

Book Reviews

CALLING CHRISTIAN LEADERS **John Stott**
 Leicester: IVP 2002 150pp £7.99pb ISBN 0-85111-257-9

True to form, John Stott has produced yet another useful addition to the Christian's library. *Calling Christian Leaders* is a readable, faithful and relevant exposition of 1 Corinthians 1-4. Stott's handling of the text has been honed by years of preaching these chapters, in particular at Keswick in 1962 and 2000, and is all the more striking for that. He has not rested on his laurels; there are plenty of quotations from recent commentaries that demonstrate a vigour in preparation that is challenging in itself. The years have driven him even closer to the text (if that were possible!) and that is what is so refreshing about it. There are no frills, the illustrations are sparing but always apt and to the point, and the pace is swift. No sooner has he made his point than he is pressing on, without stopping to admire the view. Pearls are to be found on every page, making it necessary to proceed slowly to avoid missing them (perhaps as the basis for personal devotions?). As ever, Stott's agenda is to sit under the Bible's agenda.

A few years ago, I was talking to a preacher who expressed his affectionate frustration with Stott's expositions. He said that he had to avoid reading them until after he had come up with his own sermon outlines and themes because otherwise he found himself tram-lined into adopting Stott's trains of thought, so convincing are they. He has always been able to explain the Bible's patterns and themes with such clarity and this book is no exception. For example, once read, who could forget the classic summary of God's wisdom in 1 Corinthians 2:9 as being 'invisible', 'inaudible' and 'inconceivable'? (p 66) Brilliant! Only occasionally did it feel necessary to see more working (e.g. over the identity of the 'mature' in 1 Cor. 2:6). However, as well as explaining Paul's letter clearly, he also takes legitimate opportunities to handle common questions, such as the inspiration of the Bible (pp 73-77), and the Spirit's enlightenment in the face of Christian disagreement (pp 80-81).

What struck me is how relevant this book is to the church situation in both Uganda and the UK. For example, if only some pastors in both countries heeded the demands for leadership to be characterised by service not lordship. Such cross-cultural relevance should come as no surprise, however. John Stott has

had experience preaching 1 Corinthians all over the world, but this book's relevance derives from the absolute cross-cultural relevance of the Scriptures. So of course it is relevant that the Scriptures are allowed to speak for themselves! The only slight gripe is that the book's title seems to restrict its readership to leaders. What a difference it would make if all Christians read this sort of challenge!

MARK MEYNELL
Kampala, Uganda

THE MANDAEANS **The last Gnostics** **Edmondo Lupieri**
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001 273pp \$25 h/b ISBN: 0-8028-3924-X

This is the first volume in a new series from Eerdmans called *Italian texts and Studies on Religion and Society*. Italian scholarship is less well-known in the English-speaking world than it should be, and Eerdmans is to be commended for taking on such a project. Edmondo Luiperi, the author of the first volume, is the leading inspiration behind this move, and it is a tribute to him that the first volume sets such a high standard for the series as a whole. The Mandaeans are an almost unknown religious sect who have managed to survive for centuries in what is now lower Iraq and south-western Iran. Those familiar with the history of that area will be astonished to learn that such a group has managed to withstand the pressures of militant Islam, especially since the Mandaeans are neither Jewish nor Christian, though at times in the past they have been regarded as the latter. In fact, they appear to be the last Gnostic sect which has somehow managed to survive, and an analysis of their beliefs shows that they must have acquired the essence of their historic identity sometime during the early centuries of Christianity.

Dealing with the Mandaeans is difficult because they are now few in number and they lack a learned priesthood which might be able to explain their theology in a systematic way. No doubt a good deal of their current ritual has developed over the course of time, but the precise pattern has been lost to history. Dr Lupieri gives a fascinating account of what is known about them, and does what he can to reconstruct their theology in a systematic way. He also examines the contacts which the Mandaeans have had with the outside world, and the scholarship which has concerned itself with them in the past. In particular he traces the various contacts which they have had with the west,

particularly with Roman Catholic missionaries who believed that they were a survival of an ancient eastern church which had disappeared from view after the rise of Islam. He brings the story down to modern times, and the difficulties which confront the remaining Mandaeans, both in their ancient homelands and in their recent diaspora. This is a fascinating book on an obscure subject, but it is certain to remain the standard work on the Mandaeans for a long time to come.

GERALD BRAY
Birmingham, Alabama

DISCOVERING AQUINAS

An introduction to his life, work and influence Aidan Nichols
London: Darton, Longman and Todd 2002 214pp £12.95pb
ISBN 0 232 52459 9

It is the sad fate of Thomas Aquinas to have been altogether too popular with the wrong people. In the late nineteenth century the Roman Catholic church declared him to be their 'Angelic Doctor' and Pope Leo XIII expressed the hope that a new Catholic philosophical synthesis would develop that might challenge and replace the forces of modernity which were then sweeping across the world and which Rome was doing its utmost to resist. The result was Neo-Thomism, a philosophy which achieved semi-canonical status in the Roman communion before Vatican II, and had at least one noted Anglican adherent as well, the late Dr Eric Mascall. In the first half of the twentieth century Thomas was widely studied and commented upon, and no-one could have foreseen that this situation would rapidly change. Then came the Second Vatican Council and a new wave of theological thought, led by men like Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, which overturned Neo-Thomism and within a decade had almost banished it from Catholic seminaries.

Overnight, so it seemed, Thomas had gone from being the object of uncritical adulation to being the target of equally uncritical derision, and those who clung to his legacy found themselves outcasts in their own church. Forty years later we now have a generation of Roman Catholics which knows little or nothing about Thomas, whose thought is evidently more appreciated by conservative Protestants, including many traditional Calvinists. Dom Aidan Nichols sets out in this short book to explain why the current neglect of Thomas is a misfortune,

and he pleads for a renewal of Thomist studies which will recognise the greatness of Aquinas as a theologian without falling into the trap of a mindless adoration which Thomas himself would have been the first to repudiate.

As an introduction to Aquinas' thought, this book can be highly recommended. Dom Aidan is right to insist that Thomas will not go away—he will always be one of the great names of Western Christianity, and it is as well for us to accept that fact and study him accordingly. As a corrective to recent fashion, this book has an important role to play, and we must wish it every success. At the same time, we must remember that just as one swallow does not make a summer, so one short book will not of itself turn back the tide of current modernist thinking within the Roman church or elsewhere. Still, we have to start somewhere, and Dom Aidan Nichols is to be commended for making a brave effort to do this in a climate which is fundamentally unsympathetic to his ideas.

GERALD BRAY

**SELINA, COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON, her Pivotal Role in the
18th Century Evangelical Awakening** Faith Cook

Edinburgh: Banner of Truth 2002 £19.95 478pp hb

ISBN 0 85151 812 5

During her lifetime the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion had chapels all over the kingdom with a work in America and in Sierra Leone as well. Every Chapel held the services of the Church of England. They were invariably calvinistic (although not hyper-calvinist) and they practised infant baptism. The main chapels were treated as if they were the Countess' private chapels and, to overcome the strictures of the law, she maintained a residence attached to many of them. It was significant work of God and the achievement of a woman in those days that was quite remarkable.

This biography is a superb work. It is by no means hagiographical (as are so many evangelical works of this kind) but it presents her ladyship 'warts and all' as an autocratic woman, who took a precise interest in all that went on and, indeed, gave specific instructions in every possible case. But shining through the detail of this work, there is a picture of one of the most outstanding evangelical women ever to take Christian leadership in England.

However this book is not only a brilliant biography. It also gives a most perceptive insight into the development of the Evangelical revival and the true relationship between Whitefield and the Wesleys among others. It demonstrates the importance of John Wesley's insistence upon his doctrine of holiness and it further makes very clear how significant was the fact that he did not believe in the final perseverance of the saints. Selina, by contrast, gradually moved to the full Calvinist position, insisting that in her college at Trevecca all the staff and students held to this position, with the result that men like Fletcher of Madeley were forced to cease their work there.

In many ways the tragedy of this book and of the life itself is the fact that her autocracy meant that she failed to make proper arrangements for the government of her Connexion with the result that, as an organisation, it was quickly dissipated after her death—even though the influence of the work continued to grow, especially through dissenting chapels. Her deep commitment to the Established Church produced exceedingly difficult situations. For example, her very large Spa Fields Chapel in Clerken-well (technically her own private Church of England chapel) drew out the enmity of the Vicar of the parish with the result that the only way forward was to register as a free church. It was sad that such eventualities meant that many ordained Church of England clergymen, who had preached for the Countess all over the country, withdrew from the work. The result was that she became largely dependent upon the students who were coming out of her college at Trevecca in considerable numbers.

There were perhaps twenty in training at any one time but, when wave after wave of such men spread out across the kingdom and engaged in an itinerant ministry, the impact upon the United Kingdom was very great indeed. It is significant that the Countess was, without doubt, in a position of headship in her Connexion, with all the men whom she supported, directly or indirectly, being accountable to her. Yet whatever her faults, she was, as Thomas Willis said, 'one of the brightest luminaries that had ever shone in the gospel hemisphere....Thousands, I may say tens of thousands, in various parts of the kingdom, heard the gospel through her instrumentality that in all probability would never have heard it at all. She was a remarkable woman; and this is an outstanding account of her work and of the situation amongst the leaders of the revival during her lifetime'.

JOHN PEARCE
Bury St Edmunds

THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY

An Exposition of the Book of First Kings

Dale Ralph Davis

Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus 2002 350pp £8.99 pb

ISBN 1-85792-703-6

This is an intimidating book to review. In the first place, three of Britain's finest expositors wax lyrical on the front and back covers. And then there is Davis' reputation in expounding narrative, seen in his books on the other former prophets Joshua to 2 Samuel (also published by Christian Focus). Happily, the author does not disappoint the expectations spun by such pre-emptive praise.

Davis' concern is to allow the text to address the questions to which the divine author gives answers, and therefore to be content to leave aside for the moment many of the puzzles which arise in the modern mind. This may seem a straightforward or even obvious way to read a biblical book, but it puts Davis on a collision course with a host of commentators and interpreters. For instance, the problem with Solomon is neither his wealth, nor his other excesses, nor his use of forced labour. However as much as these things unsettle some readers today, the biblical author comments only on the fact that Solomon's wives led him to worship other gods, and that is the problem with Solomon. In the same way, Jeroboam son of Nebat is not to be praised for reviving an ancient and well-founded worshipping tradition (*i.e.* neo-bovinism): the text tells us plainly that what he did was evil in the sight of Yahweh. The chapters on Elijah also need rescuing in the same way from the hands of many commentators. The main theme to emerge from all of these is that of the kings' response to the Word of God given through the covenant and the prophets.

Given the blindness of so much that is written about 1 Kings, it is hardly surprising that Davis finds himself muttering darkly in the footnotes (where he is also trenchant about literary critics). To be fair, Davis is generous in citing helpful insights from other commentators, even if he has scored them elsewhere. In all this is solace for the naïve literalist (to borrow a phrase).

Readers who are familiar with Davis' other expositions may be glad to know

that illustrations continue to be drawn from US Civil War history (note especially the story of the general who claimed the enemy 'could not hit an elephant at this distance'), from US presidential and congressional politics, and from the author's own life. It is all very readable, clear and not inaccessibly transatlantic. There are a subject index, a persons index, and a Bible persons index. Refreshing and recommended.

ED MOLL
Basingstoke

BIBLICAL POETICS BEFORE HUMANISM AND REFORMATION
Christopher Ocker

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002 265pp £40.00hb
ISBN: 0-521-81046-9

There is probably no period in the history of the Christian church which gets such short shrift as the later middle ages. Medievalists tend to think of 1300 as the peak of the civilisation they seek to interpret, and modernists disregard everything before 1500 unless it can be shown to have direct relevance to what came later. Yet the two centuries preceding the reformation were anything but dull, and in many ways they foreshadowed subsequent developments to a quite remarkable degree. The late Heiko Oberman drew this to popular attention as far as theology was concerned, and now Dr Ocker has filled in much of the gap relating to biblical studies. Protestants have tended to regard it as an article of faith that the Bible was not seriously studied until Martin Luther and John Calvin came along, and certainly it is true that the great reformers left an impact which was not matched before and has not been equalled since. Yet Luther and Calvin did not emerge from a vacuum and, as Dr Ocker shows, much of what they had to say—and particularly their hermeneutical principles—can be found more or less fully developed several generations before they began to preach and teach.

The key to all this was a new approach to literature, which favoured a careful study of the literal sense of texts in line with the principles of classical rhetoric (public speaking). Today the word 'rhetoric' has acquired a pejorative connotation which is most unfortunate, because it obscures the liberating power which that discipline had in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. An intellectual climate which had become obsessed with casuistry and fanciful

metaphor suddenly rediscovered the straightforward meaning of words, and learned to apply rigorous standards of critical analysis to texts ancient and modern. This had the immediate effect of clarifying a good deal of what passed for academic discourse, and of equipping human minds to express new and powerful ideas in a way which made sense to the majority of people. As printing was invented, so the language of intellectual speech was demystified, and a renaissance of letters was born.

The Bible would evidently not escape this, and before long it too was being subjected to the highest standards of rhetorical criticism. The Pauline Epistles acquired a new importance, because in many ways they were most suited to the rhetorical approach. Paul specialised in clear, logical argument, and there can be no doubt that much of what he wrote came from his public speaking. Before long, Paul's theology was gaining the upper hand over the mystical tendencies of an earlier era, and the seed which gave birth to Luther and Calvin was sown.

In recounting this story, Dr Ocker introduces us to a whole series of biblical commentators who have been all but forgotten today. In England there was Robert Holcot, for example, who wrote a commentary on the (apocryphal) Book of Wisdom which survives in no fewer than fifteen manuscripts, an amazing testimony to its continuing popularity. His contemporary John Baconthorpe finished a commentary on Matthew about 1336, in which the new science makes its appearance, despite the lingering impact of allegorical interpretation. From there we branch out to such forgotten figures as Johannes Klenkok and Hermann of Schildesche (Germany), Jean Fournier and Nicholas Gorran (France) and Nicolau Eimeric (Catalonia), reminding us that the awakening was continent-wide. By 1500 a new way of reading has established itself, and the way was prepared for a text-based Reformation.

Students of early Protestantism will need to read this book carefully and absorb its insights in order to gain a deeper understanding of what it was that produced the great sixteenth century upheaval. Not least, this book will be a useful corrective to that kind of catholic thinking which regards the Reformers as diabolical innovators who destroyed the medieval synthesis and failed to replace it with anything equally comprehensive. As Dr Ocker shows, that synthesis had disintegrated long before Luther was born, and the great Reformers gave shape and expression to a new dawn which was already

overtaking the church.

GERALD BRAY

TRADITIONAL ROOTS Earl Storey

Columba Press 2002 143pp price £5.99pb ISBN No. 1-85607-364-5

The subtitle of this book is “Towards an appropriate relationship between the Church of Ireland and the Orange Order”. Unfortunately the book does not live up to that subtitle. The truth is that this book raises more questions than it answers and would have benefited greatly from better research and a more theological approach to the issues raised. If you want a quick read and a surface knowledge of the historical foundations of the Orange Order then look at this book. However, the author makes some very sweeping generalisations and statements for which he fails to supply supporting evidence. For example he accuses the Orange Order of espousing ‘cultural Protestantism’ and of linking the gospel ‘inextricably’ with a unionist and British identity. He does not state it but one is left with the impression that he accuses the Orange Order of espousing and perpetuating the old heresy of British Israelism. This he supports by pointing to the many Old Testament symbols and stories depicted on Orange banners.

The book is set against the background of the ‘Drumcree dispute’. He makes a valid point when he asserts that the Orange Order, the Church of Ireland and the gospel have all been harmed and brought into disrepute by this saga. However he fails to acknowledge the work that many within the Orange Order and the Church of Ireland have done to try and resolve the situation, not least the Archbishop of Armagh. Again sweeping assertions are made linking the Orange Order to violence without any supporting evidence and without acknowledging the Order’s repeated condemnation of such.

The underlying agenda of this book would appear to be a campaign to move the Church of Ireland away from its Protestant and Reformed formularies because it is now perceived to be an ‘ecumenical church’. The author, along with some in the Church of Ireland, wishes to consign the historical formularies of the church to the seventeenth century and he states that the doctrinal debate must be ‘one of degree based upon the Anglican formula of ‘scripture (note the small ‘s’), tradition and reason’. The result here is the promotion of a liberal

ecumenical agenda and a denial of the Reformed and Protestant foundation of the Church of Ireland as stated in the Preamble and Declaration which defines the Church of Ireland as a 'Reformed and Protestant Church' (p 712 *BCP*). The author would appear to be embarrassed by such and seeks to cloak that embarrassment in a concern for the gospel.

He quite validly points out that many men have found, and continue to find, Christian fellowship within the Orange Institution which the Church of Ireland has failed to provide. He also points out that the Orange institution is orthodox in its assertion that members 'Love God, have personal faith in Christ, go to public worship on a Sunday, and uphold civil and religious liberties for all'. It therefore seems strange that he then advocates that the Church of Ireland disassociate itself from such an organisation.

In truth this book is lightweight and provides no new insights. If you have no knowledge of the Orange Order, the Church of Ireland and the parades issue then this book may well whet your appetite. If you are looking for a theological engagement of the issues raised, of the foundations and purpose of the Orange Order and its relationship to and with the Church of Ireland, then I am afraid you will be disappointed. Unfortunately it flatters to deceive. T.S. Eliot's 'straw man' comes to mind. The book, like the attending publicity at its launch, is more spin than substance. Those who wish to pursue this subject further should read Ruth Dudley Edwards' *The Faithful Tribe*.

ALAN McCANN

Carrickfergus

THE MAKING OF AMERICAN LIBERAL THEOLOGY

Imagining progressive religion 1805-1900 Gary Dorrien

Louisville: WJK Press, 2001 492pp £30.00 pb ISBN: 0-664-22354-0

Most students of theology associate liberalism with nineteenth-century Germany, in spite of the efforts of Hennig Graf von Reventlow, in particular, to trace its roots to seventeenth-century England. In this book, which is the first of a projected trilogy, Gary Dorrien, who teaches at Kalamazoo College (Michigan) demonstrates how modern theological liberalism not only had Anglo-Saxon roots quite independent of Germany, but also managed to grow and develop independently until the work of continental theologians became

widely known in Britain and the US in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Dr Dorrien demonstrates that American liberalism began with the drift towards Unitarianism in New England, and points out that this happened because in the late eighteenth century, too many New Englanders paid lip-service to a Calvinist orthodoxy in which they did not believe. When that orthodoxy was finally challenged, resistance was strong but brief, and within a generation large parts of once-Puritan New England had left the Christian church altogether. Unitarianism was, however, but an extreme form of a movement which gained much broader support in the nineteenth century. It was a time of great expansion in many fields, when it was possible to believe that science would finally bring happiness to the human race, and when it appeared that nothing could stop the inexorable advance of Anglo-American civilisation.

The great merit of Dr Dorrien's book is its astonishing wealth of detail, which he uses to demonstrate to what extent the liberals of that time shared the prejudices of their society to a quite extraordinary degree. Those who preached against slavery might find themselves excluded from Unitarian pulpits, for example, and feminists were almost universally unwelcome. Education of the black races was seen as something more or less analogous to helping the handicapped—a good work, but with severe limitations on what it could hope to achieve. Later generations of liberals cannot look back on this legacy with equanimity, and must wonder to what extent they have adopted the prejudices of the age which will only be revealed as such in time to come.

On the other hand, Dr Dorrien is personally committed to liberalism as a great step forward for the human intellect, and it is here that the Christian reader must part company with him. The notion that the human intellect is able to tackle and resolve the problems of the human race is one of the great delusions of our age, and it is a shame that Dr Dorrien continues to subscribe to this notion, even after all the horrors of the twentieth century. There is perhaps no blindness more invincible than the blindness of the academic, and this shows up most clearly in the short shrift which Dr Dorrien gives to the conservative opposition which the liberals faced, especially in the US. One may have many criticisms to make of the so-called Old Princeton school of thought, represented by Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield, but the fact that they were unable to carry the day against the opposition does not lessen their greatness. After all, Dr

Dorrien's great hero, Horace Bushnell, is all but forgotten today, while the works of Hodge and Warfield are still in print—and widely read. The growth of liberalism is only one side of a very complex story, and it cannot be fully appreciated without giving adequate attention to the forces which opposed it. Perhaps that is what Dr Dorrien intends to do in a future volume, though it would be much better if he could find some way of sympathising with them as well as with the liberals he so much admires.

Having said that, there is no doubt that this is a valuable and important work on a little-understood subject. It deserves to be widely read—and complemented by a study of nineteenth century conservatism, which was by no means simply a reaction to the forces discussed in this book.

GERALD BRAY

THE READING AND PREACHING OF THE SCRIPTURES IN THE WORSHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Vol. IV: The age of the Reformation **Hughes Oliphant Old**
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2002 556pp \$45pb ISBN: 0-8028-4775-7

Slowly but surely Dr Old is coming to the end of his magnificent works on the use of the Bible in the history of Christian worship. It is peculiarly fitting that the fourth (and therefore middle) volume of the projected seven should deal with the Reformation which, in many ways, is the hinge between the ancient and the modern. For a project like this, the great difficulty of the Reformation is getting a balance between Luther and Calvin on the one hand, and the lesser fry on the other. It is obviously impossible to omit the main Reformers, but there is so much that has been written about each of them that it is almost as impossible to do justice to them in a space which leaves room for others. To his great credit, Dr Old has not only succeeded in doing this, he has also brought out a dimension of both Luther and Calvin which is too little mentioned in the many studies which are devoted to them. This is their preaching, which is the Cinderella of Reformation studies, despite its enormous importance for the success of the movement at the time.

But the greatest interest of this volume lies in its comprehensive treatment of men and movements not often found in a book of this kind. The chapter on the Catholic counter reformation brings to our attention the work and achievement of the great Spanish missionaries, of the early Jesuits and of such figures as

Charles Borromeo and Francis de Sales. Then there is a substantial chapter on the English Puritans, followed by one on the 'Anglican' divines—Lancelot Andrewes, John Donne, Jeremy Taylor and so on. This is followed by three further chapters dealing with Protestant Orthodoxy in Germany, France and the Netherlands. Dr Old is to be commended for having given so much space to them, for it is here above all that the names mentioned will be unfamiliar to most readers, not least to orthodox Protestants today! Who now knows anything of Valerius Herberger, Pierre du Moulin or Willem Teelinck? Dr Old brings them back to life and gives us an opportunity to appreciate what an important contribution they and their fellows made to the securing of the Reformation in its later phases. The last chapter deals with the France of Louis XIV, which marks a fitting conclusion to the work as a whole.

In a work as vast as this, it is not surprising to find the odd gap here and there, though an Englishman must express disappointment to discover that one of these is the curious absence of the Homilies. Thomas Cranmer's legacy is dealt with in the prayer book lectionary of course, and it is certain that they have had more impact on Anglican worship than the Homilies ever had, but we should not forget the important role which the latter played in making England aware of Protestant teaching in the first place. Nevertheless, this is a work which cannot be commended too highly, and we look forward with great interest and anticipation to the remaining volumes in this extraordinary series.

GERALD BRAY

THE MARRIAGE BOOK: How to build a lasting relationship
Nicky and Sila Lee

London: Alpha International Publications, 2002 (revised ed.) 344pp
£5.99 pb ISBN 1 902750 26 8

This is a good book. It is full of wise advice. This counsel is supported by testimonies (especially from the authors), quotations (from Scripture and other sources), and cartoons by Charlie Mackesy. After a foreword by Nicky Gumbell there are seven main sections, an epilogue and four appendices. *The Marriage Book* is easy to read and attractively priced. It is based on the seven week Marriage Course which is run at Holy Trinity Brompton three times a year. In the introduction, we are told about the marriage wheel (p 10). This places God at the centre, places commitment at the rim, and the seven sections are the

spokes.

Section one is called ‘Building Strong Foundations’. Here we are warned against the romantic myth and the throw-away mentality. The Lees call their book ‘a toolkit for building a strong marriage’ (p 25). One principle is that it ‘is better to disappoint a friend than to harm a marriage’. Section two is called ‘The Art of Communication’. Here we are encouraged to talk and are given five profiles of a poor listener. Section three is ‘Love in Action’ which gives five expressions of love and urges us to love in ways that our partner appreciates.

Section four is ‘Resolving Conflict’. This includes the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator for appreciating our differences. As the introduction told us, here we find reasons to centre our marriage on God. There are four—marriage is a gift from God, the Bible requires mutual respect, God is the source of love, and God brings harmony to a marriage. Section five is ‘The Power of Forgiveness’. Some responses are likened to those of a rhino or a hedgehog. The reason for forgiving refers to Christ. Curiously, however, it does not refer to his death. Section six is ‘Parents and In-Laws’. This addresses the extended family, leaving parental control and childhood pain. Section seven is ‘Good Sex’. This lists six qualities for great lovers. The Lees observe that ‘it is amazing how much effort people put into conducting an affair. We need to use a similar amount of imagination, and more, in our marriage’ (p 257). We are also given five reasons for sexual difficulties. Then, in the final paragraph of a book that started with God, we are directed specifically to ‘a third person in the relationship. This is Jesus Christ, who nourishes the marriage from its core, so that we need not lean on human will power alone’ (p 288).

The first appendix gives seven tests for being ready to marry. It concludes, ‘Better by far to be single and independent, using our potential to serve God and reach our full potential in him, developing many friendships along the way, than to suffer the consequences of an ill-chosen husband or wife’ (p 296). Subsequent appendices concern the honeymoon, making a budget, and praying together. From start to finish this book is practical and helpful. But it does not contain everything a Christian marriage book should have. A significant omission is biblical roles. The book is silent about the created order of male leadership (man was made first, woman was made from man, and he names her helper and woman). Such a pattern is renewed by grace. Also, we are not told about Jesus as an example

for men. Our Lord spent time with men but did not ignore women, insult them or talk down to them. Further, we are not told about Peter's teaching. The book is silent about a woman's internal beauty, her status as weaker partner, or that a man's failure to be considerate will hinder his prayers (1 Peter 3).

The book quotes the verse that the death of Christ is the model of a husband's love for his wife (Eph 5:25), but the first reference is in the context of sex (p 242) and the second in the context of avoiding domestic violence (p 249). These aside, Christ's example is reduced to mutuality: 'His example of loving us is our model for loving our husband or wife.' (p 287) There is no reference to male leadership reflecting the life of the Trinity (1 Cor 11:3).

The result is that the vision for both husbands and wives is less than God wills and so less than believers should know. As such, husbands will continue to struggle with their masculinity and wives will continue to be robbed of a male lead in the home. This is a good book, but it is not the full Christian version we need.

JONATHAN FRAIS
Kiev

OUR SOVEREIGN SAVIOUR The Essence of the Reformed Faith
Roger Nicole

Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications 2002 184pp £6.99pb
ISBN 1-85792-737-0

The Baptist theologian Roger Nicole (who is Swiss-American) has been one of the foremost defenders in modern times of Five-Point Calvinism and of the doctrine of Scripture's inerrancy. Sadly he has published no books and his work has remained scattered through various journals and festschriften. So all those who love Reformed theology (that is, all lovers of the gospel) will be delighted to know that Christian Focus have published some of his more significant articles. The present book contains his more popular works; a companion volume *Standing Forth*, contains his more academic papers, including his articles on inerrancy from *Churchman* in 1983.

The reader will find a clear and heart-warming exposition of the Reformed faith. Highlights include lucid explanations of the doctrines of the Trinity and

justification by faith, and ‘The Doctrines of Grace in the Teachings of Jesus’, which shows that all five petals of the tulip can be found in the words of Christ during his earthly ministry. Nicole concludes ‘Was Jesus a Calvinist?...Why certainly! And it is our comfort and our refuge’. The ‘Tulip’ acronym itself is subjected to criticism as somewhat misleading; Nicole suggests a new acronym based on the word ‘Gospel’, and argues convincingly that we should talk of ‘definite’ rather than ‘limited’ atonement. He deals with the major objections to Calvinism, and his explanation of why definite atonement does not invalidate a universal offer of the gospel is particularly helpful, (it’s all to do with refrigerators...).

Nicole’s concern for the lost, and his desire to promote evangelism and world mission are evident; one essay is a call for prayer regarding the latter. The articles are short (about two coffee breaks each) and easy to understand. Nicole is gracious towards those who disagree, stating that ‘We emphasise that we do not have the corner on the work of Christ. We know that he has redeemed great multitudes who are not in the Reformed camp. (They are not Reformed as long as they are on earth, though when they get to heaven the Lord will take care of that in an appropriate way)’. He makes it clear that Reformed theology is merely an exposition of the Reformation motto *Soli deo gloria* (the title of his second essay).

The only disappointments were first, that the essay on sanctification was written too early to take into account recent work on ‘positional sanctification’, and secondly, the overall format of the book. As a collection of disparate essays, it is less effective than a systematic exposition would have been. Could Dr Nicole be prevailed upon to produce one? He is surely ideally placed to write an equivalent of Boettner’s *Doctrine of Predestination* for the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, I highly recommend *Our Sovereign Saviour*. It would be especially good as a present for a Christian who does not hold to the doctrines of grace, but who wishes to consider Reformed theology.

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Thurnby

PASTORAL THEOLOGY IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

Andrew Purves

Louisville: WJK Press, 2001 137pp £12.99pb ISBN 0-664-22241-2

The frustration this work engenders is, on balance, a healthy one. This is an introduction to the church's historical tradition of pastoral care: the fact that it leaves the reader hungry for more is an indicator of its success as a primer. Purves' objective, moreover, is both ambitious and noble: to reassert the priority of the knowledge of God in pastoral practice. Writing as Professor of Pastoral Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, he is sceptical of the dominance of the social sciences in his discipline, arguing that it has 'become concerned largely with questions of meaning rather than truth, acceptable functioning rather than discipleship, and a concern for self-actualization and self-realization rather than salvation'. The notion that the word of the cross speaks to every human situation has been displaced by psycho-therapeutic models of care, with a consequent loss of confidence among ministers in the 'pastoral power of the Word of God'.

The case is advanced by outlining the 'classical tradition' as exemplified in key writings of five pastoral theologians: Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, Martin Bucer, and Richard Baxter. Purves introduces each with a sketch of his historical context, life and thought, and proceeds to outline the contours of their pastoral theology from a major work. In the case of Martin Bucer, for example, he examines his 1538 *Von der waren Seelsorge* (*On the True Pastoral Care*), the main Reformation text on pastoral theology, and shortly to appear in its first complete English translation.

This approach, as well as whetting the appetite to delve afresh into the original authors, highlights a number of contrasts with modern assumptions. The confessional content of pastoral care, and the corresponding need for congruence between doctrine and care, is one: the classical tradition exposes the soteriological and eschatological poverty of much contemporary practice. A further example is the emphasis placed in the past on the moral formation and spiritual health of the pastor, and its high awareness of accountability to God in pastoral work: Baxter's 'take heed to yourself' is a recurring theme.

Purves is not dismissive of the contribution of contemporary thought to pastoral practice, and does not propose a blind appropriation of the tradition whose theological priorities he aims to re-assert. Writing from a Protestant perspective, he is aware of his exemplars' theological weaknesses—for example, Nazianzen's neo-platonic anthropology and Baxter's 'neonomian' soteriology—

as well as their pastoral strengths. He generally sifts the helpful from the distracting, though occasionally a statement is too sweeping to command conviction. The fact that he is less sure-footed on historical detail, notably on the origins of Puritanism, is disconcerting but ultimately does not damage his case.

The book makes available in a readable fashion a tradition in danger of neglect. The author's choice of writers and works enhances its accessibility. Above all, the book raises the stakes for all concerned with ministry. It reminds its readers that the pastoral care which is authentically called 'Christian' takes for its task the restoration of the image of God in sinful men and women, and has for its horizons heaven and hell. It was these convictions which impelled both the ministerial practice and the busy pens of the classical pastor-theologians, and which gives their works a continued relevance today.

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PAUL, APOSTLE OF GOD'S GLORY IN CHRIST

A Pauline Theology

Thomas R. Schreiner

Leicester: Apollos 2001 504pp £19.99 hb ISBN 0-85111-777-5

Pauline studies are suffering from something of an *embarras de richesse*, and many will wonder if we really need another evangelical Pauline theology when we already have Herman Ridderbos, F.F. Bruce and Robert Reymond, not to mention the more liberal work of J.D.G. Dunn, as well as a plethora of monographs. If they can suspend their cynicism, they will be amply rewarded by this fine work from Thomas Schreiner, the professor of New Testament at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky. Professor Schreiner will already be known to many as the author of an excellent commentary on Romans, and important works on Paul's view of the law, and on perseverance. Their characteristics of clear and well-reasoned exegesis are continued in this volume. It is more up to date than Ridderbos or Bruce, less idiosyncratic than Reymond, more readable than Ridderbos and unlike Dunn rooted in a respect for the authority of Scripture. The only drawback is that, unlike Bruce and Reymond, Schreiner does not examine Paul's career and speeches in Acts, or give any treatment of the individual letters. He does give brief but illuminating applications to the life of the contemporary church.

Schreiner tells us that he set out to write a textbook for 'students at both the seminary or college level', and it would indeed be ideally suited for this purpose, although pastors and preachers will also find it of great value. My only complaint is that students would also have benefited from a proper bibliography, which is strangely absent. Quite deliberately, and wisely, Schreiner has left most of the interaction with other scholars to the footnotes. This means that we are faced with a straight exposition of Paul's writings themselves. Nevertheless, Schreiner is not afraid of controversy. He deals with the various options on Paul's view of the law, and gives a convincing rebuttal both of the 'New Perspective', and the theory that *pistis christou* means 'Christ's faithfulness', reasserting the traditional Reformed understanding of justification by faith, and showing that this is not an imposition on Paul. With regard to justification, he has the humility to admit that he was wrong at one point in his Romans commentary. He gives a very helpful defence of penal substitution and definite atonement. Among other things readers will also find a judicious statement of the 'third use' of the law, a concept now often derided amongst Evangelicals, good expositions of Paul's teaching on the person of Christ, marriage, slavery, and the place of women in church leadership. He expounds Romans 11:25-27 to show that Paul foresees a final conversion of all ethnic Jews immediately before Jesus returns.

Even more valuable than these individual discussions is Schreiner's overall approach. He criticises the sterile and artificial debate over the 'centre' of Paul's theology, and employs the more helpful metaphor of building a house, God being the foundation, salvation history the superstructure, and Christ the builder. Romans 11:36 then becomes a key verse: 'God's supreme aim is to display for the coming ages the stunning nature of his grace.' Thus God's glory is the ultimate aim of everything, including the church; salvation history is subordinate to this goal. The chief way in which God glorifies himself is in his Son. Thus God in Christ takes his place at the centre of Paul's theology. It is clear that he has learnt from dogmatics, without reading it into his exegesis. Schreiner emphasises that Paul's theology is above all a missionary theology, which aimed to see God glorified in Jews and Gentiles together praising God. He also dedicates a whole chapter to the theme of 'suffering' and rightly asks why, given its prominence in Paul, this is not one of the traditional loci of dogmatics. He might also have asked why neither Ridderbos, Bruce nor

Reymond give suffering an entry in their indices! Schreiner affirms the Pauline authorship of all the canonical epistles.

In two areas I must register my disagreement. One is baptism: I am still a paedobaptist! The other is Schreiner's treatment of Romans 5:12-21. Here he rejects the view of John Murray and the Consensus Helvetica that the guilt of Adam as a covenant head was directly imputed to his descendants. Instead he returns to a view similar to Calvin's, that Adam's descendants are only guilty of the actual sins that resulted from being born with the death and corruption they inherited from Adam. I believe that Schreiner stands Paul's argument here on its head; I am still with Murray.

Despite this criticism this is an excellent book, which I highly recommend. I expect to refer to it again and again. It should become an evangelical classic.

STEVE WALTON

PREACHING LIKE PAUL Homiletical Wisdom for Today

James W. Thompson

Louisville: WJK Press 2001 177pp pb £12.99 ISBN 0-664-22294-3

The author of this book states in his conclusion, 'I am convinced that "God decided, through the foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe" (1 Cor 1:21) and that preaching is fundamental to the Christian witness'. Books on preaching abound. This book is different from most in that it seeks to prove that Paul's epistles are the most authentic examples of apostolic preaching available to us. Many would assume that the sermons of Acts 2, 7, 13 and 17 are the best examples, but James Thompson demonstrates that it is to the epistles that we should turn. His argument is relatively straightforward; scholars who have claimed that the New Testament epistles are a form of typical ancient near-East epistolical writing, have only told a part of the story. He claims that, in fact, Paul's epistles owe more to Aristotelian rhetoric than to anything else. Assuming that he is not guilty of the same selective use of evidence, his case is a strong one. He then argues from the manner in which the epistles were generally written, whereby Paul dictated to an amanuensis, who was—at least at times—the one who delivered the final document to the recipient church, that they were intended to be read as sermons, and should be heard as such by us today. He enters into a detailed discussion of Paul's sermonic method, which

we shall consider in a moment, before showing that the apostle's invariable practice was to apply theological reasoning to the problems being dealt with. Preachers today must, according to Thompson, seek to preach theology as the method of dealing with the crises facing today's church. His final chapter addresses the common phobia among preachers, who dread the onset of boredom. Today's culture is a forgetting culture, and needs to be reminded of the same basic truth on a regular basis; so do not be afraid of repetitious preaching. His conclusion reiterates his major assertions through the book. There is an appendix, which readers of this book can discover for themselves!

There is a great deal of benefit to be gained by reading this book, for it deals honestly with the failure of recent preaching models to effectively edify the church. But herein lies the danger of Thompson's basic presupposition. Throughout this book, the author speaks of the 'community of faith' that is different from the secular 'community'. This is the language of post-liberalism, and it must never be forgotten that this is Thompson's starting-point. While post-liberals have a robust ecclesiology, they have a fundamentally flawed basis for membership of that community. This brings us to the problems raised by Thompson's view of the Pauline sermonic method.

What is Paul aiming at in preaching? According to Thompson, and his fellow post-liberals, he seeks to establish the identity of the community of faith through the re-telling of the Christian story, and through calling the community members to obedience to their community rules. Thus, in the final analysis, membership of the church is measured by obedience to the example of Jesus Christ. This is, of course, the old covenantal nomism of E.P. Sanders and his disciples. Justification by faith equals being justified by faithful obedience to the community laws.

In order to establish this point, which is never made explicitly by Thompson, he shows how, after the rules of Aristotelian rhetoric, Paul uses himself as the example the readers/hearers are to follow. And there is no doubt that this is so, on occasions. However, Thompson appears to take no notice of Paul's most common method. Students of biblical theology know the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to each believer. Paul's method is to remind his readers/hearers of what they are, in and through the resurrection and their union with Christ. Thus Paul's usual theology, which he applies to almost every

'crisis' being faced by his readers, is that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the implications of the resurrection for believers. Paul never seeks to call the hearers to obedience to his rules; rather, he tells them how Christians must live, and shows that, through the resurrection, and through their faith in Jesus Christ, they are new creatures who must live as the redeemed of God.

If preachers could recover this aspect, and show our hearers what they are in Christ, and exhort them to begin to live accordingly, then preaching would begin to follow the apostolic method. And none of this can be done without the Holy Spirit, who is almost never mentioned by Thompson, though he does speak of the power of the Gospel.

Readers of this book who aim at a high standard in preaching will find much food for thought. Thompson's critique of much modern preaching is accurate and effective, and needs to be heeded. His explanation of the nature of the epistles appears to be valuable, and worth pursuing. His brief overviews of various epistles serve as very helpful introductions to those documents. His assertion that there can be no separation of preaching from pastoral work is necessary in these days of the growing 'plurality of elders' in some evangelical churches. But his basic presupposition concerning covenantal nomism seriously flaws this otherwise helpful work.

EDWARD J MALCOLM
Reading