

# Book Reviews

## **THE MESSAGE OF 1 PETER (THE BIBLE SPEAKS TODAY)**

**Edmund P. Clowney**

I.V.P., Leicester 1988 234pp. £5.50

ISBN 0 85110 789 3

This latest addition to an excellent series maintains the consistent standard. The author was at one time President of Westminster Theological Seminary and Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia, but is currently Associate Pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, Virginia. He is admirably qualified to bring out the meaning of this Epistle. With such a background it is not surprising that he pours a considerable amount of theological learning into his exposition. Whereas the series disclaims the description of commentaries, this book serves the purpose of a valuable collection of comments on all aspects of the text. Those who work through it cannot fail to be enriched by the author's mastery of understanding, but also his essentially practical purpose.

This letter has often been described as an epistle of suffering and deserves this title more than any other New Testament writing. The theme recurs throughout and the author is at pains to show not only the practical Christian approach to suffering through its pages but also its theological basis.

In a brief introductory section Dr. Clowney deals succinctly with the main issues such as readers, writer, type of letter, time and place of writing and message. He accepts the authenticity of the letter, but notes the various objections which have been raised against this. His conviction that Peter is writing to believers threatened with persecution for the sake of the gospel colours his whole exposition.

Although the books in this series are designed to be read and not just consulted, Dr. Clowney packs so much into his exposition that the reader will need a fair amount of concentration if he is not to miss some of the gems of theological thought packed into its pages. The author deals faithfully with the difficult passages, particularly the notorious section in chapter 3:19 where he gives a useful summary of the main interpretations and supports the view that the 'spirits in prison' are the spirits of those who were disobedient to the preaching of Noah. Dr. Clowney in all his expositions presents his case clearly but without dogmatism.

For the reader who wants to get under the skin of 1 Peter this book will be a tool of real value. He will come away from his reading of it with a deep sense of its theological richness and of its down-to-earth relevance. The author is to be commended for his incisive exposition.

40 Moss Close, Pinner, Middlesex

DONALD GUTHRIE

## **THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT—ITS ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND SIGNIFICANCE** **Bruce M. Metzger**

Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987 326pp. £30

ISBN 0 19 826180 2

This splendid book is the latest achievement of a scholar to whom New

Testament study owes many debts. An up-to-date book on the New Testament canon was needed, not so much to revise current beliefs on the subject as to take account of recent study and newly discovered evidence. Prof. Metzger does this with thoroughness and clarity, and comes to positive conclusions, broadly similar to those of Westcott in the last century.

The book begins with an introduction (which must in no account be neglected) on the authorities which were recognized in primitive Christianity, from the New Testament period onwards; at the head of these stands the Old Testament, followed by the words of Jesus and the preaching of the apostles, at first oral but afterwards written down, and reinforced by the apostolic epistles.

Part One is a survey of literature on the New Testament Canon, from the seventeenth century to the present day, in two chapters. Part Two is a history of the formation of the New Testament Canon, in eight chapters, beginning with a careful examination of the evidence of the Apostolic Fathers, and including discussions of the impact of heresy and the question of the New Testament Apocrypha. Part Three is a thought-provoking discussion of historical and theological problems concerning the canon, in two chapters. There are also four useful appendices.

The author is so well-read, both in ancient and in modern literature, that he constantly adds to the reader's knowledge, and one is surprised when he makes a slip, as occasionally he seems to do on peripheral matters. Various statements about the Old Testament are open to serious doubt, and the third appendix, on the Titles of the Books of the New Testament, is unsatisfactory. Nor is it appropriate to call Dean Burgon an Anglo-Catholic! But none of this is central to his subject.

The discussion of theological problems relating to the canon in Part Three is a welcome addition to the historical material. It deals both with theological problems confronting the early church, such as its criteria for determining canonicity, and with problems confronting the church today, such as whether the canon is still open or finally closed. The problems are helpfully opened up, even if they are not pursued with logical rigour. Textual problems such as Eph. 1:1 and the ending of Mark are handled in an original way (pp. 265, 269f.), and there are useful discussions of the supposed claim of the Gospel of Thomas to a place in the canon (p. 272), of the question of unity and diversity in New Testament Teaching (p. 280f.) and of the rôle of providence in the creation of the canon (p. 285f.). The striking evidence presented on pp. 254-7 of the freedom with which the Fathers often applied the language of inspiration should be related to what is said on the subject elsewhere in the book, for example on pp. 117f., 211 note. The Fathers were perhaps influenced by the fact that the Spirit was given at Pentecost to the whole church, but they evidently could use the language of inspiration in a more precise way also.

**BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION Robert Morgan and John Barton**

Oxford University Press, Oxford 1988 342pp. £29.50 cloth, £8.95 pb.

ISBN 0 19 213256 3

This latest addition to the *Oxford Bible Series* is an attempt to gather together the main streams of Biblical Interpretation, as this has been practised among Western scholars since the eighteenth century. It would not be too much to add that the words 'Liberal Protestant' probably ought to have figured in the book's title, since that is the tendency which is examined, virtually to the exclusion of anything else.

What emerges from this survey is that Biblical interpretation is no longer the preserve of those interested in theology; indeed, it may be very difficult, even impossible, for theologians to make much of a good deal of recent research in this area. More and more, the academic study of the Bible is taking place in an environment which does not recognize the claims of Christian faith, and this is reflected in the material presented here. At the same time, anything which smacks of a conservative, confessional approach to the subject is rigorously excluded, with nothing more than the most perfunctory lip-service being paid to conservative scholarship.

The book's main thesis is that the Bible can no longer be read as a message from and about God, but must be studied as evidence for the growth and development of religion. As such it is testimony to human thought, not to divine revelation. From time to time, the authors show an awareness that the Bible is important to us only because of its religious claims, but these are never taken at their face value. On the contrary, it is axiomatic that the modern scholar will approach the text with assumptions and concerns which are fundamentally at variance with the beliefs and intentions of the original authors.

The book is more thematic than historical in approach, though a broadly historical outline is discernible. The authors begin with the development of critical study and then examine the growth of both the 'history of religions' and 'history of traditions' schools of thought. They point out the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, freely admitting that the liberal critics of the last century were better at pulling down than they were building up. There follows a chapter on the relationship of Biblical study to the social sciences, and two chapters which deal with the Bible as literature. A strong plea is made for a more literary and less historical approach to the texts, on the ground that this is more consonant with their true nature. In particular, there is a reasonably sustained defence of structuralism, in spite of the acknowledged fact that few scholars and even fewer theologians know what to make of it!

On the whole, the conclusions to which this book points are rather depressing. There is a recognition that the Bible is studied mainly for its religious value and mainly by people who want to use it for devotional purposes, but such aims are subordinated throughout to the demands of critical scholarship. The hostility to anything which might be called Evangelical is polite but palpable, and this will make the book unsatisfactory for many readers. Why is it so difficult for liberals to take the conservative approach seriously? The question comes back again and again in these pages, when the craziest excesses of liberalism are given full attention and the solid work of conservatives is simply ignored. What can possibly justify the

attention given to someone like Norman Gottwald, for instance, when the work of F.F. Bruce, I. Howard Marshall, E. Earle Ellis and others is simply not mentioned at all? Is there not room here for a plea for balance in the treatment of the issues involved?

On the other hand, it may be said in the book's favour that each chapter is supplied with an ample bibliography, and that there is a most useful section at the back, giving a potted biography of the major figures discussed in the text. Such information is often not easy to come by, and we must be grateful to the authors for making it available to us in this way. On balance therefore, we have here a book of limited usefulness, largely because of its severe bias in the direction of liberalism. This is a pity, and it must be hoped that a future edition might devote a chapter, at least, to the conservative alternatives to what is on offer here.

Oak Hill College, London N14

GERALD BRAY

### **Y'SHUA Moishe Rosen**

Christian Witness to Israel Publications, Chislehurst 1987 149pp. no price  
ISBN 0 8024 9842 6

This is the book for which the B.B.C. eventually refused advertising space in the *Radio Times* at Christmas-time 1987. This is the book that was advertised in the national press (full page spreads) in December 1988. And this is the book that displeases some Jews.

Originally published in the U.S.A. in 1982, the *Christian Witness to Israel* organization arranged its British publication and distribution in 1987. It is easy to see why. The author, Moishe Rosen, is a Jewish-Christian who is keen to reach his own people with the good news that Jesus of Nazareth is *the* Messiah. After defining the meaning of the term *Messiah* in the Introduction he carefully, and tactfully, shows that the Old Testament predictions concerning the Messiah are fulfilled in Jesus. The obvious texts, such as Micah 5.1, Isaiah 7.14 and Zechariah 9.9, are referred to and expounded, as are the Gospel-writers' accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. All, and herein lies the strength and value of this book, are looked at through Jewish eyes and with a sympathetic understanding of Jewish history.

The book falls into two distinct parts. First there is the book itself (pp.1-68). Secondly, there are the Appendices and Indices (pp.69-149). Some may feel a little aggrieved by this arrangement but, after reflection, I think most will agree that this is the best way of presenting the material. The text is left intact, fills each page and is allowed to flow. Yet those who need or want additional background material concerning Jewish history, doctrines and practices will not find themselves disappointed. In the main this is supplied in the nine appendices, although the value of the indices should not be underestimated.

Primarily this is a book for Jews. That does not mean that Christians will not find it beneficial. Every minister ought to have at least two copies. One for himself and one to give away. Moreover he can and should commend it wholeheartedly to his people. It will enable them to appreciate and understand both the Jewish roots of the Christian faith and our Jewish neighbours. Indeed it may well spur them on to pray consistently and earnestly for the conversion of the Jews. It is to be hoped that it does, for, as

Robert Leighton pointed out many years ago, 'They forget a main part of the Church's glory, who pray not daily for the conversion of the Jews.'

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

GEORGE CURRY

**THE INTERPRETATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT 1861-1986**

**S. Neill and T. Wright**

Oxford University Press, Oxford 1988 £22.50hb. £6.95pb. ISBN 0 19 283057 0

Anyone who seriously wishes to come to terms with current trends in New Testament criticism will need some sense of historical perspective. How did we reach this particular point? Why are these the issues? For these reasons and for others the republication of this book in the form of a new updated edition is very much to be welcomed. It had its beginnings in a series of lectures delivered by the late Bishop Stephen Neill at Nottingham University in 1962. These lectures were subsequently published in 1964 as the first edition of the book, and are now in print again, along with an additional chapter by Dr. Wright which brings the story on to 1986.

Four things are particularly impressive about Bishop Neill's work. First, there is his capacity to encompass and interpret a remarkable range of ideas and personalities in a straightforward, well-ordered way. Secondly, there is his ability to make the material accessible. Students and others without many of the technical tools and skills of New Testament criticism will appreciate the clarity with which complicated ideas and approaches are explained. Thirdly, there is his combination of critical insight with breadth of sympathy. Even at those points where Neill dissents most sharply from the trends in question he demonstrates an appreciative understanding of scholarship's motives and interests. Fourthly, there is his capacity to link intellectual rigour and theological concern; for him the critical task was always an imperative of faith.

Individual readers are bound to appreciate different aspects of the coverage in a work of such scope, and the following survey of content is necessarily selective. The book actually begins rather earlier than 1861, and it is helpful that it should do so. The influence of people such as J.D. Michaelis, D.F. Strauss, and F.C. Baur in the earlier phases of modern criticism is very properly recognized. A particular strength throughout is Bishop Neill's knowledge of scholarship in the English speaking world. He gives illuminating sketches of generally little known corners of scholarly achievement, along with sustained assessments (appreciative but not uncritical) of such distinguished scholars as Lightfoot, Westcott, and Hort. Subsequent chapters take up in broad terms the history of studies in the synoptic gospels, the influence of Hellenism in the New Testament, and the decisive impact of theologians such as Albert Schweitzer, Barth, and Bultmann. Questions about the formation of the gospel tradition, form criticism and the historical Jesus, are squarely confronted, and Neill's work concludes, among other things, with some assessment of Qumranic studies and the history of criticism in relation to the Fourth Gospel.

It is most unlikely of course that any reader will concur with all the opinions and judgments expressed here, whether from more or less conservative positions. For one thing the scope is so immense; for another

Bishop Neill's lively intellect and sharply perceptive writing resists simplistic categorization. It would probably be fair to say that he represents a tradition of broadly conservative British scholarship, and that the strengths of that tradition show through well here. At many points the expansive and rhetorical style of Neill the lecturer continues to be apparent, but the index is good, and once readers have familiarized themselves with this style, and the layout generally, then the book is easy to use as a text book or for reference purposes.

Dr. Wright for his part has contributed some discrete and judicious updating and adaptation of the footnotes; in all essentials the text of Bishop Neill's book remains as it was. Readers who have a copy of the original, or who are familiar with it, will be interested to know what topics Dr. Wright takes up in the new concluding chapter entitled 'History and Theology'. His method is to begin with the twelve 'positive achievements' of a century of New Testament criticism with which Neill's book concluded. He thinks that with the exception of some increased uncertainty about the date of parts of the New Testament these 'achievements' are reasonably secure. With respect to Bishop Neill's twelve fields for further enquiry the record seems to be mixed. Dr. Wright then considers a number of areas where new trends and developments indicate a degree of progress. He takes account of studies in the history of the New Testament period, including its religious history, and acknowledges briefly the impact of the social sciences. He also shrewdly examines the renewed 'quest' for the historical Jesus, an enterprise about which he is positive, and skilfully elucidates aspects of contemporary Pauline studies. The Fourth Gospel receives attention, with particular stress on John Robinson's ideas, and finally we are offered some useful thoughts on interpretation and theology in general.

There are doubtless different ways of conducting an assessment such as this, as indeed there are with Stephen Neill's original. Perceptions of the present and its relationship to the past will always have a personal content, and there is bound to be scope for discussion and argument about how much space different scholars and theologians deserve. Should, for example, some of the recent writing on the New Testament from the third world be included? At the same time few would deny that the issues identified by Dr. Wright are of contemporary importance, and his discussion is always illuminating. That it shares a good deal with the original—clarity, sympathy, fairness, enthusiasm, and even some personal anecdotes—is an added bonus.

Considering the substance contained within these pages the book is very well priced. The paperback would be good value, even for those who possess the first edition. For those who do not the value all round is excellent.

Westminster College, Oxford

PHILIP BUDD

**SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND REASON: A STUDY IN THE  
CRITERIA OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE**

**Edd. Benjamin Drewery and Richard J. Bauckham**

T. and T. Clark Edinburgh 1988 297pp. £14.95

ISBN 0 567 09482 0

We have in this book a collection of articles in honour of Bishop Richard Hanson, whose contribution to modern Anglicanism can be compared in its

breadth and depth only to that of the late Bishop Stephen Neill. A polymath of wide interests and sympathies, Richard Hanson is honoured here by a number of friends and colleagues who represent the different spheres of his interests.

The format is a simple one. Each of the three sources of authority is taken in turn, and compared to the other two. The shadow of Richard Hooker naturally looms large over the whole enterprise, and it would be fair to say that the main emphasis is on a fairly conservative, Broad Church Anglicanism, though some of the contributors represent a more Evangelical, and others a more liberal approach. There are even some Roman Catholic contributions, including one from an Irish American!

The first section concentrates on Scripture. There is a magisterial survey article by Professor Bruce, followed by a study of the Virgin Birth in Luke and in the Classical Creeds by A.R.C. Leaney, and a short but illuminating piece on Priesthood by R.H. Fuller. Professor Bruce is solidly conservative in his approach to the supremacy of Scripture, though his conclusions would suit an Anglican more readily than a Plymouth Brother (which he is). Leaney's article is very sceptical about the validity of Luke's birth narrative, but is better on the development of credal theology. Fuller offers a comprehensive study of the concept of priesthood as this has been examined in recent ecumenical dialogue, and makes some helpful comments about the rôle which such a minister ought to play in the Church.

The second section concentrates on Tradition, and begins with a comprehensive and instructive article on the subject by Richard Bauckham. This is followed by an interesting study of Scripture and Tradition in the Early Irish Church, a field of study dear to Bishop Hanson, though doubtless obscure to most Biblical scholars. It will be of special interest to students of mediaeval theology, who know about the importance of Ireland at that time but may not have examined the evidence in detail. Lastly, there is Leslie Barnard's examination of the use of Patristic evidence in seventeenth and eighteenth century Anglicanism, which concentrates on the legitimacy of lay baptism. Those who supported the practice, in the hope of reconciling nonconformists to the Church of England, did so on the basis of patristic evidence, and managed to defeat the High Church party, which attempted to reserve the administration of the sacrament to the ordained clergy.

The third section gives pride of place to reason, with yet another survey article by David Pailin. This is followed by Henri Crouzel on Origen's concept of Free-Will and Susan Smalley on the much-admired but now little-read Anglican mystic, Evelyn Underhill.

Obviously, in a book of this kind, not all readers will be equally interested in everything, but the quality of the contributions is generally high, and for those with little prior knowledge of some of the more obscure subjects, this volume provides a useful way in. It is not expensive, as books go nowadays, and can be recommended to all who want a good, wide-ranging theological read.

**THE LAST THINGS: DEATH, JUDGEMENT AND HELL Paul Helm**

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1989 152pp. £2.50

ISBN 0 8515 15444

This is the third in a trilogy of books coming from the pen of Paul Helm, a professional philosopher and most able communicator. In his previous two books in the series, Mr. Helm masterfully engaged in a penetrating biblical study of conversion (*The Beginnings*) and the present Christian life (*The Callings*). In this volume he naturally concludes with what in recent times has been a much neglected subject, questions of death, judgment, hell and heaven.

The author writes out of the conviction that in many of our churches today concern for the present life has 'over-powered that for the life to come', and in so doing has not only in effect surrendered to the prevailing 'spirit of our age', but has robbed itself of many of the riches which belong to her in Christ.

Although there is much creative thought that has gone into this book so that deep matters are conveyed clearly, the writer avoids speculation which almost invariably goes with a study like this. Instead, Mr. Helm never goes beyond the limits imposed by Scripture itself and of course there is no reason why he should have to, since the teaching Scripture itself contains, is more than sufficient for God's intended purpose of warning and encouraging.

In order to neutralize certain ways of thinking which have crept into our society, Mr. Helm provides a powerful case for reinstating personal responsibility before God who is our judge. In this section in which he clears away some of the deadwood in our thinking, Mr. Helm includes one of the best accounts of the biblical view of 'time' as a gift of God I have come across; and in so doing brings us back to the biblical balance that we are to conduct our business on earth in the solemn, yet liberating, light of eternity.

With great sensitivity the subject of 'death and dying' is explored, including the question of whether a believer should ever want to die. At a time when the Bishop of Durham is yet again doubting belief in a bodily resurrection, Mr. Helm's treatment of the matter makes refreshing reading.

The necessity of divine judgment and the means of judgment are helpfully dealt with, including the knotty question of the relationship between judgment, works and grace. Heaven receives an excellent treatment, including a look at some of those who have done their best to undermine belief in its existence (Marx, for example). The dreadful matter of Hell, likewise, is dealt with in a penetrating and lucid fashion. Here the alternative ideas of universalism and annihilation are carefully considered and rejected, and the biblical picture is plainly put before the reader.

The final chapter dealing with the tension that the Christian experiences in life between 'the now and the not yet' brings this superb study to a fitting close, ending on the positive note of the Christian hope.

This is an important and thoroughly readable little book which, if taken to heart, will do much to redress the balance in the teaching and lives of many of our churches. Every minister should obtain a copy!

**GOD AND CREATION IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY** Kathryn Tanner  
Blackwell, Oxford 1988 196pp. £25.00 ISBN 0 631 15994 0

In this book, the author tackles the age-old subject of the relationship between the sovereignty of God and the free-will of the creature. She correctly perceives that this is a problem which cuts across all the usual divisions of Christian theology, so that to brand it as somehow specifically 'Calvinist', as so many do, is completely mistaken. Her quotes are taken from the widest range of Protestant and Catholic theologians, and her conclusions are generally applicable to both, though admittedly in slightly different ways.

Furthermore, it is a book written from the standpoint of committed Christian faith. The author wants to demonstrate that it is coherent to believe that God is sovereign, but that at the same time his creatures have a genuine freedom of action. She deplores the fact that many modern theologians seem to feel that they must resort to extremely radical restatements of Christian doctrine, and suggests that it may be at least partly due to a failure to maintain the coherence of traditional teaching which is responsible for this. She achieves her aim of justifying the classical juxtaposition of divine sovereignty and human freedom by relying on the concept of transcendence. For her, talk about God is by definition on a different level from talk about man, and to suggest that the one can somehow thwart the other represents a confusion of mental categories. She claims that it is precisely this confusion which has produced the loss of coherence which we notice in so much modern theological and philosophical discussion.

The book's arguments are philosophical, rather than theological, and there is virtually no reference to the Bible, for example. Nevertheless, it prepares the ground for the study of Biblical teaching in a way which makes philosophy genuinely appear to be the handmaid of theology. The main criticism which must be levelled at the book is that its language is exceedingly dense. Many readers will turn with relief to the short summaries at the end of each chapter, where the author restates in a fairly straightforward way what the argument has been about thus far! This is just as well, since otherwise the going will be tough for many. The book has something of the feel of a doctoral thesis in this respect, and it is to be hoped that the author will popularize her style in future. She has so much of value to contribute to the ongoing debate on the subject.

There are some extremely full notes at the end of the book, and an adequate index to help the reader find his way around. This is a book for specialists, but it will reward those with the knowledge and the patience to pursue it to the end.

Oak Hill College, London N14

GERALD BRAY

**DIFFERENT GOSPELS CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY AND MODERN THEOLOGIES** Ed. **Andrew Walker**

Hodder & Stoughton, London 1988 xvii + 253pp. £7.95 ISBN 0 340 42631 4

We live at a time when liberal theologies have taken over, to a large extent, many of the main-line British denominations. At least, that is the impression

one gets when one looks at their leadership. To be sure, at the points where active evangelization is being done liberalism, or modernism, may not be so much in evidence; but that is not surprising, for its 'gospel' constitutes a message hardly suggestive of the New Testament priorities which are the concern of the evangelist. The result is a sad dichotomy, with excesses on both sides. On the one, present-day Christian fundamentalism is getting itself a thoroughly bad name with (among other things) the 'television evangelist' scandals in America so widely publicized in the media. Besides, there are non-Christian fundamentalisms which add a further ill-flavour, and all this militates against a fair and thoughtful hearing for conservative apologetics. On the other hand, modernism continues to spawn many versions of the gospel which bear very little resemblance to what has historically been considered to be the New Testament message. In the circumstances therefore it is very heartening to see that scholars and leaders who (in the eyes of those in the centre) cannot be branded as obscurantist or 'fundamentalist' are realizing that the very essence of the Gospel is at stake in the modern world; that its defence cannot be left to the conservative fringe as they see it; and that there is an urgent need for those who believe in the historic doctrines of the Christian Faith to throw their energies into the intellectual battle. This book is an attempt to do that. It originates from the C.S. Lewis Centre and is edited and introduced by the founder, Dr. Andrew Walker, a lay theologian in the Orthodox tradition. It opens with him interviewing in turn four well-known leaders: Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, Prof. Tom Torrance, and the charismatic Cardinal Suenens. They discuss the state of the Church today. Next come seven chapters on 'Doctrinal issues in the light of modernist thought': Thomas Smail on the Trinity and the Resurrection; Alister McGrath on the Resurrection and the Incarnation; Keith Ward on Miracles; R.J. Berry on Science and Miracles; Alasdair Heron reflecting on Lewis's criticisms of biblical scholarship; James Dunn on the New Testament as history; and Peter Toon and Bishop Graham Leonard on Meditating on Scripture. Finally there are four chapters on 'Contemporary issues facing the church and society'. Colin Gunton writes on the Spirit as Lord, modernism's surrender of freedom; Alan Torrance on Liberation Theology; Gavin D'Costa on Religious Pluralism; and Peter Berger on the social sources of apostasy in America. There is a bibliography of eight pages, and four interesting pages of notes on contributors.

This is a most welcome book, and I greatly enjoyed it. It is good to have criticisms of modernism by thinkers who would not ordinarily appear on a Church Society platform. They help to lift our thoughts and our language out of the set channels into which they too readily tend to settle, and to add insights we might miss. I came away from reading these essays with a renewed conviction that if western civilization is to be re-converted to the Gospel (and if the unevangelized world is to be presented with the authentic Gospel) then it is essential that the Bible be restored to the position of authority it once held as 'God's Word Written'. This is a task which surely requires the best of our consecrated scholarship.

**THE SENSE OF HIS PRESENCE: EXPERIENCING SPIRITUAL  
REGENESIS. David C. Mains**

Word Publishing Inc., Waco, Texas 1988 192pp. \$8.95 ISBN 0 899 3107 X

David Main's yearning for Revival struck a cord with me. I love his longing for the electrifying presence of Jesus.

His book is easy to read and well set out. The pattern is that he writes a chapter on the theory, say, of how preaching and the Word of God come alive during Revival, and then he writes a second chapter on the same subject, giving us abundant examples from historical Revivals.

As a preacher I am happy. I have enough first-class illustrations to last me a good while. Thank you, Mr. Mains!

The book is American—for example, once or twice 'Revival' means 'a Lively Evangelistic Campaign', but ninety-eight per cent of the time it means 'an Awareness of God's Presence', so that the whole moral tone of a community is changed.

Mr. Mains asks: 'How do we measure the spiritual life of a church?' By numerical size, by beautiful buildings, doctrinal purity, is it the church meeting my needs, the brilliance of the pastor?

His answer: 'In my mind, the answer revolves around a single standard. Is there a strong, abiding sense of the presence of the Lord here?'

But Christ is always present in His church, is he not? Yes, but congregations go through the motions and pick up their agenda from the culture around them instead of marching to Christ's drum. And that's why we need Revival. I believe that God wants to surprise this generation with His presence. It is not yet the optimum time. A great day is ahead. Get ready.

David Mains then deals with 'Worship'. If Christ were physically present in your church, we would fall prostrate in a holy fear, worship would come alive, formality would vanish. We would feel it important that we were not late for worship. We would prepare carefully for worship—starting on Saturday night with a good night's sleep! (I like that. Can you see Christians switching off late television because they do not want their worship to be spoilt? O, happy day!)

Then the interesting examples from history, for example, before the Reformation congregations listened to (heavy) organ music; Luther encouraged God's people to sing; Wesley wrote six thousand hymns.

Next—the Presence of Jesus and Love. Imagine the physical presence of Jesus in our churches. He would command us to end gossip, put away grudges and two-faced friendships. Prepare for Renewal by taking seriously Christ's insistence that we truly love one another.

Revival is a revival of love; husbands and wives are reconciled; fathers and sons pray together; racial barriers are lifted. Love explodes in the congregation. The chapter on Holiness thrilled me. 'God yearns for close fellowship with His church'. He quotes much from Finney. 'In Revival the charm of the world is broken and the power of sin overcome.' 'We excuse sins and are satisfied with 70% of walking in the light.' 'The Lord won't budge 1 mm. on holiness'. 'Revival results in a real desire to serve the King.' We need to know the presence of Christ as our King not just as a friend, brother, and Saviour, then we would think in terms of serving and not be wrapped up in our own self-centredness. The poor and powerless always benefit when Renewal sweeps through the church.

The author's chapter on Preaching would thrill a preacher. In Revival God's Word comes alive. Parishioners would listen with the same careful attention as they would give if Christ were present. In Revival resistant hearers are suddenly broken by the hammer of the Spirit. There is a famine of great preaching. Listen to this on Prayer:

If we are going to experience awakening leaders are going to have to give a lead in boldness in prayer. We must talk face to face with Christ. The King of the universe has truly given us His attention.

Revival and Prayers always go together.

Finally, Evangelism. Mr. Mains makes the telling point that all our training in Evangelism makes little impact if people are not excited about Jesus. He knows his subject, Revival, well. I like this man and his repetitive longing for Revival.

What he says is not new for any who have read Revival histories; but it is refreshing and a reminder of certain things which I find missing in the Charismatic Movement, for example, the stress on holiness and the preaching of the Word.

One thing I found missing is this: David Mains forgets that Revivals come in God's time. King Jesus decides when and where, and who and how. All we can do is put ourselves in the place where God can bring His Renewal through us. But would it not be grand if we all caught Mr. Mains's vision? I long for the day when God's people are excited about the Lord, grievances are put aside, guilt released, healings occur, alcoholics are freed, joy comes tumbling into depressed lives and Sunday is the high point of the week! Go for it!

34 St. Flora's Road, Littlehampton

PETER GORDON-ROBERTS

### **SERMONS: VOLUME ONE Hugh Latimer**

(Originally published by Cambridge University Press in 1844 for the Parker Society)

Focus Christian Ministries Trust, Lewes 1987 551pp. £7.95 ISBN 1 870223 04 7

One of the greatest handicaps our earliest English Reformers laboured under was that at first, they were associated with King Henry VIII! So much so that recent celebrations of martyrs in the Church of England brushed them on one side and focussed on the Roman Catholic English 'martyrs'! It is therefore important to show that our leading Protestant Reformers might have been sailing in the same direction as Henry VIII—away from Rome, but they were definitely *not* in the same boat!

These sermons, preached on various occasions by Hugh Latimer will show this to be clearly true. The motivations of Latimer and of his colleagues like Archbishop Cranmer, were entirely different from those of the King. In them, God was ruling; in the King He was *over-ruling*! Moreover, we can see from this selection of his sermons why he was such a popular preacher with both high and low, equally in Royal Court Chapel as in parish church. John Foxe, in his *Acts and Monuments* refers to him as 'that worthy champion and old practised soldier of Christ . . . caught in the blessed net of God's Word; won through Thomas Bilney to the true knowledge of Christ', thus revealing

the secret of Latimer's fervour and faithfulness as a preacher of the Gospel.

Latimer's success as a popular preacher was partly due to his skill in getting on to the 'wave-length' of his audience. We see this especially in his sermons on 'the Card', included in this first volume. Preaching on Matthew 5 to ordinary folk, many of whom were illiterate, he conjures up in their mind a pack of playing cards. The cards are of course wordless, but their symbols are well-known and their use understood. So he lays down a question, like a playing card, 'What requireth Christ of a Christian man?' and enjoins, 'Now turn up your trump, your heart (hearts is Trump, as I said before), and cast your trump on this card, and upon this card you shall learn what Christ requireth . . .' (p.13).

Then to a more learned congregation in St. Paul's cathedral, he even turns their minds over to the earthy image of 'the Plough', on Romans 15:4. He contends that so many clergy and prelates have neglected the 'plough' (that is, preaching the Word), and are attending to purely mundane matters and even worldly pleasures, while Londoners go merrily on to eternal destruction. And, if the metaphor is vivid, even more stirring is the application: 'O London, London! repent, repent; for I think that God is more displeased with London than ever He was with the city of Nebo, and will punish the iniquity of London as well as He did then of Nebo.' (p.65).

Latimer's brilliant use of suspense to shock his hearers, after riveting their attention, by a completely unexpected turn, is well exemplified as follows:

And now I would ask a strange question: Who is the most diligentest bishop and prelate in all England, that passeth all the rest in doing his office? I can tell, for I know him who it is . . . But now I think I see you listening and hearkening that I should name him. And will ye know who it is? I will tell you . . . it is the devil! (p.70).

His fearlessness before Henry VIII, denouncing the King's 'fornication', nearly cost him his life and caused his suspension for a time. His boldness in preaching before Edward VI earned the King's unqualified admiration. His persistence in preaching and teaching 'heresy' under Mary Tudor took him finally to a martyr's end. But what a preacher! This volume of Hugh Latimer's sermons should be read, marked, learned and inwardly digested by all who aspire to be faithful preachers of God's Word and it should encourage them to 'nail their colours to the mast', especially at this time when too many of our church leaders are nailing theirs to 'both sides of the fence'!

22 Woodland Way, Fairlight, Hastings

OWEN THOMAS

## **GEOFFREY WAINWRIGHT ON WESLEY AND CALVIN**

**Geoffrey Wainwright**

Uniting Church Press, Melbourne 1987 70pp. No price ISBN 0 85819 602 6

Geoffrey Wainwright who is the (Methodist) Professor of Systematic Theology at Duke University was invited to give the Cato Lecture at the 1985 Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, a church formed in 1977 by a coming together of the great majority of Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists there. This brief book is the substance of his lecture, somewhat amplified. It is a lucid, sympathetic and eirenic discussion of the

differences so often considered to separate, decisively, the theologies of Calvinists and Wesleyans. Differences there certainly are; but the author reduces them to much less than is often supposed by going back to his heroes themselves. He clearly has a great regard for both Calvin and Wesley, for although he is an ordained minister of the British Methodist Conference he gained his doctor's degree from the University of Geneva. He quotes abundantly from both, and shows how close they are on all the great themes of biblical faith and practice. Good it would have been if all their subsequent followers had been as close to Scripture as they themselves were! Thus only at one point, he says, does the new *Basis of Union* disclose a possibly radical difference between the Methodist and Reformed positions in the matter of salvation. Wesleyan reflective theology (rather than the theology of its hymns) tended to the Catholic and Orthodox position that 'God does indeed do everything, but not alone' in salvation, man has a part to play; whereas the Reformed position ascribes everything to God alone. But he notes with regard to a related point of contention—predestination—that while Calvin's pupil Beza had brought this forward into an *a priori* position in the doctrine of God, Calvin himself had placed it in an *ex post facto* position under his doctrine of salvation (*Institutes*, Bk. III). Thus Wesley is closer to Calvin than Wesleyans today are to the Reformed.

The author covers his subject broadly. Some chapter headings are: Moderated Differences (man's fallenness, his part in salvation, 'perfection', election, God's sovereignty, the optimism of Grace); Nuanced Agreements (spiritual knowledge, the image of God, scripture's witness, Trinitarian involvement, covenant, Justification and Sanctification); Man's Chief End; Holiness and Happiness; and lastly, a short chapter featuring Charles Simeon, Friends Above. Nine pages of Notes end this brief but rewarding study.

Ivy Cottage, Grove, Wantage

DOUGLAS SPANNER

**AN EXACT DIARY OF THE LATE EXPEDITION OF THE PRINCE OF ORANGE: 1689, BY A MINISTER CHAPLAIN IN THE ARMY**

Edited M.W. Dewar

Focus Christian Ministries Trust, Lewes 1988 57pp. £1.75 ISBN 1 870223 101

One of the most interesting publications celebrating the tercentennial of the 'Glorious Revolution', is this detailed account of the whole expedition, by a certain John Whittie, Chaplain in the British Army. He sailed with the expeditionary force, accompanying the Prince of Orange, from the Netherlands to Torbay in Devon.

The reason for the expedition is given in no uncertain terms by John Whittie, viz. James II with his Catholic allies

consulted how to destroy the protestants and extirpate the Lord's inheritance, that they should be no more a people here, and that their Name should be rooted out.

He then proceeds to describe the course of the voyage in graphic detail. It was by no means a straight-forward operation. Contrary winds played havoc with some of the smaller ships. A few were driven off their course and landed on more hostile shores in South East England. But by what Whittie describes

## Churchman

as 'the undoubted Providence of God', the expeditionary force landed safely at Torbay on 5 November 1689. The people of Torbay were enjoying the usual Guy Fawkes day firework display, which Prince William and his men mistook as a grand welcome for *them!* But their mistake was not altogether misleading, because they were welcomed in Torbay and in most places, with great enthusiasm.

Whittie's vivid eyewitness account of the landing at Torbay is quaint, but impressive:

The Navy was like a little City, the Masts appearing like so many Spires. The people were like Bees swarming all over the Bay, and now all the Schievelingers *Dutch sailors* are set to work to carry the Men and Horses unto shore with speed . . . The Officers and Souldiers crowded the Boats extremely, many being ready to sink under the Weight, happy was that Man who could get to Land the soonest; some jumped up to their Knees in the Water and one or two were Head over Ears. The Night was now the Day for Labour, and all this was done lest the Enemy should come, before we were all in a readiness to receive them. The Country Harmony was ringing of the Bells for our arrival.

The progress of Prince William and his forces to London is described in similar vein. One highlight was the service of Thanksgiving in Exeter Cathedral at which Bishop Burnet preached. The record ends with Whittie's description of the Coronation of William and Mary in Westminster Abbey by the Bishop of London, the sermon being preached by the Bishop of Salisbury.

Whittie's interesting and even entertaining report underlines the fact that the 'Glorious Revolution' was bloodless, and therefore is all the more worthy of celebration. We should be grateful to the Publishers for issuing this reprint, which makes enjoyable reading as well as making us thankful that the 'Glorious Revolution' succeeded in making England an altogether more pleasant place to live in! As a 'footnote' to history this book is a real gem!

22 Woodland Way, Fairlight, Hastings

OWEN THOMAS

### **EVANGELICALISM IN MODERN BRITAIN: A HISTORY FROM THE 1730s TO THE 1980s** David Bevington

Unwin Hyman Ltd., London 1988 364pp. £11.95 pb.

ISBN 0 04 941019 9

This book is more concerned with movements than with men. In doing so, Dr. Bevington, a professional historian of Stirling University, strikes a death blow to the view that evangelicalism has always been a united current in mainstream Christianity. What is seen is a mixed stew of various ingredients. His leading treatment of the whole spectrum of evangelicalism shows there has never been a continuous united evangelical constituency throughout two hundred and fifty years. In his words, 'Evangelical religion has changed immensely during two and a half centuries of its existence'. Before accepting this view it would be helpful to consider such works as C.A. Scott's *Evangelical Doctrine Bible Truth* (1901), C.R. Balleine's *Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (1908), and books by modern authors such as J.R.W. Stott and J.I. Packer. Nevertheless, Dr. Bevington's historically well-documented thesis with its eighty-eight pages of reference notes offers a survey of evangelicalism, including Charismatic and Restoration movements

that is both erudite and in some cases convincing. He has combed and commented upon almost every available source from the writings of persons almost unknown to modern evangelicals, to works of outstanding scholars. From them he has demonstrated, in his opinion, that evangelicalism has never run a straight course. Of particular importance is his stress on the cultural, sociological effects upon evangelicalism, not least in the impact on it of the Enlightenment and the Romantic Movement.

Agreeing that the term 'evangelical' (of the gospel) dates from the Reformation in a non-partisan sense, he holds that its movement in Britain emerged in the eighteenth century with characteristics of conservatism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentricism [the cross]. This opening chapter of evangelical qualities deserves close study. However, certain weaknesses appear in his treatment of the subject. While he gives much space to Edward Irving with his pre-millennianism, prophetic and tongues speaking beliefs, he gives scant attention to Wales, and little examination of Charles Simeon's influence which, in G.M. Trevelyan's opinion, paved the way for the ascendancy of evangelicals in the Church of England during the early years of the nineteenth century. It is questionable, too, whether Bevington is correct that the Reformed Tradition had practically died away in the Church of England until the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival re-discovered it, and that only a few clergy held it. Not so, he claims, with Methodism and Dissent with their roots in Puritanism. He has valuable comments on the doctrine of assurance, and the nineteenth century holiness movement which cuts across evangelical conservatism. His final chapter on twentieth century evangelicalism deserves particular attention in outlining how liberalism became more marked, and how evangelicals have largely embraced a social gospel.

This is one of the most fascinating books on the evangelical scene that has emerged in recent years, and has laid a foundation on which later scholars may build. Bevington has been content to assess and array facts without committing himself to them. In this, he is like a spectator at a football match who notes features in the game as they occur. Not all readers will agree with his views, but it would be difficult to refute many of them. It is a book to be commended for its erudition and richness of content, but some of its conclusions should be accepted with caution.

Munden, 5 Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford

ARTHUR BENNETT

## **EVANGELICALS IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND 1734-1984**

**Kenneth Hylson-Smith**

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1988 411pp. £19.95

ISBN 0 567 09454 5

The numerical ascendancy and increasing influence of evangelicals in the Anglican Church is evidenced by the output of many scholarly books in recent years. One of the most recent is the present one. Dr. Hylson-Smith's is different from some others in that, starting from Whitefield and the Wesleys, it justifies the claim that history may best be taught and learned through leading personalities more than by major events and movements of thought and life. In this sense it treads much of the ground laid by G.R. Balleine's *A History of the Evangelical Party in The Church of England*, but explores it in

greater detail and with fresh insights, as well as up-dating it. But throughout he gives place to the political, social, and economic cultures in which evangelicals are set and are influenced by them. There is also much in his book to prove that revival of religion occurs when church going, mortality, and disbelief in God are at a low ebb, as they were in the early eighteenth century.

He develops his thesis along three lines, that of Arminian Methodism of John Wesley, calvinistic Methodism of Lady Huntingdon, and Evangelicals of the Church of England. What is remarkable about the latter is that its origin occurred when isolated clergy, often in no contact with each other, became revived. His mini-biographies thus show that Anglican evangelicalism was a clerical movement. He lists four elements that impregnated the growth of the Movement; those of correspondence, clerical associations, patronage of proprietary chapels and independent identity of evangelicals adhering to church order.

The author gives particular attention to the Clapham Sect, and the rise of evangelical world mission, and traces how the once despised minority of clergy became esteemed, some reaching high office in the Church. In his view the Movement laid the foundation of Victorian morality. He offers a sensitive approach to the Oxford Movement some of whose leaders came from an evangelical background, and were influenced by it. His treatment of evangelicals in the nineteenth century is praiseworthy in outlining evangelical social concern, evangelism, and spiritual influence. Here is to be found the origin of Home Mission Societies, evangelical colleges, renewal movements, and the onset of Bible and Science conflicts. Of particular importance is his careful treatment of the growth of liturgical reform, and the emergence of evangelical liberalism and modernism. His last section has much to say about the 1939–45 post-war period with its development of evangelical Conference centres, calls to revival, growth of scholarship, response to liberalism, and the rise of a new hymnology. He gives particular attention to the Charismatic Movement and its influence upon Anglican evangelicals by deepening the faith and enriching the lives of many. But he strangely omits the East African Revival Movement and the part it has played on the Anglican evangelical body. In conclusion he points out that while modern evangelicals face problems in Society, the whole Church, and the Church of England, they have done so before, yet remained true to Scripture and the Lordship of Christ.

No one reading this book will fail to understand who evangelicals are, and what evangelicalism is.

5 Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford

ARTHUR BENNETT

**THE CHALLENGE OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY: ESSAYS IN APPROACH AND METHOD** Ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron

Rutherford House Books, Edinburgh; Paternoster Press, Exeter 1987 153pp.  
£9.90hb.

ISBN 0 9460 6826 7

This collection of essays is drawn largely from a Conference on Christian Dogmatics convened by Rutherford House in 1985 with authors drawn from France, Holland, Britain and the United States of America.

Following the editor's opening chapter, 'The Logic of Biblical Authority', Henri Blocher explores several usages of 'analogy of faith' relating it in particular to biblical coherence as the basis of biblical interpretation. J.G. McConville's discussion of the Old Testament as a theological resource dwells on polarities underlying the notion of biblical unity and diversity. He stresses the Old Testament as 'creative of religious experience' within the forward movement of God's people. With a musical analogy he suggests that the Old Testament experience of God can, for Christians, be transposed into a higher key. It is far from clear to me, however, that 'Christian experience of God and salvation is qualitatively different from that of the Old Testament saint': especially if experience rather than theology is the measure.

Gerald Bray's 'Unity and Diversity in Christian Theology' shows something of the book's overall preoccupation with this 'one and many' theme which he approaches through a distinction between 'synchronic and diachronic' pressures on the construction of any theology. By these terms he simply refers to past Tradition on the one hand and present intellectual peer-group pressure on the other. He suggests that the conservative theologian roots himself in the former and the liberal in the latter. Preferring the traditional (diachronic) dimension as the basis for evangelical theology he characterizes charismatic-renewal movements as a 'powerful solvent for tradition'. Charismatics are then defined as liberals because they accept the influence of the present rather than engage deeply with the intellectual theology of the past. Any apparent conservatism amongst Charismatics 'is really an illusion' for they are indifferent to theology as such. Bray has several genuinely interesting ideas on the nature of theology, not least in seeing the communion of saints in terms of fellowship down the ages and as the basis for tradition itself. His argument as it stands could, I think, do without the diachronic-synchronic distinction or else he should enter more fully into the interrelation of themes presupposed by this terminology in formal structuralist discussion.

Robert L. Reymond's 'The Justification of Theology' asks why we should bother with theology at all? His answer is fourfold: because Jesus was a creative theologian; because He commanded his followers to teach; because the Apostles thought theologically; and because the New Testament church thought theologically. Having said that he then makes some comments on the relation between Christology and Myth in Bultmann and Kaseman.

But it is in Jan Veenhof's short but splendid essay entitled 'The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics' that the book really seems to tackle the issue of theological method. In eighteen pages he shows how hermeneutics, as the task of interpretation, is a process which brings together exegesis and understanding. He makes vividly clear how we bring our own life experience with us as we interpret texts. He discards the idea of a hermeneutical circle and replaces it with a 'spiral' to show how knowledge changes us as we press on to yet further insight. Then with a theological sureness of touch he describes how the Holy Spirit is related to the individual interpreter. The critical interpretation of the Bible is, he says, to be carried out as with any other book; 'there is no specific Biblical hermeneutics'.

But, and it is a vital 'but', there is something very distinctive about the approach to that critical study. It is that we have an expectation, grounded in faith, that God will grasp us. This expectation has been palpably demonstrated

in the history of the church and it is known by the individual for whom Jesus, as the ground of scripture, is permanently actual and relevant. Thus we discover new things in this word. 'As for this discovery, it must be taken into account that God's revealing of his saving truth and our discovery of it are not two separated phenomena.' The nature of our relation with the Holy Spirit and with scripture removes a subject-object division. We exist in a relation which is 'the knowing of faith'. The Spirit is the 'founder of relations'. This relationship of knowing is 'a tremendous thing, comparable with creation itself'.

This essay is itself creative and a worthy piece of theology. It shows how full attention to more recent critical theory along with a theologian's sense of the givenness of faith can advance our insight and prevent a mere reiteration of time-honoured figures and themes.

Ronald S. Wallace closes the volume with 'Calvin's Approach to Theology'. Perhaps his major concern is to stress Calvin's 'mystical' dimension. Really he refers to Calvin's own religious experience as the framework of his theology. Here, as elsewhere in the book, Anselm's famed faith-seeking understanding is drawn in as a foundation for understanding the Bible. There is an interesting contradiction between Wallace who wishes to keep human self-consciousness quite distinct from the matter of the Bible, and Veenhof's theology of the Spirit in relation to the interpreting believer. The whole area of spirituality in relation to a doctrine of man demands attention as Veenhof and Wallace are compared. Wallace approaches the issue of subjectivity strictly in terms of Calvin's thought, as is his explicit brief. The advantage of Veenhof's case is to show that such a base cannot simply be transported into the present as a working system. So much has happened in our understanding of thought since Calvin, not least the contributions made by Protestantly informed philosophers and theologians. More positively, Wallace's reflection on theology and godliness is timely. It prompts me to wonder why grace has not been given a formal place in this 'challenge of evangelical theology'?

Theology Department, Nottingham University

DOUGLAS DAVIES

**SOME FAVOURITE BOOKS John Macleod**

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1988 125pp. £1.50pb. ISBN 0 85151 538 X

This is a delightful little book. It consists of some twenty-two chapters, each of which represents a cameo sketch of a great Christian author and/or his major literary work(s). These essays first saw the light of day, without the footnotes added by the present publishers, in the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland between the years 1918 and 1922. This is the first time that they have been brought together in one volume. The author, Dr. John Macleod, was Principal of the Free Church College, Edinburgh.

This book serves not only as an excellent introduction to some of the great classics, such as Thomas Boston's *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (a must for all preachers and evangelists), Bishop Ryle's *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*, and Charles Hodge's *The Way of Life*, but also to the great men themselves. It is ideal bed-time reading. And a sure stimulus to delve more deeply into the riches that God has provided for his people, through his servants, down the years. Macleod's sketches are concise, challenging,

cheering and satisfying. A real fillip in these days of froth and superficiality. My only regret is that it is not longer and more comprehensive. Buy this book. Read it. Give it to your friends. And encourage others, especially new converts, to read it.

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

GEORGE CURRY

**THE OPEN MIND AND OTHER ESSAYS** Donald M. MacKay,  
edited by Melvin Tinker

Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham 1988 224pp. £10.95hb. ISBN 0 85110 06404

There are not many scientists who publish in the better journals of philosophy and theology as well as in scientific journals. Donald MacKay, who died in 1987, was such a scientist. Trained as a physicist, he became Granada Research Professor of Communication and Neuroscience at Keele University. He was internationally known for his research on brain mechanisms, particularly the processing of information from the human visual system. He was—and is—also internationally known for his writings on the relation between science and Christian faith.

This excellent book, subtitled 'A scientist in God's world', gives a cross-section of Donald MacKay's writings on science and faith. His was a penetrating intellect and he had no time for sloppy thinking in this area. He believed that there could be no conflict between the revelation of God in the Bible and in the book of Nature as the scientist understands it. 'Nothing buttery', his word for reductionism, was unacceptable, because it went beyond true science. To say that because we can interpret human behaviour in terms of electrical impulses in the brain, man is nothing but a complex physico-chemical mechanism, for instance, is illogical. Above all, MacKay wanted us to be logical.

Complementarity was another of his themes and it is well illustrated in several of the essays in this book. Physicists can accept both the wave and particle descriptions of light as equally valid, if apparently contradictory. The two descriptions are complementary, just as the Christian and scientific descriptions of the world are. The facts of experience convince us that both are necessary.

Christians—and perhaps humanists too—feel threatened when neuroscientists claim that man's brain can be completely described in physical terms. This seems to dehumanize us and to make free will into an illusion, let alone concepts of the soul and immortality. As a Christian neuroscientist, Donald MacKay found no insoluble problems here: 'we have no battle on our hands to prove that man's brain will defy physical explanation'. MacKay's proof that even if we knew all the physical events in the brain which led to a particular choice, the choice could still be freely made, is well known. It has irritated some people too, I suspect because they could not answer its logic while being unwilling to accept it! Put as simply as I can, the proof is as follows. A superscientist describes the state of A's brain at a particular time and thus tells him what would be correct to believe about it. However, if A believes it the state of his brain changes. If the superscientist produces a modified description which takes A's belief into account, then A would be

## Churchman

wrong to disbelieve it. So the description will always depend on A making up his mind. As MacKay says:

However predictable his actual choice may have been for the non-intervening observer, it had no immutable specification beforehand which if only A had known it, he would have been correct to believe and mistaken to reject.

Our personalities can be thought of as complex programmes running in the computer of the brain. Donald MacKay's tentative suggestion about immortality is that the programme is transferred to the resurrection body, which must have something equivalent to a brain. So he finds the resurrection of the body, as distinct from the immortality of the soul, an essential doctrine.

I should like to recount more of his insights, for instance his view that there is nothing to upset us in the concept of an artificial intelligence that is self-conscious, if only we were clever enough to make one. There is also an excellent chapter on the mythology of chance—taking Jacques Monod to task for his 'Chance & Necessity' among other things. Other topics range from the sovereignty of God to value-free knowledge. Most of the chapters should be required reading for a course on apologetics.

Evolution is not MacKay's field, but he has some penetrating, though gentlemanly, criticisms of Richard Dawkins's *The Blind Watchmaker*. Dawkins believes that evolutionary theory has destroyed Paley's argument that beautifully designed organisms imply a Creator just as a watch presupposes a watchmaker. Whether geological time is long enough for all the mutations to produce say, an eye, remains an open question, even though Dawkins feels that it is. Feelings are not enough, says MacKay: 'Somebody, some day, had better do the sums; and until then, honesty demands that the intellectual gap be recognised'.

Melvin Tinker has produced a splendid tonic for us in this selection, adding a useful index and notes on each chapter. I recommend the book wholeheartedly.

Department of Biochemistry, University Hospital & Medical School, Nottingham

JOHN HAWTHORNE

### **READY, STEADY, GROW David Holloway**

Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne 1989 186pp. £5.99pb. ISBN 0 86065 751 5

There is much within this volume that most, if not all, of us need to hear. It is an important book and represents a significant contribution to the church growth debate by one who has done his homework. David Holloway speaks with conviction and passion. He earnestly believes that 'What is required is for local churches and the denominations to develop a church planting consciousness' (p.103). However it must also be said that the publishers, and in particular an 'over-enthusiastic sub-editor' (Erratum slip), come very close to seriously under-mining the usefulness of this volume. The inclusivist language (humanity, he or she, chairperson), as well as being 'inelegant' (Erratum slip), could well put some off from hearing what Holloway has to say. In any reprint it is to be hoped that this infelicitous language will be removed. In the meantime the Erratum slip needs to be more obvious and

glued in. I did not find the one in mine until I was approximately three-quarters of the way through the book!

In the opening chapters one and two, Mr. Holloway introduces this theme. In chapters three and four he highlights the *Barriers to Growth* and some important *Assumptions* that we need to recognize. A New Testament backdrop is provided in chapters five and six, whilst in the remaining chapters he tackles ways of keeping people out (chapter seven), *The Urban Challenge* (chapter eight), and various aspects of church growth and planting (chapter nine to thirteen). He concludes with chapter fourteen on the *Vital Signs* of a healthy church.

The best material is to be found in chapters five, six and twelve. Here the author takes us to, and roots what he has to say, in the Scriptures, although not all will agree with his view of prophecy. He also underlines the importance of prayer and the Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. The least satisfactory chapter is chapter eight, *The Urban Challenge*. This contains a logical inconsistency. After highlighting the problems facing many inner-city churches Mr. Holloway then itemizes the options open to them—death, relocation, stay and work, redefine rôle or church plant. The latter is described as *The only real option* (p.101) but the author fails to show both why that is so, for an already established Urban Priority Area Church, and how an existing church is to do this.

The quotations from Calvin and Luther (p.35) are somewhat selective and the use that is made of them misleading. A quick glance, for example, at Calvin's comments on 1 Peter 2.9 clearly shows that, although both he and other Reformers believed that the words of the Great Commission were addressed first and foremost to the Apostles (which they were), he was also convinced that the responsibility [calling] of every believer is to proclaim God's glory, greatness and Word every day both with our lips as well as with our lives.

Some, quite rightly, will question his dogmatic assertions concerning central funding/subsidies and the parish structure. The parish structure may not be without its problems but surely the way to correct abuse and misuse is not by disuse but right use. And, if we are to take him at his word and 'spend our resources of manpower and money where there is receptivity' (p.67) then what would become of evangelizing the nation as a whole? The Church of England, like so many other churches would have left many inner-city areas long ago! The parish structure exists, even in Urban Priority Areas, to facilitate the reaching out to the lost everywhere within our land. Surely the primary need today is for both the manpower on the ground and the people of God as whole to be revived. We need to pray for God to send from on high a season of revival and awakening.

The author's comment that the *Alternative Service Book* provides both 'scriptural and credal worship' (p.162) should be taken with a pinch of salt. The reference at the top of p.32 should read Vicar of St. Paul's, High Elswick, as there are at least three Anglican churches in Elswick. And, on the Contents page, the title for chapter ten should read *Modes and Shapes*.

Two further points are of concern. One relates to style, the other to content. With regard to style, it is to be regretted that at times the book reads too much like a catalogue. It is very interesting to learn what other church growth experts have discovered but lists do not make for easy reading nor are

the experts necessarily right. With regard to content, I think this question needs to be asked: Does the author distinguish enough between church growth on the one hand and church planting on the other? Very few question the importance of, and a lot of us need help with, the former. But in a nation that already has fifty thousand churches and a parish structure many, like David Edwards (*Church Times* 3/2/89), will find it difficult to agree with the author's conviction that we need to develop a church planting consciousness. I hope, though, that what David Holloway says about church growth, which after all is what the book is about (the sub-title is *Principles for the Growth of the Church in Britain*), is heard by as wide an audience as possible. It needs to be.

St. Stephen's Vicarage, Low Elswick, Newcastle upon Tyne

GEORGE CURRY

**OUR GOD REIGNS Tony Higton**

Hodder & Stoughton, London 1988 294pp. £2.95

ISBN 0 340 42628 4

Tony Higton, well-known as a fighter for orthodox morality and doctrine in the church, urges his readers to 'submit to God's sovereignty in Revelation, in Creation, in Salvation, in the local Church and in Judgement'. These five areas form the five main divisions of the book.

In each division of the book, he begins with a section (packed with references) on the Bible's teaching on that subject. Then by contrast, he turns to the nation, and in particular to the Church of England and its leaders. In each division also there is usually a section of application to the local church.

I found myself comparing this book on God with Jim Packer's *Knowing God*, though it does not have the conciseness and intellectual rigour of Packer's classic. On the other hand, Tony Higton does attempt to address current issues. Included are such areas as embryo research, abortion, homosexuality, the 'New Age Movement', the fire at York Minster and A.I.D.S.

The sections on the Bible's teaching are, by and large, straightforward restatements of common teaching, though I found some of the references unconvincing. (*Does Acts 4:31 show that the New Testament writers see themselves as speaking the Word of God? Do Matt. 16:19 and 18:18 show that 'evil powers can be 'bound' by the authoritative Word of faith'?*).

Public Enemy Number One is clearly 'the liberals' and there are many quotes from them. Sometimes I had a vague unease as to whether the selected quotes were fair to their speakers. Perhaps they were, but it would have helped to give the book weight if somewhere it could have acknowledged that the issues addressed were highly complex, or that there might be other legitimate biblical views on them. At one point, for example, the author seems to be saying that those evangelicals who do not share his view of Charismatic Renewal 'have a fairly liberal approach to Scripture themselves. They do not really face up to the clear teaching of the New Testament . . .' (p.22).

Those who have read David Holloway's book *A Nation under God* (Kingsway) may be disappointed with this book on the Church under God. We may wonder how many will be convinced by it who do not agree with it already.

But there is much in the book that would make good discussion group material; for example, the chapters on pro-life issues, sexual morality or discipline in the church. And there is much to be learnt from the author's experience in the public arena, contending for a biblical church. He must often have felt a voice in the wilderness. 'Would that all the Lord's people were prophets.'

St. Matthew's, St. Leonards-on-Sea

ROGER COMBES

**SCIENCE AND PROVIDENCE: GOD'S INTERACTION WITH THE WORLD** John Polkinghorne

S.P.C.K., London 1989 114pp. £5.95

ISBN 0 281 04398 1

There has recently been an intelligent revival of debate between the worlds of science and Christianity. This book is a very good example of this ongoing debate. In it Polkinghorne explores the nature of God's interaction with the world from the viewpoint of a physical scientist with a deeply Christian commitment. For Polkinghorne, God is not the impassible, distant being that is the product of much popular theism. Drawing on analogies from modern physics in which the physical world is no longer the predictable, deterministic machine of popular thought, God is perceived to be at work in the world's processes; 'The scientifically discerned process of the world is sufficiently flexible to permit both God and us to work within it (p.41).

However, both Process Theology and panentheism are rejected as making God too much a prisoner of time and process. Instead, the writer opts for what he calls 'divine dipolarity' in which God is both being (divine eternity) and becoming (divine temporality). God interacts with the world in ways other than the mere willing of its physical existence or ongoing events. Scientifically discerned processes show a certain openness to future possible states, an openness of becoming in which God is at work and in which, through prayer and attentiveness to the divine will we seek to align our wills to God's will. Miracles are not an *interference* with nature but an *interaction*—there is nothing logically impossible about the Resurrection or the Virginal Conception, which Polkinghorne calls an acted symbol within history.

If the processes of the world show an openness to future states, then it is possible to see evil, both moral and natural as a result of this. We are freely-choosing beings in the moral realm (the classic free-will defence of moral evil). But natural evil is held to be the result of the openness and freedom of the physical world. God gives to his creation an '... independence which is love's gift of freedom to the one beloved'. (p.66). That freedom, the expression of divine love means that there are the dark possibilities of destruction in both the moral and physical world.

It is hard to do justice to all the themes raised by this sensitive book. In many ways, despite its modern perspective in contemporary physics the book stands within the mainstream of Anglican theological thinking which has spanned the hundred years from *Lux Mundi* until today. There is the emphasis on the incarnation as an act of divine humanity, with kenosis in an imprecise form called upon to describe the mystery of the Word made Flesh. There is the tendency to make the doctrine of atonement recede into the background as the divine involvement of the incarnation and its outworking

in sacramental theology become the centre of theological thinking. I would like to see a more thorough exploration of the way in which God interacts with the world in the obedience of his Son to the death of the Cross. In what way does this actually deal with the imperfections of the world, both moral and physical? It would be valuable to have some sort of outworking of Paul's theme of the cosmic Christ in this context.

Yet Polkinghorne can write movingly of the way in which the cross shows us God as:

. . . not a spectator, but a fellow sufferer, who has himself absorbed the full force of evil. In the lonely figure hanging in the darkness and dereliction of Calvary the Christian believes that he sees God opening his arms to embrace the bitterness of the strange world he has made. The God revealed in the vulnerability of the incarnation and in the vulnerability of the creation are one. (p.68).

It is this combination of Christian spirituality and honesty before the unresolved problems of the physical world that makes this a valuable book.

The Vicarage, St. Keverne, Cornwall

TIM GOULDSTONE

## **COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE**

**Hugh Montefiore**

Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1988 ix + 66pp. £3.95 ISBN 0 7152 0631 1

In this little book Bishop Montefiore gives us the substance of his 1988 Barclay lectures, the series founded in 1978 in memory of Prof. William Barclay. The general subject of the series is 'Communication of the Christian Gospel', and the Bishop as an able communicator was a fairly obvious choice as a lecturer. His chapter headings are: The Gospel in an Age of Science; The Gospel and the Sciences; and, Communicating the Gospel in an Age of Science. I have not yet read his earlier and longer book, *The Probability of God*, but I must confess that the present one disappointed me. For one thing, there are too many references to science and its philosophy which give the impression of subject matter ill-digested. He writes for instance (p.34), '... the second law of thermodynamics . . . does not function within closed systems . . .', which is where it does function. Then again (p.53), '... facts are never certain and seldom complete . . . Facts are falsifiable . . .' Clearly, he has *theories* in mind, not facts. On a historical note (p.23), he writes, 'The ancient world had no idea of secondary causation'. Really? What of Aristotle's analysis of causation? and of such biblical passages as Exod. 14.21? Granted that the Bible attributes natural events to God, is it really necessary (as he seems to imply) that the advance of science, with its mechanistic explanations, compels us to relinquish this understanding of things? Surely not; but if this is what he means, how does the Bishop interpret such sayings as Matt 5.45; 6.26, 30? He would seem to rob them of all power to direct present conduct or inspire present trust. It is all so needless; as Dr. Thomas Chalmers once said 'The uniformity of nature [the validity, that is, of the concept of scientific law] is but another name for the faithfulness of God'. The biblical view allows *both* for the regularity of nature *and* for the exceptional miracle; one only has to position one's notion of the

relationship between Creator and creation in alignment with the biblical one to see this.

To come to my other point: the author's treatment of science and its basis in philosophy leaves me quite sceptical of his more literary assertions, such as (pp.25–26) that the New Testament writers never intended their plainly-recounted records to be understood as referring to events which actually happened! Such assertions are made too often and too easily, and (so far as my experience goes) in too question-begging a fashion for them to have any power to convince ordinary intelligent readers. Thinking men and women are right to be 'shocked' by them!

I think that the Bishop could have made a far better case than he has. I believe he has been too timid in what he has said; I hope next time he will be bolder. But the gracious tone in which he has written is very welcome.

Ivy Cottage, Grove, Wantage, Oxon

DOUGLAS SPANNER

## INDEX OF REVIEWS

BEBINGTON, <i>Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s</i> (A. Bennett)	276
CAMERON, ed., <i>The Challenge of Evangelical Theology: Essays in Approach and Method</i> (D.J. Davies)	278
CLOWNEY, <i>The Message of I Peter (The Bible Speaks Today)</i> (D. Guthrie)	262
DEWAR, ed., <i>An Exact Diary of the Late Expedition of the Prince of Orange: 1689</i> (O.J. Thomas)	275
DREWERY, BAUCKHAM edd., <i>Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine</i> (G.L. Bray)	267
HELM, <i>The Last Things: Death, Judgment and Hell</i> (M. Tinker)	269
HIGTON, <i>Our God Reigns</i> (R. Combes)	284
HOLLOWAY, <i>Ready, Steady, Grow</i> (G.R. Curry)	282
HYLSON-SMITH, <i>Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734-1984</i> (A. Bennett)	277
LATIMER, <i>Sermons</i> , Volume I (O.J. Thomas)	273
MACKAY, <i>The Open Mind and Other Essays</i> (J.N. Hawthorne)	281
MACLEOD, <i>Some Favourite Books</i> (G.R. Curry)	280
MAINS, <i>The Sense of His Presence: Experiencing Spiritual Regeneration</i> (P. Gordon-Roberts)	272
MONTEFIORE, <i>Communicating the Gospel in a Scientific Age</i> (D.C. Spanner)	286
METZGER, <i>The Canon of the New Testament</i> (R.T. Beckwith)	262
MORGAN, BARTON <i>Biblical Interpretation</i> (G.L. Bray)	264
NEILL, WRIGHT <i>The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986</i> (P.J. Budd)	266
POLKINGHORNE, <i>Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World</i> (T.M. Gouldstone)	285
ROSEN, <i>Y'shua</i> (G.R. Curry)	265
TANNER, <i>God and Creation in Christian Theology</i> (G.L. Bray)	270
WAINWRIGHT, <i>Geoffrey Wainwright on Wesley and Calvin</i> (D.C. Spanner)	274
WALKER, ed., <i>Different Gospels: Christian Orthodoxy and Modern Theologies</i> (D.C. Spanner)	270

## Other Books Received

- Cambridge University Press** John Rogerson, Philip Davies, *The Old Testament World*, 1989, £19.50
- T. & T. Clark** Ernest Best, *From Text To Sermon*, 1988, £4.95; Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, 1988, £7.95
- Cowley Publications** Ed. David Gracie, *Ghandi and Charlie: The Story of a Friendship*, 1988, \$9.95
- Eerdmans** Jacques Ellul, *Jesus and Marx: From Gospel to Ideology*, 1988, £10.25; Ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Theology & Violence: The South African Debate*, 1988, £9.50
- Kingsway Publications** Steve Turner, *Hungry For Heaven: Rock and Roll and the Search for Redemption*, 1988, £3.99
- Oxford University Press** Ed. George Appleton, *The Oxford Book of Prayer*, 1988, £4.95

**MANY *Churchman* READERS  
ARE ALREADY MEMBERS OF  
Church Society.**

**The present times are critical  
for the Church of England.**

We invite you to join Church Society which is committed to upholding the loyal clergy of the Church of England, encouraging her faithful members and raising a standard which can be clearly seen.

The present subscription, when combined with *Churchman* is £20 p.a.

(Students and Pensioners: £15.00).

*More information about the Society and its work will be gladly sent on request to the Society's office: Whitefield House, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT.*