

Book Reviews

EVANGELICALISM DIVIDED – A RECORD OF CRUCIAL CHANGE IN THE YEARS 1950-2000

Ian H. Murray

Edinburgh: Banner of Truth 2000 342pp hb £13.50 ISBN 0 85151 783 8

Perceptive, highly readable, fascinating, disturbing, frustrating, but above all, extremely important; these are just some of the words to describe this latest book by Iain Murray. I am tempted to say that it is one of the best ‘half books’ on the recent history of Western evangelicalism written. That is not meant to be a facetious remark, but, as we shall see, it does highlight a significant deficiency in what is otherwise a very valuable and thought-provoking volume.

Murray begins by placing the contemporary evangelical scene (by which he means American and British) against the backcloth of developments which took place over a hundred years ago and the devastating influence of Schleiermacher (whose name, ironically means, ‘maker of veils!’). The price paid in his attempt to defend Christianity against its ‘cultured despisers’ was unacceptably high, namely, the restriction of religion to the realm of ‘feeling’, which by definition is above attack. But, if Christianity could effectively be defended in this way, neither could it be commended, because matters of evidence, proof and reason simply had no part to play in the religious sphere as defined by Schleiermacher. The corrosive effect of this viewpoint on academic theology is well documented and it was against the rise of this kind of theological liberalism that evangelicals made a clear stand throughout the 1920s up to, and including, the 1950s, often as a despised minority.

Murray then charts the phenomenal rise of the young Billy Graham and the influence upon him of Harold Ockenga and Fuller seminary, with their gradual distancing of themselves from ‘fundamentalism’ and the rather abrasive and isolationist attitudes often associated with it. This influence is perceived in one of the frequently repeated sayings of Billy Graham from 1957 onwards that, ‘The one badge of Christian discipleship is not orthodoxy, but love’. Murray, amongst others, sees this as indicative of the path Graham was to tread later in order to try and ‘win’ non-evangelicals over to supporting his crusades so that without compromising his message he

appeared to be willing to have on the platform those whose beliefs were, quite frankly, liberal. And if the measure of his achievement is the degree to which old opponents were won over, then this approach was unquestionably successful. For example, Michael Ramsey who opposed Billy Graham's CICCUC mission to Cambridge University on the grounds that his views were 'heretical', formed a respectful friendship after they met in New Delhi for the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches. It was here that Graham asked the Archbishop, 'Do we have to part company because we disagree in methods and theology? Isn't that the purpose of the ecumenical movement, to bring together people of opposing views?'

Murray notes the same broadening and inclusive approach amongst Anglican evangelicals with John Stott and Jim Packer as their leading spokesmen. Murray sees the famous public disagreement between Stott and Lloyd-Jones at the Evangelical Alliance meeting in 1966 as exposing two fundamentally opposed approaches. He argues that while Stott took the line that within the Church of England a new opportunity presented itself both to advance evangelicalism and renew the major denominations from within, Lloyd-Jones claimed they were mutually exclusive of each other. The latter goal would, in his opinion, invariably impede the former. The result would be the sort of 'doctrinal indifferentism' characteristic of the ecumenical movement as a whole. As far as the author is concerned, the first NEAC at Keele in 1967 and subsequent events within Anglican evangelicalism bear out Lloyd-Jones' contention.

Chapter 3 provides more detailed evidence that while the aims of the Billy Graham organisation were high, the priorities were all wrong. The seeking out of friendships with the 'rich and famous' by Billy Graham is seen to be singularly lacking in gospel priorities, citing his defence of Richard Nixon at the height of the Watergate scandal as being a case of serious misjudgment. The appeals to Graham by the likes of Lloyd-Jones and Francis Schaeffer to 'think again' his policy of broad co-operation went unheeded and the lack of criticism of Graham's evangelistic methods by those in the United States, at least, is lamented.

In chapter 4 it is the turn of Anglican evangelicals to be put under the spotlight of scrutiny to consider the part they have played in fostering (albeit unwittingly) evangelical disunity. In particular the part played by the young

Packer in promoting a widespread resurgence in the interest of the Puritans, the establishment of the Westminster fellowship with Lloyd-Jones and his robust intellectual defense of historical Anglicanism and evangelicalism (witness *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*), is contrasted with what the writer sees as an almost inexplicable ‘U-turn’ in his contribution to the collection of essays ‘All in Each Place’, and later the document, ‘Growing into Union’ as well as NEAC 1 which effectively marked the end of fellowship between Free Church evangelicals gathered around Lloyd-Jones, and those committed to mixed denominations. This is when the ‘cold war’ of British evangelicalism began in earnest. To be fair, Murray notes that ‘some’ remained true to the ‘old paths’, although only Alan Stibbs is cited as an example.

Chapter 5 is entitled, ‘How the Evangelical Dyke was Broken in England’ and it would not be too wide of the mark to say that Packer and Stott are cast as the villains of the piece. Evidence is amassed in support of the claim that a serious drift away from historic evangelicalism began to take place resulting from the policy of ‘in it to win it’ promulgated at Keele in 1967. Packer’s contribution to the Doctrine Commission’s report ‘Christian Believing’ chaired by the arch-liberal Maurice Wiles is noted, as is the dialogue between John Stott and another representative of the liberal establishment, David Edwards, published as ‘Essentials’. The book put together by the staff of Wycliffe Hall, entitled ‘Anglican Evangelicals’, which contained a contribution from ‘a friend’, the heretic Richard Holloway, is further grist for the mill, indicating that many Anglican evangelicals have departed from their noble forebears, moving in a direction which accentuated evangelical division, leaving many free church conservative evangelical brothers and sisters simply looking on in complete bewilderment and sadness. Some of the criticisms made here do need to be heard and assessed.

At the point where one may be feeling somewhat disheartened and depressed and left wondering, ‘Where did we go wrong and what hope is there?’, Murray provides an uplifting and challenging chapter which begins by looking at what Scripture says is the Gospel and how Christians believers should relate to each other as well as to those who would deny basic Christian truth (1 John is especially relevant here). It then moves on to review the approach of the Reformers and Evangelicals of the Great Awakening. The book is worth obtaining for this chapter alone.

Next, Murray focuses on what he considers to be some of the key issues on which evangelicals have displayed a general level of agreement in the past, but which is no longer the case.

First, the nature and authority of Scripture. It is argued that in the quest for achieving greater 'intellectual' credibility in the halls of academia, some professing evangelicals have adopted what can only be described as views commonly associated with theological liberalism.

Second, in attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Church, a significant departure has taken place by some evangelicals from an earlier position. Murray argues that while not denying for a moment that there are those who, while remaining Roman Catholics, are born again believers, the Roman Church as a whole still remains in grave error and so nothing less than the integrity of the Gospel is at stake, which those who support 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together' either fail to recognise or consider of little consequence in terms of what ECT hopes to achieve.

Third, there is the matter of theological and biblical illiteracy amongst many professing evangelicals which is a cause for concern. Not only, it is argued, is this a consequence of the accommodating policies pursued in the past, but will further such policies in the future. While evangelicalism remains broad it also rather shallow.

Finally, there remains that which the author describes as the 'unresolved problem' of the church. Murray rightly draws attention to the biblical understanding of the church as being that of an 'assembly' – local and earthly, and universal and heavenly, with this being the main difference between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic understanding. The latter more or less conflating the two in its institution, so that to become a member of the Roman Church by baptism is to be united to Christ. In this chapter, Murray tries to set the record straight that in the call of Lloyd-Jones in 1966 there was no question of seeking to establish a United Evangelical Church, conceived as a distinct denomination. Rather, argues Murray, Lloyd-Jones was attempting to raise the more fundamental question whether, given the advance of the ecumenical movement, it would be practically possible for people to continue within mixed denominations and remain consistently evangelical. Murray states that some may have perceived this as a call to

'come out' of such denominational groupings and unless they did Lloyd-Jones and others would not continue to have fellowship with them. But this, he maintains, 'was to miss the main point' (p. 283) which, as outlined above, is the matter of the ability to hold to a clear evangelical witness in such situations.

The final chapter is one of the most irenic and moving pleas for a greater understanding and indeed, rapprochement, between all sincere and earnest evangelicals I have read. It is compassionate and full of godly wisdom and must move all those who wish to honour the Lord Jesus by living and proclaiming a fully-orbed Gospel, to desire a better future by learning lessons from the past.

I began the review by saying that this is one of the best 'half books' to be written on the history of modern Western evangelicalism. That is, while it is so informative, it is also significantly and woefully lacking in presenting a complete picture. As a result I fear that Iain Murray may well have weakened his very important case.

Another 'half book' needs to be written which will include the following:

(1) The part played by mainly free church evangelicals in accentuating the division within evangelicalism by often intemperate and not wholly honest assessments of those who would disagree with them. I fear that Iain Murray paints an all too glowing picture of those who, for the want of a better word, reside at the 'separatist' end of the spectrum. No doubt some of the criticism levelled at Stott and Packer for example, is justified, and only the Lord and not history, will be their judge. However, it does not bode well for good scholarship to at least appear to display partiality by not subjecting those with whom Murray himself would more easily align himself with, to critical scrutiny. So, on the question of the 'parting of the ways' which took place between Packer and Lloyd-Jones after 1966, Murray is highly critical of Alister McGrath's claim that there was 'bitterness' and that it was not so much Lloyd-Jones but some of his 'advisors' who were responsible for this 'hard line approach'. Indeed, according to Murray it was 'a parting of friends'. This surely is too rosy a view of what really happened and does seem to be slightly revisionist, to say the least. Whilst Lloyd-Jones may well have been able to distinguish 'personalities from principles' not everyone around

him could or did. And surely one cannot believe that some of the sideswipes Lloyd-Jones himself made in the direction of Anglican evangelicals in some of his addresses made after 1967, now collected in the volume 'the Puritans', did not add fuel to the fire and lead to a further moving apart of fellow evangelicals? No man is perfect, and Dr Lloyd-Jones constantly reminded people that 'we do not believe in popes', so why fail to attempt to be objectively critical at this point? Even a cursory recognition of fault in this direction would increase the credibility of Murray's analysis.

(2) One may also wonder whether Murray's account of the 1966 'call' of Lloyd-Jones is a case of special pleading. The fact that so many did hear it as a call to leave mixed denomination or risk loss of fellowship seems to indicate that at least it was a significant component of the message. Also the 'freezing' of fellowship which did take place afterwards gives credence to the interpretation of the 'call' by Packer and McGrath amongst others that a move towards some 'pure' church was envisaged and that 'guilt by association' was not acceptable.

(3) Is it really all doom and gloom in the Anglican evangelical world as Murray seems to suggest? A more complete analysis of the scene would have suggested otherwise. How is it possible to write a recent history on evangelicalism in Britain without mentioning the tremendous contribution Proclamation Trust has made in both improving the spiritual health of evangelicalism by promoting better preaching and drawing together evangelicals from across the divide? We also have the newly formed network 'Essentially Evangelical' which seeks to promote the sort of evangelical co-operation for which Murray pleads in his final chapter, so surely this could have received a mention?

We might also ask: why is it that the only 'good' Anglican evangelicals seem to be those who have died (like Ryle and Stibbs) or who seem to back up what Murray is wanting to say (like Gerald Bray whose Churchman editorials are quoted with relish)? Surely, Dick Lucas might have received at least a passing mention? What of the establishment of REFORM, or the work of David Holloway and the Christian Institute for example? One would not know they existed if one were to be guided by this book alone. These are serious omissions indeed. Their absence results in a presentation which conveys to the unwary reader that Anglican evangelicalism has sold the pass

and is being led lemming-like towards ecumenical oblivion.

(4) While Murray's reading has certainly been wide, his reporting of the results has been selective. Take, for example, the chapter on the 'unresolved issue' of the church. From a perusal of this chapter one would not get the impression that Anglican evangelicals hold any view other than a quasi-catholic notion of the denomination being 'a church' I myself have argued against this view in 'The Anglican Evangelical Crisis' which Murray has read and yet no reference to its handling of the ecclesiology issue is made. What of the tremendous influence the Sydney evangelicals have had in changing the scene in Britain, both in terms of their writings on ecclesiology (like D.B. Knox and P.T. O'Brien) and radical practice (Philip Jensen)? And while one may not agree with everything that is written, surely something positive can be said of the immense contributions that have been made in the arena of academic theology by the likes of Alister McGrath and others?

(5) At points one might wish to challenge Murray on matters of fact. For example, on page 182 he writes that the liberal theologian James Barr went to Wycliffe Hall to teach after he left Manchester University. It is implied that this might account for a lack of response to some of the things he said on the matter of biblical inerrancy by the former Principal of the Hall, R.T. France. However James Barr never taught at Wycliffe Hall. He certainly taught at Oxford University both as Oriel Professor of Biblical Interpretation and Regius Professor of Hebrew, but never as a member of staff at Wycliffe. This is an unfortunate error for it gives the impression that Wycliffe Hall, while having an evangelical foundation, sits rather loosely to its articles by allowing those who are avowedly anti-evangelical to teach its students. What is more, it suggests that France may have not been so rigorous in his critique of Barr because of partiality.

Murray sadly gives the appearance of being selective in his material and perhaps more than a little 'one-sided' in the presentation of it. This will not only cause some to dismiss some of the very important things that need to be heeded but could further accentuate the divide which still persists. This is clearly not the intention of the writer for, on the contrary, here is a book which, in spite of the deficiencies outlined, longs to capture the sort of vision for evangelicalism as laid down by Richard Baxter. There is no gloating triumphalism, only a genuine and sad appraisal of a division which would

have been best avoided and should be overcome for the sake of the cause of Christ. This book is a 'must' read, but do bear in mind it is only part of the picture, albeit a significant part.

MELVIN TINKER

THE CARE OF CREATION

R.J. Berry (ed.)

IVP 2000 213pp £9.99 pb ISBN 0851116574

Everyone knows that keen evangelicals are concerned with the primacy of gospel ministry so why bother reading a book on environmental ethics? One of the benefits of reading this book is the realisation that it is actually a poor understanding of the gospel which leads to such an attitude.

This recent publication is a collection of pithy and thought provoking responses to the Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation (1994). Prof. R.J. Berry, himself a geneticist based at University College London, has drawn together an impressive array of Christian theologians and scientists whose rich variety of responses alone make this book worth dipping into.

The book helpfully commences by reprinting an important article by Lynn White from the 1960s in which he famously accuses Western Christian thought of being responsible for the modern ecological crisis. This is swiftly countered in the following chapter by Ronald Sider who rightly identifies the materialistic individualism spawned by the Enlightenment as the real culprit. It is this, he claims, which has both shaped our culture and infected Christian thinking about humanity's relationship to the rest of the creation. He then begins to put forward what becomes one of the significant challenges of the book: we need to go back to the Bible to have our distorted worldview corrected.

The remaining chapters take forward the challenge of rethinking our position as Christians. Some of the highlights include Ron Elsdon's contribution on how biblical eschatology helps shape our response to environmental issues, Richard Bauckham and John Houghton's critiques of the use of 'stewardship' terminology and Stephen Rand's argument for environmental care from the perspective of loving our neighbour.

Although one or two chapters contain sloppy exegesis, the book as a whole contains plenty of material to get you thinking along the right lines. For the pastor-teacher it also contains a useful index of scriptural references relevant to creation and some useful nuggets for preaching, such as Michael Northcott's critique of western consumerism as idolatry.

As a short collections of essays the book lacks the coherence and in depth argument of a volume by a single author, but then again that is not its function. It has been designed to stimulate, to challenge and to rebuke us in our often sloppy theology of the relationship of creation to redemption and a lifestyle which simply apes that of the consumer idolatry of the world around us.

If the 'green issue' is one that you have been putting off sorting out for a while then it's time to reconsider. Global warming, ozone depletion, human cloning and genetically modified foods are the issues which grab our headlines on a regular basis. Failure to ensure we have a biblical ethic of the environment will not mean we have a neutral ethic but rather one that is derived from the world. Moreover, by sidelining the issue of environmental ethics we may well be in danger of missing one of the greatest apologetic and evangelistic opportunities of our generation.

STUART ALLEN

JOHN NEWTON AND THE ENGLISH EVANGELICAL TRADITION

D. Bruce Hindmarsh

Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans 2000 366pp £19.99 pb
ISBN 0 8028 4741 2

John Newton will be known to many as the subject of a dramatic conversion: the blasphemous, brutal, slave-trader who turned to Christ, and as the author of 'Faith's review and expectation' – better known as 'Amazing Grace'. This fascinating book reveals that he was much more. It is not a biography, although Hindmarsh has the elusive combination of sympathy and detachment that makes the good biographer, and so it is perhaps not the best starting point for those who are unfamiliar with Newton's life. Instead it is a study of different aspects of Newton, and through him of the Evangelical Revival. Hindmarsh takes us through Newton's conversion narrative, his theological maturation, his struggle for ordination, his two pastorates, his view of the spiritual life, and his hymnody with ease and erudition. Newton

himself emerges as a key figure in the later revival (by the end of his life he was its elder statesman), steering a safe course of evangelical Calvinism between Wesley's Arminianism and the Hyper-Calvinism that led many of his dissenting friends astray. He took a pragmatic attitude towards church order, and co-operated fully with Dissenters, whilst seeing no reason to leave the Church of England. The dilemma that he and the other evangelicals faced over the tension between Anglican order and evangelism is one that remains with us. Through his letters Newton was the great spiritual guide of the revival, and one hopes that Hindmarsh's readers will go on to read Newton's *Cardiphonia*, an evangelical classic that has been neglected for too long. Hindmarsh's account of Newton's pastoral activities is deeply interesting as a case study of an 18th century evangelical parish minister. As someone who is preparing for parish ministry I found it inspiring!

This is not simply a study of Newton the man, but a study of Newton in his social context. Hindmarsh uses Newton to illuminate the evangelical tradition. He is a safe guide through the varieties of eighteenth century soteriology, and to hymnology. The book is packed with insights. For instance, on the way that Old Dissent formed a bridge between the Puritans and the Evangelicals, and on why Newton's generation were not squeamish about singing of Christ's blood. It is a major contribution to our understanding of the Revival, and essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the history and nature of evangelicalism. One would have liked more on Newton's relationship with his wife, and with Cowper, and on his final rejection of slavery. But these are very minor complaints, and more than made up for by the insight we are given into Newton's world. The book is exceptionally well researched, an outstanding piece of historiography, and written in a clear and engaging style that is a delight to read. I highly recommend it.

STEVE WALTON

ANYONE FOR ALPHA? EVANGELISM IN A POST-CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

Stephen Hunt

London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001 127pp £7.95 pb
ISBN 0-232-52404-1

The Alpha Course is undoubtedly the best known and most widely used evangelistic tool in the world today, with a cross-denominational appeal that

puts it ahead of 'Emmaus' or Christianity Explained'. Yet Alpha is not universally popular. Many people feel that its particular theological emphases are at best unhelpful, and at worst misleading. Stephen Hunt's book is therefore a timely look at this phenomenon, and is no worse for being written primarily from a sociological, rather than a theological, perspective. The bulk of it is based on a survey Hunt himself conducted amongst a number of churches using the Alpha course. And here is both its greatest strength and weakness.

Given the scale and potential significance of Alpha, to say nothing of the cost (including a £1 million advertising campaign), it is surely worth looking objectively at its effectiveness. Hunt is clearly capable of carrying out such an analysis, being both a lecturer and author in sociology. Unfortunately, Hunt's survey is simply too limited to do full justice to the subject. For example, all the churches in his survey were in the Reading and Maidenhead areas of Berkshire, and although Hunt asserts that 'the findings reported here are fairly typical of other regions in Britain' (p. 55), one suspects this is an optimistic assessment.

This is a shame, because Hunt's results make fascinating reading, providing exactly the statistics that are needed to evaluate Alpha critically rather than merely anecdotally. For example, ninety-seven per cent of the people attending an Alpha course in the Reading area are white, seventy per cent of them are married, well over half are between thirty-one and fifty years of age and all but nine per cent of them have a GCSE or higher qualification. Of course, the conclusion that the average person doing Alpha is white, middle-class and middle-aged doesn't make Alpha a bad evangelistic tool, but it would certainly mean that it is not the answer to all the evangelistic needs of the church. The difficulty with supporting this conclusion from Hunt's work, however, is that any survey restricted to Berkshire in general and Reading in particular is likely to throw up a lot of middle-class white people.

Perhaps Holy Trinity, Brompton itself would be ready to commission Hunt to carry out a more thorough survey, even though he is critical of Alpha in some respects. He identifies, for example, the way in which Alpha has introduced or sustained a charismatic theology in churches throughout the UK and abroad and he also offers an 'Alternative Alpha Course', which he believes would make a better introduction to the faith. But his criticisms throughout

read like the 'wounds of a friend'.

This is certainly a book which those interested in evangelism should read, albeit with the caveats outlined. As well as informing, it might stimulate others to consider how to do something better than Alpha, whilst taking into account the lessons which Alpha highlights. (By the way, Hunt estimates that between three and four percent of people attending Alpha were actually converted in the process.)

JOHN P RICHARDSON

CHRIST ON TRIAL: HOW THE GOSPEL UNSETTLES OUR JUDGEMENT

Rowan Williams

London: Fount (HarperCollins) 2000 141pp pb £6.99 ISBN 0-00-710791-9

What is a 'trial' Williams finds it fruitful to explore the metaphor as a two-way process of discovery. The trials of Jesus should therefore uncover truths about the prisoner himself and also about the readers.

What the trials of Jesus reveal about the weaknesses of mortal human beings 'the readers' is expounded with considerable empathy, and illustrated from several works of fiction. In the face of his accusers, Jesus' conduct challenges the very things in which religious people take comfort: his silence denounces the use of the language of religion as a weapon; his total exclusion from human structures reveal how uncomfortable the poor and other 'outsiders' make us feel. Too often we act as if they must be eliminated or pushed out of sight because they unsettle us. In the trials of some early Christians we are also shown the awful possibility of martyrdom becoming in itself a bid for the same kind of power, a trump card in the struggle for world control. All this is described in poetic language that does at times leave the reader more impressed than informed.

What is ultimately unsatisfactory about this book is that so little of substance is said about God as he is revealed in Scripture. Williams is right to say that 'if our talk about God is a religious version of talk about human safety, the paradox is that it will never say anything at all about salvation' (p. 15). But he goes on at several points to deny that God can effectively communicate

with his creatures by language: there is no common language, and in any case the language of humans is so discredited by its role in the abuse of power that some things 'become untrue when they are said' (p. 82). With God unable to speak truthfully, the reader is left without proper consolation. So too with the structures of human society: since God cannot be found in them or through them he can only be sought in the powerless, the victim and the voiceless – those who are beyond the boundaries of society. Their witness is mute and the reader is left only with God as 'the reality that, simply by being what it is (or who it is) establishes that violence cannot fill up the whole space of the world' (p 12).

This was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book for 2001 (Williams is Archbishop of Wales), and is disappointing for those hoping to learn about the God who spoke by the prophets, but in these last days has spoken to us by a Son.

ED MOLL

PREACHING THE WHOLE BIBLE AS CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

Graeme Goldsworthy

Leicester: IVP 2000 272pp £11.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-539-X

The central thesis of this book is clearly stated on p. 113 – 'all texts in the whole Bible bear a discernible relationship to Christ and are primarily intended as a testimony to Christ'. Many who profess to be Christians would be deeply sceptical of this statement and nevertheless be concerned at the low ebb Western Christianity has reached. Through reading this book we may grasp why Scripture authority and power has been so emasculated in our Christian communities. In fact it may dawn on the reader that the reason why the church has reached a low ebb in many places is precisely because Christ has not been preached from all the Scriptures.

Goldsworthy is well known already for his writings on biblical theology and this is another in which that theme is prominent. Yet this book has the potential to be the most influential of all that he has written, such is the importance of what he says for pastors and preachers. It is written in two distinct parts, the first of which explores that central thesis referred to above. In the second half the different genres of biblical texts are explored and practical hints on how they may be preached in a way which testifies to

Christ are given. No one can accuse this author of being hypocritical about the practical implications of the concerns he writes about.

There are many points in this book which challenge that received wisdom on preaching which can so easily empty the gospel of its power to save. On p. 122 Goldsworthy insists that biblical theology is at the heart of hermeneutics and he boldly asserts that hermeneutics have been hijacked by literary and linguistic concerns. Elsewhere he reminds us that the biblical theology of the preached word is the proper basis for the practice of preaching. He contends that the neglect of this could explain why modern preaching is so feeble. I also appreciated his point that the preaching of Paul's letters often ends up as legalistic when we ignore the gospel basis expounded in the early part of those epistles.

All in all there is a real wealth of important material on preaching here that needs to be carefully digested. It is worth buying the book for that alone. However we are also given the bonus that if we do not know how to preach Christ from the Psalms or apocalyptic literature then this book will help us get started in that. This book deserves a long life and a wide circulation.

MARK BURKILL

REVELATION 17-22 (Word Biblical Commentary 52c)

David E. Aune

Nashville: Thomas Nelson 1998 xlvii+450 pp \$32-99 hb
ISBN 0-8499-1545-7

This is the third and final volume of David Aune's magisterial commentary on the book of Revelation. As with the other volumes, this one is meticulous, thorough, comprehensive, and exhaustive. With over 100 pages of indexes (modern authors, principal topics, biblical and other ancient sources) covering the whole three volume work, detailed discussions of textual criticism and the unusual syntax of Revelation, plus the occasional excursus (there are five in this volume) on such topics as 'Ancient Utopias and the Paradise Myth', this is certainly an excellent resource for scholars of the Greek text and background of the Apocalypse. As is to be expected, Aune interacts fully with the latest source material (some quite recent) and the full range of scholarly books and articles covering Revelation and its background; he does not, unfortunately,

interact with G.K. Beale's equally monumental commentary (in the NIGTC series) which was published a little later than this volume.

There is an immense amount of detail in the commentary, especially on the historical background and on Greco-Roman parallels to the text. Aune is very sparing in his theological comments, and I was surprised not to find an excursus on the millennial debate. There is too much detail, and not enough 'big picture' for the busy pastor-preacher to find this volume helpful in sermon preparation. There are a few typographical errors (including a spelling mistake in the Editorial Preface, and some mis-pointed Hebrew on page 8) and Aune's English vocabulary is occasionally obscure. This is not the best commentary to buy with preaching in mind, but for historical and linguistic detail, and an especially thorough study of the difficult textual problems in Revelation, it is excellent.

LEE GATISS

1 AND 2 SAMUEL (New International Biblical Commentary 6)

Mary J. Evans

Carlisle: Paternoster 2000 xiv + 267 pp £12.99 hb ISBN 1-56563-579-5

Mary Evans, Lecturer in Old Testament at London Bible College, focuses on three major areas of interest in the books of Samuel (following Brueggemann): the socio-historical, personal, and theological concerns of the writers. This threefold cord (better expressed as 'politics, people, and preaching!') is held together in her opinion by the integrating perspective of 'the nature, accession, use, and abuse of power'. She finds that 'within the text there is both a description of the power struggles within Israel and a critique of the attitudes that view power as so important' (pp. 9-10). The possible political agenda of the book is examined, but not in unnecessary detail; the ambivalent portraits of the various main characters are investigated and occasionally well expounded; and the theological reflections and concerns of the authors are drawn out.

The emphasis laid on 'power' from a socio-psychological angle is perhaps overplayed at the expense of the more crucial redemptive-historical perspective of the books within the canon of Scripture. Reflections on the use and abuse of power can be found throughout the Bible, of course, but here the big issue is not merely the power struggles of the great, but the promises

of God. The continuity of the promise to Abraham and the focusing of those promises onto David and his descendents is of the utmost importance for understanding these books and their purpose within the Bible. The institution of the kingship, the emergence of the prophets, and the centrality of Jerusalem are also vital components, with massive theological implications. Evans' focus on power in politics, people, and preaching may be a useful handle on some of these key aspects of the books, (they are certainly not ignored) but it does not encapsulate its whole message.

The attempt to discover a 'melodic line' through the books is, however, a laudable one and although the theme of 'power' may not be as all-embracing as Evans' tries to make it, that does not stop this commentary from being useful. There are some insightful comments made on the David and Bathsheba story, and particularly on the 'appendix' of 2 Samuel 21–24 and the function of the psalm in 2 Samuel 22 as an *inclusio* with Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2. The motif of power is related in the introduction to the New Testament's emphasis on 'power in weakness' and interestingly Jonathan, not just David, is seen as a possible type of Christ, since he 'did not consider the power of his father something to be grasped (*cf.* Phil. 2:6)'.

The chapters are quite short (about 4 pages each on average) and could serve as Quiet Time notes for more serious Bible readers (although application is rarely made to the Christian today). Textual criticism (normally a great concern in commentaries on these books due to the nature of the Hebrew text) does not feature highly in the notes, which makes the book much easier to read but not as useful as a reference work (although parallels with Chronicles are carefully noted). Overall, this is an introductory commentary with some value, but the preacher will require more help with both the big picture and the application of the text.

LEE GATISS

PROVERBS (Word Biblical Commentary 22)

Roland E. Murphy

Nashville: Thomas Nelson 1998 lxxv + 306 pp \$32-99 hb
ISBN 0-8499-0221-5

Roland Murphy, a Roman Catholic Priest, is an expert in Wisdom Literature having written several books on the subject including the commentary on

Ecclesiastes in this same series. This is the first and longer of his two commentaries on the book of Proverbs (the other appears in the NIBC series from Paternoster) and is much more technical in its approach and handling of the detail. It begins, after a brief survey of introductory matters, with a new translation of the whole book which is relatively literal, adhering closely to the Hebrew text. Proverbs is then divided according to its major sections and commented upon in the usual style of the Word series. Nine excursuses are grouped together after the main body of the commentary and cover issues such as translating Proverbs, the fear of the Lord, Theology, and International Wisdom.

The excursus on 'Fear of the Lord' rightly brings out the key importance of this concept for the book, and its use as a marker or *inclusio* for chapters 1–9 and indeed for the book as a whole. On 'Retribution' Murphy attacks the simplistic view that Proverbs assumes a straightforward deeds-consequences nexus, a mechanical equation of good deeds and good results (and vice-versa). He claims that although the Bible does know something of a 'every act has built-in consequences for the actor' idea, it even more frequently affirms the direct agency and causality of God in justice and retribution. This is well observed. The excursus on 'Theology' is weakened by the insistence that the Old Testament contains not one but several theologies, a theology of wisdom among them. This leads Murphy to state that 'the dialogue with the environment was also a dialogue with the God who was worshipped as creator and saviour. This is the basis for a salvific faith. Such an understanding of biblical wisdom is important for non-biblical religions, for trillions who have never heard of the name YHWH or Christ. It makes possible a faith response that is not explicitly related or limited to a particular mode, history, for the revelation of God' (p. 272).

More could have been expected on the christological reading of chapter 8, verses 22-31, especially in a commentary designed to help preachers as well as scholars (although the important role these verses played in the Arian controversy is mentioned briefly). There are some excellent observations on the 'ideal woman' poem in chapter 31 which help us to see it more as praise for wisdom itself and the fear of the Lord than an impossible job description for the perfect super-wife. As is usual for the series, there is plentiful interaction with modern critical studies in German and French as well as in English, and more detailed notes on the Hebrew alongside sections of

comment and explanation.

Some readers may wish that there were additional excursuses on subjects such as Proverbs in Biblical Theology, Christ and Proverbs, the use of Proverbs in Dogmatics or Pastoral ministry, or Preaching Proverbs. For a discussion of these and other such useful subjects, the preacher, teacher, or Bible Study leader will need to look elsewhere (perhaps to Graeme Goldsworthy's book *The Tree of Life*) D.A. Garrett's commentary in the New American Commentary series is equally competent on the technical details and issues surrounding the exegesis and interpretation of Proverbs while retaining an evangelical perspective and applicatory goal in mind throughout. These latter two things Murphy's commentary cannot do and does not set out to do. Notwithstanding these limitations then, it is a stimulating and learned book with some helpful comments on the detail and some interesting insights in the excursuses.

LEE GATISS

CHRIST, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. PAUL'S THEOLOGY OF JUSTIFICATION (NEW STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY NO. 9)

Mark A. Seifrid

Leicester: Apollos 2000 222pp £12.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-470-9

This is an outstanding book on the greatest of themes- Jesus Christ, our only righteousness. Seifrid thoroughly examines the concepts of righteousness and justification in Paul, and their Old Testament background. He stands within the Reformation tradition, and acknowledges his debt to the Reformers, (especially Luther), without being slavishly imitative; he is not afraid to criticise Protestant tradition where it has departed from scripture. Seifrid's work is timely, as the glorious truth of justification by faith is now under assault as never before, and from those who claim an evangelical heritage. The book shows how Sanders, Dunn, Wright, etc. have misread both Paul and the historical background – suddenly the 'New Perspective' seems like old hat. But it is not narrowly polemical; its stress is positive and glorifying to God.

At the heart of the book is an illuminating exposition of Romans. Seifrid maintains that God's righteousness cannot be reduced to his 'covenant

faithfulness', but belongs to the context of God's activity in 'ruling and judging'. Particularly valuable is his emphasis that God is not like a modern, impartial, judge, (the assumption of some commentators); he is one party in a great lawsuit against humanity, and acts to vindicate himself. Seifrid shows that the *dikaïosune theou* in Romans is an eschatological gift; in 1:17 God's vindicating act of raising Christ from the dead for us, and in 3:21 the forensic righteousness given to believers. God has brought to an end his contention against us at the cross, vindicating himself, and in the resurrection declares his saving righteousness. Our justification is found in Christ's saving work; I found Seifrid's insistence that justification is located in Christ's resurrection particularly helpful. In other chapters Seifrid considers Paul's conversion, the theme of righteousness in the rest of Paul's letters, the purpose of the Law, the nature of faith, (*pistis Christou* in Romans is 'faith in Christ'), and the place of Israel in Romans 9–11. He concludes by considering the implications of the 'alien righteousness' given us in Christ for biblical and systematic theology, Protestant-Roman Catholic dialogues, and preaching. All these discussions are valuable and thought provoking.

With a book this good, there is always the danger of bandwagon-jumping, so some reservations are necessary. Not all of Seifrid's exegesis is convincing or clear. His criticisms of Protestant Orthodoxy are good, especially his stress that the imputation of righteousness is not something extra added to forgiveness in justification. But his emphasis that justification is found solely in the cross and resurrection, not as an item in an *ordo salutis*, seems to make justification prior to faith, which is surely not the New Testament order. Ironically, at this point he is closer to some of the Protestant scholastics whom he criticises, than to the Reformers whom he commends. We should see Seifrid's work as complementary, rather than antithetical, to Protestant Orthodoxy at this point, and not play off salvation history against an *ordo salutis*.

But overall Seifrid combines good, solid, incisive exegesis with a wide grasp of biblical theology. This is an exciting book; one to grapple with again and again as one realises the glory of what God has done in Christ. I think I will preach the Gospel more faithfully because I have read it. It made me think, but more than that it made me pray, and it made me worship.

GRACE, GRIT & GUMPTION: SPIRITUAL REVIVAL IN SOUTH WALES**Geraint Fielder**Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications 2000 240pp £6-99 pb
ISBN 185792-500-9

Hagiography is not dead. This account of three Welsh evangelists at the turn of the twentieth century is written by a strong sympathiser in the style of older denominational histories, and makes no pretence at objectivity. It is the Christianised equivalent of a swashbuckling romance. But Geraint Fielder is unashamed of that fact – he explicitly intends not only to inform his readers, but also to inspire them. His account is termed a ‘thrilling, at times heroic, story’ (p. 7), ‘a vigorous and courageous evangelistic adventure’ (p. 12), ‘a romance of faith’ (p. 13). It aims to be ‘a virile boost to spiritual morale’ and to challenge us to engage in wholehearted evangelism amongst Britain’s ‘burgeoning underclass’ (p. 12). Perhaps because Fielder relies heavily on earlier biographies and denominational magazines, there is little report of any weaknesses or fruitless missions of these evangelists. Instead they are likened to David’s three mighty men, and their ministry is called ‘incredible’ (p. 43), ‘exceptional’ (p. 172), ‘remarkable’ (p. 176), ‘a model’ for the Christians of today (p. 117). All is glorious success and harmony until they die and the next generation takes over, and the book ends with a survey of churches they established which are no longer open in the year 2000 because their congregations strayed from the principles and passions of their founders.

This is the tale of John Pugh and brothers Seth and Frank Joshua, founders in 1891 of the Forward Movement, an evangelistic organisation within Welsh Calvinistic Methodism. With the motto ‘Wales for Christ’, they preached (both the gospel and temperance), prayed, fought poverty and prostitution, and built mission halls across Glamorgan and Monmouthshire, ministering particularly to English-speakers who arrived during the rapid industrialisation of south Wales to work on the mines and docks and were unreached by the Welsh-speaking chapels. Pugh and the Joshuas were prominent in the ‘Welsh Revival’ of 1904-5, and appealed for men with ‘grace, grit and gumption’ to be partners with them in mission. Perversely the book’s front cover reads ‘Grace, Grit and Gumption’, while the title page prefers ‘Grit, Grace and Gumption’! Pugh died in 1907, followed by the Joshuas in the 1920s, but their connexion sprang to prominence once more through the influence of Martin Lloyd-Jones, pastor of Sandfields Forward Movement church in

Aberavon from 1927. His daughter, Lady Catherwood, is right that Fielder's work 'warms the heart' (p. 1), and thus far the book is valuable for Christian readers and meets its aim, although greater objectivity would have won for it an wider significance in this neglected area of British church history.

ANDREW ATHERSTONE

I BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE

David Jackman

Hodder & Stoughton 2000

£7.99

240 pp

ISBN

I believe in the Bible is a welcome contribution from the pen of David Jackman, Director of the Cornhill Training Course. Much of the wisdom which he shares with his students is to be found in this excellent book. He gives a well-researched introduction to the reliability and perspicuity of the Bible. His overview of the plotline or 'melodic line' (to quote Dick Lucas) of the Bible's meta-narrative is very clear.

As I read this book I had in mind John Stott's *Understanding the Bible* which I first read as a new Christian twenty years ago. Stott's publication is a masterful overview of the story of the bible and provided me with an excellent framework to understand the cultural, social, geographical and historical background to the Bible. I therefore wanted to ask what this book would be able to contribute given the background of John Stott's publication.

First, the author is evidently engaging with the students that he is teaching at Cornhill on a day to day basis. Many of them are coming with a new set of questions at the beginning of the 21st century. Each chapter is introduced with hypothetical discussions between young people who have genuine questions about the reliability and applicability of the scriptures. Whilst I am not convinced that these dialogues always work, this demonstrates a concern for real engagement with the questions that modern people are asking. Many of these questions have to do with the post-modernist agenda.

Secondly, English Evangelicals have recognised more recently the need to engage with biblical theology, particularly the way in which it helps us to put together a 'big picture' of the bible story. Graeme Goldsworthy has been influential upon many of the students who go through the Cornhill training

course. Various other authors have had an impact on this book, and I find the biblical theology he outlines refreshingly engaging.

The book begins with the bold affirmation that the Bible has a story to Whilst acknowledging (p. 29ff) that the Bible was written over 1,600 years and is really a collection of sixty-six books, the author is clear that 'Jesus Christ is the centre and focus of the entire Bible'.

In a pick and mix age a re-affirmation of the reformation watch word *sola scriptura* is welcome. The modern implications of that reformation marker are dealt with in chapter four – 'Can we trust the Bible's reliability?' Questions about the authenticity of documents and the reliability of translations are addressed here. However questions relating to 'The new Hermeneutic' are also addressed and there is interaction with *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard.

The next two major sections address the question 'So how do we unpack the old/new Testament?' Here the author skilfully tells the story of old and new Testaments and manages to give the big picture while also homing in on some critical passages in history, poetry, prophets and New Testament. The relationship between the Old Testament and the new, following John Goldingay and his explanation of the interpretative tool 'Typology', is summarised as follows:

Starting from the point that what can be said about Israel's relationship to God under the old covenant can be said about the Church ('the Israel of God' – Galatians 6: 16) under the new, Goldingay stresses that the point of correspondence is in the saving acts of God, because of the consistency of his unchanging character. (p. 156f).

In touching on the questions of the sufficiency of the Bible we are reminded that biblical teaching and application is not purely a pulpit task but one that is done in the context of home groups and smaller meetings too.

The final chapter is entitled 'Is there anybody out there listening?' In a post modern society it is argued that living by the Bible's big story of God's saving love for us is powerful dynamic for change (p. 223ff.). In *I believe in the Bible* David Jackman provides the new Christian with a careful introduction to the

big story of the whole of the Bible. It is also an encouraging book for pastors and preachers as they benefit from the writer's careful study and coherent logic.

I have been pondering the question who 'would benefit most from this book?' At the beginning of the book there is an imaginary interplay between Alison, Matt and a keen Christian. I suspect that the author hopes that he will persuade the sceptic through the pages which follow that the Bible is reliable and trustworthy. I was completely convinced, encouraged and reinforced in my convictions about the scriptures. Would I give the book to a sceptic? I am not sure, since I think the book assumes a more sympathetic audience.

With great confidence I shall give this book to Christians to strengthen and encourage them in their conversations with those who are sceptical about the abiding value of placing one's confidence in the God who speaks today through the Bible.

These are minor quibbles beside what is overall an excellent book which justly deserves to sit alongside John Stott's work from three decades back.

SIMON VIBERT

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