

# Book Reviews

## **THE BOOK OF RUTH The New International Commentary on the Old Testament Robert L. Hubbard Jr.**

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1988, 317pp. £20.95

ISBN 0 8028 2358 0

There are two great besetting sins of Old Testament commentators, the first pretty pervasive and the other a special hazard to commentators on historical texts. Dr. Hubbard has conquered them both. The first can be called the 'Gashmu saith it' syndrome: some revered figure of the past made an assertion which has gone on re-appearing, unchecked, in successive commentaries; the second is to re-tell the story of the historical book concerned and to call the retelling a commentary. Dr. Hubbard (Old Testament teacher at Denver Seminary) follows no-one blindly. He has mastered a voluminous literature on Ruth and subjected it all to exact scrutiny in a most impressive way. The result is a book full of copious footnotes, a treasury of Ruth-study, rich in criticism, syntax and lexicography. Furthermore he knows that delicate art of blending exegesis with exposition so that constantly we are, at one and the same time, being told what happened, what it means and wherein it is a Word of God. It would be hard to praise too highly this exceptional commentary. There is perhaps one point where maybe he has bowed too soon to orthodoxy in that he seems to lean towards finding some *crisis* in the Davidic monarchy as the point of origin of the need to tell Ruth's story as David's ancestress. Surely a sensitive, finely-spun piece of artistry such as this narrative is (and no one will make us feel this better than Hubbard) must be the product of love and enthusiasm rather than controversy: in just the same way that today a major royal occasion spawns every sort of royal study. But what a minute carp this is when everything else merits only praise. From beginning to end we are gripped by Hubbard's skill as a writer, a student, a critic and a commentator. Here is a commentator one cannot afford to be without.

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ALEC MOTYER

## **JESUS WITHIN JUDAISM James H. Charlesworth**

S.P.C.K., London 1989, 265pp. £9.95

ISBN 0 281 04506 6

What evidence is there that the Four Gospels are factual documents of the sayings and life of Jesus? Professor Charlesworth regards them as serviceable writings based on pre-70 AD traditions of Jesus, whose tap-roots, in his opinion, lie in Judaism. His study of what he calls the 'Jesus Search' is an exhilarating thesis of Christ's Jewishness. He sees in Judaic apocalypticism, eschatology, and forgiveness of sins doctrines which Jesus held and taught. In holding to the influence of Jewish theology and culture upon Jesus he finds difficulty in believing that the sayings of Jesus were self-originating. In his view the authors of the Four Gospels were editors, not compilers of unassailable facts. But he isolates certain of Jesus' sayings as genuine, such as

the term 'Abba' (Daddy) that intimates Christ's close relationship with the Father. He allows that Jesus had some Messianic understanding of himself, a particular point being that of the parable of the wicked tenant farmers. From it he rejects the view that the term 'Son' is an editorial adjunct, on the ground that the phrase 'Son of God' is found in first century Hebrew documents. As to Jesus' harsh sayings against the Pharisees, these he excuses as reflecting a later age of conflict between Christians and Jews.

Of much more importance is the author's treatment of recent archaeological discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Nag Hammadi codices discovered in 1945 in Upper Egypt. These and other writings 'enable us to evaluate the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth', he says. While holding that Jesus probably met and talked with the Essenes scattered around Palestine he admits that to compare him with them is a shaky ground. More evidential for him are the ruins from Christ's era such as Pilate's name on a stone, and the 'Burnt House' in Jerusalem, a relic of the 68 AD Roman conquest. He mentions the sensational discovery of a crucified man's bones attached to a piece of wood that may reflect upon Jesus' crucifixion. He considers that the pre-70 AD Capernaum house and fish-hooks under an octagonal church may have been Peter's and that it could have been used for worship. (One thinks of the 'Room of the cross' unearthed at Pompeii).

Of much help to students is Charlesworth's appendix of early Jewish documents of Jesus' era, lists of archaeological codices and scrolls, and those of influential books on the 'Jesus Research' written between 1980 and 1984.

This is an outstanding book by an influential New Testament scholar who frankly admits that he has come to a more conservative view of Jesus than he held some years ago. Yet it is possible that he over-states his case in placing Jesus so rootedly in Judaic culture and religion, centred as it was in Jerusalem, a city Jesus visited infrequently. He lived for thirty years in Galilee, a cosmopolitan and liberal part of Palestine. As a Galilean he belonged to a people scorned by the orthodox Jews of the south: 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' John 1:46. While this book makes a major contribution to New Testament studies it is unlikely to satisfy those who accept the integrity and authority of the Four Gospels. Readers of it need to have some background knowledge of the matters discussed.

5 Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford

ARTHUR BENNETT

## **JESUS IS THE CHRIST: STUDIES IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN**

**Leon Morris**

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids; Inter Varsity Press, Leicester 1989, 224pp. £8.95 pb.

ISBN 0 8028 0452 7

Anything from the pen of Leon Morris attracts and rewards study and this book is no exception. One comes enriched from reading it – an experience which owes as much to the way we are allowed to join the author in grappling direct with the pages of Holy Scripture as it does to his diligence in bringing the teaching of John under significant headings.

The opening chapter ('John's Theological Purpose') turns out to be a discussion of the meaning and use of 'signs' in Johannine thinking. This is followed by a (not too successful) chapter exploring the relationship between

the seven signs and the seven discourses which the Gospel contains. While this provides an opportunity for a fascinating review of the contents of the Gospel, the attempt to relate sign to discourse impresses the reader as a trifle forced and unreal. Following this, however, the book gets into its stride with chapters on Jesus the Man, The Christ of God, The Son of God, The 'I AM' Sayings, God the Father, The Holy Spirit, 'That you may believe', and Life. It is not too much to say that under each heading one is made aware of the spread and the focal points of Johannine theology. In this way the book actually does live up to its subtitle. The chapter on 'Jesus the Man' is weakened in importance by the fact that Morris uses Kasemann's understanding of John as a stalking horse. The positions attributed to Kasemann are so plainly silly and so inadequate an understanding of John that Morris's exposure of them savours of taking pennies from a blind man. It would have been much better to save space by ignoring Kasemann, using it for fuller positive exposition. The chapter on the Holy Spirit stands out for fulness and helpfulness whereas that on the 'I AM' sayings treats each saying with a brevity which defeats usefulness.

Preachers will be grateful for this book in its very comprehensive gathering together of the relevant references in John under each major topic. They will find their appetites for preaching from John whetted, even though they – and all who have studied John in any depth – will at the same time be a bit disappointed that what they read tends to be very much the 'first word' on the subject whereas, with Dr. Morris as guide, they would have expected something approaching the last word. Students coming freshly to John will find a rich treasure.

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ALEC MOTYER

**JAMES, THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE James B. Adamson**

Eerdmans Grand Rapids 1989 553pp. £23.50 pb.

ISBN 0 8028 0467 6

Dr. Adamson is already well known for his commentary on the Letter of James in the New International Series and the present book is plainly a product of the immense reading which went into the commentary – and much else besides, including his own doctoral work. He is a thorough master of this wide literature and is also a master of common sense, as his conclusions on the nature of the letter and its specific problems show. Sadly he is not a master of brevity and the major fault of this book is diffuseness, repetition and wordiness. Nevertheless it is a mine of information on James and an indispensable resource for serious study.

Adamson believes that the most obvious author must be James, the brother of the Lord. Even those who hold that this is the likely truth will not find Adamson's reasoning as persuasive as he clearly does. Assertion can easily be mistaken for proof. But the discussion is full – even exhaustive – and would safely reach the conclusion that there is no more promising candidate for authorship than this James. Adamson also holds that the letter is a coherent piece of work, which he demonstrates not by a structured analysis but by a running outline. He is most penetrating and observant on any matter touching on James' Greek style and vocabulary.

There are two excellent chapters of 'James and Jesus' ('The words of Jesus break through more often than in any other document outside the Synoptics') and 'James and Paul'. On this latter vexed question he holds – and shows – that James did not write in a combative spirit. He had his own message which, in the providence of God, balances Paul, the two representing (in a vivid discussion) the left and right legs of normative Christianity, the experience, status and life of those which have come into the 'law of liberty'. Yet, if James was not combating Paul, Adamson, in his enthusiasm for James, is a touch an anti-Paulinist!

An interesting chapter on the socio-economic background of the letter is followed by a very long treatment of the teaching, in which nothing is omitted even though it would be hard to say that new ground was being significantly broken. Thoroughness and usefulness are the keywords here.

Regarding the addressees of the letter, Adamson holds that ch. 1:1 must refer to Jews and Christian Jews. He does not seem anywhere to explain how such a letter came to be written to Jews or why James should think it appropriate to address them in this way. And he certainly does not give deep enough consideration to the (rather more obvious) thought that 'the twelve tribes of the *diaspora*' is a theological description of the Church.

We are indebted to a marvellously diligent author for putting at our disposal the fruits of long and demanding scholarship – which will be amply repaid if the appearance of a big book on James serves to call attention to a still too neglected part of the New Testament.

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ALEC MOTYER

**STUDYING THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS** E. P. Sanders and Margaret Davies  
S.C.M. Press, London 1989 ix + 374 pp. £13.50 ISBN 334 023424

This book, by the Dean Ireland's Professor of Holy Scripture in the University of Oxford and his wife, will be required reading for many theological students in the coming years. It is learned and well-written and beautifully printed, but unfortunately rather sceptical in its conclusions. It begins by arguing the general unsoundness of the patristic traditions concerning the gospels, illustrating this from the birth narratives which show the anonymous authors of Matthew and Luke creating 'sacred history' which is not historical. It ends by specifying only eight things which the historian can assert with virtual certainty about Jesus. In between come five chapters on the synoptic problem, six on form criticism, others on redaction criticism, structuralism and deconstruction, rhetorical criticism and gospel genres, all leading up to the quest of the historical Jesus and all valuable for understanding contemporary synoptic studies.

The key to the standpoint of the book is probably best seen in the chapters on form criticism with their stress on the fragmentary nature of the Jesus-traditions which have been modified in transmission to suit the current needs of the church. In addition the narrative framework into which the sayings of Jesus have been fitted have minimal historical value. Incidents have been created to show the fulfilments of Old Testament prophecy and later events and ideas in the history of the church have been read back into the life of Jesus. All this means that in the quest for the Jesus of History it is impossible

to presume that the evangelists are reliable witnesses, they must be severely cross-examined before their testimony is accepted. Under this hostile examination, not very much is left: Jesus, a wonder-worker and healer, comparable to the magicians of the contemporary world; one who mistakenly expected an imminent coming of the kingdom; one who taught love of one's enemies; one who forbade or strongly discouraged divorce.

Perhaps the most interesting section is that on the synoptic problem, for the authors here make an original contribution. They believe that literary relationships provide the basic understanding of the likenesses and differences of the gospels – they barely allude to the oral theory of Wieseler, Westcott, Rist and Reicke – and the literary relationships are very complex. They see merits in all the current solutions: in the two-source theory, in the views of Boismard, Goulder, Griesbach and others. This in itself, they say, 'constitutes a general argument for a complicated solution, but one which cannot be precisely described.' They 'think it likely that one or more of the gospels existed in more than one edition, and that the gospels as we have them may have been dependent on more than one proto- or intermediate gospel.'

All this is open to question, from the anonymity of the evangelists, the fragility of patristic tradition and the dependence on literary relations to the final complexity of the suggested solution. Belief in a common form of early oral teaching together with a higher regard for the witness of the fathers would seem to provide a more credible and satisfying answer and one which would provide a broader base for an understanding of the Jesus of History.

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JOHN WENHAM

### **THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM: A BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1716–1988**

**T. R. W. Longstaff and P. A. Thomas**

Mercer University Press, Macon, Georgia 1989 235pp. \$35 ISBN 0 86554 321 6

This book is not for bedtime reading, nor is it an aid to sermon preparation, but its publication has considerable significance. It illustrates the ferment in synoptic studies and the continuing vitality of the Griesbach school, which makes Mark the latest of the synoptic gospels. The foreword is by W. R. Farmer, who is general editor of *New Gospel Studies: A Monograph Series for Gospel Research*, of which this volume is No. 4. He is the best known representative of the school and the first compiler, T. R. W. Longstaff, is already well known as an adherent. The second compiler, P. A. Thomas, apparently belongs also.

The book aims to provide accurate bibliographical information about all works on or related to the synoptic problem since 1716. The list contains nearly two thousand items, arranged first in alphabetical order of authors, and then in order of date. It concludes with a brave attempt to produce a subject index. The authors of course have not read all the two thousand works, so they decided to make it a keyword index, relying largely on the titles for their information.

Farmer points out that there have been three periods where belief in gospel order has been dominated, first (1716–1790) by the Matthew, Mark, Luke view; then (1790–1870) by the Matthew, Luke, Mark view; and then

(1870–1970) by the view which gives priority to Mark and Q. Since 1970 'the solution to the Synoptic Problem has increasingly come to be regarded as an open question.' There are now many competitors in the field – all the old views have come up for re-examination (including the oral theory) and there are new complex literary source-theories on offer as well. We owe it largely to Bill Farmer that this healthy state of affairs has come about. We should all be grateful to him and to his collaborators.

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JOHN WENHAM

**AN UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM: THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS FOR TODAY** David Gooding

Inter Varsity Press, Leicester 1989 255pp. £4.95 pb.

ISBN 0 85 110677 6

This is a marvellous exposition of Hebrews. If its paperback format and popular style inhibits the more specialist reader from consulting it, the loss will be entirely his; if any existing commentator on Hebrews is given the opportunity of revising his commentary for re-publication, he should not fail to consult Gooding. He will find material here that will illuminate every chapter of this crowning book of the New Testament.

It would be hard to find adequate praise for the handling of the first chapter of Hebrews. Gooding puts the often superficial annotations of the average commentary to shame by the breadth and depth of his probing into the Old Testament background of the catena of references chosen by Hebrews to exalt the glory of the Lord Jesus. The two chapters devoted to this exposition are a paradigm of what is required if we are to understand how the New Testament uses the Old. If I say that the rest of the expositions did not (for me) quite reach the same height this is to be understood in the same way that calling Everest the highest peak casts no aspersions on the second highest. Throughout the exposition Gooding has a gentle and enlightening touch. He catches the true Hebrews-balance between exalting the glory of Jesus and facing the believer with the stern call of the truth. The crux of 6:4ff. is brilliantly exegeted and expounded, and thorough, no problems are dodged.

Two matters remain in my mind as blemishes. To draw the contrast between the Old Covenant and the New by saying that the former was bilateral and the latter unilateral does not seem satisfactory. It was not in quite this way that the Old Covenant imposed a burden that the people, for all their expressed willingness, were not able to bear. Secondly, the exposition has a heavily 'Jewish' orientation. To speak of the people of the Old Testament as 'Jews' is, in my opinion, not only erroneous but also highly damaging to a true doctrine of the covenant people of God, but in addition, to make Hebrews so specifically a tract dealing with the problems of Christian Jews does distance it from us who have not a Jewish background and, more sadly, moves this great 'epistle' from its position as the doctrinal capstone of the New Testament. Surely it is much more a review and critique of the Two Covenants than a tract on a particular set of problems and surely above all it is an objective statement of the supreme glory of Jesus above anything else. Let no one, however, miss this great book.

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ALEC MOTYER

**THE GIFT OF PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND TODAY**

**Wayne Grudem**

Kingsway, Eastbourne 1988 348pp. £7.95

ISBN 0 86065 508 3

This book is a popular abstract of a thesis in which the author has tried to reconcile traditional Reformed teaching on the subject of spiritual gifts with the insights and experience of the charismatic movement. He is concerned to preserve what he regards as the truth contained in each of these views, and believes that this is possible on the basis of a new understanding of the way in which prophecy functioned in the New Testament Church.

Basically, the author starts with the premiss that Scripture is the final and supreme authority in matters of faith, so that whatever 'prophecy' might be today, it is not authoritative in that sense. He then goes on to point out that there were prophets in the New Testament Church who were not apostles, and whose prophecies were neither condemned nor superseded by apostolic teaching. Quite what the content of these prophecies was is unknown, and the author wisely refrains from being too dogmatic, though he is able to point out that we are told that they were meant for the edification and consolation of the Church.

What emerges from this is a 'word in season' uttered by someone with special insight into the spiritual condition of individuals and/or groups of people. Such words must be tested, and may prove to be erroneous, but in principle, God guides his Church in this way, and we must expect shafts of divine light to reach us through what we might otherwise call 'intuition'. Many people have experienced this sort of thing during their lives, and may have expressed it by speaking of a 'burden' which has been placed on them.

By interpreting the gift of prophecy in this way, the author of this book hopes to make it acceptable to Reformed Christians, as well as to curb some of the excesses of the charismatics, who may claim more for the gift than is strictly warranted. His solution of the problem has commended itself to many who would not be sympathetic to the charismatic movement, and as such it must be taken very seriously. What seems to be happening is that the author is telling us that we have restricted our understanding of the word 'prophecy' to that particular form of utterance associated with divine revelation, and ignored the fact that the word can have many meanings and applications beyond this. That not all Old Testament prophecies entered the canon of Scripture is self-evident, as is the fact that not all were true.

On the other hand, it is probably true to say that this book tends to minimize prophecy, even in the New Testament sense of the word, and that what was going on in the churches was something more than the expression of prayerful insight. If this is so, of course, the case for cessation after the completion of the New Testament canon becomes greater, though this is not explicitly taught in the text of Scripture. Rather it was discovered by experience, as when the Montanists began to claim that their utterances were a 'New Prophecy'. One might also add that occasionally the author stretches his point, as in his discussion of the Book of Revelation (p. 160), which is clearly not a prophecy in any ordinary sense. Nevertheless, this is an important book which will do much to stimulate further discussion of the subject, and it should be read by anyone concerned with the exercise of spiritual gifts in the Church today.

**TRADITION AND TRUTH: THE CHALLENGE OF ENGLAND'S  
RADICAL THEOLOGIANS 1962-1989 David L. Edwards**

Hodder and Stoughton, London 1989 326pp. £14.95 hb. ISBN 0 340 51452 3

This book follows David Edwards' *Essentials* (1988) in which he held a sort of dialogue with John Stott, commenting on a number of themes crucial to the debate between Liberals and Evangelicals and giving John Stott the chance to reply. Here we have something similar, written in the same pleasant easy-to-read style and with the radicals given the opportunity to reply at the end. The chapters each name a theologian and a topic associated with his name, and then without confining themselves to him, outline current radical views and then the author's criticisms of them. David Edwards has in fact quite a lot of criticisms to offer; although a liberal himself he is not so radical as those he introduces. He writes in a courteous and gracious spirit; but some of the responses seem a little nettled nevertheless. He starts with John Robinson and Images of God; then comes Don Cupitt and the Reality of God. Maurice Wiles and the Activity of God follows; does God intervene after creating? Geoffrey Lampe and the Incarnation: was Jesus only a man filled by the Spirit of God? John Bowden and the Facts about Jesus: what do we really know? Dennis Nineham and the Relevance of Jesus: if Revelation is culture-bound can it be authoritative? John Hick and the Uniqueness of Jesus: the world's only Saviour? Finally, what then should we believe? Altogether a very instructive and interesting book; one in which one can as it were eavesdrop on a frank and sometimes slightly irascible discussion. There seems little real consensus here; all agree on what a bad thing fundamentalism is, in fact something the slightest smell of which is to be avoided at all costs! Nearly all agree on the uniqueness (in some sense) of Jesus Christ; and most would seem to be ready to answer the question 'Canst thou by searching find out God?' in the affirmative - at least, it is difficult to see how else they hope to be able to settle the great question of how God relates to the world and to history. It is here that I would place one of the great weaknesses of the liberals: a failure to identify and justify their basic presupposition, stemming from the Enlightenment. This is the assumption that the natural reason, working on natural data (those accessible to the physical sciences, and to the human sciences such as anthropology, archaeology, psychology, and sociology) is qualified to pronounce on this great question. This presupposition is of far-reaching consequence. As conservatives we do not accept it; in fact we positively reject it. Our own presupposition is quite other: Jesus Christ, the Word who was with God, was sanctified and sent into the world to bear witness to the truth. It can only be known through Him; and that surely means (unless we are prepared to accuse God of oversight, indifference or folly), through the Scriptures which in His providence are our only record of the Person and work of Jesus.

Reading much of this book reminded me forcefully of Ian Ramsey's complaints in the introduction to his *Models of God's Activity*; today's learned theology lacks the sense of God's presence, and of having anything worthwhile to offer to men and women in need, so different is its whole atmosphere to that of say Augustine's *Confessions*, in which God is ever-present and all-important. David Edwards has by nature a very generous disposition; I think it leads him here to be too generous in awarding the title



'Christian' to his subjects. I find it difficult to think of at least two of them as Christians in any New Testament sense; but then I am not the judge.

This is an enlightening but hardly an impressive book; the views it describes are too idiosyncratic, too lacking in convincing logic, and above all, too devoid of biblical basis to be anything like satisfying to heart and mind. Personally, I come back again and again to the reassuring declarations of Matt. 11.25ff. and 1 Cor. 1.26ff. These do not deny the place of scholarship, but they do set it in a firm context of childlikeness and of reverence for God's Word.

There is a Bibliography of nine pages and a general Index of seven. I found no misprints and the production is good.

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DOUGLAS SPANNER

**HAS THE CHURCH MISREAD THE BIBLE? Moisés Silva**

Inter Varsity Press, Leicester 1987 viii + 136pp. £5.95 ISBN 0 85111 501 2

**LITERARY APPROACHES TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**

**Tremper Longman III**

Inter Varsity Press, Leicester 1987 xi + 164pp. £6.95 ISBN 0 85111 502 0

These two books under the new Apollos imprint of I.V.P. are Volumes 1 and 3 in the series Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation of which Vol. 6, *Science and Hermeneutics* was recently reviewed in these pages. The first of the above volumes is by the series editor Moisés Silva, who occupies the chair of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, and it serves as an introduction to the whole series. It is not intended to answer the question posed in its title; rather, as the author says, its object is to provide a 'unique and practical perspective on the history of interpretation'. It is not intended to be polemical, but is addressed rather to those who share the author's commitment to the divine authority of Scripture; this is in fact the characteristic of the series as a whole. I found Prof. Silva's treatment lucid, well-informed, comprehensive and stimulating. In his first chapter – *Today's Hermeneutical Challenge* – he lists the disciplines which share the general problems of hermeneutics with the biblical scholar – philosophy, literary criticism, linguistics, history, science and theology. Then he asks, Has their experience in their own fields anything helpful to offer? Does it illuminate the task of the scholar? In his next – *Obstacles in the Study of the History of Interpretation* – he outlines the historical problems in a fashion which recalled to me the changing understanding of the way in which science has progressed. The thesis which he develops is that the progress of interpretation has been (and still is) dominated by the church's appreciation that we face a series of difficult 'tensions' in our reading of Scripture: the Bible is divine and yet comes to us in human form; the commands of God are absolute and yet are often historically relativized; the divine message must necessarily be clear yet it often seems ambiguous; the Spirit is our guide yet we need scholarship; the Scriptures seem to presuppose a literal and historical sense yet we often meet the figurative and non-historical; the individual interpreter has a private responsibility yet some degree of corporate authority appears necessary; the biblical message must be objective but our inescapable presuppositions seem to involve a degree of subjectivity. The following chapters deal with these

'tensions' in a way that I found very helpful. 'Origen', 'Allegory', 'Erasmus versus Luther', 'The Riddle of Messianic Prophecy', 'Kant and the Bible', 'From Schleiermacher to Bultmann' are some sub-headings that give an idea of the coverage. Prof. Silva has given us a book sound, scholarly and very readable. It should be extremely useful to theological students and to all in the practical ministry who wish to preach accurately the whole counsel of God. It sounds a welcome but unobtrusive devotional note at times. There is a comprehensive list of books for further reading, an Index of Modern Authors and Titles, an Index of Subjects, and an Index of Biblical Passages.

Tremper Longman is Associate Professor of Old Testament at the Westminster Seminary. He writes in the easy style and for the same readership as Moisés Silva. He deals first with the theoretical aspects of the literary approach. Historically, interest took a leap forward with the work of Robert Lowth in the last century on the literary structure of Hebrew poetry and its emphasis on the device of parallelism; Gunkel (interested mainly in rival approaches) stressed the notion of *genre*. The modern period looks much to Muilenburg's 1968 address on 'Form Criticism and Beyond'. Then follows a very interesting discussion on theories of literary meaning; where does one look to locate the authentic meaning of a piece of literature? Does one look to the author, to the work itself, or to the reader? 'Modern literary criticism', he writes 'has rejected the author as the major element in the interpretative process . . . authors have no privileged insight into their own work'. Prof. Longman himself does not support this astonishing postulate of the so-called New Criticism (which arose in the 1940s), but he gives a very interesting account of it and of its obvious negative relevance to such disciplines as Source Criticism. No doubt it represents a reaction against extreme cases of the traditional approach which 'studied everything but the work of literature itself'; but it seems to have followed the usual pattern of the swinging pendulum by going too far. I could not help recalling the ideas of that doyen of the philosophy of science Sir Karl Popper, who postulated three worlds: the physical (I), the mental (II), and the World (III) which consists of the constructions of the human mind. All, according to him, have an autonomous existence. They interact but must be studied in their own terms. He instances the invention (or discovery) of the sequence of natural numbers. This, once presented, poses theoretical problems (such as whether there is a greatest prime number) never envisaged by its author and in no sense due to him. No doubt there are important differences between the sequence of natural numbers and a work of literature, but the parallel to the ideas of the New Criticism is interesting. Longman notes that the latter has been compared by John Barton with the 'canonical method' of Brevard Childs according to which the meaning of a biblical passage must be sought within the literary context of the canon of Scripture as a whole. Evangelicals would feel a sympathy here.

Structuralism, in contrast to the New Criticism, has had a much bigger impact on biblical hermeneutics. It has a very wide-ranging and broadly-dispersed disciplinary outlook and Longman discusses it in some detail. He follows this logically with theories of meaning which focus not on the author, nor on the work itself, but on the reader. Finally, he notes the *avant-garde* Deconstruction, again from France. All of this serves to set the whole matter in his own sober perspective. The second part of the book deals with the

application of the methods of literary criticism to both prose and poetic passages in the Bible, with a number of particular passages treated in some detail. These are illuminating, if not exactly exciting.

This very useful and well-worthwhile book ends with a book-list and Indexes corresponding to those of the previous one.

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DOUGLAS SPANNER

**ANGLICANISM AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH Paul Avis**

T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh 1989 335pp. £19.95

ISBN 0 567 095126

Dr. Avis's latest volume offers a comprehensive theological and historical survey of Anglican identity in an attempt to interpret the Church of England's understanding of the Church. It moves within the realm of ideas as expressed by four centuries of its leading figures. He has much to say about Anglican ecclesiology, authority, Erastianism, scripture and tradition. His methodology is to trace the origins of various Anglican strands and follow them through. Thus, his full consideration of Archbishop Laud's influence is seen fructifying in nineteenth-century radical catholicism. In seeking to understand the meaning of Anglican singularity he lists the bones of scripture, tradition, and reason as the skeleton of its identity. The book is sectionalized into centuries, with particular attention given to ecclesiastics. He is generous towards Thomas Cranmer in his attempt to create a pan-confessional union of Reformed churches, and accepts the *Thirty-nine Articles* as normative Anglican theology. Richard Hooker receives masterly treatment as setting the true grounds of Anglicanism. But he is unfavourable to the radicalism of Pusey, Keble, and Newman. To be highly commended is Avis's 'case studies' of what he styles 'The Anglican Consensus' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which sought to identify Anglicanism as a bridge-church between Rome and Geneva. He sensitively deals with the Church's antagonism towards Presbyterian ordinations during the Civil War, and the reaction of non-conformity when two thousand ministers lost their churches in 1662. Puritanism and the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival receive scant treatment. He sees evangelicals as part of an over-lapping circle with high-church and broad-church traditions. Of particular interest to him is the rôle that evangelicals played in the crisis aroused by the Oxford Movement. But he strangely ignores the pregnant influence of Charles Simeon who, in G. M. Trevelyan's judgment, brought vitality and enthusiasm through his 'Simeonite' clergy into church affairs, and saved evangelicals from drifting into Dissent. His view of Tractarianism is that its exponents attempted to un-protestantize the Anglican church against the desires of the people. This book closes with brief comments on Anglican identity in the early years of the twentieth century. It would have been helpful to have had some outline of modern trends that embraces Erastianism, ecumenicity, and the concentration of authority in the hands of the General Synod. It remains to be seen whether the present day upsurge of evangelicalism will lead to a new kind of Anglican identity.

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ARTHUR BENNETT

**A HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANS Ed. Martin E.****Marty and Dean G. Peerman**

Lutterworth Press, Cambridge 1989 735pp. £9.95 pb.

ISBN 0 7188 2793 7

This is an enlarged edition of a work first published in 1965 under the same title. It sets out the lives and thoughts of the great thinkers who have moulded the shape of Christian theology over the past two hundred years, from Schleiermacher to Hans Küng. There are thirty eight of them, each thus occupying about twenty pages. The first edition ended with Bonhoeffer and Tillich, and was rather short on the major Catholic theologians; the present edition has aimed at correcting this as well as bringing the tally right up-to-date with Pannenberg, Moltmann and Küng. The work is divided into four sections: 'The Nineteenth-Century Tradition'; 'Between the Times'; 'Mid-(20th)-Century Classics'; and 'Recent Theological Work'. Each account is naturally by an author sympathetic to his subject, and as would be expected, the essays differ in quality. Some are pitched in rather technical language and are hard for the non-specialist to follow; this is a pity, as most of the users will almost certainly be such non-specialists. But others are exemplary and a pleasure to read. Those on Pannenberg and Ricoeur were the former, the ones on Bultmann and Küng the latter. Of other names, and to give a better idea of the coverage, mention might be made of F. D. Maurice, P. T. Forsyth, Gustaf Aulen, Nicolai Berdyaev, the Niebuhrs, Carl Henry, Jacques Ellul and John Cobb. Each essay is followed by a Bibliography of two books, one by the subject and the other a biographical study where one is available. The work concludes with seven pages of Notes on the scholarly essayists themselves. There are two brief Introductions but no Index.

This could be a most useful work for anyone wanting a quick introduction to the great names of the last two centuries of Christian theology. An index would be a help, as would be a simplifying of the more technical articles.

Ivy Cottage, Main Street, Grove, Oxon.

DOUGLAS SPANNER

**MISSION TODAY Graham Cheesman**

Evangelical Press, Darlington 1989 167pp. £4.95

ISBN 0 9507657 5 9

This book sets out to be an introduction to Mission Studies and this it certainly does. The book is divided into four main sections: Fundamentals, History, Theory and Practice. The first section, Fundamentals, consists of four chapters dealing with the Definition of Missionary Work, The Great Commission, Motives and The Holy Spirit. In the second chapter on page 18 it was good to be reminded of the basis for Mission in the Scriptures. An interesting point in this chapter is the baptizing before teaching, which is unusual in the United Kingdom today. In the chapter on Motives the author talks about love for the people and love for the Lord. There seems to be a lack of awareness in much of the church today at the plight of the lost and

their having no hope of escape from eternal punishment without Christ. Our ultimate motivation, though, must come from our love for the Lord and our response to what He has done for us.

The second section consists of thirteen chapters which give a broad and selective overview of the history of missionary activity. Chapter Five deals with Paul – the Biblical Pattern – and shows the difference between Paul's methods and those used in our modern times. Reading on page 35 how Paul was financed, especially point 2, left me wondering about the enormous expenditure of the recent Mission '89 Campaign. On page 69 there is a diagram illustrating the division of the main groups of Christians. The author then states,

Only God knows the hearts of men so no estimate will be given of those truly born again of the Spirit of God and so in the Church of Christ world-wide. Experience shows that even in the Evangelical Segment there is much Christianity that is in name only.

This is a good reminder that numbers and labels can mean nothing. Chapter Twelve is concluded with a brief summary of the Church in the various parts of the world.

The third section consists of four chapters dealing with some aspects of Modern Evangelical Missiology. There is a comment on page 87 which says something to those who lay great stress on culture and the way we approach that culture with the Gospel. 'The Gospel judges every culture because every culture is constructed by sinful man'. One of the chapters in this section deals with the Church Growth Movement. To each of its propositions the author reacts. Some of his reactions are quite thought provoking. On page 104 he comments on the World Council of Churches and I was left thinking that it could well be one of those unreached people groups mentioned in the previous chapter. The last chapter in this section deals with Social Responsibility and Mission. On page 108 he comments: 'But we can only become involved in ways that are Biblical and honouring to God'. That is something for those engaged in the Social Gospel to think about.

The final section deals with the missionary and the churches. Chapter Eighteen was very helpful and Chapter Nineteen very practical for would-be missionaries. The book ends with the statement of the Lausanne Covenant. Throughout the book there are suggestions for further reading and in the Postscript the author challenges each one of us to a response. I would certainly endorse his last comment: 'Whatever you decide God wants you to do, for the rest of your life, be a Christian deeply involved in God's missionary work across the world.'

London, S.W.6

ROGER COOK

**ISSUES FACING CHRISTIANS TODAY: A MAJOR APPRAISAL OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL AND MORAL QUESTIONS** John Stott  
Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Basingstoke 1984 352pp. £5.95 ISBN 0 551 011580

The very fact of this book marks the degree to which contemporary evangelicalism is committed to the recovery of its traditional social concern;

since by it one with a strong claim to the status of elder evangelical statesman has added the firm weight of his reasonable authority to the task of making up for fifty years of evangelical neglect of social matters.

For the ethical issues that John Stott chooses to treat here are predominantly social ones. He divides his book into four parts, each with four chapters. In Part One he deals with the general question of the rôle of Christians in a non-Christian society. Then, turning to particular moral issues, he first considers those whose basic dimensions are global (Part Two) before attending to ones that (arguably) persist more at the level of a particular society (Part Three). The final Part is devoted to a selection of sexual issues—feminism, divorce, abortion and homosexuality—which are currently the stuff of passionate public debate.

Stott's most constructive contribution is in the first Part, where he wrestles with fundamental issues. In Chapter One, he gives us a history of evangelical social concern, in which he attributes its abandonment earlier this century ('the Great Reversal') to, *inter alia*, a reaction against theological liberalism and the social gospel, post-World War One pessimism (but was not this the period when social ethics were flourishing in Catholic reaches of the Church of England?) and the popularization of pre-millennialism. Stott dates the beginning of the reversal of this Reversal to the 1960s and regards the Lausanne Congress of 1974 as crucial. But he alludes to continuing disagreement within the evangelical movement over the proper relationship between evangelism and social activity (p.10), and responds with his own outline of a 'biblical theology' that seeks to integrate both. Here we might suffer some disappointment that Stott appears to perpetuate the misapprehension, not uncommon among evangelicals, of 'biblical theology' as something that the Bible presents to us directly. This obscures the fact that it contains a (limited) diversity of theologies, and therefore that we can hope only to *construct* a coherent theology on the basis of a *judgment*, ventured carefully and prayerfully, about what it is that the Bible's several voices are saying. In an important sense, 'biblical theology' is something that we *make* and not something that we are simply given.

However, although he seems to pass by the issue of theological pluralism in the Bible, it is to his credit that he does tackle (in Chapter Two) the issue of ethical pluralism within the Church. On the one hand, he acknowledges that heterogeneity acts positively as a safeguard against blinkered vision (p.43); but on the other, he clearly (and rightly) believes that the Church must still strive toward a common ethical mind by means of spiritually, morally and intellectually disciplined reflection of a corporate nature (pp.30–31). Following William Temple, he also suggests that the leadership of the Church should refrain from committing it to particular public policies, partly on the ground that on any given issue it would thereby be bound to alienate some of its members. The problem with moral pronouncements that persistently hover at the level of general principle, however, is that unless they take on the flesh of particular recommendations their *meaning* will remain largely obscure and anodyne. Perhaps the solution is to say that the Church should *pronounce* at the level of principle, but only *suggest* at the level of policy—a distinction which Temple used in his *Christianity and the Social Order*. But it must do both.

In Chapter Three, Stott considers the problem of pluralism at a third level;

namely, the form of Christian moral witness in a pluralist, democratic society. His recommendation (which would be less suitable for societies where the scope for public debate is more limited) is that Christians must seek to *persuade* their fellow-citizens of the benefits of Christian morality; and on the basis of the correlation between Scripture and Natural Law he believes that Christian morality can be promoted in ways which non-Christians may find cogent (p.56).

The final chapter of Part One confronts the question of what kinds of influence Christians might reasonably hope to exercise in society as a whole. After reviewing some of the major ways in which evangelicals have shaped society in the past, Stott affirms the vital importance of prayer, noting (without exploring) its neglect among some Christian social activists (p.68). Then he proceeds to argue for evangelism as the foundation of social action, contending that personal transformation is the motor for cultural and social change (pp.68ff.). However, lest it be thought that Stott simply reverts here to old-fashioned evangelical individualism, it is noteworthy that he concludes this chapter by asserting that the quality of the *corporate life* of the Church is the foremost form of Christian witness (pp.73ff.).

The ensuing twelve chapters (5–16) deal with a variety of particular moral issues, ranging from the environment and feminism to industrial relations and abortion. The selection is broad, but not comprehensive: business ethics (as usual) and medical ethics are omitted. But *Issues Facing Christians Today* does not, after all, pretend to be a *summa moralis*. As we would expect from John Stott, his treatment of moral issues takes biblical exegesis seriously; but it is also remarkably *ecumenical*. In addition to Scripture, he has taken into considerate account, for example, papal encyclicals and social scientific literature. It should be pointed out, however, that this book focusses on the critical analysis of moral *issues*, and does not engage in what is arguably the prior task of the critical moral analysis of *culture* and of the values presupposed by social and economic and political structures. This is not to say that such a limitation of scope invalidates what the author has done for us here; but it is to say that what he has done for us is limited.

Within his chosen limits, however, John Stott has written a lucid, solid and circumspect introduction to a wide range of matters of social ethics, and in a manner that is sufficiently ecumenical to deserve the respect of non-evangelicals. *Issues Facing Christians Today* does not pretend to be a book of high sophistication and originality, but it deserves to be successful as a textbook in courses on Christian ethics for undergraduates and ordinands; and the claim on its back-cover that it is 'destined to become a handbook for Christians in the 80s' is not at all fantastic.

Latimer House, Oxford

NIGEL BIGGAR

**4,000,000 REASONS TO CARE HOW YOUR CHURCH CAN HELP  
THE UNEMPLOYED Peter Elsom and David Porter**

MARC Europe, Bromley and C.A.W.T.U., 1985 160pp. £3.95 ISBN 0 947697 14 4

For reasons that are obvious, the 1980s have witnessed the publication of a plethora of books on work and unemployment. The distinctive feature of this one is revealed in its subtitle: its orientation is basically practical. Although it

does begin with a few pages about 'biblical guidelines' on work, followed by an historical account of how unemployment has grown to its current dimensions and then by a helpful section on how to read official statistics, *4,000,000 Reasons to Care* makes its way rapidly (by page 21) to the question of what can be done about the problem.

The general lines of its response to this question are determined by three premises: first, that since the present Government will not try to solve it by using public spending to increase demand, the solution must come in the form of 'a dramatic resurgence of entrepreneurial activity' (p.21); second, that it ought not to be solved by increasing the mobility of labour, given the damage to existing communities that would result (pp.31ff.); and third, that individuals can make a difference (p.21. Cp. *Faith in the City*, 9.68-69). On these premises, then, *4,000,000 Reasons to Care* contends that unemployment must be dealt with by *individual and corporate action in the locality*.

Part Three, which comprises over half of the book, is devoted to representing a wide range of the kinds of initiative that individual Christians and their churches might take to relieve unemployment. (It should be said that Elsom and Porter do not claim to provide a *solution* to the problem so much as to suggest effective ways of fighting it). These range from the acceptance of cuts in pay, work-sharing and early retirement to lending venture capital, engagement in government schemes and setting up co-operatives. Some attention is also paid to considering various forms of pastoral support for the unemployed. Part Four provides some helpful advice on 'How to Get Organized,' and the book ends with a list of local Church Action With The Unemployed (C.A.W.T.U.) contacts, together with the names and addresses of a variety of 'helpful organizations' (government, independent, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish).

It is true that some of the information in this book is now dated; for example, the problem of unemployment is not quite what it was four years ago. But in spite of encouraging news (if one believes the Government), unemployment is still a major problem in some regions and among some groups of people in Britain; and *4,000,000 Reasons to Care* provides a very helpful place for individuals and churches to start thinking about what they can do to relieve the suffering of those without jobs.

Latimer House, Oxford

NIGEL BIGGAR

### **HELPING THE HELPERS: SUPERVISION AND PASTORAL CARE**

**John Foskett and David Lyall**

S.P.C.K., London 1988 164pp. £5.95

ISBN 0 281 04386 8

This book is an addition to the sixteen volumes already in the New Library of Pastoral Care. The series provides a splendid resource for the theological student and the minister who wants to develop his pastoral ministry. Christians in social work, teaching and allied occupations will find much in these books to help them.

In this book Foskett and Lyall apply the methods of social worker training and supervision to the training and supervision of the Christian pastor. Their



experience in hospital chaplaincy work and the supervision of students give them added credibility in all they write. They are aware of the theological dimension in pastoral care and avoid the danger of treating pastoral care as another name for social care. The book is enlivened by several case studies and verbatim interviews, and these are used to illustrate their more general discussion.

The authors identify three possible approaches to pastoral care: 'Applied Theology', 'Applied Psychology' and 'Narrative Theology'. While recognizing that all three approaches will be used in pastoral care, they would encourage the 'Narrative Theology' approach. In this approach the pastor should be aware of stories in tradition (Scripture and history) in the story of the situation and in the story of the life of the counsellor. To the simple-minded reader, this appears to be saying that good pastoral care requires the counsellor to be aware of his God, of himself and of his client. In the authors' words:

the whole process of theological reflection is directed towards a pastoral practice that takes seriously not only the realities of the human situation but also the insights of the theological tradition and the personal experience of the carer.

The authors suggest setting up 'triads' where three people who are engaged in ministry meet regularly with one another to talk about their work. Each member takes it in turn to have a different rôle as presenter, receiver and observer. In one of the verbatim interviews there is a staff discussion which goes some way towards the triad system but without the people concerned consciously taking on the three rôles. The book ought to be read by all Directors of Pastoral Studies at theological colleges and Directors of post-ordination training.

In practice, it is more difficult to see ministers gathering together in threes to monitor the effectiveness of their pastoral work. Providing complete confidentiality was maintained and people were unidentified, there could be great value in such triads. We ministers often lack any effective supervision of our pastoral care. Such supervision as we do receive often comes from our wives who have a highly important rôle in affirmation and correction. But surely ministers would benefit as well from supervision from a more neutral source.

We must avoid detaching the minister's rôle as a carer from the mutual pastoral care given by members of the congregation. Foskett and Lyall show that we should run a spiritual health service and not a spiritual *sickness* service. Prevention is always better than cure. For that reason this reviewer would want to see a good deal of thought given to the way the whole life of the congregation (worship, preaching, house groups, and the like) should provide ongoing pastoral care.

A second book with the same title could be written to show how the pastor needs to be pastored. In the past the pastor has too often been isolated (or has isolated himself). The value of leadership teams of laymen and clergy where there is a shared responsibility for each other and for the task would be only one chapter among many.

**WORLD CHRISTIANITY: EASTERN EUROPE** Ed. Philip Walters  
 MARC, Eastbourne 1988 318pp. £9.95 ISBN 1 85424 065 X

The situation of Christians in Eastern Europe (including the U.S.S.R.) continues to make the headlines, and a book of this kind is always a welcome addition to the literature on the subject. It tries to present in a clear and concise way what the Church scene is like in the different countries behind what used to be called the Iron Curtain, and to provide the sort of background needed to make sense of the changes which are taking place there at the moment.

To say that the book is out of date is not a criticism of it; on the contrary, it demonstrates just how topical the issue is, and how necessary it is to be well-informed. Here the ordinary reader will be given an accurate and authoritative guide to what has happened in the period 1945–1985. In Eastern European terms, this is now history. What has happened since 1985 (the year Gorbachev came to power) is interesting and important, but it is not yet history, in the sense that the changes which have occurred can theoretically be reversed if he falls from office. To that extent, the new openness is a fragile plant, and it is worth being reminded of this at a time when *perestroika* seems to be running aground. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom, and this book serves as a useful reminder to us all that that freedom has not yet been fully achieved in the countries under discussion here.

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GERALD BRAY

**KONSHAUBI: FREE ON THE INSIDE** Georgi Vins  
 Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne 1988 96pp. £1.99 ISBN 0 86065 719 1

The book opens with the author arriving at a Soviet labour camp in the Ural Mountains in Spring 1967. There he meets up with Fyodor Makhovitsky, pastor of the Leningrad unregistered church and with Konshaubi Dzargotov serving terms of imprisonment there.

Konshaubi's story is told in chapter 3, page 21, a Circassian by birth, he grew up in a Muslim village in the Caucasus Mountains in Southern Russia. As a boy he first heard of Jesus Christ 'the Russian God'; at the age of nineteen he believed in Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. He was persecuted and rejected by his Muslim family when he told them of his new faith. It was much later that he was sentenced to three years in imprisonment for his rôle in the life of the unregistered church of Ust-Dz Reguta.

The book goes on to recall, often with real humour, daily life within the labour camp, the character of some of the prisoners as they shared their faith. This is clearly shown on page 41. The faithful testimony of these men's lives became more and more apparent. One by one prisoners came to them for discussions about God. Others talked amongst themselves with wonder.

Baptists can't live without praying. They pray all the time—on the transports before meals, in the morning when they get up, and at night before they sleep. Why are the Communists torturing them, sticking them into prison? The Baptists have the most genuine faith of all! If everyone behaved like them, there'd be no criminals or prisons or labor camps!

The book concludes with Konshaubi's third trial in 1985 with fellow defendant Sergei Dubitsky. Dubitsky in his final statement includes a quote from a book in which:

The author writes that the persecution of Christians never gave and never will give the desired results. For us with Christ, even in prison is freedom. Without Christ, even in freedom there is prison.

This brings home to me personally the truth of the words of Jesus, 'So if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed.' John 8.36.

Georgi Vins urges us to pray for Konshaubi, his family and those who, like Konshaubi, are sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ among the forty million Muslims who live in the Soviet Union.

London S.W.6

NICKY COOK

### **LETTERS FROM A SOVIET PRISON Mikhail Khorev**

Monarch Publications, Eastbourne 1988 221pp. £2.75 ISBN 1 85424 096 X

After the preface by Georgi Vins, Mikhail Khorev begins the story on page 11 with the words 'On 19th May 1966 I was arrested together with Georgi Petrovich Vins and taken to Lefortovo Prison'.

In Lefortovo Prison we learn of the interrogation tactics used and share in the agony and anguish that Mikhail went through when offered the choice of his freedom if 'he will go home and live in peace', rather than serve a first term of imprisonment.

Part One of the book contains the account of his trial, the outcome of which was a foregone conclusion.

Part Two 'I Write to you Children' is Mikhail Khorev's prison letters to his children. These are intensely moving. They brought tears of joy but also of sorrow to my eyes. We learn of one man's great love for the Lord and his sufferings for Christ. Mikhail writes about his own father who was arrested in 1937, when Mikhail was seven years old, for his active service as an evangelist and never returned home. We learn of the time when Mikhail himself was set aside to the work as an evangelist and his wife was being prepared to surrender him to full-time service.

He recalls in the letters his Christian service, his life in prison and teaches and instructs his own children in the faith through them.

The book ends with a visit to the Penal Camp related by Veniamin Khorev, one of his sons who has himself been arrested and with his brothers Ivan and Pavel are assuming leadership rôles within youth groups and churches. Mikhail himself was further sentenced, then shortly after his release, left home to continue his secret work for the church, risking further arrest.

The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us in Hebrews 13.3:

Remember those in prison as if you were their prisoners and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering.

May we indeed remember and pray for the suffering church and our persecuted brothers and sisters.

London S.W.6

NICKY COOK

**JESUS & DIVORCE: TOWARDS AN EVANGELICAL  
UNDERSTANDING OF NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING**

**William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham**

Hodder & Stoughton, London 1984 287pp. £5.95

ISBN 0 340 355425

Heth and Wenham have composed a cogent argument against the tradition of New Testament interpretation which concludes that in certain circumstances both divorce and remarriage are permissible for Christians. This tradition, which finds its classical formulation in the writings of Erasmus, was largely adopted by the Reformers, then enshrined in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and now constitutes the contemporary evangelical consensus. Against it *Jesus and Divorce* brings to bear the virtually unanimous view of the Early Church that remarriage after divorce is not a moral option; and it then proceeds to support this position with a series of detailed and circumspect exegetical arguments.

Chapter 1 defends the special authority of the interpretation of the Fathers on the grounds of their being closer to the cultural, social and linguistic grid of the New Testament than we, and of the remarkable unanimity of their views. The authors do not pretend to claim that these grounds are conclusive; but they do argue (reasonably) that the burden of proof lies on those who take an alternative view.

After the subsequent chapter (2) in which we are given a modern version of the patristic position, composed out of the exegetical work of Jacques Dupont and Quentin Quesnell on Matthew 19, we meet the Erasmian interpretation in the forms given it by Erasmus himself, by the Reformers and by the Westminster Confession. This chapter (3) is heavily reliant on secondary sources (especially V.N. Olsen, *The New Testament Logia on Divorce: A Study of their Interpretation from Erasmus to Milton*), and perhaps for that reason is rather less than fluent in its exposition. It concludes with a helpful summary of points of exegetical contrast between the Fathers and the Reformers.

Chapter 4 is effectively devoted to presenting John Murray's modern version of the Erasmian position (*Divorce* [1953]), whose basic grounds are reckoned to be these: first, that the divorce about which Jesus spoke was of the Mosaic dissolution kind (Deuteronomy 24.14); and second, that the exception clause in Matthew 19.9 ('except in the case of *porneia*') was intended to qualify both divorce *and* remarriage. In Chapter 5 the authors attempt to subvert the first ground by interpreting Deuteronomy 24 in the light of Genesis 2.24 and Leviticus 18, and by concluding that it does not teach dissolution divorce at all. And in Chapter 6, which is the longest, they proceed to argue that the Patristic account of the New Testament materials (in the Synoptics and in I Corinthians) is both clearer and more coherent than the Erasmian one.

This is followed by four chapters each presenting a modern school of interpretation which, in the authors' reckoning, makes more credible sense of the divorce texts in the Gospels than the Erasmian tradition. First, there is the argument that Matthew 5.32 and 19.9 are concerned with impediments to a valid marriage (that is to say that *porneia* is the equivalent of incest), not with providing reasons for dissolving one (Chapter 7). Second, there is the Betrothal View, which differs from the Unlawful Marriages View in reading

*porneia* as denoting infidelity during the period of betrothal (Chapter 8). Third, comes the Preteritive or 'No Comment' View, which reads the exception clauses as qualifying the propositions altogether, and not just the verb 'to put away' (Chapter 9). And then, in Chapter 10, comes the Traditio-Historical View which holds that the different Gospel texts have different meanings reflecting the concerns of the evangelists for the particular circumstances of the communities for which they were writing. Although more credible than the Erasmian account, Heth and Wenham find all four of these positions flawed, the first two because of their restriction of meaning of *porneia*, the third on grammatical grounds, and the fourth because it pits Matthew against Jesus.

In the final chapter (11), the authors acknowledge that the moral position for which they argue on exegetical grounds—that divorce but not remarriage is permissible for Christians—entails serious pastoral problems; but they rightly insist that pastoral perplexity should not be allowed to obscure the high moral calling of married Christians to bear witness to the Gospel—to marriage as a *mysterion* of the union between Christ and his Church—through persistent, if unrequited, love. Nevertheless, the persuasiveness of this position would have been much enhanced had its pastoral ramifications been explored and defended as thoroughly as its exegetical foundations. For the question remains whether, even given a high Christian calling and earnest and honest prayers for the grace with which to meet it, there are not moral predicaments where it cannot be met without unconscionable damage to innocent neighbours; for example, cases involving children whose well-being requires (?) the replacement of a divorced and absent parent. Certainly, it would be quite unreasonable to expect Heth and Wenham to have covered such ground in this book, which is already quite substantial; but their exegetical argument does need a pastoral sequel.

Latimer House, Oxford

NIGEL BIGGAR

### **SCHOOLS NOW: A PARENT'S GUIDE Charles Martin**

Lion Publishing, Tring 1988 251pp. £4.95

ISBN 0 1459 1546 9

If you want value for money, this is the book to buy! It's not a book to sit down and read through at a sitting: it's more like a supermarket, crammed with items of all kinds from which you make your own selection.

Chapter One looks at the education system, what's in it, and who runs it and whether they should or not. Chapter Two is about how schools are run, their aims ('people-growing places'), methods of teaching, streaming, schools and the community including multi-cultural communities, and local financial management. Chapter Three discusses the nature of the child, touches on Skinner, Piaget, Jensen, Eysenck and Bantock and ends with a Christian critique of the dominant humanist view.

In Chapter Four what parents can offer to the education system is considered. There is a long, wise discussion about choosing a school which examines the various kinds of school on offer and includes something on 'opting out'.

'A National Curriculum' (Chapter Five) provides a historical background to the 1988 Education Reform Act, glances (rather briefly) at the National Curriculum itself and majors on the earlier Her Majesty's Inspectors' formulation of nine areas of learning and experience. There is also an analysis of the curriculum in terms of skills, attitudes, concept and knowledge. TVEI and CPVE are explained.

Chapter Six deals with religious and moral education, providing some historical background. Arguments for and against Religious Education in the state school are examined. The thorny question of assemblies in school is raised and the author's judgment on the provisions of the 1988 Act is that 'it puts upon governors and head-teachers a task which in many places is impossible'. He suggests possible ways forward. The chapter ends with an extended story about pressures which a head-teacher faces from a highly committed Christian parent and from a Muslim governor. The complexities of the present situation in religious education are nicely illustrated here.

Chapter Seven deals with assessment, providing some historical background to pre-G.C.S.E. exams and discussing recent changes. There is a close discussion of the difference between criterion-referenced and norm-referenced testing and a rather slim account of assessment under the National Curriculum. The purpose and implications of assessment in schools are well aired.

Chapter Eight looks at standards and does some helpful conceptual analysis on what 'standards' are to be taken to mean. The question of whether they are rising or falling is comprehensively tackled and common misunderstandings are exposed. Chapter Nine deals with life after school and with the range of training and education which is available.

In Chapter Ten the subject of the teacher is considered, this time without a historical context, concentrating on the details of the current scene and the implications of the 1988 Act. Teacher appraisal (shades of clergy appraisal!) and teacher stress are discussed and the teacher's responsibility considered. Chapter Eleven is a detailed analysis and discussion of the rôle of governors in the school and includes the provisions of the 1988 Act.

There is no waffle in this book. It covers an immense number of educational topics in a gritty and detailed way and although the density of the text gives it a certain breathlessness and makes it quite demanding, providing it is read selectively, it will be a clear and helpful guide to a great deal of what is going on in schools today. The style is concentrated but there are plenty of lively and humorous asides. There are twenty six useful diagrams. Anyone looking for a sensitive, thoughtful and informative over-view of the educational world will find it here.

That said, however, the author is clearly more at home with the world of the secondary school than the primary school and much of his material is to do with secondary schools. The primary school is well catered for but does not receive the sort of insightful coverage which springs from the author's sustained personal experience in post-primary education.

The cover and publisher's blurb are somewhat misleading because they convey the impression that the book is mainly about the Education Reform Act. This is not so. This topic is certainly covered but it is placed within a comprehensive pattern of other educational issues which are better described by the title, 'SCHOOLS NOW', than by the publisher's presentation of the book.

## Churchman

The other caveat which has to be made about this splendid book is that like anything written at the time of the making of the Act, it cannot help being a little dated now as the implications of the Act are taken further, for example by subject working parties and by the work of the School Examination and Assessment Council.

The tone is good-humoured and judicious throughout and there is rarely any attempt to argue for a particular position. On the whole the issues are raised and the readers are left to draw their own conclusions.

Edge Hill College of Higher Education, Ormskirk

HOWARD SAINSBURY