

So what has been/will be 'heard' by those who stand on another side of the theological fence from R. T. Brooks? Will this material really 'communicate' in that sort of situation? Or are its assumptions so foreign that the message and medium do not stand close enough to recipients? I do not know the answer. But I am sure a great deal rests on it.

So to the second question. This relates to the issue of language. Our author treats it with proper seriousness and has some forceful things to say about the difference between parable, allegory, myth, legend, paradigm, documentary, illustration, and example. He clearly stands with what bids fair to become the received orthodoxy of modern linguistic understanding. Yet to what extent all this has much point of contact with the received orthodoxy found in vast concourses of the religious I am not so sure. How many Christians in fact seem to be virtually tone deaf along substantial ranges of the linguistic spectrum? Will Mr Brooks's presentation communicate with them? I hope so. It deserves to.

Two questions, then. You might say that both of them raise fundamentally similar issues. Communication, it will be agreed, involves the illumination of a 'shared world'. But that is true in a number of different ways and at a number of different levels. It may be that communication falters because at crucial points and in a crucial sense a 'shared world' is in fact lacking.

NEVILLE CLARK

## REVIEW

*John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition* by Timothy George. Murcer University Press, 1982, pp.ix, 263.

This extremely attractive, well-written and well-researched book makes a fine introduction to the new Dissertation Series sponsored in the United States by the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion. It takes careful and critical note of the previous historiography of the Separatists before surveying the biography and teaching of Robinson himself.

The two main chapters of the book are concerned with the nature of his ecclesiology and of his Calvinism. Robinson, of course, was quite prepared to accept that God had his elect saints even in the Babylon of the Anglican and Roman churches. Nonetheless, he was also sure that while the true visible Church as he understood it was not the *only* way it was, nonetheless, 'the only ordinary beaten way to heaven'. Central for him as for the Separatists generally was the importance of the practice of the discipline (Matthew 18. 15-17, 20). Consequently, in his treatment of the Parable of the Tares, Robinson argued that the field must be the world and not the Church - otherwise notorious offenders in both life and doctrine must be tolerated within it. Hence the act of discipline became, as George says, virtually the third sacrament to the Separatists in general and to Robinson in particular. Nevertheless, he was perfectly well aware, although his opponents like those of the Anabaptists before him refused to recognise it, that the Church on earth could not be perfect. His point was

that it was the Church's task to seek to be *as perfect as it could*. Incidentally, it is noteworthy in his generation that, in spite of the Pauline injunction requiring women to be silent in church, he believed that if the men were silent the women might publicly rebuke an entire erring congregation.

It was important too that Robinson lined up firmly with the Calvinism of Dort and wrote against the General Baptists to defend that position. He was prepared also to insist that even a baptism derived from a false Church did not need repetition: an issue which had disturbed the Separatists for many years and was to play an important part in Baptist polemic for the next generation.

In all this book, with its confident and intelligent criticism of secondary authorities and its careful and thorough exposition of its main subject, is a model of its kind. (The printers will want to take account of 'presumptious' for 'presumptuous' on p.172 and 'precipitous' for 'precipitate' on p.179).

B. R. WHITE

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\* SPURGEON TERJUBILEE \*  
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\* Saturday, 8th September, 1984 \*  
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\* A Day Conference organised by the Baptist Historical Society to mark the \*  
\* 150th Anniversary of the birth of Charles Haddon Spurgeon will be held at \*  
\* HISTON BAPTIST CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE, starting at 10.30 a.m. \*  
\*

\* Lecturers include: \*  
\*

\* Mr J. H. Y. BRIGGS, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S. \*  
\* Department of History, University of Keele \*  
\*

\* Revd M. K. NICHOLLS, B.D. \*  
\* Tutor, Spurgeon's College \*  
\*

\* Revd J. J. BROWN, B.D. \*  
\* Past President of the Baptist Union \*  
\*

\* It is hoped to arrange a visit to Isleham Ferry, where Spurgeon was \*  
\* baptized, in the afternoon. \*  
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\* The fee will be £4-50 inclusive. The conference will finish about 8 p.m. \*  
\* Overnight accommodation available with Histon churchmembers if required. \*  
\*

\* We hope many members of the Society will take advantage of the opportunity \*  
\* to meet on this day. \*  
\*

\* WRITE FOR FULL DETAILS AND APPLICATION FORM TO THE SECRETARY \*  
\*

\* Revd Roger Hayden, M.A., B.D. \*  
\* 37 Woodcote Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7BB \*  
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