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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Book Reviews

PLOT AND PURPOSE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

E. A. MARTENS

IVP 1981 271pp. £4.95

ISBN 0 85111 568 3

This is an ambitious book in so far as it undertakes a task which has baffled generations of scholars, namely, to achieve some common perspective by which to view the OT documents in all their complexity and variety. Dr Martens proposes a 'Plot and Purpose' which is expressed in four aspects of Israel's life: as salvation, as a covenant community, the knowledge of God, and the land as promise and fulfilment. These are not handled, as one might expect, in four main sections loosely associated with each other, but in three 'giant steps' across the whole range of Israel's history:

1) From the Exodus to Samuel, 2) The period of the monarchy, and 3) From the exile to the dawn of the NT. The plan makes for difficult reading, but it does compel the reader to concentrate on all four aspects of Israel's life at the same time and it achieves a certain direction for each 'giant step', culminating in the NT itself.

Whether the author fulfils his ambition and vindicates his thesis the reader will have to judge for himself. Perhaps I may permit myself a certain reservation about the fourth aspect of Israel's life—'the land'. This obviously occupies a prominent place in the canonical Scriptures and in Zionism of a later age, but I wonder how far it continued to be influential in the Diaspora in which, in point of fact, the bulk of the Jewish people lived most of the time, having to find an alternative to 'the land' in the ghettos of Greece and Syria, Rome and Alexandria. But, in following the main stream, I have explored not a few tributaries on the way which are unfamiliar to me and I am grateful for them. I am grateful also for the so-called 'tables'—which in summary form present material otherwise widely scattered and difficult to organize—regarding, for example, the covenants, the day of Yahweh, the development of promise, and even the theological survey of Genesis 1-11. In my early days as a student, and later as a teacher of the OT, I would have been greatly assisted by these simple aids to understanding.

Bishopthorpe, York

+ STUART EBOR:

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS : The New International Commentary on the Old Testament GORDON J. WENHAM

Eerdmans, USA 1979

Hodder and Stoughton 1979 362pp. £6.25

ISBN 0 340 24798 3

LEVITICUS : An Introduction and Commentary

R. K. HARRISON

IVP 1980 253pp. hardcover £4.40

ISBN 0 85111 633 7

paperback £3.95

ISBN 0 85111 834 8

Evangelicals will no doubt be as delighted as they are surprised to see two full commentaries on Leviticus, by able conservative scholars, appear in con-

secutive years. R. K. Harrison deserves special congratulations, since he wrote one and edited the other.

The introduction in the Tyndale Commentary is brief (pp.13-37) and concentrates on questions of authorship and date. It begins with Astruc and rather snarls through two centuries of Pentateuchal criticism, only to stop short of the present situation. Many will be unhappy at Harrison's too general and too caustic references to 'liberal scholars' (p.20 etc.).

Wenham has a more generous space allowance, which enables him to argue his case more satisfactorily. On authorship and date he outlines three major positions: 'traditional', 'standard critical', and 'mediating' (Kaufmann). After stating the main arguments for each, he sums up: 'Each of the... positions has its difficulties... a post-exilic date for Leviticus is difficult to maintain... a much earlier date is required by the evidence.'

Harrison's section on theology is clear and sound, but rather thin. Wenham has four sub-headings: 'Presence of God', 'Holiness', 'Role of Sacrifice', and 'Sinai Covenant'. There are copious references throughout the section to illustrate and support the points he makes. He employs a diagram to illustrate the threefold distinction: holy-clean-unclean. I found his whole introduction most helpful. One quibble: with a little more space we could have had Wenham's views argued more thoroughly—even if in smaller print?

Both commentary sections are useful: on points of detail and also on more general matters of interpretation. Their treatments of (e.g.) clean and unclean animals (Lev.11) and the Jubilee Year (Lev.25) are worth comparing. I particularly like Wenham's systematic layout for each section: translation, structure, detailed comment and, finally, 'Leviticus 1 (etc.) and the NT'. Good use is made of sub-headings. Notes on the structure of larger sections are sometimes included (e.g. Lev.1-3).

Neither commentator deals very fully with some of the difficulties that arise from comparing Leviticus with the rest of the Pentateuch. How do the laws concerning the priests' portions fit together, for instance? Leviticus 7: 28-36 specifies breast and right thigh (or shoulder?) but Deuteronomy 18:3 has the shoulder, stomach and cheeks. To Wenham this 'suggests that there was some flexibility later.' Harrison does not mention the problem. Mind you, he does include a fascinating theory of Chief Rabbi Hertz about waving and heaving, which is either wrong or else it foreshadows the cross.

Wenham notes the chiasm in Leviticus 24:16-22, and explains how the structure shows the emphasis of the passage. Harrison calls it palistrophe (p.15) and concentric, and uses it to argue that it is not haphazard or late. (They could have noted the *inclusio*, vv.13, 23b, and the further close parallels, vv.14 and 23a). Both comment helpfully on the *lex talionis*.

Both commentaries are worth having. My own preference has, I fear, already obtruded.

Oak Hill College, London

G. MICHAEL BUTTERWORTH

THE FATE OF KING SAUL : An Interpretation of a Biblical Story DAVID M. GUNN
 JSOT Supplement Series 14

JSOT Press, Sheffield 1980 181pp. £7.50

ISBN 0 905774 24 8

This stimulating and provocative book seeks to interpret the story of Saul with an eye to his impact as a tragic literary figure. We are reminded more than once of Oedipus, Macbeth, and Othello. Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge*

might also have been usefully cited. The chief interest in the exercise is the interplay between the tragedies of fate, and the tragedies of flawed character. Is Saul wholly responsible for his demise; does he contribute towards it; or is it inevitable anyway?

David Gunn is in no doubt about where the weight of the answer should lie. He shows that the stories of Saul's 'sin' in 1 Samuel 13 and 15, where many commentators find the basis for Saul's rejection, raise more problems than they solve. His offences are technical, not a matter of fundamental loyalty. The command he 'disobeys' is distinctly ambiguous, and why is it that his motivation and repentance, unlike that of the people, is ignored? In short, the stories tell more about the motives of Yahweh and Samuel than they do about the guilt of Saul.

After a survey of all the textual material, Gunn concludes that from the moment of his anointing the future is loaded against Saul. This is central to the tragedy: David is the favourite and Saul the victim. Saul's jealousy contributes to his predicament, but in view of his knowledge of his rejection there is much in his struggle that is tragically heroic rather than culpable.

The real theological problem is thus Yahweh's repentance, and his fundamental transition of attitude from rejection of monarchy to its unqualified acceptance in David. Saul is caught up in a conflict between Yahweh and the people in which he himself must be the loser. Is it to be Saul, the people's king, or David, Yahweh's king? The question this raises is whether we must allow in the stories of Saul a theology of 'the dark side of God'. Since there are other parts of the Bible which suggest it, the notion is not of itself inconceivable.

The questions this kind of study raises are hermeneutical. Is this the impression of Saul which the original story-tellers and editors wished to create? How far should theological reflection be controlled by original intentions? What kind of contribution can our modern consciousness make to Biblical interpretation and to fruitful theological reflection?

Westminster College, Oxford

PHILIP J. BUDD

ISAIAH AND THE DELIVERANCE OF JERUSALEM :
A Study of the Interpretation of Prophecy in the Old Testament
R. E. CLEMENTS

JSOT Supplement Series 13

JSOP Press, Sheffield 1980 131pp. £7.50

ISBN 0 905774 23 X

The pattern of events in that critical year 701 BC has given OT historians much scope for discussion and argument, albeit inconclusive. This contribution by Dr Clements could go some way towards establishing a consensus. The book is lucid and carefully argued, and its results persuasive.

The problem consists in the fact that, whereas 2 Kings 18:13-16 and Sennacherib's annals are in broad agreement that Hezekiah submitted to Assyria in 701, thereby saving Jerusalem from destruction, two extensive narrative traditions in 2 Kings 18:17-19:37 make no reference to surrender and the payment tribute, but speak rather of dramatic divine deliverance. It has sometimes been suggested that these deliverance stories indicate a change of mind on Sennacherib's part, and a subsequent attempt to take the city, or else a second Judean campaign by the Assyrians in a later year. Both hypotheses lack evidence, and it is doubtful whether either does justice to what the Bible intends to say. The search for history can easily be disrespect-

ful of the Bible if it misjudges the true character of the literature in question.

The conclusion this book draws is that there are no serious *historical* difficulties. The annals and 2 Kings 18:13-16 are clear enough about the main outline of events. An examination of the deliverance traditions suggests that they are 'theological narrative'—in short, they offer a later theological interpretation of why Jerusalem was preserved from the disasters which overtook the rest of Judah in that year. Support for the thesis comes from an analysis of the preaching of Isaiah. In Josiah's time there was an important reinterpretation of the prophet's threats against Assyria, and this is shown to have much in common with the content and outlook of the deliverance traditions. Dr Clements concludes that the essence of Zion theology is more a product of this interpretation of 701 than its presupposition. The circles responsible must have been part of the Judaeen reform movements which gave us Deuteronomy, and some interesting interconnections and implications for Israel's religious history are suggested.

Westminster College, Oxford

PHILIP J. BUDD

AMOS'S ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS

JOHN BARTON

Society for OT Study Monograph Series 6

CUP 1980 83pp. £7.50

ISBN 0 521 22501 9

Behind the obvious fact that the oracles against the nations in Amos are so arranged as to take Israel by surprise and issue in self-condemnation, lies the question of how it is that Amos could assume his hearer's agreement to divine judgement on pagan peoples for the crimes specified. It is to this question that Dr Barton directs his enquiry. It will not do to argue from the nature of Yahweh as holy, and his status as the only God, outwards to what he 'must' therefore do on a world-wide scale, for this turns Amos's argument on its head: Amos is concerned to show that because Yahweh will so act against the nations, he 'must' bring judgement on Israel. Dr Barton contends that, if Amos's message was to find its mark, he must have believed and have held his Israelite hearers to have believed that 'all the nations of the world are bound by certain moral laws and are accountable for their conduct.' He supports this by a most interesting appendix on 'International Law in the Ancient Near East', well justifying the conclusion that Amos is assuming 'some such conventions rather than, say... divine covenant-law, when condemning the nations.'

In pursuit of this conclusion, Dr Barton casts the net of enquiry possibly more widely than the topic actually requires, but in this way enriches us with perceptive linguistic, exegetical and historical notes on Amos 1:3-2:5. It seems a pity that he acquiesces so easily in the unconvincing arguments customarily advanced for the denial to Amos of 1:9-12 and 2:4,5. His description of the Judah oracle as 'insipid' prevented a more thorough examination of its position as laying a foundation for the unique, revelation-based ethic of the people of God. To this extent there is less power than it deserves in his conclusion that 'Amos is original in asserting that social injustices... in Israel... have the same moral status as transgressions of the much more "self-evident" laws of... the practice of war.'

Dr Barton is to be congratulated on a sound contribution to the study of Amos.

Trinity College, Bristol

J. A. MOTYER

THE BARREN TEMPLE AND THE WITHERED TREE

WILLIAM R. TELFORD

JSNT Supplement Series 1

JSOT Press, Sheffield 319pp. £9.95

ISBN 0 905774 20 5

Most of us have puzzled over the cursing of the fig-tree, perhaps with some embarrassment. But few are likely to feel the problem deserves three hundred pages of solid PhD! The preacher may, however, hope to find some of the main points distilled into future commentaries, and they will be better commentaries for it.

Few have found it satisfactory to view the episode as a miracle story *tout simple*; it is more often treated as a symbolic gesture. This dissertation now puts this approach beyond question. The passage is seen in relation to the wider context of chapters 11-13 of Mark, where the focus is on the Temple, visited, denounced, and abandoned by the Messiah. It has been found wanting, and its central role in God's relation with his people is finished. It is this message, Telford believes, that the fig-tree story is designed to enforce.

He is less convincing in his insistence that the 'mountain' to be moved (Mark 11:23) is the Temple Mount, but his thesis is that the whole pericope in Mark is concerned with the Temple, and it was Matthew who first turned it to an 'illustrative didactic story' about the authority of Jesus and the power of prayer.

Having established Mark's intention, Telford turns to Mark's readers, and argues at rather tedious length that they too would have had reason to see the withering of a fig-tree as a symbol of eschatological judgement on the nation. The treatment of OT background is impressive, but, when he turns to later Judaism, too much consistency is imposed on a very varied collection of unconnected fragments, often of dubious date. There follows a search for similar symbolism in almost every NT reference to figs, which is really unnecessary to the main thesis.

Telford's concern is with the function of the story in Mark rather than with its origin, but he inclines to seeing it as 'a haggadic tale based on the OT'.

Altogether a sound and helpful main thesis but a regrettable tendency to overkill in detail.

Tyndale House, Cambridge

DICK FRANCE

ACTS : An Introduction and Commentary

I. HOWARD MARSHALL

IVP 1980 427pp. hardcover £5.95

paperback £5.50

ISBN 0 85111 634 5

ISBN 0 85111 835 6

We are already indebted to Howard Marshall for two books on the gospel of Luke: an introduction which has become standard, and a magisterial commentary on the Greek text. Now, in the series of Tyndale NT Commentaries, Professor Marshall has completed the trilogy appropriately by producing an excellent commentary on the English text of Acts. This volume replaces the one by E. M. Blaiklock in the same series, published in 1959. Marshall gives two reasons for providing this fresh treatment. First, studies over the past twenty years have emphasized the *theological* importance of Acts, and he has wished to take account of this interest. Second, in answer to the approach of scholars such as E. Haenchen, who in the past quarter-century have been

sceptical about Luke's trustworthiness as an historian, Marshall has felt it necessary to defend the *historical*, as well as theological, content of Acts.

This new commentary is a concise, but not superficial, treatment of the text, each section of which is headed by an introduction drawing out the main themes. Marshall's exegesis is sound, and he writes with balance and ease; he has the gift, indeed, of condensing a scholarly understanding of the material without confusing issues of bewildering the reader! A useful introduction deals with the current critical issues (although the 'Paulinism' of Acts receives less attention than it might), and footnotes throughout the volume refer to a wealth of up-to-date literature for further study. There are, however, no indexes.

At times the writer is rather too defensive in his treatment of historical questions in Acts (cf. Paul's voyage and shipwreck, pp.401-20); and on other occasions he appears cryptic in his handling of 'salvation history' events (for example, what does he think *really* happened at the ascension?). Also he is inclined every now and then to repeat what is in the text, at the expense of probing critical questions more thoroughly. Despite these observations, it is nonetheless pellucid that Professor Marshall has given us here a first-rate commentary which admirably fulfils its declared aim of helping the general reader (and the theological student) to understand completely and clearly as possible the meaning and contemporary relevance of the NT text.

Coventry Cathedral

STEPHEN S. SMALLEY

LAST SUPPER AND LORD'S SUPPER

I. HOWARD MARSHALL

Paternoster Press 1980 191pp. *hardcover* £7.40
paperback £4.20

ISBN 0 85364 306 7
ISBN 0 85364 313 X

The author of this work is a learned NT scholar who believes the Bible and treats it reverently. He is by no means negative in his approach to the sacrament, but he is an unashamed Free Churchman, prepared to do battle for Free Church practice. This makes his book unusual and refreshing among recent writings on its subject, even though it may not always command assent, e.g. when he insists on sitting-reception, as if this was the same thing as reclining at the Last Supper, and on giving holy communion to the unbaptized (p.156). His book is also noteworthy as a further example of the recent healthy reaction against a eucharistic interpretation of John 6 (pp.133-38).

The work is not exempt from small mistakes: e.g. the statement that in NT times heaven was removed from the houses not on the fourteenth but on the thirteenth day of Nisan (p.21), and the misleading account given of the Jewish leap-year (p.72). Such mistakes only indicate that the author is at his strongest when on his homeground of NT study, and not dealing with church history or Judaism. It is, none the less, regrettable that the specialization of NT scholars today is usually as narrow as it is, and especially that hardly any of them, except Joachim Jeremias, show that mastery of Jewish background literature which is so important to the interpretation of the NT. Thus, on the vexed question of the dating of the Last Supper in the synoptic gospels and John, the author might have assessed the relative probability of the various explanations differently had he realized how much harder it would have been for the Sadducees to delay the Passover by a day than to advance it by a day (see pp.72f.,142), and how much more eating of sacred foods—meal offerings and peace offerings—there would have been for the chief priests in the re-

CHURCHMAN

mainder of the week of unleavened bread than on the Passover night itself (see pp.68-70).

Incidentally, since the reviewer finds himself quoted on p.168 in relation to one of these explanations (that offered by H. W. Hoehner), perhaps he should say that he quite agrees with the author that the explanation in question is impossible.

Latimer House, Oxford

R. T. BECKWITH

THE HOLY SPIRIT EDUARD SCHWEIZER

translated R. H. and I. FULLER

first published in Germany 1978

SCM Press 1981 138pp. £3.95

ISBN 0 334 02051 4

Out of Switzerland come many good things, not least the productive and justly famed scholarship of Eduard Schweizer, professor of New Testament theology and exegesis in the University of Zürich. One of his best known and most influential works is the article on the Holy Spirit in the nine-volume Kittel *Wörterbuch*. That was first published in the late '50s. Now he has returned to the same subject and offers the fruit of a lifetime's deep and reverent study to a wider readership.

The structure is straightforward: an introduction and conclusion bracketing three chapters on the OT, Intertestamental Judaism and the NT—the last forming more than half the book. Each chapter is broken up into clearly marked sections, the longest rarely more than two or three pages. The style is lucid and popular, the content magisterial and profound, without requiring any specialist knowledge.

In each chapter Schweizer looks at the strangeness of the Spirit, the Spirit and creation, the Spirit as the source of knowledge, and the Spirit in the future consummation. He proceeds by brief, incisive and (as we might expect) frequently insightful exposition of the text. Each main section ends with the question, 'What does this mean?', as the attempt is made to show the continuing relevance of the findings, often with good effect.

Not all will agree with all the exegesis—I am very doubtful about his assertion that the NT gives the Spirit little or no role in the final consummation. But if you are like me, you will find many more passages of compelling exposition. I think particularly of Schweizer's treatment of the human spirit in the intertestamental literature, of the diversity of the gifts in Paul, and on the Spirit in the structure of the community in John.

In short, if you want a brief but authoritative survey of the biblical teaching on the Spirit, Schweizer is your man. He will instruct you, provoke you to deeper thought, and stir you to a richer reverence.

University of Nottingham

JAMES D. G. DUNN

THE CHURCH—MAINTAINED IN TRUTH

HANS KÜNG translated EDWARD QUINN

first published in Germany 1979

SCM Press 1980 87pp. £2.95

ISBN 0 334 01939 7

Can the church continue to survive? Trends in science, philosophy and social

development pose the challenge, and Küng can see no truth or worth in any attempt to invoke an infallible guide. The church, rather, is 'indefectible'; it will neither peter out nor finally fail, because God is faithful and that is assured in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the gospel which in successive times will elicit faith and guide the church by the grace of the Spirit of God. The church cannot be identified with the Spirit, nor his grace with official position or individual extremism. Yet it is the individuals in the church—'the little people of God'—who are more important than institutions. Thus the only guide for the church is, fundamentally, the gospel; this is received and known through the ongoing tradition of understanding and experience, but that tradition is itself always assessed by the gospel in a 'hermeneutic circle' so described. For the church's guidance, or for controversial issues, the anxious demand for a supreme, infallible guardian of truth vested in a magisterial office has, Küng notes, hardly ever been serviceable, and stretches credibility too far, especially when considering the competence required. Rather, the church's inner authenticity, led by the Spirit, is the support of true authority, and would enable a more open method of harnessing competence for pointing out the path.

Küng finds no exegetical nor historical argument for the Petrine office, although he sees a 'primacy of service' to the whole church as an important hope. But he is more obscure when he emphasizes its pastoral, over against its jurisdictional, authority (and so, presumably, non-administrative); for while this would gain in reducing the encumbrance of the curial set-up, it is not clear how it would work. He concludes with two additional extras: a survey of the background to his theme in wider RC theology; and his self-explanation, 'Why do I remain a Roman Catholic?', in the face of his condemnation based upon the citation of this book. The continuing ARCIC discussions will not be able to deal further with papal authority and ignore it.

Archdeaconry of Auckland, Co. Durham

G. J. C. MARCHANT

FAITH KEITH W. CLEMENTS

SCM Press 126pp. £4.95

ISBN 0 334 00450 0

Keith Clements, a tutor at Bristol Baptist College and editor of the *Baptist Quarterly*, has written this book out of the conviction that in much recent theological discussion, the basic issue of what it means to have faith has suffered some neglect. In this he is surely right. Many uses of the word are less than adequate in either a general or a specifically Christian context. He has therefore written at a reasonably popular level to stimulate theological reflection on a profoundly important subject.

A number of emphases lie behind his treatment of the question. He sees faith primarily as a matter of personal trust, a trust which looks away from all self-sufficiency to the all-sufficiency of a gracious God. But he makes the necessary point that faith is also a gift of the graciousness that has evoked it. This faith is a trusting in Jesus, and a sharing in his trust with the Father.

Yet for Mr Clements, the human element cannot be ignored. The trust of faith is founded on the decision to trust, a decision involving repentance. Outward confession and the commitment of obedience are also characteristic of this human side of faith. There is freedom in faith, and understanding. Finally, for him, faith is exploration; an unceasing exploration of God's goodness and graciousness.

Over against more partial and limited understandings of faith, the author is concerned to stress faith in its wholeness.

The book is helpful in several aspects. There are a number of perceptive criticisms, and there is a good anchorage in biblical material. All the same, I have some reservations. Although there is emphasis on faith as gift, the thrust of the book is on the humanness of faith. The focus of faith is in some danger of being transferred from the giver of the gift of faith to the receiver; and faith, instead of being a gift, all too easily becomes a work.

Running through the book is a general recognition of the nature of sin; but in his treatment of salvation, while stressing wholeness, there is insufficient explanation of what salvation is *from*. Saving faith is cross-shaped.

The author is critical, as perhaps he should be, of bibliolatry; but faith is also a conviction of truth founded on testimony. Faith responds to authority as well as to our understanding of the biblical tradition.

Nevertheless, the book provides some useful groundwork and will repay study.

Knutsford Vicarage, Cheshire

BILL PERSSON

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY : Sources and Documents HOWARD CLARK KEE

first published by Prentice-Hall, USA 1973

SPCK 1980 270pp. £4.95

ISBN 0 281 03791 4

This collection of ancient documents invites comparison with C. K. Barrett's *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (SPCK, 1956). Both provide the NT student with important examples of the sort of material (Targums, Visions, Odes, Inscriptions, Scrolls, etc.) he will often see referred to, but will rarely read straight off for himself. I guessed originally that Kee would have taken the opportunity to improve on Barrett, but looking again at the latter I see I was wrong: there is not a lot in the new book which is not either present or paralleled in the old, and Barrett's layout is far more satisfactory (Kee's categories, particularly the strange one called 'Meaning in History', which could be seen as a cryptic attempt to discredit *Heilsgeschichte*, are oddly unclear).

Nevertheless the book, with its introductions, annotations and illustrations, is clearly useful for those who want to get to know the wider world in which Jesus and his apostles lived and worked. There are of course bound to be questions over any one person's selections from such material: I was surprised to find neither Tacitus nor Suetonius, neither the Shema nor the Eighteen Benedictions. And omitting the apostolic Fathers on the grounds of easy availability is odd; the Scrolls, after all, are also in paperback now.

A more important problem is the methodological stance reflected in the title, which makes an interesting contrast with that of Barrett. Though Kee professes to see the dangers, I sensed time and time again the suggestion—not least in the potentially useful marginal references to NT passages—that these documents showed one, so to speak, where Paul or Matthew got it from. (The one time Kee draws back is in claiming that, whereas the Rabbi's parables were allegories, Jesus' were not—until the early church misunderstood them!) When all is said and done, this book (for all its undoubted value) is simply *not* about 'The Origins of Christianity', but about the world into which Christianity burst as something new and different, a scandal to Jews and folly to Greeks.

Downing College, Cambridge

N. T. WRIGHT

**THE ECLIPSE OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE : A Study in
Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics**
HANS W. FREI

first published in 1974 355pp. hardcover £14.40 ISBN 0 300 01623 9
Yale University Press 1980 355pp. paperback £4.40 ISBN 0 300 02602 1

A major review of this book was included in this periodical in 1975 after its original publication, and its appearance now as a paperback must be warmly welcomed. Frei's analysis of the way in which biblical narratives were handled in these two crucial centuries is masterly, and sheds much light on contemporary problems with which we are still wrestling. Indeed, it enables one to understand why the hermeneutic debate in one form or another has been, and continues to be, a major problem for the twentieth century. Frei argues that because the biblical narratives were written realistically, they were read as if they were historical, until their historical reliability was questioned. Thereafter there was dispute about how they should be understood. Frei shows that realistic narrative need not be historical; it may be a novel which is history-like, for example. For those who cannot accept that the biblical narratives are historical, Frei outlines several possible alternatives, but he also makes clear the question about the reference of a narrative is an important one in its interpretation. For those who are concerned about how to understand biblical narratives, this book is essential reading; it highlights many of the key questions as it examines the attitudes of the past.

St John's College, Nottingham

CHRISTINA BAXTER

**RED TAPE AND THE GOSPEL : A Study of the
Significance of the Ecumenical Missionary Struggle of
William Paton (1886-1943)** ELEANOR M. JACKSON

Phlogiston Publishing 1980 409pp. £15.00 ISBN 0 906954 01 0

William Paton was one of the half-dozen men whose influence was decisive in the ecumenical movement of the first half of this century. Shortly after his death, an account of his life was published by his colleague Margaret Sinclair, but there was need for a fuller assessment which could only be written from a more detached position. This need is now well met.

As an account of a great and lovable man, the book holds one's interest throughout. The title points to the tension which runs through his life, between a deep commitment to the gospel, dating from Paton's conversion as an Oxford undergraduate, and the complexities of the political and administrative issues to which his life was given. Dr Jackson organizes her material thematically, not chronologically, which sometimes makes it difficult to remember where we are in his life story, but makes it easy to follow through the issues on which he was engaged. This is much more than a biography of Paton: it illuminates (from much fresh research) the struggles of the churches to move from colonial-style missions to inter-church fellowship, to relate to the world religions, to maintain the supranationality of missions in wartime, to relate constructively to Judaism, to nourish a Christian vision for society, and to create a World Council of Churches. Paton was not an original thinker but he had enormous capacity for work, wise judgement, and shrewdness about political realities. He got things done.

This is no hagiography. Paton's weaknesses are not glossed over. Nor is Dr Jackson tender towards the follies and blindnesses of the ecclesiastics who

CHURCHMAN

pass under her review. One feels that she set out with a bias against, rather than for, the sort of evangelical missionary commitment which was the driving force of Paton's life, but that Paton won another friend. Her account of his life is the more valuable because it helps the reader to see both the grace and the judgement of God at work in the struggles of Christians to be faithful to their missionary calling.

Birmingham

LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

IRELAND : LAND OF TROUBLES A History from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day

PAUL JOHNSON

Eyre Methuen 1980 224pp. £6.95

ISBN 0 413 47650 2

The book's sub-title is misleading. It is rather a record, and a very readable one, of the English involvement in Ireland over nine centuries.

Paul Johnson, formerly editor of the *New Statesman*, provides us with a very well-balanced account, managing to avoid the seemingly inevitable anti-Unionist bias which affects so many 'post-imperial' English writers, journalists and TV documentarists. The acid-test of an author's objectivity, when writing on Anglo-Irish relations, must surely be his treatment of Oliver Cromwell's Irish campaign. He passes the test well! He judges the issue by the standards then prevailing, without on the other hand interpreting it (as the Orange Order does) as a valid crusade for Protestant truth—and all within six pages.

We are given a clear map of the evolution of the Anglo-Irish relationship from the time of the initial involvement of the Catholic English king who aimed to bring Roman order within the unruly Irish church at the request of the Pope. What emerges constantly is the half-hearted and often ill-informed approach of British rule, which time and again led to the adoption of panic measures. British politicians 'failed because Ireland was a passing episode in otherwise fruitful lives of public service and creative labour... Alas, it is of the essence of wise government to know when to absent itself. Britain has learnt by bitter experience in Ireland that there is no substitute for independence' (p.195).

I see only two major omissions which at all detract from the reliability of this book as a sure guide. There is no attention given to the particularly religious motivations which have played a formative role alongside the cultural and political power struggles which Johnson outlines so well. This is a particularly serious omission in regard to Northern Protestantism: in fact, judging by his use of a remark by Ian Paisley (p.194), he seems to misunderstand the spiritual and doctrinal dynamic which has been a powerful driving force within the Unionist camp. Secondly, he does not deal with the suspicions and fears of the ordinary population. The paramilitary organizations on both sides could not exist with any effectiveness at all, without this grounding in the emotional consciousness of the people in both communities.

One of the book's great strengths is the contextualization of the Irish problem within European history, which is a dimension often ignored. Johnson highlights particularly the impact of the French Revolution on Irish Nationalist hopes, the Liberals' difficulty in passing Home Rule legislation at the height of Britain's imperial progress around the world, the decline of the British economy in the sixties and the consequent end of the doctrine that 'You'll always be better off within the UK than in Eire', and the effect of the

student riots in Paris on the civil rights movement at the end of the sixties.

With such a breadth to his judgement, I find the wishful thinking with which he ends the book particularly astonishing. He feels that we may well be approaching a lengthy lull of peaceful coexistence in Ulster which will provide the breathing-space in which to work out a solution. His own arguments all lead to a completely different conclusion. Whenever attempts are made to find solutions, there is never a 'peaceful lull'. With unemployment in Northern Ireland higher than elsewhere within the UK, the situation is hardly likely to lead to a period of civil peace, and the evidence of the modern world is that this century is the one when ongoing political struggles are carried through to the conclusion. A better epilogue would have been to see the future within a wider context. It is surely most likely that events and attitudes on a European or world scale will influence the future at least as much as the attitudes of the protagonists within these islands who have failed over nine centuries to find a solution on how they are to live peacefully together.

Newry, Co. Down

DAVID K. GILLETT

THE MAKING OF POST-CHRISTIAN BRITAIN :
A History of the Secularization of Modern Society
ALAN D. GILBERT

Longman, UK and USA 173pp. hardcover £6.95
paperback £4.50

ISBN 0 582 48563 0
ISBN 0 582 48564 9

As one who until recently has lived for a number of years outside Britain (though not outside the impact of secularization—the subject of this work) I have found this book fascinating reading. The author has helped me to understand in a new way many aspects of British church life, beliefs and attitudes, and to make some sense of the tensions and frustrations which are part of Christian discipleship in a thoroughly secular culture.

To begin with, Alan Gilbert carefully defines the meaning of both religion and secularization, and shows why the two are likely to conflict. He does not subscribe to the view, now seen to be both historically superficial and theologically dubious, of some churchmen of a decade and a half ago that secularization is part of God's plan for the world.

He goes on to trace the historical forces which have led to the kind of societies we experience today, as 'complex urban-industrial'. At the same time he discusses the progressive effect of these forces on Christian belief, and how different sections of the church in Britain have responded to the challenge of living in a world driven along by values and expectations quite different from those of the past.

In the final section, Gilbert shows some of the ways in which the church has tried, and is trying, to come to grips with the decline in its membership and influence which has resulted from secularization.

The book is very readable. It is even-handed in its analysis and criticisms of the failure of every part of the church adequately to distinguish between its real message and the centuries of cultural baggage which continue to make it unfit to engage in a new mission for a new age. He is particularly interesting in showing that the so-called church/sect divide is much more complex in practice than some people's theories would allow.

Of course, Gilbert throws up issues with which one might want to quarrel, on the grounds either of his presentation or of his assessment of the reality of the church today. But that is good, if it produces solid thinking leading to

CHURCHMAN

meaningful action. He might have developed further some influences which seem to be reversing the secularization process. He might have recognized a more positive role for secularization in stripping the church of inessential, compelling it to return again to its essence as a servant community. However, he has done more than enough to demonstrate the underlying cultural context in which the church has to fulfill its call. His book, therefore, is to be highly recommended.

St Paul's Church, Robert Adam St, London W1

J. ANDREW KIRK

LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON : An Abridged Edition DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

edited EBERHARD BETHGE

first published in English 1953

SCM Press 1981 150pp. £2.75

ISBN 0 334 00895 6

This bundle of private letters and papers from a Nazi prison, written to a Christian friend and to courageous agnostic parents—who themselves lost two sons and both sons-in-law in the conflict—possess an abiding beauty and power which makes the reviewer long that this new beautifully produced abridged edition (with nothing essential omitted) will succeed in its aim of introducing Bonhoeffer to a coming generation. I commend an unforgettable classic, then, a book to buy and to use all through one's ministry. Why?

First there is the glorious but natural unveiling of our inheritance in Christ: Durer's paintings, the psalm settings of Schutz, 'a real craving for an evening of music together—a trio, quartet or some singing'. Beyond the stark walls of Tegel, Bonhoeffer always sees the bunch of dahlias brought by a visitor, the lime trees and chestnuts near his cell, the tom-tits nest in the prison yard. Deeper still there is the inherited grace of family, of home... 'a stronghold amid life's storms and stresses—a refuge, even a sanctuary with its resting place in God'; deepest of all, the power of Christian fellowship itself: 'I would not have been able to speak with [another] in that way which is only possible with you.' But second, there emerges a winning portrait of selfless discipleship. Despite air raids, despite anxiety about his young fiancée, there is that tenderness for his mother, the written prayers for fellow prisoners, the Christlike courage.

Finally, a mighty awareness of God binds all together, providing that *cantus firmus* which undergirds the rich 'polyphony' of the rest (p.103). We come to know Christ better partly through his people. In crises, Bonhoeffer's deepest gift to me has been an authentic witness to that grace which God gives to those who trust in him.

Kingston, Surrey

+ KEITH SUTTON

INTO ALL THE WORLD F. W. DILLISTONE

Hodder and Stoughton 1980 251pp. £8.25

ISBN 0 340 25479 3

Who are great? More than a few men of discernment have named Max Warren in the same breath as Randall Davidson and William Temple as the most influential Anglicans of this century. But have any of them touched as many people as C. S. Lewis? Max himself would have scorned all such calculations as absurd. He is vividly remembered by an enormous number of

Christians all over the world, yet in most congregations in this country only a few have heard of him, or of the two archbishops, for that matter. To Max Warren fame was unreal: only friends mattered, and this definitive biography will help a new generation to understand why he had so many and animated them so that, as one of them said of his first acquaintance with him, 'From that point I was able to start growing'.

Through the clarity and pace of his writing, Dr Dillistone has succeeded in the difficult task of making a transparently good man interesting. I confess I had feared that the book, being written too soon, was bound to be hagiographical. Max's autobiography revealed more of his friends than of himself, apart from the very moving account of agonizing self-discovery during his critical illness. Dillistone, with access to his personal diaries, has looked below the surface throughout the story, though he never violates that sanctum, as he calls it, 'carefully guarded, into which no other human being was allowed to enter.' The book captures the unique combination of *seriousness*, so typical of early nineteenth-century evangelicals, and *abhorrence of solemnity*, often expressed with a very Irish sense of the ridiculous.

This was the source of Max's modesty. As an undergraduate he wrote, 'God has given me in some measure organising ability, something of writing and making friends and of speaking. I trust to use them to His glory.' As a summary of his gifts, that is as accurate as it is understated. This biography really does justice to the vitality and penetration of Max's thought, his passionate theological conviction combined with a never-flagging readiness to explore, his statesmanship and independence in the field of world mission. It is a portrait of greatness.

Wolvesey, Winchester

+ JOHN WINTON:

IN RETROSPECT : Remembrance of Things Past F. F. BRUCE

Pickering and Inglis 1980 319pp. £7.50

ISBN 0 7208 0471 X

During the War I once had to swear-in conscripts. This meant minutes of activity and half hours of waiting, with a book. Somebody had lent me *The New Testament Documents—Are they Reliable?* by a Scottish lecturer in classics at Leeds—F. F. Bruce. At that time most English evangelicals were in their phase (mercifully brief) of timorous flight from scholarship. This had left destructive liberalism in command of the field, and I can still recall the thrill of Bruce's calm, lucid demonstration that true scholarship thoroughly attested the New Testament.

No one has done more to re-establish evangelical scholarship than F. F. Bruce, who became the first professor of biblical history and literature at Sheffield and then held the Rylands chair at Manchester until retirement. His teaching, his many books and commentaries, his editorships and his encouragement of other authors, have meant much to Christian learning and to the propagation of the faith.

This charming book of 'remembrance of things past' reveals the man. It is not a memoir, so much as a fond recollection of friends, colleagues and events. It is adapted from a series of articles in a magazine of the Open Brethren, and still leans that way, but this means that other Christians will discover more about attitudes and figures of Brethren past and present. It is interesting to learn that the Brethren of Professor Bruce's youth, in the north-east of Scotland, derived their meeting from the evangelism of

Brownlow North. These Scots greatly admired academic distinction: faith, evangelism and scholarship were in the very air.

The book has also a touch of a thoroughly nice Senior Common Room, where learned men respect and support one another without surrendering their own convictions. Names famous in their day cross the pages, thus offering a historical footnote to biblical studies of the past thirty or forty years. And shining all the way through is Professor Bruce's devotion to the living Christ and to the highest standard of academic research.

Rose Ash, Devon

JOHN POLLOCK

THE ROOTS OF A RADICAL JOHN A. T. ROBINSON

SCM Press 1980 168pp. £3.50

ISBN 0 334 02321 7

In my retirement, I find myself asked to review Dr Robinson's latest book. Twenty years ago, when the author was my suffragan bishop of Woolwich, the request was different. It came from many quarters—namely, that I should allow a charge of heresy to be lodged against him in the Southwark Consistory Court. I used my veto. John Robinson had horrified the under-heads and the illiterate bores in the Church of England with his *Honest to God*. Today the climate of opinion is different. The nineteen-sixties proved to be a watershed. For many it was a frightening and distasteful decade. Their attitude towards it was a mixture of King Canute and Mary Whitehouse. John Robinson was among the few theologians who understood what was happening and used his outstanding gifts to interpret the Christian faith in a changing and rebellious situation. The church has reason to be grateful to him.

However, his work is by no means finished. On the contrary, *The Roots of a Radical* provides a feast of good things. Especially valuable is the chapter on Christology. Unimpressed by *The Myth of God Incarnate*, and by the riposte *The Truth of God Incarnate* (I found it difficult to decide which was the worse book), he wrestles with the scriptural concepts and points to a fresh understanding of the doctrine of the incarnation. Especially stimulating is his commentary on his basic *Credo*: 'I want at all costs to hold to and to communicate "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" as the heart and concentrate of the gospel.'

The middle section of the book deals with some of the social implications of the gospel and with the reasons for concern. He quotes Nicolas Berdyaev: 'Bread for myself is a material problem: bread for other people is a spiritual problem.' Dr Robinson then directs the attention of his readers to urgent contemporary problems—sex, nuclear energy, war and violence. He offers no easy solutions; on the contrary he leaves them with intensely disturbing questions.

His final chapter, 'Some Leaves of the Tree', is sheer joy. He gives us penetrating vignettes of a 'mixed bag' of characters from Zacchaeus and Judas to Julian of Norwich and Joseph Barber Lightfoot.

Admirers of John Robinson will need no commendation to encourage them to read his latest book; his critics might well benefit by so doing. Perhaps they might realise that he is one of the few prophets in our midst.

Bath, Avon

+ MERVYN STOCKWOOD

A PASSION FOR TRUTH : HANS KÜNG A Biography
ROBERT NOWELLS

Collins 1981 377pp. £9.95

ISBN 0 00 215056 5

If you want to know the colour of Hans Küng's eyes or what he eats for breakfast, this is not the book for you. If, on the other hand, you want a careful summary of what he stands for, of how his theology has matured and developed, and of how it is that, at a comparatively early age, he has captured the attention and won the respect of vast numbers of thoughtful people all over the world, this is your book.

Two questions seem to Küng to be of overwhelming importance. The first question which he must ask as a theologian is: 'Is it true?' The second is: 'Can I make the message of Jesus Christ understandable to the men and women of today?' Because he began his ministry as an assistant priest in a parish, the second question is always kept in the forefront of his thinking and is reflected in the lucidity of his style (in contrast to that of some of his contemporary theologians, notably Karl Rahner!).

Soon after his fiftieth birthday, Küng was deprived by the Doctrinal Congregation of the commission to teach Catholic theology in the name of the church and as a teacher recognised by the church. It was a bitter blow—not only to him but to multitudes who, like him, had longed for a continuation of that reformation of the Roman Catholic Church whose spring had been heralded in the reign of Pope John XXIII and at the second Vatican Council. But in spite of his deprivation, Küng remains a priest and is determined to maintain his allegiance to his church, *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

One can criticize, if one will, the sharpness with which Küng makes his points and conducts his controversy with the ecclesiastical powers that be. But consider some of the main things for which he stands and for which he is prepared to face the anger of his leaders: freedom for theologians to do their work; living reform of the liturgy; a voice for all members of the church in the affairs of the church at local, diocesan, national and international level; scrapping the obligation of clerical celibacy; reform of the Roman Curia; the ordination of women (against which 'no biblical or dogmatic arguments can be raised')—these are only some of the causes for which he pleads in books big and small. But do not our hearts and minds warm to most, if not to all, of them? To read his condemnation, for example, of *Humanae Vitae* is to breathe a gust of fresh air. One can only hope and pray that the windows of the Vatican will not shut it out.

Sissinghurst, Kent

+ DONALD COGGAN

THE PROBLEMS OF THEOLOGY
B. L. HEBBLETHWAITE

CUP 1980 164pp. hardcover £8.95
 paperback £2.95

ISBN 0 521 23104 3

ISBN 0 521 29811 3

There is an advantage in having a book that provides a brief but sufficient panoramic view of a subject before one deals with one or more aspects of it in greater depth. The author's considerable experience in teaching theology in Cambridge has resulted in just such an overview, where, with little or no background, a student or interested reader will be taken through the main issues of contemporary theology, given a glimpse of recent processes at work, and introduced to some of the most influential trend-setters in the

study and the thrust of their influence. All this is set in a wider survey that takes account of the current emphasis upon 'religious studies' and faces fairly the plurality of religions, all with their own theological and ethical constructs.

But this is no merely descriptive exercise in comparative religion: it poses, as a whole, the theological question of the significance of this plural religious situation. Again, this is no launching-pad for another experiment in religious syncretism: for while Hebblethwaite is scrupulously fair, he suggests criteria by which to assess all forms of religious thought and practice, and further explores the relation of theology to such other disciplines as psychology, the social sciences, philosophy and history. Within such an interdisciplinary study, the issue of revelation—especially revelation in history—has to be faced. The uniqueness and absoluteness of Jesus Christ is at least affirmed, and the doctrine of the Trinity seen for what it is—the articulation of the richer understanding of God arising from faith born from the impact of the person and work of Jesus Christ. There is a welcome chapter on the ethical outcome of doctrinal belief, itself an indication of a growing theological recognition today; and a final chapter discusses recent ways of assessing theology as a kind of discourse. The author calls for an openness and honesty, both by believers and unbelievers, in these matters; the discussion must be rational and self-critical on the part of believers, while unbelievers must accept the genuine importance of the task. The drift of the book may appear dispassionate, but it is not uncommitted; while much more could be said, going on from it, nevertheless it provides a very useful piece of map-work to begin. There is a short bibliography at the end.

Archdeaconry of Auckland, Co. Durham

G. J. C. MARCHANT

**WHERE DO WE STAND? An Examination of the
Christian's Position in the Modern World**
HARRY BLAMIRE

SPCK 1980 158pp. £3.95

ISBN 0 281 03766 3

Harry Blamires returns to Christian writing after a number of years' absence from the field. Those who appreciated *The Christian Mind* will not be disappointed. It is good rousing stuff, full of trenchant and quotable comments, with telling blows against some fashionable Christian attitudes. You do not have to agree with everything he says, but his assessments should be taken seriously.

He asks two primary questions, which he attempts to answer. The first relates to the cultural situation in which Christians find themselves; and the second as to how we should stand and act in our situation.

He charts a change in mood from the sixties, both among Christians and in society generally. Optimism in the West about the achievements of civilization has been succeeded by scepticism: a scepticism that has been accompanied by the collapse of a value system based on authority, order, and rationality.

He warns about too close an identification with secular concern, however much we may share with society the aim of ameliorating material conditions; for Christian goals are not the same as non-Christian goals. Our most urgent question is not what makes Christianity relevant, but what makes it different.

The root cause of our present malaise is a refusal to choose between God and mammon. If nineteenth-century Christianity was inclined to sanctify

money-making and empire-building, to-day we sanctify middle-class hedonism. Nothing is easier than writing in which talk about sin is steam-rollered by talk about compassion.

The book concludes with a plea for a rational Christian apologetic in the face of subjectivism and relativism.

It may be that, in his desire to press his argument, he does less than justice to the fact that it is God's world that we live in. But for those of us tempted to too great a this-worldly preoccupation, the book is a salutary reminder that God's purposes of redemption are essentially transcendent in character.

A stimulating book, to be recommended.

Knutsford Vicarage, Cheshire

BILL PERSSON

JUSTICE IN INDUSTRY PETER MAYHEW

SCM Press 1980 165pp. £4.95

ISBN 0 334 00820 4

This is a disappointing book. The Rev. Peter Mayhew, who has a non-parochial job in Oxford, sets out to try and find a solution to what he sees as wrong in industrial relations in Britain. He has put a great deal of effort into interviewing and reading largely contemporary accounts of breakdowns in relationships at the work place; I counted twenty-five quotations from the Guardian alone. However, after reading the book I do not really think we are any the wiser. Yet we should have been; the title requires clear analysis and solutions. Mayhew devotes ten pages to the Greek word for justice, and a similar number to the Christian doctrine of justice. In the latter he concludes that 'man should treat man with respect, man should respect others and treat them justly.' The rest of the book, well over 130 pages, recapitulates the evidence, with some fresh opinions from workers and managers, for the fact that damage is caused by industrial disputes.

The role of shop stewards is discussed, and a lengthy chapter on participation ends with the statement that 'there is no correct philosophy and no blue print for participation'. It was all in the Donovan Report in 1968 and the Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy in 1977, and little—all too little—has changed since then. Mayhew and other well-meaning people are convinced of the benefits which can be derived from a relationship of trust based on justice. His final chapter on the way forward concludes that 'justice in industry will lead to trust. Hereby better industrial relations will be created. These will lead to higher productivity. All will benefit.' All good stuff, but the author seems to give little attention to examining the nature of the company and the law under which it operates on the one hand, and the demonic potential of power in inscrupulous hands on the other.

The book does do one positive thing: it focuses attention away from a 'love conquers all' approach—beloved of some industrial chaplains—to 'justice', which is as important a biblical theme as 'love' in sorting out distorted relationships in a world characterized by selfishness.

London EC4

SIMON WEBLEY

CHURCHMAN

CHRISTIANS GRIEVE TOO DONALD HOWARD

first published by AIO Publishing, Australia 1979

Banner of Truth 1980 30pp. 50p

ISBN 0 85151 315 8

DYING : The Greatest Adventure of my Life

JAMES H. CASSON

Christian Medical Fellowship 1980 40pp. 60p

ISBN 0 906747 05 8

Donald Howard's excellent booklet will fulfil a real need for Christians who so often think that their faith should overcome all the natural feelings associated with bereavement. Each chapter provides biblical references to substantiate Christian teaching on the reality, and yet hope, in our grief. There is useful information on the physical symptoms, unreality, pining, searching and illusions associated with normal grief experience which will be reassuring to bereaved people. It is also helpful for readers to realize that feelings of guilt, regret, anger and fear are normal, and are most likely to be resolved when exposed and talked about with someone who understands the pain of bereavement. It is suggested that a conspiracy of silence frustrates relationships with the patient and adds to the problems of families, and readers are admonished to be courageous in expressing feelings, unafraid of tears, and practical in the help they offer.

The prevailing message, that Jesus himself experienced and overcame grief and death, makes this a booklet that should be available in any situation where Christians are themselves experiencing grief or helping others to cope.

Dying—The Greatest Adventure of my Life is a courageous booklet, written from personal experience of a young GP. It highlights problems created by well-meaning people who telephone, write and visit dying people, and throughout its pages advises medical colleagues of their role and contribution. Insight is given into personal adjustments which have to be faced, the needs of children in the family, and the importance of truth. His frank discussion of difficulties for the Christian facing terminal illness will be especially helpful to fellow-sufferers, and we are reminded of the special problems for a GP 'dying publicly' in front of his patients.

Suffering, fear of death, and the liberating knowledge of God's forgiveness through Christ, are coupled with a plea for clearer Bible teaching in churches on this issue. Quoting two other patients, the writer shows us individual reactions and experiences of the same disease—a salutary reminder to everyone—and his response to the question 'Why me?' will help many people. The booklet concludes with thoughts on the true nature of divine healing and useful Bible references. This personal story should be read by every medical practitioner.

St Christopher's Hospice, London SE26

D. H. SUMMERS

CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE : The Path to Spiritual Growth RICHARD FOSTER

first published by Harper and Row, USA 1978

Hodder and Stoughton 1980 179pp. £1.50

ISBN 0 340 25992 2

It is sometimes said that modern Protestantism suffers from the lack of a genuine ascetical theology, and there is substance in the charge. The tradi-

tion has indeed much to offer, and runs through Puritanism, pietism and evangelicalism to the present day. Yet it has always felt the tension between its very proper emphasis on the doctrine of grace, with its corollary in the freedom of the man of faith, and its consciousness of the need for a systematized, or at any rate a sufficiently articulated, Christian *askēsis*. Added to this, there is today the adverse influence of 'secular theology', with its almost pathological fear of 'detachment' from the concerns of this world. That there is an evangelical kind of spiritual discipline is plain. The difficulty is to give it a judicious expression within the context of a biblical doctrine of grace.

Richard Foster's book is a very successful popular treatment of the subject from an evangelical viewpoint. He regards the spiritual disciplines ('inward', like prayer; 'outward', such as service; 'corporate', as for instance worship) as the 'door to liberation', by which he means that they are God's gifts and the instruments in his hands for subduing and rooting out those sinful tendencies and ingrained habits which prevent us from appropriating freely the blessings of his grace. They *can* be thought about wrongly and be put to illegitimate use (legalistically), but not necessarily so. Provided that they find their place in a life which is based on humble, repentant submission to God, they have an important part to play in promoting freedom for the service of God, in perseverance and steadfastness.

There is a sturdy Christian realism about this book which should help many people to understand better what is happening to them when God leads them into times of (for example) spiritual darkness and quiescence, or calls them to more vigorous activity in the things of the Spirit. This is a balanced account of the spiritual pilgrimage, replete with much biblically grounded advice for the Christian pilgrim.

Wheldrake Rectory, York

JOHN COCKERTON

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PRAY?

HUBERT RICHARDS

SCM Press 1980 96pp. £2.50

ISBN 0 334 01775 0

THE PRAYER PRINCIPLE MICHAEL BAUGHEN

Mowbrays 1981 133pp. £1.50

ISBN 0 264 66701 8

What Happens When You Pray? is a book which is concerned, as its title indicates, with what for many people is *the* fundamental question about prayer. Praying people sometimes put a nagging doubt into words and ask: When we pray, are we really talking to a listening heavenly Father, or are we only talking to ourselves? A book which confronts questions of this sort head on, and presents a well-argued case (whatever one may think of its conclusions) is worthy of attention.

Hubert Richards recognizes that petitionary prayer is here to stay, but argues that it uses a *language* which is not to be taken 'literally'. God is not someone with whom we can have a conversation of the kind that we have with our fellow human beings, nor is he someone whom we can cajole, pressurize or manipulate. He is not 'over there', but here with us and in us, and he does his work through us. Prayer is an activity in which we become more aware of ourselves, of our neighbours, and of our responsibility for the world in which God has set us and in which he is present. It can be said to 'change things' only in the sense that it changes the one who prays, reforms his attitudes,

CHURCHMAN

and stimulates him to compassionate activity. In this the activity of God himself is to be seen.

It is good to be faced with a downright presentation of the problems of petitionary prayer. I wish that Richards had started from a more sympathetic understanding of petition and intercession as they have been received and used in the church's tradition (a book like H. H. Farmer's *The World and God* shows what a thoroughly respectable account can be given of them). He allows himself to descend into caricature from time to time. I wish also that he had shown rather more clearly how he personally manages to go on using the language of intercessory prayer (as he presumably does) while accepting the somewhat immanentist theology of prayer which he advocates in this book.

Michael Baughen works within a traditional framework, and makes good use of illustrations from everyday life in expounding a theory of prayer and in commending a practice of prayer which will be familiar to all evangelical Christians. An excellent book to put into the hands of those who want to think through the basic principles of this most important aspect of Christian living.

Wheldrake Rectory, York

JOHN COCKERTON

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS MICHAEL PERHAM

Alcuin Club, SPCK 1980 177pp. £6.95

ISBN 0 281 03794 9

'These evangelicals die well', is a comment Archbishop Garbett is reputed to have made when, as Bishop of Winchester, he had just visited the recently bereaved widow of a clergyman in his diocese. Michael Perham's book helps to underline why this is so.

Subtitled 'An Examination of the Place of the Christian Dead in the Belief, Worship and Calendars of the Church', this book has been written in order to encourage 'a rediscovery of the full meaning of belief in 'the communion of saints . . . the countless Christians in every age whose lives give evidence that the Christian God is a God who acts in each generation and is acting still.' The opening five chapters give a useful summary of Christian belief about the dead, and its liturgical expression through the centuries, while the last two chapters contain a review of the present situation of the liturgical calendars of the Churches of England and Rome as well as the American Episcopal Church, together with some careful research into the balance of the commemoration of saints in various liturgical calendars and very constructive suggestions for making such calendars more representative.

Chapter seven is the one which will cause some eyebrows to raise, as the writer finds it difficult to describe the divergencies in the eschatology of the New Testament as less than contradictions (p.91), and suggests (p.100) that 'the end of the world would seem to be something it [the church today] should leave to the scientists, uncertain as they are.' This conviction arises from a dissatisfaction with the traditional ways of stating eschatology, and a concern that there should be further opportunities for growth and development in the after-life, rather than the more static terms implied in the imagery of the dead 'resting from their labours'. Perham's slogan appears to be that the experience of the saints after death should be seen in terms of direction rather than perfection. Might it perhaps be that we all face the problem of trying to understand and describe the experience of eternity in the language of time—and this applies as much to Perham's ideas of direction, movement and growth as to the medieval theories about purgatory. Paul's consolation

lay in the fact that to depart this life is to be 'with Christ' (however we understand that picture), and evangelicals will continue to derive their confidence from that biblical assurance.

This is a stimulating book, and we are indebted to the Alcuin Club for yet another valuable contribution in their series of publications of current theological as well as liturgical interest.

Oak Hill College, London

DAVID WHEATON

THE ALTERNATIVE SERVICE BOOK together with the Liturgical Psalter

Clowes et al. 1980 £4.50

PRAYERS FOR USE AT THE ALTERNATIVE SERVICES
DAVID SILK

Mowbrays 1980 165pp. £4.95

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ISBN 0 264 66711 5

ISBN 0 264 66483 3

SHARING IN ONE BREAD : Holy Communion Rite A
from the ASB MICHAEL PERRY

first published in 1973

SPCK 1980 90pp. £1.50

ISBN 0 281 03790 6

IN LIFE ETERNAL : A Preparation for Holy Communion
MARGARET STEVENS

first published in 1952

Mowbrays 1980 207pp. £1.95

ISBN 0 264 66758 1

CELEBRATING THE LITURGY : A Guide for Priest and People
DAVID AUSTERBERRY

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The immense sales of the *Alternative Service Book*, since its publication in November 1980, and growing evidence of its use, are indications that this book will be determinative for Anglican worship over the next quarter of a century. Yet the book itself contains little that is really new. The services are those to which the church has grown accustomed during the past fifteen years of liturgical experiment; the revisions the Series 3 Eucharist has undergone in order to become Rite A, the key service of the Book (permission to have the penitential section at the start of the service, variety within the Intercessions, three additional Eucharistic Prayers, a repositioning of the Fractions, and minor linguistic changes) are hardly revolutionary; the Liturgical Psalter has been on the market for four years; and to print in full the lessons of the two-year Sunday lectionary is not startling innovation. Wherein then lies the newness of this book? It lies in giving permanence in the Church of England to three principles: that worship can be in contemporary language; that eucharistic worship is the heart of Christian worship; and that flexibility in worship is vital for sustained life.

No one will wish to argue that the *Alternative Service Book* presents the church with the last word in a contemporary liturgical language: even the 1662 Prayer Book, though it epitomized a particular stage in the evolution of the English language, did not do this for its time. Language develops, as too does the way people want to respond to God, and the *ASB* gives a style of language which seems to be in tune with what people are finding of meaning

today. Of course there are infelicities, but there is also a new poetry, if once the rhythm of the language is sensed (e.g. the Alternative Prayer of Humble Access, the second Preface of the Cross), and there is a most attractive simplicity and directness in the redesigning of that Reformation feature of certain services—the Exhortations (see the Initiation and Marriage Services). An excellent companion to the new Prayer Book, and of similar linguistic style, is *Prayers for use at the Alternative Services* by David Silk. Many of the prayers in this book are new, and reflect the Sunday themes, but there is also sensitive rewriting of many ancient prayers, and provision of additional forms of service for occasions not catered for in the *ASB*: the Blessing of Palms on Palm Sunday; the Ceremonies for Easter Eve; a form of service after a Civil Marriage, etc.

The second principle of the *ASB*, that of focusing the centrality of eucharistic worship, is not new—and yet it is. In the 1662 Prayer Book, the eucharist is central, though Anglican practice over four hundred years has often clouded this for many people. In the *ASB*, there can be no doubt that the eucharist is the staple of worship. The eucharist, in this book, whether it is Rite A (Series 3 revised) or Rite B (the more traditional Series 1 and 2 revised), has the clear primitive structure of word/sacrament and Four-action Shape: a structure obscured in the Reformation prayer books, but restored in modern rites, not only in the Church of England but in all churches affected by the liturgical movement of this century. In understanding and praying through the new eucharist, Michael Perry's *Sharing in One Bread*, and Margaret Stevens' *In Life Eternal*, are both of value. Both were previously published to accompany the Series 3 eucharist, but now are revised to accompany the new prayer book. Archdeacon Perry's book is an explanation of, and commentary on, Rite A, whilst Miss Stevens' book is a devotional manual for the individual coming to communion, providing 'thoughts', brief quotations for meditation, and prayers, all of which are based on the themes of the readings in the two-year lectionary.

The third principle of the *ASB* is the most startling and the most important for the Church of England. The 1662 Prayer Book allowed no freedom to priest and people in the ordering of worship; nor did the services from Series 1 to Series 3 do so in any real way. The new book, however, enshrines the principle of flexibility. In the rubrics, 'may', not 'shall', becomes the key-word. Already, the book has been described as 'adult liturgy': it gives guidelines and suggestions for relevant worship; it encourages priest and people together to decide on the most appropriate forms of service for their needs; it encourages sensitivity to immediate situations, as well as wider national and world needs; it gives scope for worship to become a corporate activity in the planning as well as in the execution. And yet, because of this flexibility, services can still, if it is so wished, be used in a very set, and even traditional form. Indeed, this is where the book is so skilful, for it allows, in Rite B, a service to be designed, as near as makes no difference, identical with the 1662 Eucharist, in 'thee-thou', traditional language, and, by including the 1662 canticles at the end of the Offices, allows a traditional form of those services too. The principle of flexibility allows old and new to coexist, though in using this flexibility, clergy and laity alike need guidance and education. This is provided by David Austerberry's *Celebrating the Liturgy*, an interesting and useful study, indicating how one parish engaged in the corporate task of designing their eucharistic worship, so that it expressed what they felt they were as the body of Christ.

Anglican Worship Today is an illustrated guide to the entire Alternative Service Book. Its style is popular, though none the worse for that. Its scholarship is sound and accurate, and, in passing, it gives the reader an excellent, basic, liturgy course. The illustrations are attractive, and in text, picture and

diagram, the new services are explained in such a manner as to indicate the ways in which they will be performed by the various traditions within the Church of England: the first time, surely, this has been attempted in the same volume.

Ridge Vicarage, Potters Bar, Herts

JOHN SIMPSON

A HANDBOOK OF PARISH FINANCE
PHYLLIS CARTER and MICHAEL PERRY

Mowbrays 1981 152pp. £3.50

ISBN 0 264 66414 0

This 148-page handbook is packed with both useful and helpful information, and provides an excellent addition to the series of parish handbooks published by Mowbray.

The hyper-inflation of the past decade has affected the church no less than secular society. Necessarily, the demand laid upon the laity to provide funds to continue and fulfil the true mission of the church, to pay adequate stipends, and to maintain buildings, has been enormous. The publication of this book is therefore both appropriate and timely.

The financial structure of the Church of England has been described as similar to the peace of God—it passeth all understanding. But not any more. The authors are to be congratulated on the lucid way in which they have illuminated the dark recesses of the finances of the wider church. For all those not able to comprehend the inter-relationship between parish finance, diocesan boards of finance, the Central Board of Finance, the Church Commissioners and the Pensions Board, there is an excellent chapter of analysis and exposition.

Parish treasurers will discover a mine of helpful information. They will not only find it a resource book to which to turn, but also full of helpful material concerning methods of book-keeping and preparation of budgets. They will discover detailed answers to questions regularly raised in respect of property and trust funds, and important matters of insurance, and the specific responsibilities laid upon PCCs in respect of each.

Church officers and council members will find particularly helpful the chapter 'Giving to God—and Getting it Back from Caesar'. Here we are brought to the theological root of the Christian stewardship of money and the Christian's commitment of the whole life to God, including the purse. Again there is a wealth of practical guidance in respect of the preparation for stewardship missions, not forgetting Deeds of Covenant and the principles of tax recovery.

Out of their wide experience, Miss Carter and the Archdeacon of Durham have served the Church well by their clarity of thought and presentation of this difficult but crucial area of parish finance.

Southwark, London

DAVID BOLLON

CORRECTION
MUSIC AND THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

Churchman, Vol.95, no.2, p.183.

The second sentence of the second paragraph should read: 'The reign of Edward VI is likewise presented as a negative period for church music, but with approval rather than disdain. The index to the Parker Society volumes...'

INDEX OF REVIEWS

AUSTERBERRY, <i>Celebrating the Liturgy</i> , (J. Simpson)	285
BARTON, <i>Amos's Oracles Against the Nation</i> , (J. A. Motyer)	267
BAUGHEN, <i>The Prayer Principle</i> , (J. Cockerton)	283
BLAMIRE, <i>Where Do We Stand?</i> , (B. Persson)	280
BONHOEFFER, <i>Letters and Papers from Prison</i> , (K. Sutton)	276
BRUCE, <i>In Retrospect</i> , (J. Pollock)	277
BUCHANAN, LLOYD, MILLER (eds.), <i>Anglican Worship Today</i> , (J. Simpson)	285
CARTER, Perry, <i>A Handbook of Parish Finance</i> , (D. Bollom)	287
CASSON, <i>Dying</i> , (D. H. Summers)	282
CLEMENTS, K. W., <i>Faith</i> , (B. Persson)	271
CLEMENTS, R. E., <i>Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem</i> , (P. J. Budd)	266
DILLISTONE, <i>Into All the World</i> , (+ John Winton:)	278
FOSTER, <i>Celebration of Discipline</i> , (J. Cockerton)	282
FREI, <i>The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative</i> , (C. Baxter)	273
GILBERT, <i>The Making of Post-Christian Britain</i> , (J. A. Kirk)	275
GUNN, <i>The Fate of King Saul</i> , (P. J. Budd)	265
HARRISON, <i>Leviticus</i> , (G. M. Butterworth)	264
HEBBLETHWAITE, <i>The Problems of Theology</i> , (G. J. C. Marchant)	279
HOWARD, <i>Christians Grieve Too</i> , (D. H. Summers)	282
JACKSON, <i>Red Tape and the Gospel</i> , (L. Newbigin)	273
JOHNSON, <i>Ireland: Land of Troubles</i> , (D. K. Gillett)	274
KEE, <i>The Origins of Christianity</i> , (N. T. Wright)	272
KÜNG, <i>The Church—Maintained in Truth</i> , (G. J. C. Marchant)	270
MARSHALL, <i>Acts</i> , (S. S. Smalley)	268
MARSHALL, <i>Last Supper and Lord's Supper</i> , (R. T. Beckwith)	269
MARTENS, <i>Plot and Purpose in the Old Testament</i> , (+ Stuart Ebor:)	264
MAYHEW, <i>Justice in Industry</i> , (S. Webley)	281
NOWELLS, <i>A Passion for Truth: Hans Küng</i> , (D. Coggan)	279
PERHAM, <i>The Communion of Saints</i> , (D. Wheaton)	284
PERRY, <i>Sharing in One Bread</i> , (J. Simpson)	285
RICHARDS, <i>What Happens When you Pray?</i> , (J. Cockerton)	283
ROBINSON, <i>The Roots of a Radical</i> , (M. Stockwood)	278
SCHWEIZER, <i>The Holy Spirit</i> , (J. D. G. Dunn)	270
SILK, <i>Prayers For Use at the Alternative Services</i> , (J. Simpson)	285
STEVENS, <i>in Life Eternal</i> , (J. Simpson)	285
TELFORD, <i>The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree</i> , (R. T. France)	268
WENHAM, <i>The Book of Leviticus</i> , (G. M. Butterworth)	264
and <i>The Alternative Service Book Together with the Liturgical Psalter</i> , (J. Simpson)	285