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Book Reviews

ZION'S CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS?: The Bible, Israel and the Church

Stephen Sizer

Nottingham: IVP, 2007 192pp £7.99pb ISBN: 978-1-84474-214-1

Does God have a purpose for the nation and land of Israel today? This is a major point of difference between Dispensational and Covenantal readings of the Bible. In *Zion's Christian Soldiers* Sizer exposes the foundations of Dispensational views, and the error of their strong support for certain views about Israel today. Given the widespread influence of this school of thought, there is the frightening prospect that the US might adopt foreign policy under (Dispensational) Christian influence.

The key issue in understanding the relationship between Israel and the church is to read the Bible literally and contextually. Ultra-literalists ignore the historical setting of prophetic and apocalyptic passages and then read contemporary events back into prophetic passages. As a consequence Old Testament texts are made to speak about present and future events almost as if the New Testament had never been written. But by reading the Bible as a whole and in context it becomes clear that there are not, in fact, two chosen people (Israel and church), but one (Israel and now the church).

A second consequence is that those who believe the promises made to Abraham still apply to his physical descendants today oppose the dismantling of Jewish settlements in Gaza and the Occupied Territory; but the Bible makes it clear that the land is God's and that residence in it was always conditional on faithful obedience. Jesus redefined the Kingdom as a spiritual and heavenly reality, which is why the New Testament teaches that the land has served its purpose: 'it was, and remains, irrelevant to God's ongoing redemptive purposes for the world' (p. 98). In a similar way, Christians are to look to Jerusalem as a vision of a city inclusive of all nations—not as a place which must remain undivided at all (political) costs.

Two of the stranger beliefs promoted by Dispensationalist thinking are the rebuilding of the Temple, and the Rapture. Attempts by Zionists (Jewish and Christian) to rebuild the Temple are taken seriously by the political authorities, and may well ignite an apocalyptic war with Muslims worldwide. But when

Jesus died to atone for our sins, the temple in Jerusalem became redundant: that is why Sizer must say that ‘To advocate rebuilding of the Temple is heresy’ (p. 130). The Rapture is ‘the novel idea that Jesus will return twice’ (p. 131), made popular by the hugely successful “Left Behind” books. It accompanies an outlook which is inherently pessimistic about the Middle East and looks for an ‘Armageddon’ confrontation. But biblical references to Armageddon do not necessarily lock us into believing there has to be an apocalyptic war between Islam and Christianity; surely as peacemakers, Christians can have nothing to do with stoking such a conflagration.

The key issue remains, ‘What difference did Jesus’ coming make to traditional Jewish hopes and expectations?’ Sizer shows by his clear and direct treatment how Dispensational writers (including Hagee, Schofield, Darby and Hal Lindsey) fail to address this question. This is a clear and helpful book, which requires no prior understanding of Dispensationalist thinking. It will equip the reader to understand these views and to appreciate what is at stake when those who believe these things try to make governments and Christians follow them.

ED MOLL

Wembdon, Somerset

ROUND THE CHURCH IN 50 YEARS: An intimate journey

Trevor Beeson

London: SCM, 2007 279pp £19.99pb ISBN: 978-0-334-04148-1

Trevor Beeson was a Canon of Westminster before becoming Dean of Winchester so he has clearly been every inch an ‘Establishment man’. This is the perspective from which he writes. He is a liberal churchman who has shared in the advantages of an age which is fast disappearing.

It is an interesting book because, although essentially lightweight, it reveals the mindset of the liberal establishment of the Church of England—and it is a very partial view, demonstrating how the ascendancy within the Church of England regards the rest. For example no less than three Evangelical Archbishops (Coggan, Carey and Blanch) are dismissed. Likewise there is no understanding of the catholic stance in the church and Graham Leonard’s appointment as Bishop of London is regarded as the result of a mafia. Nothing much is said about the prayer and retreat movement on the catholic wing, and the various

references to the evangelicals are quite simply trite and patronising. Having said all that, this is a fascinating book, covering a period in the Church of England when it changed out of all recognition. It would be salutary for evangelicals to read in order to understand the mind-set of the apparently victorious majority.

JOHN PEARCE
Bury St. Edmunds

**YOURS IS THE KINGDOM:
A Systematic Theology of the Lord's Prayer**
Gerald Bray

Nottingham: IVP, 2007 208pp £9.99pb ISBN: 978-1-84474-209-7

The Lord's Prayer is the most widely known of the biblical prayers and has received relatively little systematic reflection. Gerald Bray's own thinking has convinced him that this prayer is essentially an embryonic form of systematic theology. This accessible approach to the theology assumed by Jesus' prayer has been developed from Bray's Moore College Lecture series.

Each of the first five chapters takes a petition from the Prayer itself and a brief final chapter considers the liturgical doxology found as a late marginal to Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer. Christian prayer assumes much about the believer's relationship with the God to whom we pray. Bray looks at the theology behind each petition, with illustrations from personal experience amplified by the lessons of historical theology. For instance, the chapter on 'Our Father' considers the believer's privilege as an adopted child in God's family, and so on for each petition. There is much that is helpful, and I found Brays reflection on sin, forgiveness and the Reformation on the petition 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us' both heart-warming and instructive. The discussions touch on contemporary issues and sometimes wander a little from the original point. But they illustrate how widely doctrine can be applied. There are few references to biblical or secondary literature, and I thought that even a brief overview of the other main systematic treatments of the Lord's Prayer would have been welcome. Nevertheless it is always valuable to see the connection made between systematic theology and prayer: the one leads naturally to the other. This is not a surprise of course, and is borne out by other recent books on Christian prayer: J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom's

Praying: Finding our Way from Duty to Delight (IVP, 2006) and Graeme Goldsworthy, *Prayer and the Knowledge of God: what the Bible teaches* (IVP, 2003) are both books on prayer that begin with a hundred or more pages of theology to describe the relationship that exists between the Christian believer and God, through the gospel. Both of these last two are well worth reading: Bray's volume is a somewhat easier read and ranges beyond prayer itself.

ED MOLL

Wembdon, Somerset

IN THE NAME OF JESUS: Exorcism among early Christians

Graham H. Twelftree

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007 351pp £17.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-2745-1

The role of exorcism in early Christianity, and particularly in the ministry of Jesus, is a subject which seldom attracts much attention nowadays, although even a cursory reading of the New Testament will show how important it was at that time. The modern reluctance to discuss the issue has a lot to do with the feeling that demons do not really exist, and that to try to get rid of them by using somewhat mysterious ritual practices is nothing but an absurd medieval relic which truly modern people do not take seriously.

To his credit, Dr. Twelftree does not accept that analysis, and argues that demons and demon possession are phenomena that need to be examined without prejudging their character. He himself appears to come from a church background where exorcism occupied a significant place, and much of his study is directed towards this. His overall conclusion is that exorcism, while important in the early church, was not as dominant a feature of its life as his own modern congregation seemed to suppose. His conclusion therefore is that the practice ought to be de-emphasised in favour of a more positive proclamation of the truth of the gospel as the preferred means of quelling demonic activity, but that it should not be ruled out entirely.

He justifies this by arguing that the early Christians went from the ministry of Jesus himself, who was a practising exorcist, to a position in the time of the Apostle Paul where exorcism was still fairly common but not dominant, to the second century where it had become marginal and been integrated into the rite

of baptism. He resists the modern trend to interpret the New Testament evidence in social and political terms, and gives compelling reasons why the term Legion, as used by the evangelist Mark to refer to a demoniac, should not be understood as a reference to the Roman Empire. His theological analysis is sound and balanced, although whether Jesus should be referred to as an 'exorcist' is questionable. No-one doubts that he cast out demons, but whether this activity was really central to his ministry may be doubted. As God in human flesh, Jesus naturally attracted the devil's attention and we learn more about Satan and hell from our Saviour than we do from anyone else in the Scriptures, but that does not make him a professional exorcist. If casting out demons occupies a less prominent place in later church history that is only to be expected, since neither the apostles nor their successors were waging a spiritual battle of comparable intensity. Whether the practice of exorcism really diminished significantly as time went on is hard to say, because the evidence cannot be easily quantified and compared. It seems best to conclude that the practice remained available to the church and was used when necessary, but that it was seldom central to its evangelistic or pastoral activities.

Unfortunately, Dr. Twelftree's presentation of the evidence is marred by excessive deference to what he repeatedly calls the 'majority' view of New Testament origins. How does one decide what constitutes 'majority' opinion in the first place? More seriously, Dr. Twelftree is ready to jump from the obvious to the speculative to the dubious without proper caution. This is particularly evident in his chapter on Q, where he begins by admitting that it is by no means certain that there was ever such a document, but then proceeds to treat it as if it were as substantial as any of the Gospels. Equally disconcerting is the way in which he relegates works like James and the Didache to a relatively late period, even as he admits that this is by no means certain! For someone who is trying to plot the development of exorcism over time, this method is very unsatisfactory, because it leads the author to relegate texts which say little or nothing about exorcism to a late date whether or not this can be justified on other grounds. Inevitably, such a practice serves his own thesis, which must make the reader question his methods.

The most surprising (and disappointing) thing about this book is that it has been published by Baker Academic, an imprint that one would normally associate with a more conservative Evangelical approach to the Bible. For example, no

Christian publisher should allow an author to use CE dating (instead of AD), since this is an immediate indication to readers that he is distancing himself from Christianity. There is a place for books of this kind in the secular market, but a publishing house which sees itself as conscientiously Christian should be more demanding about what is and is not acceptable practice.

Having said that, readers who can look beyond the dubiously late dating of the source material and concentrate on the author's theological analysis of it will learn a great deal about exorcism in the early church and gain a good insight into the place that it should occupy in Christian communities today.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

REAL LIFE JESUS: Meaning, Freedom, Purpose

Mike Cain

Nottingham: IVP, 2008 192pp £7.99pb ISBN: 978-1-84474218-9

This accessible and thoughtful introduction to the good news about Christ is written with atheists and agnostics specially in mind, but will of course benefit any reader. Mike Cain chiefly intends to help those who want to meet the real life Jesus. He does it very well, as several well-known evangelists testify in the book's blurb. Why is it so good? Three features stand out. The first is reliable Bible handling. *Real Life Jesus* takes the reader through key chapters in John's gospel, and Cain gets to the heart of the evangelist's purpose: to know Jesus Christ. While he touches on the main themes of the gospel, and lays out some of the wider context, Cain preaches for the same decision that John wrote for: to have eternal life (John 20:20-31). Secondly, this is no desiccated tome of 'correct teaching' but a book which through vivid illustrations and a brilliant turn of phrase brings the Bible teaching to light. Cain shows us how to have great illustrations and keep them 'on message'.

It is not the case that good stories have to be allowed a life of their own so that they wander off the point. Nor do they have to be dull. Rather, like a column of Grenadier Guardsmen on parade, they are brightly coloured, full of punch, and highly disciplined. The third commendable feature is, I think, a little harder to spot because it lies just below the surface. The author as pastor and evangelist has clearly talked extensively with atheists and agnostics. The

coherence of engagement between the gospel and the unbelieving world surfaces whenever the argument brings secular culture into contact with Christianity. That is why Cain's thoughtful approach to connecting with others can only be glimpsed from time to time: but it most certainly is there. For all these reasons, this book should help all who seek to meet the *Real Life Jesus* and all who, knowing Him, want to bring others to share in his Real Life.

ED MOLL

Wembdon, Somerset

ECSTASY AND INTIMACY:

When the Holy Spirit meets the Human Spirit

Edith M. Humphrey

Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2006 295pp £11.99pb ISBN: 978-0802831477

For at least a decade evangelicals have pointed out that 'spirituality' is a word which can mean and justify anything. In response to charges of postmodernist pastiche, some spirituality writers have made a renewed effort to earth their insights in church history. Such an enterprise is this book, and in approaching spirituality from a historical perspective there is much to be gained. The author is herself concerned with discerning the difference between the 'Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age', (p. 1).

The book falls into three parts—Love, Light and Life—corresponding to the Father, Son and Spirit. Each chapter concludes with passages from church history for reflection, questions and further reading. God's Trinitarian love and inner relational nature is refreshingly presented as central to spirituality and Christian faith. The Bible narrative is recounted from the perspective of emphasizing God's Trinitarian love—'The Holy tryst and the Great Story' (p. 13). A working definition of spirituality is given as 'The study and experience of what happens when the Holy Spirit meets the human spirit' (p. 31). The focus on actually experiencing God's love comes through in helpful comments such as 'We are not simply informed about a key Christian doctrine, but we are formed and reformed by the triune God who loves us' (p. 84). Obviously the quote is intended not to set the former against the latter, but to draw attention to the importance of allowing the former to follow through to the latter. The chapter on 'When Spirituality Goes Wrong' contains reminders about many of the dangers we face in the Christian life—perfectionism, ignoring or distorting key doctrines.

The book is in many ways refreshing and encouraging to read. It is intended to be a corrective to both spirituality which is rootless and ahistorical, and that which is dry and rationalistic. The eclectic quotations from past writers are intriguing and stimulating. If a criticism is to be levelled at the book, it may be that it seeks the correctives in the wrong place. In at least three ways, *Ecstasy and Intimacy* encourages readers to seek spiritual reality in what may be generalized as the Eastern Church tradition or the Anglo-Catholic Church tradition. The first way one sees this tendency is in the striking lack of treatment of reformed thinkers who had much to say about the Spirit and experiential Christianity. In a book which quotes so many theologians, it is odd not to hear from Calvin, Edwards or Puritans such as Sibbes and Owen. The second part of the Eastward drift is seen in the one-sided presentation of people such as Augustine, as a mystic. He is presented solely as a mystical writer (pp. 111ff). This is to be very selective in one's reading and to miss out on much he could offer. The third way we see this propensity is the positive presentation of Eastern and Anglo-Catholic theology. So Thomas à Kempis, John of the Cross, Julian of Norwich and Macarius are focused on uncritically. The family and marriage are described as 'Icons of Love' (p. 155) and in one passage the Orthodox mass is described in wholly affirming terms (p. 118).

This criticism does not mean we cannot learn from the book—as Luther said we should be happy to take gold from anybody who proffers it. However if one holds that the Reformation was in point of fact a necessary and good thing, then we may humbly admit that our spirituality may need reforming, while boldly insisting that it is through deeper appreciation of reformed theology that our spirituality will flourish.

PETER SANLON
Cambridge

REINVENTING ENGLISH EVANGELICALISM, 1966-2001:

A theological and sociological study

Rob Warner

Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007 284pp £19.99pb ISBN: 978-1-84227-570-2

This is a significant book, yet it is not easy either to read or to review. The main difficulty in reading is that the last 90+ pages carry out a critique of the various statements/bases of faith put out by different evangelical organisations since

the Evangelical Alliance started the trend in 1845. Extracts from these statements are discussed (e.g. on pp. 153-4), but the full texts are not published in this volume, which makes it difficult to evaluate the author's conclusions without the full context. It would have been helpful if, along with the three appendices provided, there could have been a further one containing the texts in question. One of these appendices is an extensive bibliography, to which the author frequently refers in terms which seem to assume that the reader will be familiar with the writings in question. Further, as the author is a sociologist, being Lecturer in Sociology of Religion and Practical Theology at the University of Wales, Lampeter, some of the sentences contain jargon which makes for difficult reading.

The basic thesis of the book is that ever since the difference of opinion between John Stott and Martin Lloyd-Jones at the Second National Assembly of Evangelicals, there has been an increasing polarisation between what are termed the 'conversionist-activist entrepreneurial axis' and the 'biblicist-crucicentric axis' among evangelicals. The two main parts of the book are a study of how the former expressed themselves in the Evangelical Alliance (mainly during Clive Calver's period as general director), Spring Harvest and Alpha, and the latter in the concern to see correct doctrine expressed in a variety of doctrinal definitions put forward by evangelical bodies.

Many readers of *Churchman* will be dismayed to find that conservative evangelicals are being branded extremists who are the equivalent of the Labour party's Militant Tendency who had to be disowned before the party could gain credibility (p. xviii). This reviewer finds that sociologists like to try to pigeonhole people: many will find themselves like him identifying with features of both of the traditions identified here. What the author does not investigate is why the bases of faith put forward by evangelical organisations became necessary. It would have been helpful to have had a discussion as to why the IVF found it important to state its doctrinal position when disaffiliating from the SCM, or BCMS when it separated from CMS, even though both were in the early years of the last century (in spite of its title the author takes as his starting-point the first such definitions by the Evangelical Alliance in 1845 and 1846). Is a rightward tendency a symptom of a desire to be exclusivist, or is it rather a concern to ensure that certain features of Christian belief are safeguarded? Are evangelical bodies not entitled to take steps to ensure that

those working under their auspices maintain the doctrines which the organisations in question regard as basic to their mission?

Obviously the two main areas of contention among evangelicals in such definitions will be those concerning the Bible and the Work of Christ. Much of the second part is given over to assessing the way in which successive statements by different organisations, or the same organisation at different times, have veered to the left or the right on these issues. For Anglican evangelicals NEAC at Nottingham 1977 is seen as making the most moderate formulation on the atonement, confirming ‘the extent to which [it] marked a sharp break with Keele 1967’ (NEAC 1). ‘Whereas the first NEAC was closely aligned with the IVF/UCCF school of conservatism, the second shifted dramatically to the left’ (p. 228). The 2003 publication of Steve Chalke’s *The Lost Message of Jesus* is recorded in the bibliography, but this book was published too soon to assess the responses to Chalke’s repudiation of penal substitution.

There is much that deserves careful thought in this volume, which is a further contribution in Paternoster’s “Studies in Evangelical History and Thought”. Evangelicals of every shade will do well to ponder the criticism that is levelled at those who promise more than they can deliver (see pp. 85-6 on ‘vision inflation’), and there is a wise consideration (pp. 82-4) of the impact of some of the songs made popular at Spring Harvest. Chapter 3 on trends highlights the decline of Christian magazines and the Quiet Time and this provides challenging reading for all involved in Christian discipleship.

The book is illustrated by forty-two tables giving statistics and making comparisons, and the second of the appendices offers a ‘succinct, post-conservative reformulation of the pre-fundamentalist evangelical tradition within the broader context of a generous and inclusive Trinitarian orthodoxy’. An interesting and encouraging point made in the concluding chapter is that ‘the numerical collapse of alternative traditions, Protestant and Catholic, means that any post-secular Christian future will inevitably and perhaps increasingly be shaped by the evangelicals’ (p. 242). It is a pity that the proof-reader overlooked the use of the word lassitude for, presumably, latitude on pages 187 and 203, and should melded (p. 141) read moulded?

DAVID WHEATON
Chesham

**DECONSTRUCTING RADICAL ORTHODOXY: Postmodern
Theology, Rhetoric and Truth**

Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (eds.)

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005 xviii+191pp £50hb ISBN: 978-0-7546-5398-1

**INTERPRETING THE POSTMODERN: Responses to ‘Radical
Orthodoxy’**

Rosemary Radford Reuther and Marion Grau (eds.)

London; NY: T&T Clark, 2006 xv+240pp £22.99pb ISBN: 978-0567028907

**RADICAL ORTHODOXY AND THE REFORMED TRADITION:
Creation, Covenant, and Participation**

James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthius (eds.)

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005 301pp £14.99pb

ISBN: 978-0801027567

Originating with John Milbank, finding its focus in the work of Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, and now encompassing theologians from around the world, Radical Orthodoxy is one of the phenomena of contemporary theology. These three volumes negotiate that phenomenon from very different perspectives.

Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy is a collection of essays examining Radical Orthodoxy’s historical reconstructions, and finding them wanting. The contributors, specialists in their fields, evaluate Radical Orthodoxy views on figures such as Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Scotus, Kierkegaard, Hegel, and Derrida. The essays cover classical, patristic, medieval, modern and post-modern thinkers, and move beyond simple historical interest, because the Radical Orthodoxy project rests in large part on a particular reading of history, in which the rise of the modern is a profoundly negative event, and can be traced to the malign influence in the middle ages of Scotus, and the rise of nominalism.

The essays are at times sharply critical, though some are more negative in their evaluations than others. According to these authors, Radical Orthodoxy authors frequently distort the sources with which they engage, in order to advance a particular agenda. Thus, Aquinas is interpreted in a distinctively

Radical Orthodoxy way that, according to John Marenbon, at least in part, ‘offers a blatant misreading, and ignores the normal canons of scholarly enquiry’ (p. 49). Similarly, Richard Cross claims that the Radical Orthodoxy reading of Scotus is in places ‘eccentric...unscholarly, [and] profoundly at fault’ (p. 78, n. 1). Cross offers an analysis of Scotus’s claims, in contrast to Aquinas, that language used of God is properly univocal, rather than analogical. He demonstrates that Scotus offers a new theory of language (which Cross prefers to Aquinas’s), but not (pace Radical Orthodoxy) an ontological claim. This is of particular significance, given that a lynchpin in the Radical Orthodoxy narrative of the history of thought is the claim that Scotus marks an ontological wrong turn in claiming that being is predicated univocally of God and of creatures, in contrast to Aquinas’s analogy of being.

Radical Orthodoxy would not be the first scholarly movement to indulge in dubious interpretations of historical sources to further its theological agenda—one thinks, for example, of neo-Barthian appraisals of Reformed scholasticism—but it serves as a reminder of the importance of integrity in engaging with historical texts. Nevertheless, even if the evaluations in this volume are correct, this does not, of itself, negate the positive theological agenda of Radical Orthodoxy. For example, the Thomist (and Radically Orthodox) claim that language concerning God is analogical, rather than equivocal or univocal, is, to the mind of this reviewer, correct, in contrast to Scotus and Cross, but this must be established on biblical, theological, and philosophical grounds, not simply historical ones.

Overall, this first volume offers stimulating and careful historical essays. Somewhat less interesting is the volume of responses edited by Reuther and Grau, written largely from feminist and liberation theology perspectives. The responses here are not uniform; but at times the critiques are little more than complaints that Radical Orthodoxy is too orthodox, and not ‘radical’ enough. Authors complain that the notion of orthodoxy also involves adjudicating other positions to be heretical, and that the Radical Orthodoxy authors are too committed to premodern Christian approaches, particularly those of Augustine and Aquinas. Radical Orthodoxy’s rejection of the Enlightenment and its consequences for theology is also criticised. Again, the authors score points against Radical Orthodoxy’s misreading of various thinkers, but the constructive alternatives outlined will hold little attraction to conservative evangelicals.

Far more interesting is *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, which offers a theological engagement with Radical Orthodoxy from a conservative Reformed perspective. An additional bonus is essays by Milbank and Ward, engaging from an Radical Orthodoxy perspective with the Reformed tradition. The Reformed authors are not united in their estimation of the value of Radical Orthodoxy, with some enthusiastic, and others more cautious. Again, Radical Orthodoxy accounts of history, notably their readings of Plato and Scotus come in for some criticism and correction. In line with their Reformed theological commitments, the authors offer corrections to the Radical Orthodoxy emphasis on transubstantiation in the light of Calvin's theology of the Lord's Supper. Radical Orthodoxy's Neoplatonist account of creation's analogical participation in God is assessed from the perspective of Reformed covenant theology. Radical Orthodoxy's social and political agenda is engaged from a variety of Reformed perspectives, not least those of the twentieth century Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition that follows Abraham Kuyper. Although the contributors are all conservative Reformed Christians (Milbank and Ward excepted), they are not always uniform in the details of their own theological commitments. Thus they illustrate something of the diversity of the conservative Reformed tradition. Despite, or perhaps because of, these differences, this collection makes for a stimulating, if not an entirely coherent, read.

Doubtless, Radical Orthodoxy will continue to spark interest, debate, and controversy for a number of years to come. For Churchman readers the most interesting of these volumes, not least for its positive theological proposals, will be this final collection of essays, written from within the Reformed tradition.

MATTHEW MASON

Tunbridge Wells

TRAVEL THROUGH OXFORD

Andrew Atherstone

Leominster: Day One, 2008 128pp £10pb ISBN: 978-1846251153

Day One's latest 'Travel Through' guide is an excellent little book, as both a 'virtual' as well as an actual guide to the historic city of Oxford. Reading it left me feeling somewhat overwhelmed and amazed with all I had discovered, a testimony to both the significance of events in this city over many centuries and the ability of the author (Andrew Atherstone, who also wrote *Travel with the*

Martyrs of Mary Tudor for the same series) to bring characters and situations to life within a very limited space. Indeed, there is an incredible amount packed into the 128 slim pages, with Atherstone's engaging history of the city and its rich Christian heritage being complemented by more than a hundred colour photos (mostly taken by Atherstone himself, highlighting his enthusiasm for his subject).

If you are intending to use the guide on the streets of Oxford rather than simply from the comfort of your armchair (and it is designed to work both ways), the guide has uncluttered maps and concise travel information to aid navigation around the city centre. In addition to a fold out map locating nearly sixty sights, there are a number of maps throughout the guide summing up particular historic periods ('Medieval Oxford', 'Reformation Oxford', 'Inklings Oxford', to list just a few). If you are unable to decide on a particular historical period to discover, the guide finishes by listing a 'Top Ten' of attractions.

Some historical sights are inevitably relevant at multiple points throughout the history covered by the guide, and information on these is not repeated for each map. A simple index, easily missed, makes finding the information you require for your chosen itinerary straightforward, although some familiarity with the guide before setting out will certainly help.

For those who happen to live in Oxford or plan to visit, this is an essential purchase to bring the city's great Christian history to life and even has evangelistic potential if you take others on a tour. For those who may never visit the city of saints, scholar and dreaming spires, reading this guide will make you feel that you have.

JOHN MARTIN
Oxford