Sabbath as a creation ordinance and considers the obligation to observe it as being on a different footing from the rest of the moral law and argues there is no continuing requirement to make one day in seven special.

Each section of the book is provided with an appropriate bibliography which should lead to a deeper appreciation of the message of Leviticus. However, there are no indexes of any sort. This is therefore not a book that is easily accessed with just a general idea of a theme, or to see if it sheds light on a particular New Testament passage. In such circumstances the reader has to have prior awareness of which sections of Leviticus are of potential relevance before the material in the book can be successfully located. But it is worth searching for answers because there is much here to stimulate.

John L. Mackay, Free Church College, Edinburgh

The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament (Second Edition)

William J. Dumbrell

Apollon, Leicester, 2002; 347pp., £16.99; ISBN 0 8010 2532 X

The second edition of William Dumbrell's *Faith of Israel* reminds me of a certain well-known TV advertisement – 'it does exactly what it says on the tin' ... or 'on the cover', in this case. Dumbrell's fine work is all that it claims to be: a *survey* of the main *theological* themes of each book of the Old Testament. Which, when one thinks about it, is a mammoth task which, it must be said, Dumbrell undertakes extremely well.

The first edition of this book was written in the early 1980s, so Dumbrell felt that an update was needed if its relevance was to be maintained. He suggests, 'Further work on the text has produced new insights as to the purpose of the canon and how the individual units contribute. Information gleaned from scholarship since the early '80s has been included. Basically, however, if the content has changed somewhat, the thrust of the earlier edition has been maintained.' So if you already have the first edition and are wondering whether or not you should buy the second edition, then the answer to that question very much depends upon your reasons for buying the book in the first place. The theological themes of the Psalms have not changed since the early '80s; the discussion in the secondary literature, however, has moved on greatly. So if one is looking for a discussion of OT themes then the second edition is not necessary, but if an awareness of the state-of-play in contemporary scholarship is desired then the second edition is, indeed, an important update. Generally speaking, Dumbrell seems to take a slightly more 'canonical' approach in the second edition, the main themes of each OT book being identified with sections of the text of that book. This

approach seems preferable to the perhaps more 'thematic' discussion of the first edition. Also, the larger format of the second edition does make for a better reading experience.

The book is divided up into four sections following the canonical structure of the Hebrew Old Testament – the Books of the Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy), Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings), Latter Prophets (Isaiah-Malachi, apart from Lamentations and Daniel) and the Writings (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles). Some may quibble that a Christian approach to the interpretation of the OT should follow the Christian canonical structure. However, as Dumbrell's central thesis is to present the scriptural basis of faith of the 'pre-Christian era' covenant community and his task is primarily an exegetical one (*i.e.* seeking to understand the themes of each OT book as the original hearer would), it seems entirely appropriate to follow the structure of the Hebrew canon with its Law, Prophets and Writings development. This approach also makes a broad connection between the faith of Israel and the historical development of Israel, two foci which are largely separated in other introductions to the OT. Whilst the exact nature of the link between these two areas of study will always be a question which is open to some degree of debate, this does seem to be a debate which is worth having. The publication of the second edition of *The Faith of Israel* may well act as a catalyst in reawakening discussion about the relationship between Israel's faith and her history.

Each chapter varies somewhat in content dependent upon the length and significance of the biblical book under discussion – 26 pages for the lengthy prophecy of Isaiah, whereas Nahum receives less than three pages. The ambitiously holistic nature of Dumbrell's work will inevitably leave some readers disappointed with the attention given to individual books. By way of example, it strikes me that given the significance of the Psalms in the hearts and minds of the community of believers, the treatment of the Psalter is unduly brief, focussing as it does on no more than three major psalmic themes. Doubtless, individual readers may feel that other books deserve greater attention than they receive, however, on the whole the attention paid to each individual book seems appropriate to their size and significance.

Each chapter includes discussion of the structure, themes and theological significance of the OT book under consideration, including comment on the placement and impact of that book within the larger canon of the Old Testament. Perhaps the best way to give a flavour of Dumbrell's work is to interact with a single chapter by way of example.

Chapter 5, as one would expect, brings the Book of Deuteronomy under consideration. Dumbrell starts off with a brief summary of the theology of Deuteronomy: 'The book is a collection of words of command and instruction, words of preaching and exhortation contained in a series of speeches by Moses just prior to entering the Promised Land. The speeches underline the redemptive grace of God, to whom obedience is to be expected. Deuteronomy is thus a book of Torah, a book of preached law. Torah is the instruction and teaching that, grounded in the Exodus redemption, will retain the Promised Land' (p. 57). He then goes on to outline Deuteronomy's background in ANE suzerain-vassal treaties, prior to a structural analysis of the whole book. This analysis, broadly speaking, divides consideration of the book into sections following the pattern of the various Mosaic speeches in Deuteronomy. However, this helpful idea wavers a bit towards the end of this introductory section, leaving the reader a little unsure as to quite what is to be done with Deuteronomy 31-34. Within these broader sections, a brief summary is given defining the content of each subsection or chapter of the canonical text. So, as part of the consideration of Moses' second address, we are given a brief and helpful rundown of the content to be found in each chapter, be it paraenetic or legal material.

The second major section of the chapter deals with the themes of Deuteronomy. Dumbrell picks out and discusses the major theological strands woven throughout the fifth book of the Law, discussing such concepts as the land, the altar law, rest, holy war, *torah*, law and love and, finally, deuteronomic humanitarianism. Each of these themes is given brief exegetical and theological consideration, bringing out some application from the observations made in the more descriptive initial consideration of the make-up of the book. Chapter 5 concludes with a paragraph-length summary of the Book of Deuteronomy and an equally brief overview of the Pentateuch. Most of the chapters follow the same or a similar pattern with descriptions of the content found in each OT book combined with discussions of its theological themes.

Dumbrell's book is an immensely helpful summary of and introduction to the theology of OT Israel. His analyses make sense of texts which are often difficult to understand as a whole without some background knowledge of setting, history and culture. He goes beyond the purely descriptive to answer the 'So what?' questions. Dumbrell's discussion of the theology of each OT book brings a real sense of significance to his consideration of the content of each book. I am quite sure that the theological similarities between Israel's faith and the contemporary Church's understanding of Christianity – similarities which

Dumbrell makes readily apparent in this book – will be a great eye-opener to many Christians who only rarely delve into the OT and view it as full of nothing but wars, genealogies, incomprehensible animal sacrifice and legalism. For these things, Dumbrell is to be roundly congratulated.

If I have a criticism, it is a relatively minor one: I am a little unsure to whom this book is addressed. I could not find an explicit statement describing the ‘target audience’ in this second edition. If to the scholar (and I am sure it is not), then the interaction with the secondary sources and discussion is too brief. If to the undergraduate student (and I suspect this may be the case), then some of the interaction with scholarship assumes too great a degree of knowledge. If to the ‘thinking Christian’ (who will benefit immensely from this book), then the interaction with the scholarly community is largely unnecessary. Drawing example from the Deuteronomy chapter once again, the reader is told that Deuteronomy 12-28 ‘has normally been associated with Josiah’s reforms of the late seventh century’ (p. 60). If Dumbrell’s book is addressed towards the theology undergraduate as an initiation into Deuteronomy studies, some additional explanatory information regarding the scholarly background to this thesis would be helpful. A brief summary of the theories of de Wette and Wellhausen, and how these have impacted studies in Deuteronomy would provide a very helpful framework for theology students encountering OT studies for the first time. One other detail that I think would benefit the readers of *The Faith of Israel* would be to have subject-specific bibliographies at the end of each chapter rather than a single comprehensive bibliography at the end of the book. This would provide an easy point of entry into more advanced studies in the scholarly literature surrounding each book of the OT.

However, these comments should not be allowed to colour the reader’s impression of the overall strength of this volume. William Dumbrell has written an excellent and very helpful introduction to the theology of the Old Testament – it is especially a book from which undergraduate theology students and Christians who are interested in doing more reading in the OT will benefit immensely. Dumbrell’s grasp of both the theological issues and scholarly debate is remarkable and *The Faith of Israel* is an excellent first port of call for anyone wishing to think seriously about the meaning and significance of any OT book.

Jamie Grant, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Fertility and Faith: The Ethics of Human Fertilization

Brendan McCarthy

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1997; 288pp., £12.99; ISBN 0-85111-180-7

Every few weeks, it seems, there's some new development in human reproductive technology. Parents are choosing whether to conceive a boy or a girl; children have been born with genetic material from three parents; children are being born 'to order', to act as cell donors for ailing siblings; cloned human embryos have been produced.

Many of these developments are considered in the Warnock Report, and it certainly seems worth revisiting the Warnock debate. Mr McCarthy claims that 'A weakness of many Christian contributions to the Warnock debate was that... [o]pinions were expressed concerning this or that technique without first establishing a defensible moral framework for the discussion', and seeks to offer such a framework. After considering the relationship between morality and legislation, he examines the biblical passages relevant to the status of the embryo, and the status of the embryo in Christian thought through the ages. Having concluded that human embryos are 'bearers of God's image... and hence must be treated with the same respect and dignity as any other members of the human race', he goes on to tackle sexual ethics. Then from this generally conservative foundation, he addresses specific techniques and issues, such as artificial insemination by husband or by donor, *in vitro* fertilisation, and embryo research. Alas, since the book predates 'Dolly', human cloning is barely mentioned.

I regret to have to say that I found this book almost unreadable. This wasn't due to the content, although I did find the philosophical material hard going. (I'm neither a theologian nor an ethicist – just a parish minister with a science background.) Nor was it due to the exhaustive approach, which makes for some tedious repetition, as Mr McCarthy himself notes. It was mainly due to the writing style.

In my former career I was taught a useful rule of thumb for assessing readability. In a piece of writing for educated non-specialists, the average number of words per sentence and percentage of less familiar words should add up to around 30. If their sum is below 25, the writing may seem patronising; if it's above 35, many readers will struggle. On the page of the book which I analysed, 15% of the words were technical or polysyllabic, and there were 30 words per sentence on average. Neither would have been too bad on its own – 15% unfamiliar words is par for the course in technical writing, and 'highbrow' English uses around 30 words per sentence. But combine them...!

So I can't commend this book to anyone but specialists. And this is a great pity, since Mr McCarthy has put together a lot of valuable material, which I'd like to see more widely available. I found the historical conspectus of the Church's view of the human embryo especially useful. But someone who goes to this book to learn will have to work harder to get something from it than is reasonable.

Richard T. Corbett, Broxburn Parish Church

Revelation

Grant R. Osborne

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2002; 869+xxpp., ISBN 0 8010 2299 1

This formidable commentary on the Book of Revelation, by the professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, is clearly the fruit of much reading and much thought. It is the third title to appear in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series, under the general editorship of Moises Silva. The series, which is committed to the authority of Scripture, aims to be scholarly but readable, and particularly to meet the needs of preachers. It promises well.

After careful discussion, Osborne favours John the apostle as the author of the book and the reign of Domitian (mid 90s) as its date. He notes that the book is apocalyptic but not pseudonymous: he does not say that this is natural, since no-one in the first century imagined that the great canonical apocalypse of Daniel was pseudonymous, but it is in fact natural, as Josephus and other first-century evidence about Daniel shows. The uncanonical apocalypses produced by Daniel's host of imitators were of course pseudonymous, and Osborne is very well read in these also. He holds that the symbolism of the book should be explained against the background of first-century usage, especially apocalyptic. Of the traditional schools of interpretation of the book, he has least use for the historicist, but thinks that the other schools may be to some extent combined, though with a futurist emphasis. He thinks that the Beast and the False Prophet, though expressive of anti-Christian tendencies throughout history, will finally be revealed as individuals.

Osborne firmly calls the Beast the Antichrist, and identifies him with the antichrists of 1 John and with the Man of Sin of 2 Thessalonians. He holds that the Beast is a political figure, whereas the False Prophet is a religious figure. There are difficulties here, because the antichrists of 1 John and the Man of Sin of 2 Thessalonians are both clearly religious figures. They originate in the church (1 John 2:19; 2 Thes. 2:3) and

propagate heresy (1 John 2:22, 26; 4:2-3; 2 John 7; 2 Thes. 2:4, 9-12). It might be easier to identify them with the False Prophet, were it not that the False Prophet makes men worship the Beast (Rev. 13:12), whereas the Man of Sin claims to be worshipped himself (2 Thes. 2:4). Perhaps the Antichrist should rather be thought of as a corporate entity, both political and religious, not unlike present-day Rome, though much further sunk in error.

On the question of the Millennium, Osborne favours pre-millennialism, though not dispensationalism. He points out that in Jewish eschatology, both Essene and Pharisaic, a preliminary period following the coming of the Messiah is sometimes expected, before the final consummation, and he takes John's expectation to be the same. It is worth pointing out, however, that in Jewish eschatology there was only one eschatological war (that of Ezek. 38-39; Dan. 11:40-12:1; Zech. 12-14, and the dependant Pharisaic and Essene texts), not two, whereas pre-millennialism gives us an eschatological war before the millennium (that of Rev. 19:11-21) and another one after it (that of Rev. 20:7-10). Osborne points out that the Beast and the False Prophet lead the anti-Christian armies in the first war, but Satan himself in the second. However, when the war is anticipated in Revelation 16:12-16, all three leaders are spoken of. The definite article in Revelation 20:8 (*'the war'*, i.e. that of chs 16, 19) may be significant.

Altogether, this is a helpful and thought-provoking commentary.

Roger Beckwith, Oxford

Christian Mission in Western Society

Simon Barrow and Graeme Smith (eds)

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, London, 2001; 270pp., £11.50; ISBN 0-85169246-X

This book is a selection of essays gathered together from two separate conferences, one on the theme of 'Mission in Western Society', and the other commemorating the 1400th anniversary of the death of Columba and the arrival of Augustine in Britain, a congruence of dates which provided the opportunity for contributors to contrast Celtic and Anglo-Saxon forms of Christianity.

Topics covered include such apparently diverse issues as the legacy of Columba, the current degree of Christian inculturation in Europe, feminist theology, issues surrounding mission in and from Black communities in the UK, and Christian political discourse, as well as

essays looking more specifically at mission and modernity. Most of the contributors are European, although an international perspective is provided by a Korean, an Indian and a South African. Theologically the vast majority share an ecumenical as opposed to an evangelical approach to the nature of Christian mission.

Sadly the book, while containing some helpful insights, does not really provide the kind of analysis of the contemporary situation which the title suggests it will do. This is in part due to its being a collection of papers from not one but two conferences. Inevitably there is a sense of only loose connectedness between many of the essays. The other thing which reduces its usefulness is that it is a book *by* theologians and missiologists *for* theologians and missiologists. Most of the essays are filled with terminology which those outside the discipline of missiology will find difficult, and some are so full of technical language as to be virtually impenetrable.

The ecumenical nature of the contributors means that there is an at least implicit acceptance of the pluralist position with regard to the uniqueness of Christ and the relationship with those of other faiths. There is therefore little attention paid to questions of the nature of evangelism and conversion. There is also a strong tendency to dismiss evangelicalism as a kind of retreat from the challenges which the transition from modernity to post-modernity presents. The irony of this is that in both the UK and the world, it is the Pentecostal churches which are the fastest growing. Only the articles by Joe Aldred and Allan Anderson take this into account. It is this which makes them especially important for evangelicals to read, though Aldred's in particular makes humbling reading as well. He is very critical of Western imperialism which has accompanied much Christian mission, and though he may be accused of overstating his case, all white Western Christians should take note of his views, especially as the balance of world Christianity swings (irrevocably?) away from the West to the Non-Western world.

Of the other contributions, the essays on Celtic Christianity by Adrian Hastings and Michael MacCraith are good value, especially as they effectively challenge claims that Celtic spirituality is the universal panacea for all Western Christianity's ills. Bert Hoedemaker's essay on mission after modernity is thought-provoking, and Simon Barrow's concluding chapter brings into focus many of the key issues which the contributors have touched on, albeit often rather tangentially. It would have been a better book altogether if this had been the opening chapter, and if contributors had then been invited to respond to his insights. However, the overriding impression is that any attempt to reflect on the challenge

of mission in western society must include insights from the evangelical and charismatic/Pentecostal wing of the church if it is to be truly helpful.

David Miller, International Christian College, Glasgow

Virtual Morality

Graham Houston

Apollos, Leicester, 1998; 224pp., £14.99; ISBN 0 85111 461 X

Graham Houston's *Virtual Morality* is an exploration of the interface between technology and Christian morality, and is particularly focussed on the moral issues raised by Virtual Reality systems. The book is based on Houston's 1996 PhD thesis. The subtitle, *Christian Ethics in the Computer Age*, hints at a wider scope, but in fact the book rarely, if ever, strays into areas of computer use apart from VR.

The study aims to work on the boundary between Christian ethics and the philosophy of technology. Houston makes the claim that philosophy of technology stands in the same relation to Christian ethics as philosophy of science does to systematic theology. Within the overall context of a view that there are such things as objective moral values, and that technology in general is not morally neutral but heavily value-laden, he explores the particular issues raised by computer-generated environments which present the participant with a simulation of some activity – exploring a remote planet, perhaps, or performing intricate surgery, or engaging in some form of combat – which is on the one hand utterly absorbing and life-like, yet on the other has no real outcome outside the simulated world. His concern is that by giving their participants the opportunity to do things which would be impossible, unlawful, or socially repugnant in real life, the designers of virtual environments may (deliberately or otherwise) be affecting people's real-world behaviour: that what they come to regard as acceptable within the 'game' may start to influence their conduct outside it; or, conversely, that the behaviour people are willing to engage in within the virtual world may, even though it results in no physical harm, be an indicator of the sort of (*e.g.*) murderous or lustful heart-attitude of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 5:21ff.

Houston's assertion is that, for both designers and participants, morality in a virtual world cannot be divorced from real-world morality. He proposes an 'Ethics of Christian Realism' as a toolset for dealing with the issues raised by VR technology, and goes on to propose, following Kallman and Grillo (1996), a systematic process for the ethical evaluation of VR applications.

Virtual Morality is unashamedly academic in its approach. The subject-matter, and the level at which it is treated, would suggest a target audience of postgraduate and final-year undergraduate students in the fields of moral philosophy or Christian ethics, and might also be of interest to students of computer science or psychology.

Its origins as a doctoral thesis are evident, and therein lie both its strength and its weakness. The intellectual rigour of the treatment is exemplary: every point is carefully argued, every source meticulously acknowledged. The reviewer found much to admire in the care taken over the writing, but was on occasions moved to wonder just how well the work had fared in the transition from a paper written to satisfy the requirements of a degree to a book intended to benefit a wider audience. The survey Houston gives of existing work in the areas of technology and ethics will make this a useful resource for those approaching this specialist area for the first time, though a more discursive approach might have made the book more attractive.

Julian Turnbull, Gullane

Theology at the Void. The retrieval of experience

Thomas M. Kelly

University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2001; xxviii+188pp., \$20; ISBN 0 26803 352 8 (hb), 0 26803 353 6 (pb)

This book started life as a doctoral thesis at Boston College. It is not particularly light reading.

It will be interesting for specialists who want to think about the theological implications relating to language and experience in the context of the post-modernist/deconstructionist debate, and with particular relation to specific thinkers, such as F. Schleiermacher, W. Proudfoot, G. Lindbeck, G. Steiner and K. Rahner.

All questions concerning religious language are frighteningly complex. Kelly says in his introduction that the issues which determine theology are philosophical, hermeneutical and anthropological, *e.g.* what is a human being, what is language and what is theology?

These meta-theological questions are placed in the context of modernism and the postmodernistic reaction. These terms are defined and make the context of the book.

Kelly's intention is to write in a way that is dialectical in confronting different theologians, contextual in regard to recent debates about language, and ecumenical, considering the questions raised in interreligious debate.

The author has chosen to look at foundationalism, its critics and defenders. Schleiermacher is a key figure, in the post-ontological era, with his notion of religious experience. The problem is that experience is under fire, as it implies interpretation through language, and how does language, which can be slippery and ambiguous, correspond to reality?

Kelly examines the interpretation of Schleiermacher and his critics. Can the subject be central in interpreting religious experience and does her interpretation correspond to reality? Postmodernism replies in the negative. Human experience is not common; each individual experience is mediated by means of contextualised language.

The author presents this problem by an analysis of four thinkers who all relate, in one way or another, to Schleiermacher, and refer to him: W. Proudfoot, G. Lindbeck, G. Steiner and K. Rahner.

Schleiermacher's turn to the subject was a reaction against onto-theology. Lindbeck's post-liberal view of the relation of experience and doctrine rehabilitates Barth's notion of the word of God. Steiner's *Real Presences* lays the way open to transcendence. The *dénouement* is possibly in Rahner's 'theology of mystery': – humans are grounded in holy mystery. Between the original actualisation of experience and theoretical knowledge are conceptualisation in language and communication, which mean that experience and reflection are never really separate.

This opens a world of dialogue for Protestants. What about the *sola Scriptura*? It seems that Rahner's theology still relates to the nature/grace duality of Thomism, which Barth so rigorously rejected, together with the references to analogy which Kelly introduces (pp.132ff.). At this point the Protestant reader might well find himself in agreement with Lindbeck, and be willing to leave his questions about ontology hanging.

Kelly's book has two drawbacks. One has the impression that the preface and introduction (pp. xiii-xxviii) were written after the conclusion. When the conclusion is reached there is a sense of *déjà vu* – the cards handed out at the start are the same at the end. Secondly, Kelly has a penchant for Karl Rahner. Rahner's method seems to underlie his criticism in general, and the presupposition that Rahner has the right approach underlies the other critical chapters.

Absent from the bibliography on the subject, for starters, are the important works of L. Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind* (1969), D. H. Kelsey, *The uses of Scripture in recent Theology* (1975), R. Lundlin, *The culture of interpretation* (1993), A. C. Thiselton's magisterial books

on hermeneutics, T. F. Torrance's article on the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher (*SJT*, 1968) and Alvin Plantinga.

A whole new world awaits you!

Paul Wells, Aix-en-Provence

Science and Its Limits. The Natural Sciences in Christian Perspective

Del Ratzsch

InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, Illinois; Leicester, England, 2000 (second edition); 191pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 85111 466 0

Science and Its Limits is an excellent examination of what science is, of what it is not, and of its limits. The book is specifically aimed at Christians, helping them to grapple with such questions as: 'Is there a conflict between science and scripture?', 'Should science and theology take account of each other's findings?' and 'Is science important for Christians?' To all such questions, and many more, Del Ratzsch gives careful consideration and very balanced answers. The author is Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, Michigan, and throughout the book is closely argued philosophically. But if the book demands thought it is nonetheless very readable. There are helpful headlines subdividing the text of each chapter, comprehensive footnotes at the end of the book (several of which are extremely interesting), an index and a small bibliography.

The present edition is an expanded version of *Philosophy of Science* first published in 1986. The main additions are the chapter on 'Intelligent Design' and the Appendix.

There are chapters on 'Science: What is it?', 'The Traditional Conceptions of Science', 'Philosophy of Science in the 1960s & 1970s', 'The Contemporary Situation', 'The Competence of Science', 'The Limitations of Science', "'Scientific" Challenges to Religious Belief', 'Design & Science', 'Christianity & Scientific Pursuits', 'Christianity & the Specific Content of Science' and the Appendix: 'Speaking the Truth in Love'.

Each chapter examines the main positions held on each topic and outlines all the main arguments for and against. Chapters 1 and 2 look at the presuppositions of science and the traditional view of science (characterised by rationality, empiricism and objectivity), from its beginnings with Bacon to the school of positivism and its decline, and the objections of Popper. Chapters 3 and 4 outline the revolution of Kuhn, postmodern developments, and contemporary understandings.

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Chapters 5 and 6 consider how far scientific theories can be taken to be 'true' or 'real' and proven true, false or simply confirmed, and what science can not tell us. Chapter 7 examines the various challenges to religious belief from science. Chapter 8 is a long and careful consideration of how far nature exhibits the characteristics of design and whether these can be said to point to a Creator. Chapters 9 and 10 consider the importance of science for Christians, how much science and Christian belief have in common, and how they may be considered to be related.

Throughout, the book encourages people not to take a simplistic, one-sided view, but to be open to the arguments of the other side. Nevertheless, the author comes down clearly on what he considers to be the possible Christian positions and indicates which he considers the most viable. The appendix, aimed specifically at helping Christians with different positions to listen to the other side, and to continue to 'speak the truth in love', is most helpful and timely. The book can be warmly commended.

Robert T. Walker, Edinburgh

Groundwork of Science and Religion

Philip Luscombe

Epworth Press, Peterborough, 2000; 274pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 7162 0535 1

This book is a very useful overview of the relations between science and theology. It is very readable, well laid out, with numerous headings to break up the text, extensive footnotes at the end of the book, and a good index. The author sees the importance of trying to get the 'wide picture' and trying to relate together as many fields as possible. Throughout, the author is alive to the complexities of the many issues, seeing how there are arguments on both sides, though he usually ends by indicating where his own sympathies lie.

There are nine chapters: 1. A Large Map – The Relation of Science and Religion; 2. Religion and the Rise of Science; 3. Darwin's Century – Warfare and Harmony; 4. What is Science? – The Philosophy of Science; 5. Making Science – Sociology and the claims of 'Truth'; 6. Scientific Views of the World; 7. Relating Science and Religion; 8. Doing Theology in a World of Science; 9. Creation Waits: Making a Theology for Today.

After a short introductory chapter, chapter 2 gives a good account of the rise of science and the various factors involved, while chapter 3 is an excellent summary of the background to Darwinism, Darwin's own

theory (what it was and what it wasn't) and the progress of its reception. It is particularly useful for helping to dispel some of the common myths, for example, that Darwinism was supported by scientists and opposed by churchmen. Chapter 4 analyses the various views of what science is before coming down on the side of a qualified realism, and then the next chapter examines the claims of postmodern sociology that science can be explained as a social construct with no claims to objective insight. Luscombe concludes that science cannot be so easily denied its claim to some measure of objective reality.

Chapter 6 outlines major scientific views of the world from Newton to Einstein and quantum mechanics. There are good accounts of the nature and meaning of quantum theory, the principle of natural selection, the role of chance, chaos theory, and the anthropic principle. Chapter 7 discusses different models for the relation of science and theology, conflict, independence, dialogue and integration, concluding that science and theology can each help each other, to understand creation better, and to see it as a whole under the love of God. Chapter 8 outlines the work of some important exponents of theology in a scientific world, Torrance, Pannenberg, Gilkey, Hardy, McFague and Hodgson, while the final chapter attempts to summarise crucial features of the Christian message today, suggesting that it is no longer possible or necessary to interpret the Fall as the occasion of death and evil entering the world.

The book has its weaknesses: it is unfortunate that Luscombe misunderstands both Torrance and Barth at crucial points, and seems to think that Alister McGrath has no interest in science. When he also says that 'within a few years' science will finally succeed in giving us a TOE, or theory of everything, his customary caution and balance seem to have forsaken him. Nevertheless, the book can be recommended as a good, balanced, and very readable introduction to the complex relation between science and theology.

Robert T. Walker, Edinburgh

Reading Proverbs with Integrity

Craig Bartholomew

Grove Books Ltd, Cambridge, 2001; 23pp., £2.50; ISBN 1 85174 485 1

How many sermons have you preached or heard from the book of Proverbs recently? Craig Bartholomew points out that the book has been the 'Cinderella of Old Testament study'. The aim of this little book is to assist the preacher in his preparation of a series of sermons. His desire is

to bring the light of recent scholarship into the study of the 'ordinary' pastor. In particular he interacts with Van Leeuwan and R. E. Murphy.

There is a chapter on 'How not to read Proverbs'. He points out that the fragmentary approach is not all that helpful. The book of Proverbs has a context and reading one particular proverb out of context can be wrong and even dangerous. He notes that Proverbs 12:21 could prove that calamity comes from the committing of one particular sin. The author is also not in favour of preaching on topics within Proverbs, topics like discipline, initiative. He argues that these individual topics also require a context. He complains that Proverbs misses out other big issues like kingship, politics, justice and courtroom ethics. We can hardly complain because holy writ excludes some topics which we believe should be included!

Bartholomew suggests that the main interpretive key is to be found in chapters 1-9. These chapters reveal that the book is about creation ordered by the wisdom of God. The underlying metaphor reveals a world made by God in which there is a tussle between wisdom and folly. There is the battle of choice between two ways, two loves, the wife or the harlot, the fool or the wise man.

The value of this book is that a scholar has read other scholars and is able to condense and feed his reading into the study of the pastor. The value of this short book is to highlight that wisdom is about hard issues like politics, sex, family and work. It is good also to note the high Christological emphasis of Proverbs as the wisdom of Proverbs is ultimately fulfilled in Christ and the two ways are brought before us in the New Testament through the wise and foolish builders. This is a worthwhile read.

David C. Meredith, Smithton-Culloden Free Church, Inverness

When Grace Transforms: The Character of Christ's Disciples Envisioned in the Beatitudes

Terry L. Johnson

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 2002; 176pp., £7.99; ISBN 1 85792 770 2

Terry Johnson is the senior pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia. He was editor of the *Trinity Psalter* for the PCA, and has written *Leading in Worship*, a resource book for presbyterian ministers, and *The Family Worship Book*, a resource for family devotions. His book, *When Grace Comes Home: How the Doctrines of Grace Change Your Life*, was described by J. I. Packer as 'sweet, strong, classic, pastoral Calvinism'.

In his new book, Johnson expounds the beatitudes of Matthew 5. A preface sets the sayings in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, and a rather cursory first chapter introduces the beatitudes as a unit. Then follow eight chapters dealing with each beatitude in turn, and a brief concluding chapter reinforces the consistent emphasis that Christian authenticity is a matter of the heart.

Many others before him have expounded these beatitudes, and Johnson makes good use of the contributions of Thomas Watson, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, John Stott, James Montgomery Boice, Sinclair Ferguson, and others. But above all, he makes excellent use of Scripture, with a wealth of quotations, from Old Testament and New, illustrating each chapter. A great deal of biblical homework is done for the expositor.

This is not a scholarly book, but it is a serious and a practical one. Johnson underscores the antithesis between the Christian and the world, insisting on the fundamental seriousness of the blessed life. The drawing of distinctions is uncompromising. He is good on spiritual application, warning against counterfeits to the beatitudes and identifying barriers to them, but also giving practical helps towards the development of these qualities. There is a passion for godly character and holy living throughout.

There are indexes of persons, subjects and Scripture. Most of the subject index is headed 'Scripture Index', continuing a typographical carelessness which kept surfacing. It seems not everything is as carefully proofread as *SBET*.

The book is dedicated to J. I. Packer and J. A. Motyer, revered teachers of Johnson during studies in England, and each of them provides a warm commendation. Packer comments that the expositors who edify are the 'diggers who dissect the heart.... Terry Johnson is a digger, and his businesslike exploration of the beatitudes is a clarion call to discipleship in depth.' Johnson offers a spiritual workout for the Christian, and another helpful companion for the preacher expounding these surprising sayings.

Alasdair I. Macleod, Free Church, Leith

The Pauline Writings (IBR Bibliographies)

M. Seifrid and R. Tan

Baker, Grand Rapids, 2002; 245pp.; ISBN 0-8010-2482-X

This most recent and unusually substantial addition to the useful IBR series of annotated bibliographies will provide theological students

(particularly postgraduates) and scholars with an important resource as they construct bibliographies for research and teaching. A total of 846 numbered items are arranged in numerous categories. The level of annotation on each item ranges from substantial paragraph to the two-word comment, 'brief survey' (p. 25). The significance of the numbered items is somewhat unclear as numerous other items are mentioned in brief introductions to each section. While no published bibliography can be exhaustive, this selection of titles is remarkably comprehensive and well chosen. Seifrid and Tan demonstrate particular familiarity with German scholarship in monographs and journals which will, no doubt, increase the value of the book for research students, but decrease its value to those who do not read German. Those who need bibliographies such as this will welcome this volume warmly.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

The Eternal Now

Paul Tillich

SCM, London, 2002; 133pp., £9.95; ISBN 0-334-02875-2

Until this re-publication, the earlier edition of 1963 was only available from second-hand suppliers. This collection of sermons shows Tillich at his most mystical and psychological. He deals with the problems of the ministry in a succinct manner. The legendary comment from the Union Seminary student who first heard these sermons says it all, 'We aren't sure we understand him; but he certainly understands us.'

Robert Pickles, Chaplain, Strathallan School