

Book Reviews

A MIRROR FOR THE CHURCH. PREACHING IN THE FIRST FIVE CENTURIES

David Dunn-Wilson

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005 224pp. \$22pb ISBN: 0-8028-2866-3

ST. PETER CHRYSOLOGUS. SELECTED SERMONS, Vol. 2

Translated by W. B. Palardy

Washington DC: CUA Press, 2005 308pp. \$39.95hb ISBN: 0-8132-0109-8

Sermons make up a large part of the legacy of patristic literature, yet they have been surprisingly little studied in modern times. The exceptions which there are—the sermons of Augustine or John Chrysostom, for example—are mainly used for their doctrinal content, and seldom studied from the rhetorical or homiletical perspective. Part of the reason for this is that a good sermon has to be contextualized, and this inevitably creates difficulties when the context is so alien to us. Ancient sermons are seldom expository in the modern sense, and this creates an additional difficulty, since it is often difficult to follow the pattern of thought which has led the preacher to draw the conclusions which he does. At best, they are liable to seem like curiosities which help us to understand the mentality of the ancient world better than we otherwise would, but which are of extremely limited usefulness for modern congregations.

It is therefore encouraging to see that David Dunn-Wilson has done his homework with considerable depth and thoroughness, and has managed to dispel this impression with remarkable lucidity. He takes us through the different periods and styles which characterize ancient preaching, and shows us how at every point it was intimately connected both with the exegesis of Scripture and with the pastoral needs of the church. Even when we cannot copy the Fathers word for word, we can still learn a great deal from their methods, and it is here that Mr Dunn-Wilson wisely concentrates our minds. The book is too short to be able to include much in the way of samples of ancient preaching, but there are ample notes and references to primary sources (many of which are easily available in English) and this is one of the book's great strengths. The author is fully abreast of modern research, which he quotes judiciously without overawing the reader with obscure detail. This is definitely a good book for a preacher to have on the shelf, and it offers a way in to a world which might otherwise seem inaccessible.

Coincidentally, but opportunely, the “Fathers of the Church” series has come out with a translation of a number of sermons delivered by St. Peter Chrysologus, who was Bishop of Ravenna from about 426 to about 450. It was a key time in the history of that city, because it was then that the Roman emperor moved his court from Milan to Ravenna, so that Peter became the court preacher as well as the chief pastor of the city. His sermons are mainly devoted to matters of ascetical discipline, and many of the ones printed here were originally delivered in Lent.

The general theme is that the things of this world pass away, but the things of God are eternal, and so the wise believer will concentrate on them and leave the follies of this world behind. Peter preached in an age when Christianity was on the offensive, and he saw nothing wrong with compelling pagans to adopt the faith for their own good. In his mind this was not a compromise of standards but a vital means of spreading the divine blessings of the gospel to society as a whole. We who live in a more tolerant age do well to remember that our willingness to rely on persuasion as the means of conversion is deeply indebted to that generation which got rid of paganism by law and force, so that Christianity became the default religious position of all Europeans, whether they liked it or not. That legacy is weaker now but it is still with us, and the sermons of Peter Chrysologus help us to understand how we became the kind of society which we are and have been for the last fifteen centuries. This book is unlikely to be widely read by non-specialists, but for those with a particular interest in the period it is an important addition to the literature available on the subject.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

BEYOND THE BIBLE: Moving From Scripture to Theology

I. Howard Marshall with essays by Kevin J. Vanhoozer & Stanley E. Porter

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004 136pp £9.99pb ISBN: 1 84227 278 0

Beyond the Bible provides a valuable, stimulating, yet problematic evangelical conversation about the perennial necessity of moving from the ancient authoritative Scriptures to contemporary application and developed doctrine. Hot potatoes at least touched on, include the historicity and authorship of

Biblical books, infant baptism, ecumenism, the roles of women in ministry and family, homosexuality, slavery, apartheid, medical science, Old Testament 'genocide', open theism, penal substitution, the nature of hell and God's judgement, capital punishment and fundamentalism.

Professor Marshall's first chapter lays out some of the hermeneutical issues facing evangelicals and provides a useful historical sketch of biblical interpretation, defending believing grammatico-historical criticism. Taking J. I. Packer's *Understanding the Bible: Evangelical Hermeneutics* (1990) as a representative example, Marshall alleges problems with evangelical attempts to arrive at applications, arguing that contemporary exposition is more complex than is often realised.

Drawing on the work of W. J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuality* and C. H. Cosgrove, with a wealth of examples from ethics, worship and doctrine, Marshall's second chapter contends that doctrinal development is both a fact and a necessity, to which Scripture itself bears witness. The agenda for Marshall's final chapter, then, is 'The Search for Biblical Principles' for going beyond the Bible.

Marshall's conclusions are neatly summarised in seven propositions (pp. 78-79). He believes that he has found development, incompleteness, diversity, tension, continuity and discontinuity in the whole of Scripture, which he continues to affirm as supremely authoritative, but sometimes 'no longer valid in their original form...but...authoritative in a different way' and always in need of interpretation and fresh application. We are called, then, to 'a task that involves considerable risk': 'some teaching of Scripture needs to be understood and applied differently from in the first century' with 'A Mind Nurtured on the Gospel' (p. 70ff).

Kevin J. Vanhoozer makes a very helpful 15 page response to what he calls 'The Marshall Plan' in which he examines four possible senses of 'going beyond' Scripture biblically. Vanhoozer suggests that what is needed for the contemporary application of the Bible is, rather, 'a mind nurtured on the Christ-centred canon' (p. 94).

In the final essay in this volume (31 pp), Stanley E. Porter (McMaster Divinity School) considers five hermeneutical approaches to New Testament

interpretation that offer to yield a valid theology, thus: (1) the historical critical method, interacting with G. B. Caird's *New Testament Theology*; (2) Wittgenstein's *Classes of Utterances* as developed by Anthony Thiselton; (3) Speech-Act theory, drawing on the work of Thiselton, Vanhoozer and Briggs; (4) Marshall's developmental theory. Finally, Porter makes his own proposal identifying what he calls a Pauline approach of core beliefs with 'translation' on a dynamic equivalence model into other cultures and situations.

This book is far from presenting itself as the last word on hermeneutics, and it is just as well. Maybe it is not naïve to suggest that Marshall tends to overestimate the hermeneutical gap and fails to emphasise the perspicuity and sufficiency of the Scriptures that were written 'for us'. Readers may think that Marshall has gone beyond the Bible in unbiblical directions regarding women's ministry (p. 76) and that his discussion of the way in which Jesus' teaching is relativized by his salvation-historical context (p. 63ff) and the contention that Jesus' imagery of divine judgement is inappropriate to our times (pp. 66-68) seem risky indeed. It is not obvious that Marshall has set out sufficiently robust criteria to keep his successors from effectively leaving the Bible behind.

MARC LLOYD
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CAN WE BE SURE ABOUT ANYTHING? SCIENCE, FAITH AND POSTMODERNISM

Denis Alexander (ed.)

Leicester: Apollos, 2005 256 pp £ 12.99 pb ISBN: 1-84474-076-5

Given the ease with which so many disciplines have been overrun by postmodernism, is it merely a matter of time before science laboratories too must capitulate? Anyone tempted to answer 'Yes' either overestimates the strength of postmodernism's arguments, or underestimates the nature of the scientific task, or both. In a similar way, of course, any Christian tempted to panic at postmodernism has either overestimated it, or underestimated the gospel message. Christians and scientists therefore find themselves joined in a similar battle, but this collection of essays is concerned primarily with the impact on science. Written by Christians, many of them also working scientists, this book shows why there are still firm grounds for confidence in the truth.

The reasons for this confidence emerge when the scientific enterprise is examined from a biblical viewpoint. Several themes emerge, the first being that the scientific outlook is best described as 'critical realism'. Carson shows that it is quite false to posit an antithesis only between absolute or relative knowledge; only the omniscient can know absolutely, but our knowledge can only ever be finite—hence 'critical'. But reality can be known to a very good approximation—hence 'realism'. So while some of the insights of postmodernism are valid, the working scientist will find them neither revolutionary nor devastating.

Kuhn was right to show that scientific thought does not advance by some inexorable progress towards the truth but moves by fits and starts from one paradigm to another; and aspects of the paradigm shifts are indeed political because key champions enable ideas to catch on in the scientific community. But that is not to say that competing paradigms are utterly and mutually incompatible. A new paradigm is said to be superior because it better fits the evidence and resolves more anomalies than the alternatives. Trigg shows that the rules for changing from one paradigm to another are independent of both: they form a metanarrative, and testify to an objective truth beyond them. In a similar way, conversion to Christian faith is a paradigm shift because the Christian worldview is superior to the alternatives in fitting the evidence better and resolving anomalies.

A final theme for confidence arises from the way the scientific community itself operates. Two chapters outline the workings of the scientific method and show how markedly it differs from that of the humanities. Three further chapters show how this feeds through to what can be known of the truth in quantum mechanics, geology and in the public perception of science.

The book opens with the observation that in one lab, none of the researchers had even heard of postmodernism, yet many of these young scientists live their everyday lives saturated in its culture. These essays demonstrate why those whose work brings them into daily contact with truth and reality are least likely to go over to the epistemological dark side. Once again here is a strong analogy for any Christian: in the face of postmodernism's challenges, the believer's best security lies in knowing and living by the gospel message itself. All Christians working in science should be aware of these themes and this collection would bring them up to date in a general way. Several of the essays are stretching; all

are rewarding, and all reflect a mature confidence in the truth. This is a very helpful publication for scientists and for scientifically-minded Christians.

ED MOLL
Basingstoke

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS

Michael Green

Oxford: Monarch Books, 2005 192pp £6.99pb ISBN: 1 85424 714 X

This is a revision of *You Must be Joking* which was published in 1976. The author explains that when Hodder and Stoughton relinquished the title in 2003 he was immediately asked by four other publishers to republish it. The result is not just a revised version of the original, but a volume containing much new material addressing issues which have more recently emerged, for instance from the publication of *The Da Vinci Code*. Michael Green, one time Principal of St. John's College, Nottingham, and Rector of St. Aldate's, Oxford, will need no introduction to readers of *Churchman* and, as an evangelist of international repute, he is at his best in refuting popular objections to the Christian faith.

That is the purpose of this book, which has chapters setting out the classic arguments for the existence of God, examining the so-called conflict between science and Christian faith, the authenticity of the New Testament, the evidence for the existence and deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as others. Among the new material included are chapters considering Jesus's relationship with Mary Magdalene and whether all religions can lead to God.

In the chapter discussing whether "You can't change human nature!" there is a brief but balanced consideration of the issue of physical healing (p. 174), and Michael livens the chapters with illustrations from his years of evangelistic ministry as well as quotations which reflect a breadth of reading and his background as a classical scholar. The blending together of old and new material has been skillfully done, but in one place at least there is evidence of editorial oversight: a reference on page 74 to the facts considered in the last chapter should have been to chapter 3 and not 6.

In days when many churches are running *Christianity Explored*, *Alpha* and similar courses this is a good book to have available to provide answers in

greater depth to some of the issues that may be raised in the minds of the participants. There are suggestions for further reading at the end which will also be helpful for those who wish to explore certain issues in greater depth.

DAVID WHEATON

Chesham

ATHANASIOS

London/New York: Routledge, 2004 293pp
ISBN 0-415-20202-7 (hb) 0-415-35174-X (pb)

Khaled Anatolios

£50 hb/£18.99pb

TERTULLIAN

London/New York: Routledge, 2004 200pp
ISBN: 0-415-28230-6 (hb) 0-415-28231-4 (pb)

Geoffrey D. Dunn

£50 hb/£16.99 pb

These two books are the latest to appear in Routledge's *Early Church Fathers* series. The aim of the series as a whole is to present major fathers of the church in their own words, by choosing representative selections of their works and offering fresh new translations and commentaries of them. Athanasius and Tertullian are obvious choices, and interestingly, they have one characteristic in common—neither was a nice person! This fact is brought out by the different editors, who clearly think that they have to justify the sometimes brusque nature of their subjects' writings and the rudeness with which they often treated their opponents. Both men were engaged in serious doctrinal struggles within the church, and Tertullian also had to combat attacks from the still dominant pagan culture outside it. Athanasius was so successful in his defence of the first council of Nicaea in 325 that his name became a byword for orthodoxy and his chequered career was held up as an example of courageous resistance to state-sponsored attempts to water down the Christian faith for essentially political reasons. Tertullian suffered a contrary fate; despite his undoubted orthodoxy in matters of doctrine, he sympathized with the Montanist sect from Asia Minor and was eventually branded a heretic, though the condemnation was too late to have much effect on his influence.

Each of these books contains a substantial introduction to the writers concerned, and they both reflect the current state of scholarship. Dr. Dunn follows the lead set by Timothy Barnes about twenty years ago, and supplements this with the findings of more recent research—much of it (like

himself) from 'down under'. Why Australians and New Zealanders should feel a special affinity for Tertullian is something of a mystery, but there is no doubt that a disproportionate amount of current scholarly writing on him is coming from that part of the world. Selecting from Tertullian's vast and varied output is no easy task, but Dr. Dunn has done it by establishing two fundamental criteria. He wanted to take one work from each of the three major areas of Tertullian's writings, as defined by Johannes Quasten in his famous *Patrology*, viz., apologetic, polemical and ethical. He also wanted to pick works which have not been translated in the past century. The result was that he has come up with 'Against the Jews', 'Antidote for the scorpion's sting' and 'On the veiling of virgins'.

One important aspect of each of these works is the way they reveal Tertullian's interpretation of Holy Scripture, a theme which was always at the forefront of his writings, even though he never penned a commentary as such. As each of these works is short, they can all be given in full, which is very helpful to the student. The translations are well done and Dr. Dunn is to be congratulated for having had the courage to include an obviously anti-Semitic work in his selection. This is important, not because anyone wants to stir up animosity towards Jews, but because it is more necessary now than ever before to understand that ancient theological polemic of this kind was not racist. No-one need be offended by what Dr. Dunn has translated, and it must be hoped that his book will help us all towards a greater understanding of the realities of early Christian life. The one complaint which seems valid is that he has unfortunately surrendered to political correctness in avoiding the masculine pronoun for God! This is certainly not a faithful rendering of Tertullian himself, and it is a pity that Dr. Dunn should have felt so intimidated by the modern feminist movement. At least he puts 'God' in square brackets where 'he' would appear to be more natural, so the reader can make the substitution for himself.

Dr. Anatolios' book on Athanasius is more original in its scholarship, partly because less has been written on him in recent years and also because Dr. Anatolios has himself produced a recent book on Athanasius' thought. Though he now teaches in the USA, it is apparent from his name that Dr. Anatolios is an Egyptian Copt, which gives him a particular attachment to the great bishop of Alexandria, even if the cultural distance between them is as great as it is between Athanasius and us. This book is grouped around a single

theme—the defence of orthodoxy against Arianism. This is fair enough, since Athanasius devoted most of his life to that struggle, and that is how his name has gone down in history. It contains only one complete work, a commentary on the Creed of the council of Nicaea (not to be confused with our modern Nicene Creed). The rest consists of three selections from his orations against the Arians, and one from his letters to Serapion, on the Holy Spirit. There is also a letter to Adelphius, a fellow bishop, in which Athanasius attacks the Arians yet again.

By concentrating on a single theme, Dr. Anatolios is able to explore it in greater depth, and his introductory material provides a theological analysis of the subject which goes much deeper than Dr. Dunn's introduction, which has to touch on such a wide range of material. The Arian controversy has never been easy to understand, and those interested in it will be grateful for Dr. Anatolios' clear and lucid exposition. Once again, the only criticism is that he has made another curious concession to modern political correctness—this time by adopting 'Common era' dating instead of the more usual 'Anno Domini' one. This is odd in a Christian work, and should be avoided because of its unfortunate secular flavour. However, this is a minor criticism, and Dr. Anatolios' book, like Dr. Dunn's, makes an important contribution to our understanding of this great church leader of the past.

GERALD BRAY
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A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS

David Jasper

Louisville, KY/London: Westminster John Knox, 2004 xii, 148pp
\$19.95pb ISBN: 0-664-22751-1

This is an introductory history of hermeneutics in the western world from inter-testamental times to our own day. The author describes hermeneutics as the history, theory, and understanding of the nature of texts and how people relate to and use them. This book centres on the Bible but includes subsidiary references and implications for non-religious literature. It is designed for undergraduates in university departments of religion and in seminaries, with applications for all students of literature, whether or not they are concerned

with the Bible. Throughout the book is the theme that 'changes in hermeneutics and technological developments often go hand in hand, as the latter effectively change the world in which we live and the ways in which we perceive it' and therefore our interpretation of texts relating to the world. The book frequently makes reference to earlier periods to show how hermeneutics, especially biblical hermeneutics, has never stood still but changes with technology, with the surrounding mental and environmental culture, and with the interplay of all texts, religious and secular, print and non-print, with one another to influence and alter our interpretation of others.

Jasper illustrates some ideas and concepts of exegetes and scholars of hermeneutics with quotations from their works or translations from them. Because all parts of the book reveal that he possesses a wide knowledge of ancient and modern literature, I wondered at first why he quotes from collections of selections or of quotations rather than from complete translations of the original texts themselves. Then I concluded that by referring readers to such collections he enables them to pursue their studies in works that are cheaper, more likely to be found in libraries, and certainly more likely to contain extensive background notes on the subject matter.

Professor Jasper is a master at expressing complex and abstract ideas in prose understandable by his target audience. His writing flows with a smoothness and intelligibility hard to achieve in a work on what is essentially philosophical and complex, involved thought. He employs a minimum of technical terms even though this book would probably have been easier to write in professional jargon. His summaries at the ends of chapters are extremely helpful because of the many authors and abstract ideas each chapter deals with and the reader's consequent difficulty in grasping them.

Jasper alerts the reader to new features of our society and technology that may influence hermeneutics both now and in the near future. He mentions the influence of non-print materials such as unwritten media (e.g. films) on the matrix of texts and other sources of material that influence our lives and how we see our places in the world, which he says influences how we interpret the Bible and other texts even within our Western culture.

In keeping with his thesis about the influence of technology on reading and

understanding, the last page of the full text holds forth that ‘Reading and writing with computers is becoming a new art, and it will demand new hermeneutical insights’.

DAVID W. T. BRATTSTON
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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT: CONTEXTS, METHODS AND MINISTRY FORMATION

David A. deSilva

Leicester: Apollos/Downers Grove:IVP, 2004 975pp £24.99hb
ISBN:1-84474-023-4

Warmth is a quality all too rarely seen in volumes of New Testament Introduction: weight and scholarship are more usual. The work under review combines all three to give valuable service to the bible-teaching minister and the ministerial student.

DeSilva’s basic premise is that that New Testament documents were written as a pastoral response: “Each text was written to serve some specific pastoral need and answer a range of important questions arising out of the life of the church” (p. 29). This starting point, so fundamental to expository teaching, transforms the quest for date, authorship, composition and so on. These questions suddenly become interesting as they help to discover the pastoral purpose of each book. The enquiry (or inquiry, as this is written in US English) culminates in an exposition of the message of each New Testament document. This is followed by a discussion of the book’s relationship to ‘ministry formation’—what the themes and topics have to say about Christian discipleship and ministry. This warm approach brings the book out of the library and into the study.

The discussions of date, authorship, composition etc. are fully aware of current scholarship as they argue an evangelical case. Additionally there are significant essays on the religious, social, historical and cultural background to the New Testament, on the nature of the Gospels and on Paul’s letters, and there is an excursus on pseudepigraphy. Many of these are informed by deSilva’s own work on shame, honour, kinship and patronage. Each of these essays is

informative, accessible, up to date and, tellingly, useful to support church-based bible teaching. The third main showcase for the author's scholarship is in the numerous short articles which address so-called 'exegetical skills'. These cover various forms of higher and lower criticism, and are generally long enough to be of use and short enough to be introductions. All have a bibliography, and are clearly indexed on pp. 26-27.

An unfortunate consequence of uniting so many good things in a single volume is weight: nearly a thousand pages produce a hardback of just under two thousand grammes. No doubt there are matters of detail to quibble about here and there, but overall this is a very helpful introduction to the literature and times of the New Testament libraries and patrons would do well to make this investment in their young pastors and ministers-in-training.

ED MOLL
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HOLY LAND HOLY CITY

Sacred Geography and the Interpretation of the Bible

Robert P. Gordon

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004 162pp £10.99pb ISBN:1 84227 277 2

On the back cover this book is described as 'a wide-ranging study', and this is both its strength and weakness. The author, Regius Professor of Hebrew in Cambridge, leads the reader through nine chapters, which address: 'Absent City [= Zion]/Missing Mountains in Genesis 1-11', 'The Land Theology of Genesis 4', 'The City of God' (an examination of the Omphalos—or navel of the earth—myth concerning the status of Jerusalem), 'How did Psalm 48 happen', 'The Geography of Golgotha', 'Future Dimensions' (eschatological Jerusalem in Scripture), 'Marching to Zion' (a historical survey of Jewish and Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem), 'Literalism, Determinism and the Future' (a cautionary examination of the theologies underpinning the territorial claims of modern-day Israel), and 'Neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem'.

While listing chapter titles might appear to be a cheap way of reviewing a book, it does illustrate the concerns addressed in this volume and demonstrates the need for a coherent thread to link them in order to retain the general reader's

attention throughout the work. On this latter point, a heavy weight of responsibility falls on the three-page introduction. Here, having reviewed the various possible meanings of ‘sacred geography’, Gordon defines his own stance as examining ‘when the literal, geographical facts of a case are disregarded by the biblical text in order to express some further, or higher, truth’ (pp. 1-2). Putting aside any theoretical questions concerning this definition (Gordon does not, for example, interact with any spatial theory), it is easier to see how this theme works through the first four chapters of the book.

However by the latter more thematic chapters, the connecting thread is wearing thin. Indeed, the final chapter ‘highlights the ‘a-territorial’ nature of Christian worship of God...[producing] the sidelining of ‘place’, [suggesting that] profounder insights and broader vistas become possible’ (p. 4). For the reader seeking (biblical-)theological coherence across the chapters—as opposed to historical windows of observation—this might be a productive and informative starting position rather than a climactic conclusion. As a result, it is hard to profile the ‘general reader’ for this book, and difficult to see it advancing a useful theory of ‘sacred geography’. Nonetheless individual chapters thoughtfully engage their topics, and will stir individual readers. A book for the library, perhaps, rather than the home bookshelf.

MATTHEW SLEEMAN

London

THE MESSAGE OF THE TRINITY

Brian Edgar

Leicester: IVP, 2004 336pp. £ 9.99pb ISBN: 1-84474-048-X

This book has come out in the series “The Bible Speaks Today”, which at first sight will seem unusual. Over the years, the series has concentrated on expositions devoted to biblical books or to important parts of biblical books (like the Sermon on the Mount) and has tended to follow a verse-by-verse approach. Here, for the first time, we have entered the field of systematic theology, approached from the text of the Bible alone. This in itself makes Dr. Edgar’s book significant, because it is generally agreed that there is an alarming gap between biblical studies and systematic theology which operates to the detriment of both, but especially of the latter—particularly in Evangelical

circles. What Dr. Edgar is trying to do is to show how it is possible to take biblical passages and expound them in a way which will produce a form of systematic theology, avoiding the terminology and structures of the more traditional presentations.

Dr. Edgar certainly deserves ten out of ten for trying, and much of what he says is excellent. If the book is regarded as a series of Bible studies around a common theme, it may be said to succeed very well and many preachers will find it very helpful when called upon to preach on this subject. Whether it is really an exposition of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity though, is more debatable.

Dr. Edgar begins, promisingly, with a detailed exposition of 2 Corinthians 13;14, better known to most churchgoers as 'the grace'. Here he sets out the basic concept of the Trinity as love, which is meant to guide our thoughts through the book as a whole. From there he goes on to another very good exposition of Ephesians 1:1-14 before launching into three extended studies of the Trinity in the Old Testament. It is at this point that reservations begin to set in. The Trinity in the Old Testament?

The overall structure of the book makes it clear that this is the section devoted primarily to the person of the Father, though there are great difficulties with any attempt to identify him with the God of the Old Testament, particularly if a passage like Proverbs 8:22-31 is then brought in as evidence of the Father's 'wisdom' as a kind of second person of the Godhead. To conclude with an exposition of the Holy Spirit on the basis of Ezekiel 37 is perhaps somewhat less controversial, but is still liable to raise more questions than it answers. The fact of the matter is that the Trinity is revealed to us in and through Jesus Christ, not in the Old Testament, which inevitably puts a large question mark over the expositions in this section of the book.

The next part is devoted to the Trinity 'in the experience and teaching of Jesus', an unfortunate turn of phrase which inevitably leaves the reader wondering whether it contains some form of adoptionism. Precisely how does Jesus 'experience' the Trinity? Mercifully, Dr. Edgar's expositions are better than his choice of title, and it is particularly heartening to discover that he looks for support to each of the four Gospels. He is also prepared to defend the authenticity of the Great Commission at the end of Matthew, to which he

devotes an entire chapter, reminding us of the intimate link between the sacrament of baptism and the doctrine of the Trinity.

The last part of the book is devoted to the early (New Testament) church and not unnaturally, it tends to concentrate on the work of the Holy Spirit. The texts discussed are mostly Pauline, apart from Acts 2 at the beginning and two verses of Jude at the end. Oddly, Revelation is left out, although it is arguably the most deeply Trinitarian book in the entire New Testament! Once again, there are many brilliant insights in these chapters, but the reader must be careful when it comes to the finer points of theology.

One of the weaknesses of Dr. Edgar's approach is that one verse seldom gives enough detail for an entire doctrine to be constructed, and when Dr. Edgar comes up against this problem, he tends to duck it. For example, he quotes Galatians 4:6 as the only verse in the New Testament to use the phrase 'Spirit of the Son' and then goes on to give a potted explanation of the Filioque controversy, which he suggests might be resolved by adopting a compromise formula ('through the Son') which was actually tried and rejected in the fifteenth century. More disturbingly, he uses the same passage to make a plea for regarding sexual differences as immaterial in Christian ministry, without seeming to realize that the result in Trinitarian terms is a form of modalism, in which equality implies interchangeability.

Perhaps the root of Dr. Edgar's difficulty is that he does his best to get away from the language of classical orthodoxy, which he mistakenly believes to have been derived from ancient Hellenistic philosophy, with the result that he is insufficiently sensitive to the nuances which traditional theology was always so keen to insist upon. The desired marriage between biblical and systematic theology will only be properly consummated when it is accepted on all sides that the terminology of the latter is derived from the former, not imported from an alien source. Dr Edgar has pointed the way towards what needs to be done, but there is still some way to go before we can confidently state that the union we all desire has indeed taken place.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

THE COMMUNITY OF THE WORD: TOWARD AN EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

Mark Husbands and Daniel J Treier (eds.)

Downers Grove: IVP/Leicester: Apollos, 2005 291 pp £14.99pb
ISBN: 0-8308-2797-8 (US) and 1-84474-082-X (UK)

These fourteen essays, presented at Wheaton College Graduate School in April, 2004, seek to explore what evangelical ecclesiology can contribute to the wider church. They are grouped under five headings. Part One takes a backward glance at 'Evangelical' Theologies; Part Two is devoted to Locating the Church Dogmatically and Part Three examines the Church as a Moral Community. Part Four asks whether the Church is a Sacramental Community, and finally Part Five wants to locate the Church Culturally.

It seems to this reviewer that any exercise in evangelical ecclesiology is only as useful as its understanding of the terms 'evangelical' and 'ecclesiology'. John Webster writes that 'The task of evangelical ecclesiology is to describe the relation between the gospel and the Church' (p. 75). He is, alas, the only author to favour a theological definition of evangelicalism, let alone to try to explore the connection between the gospel and the church. His fellow contributors instead employ a range of sociological definitions and identify evangelicals as 'those who by self-definition or with good reason can be linked by heritage or influence to dispensational fundamentalist roots' (Okholm, p. 45), or as part of a subculture (Wilson), or as a factor of human history (Guder), or as non-Anglican North American Protestants (Carter), and so on. Such an undecided conception of evangelicalism is bound to weaken the collection's contribution to evangelical ecclesiology.

As for ecclesiology, the assertion that evangelicals lack an adequate ecclesiology is mostly accepted without objection. For instance, Guder writes without further analysis that it 'is widely acknowledged that the planting of new Churches in previously unevangelised cultures was undertaken with a very inadequate ecclesiology' (p. 123). Webster's is again the lone voice in the wilderness, crying that 'Evangelical Christianity is nowadays sometimes tempted to think that the remedy for its instinctive ecclesiological indifference is to move upmarket. The evangelical tradition has latterly been alarmingly indiscriminating—in its very open attitude to socially immanent theories of

atonement, for example...’ (p. 112). Both the move upmarket (to sacramentalism) and the uncritical acceptance of other positions are evident in chapters that hold up before the reader an exposition of Vatican II’s Sacramentalism (Badcock), the WCC’s document *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* (Charry), Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth* (Jennings, who goes on to advocate the use of Icons), and the *Eucharist [sic]* (Charry). Wilson surveys four authors who are considered to have ‘unquestioned’ evangelical credentials: Francis Schaeffer, Charles Colson, Rick Warren, and Brian McLaren (p. 64). Dyrness suggests that an enhanced appreciation of church buildings, symbols and actions would be helpful. It is hard to see how all these explore the connection between the evangelical gospel and the evangelical church. It is also curious to see this collection published on both sides of the Atlantic, given how much of the writing is specific to the North American church scene.

Evangelical theology and ecclesiology have much to offer the wider church. In these essays, however, there is more itinerant exploration than discernible movement ‘toward’ (or as we might say, towards) an evangelical ecclesiology. There is meat in Webster’s two essays, but the footnotes suggest they condense ideas available elsewhere.

ED MOLL
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**THE RISE OF EVANGELICALISM: THE AGE OF EDWARDS,
WHITEFIELD AND THE WESLEYS** Mark A. Noll
Leicester: IVP, 2004 316pp hb ISBN: 1-84474-001-3

The Inter-Varsity Press has an excellent publishing tradition when it comes to books on biblical studies, doctrine, apologetics and Christian living. Stimulating works on these themes pour from the press by the dozen every year. Yet when it comes to church history from an Evangelical perspective, the IVP list has traditionally been thin. A. M. Renwick’s *The Story of the Church* (1958) is now a classic, but is an exception. Thankfully that disappointing state of affairs is quickly beginning to change. The last few years have seen, amongst others, John Piper’s biographical sketches of Evangelical heroes, Oliver Barclay’s history of the CICC, Timothy Dudley-Smith’s *magnum opus* on John Stott, a new introduction to the Puritans and the IVP *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*.

Now InterVarsity Press has courageously grabbed the bull by the horns and commissioned a five volume history of Evangelicalism, by five leading international scholars. It will trace the development of the movement from the 'Evangelical Revival' or 'Great Awakening' at the start of the eighteenth-century, through many highs and lows, to its global dominance at the end of the twentieth-century. Here Volume One covers events from the 1730s to the 1790s, when the first generation of Evangelical leaders had passed from the scene.

To attempt a coherent history of a diverse worldwide movement over three centuries is certainly a bold task. Where do the boundaries of Evangelicalism lie? Who should be included and who excluded from such a history? Is there one authentic Evangelical identity? This is a perpetual headache for the historian, and these volumes adopt a fairly flexible approach, 'as defined by genealogy and principle' (p. 17). In other words, they focus both upon the spiritual descendants of the eighteenth-century revivals ('genealogy') and upon groups which have embraced historic Evangelical convictions ('principle'). The loose definition chosen for the series is David Bebbington's famous Evangelical quadrilateral—'biblicism' (an emphasis on the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and conduct), 'crucicentrism' (an emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross), 'conversionism' (a belief that we need to be born again by the Holy Spirit) and 'activism' (an expression of the gospel in effort—such as missions and philanthropic societies).

Mark Noll is one of the world's foremost scholars of Evangelical history. With his vast knowledge of the period, he guides us judiciously through the key issues, ideas and personalities. This first volume naturally gives most attention to Britain, North America and the West Indies, with an emphasis on trans-denominational, trans-Atlantic crosscurrents and relationships. One of Noll's most valuable chapters is that entitled 'Explanations'. What was the cause of the Evangelical Revival? Why did it happen? Why were both sides of the Atlantic rocked by this world-changing movement? Secular historians dismiss the revival as 'all down to psychology', and receive from Christians the simplistic retort that 'God did it'. Noll is not satisfied with either approach—he wants to keep God at the centre of the picture, but also to take historical circumstances seriously. He points to social, economic and intellectual factors which meant that in a real sense the 'time was ripe' for revival. He also points to the significant impact of human agents—one of the century's greatest

orators (Whitefield), one of the century's most effective organisers (John Wesley), one of the century's most popular troubadours (Charles Wesley) and one of the century's most powerful thinkers (Edwards). And yet Noll argues that it would be bad history to ignore the explanation of the early Evangelicals themselves—that the revival was ultimately a work of the Spirit of God.

Here is a book to be savoured. The prose is sharp, the observations astute, the content rousing. It is both accessible to the beginner and packed with fresh material for the serious student. A major bonus is the bibliography, with all the best secondary literature as well as one hundred recommended primary sources — enough to keep the most enthusiastic reader busy. If Noll's contribution is anything to go by, this will prove to be an excellent series and is sure to become the standard introduction to Evangelicalism for many years to come. We look forward to the following volumes with eager anticipation. Well done IVP!

ANDREW ATHERSTONE

Eynsham

THE FACE OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES: A SURVEY OF RECENT RESEARCH

Scot McKnight & Grant Osborne (eds.)

Leicester: Apollos, 2004 544pp £19.99 pb ISBN 1-84474-039-0

In 1999 Baker Academic and Apollos published a wide-ranging survey of recent research on the Old Testament called *The Face of Old Testament Studies*. Five years later, this companion volume is a similar 'state of the art' review of the various sub-departments of New Testament studies, from textual criticism to social studies, from parables and Luke–Acts to Pauline theology. Twenty-two chapters written by acknowledged experts in their respective fields set out and evaluate the current thinking in their particular area.

This is a useful work for several kinds of people. First, it is a useful book for anyone wanting to gain an overall view of the state of New Testament scholarship, whether they are students, scholars of another discipline (say, Old Testament studies or systematic theology), or specialists in only one area of New Testament wishing to understand contemporary developments in another specialised field. It would also be useful for ministers who left theological

college some time ago should they wish to read up on how academic study has progressed in the intervening years, or indeed for any minister wanting to gain an appreciation of modern critical scholarship on a corpus of material they may be preaching from.

For instance, Stanley Porter's robust and provocative study on Greek grammar and syntax charts the rise of several new ways of analysing and understanding koine Greek (including verbal aspect theory, of which he is a major practitioner). This is very useful considering the impact such new methods are starting to have on biblical commentaries, although Porter's scathing indictment of older methods of study and his thinly disguised disdain for those who do not adopt his own new paradigm in toto will not necessarily win adherents. Craig Blomberg's chapter on John and Jesus is especially helpful here with its broad brush survey of the last 30 years of scholarly activity. Blomberg also gives an insightful warning about 'a clear trend in one important wing of biblical studies internationally: the embracing of increasingly anti-Christian perspectives' (pp. 216-17) and the sidelining and (deliberate?) neglect of first-class evangelical monographs and commentaries by the scholarly guild (p. 218).

Several articles make tantalising comments about the possible future direction of studies in their field. Walton on Acts, for instance, mentions the possibility of further studies (building on the work of Bruce Winter) of the standard rhetoric of first-century forensic proceedings and how this aids our understanding of Paul's speeches in the latter part of Acts. Others also suggest ways in which their fields may develop in the next decade.

An evangelical piety which fits the academic study of the text into a warm-hearted believing framework creeps occasionally into some articles, but is sadly absent in others. The contributors are not uniformly evangelical or conservative in viewpoint (James D. G. Dunn, for instance, contributes the chapter on the theology of Paul) but they do all have a well-known breadth of knowledge in their areas of expertise and have previously published material on them (Peter Bolt on Mark's Gospel, Darrell L. Bock on Luke, and Grant R. Osborne on Revelation for instance) which makes this a fine, solid, and reliable reference work.

LEE GATISS
London

THE GLORY OF THE ATONEMENT

Charles E. Hill & Frank A. James III, (eds.)

Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2004 495pp £19.99pb ISBN: 1-84474-024-2

At a time of increasing confusion about the atonement in English Evangelicalism, if not further afield, it becomes ever more incumbent on pastors and teachers to be clear and consistent in their understanding and instruction.

Over the last year, Steve Chalke, one of Evangelicalism's more public faces in England, has caused considerable unrest in the Evangelical Alliance and elsewhere with his rejection of penal substitution, and a desire to propound a doctrine of the atonement other than that of classic Evangelicalism. In such an environment this book makes a welcome entry to the stage. Roger Nicole has been a consistent defender of penal substitution as truth at the heart of the atonement. This book is presented by the editors and contributors as a Festschrift to him. The editors have compiled an enviable team of authors: Blocher, Carson, Gaffin, Packer, Sinclair Ferguson, Vanhoozer and others.

This book is a fantastic resource, and may be approached as a textbook and reference work, rather than a cover-to-cover read. The first section addresses atonement through biblical exegesis. The contributions examine atonement in the Pentateuch, Psalm 51, Isaiah 53, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, the Johannine and Pauline corpora, Romans 3, Hebrews, the General Epistles and Revelation. These are heavyweight articles, and would indeed serve ministers as commentaries on specific passages. Alan Groves' article on Isaiah 53, in particular, demands workable Hebrew, and a number of the New Testament articles assume basic Greek.

The second section on historical and systematic understandings of atonement is equally valuable, though some of the subjects are perhaps more surprising. For example, here is the ontological presuppositions of Karl Barth's doctrine of the atonement. I found Raymond Blacketer's defence of definite atonement the most heartening in the book, demonstrating this doctrine's roots in pre-Reformation theology and its consistent exposition from Calvin onwards.

The work concludes with two gems, Jim Packer on “The Atonement in the Life of the Christian” and Sinclair Ferguson, “Preaching the Atonement”. To observe helpful, practical, ministry-oriented reflection at the end of such a wealth of scholarship is a model other Christian books could profit from.

The editors observe at the outset ‘the fact that evangelical readers have not seen much on this topic since John Stott’s *The Cross of Christ* made the project even more appealing’. In providing a robust exegetical, theological and practical defence of penal substitution, the editors have provided a reliable staging post on a road trod too seldom by evangelical authors. Given the paucity of recent works available, I think every minister should own and refer regularly to this book.

NEIL JEFFERS
Southgate

HOPE FOR EVER: THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF LIFE AND DEATH

Stephen S. Smalley

Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005 94pp £7.99pb ISBN 1-84227-358-2

The 2004 Didsbury Lectures were on the theme of “Christian Hope” centred in particular on the Bible’s teaching. The four chapters focus in turn on Hope, Judgement, Hell and Heaven and testify to a confident affirmation of the biblical hope of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

If there is a ‘big idea’ advanced by Smalley it is that because Christ himself was raised from death there is firm hope for the Christian in the face of death. The thesis itself touches on many major and controversial areas of doctrine, and Smalley provides a sympathetic synthesis with helpful summaries at key points before continuing with his basic theme. It is good to be reminded of the connection between Jesus’ resurrection and the Christian hope, and that however reluctantly, the faithful scholar must conclude the resurrection is an event of historical significance. Smalley is clear on the goodness of the Bible’s teaching that judgement is for all people and that it is consistent with the character of God as revealed in both Testaments. Since the advent of Christ who is unique, judgement now takes place in the light of human response to Christ. Smalley defines Hell as ‘where God is not’, without opting for

universalism, eternal torment or conditional immortality. Since judgement is seen to be restorative and not retributive, it is perhaps not surprising that so little is said of the Cross of Christ in the chapter on judgement.

However it is welcome to hear that neither reincarnation nor purgatory is consistent with the biblical Christian hope. More conjecturally, Smalley suggests there is a basic connection between personality in this life and identity in eternity. Clearly the reader will not agree at every point with the line taken by the author. This reviewer was not convinced by the possibility of second chances, nor by the author's reluctance to admit any material dimension to the resurrection body, nor by the notion that growth will be a key mark of our existence in heaven. One wonders also whether the Spirit makes any contribution to the Christian's future orientation. But it is perhaps churlish to criticise what is omitted in a small volume that otherwise packs so much in. The lecture format may explain why there is little by way of practical application. The theme itself is one which it is always pleasing to see in print.

ED MOLL
Basingstoke

THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA: AN INTRODUCTION

Otto Kaiser

**Edinburgh: Alban Books/Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson,
2004125pp £10.99 pb ISBN 1-56563-693-7**

The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion tell us that the Apocrypha 'are read by the church for examples of life and instruction in behaviour, but the church does not use them to establish any doctrine' (Article 6, from the English Prayer Book). Luther too said that these books, such as Tobit, Baruch, Bel and the Dragon, Susanna, and Maccabees, were 'profitable and good to read'. Of all Protestant denominations only Anglicans tend to make much use of the Apocrypha today, although amongst many evangelicals it is probably rare to find anyone who has even heard of them let alone read them for instruction in behaviour! In some ways this is a good thing, since we do not want to succumb to the temptation that other traditions have fallen for of elevating these books to the status of Scripture (the Council of Trent gave them unqualified canonical status and anathematised those who would not do likewise).

However, it would be useful for those who consider themselves well-read, and for all clergy, to at least be familiar with these ancient writings which, although they form no part of God's word written, do give us insight into the history and thinking of God's people in the inter-testamental period. The New Testament contains several allusions to verses in the apocryphal books (e.g. Romans 1:18-32 = Wisdom of Solomon 12-14; Hebrews 11 = Ecclesiasticus 44), and no-one who reads 2 Maccabees 7 can fail to be inspired, and also enlightened as to the ferocity of attachment the Jews of Jesus' day had to the food laws. Baruch 3:38 has interest in debates about pre-incarnate appearances of Christ, and 2 Maccabees 12 is the favourite passage of the Catholic Catechism to prove purgatory and prayers for the dead.

Given that reading the apocrypha is a profitable exercise, the question is whether this book is a profitable introduction to read alongside the texts themselves. I do not think it is. For specialists and scholars wanting an introduction to the historical-critical analysis of the sources, compositional histories, and dating problems associated with these works it may be of use. To those wanting a survey of the material and its usefulness and some theological reflection, it is not so obliging. From the first page it is unhelpful, claiming that the Church recognised the apocrypha 'as canonical' as early as the 4th Century, which clearly is a distorted picture of a more complex historical and theological reality, and a definite overstatement. Kaiser's liberal attitude to the Bible itself also surfaces occasionally.

The most difficult thing for the reader to acclimatise to is, however, the heavily Germanic sentence structure. Consider for example, 'The poetry of the Wisdom of Solomon employs the parallelismus membrorum typical of Semitic poetry, which as a rule is bipartite and occasionally tripartite, and which is apparent in the antithetically, synonymously, or in its analytical form, synthetically balanced cola or lines' (p. 107). Sir Humphrey Appleby of *Yes Minister* would be proud of such otiose prolix verbosity, and the distinguished Dr. Kaiser writes thus as a matter of course, excelling in the art of saying simple things in particularly complicated ways. (He means, incidentally, that Wisdom of Solomon uses parallelism like the Old Testament, with ideas being either contrasted, repeated, or developed within 2 or 3 lines).

There are some useful insights still to be gleaned here for those unfamiliar with the Apocrypha. It is just rather tiresome wading through everything else to

find them. So for a basic introduction to these useful works, I would recommend B. M. Metzger's, *An Introduction to The Apocrypha* and leave Kaiser's work on the shelf for that very rare occasion when someone asks me a complicated question about inter-testamental Judaism or I need a useful chart like that on p. 24 which elaborates 'the Divergent Enumeration and Transmission of the Books of Ezra in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the NRSV'.

LEE GATISS

London

THE MESSAGE OF SAMUEL (The Bible Speaks Today)

Mary J Evans

Leicester: IVP, 2004 286pp £9.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-295-1

As with all in the series this book aims to be clearly Evangelical, non-technical and accessible to the 'ordinary' believer. In that sense (and others), the editors claim these are not really commentaries in the traditional sense, although they have greatly helped laymen and experts get to grips with and apply the Bible.

This is a well-written book with an easy to follow and winsome style with very helpful footnotes, which at times are the most helpful part! Each section ends with some questions, which are generally good but not consistent.

Evans draws the reader into both her own book and into Samuel. Right from the beginning she superbly gets under the skin of human characters in the book. This is especially true when she deals with relationships. However she is often less sharp at seeing God's intervention and presents a somewhat inconsistent view of God's sovereignty.

There are a number of helpful insights and observations however they frequently stray into speculation. Commentaries on narrative often pose 'perhaps' or 'what if' scenarios, but this book went too far.

The series intends not to be ivory tower but practical for Christian living. This volume certainly works very hard at being relevant and applied. Sadly it is often too hard. Applications are often strained, highly moralistic and tend to ignore

Biblical Theology. Passages become directed to congregational leadership and styles of worship. The New Testament is quoted to back up moral applications rather than showing how that part of Samuel was fulfilled in Christ.

The Herem (ban) causes Evans problems simply due to her lack of Biblical Theology. She rightly shows how this displays God's absolute holiness. However she then leaps to John 3 and Hebrews 10 to show how we can now be forgiven. Had she gone to Hebrews 11 instead she could have made a link between the land then and that which is to come. This was the big disappointment of the book that promised so much. Very early on the need to see Samuel in the whole Bible was flagged up saying (p16) 'You've read the law, you've heard the prophets, ... what do you make of this?' but we never see how Christ fulfils the promises or the types that are put before us. Although Evans avoids some of the common pitfalls of 1 Sam 17 she misses an open goal for showing how the anointed (but not yet reigning) King saves Israel. Countless other opportunities went begging.

If you are looking for a commentary on Samuel you may be frustrated that on the one hand this does not give you the detail of a classic commentary while on the other it does not really help you with the broad brush strokes either.

DARREN MOORE

Tranmere

MAKING SENSE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT Craig L. Blomberg
 Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2003 189pp £8.99pb ISBN 1-84474-034-X

Blomberg's expertise as a New Testament scholar is evident in this pithy book, which he hopes will be read by 'a broad cross section of the reading public' presented 'at a level readily understandable by college-educated adults' (p. 11), while he includes sufficiently detailed footnotes and references to help those wishing to take their research further. Subtitled "Three Crucial Questions", in three chapters he addresses these matters: 'Is the New Testament Historically Reliable?', 'Was Paul the True Founder of Christianity?' and 'How is the Christian to Apply the New Testament to Life?' Theoretically each chapter could be read independently, although there are occasional references to earlier

arguments and evidence. The first two chapters are clearly apologetic, particularly suited to the thinking enquirer, whereas the third has a very different character.

His reason for writing the first and longest chapter is to counter the prevailing disbelief 'outside of distinctively evangelical circles...that any substantial majority of the Gospels or Acts is historically accurate' (p. 20). It covers similar ground to his previous books on the Synoptics and John in a more condensed form, but incorporates the remainder of the New Testament, and updates his previous work by responding to more recent developments (e.g. The Jesus Seminar). He draws on Tom Wright's 'double dissimilarity and similarity criterion' (p. 21) for evaluating the historical authenticity of gospel material, together with other non-Christian writers of the period and archaeological evidence, to conclude that since 'the Gospels and Acts prove reliable in so many places where they can be tested, they should be given the benefit of the doubt in those places where they cannot' (p. 70).

Chapter two, tackling the supposed conflict between the teaching of Jesus and the Pauline gospel, looks at Paul's familiarity with Jesus' teachings and the gospel traditions, before examining broader theological issues (including justification by faith and the kingdom of God, the roles of the Law and women, Christology and eschatology). Quoting Dale Allison, he summarises that 'the persistent conviction that Paul knew next to nothing of the teaching of Jesus must be rejected....On the contrary, the tradition stemming from Jesus well served the apostle in his roles as pastor, theologian, and missionary' (p. 106).

It would be tempting to make the third chapter compulsory reading for every leader of a Bible study group, children's or youth group in any church. It is an excellent explanation—illustrated with numerous examples—of how to interpret and apply the biblical text to twenty-first century living, particularly for those who have not had formal theological training. This book is worth buying and recommending for these forty pages alone.

NEIL WATKINSON
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