

## REVIEWS

**Collected Writings of William Still, Vol. 1: Theological Studies**  
Nigel M. de S. Cameron and Sinclair B. Ferguson (eds.)  
Rutherford House Books, Edinburgh, 1990; 340pp., £19; ISBN 0  
946068 38 0

The influence of William Still's ministry in Aberdeen is well known. Many who are indebted to him will appreciate the gathering of these sermons and conference addresses within one cover and be prepared to pay the price. Others who have heard of his ministry from afar and noticed its effect on other preachers will welcome the opportunity to assess his message. They will also grasp something of the personality of the man. It is not just that the unique language of the preached word has been preserved. There is also an obvious joy and excitement as the truth is communicated. Critics, however, might feel that the editors could have been a little more severe when it came to publication.

The material in this, the first of three promised volumes, covers the period from 1967 to 1981. It includes series of sermons on the cross, the Holy Spirit and the devil followed by addresses given at U.C.C.F. conferences on the Second Coming and the Lord from heaven. Lastly there is a long chapter on law and grace which lacks the vitality of the rest of the book.

The material highlights some of the recurring emphases which characterised William Still's work during the period covered by the book.

His attitude to Scripture is all important. He obviously fully accepts it as God's Word but it is his insistence on the unity of the Bible which receives greater emphasis. His habit of 'sweeping through Scripture' points to a belief in the unity and coherence of revealed truth which is commendable, though sometimes, before the 'sweep' is finished, the reader will feel that the point has long since been made.

Mr. Still believes that the Trinity is foundational to all doctrine. His habit of beginning a discussion with an exposition of the place of three Persons of the Godhead is an object lesson for all who would root Christian truth in the nature of God.

One emphasis stands out above all others. The author would unashamedly claim it to be his distinctive. He returns, time after time, to his belief that there are three dimensions to the cross. Christ died to deal with our sins, that is, what we have done wrong. He also died to deal with our sin, that is, our natures which had gone wrong. Lastly, Christ died to deal with the source and author of sin, Satan himself. If there is much, on these writings, on the devil, there is also a great deal more on the cross, its power and its victory. The three-fold dimension of the cross is carefully and helpfully explained on several occasions and provides the chief value of the volume.

Of course there are passages which cause the reader to pause and question and in so doing he will join the noble succession of some who first heard these talks. There are areas where the author is less than convincing. In dealing, for example, with the gifts of the Spirit, William Still, though interesting, does not scratch where people are itching today and so what he says is largely

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irrelevant to the modern debate. Readers who know the author's detachment from Crusade evangelism will notice his bland assumption that everyone agrees with him that evangelism has to be seen in a teaching context.

Running through the book there is a concern for the edification of Christians. They will mature through familiarity with the Scriptures and as they live by the power of the cross.

*James Taylor, Stirling Baptist Church*

### Statement of Faith

Scottish Theology Study Group of Rutherford Fellowship; Rutherford House, Edinburgh, 1991; 14pp., £1.

This Statement of Faith is the product of discussions between Evangelical theologians, mainly (but not exclusively) of a Presbyterian cast, who believe that an up-to-date statement (emphatically not a confession) of belief, related to current trends and issues, is needed to clarify where the sponsoring groups and others like them stand on the increasingly pluralistic spectrum of the modern church. It professes to have a special relationship to the Scottish situation, but as that turns out to be little different from conditions elsewhere, this document will have a far wider usefulness.

The authors of the statement would appear to have attained their major aims, and many sections of it are admirable résumés of the Evangelical position, put in modern language and with an eye to current debates. This is especially true of the more 'practical' sections towards the end of the statement, where the life of the believer and of the church are stated clearly and concisely.

It is in the earlier sections of the statement that the touch is less sure. Often this is mainly a question of language, as for example, when it is said that Jesus Christ 'existed with his Father from the very beginning'. We know what is meant, of course, but the theologian might well prefer to say something like 'who dwells with his Father in eternity'. The way it is expressed here does not exclude the possibility that God dwells in time, an idea which is also implicit in the use of the verb 'existed' (as opposed to 'was') – a point which ought to be recognised in an age of existentialist thought!

Occasionally things may be said inadvertently which, though true in themselves, leave questions in the mind. This is especially obvious in the description of God the Father as 'creator and upholder of the universe and sovereign over all; redeemer and lord of his chosen people'. This is true, but the statement can (and must) be applied equally to the Son and the Holy Spirit as well. We cannot restrict this kind of language to the person of the Father alone, without opening the door to a form of Arianism.

The section on the incarnation contains two curious phrases which suggest that the authors hold a curious kind of kenoticism. Jesus is said to have 'veiled his divine identity' and to have emptied himself by 'subjecting himself to the lowliness of human life', though the New Testament suggests something rather different from this. On the first point, John 1:14 makes it plain that 'we beheld his glory' *in the flesh*, which makes the concept of veiling a rather different one. In Scripture it is not Jesus who veiled himself, but God who

veiled the eyes of the Jews, so that they would not be able to see him. We must remember that Jesus blamed his disciples for not recognising the Father in him – something which would have been very unfair, to say the least, if he had deliberately veiled his divine identity. Likewise, Jesus emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, *i.e.* by adopting a new relationship to his Father, *not* by coming into the world. The incarnation was consequent on the self-emptying, and is not to be identified with it – an important point!

Working backwards slightly, the section on creation and the fall are unsatisfactory as they stand. Again, it is possible to see what is intended, but the language is imprecise to the point of being misleading. Human beings are said to bear the 'stamp' of God 'in their nature as persons'. It goes against the Christian theological tradition to confuse the words 'nature' and 'person' in this way; normally they are regarded as theoretical opposites (*e.g.* 'one divine person in two natures'), not as the same thing! Furthermore, the Bible says that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, not that we bear his 'stamp'. That word is used, if it is used at all, only of Christ (Hebrews 1:3). The fusion of Christ with Adam on the basis of the image is common nowadays, but it is not borne out by Scripture, at least not in the sense intended here. To say that Christ is 'the perfect pattern of human life' is both vague and potentially dangerous – are we all expected to be celibate carpenters in Nazareth?

This statement is especially curious in view of what comes next. To say that 'man and woman were created for each other, in the mutual fulfilment of heterosexual marriage and the family' is not only to ignore the teaching of Paul, but to condemn Jesus himself to the level of an unfulfilled human being! Of course we do not want to advocate a homosexual lifestyle, but it is not necessary to go to this extreme in order to achieve that aim! Furthermore, the Bible nowhere says that after the fall, God's image in man was 'spoiled', or that 'the fall has also blighted the natural order'. One ought to be careful even in saying that Adam and Eve's sin has been 'transmitted to all generations', as if it were a sexual disease!

For a document which gives such a high place to Scripture, it is disappointing not to find it used more often. Occasionally it is quoted without acknowledgement, and there are many places where it would be helpful to have a reference (not necessarily a 'proof text') in support of what might easily be seen to be controversial. Sometimes scriptural language seems to have been avoided quite deliberately, as when the resurrection is said to have taken place 'two days after the crucifixion'. The Creeds have always said that Jesus was raised on the third day, and it seem peculiar not to retain such a familiar phrase, with an explanation of its meaning if necessary.

Another peculiarity is that the statement is not numbered by section and paragraph, making it difficult to quote easily. This is an editorial matter, but such numbering is now customary in documents of this kind, and can even find support in the layout of the Westminster Confession (not to mention the Bible!).

The achievement of such a statement in the current climate of theological minimalism is not to be underrated, though the authors ought to go back to their text and iron it out a little further. That could produce a most helpful

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and succinct statement of Evangelical belief, which would be of service not only to the Scottish churches but to Reformed Protestants around the world.

*Gerald Bray, Oak Hill College, London*

### **The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically**

Richard Bauckham

SPCK, London, 1989; 166pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 281 04402 3

This stimulating contribution to the ongoing discussion of the relation of the Bible to political life originates in a series of articles published in *Third Way* 1984-85, expanded and arranged to form the present volume. Prospective readers should not be put off by the rather unimaginative title; beginning from a consideration of methodological issues the book aims to develop an understanding of the political relevance of the Bible in a disciplined way and in so doing establishes some new approaches to these questions. It does not set out to be a summary of the political teaching of the Bible or a programme for Christian political action but is intended as 'a course in political hermeneutics'.

It is divided into ten chapters with the first forming both an introduction to the problems of method inherent in a political approach to the Bible and an outline of various hermeneutical principles which are then applied in the following nine. These chapters contain a thought-provoking juxtaposition of biblical material and particular political contexts and situations. For example, those entitled 'Wisdom for the Powerful', 'The Genesis Flood and the Nuclear Holocaust' and 'Taxing Questions: Jesus and Taxation' yield fresh insights into the political significance of the biblical material which provide a basis for further fruitful reflection on the part of the reader.

However, while Bauckham adequately addresses the difficulties of biblical interpretation in the context of Christian political thought, the other fundamental question remains less fully addressed. The ineluctable problem of a 'political hermeneutics' is that a specific hermeneutic implies a particular political stance to the extent that the one cannot be defined without the other. As the conflict in the nineteenth century between and Anti-Revolutionary party and the Christian Historical Union within the Calvinist political movement in the Netherlands classically illustrates, in Christian political movements differing biblical exegetics are closely related to distinctive political positions. Well written, with an admirable clarity in its handling of the basic hermeneutical issues, *The Bible in Politics* would need to be read with this in mind.

*Ian Maxwell, St Ninian's Church of Scotland, Paisley*

### **The Christian Story. Authority: Scripture in the Church for the World. A Pastoral Systematics, Vol. II**

Gabriel Fackre

William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1987; 366pp., £12.25; ISBN 0 8028 0276 1

The author describes himself as an 'evangelical ecumenical' seeking for 'a truly catholic theological method'. Evangelicals who may be put off by this claim to 'catholicity' need not fear in this a strident ecumenicalism. Rather the book is a model of how a theologian should meet and debate with other theologians and has much to teach any reader with settled convictions. The declared programme is not an empty boast: Fackre grapples heroically and fruitfully with the seemingly intractable diversity of theological hermeneutical method in modern scholarship.

The book opens with a most unusual autobiographical introduction of over 50 pages! British readers could find such personal reference inappropriate, but in fact familiarity with the author's wide theological, social and political activities primes us for the well-earthed and comprehensive study that follows.

Having competently summarised, compared and assessed most of the major options in modern hermeneutics Fackre offers his own basis for conversation between them, based on 'narrative systematics...the biography of God', settling for the following formula in the search for theological authority: 'Scripture as *source*, gospel as *substance*, Christ as *centre*, the church as *resource*, tradition as *guide*, the world as *setting*, gracious signs therein as *aid*, liberation/reconciliation, narrative, and ecumenicity as elements of *perspective*' (p. 157). The heart of the book is a development of the schema as a catholic basis for theological method and it skilfully challenges all the protagonists to take it on board.

Along the way there are many fruitful and challenging observations, for feminists as well as chauvinists, for liberationists as well as traditionalists, for sceptics as well as conservatives. One for evangelicals is the reminder that even those with the highest view of Scripture reserve a place, more than they care to admit, for the interpreting church (whether in the Fathers, the Reformers or the creeds). They too need a working 'combinationist' hermeneutic which they can properly justify. Throughout, we find judicious and uncompromising comment dispensed with fairness and sensitivity towards the dialogue partners.

Such a rich and ambitious book could not be completely watertight. One or two selective comments will have to suffice. The author, by his stress on the humanness of the Bible, seems to be left with a 'mixed' theory of it as authoritative source. It is doubtful if Christ as centre and the gospel as source can be extracted to serve as the proper normative authority. This weakness, however, is not central enough to spoil the book.

Again, the insistence on the Christian community, and not just the individual, as interpreter comes as an overdue corrective but raises a problem of circularity. What first *identifies* that community if not indeed an interpretation? Which then comes first, community or interpretation?

Lastly, in perhaps the only quirkish part of the book, Fackre revives the notion of a hearing of the gospel after death but rests too precariously upon the unclear 1 Peter 3:18,19 and the 'descent into hell' of the Apostles' Creed which Calvin explained so differently.

These controversial intrusions do not mar the book. Although sometimes wordy, it is a fine and instructive introduction to a formidable subject.

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Everyone doing serious theology would benefit by having first read such a book.

*R. Kearsley, Glasgow. Bible College*

### **The Christian Life – A Doctrinal Introduction**

Sinclair B. Ferguson

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1990; 218pp., £3.50; ISBN 0 85151 5169

As one would expect from the pen of Sinclair Ferguson, here we have a profound but non-technical, highly practical discussion of doctrine. It is readable with good and illuminating exposition of biblical passages. The Christian life is considered under such sections as 'the plan of grace', 'born again', 'faith in Christ', 'justification', 'union with Christ', 'election' and others.

After my initial glance through the book I had two worries about it. First, in the introduction Sinclair Ferguson tells us the book is about 'The Application of Redemption'. Does he thereby imply that the Christian life is just a series of blessings applied to us because atonement has taken place? In fact I need not have worried. Much of his exposition, getting to the heart of the New Testament as it does, shows him interpreting the Christian life as flowing out of the heart of the incarnation and atonement.

Secondly, I noted that 'Union with Christ' in the table of contents seemed to be just one of the aspects of the Christian life. But the actual chapter shows it to be what it is, namely, the foundation of our justification, sanctification, election etc. Being true to the New Testament, Sinclair Ferguson interprets it not only as our 'faith union' with the Lord but, more fundamentally, a 'flesh union' with Christ. By his incarnation the Son of God took hold of our nature, so that 'our union with Christ is therefore based on Christ's union with us'. Here we have sound New Testament theology which is the basis for the rest of the book. I say 'New Testament' because my one *little* criticism of the book is the lack of Old Testament material and surely it is a great Reformed principle to believe in the unity of the Bible. At the back of the book there are nearly eight pages of New Testament references, but only one and a half pages of Old Testament. Following on from this point I feel the chapter on 'election' could have been even better. Although the author refers to the election of Israel in Old Testament times he uses this only to show that God is an electing God. If only he could tell us how both our Lord and Paul use the election of Israel as the means by which we understand all God's electing purposes (in mercy and hardening), then I think he would have written something even more profound.

Having said that, I highly recommend this book. Drawing on his love for Calvin and John Owen, Sinclair Ferguson has ably fulfilled his aim to bring together doctrine, experience and practice in a non-technical but profound way. Many people will be greatly helped by this book. There is much in the ample biblical material to help the preacher in his task to make a bridge from God's Word to the daily experience of the Christian.

*Howard Taylor, St David's Church of Scotland, Glasgow*

**What Christians Believe – A Biblical and Historical Summary**

Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Webber

Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1989; 480pp., \$19.95; ISBN 0 310 36720 4

Given the contents of this book, a more appropriate title would have been 'Christian Doctrine – A Biblical and Historical Summary'. It divides doctrine into the five sections, The Bible, God, Salvation, Church, and End Times. Each section has two main parts, 'Biblical' by Alan Johnson and 'Historical' by Robert Webber. They deliberately try to be fair to the pluralism of evangelical Christianity, respecting genuine differences on such subjects as election, sacraments and free will. The book is non-polemical, clear, very readable and not tied to any system other than the broad evangelical consensus.

Each 'Biblical Section' is really a history of the development of belief from the Patriarchs through Moses, the Prophets, Jesus and the New Testament church. I am not happy about this approach, but nevertheless Johnson gives much very helpful exposition which will be useful for any reader.

Each historical section deals with the development of these same doctrines in the early church fathers through Augustine, the medieval church, Luther, Calvin, the Baptists, Arminius, Schleiermacher, Barth, and Liberation and Process Theology. It is well written, but as is inevitable in an attempt to cover so much ground there is some loss of accuracy. For example the difference between Calvin and Zwingli on the Lord's Supper is blurred and the discussion of difference between Luther and Calvin on Christology is so brief as to be inadequate. Nevertheless Webber does give a very useful and readable summary for the beginner.

I have a deeper problem with this book. I do not think the authors are true to their own principles. In the Introduction, they tell us that they do not like theological systems such as Calvinism or Dispensationalism. Truth, they tell us, is not a particular system. Jesus is *the* Truth, and the whole Bible is the truthful written revelation of this person, Jesus Christ. So far so good. So why, I wonder, do they treat the Bible as if it were a history of doctrines (Moses to the N.T. church), rather than what it is, namely the true story of God's dealing with humanity (focused in Jesus Christ), out of which we learn doctrine. The significance of the history of Israel in obedience and disobedience is hardly touched upon, yet this is the subject of the Bible and is interwoven with our understanding of the incarnation and atonement. This is seen particularly in their section on the doctrine of God. I believe it would have been better to see Jesus in his life, death and resurrection as the self-revelation of God to humanity which enables us to understand the Old Testament more fully, rather than, as they do, seeing the Bible as a history of the development of understanding the attributes of God.

Nevertheless I do not want to be negative about the book. It does provide a very good and reliable overview for the theology student. Its biblical exposition is both profound and helpful and the whole book breathes a true love for God and his Word. It has a very good index.

*Howard Taylor, St David's Church of Scotland, Glasgow*

**Truth and Social Reform**

Vishal Mangalwadi

Spire (Hodder & Stoughton), London, 1989; 136pp., £3.95; ISBN 0 340 42630 6

This book is a striking and provocative attempt to apply Christian teaching to the political and social realities of the modern world. Vishal Mangalwadi is an evangelical Christian who has given himself to work among the poor in his native India in various types of programme. Working from the basis of an incident in the life and ministry of Jesus, he insists that truth and salvation have implications beyond the purely personal fact of justification by faith. He insists that the concern of Christ for the poor and oppressed was not some adjunct to his main teaching but rather fundamental to any proper interpretation of that teaching.

'Christ's compassion was prophetic. Instead of being a gut-level response to pictures of starving children, it grew out of a prophetic insight into the social and theological causes of suffering. In His response, therefore, Jesus went to the root of human misery and dealt with it.' (p. 3)

In successive chapters he demonstrates that the subjects of compassion, evangelism, sin and salvation, the Holy Spirit, the church and Christian hope all have a bearing on social reform.

The many illustrations he presents of practical situations he has faced in India give strength and body to his argument. His analysis of them in terms of the Christian gospel bears serious consideration, although one is sometimes inclined to the view that his 'politicisation' of Christianity goes beyond what can strictly be understood from the texts and principles he quotes to make his case. He does not, however, like some of the liberation theologians, accept the Marxist analysis uncritically.

'Karl Marx rightly understood that true compassion calls for dealing with the social context which makes men miserable. Marx, however, defeated his own purpose by trying to build a case for compassion on atheistic premises. If the individual man is merely the product of random chance in an impersonal universe, then there is no meaning in caring for him, especially when he is too weak and powerless to be of any use to us. But if man is a created being, then he is special to his Creator. If he is created as the image-bearer of the Creator Himself, he is even more special.' (p. 8)

Perhaps the most powerful section in the book is his study on the Ten Commandments, in which he shows their application to specific situations he faces in his country today.

One notable and perceptive area of the book is its concern to see the spiritual forces and demonic powers at work in the universe. In one revealing incident the author speaks of his failure in a particular situation because he had ceased properly to believe in such things: '...my secular education had really made me quite naturalistic.' (p. 28) This is a useful corrective to post-Enlightenment rationalism from which we in the West suffer most acutely.

The book, however, is not simply an academic discussion of poverty, development and injustice, it ends on a most practical note. Mangalwadi and others have formed a charitable trust to make capital grants and loans



available to poor Indian farmers. This is to enable them to avoid the poverty trap of high interest loans, and the oppressive injustice of those who would seek to deprive them of their land, or force them to sell their produce below the level of subsistence. Readers are asked to make loans or gifts towards this work.

It is rare for a book to provide stimulation, challenge and opportunity all at once. It is to be hoped that this challenge will be taken up by Christians in rich countries such as ours.

*A. T. B. McGowan, Trinity Possil and Henry Drummond Church, Glasgow*

### **The Christian Healing Ministry**

Morris Maddocks

SPCK, London, 1990; 270pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 281 04462 7

This book is the second edition of a volume published in 1981. The author has left the text of the first edition intact and added a new preface and a new fourth section to the book as well as revising the bibliography. When he wrote the first edition, he was the bishop of Selby, but he is now the advisor for the ministry of health and healing to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. The publishers claim that the book has now established itself as 'the classic work on the subject'.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part reviews the biblical basis of the healing ministry. Part two consists of a brief history of healing in the church of today and a description of its various features and organisation. The third part discusses the significance of health and healing in modern society, whilst the new part four describes developments since the first edition was published. An appendix gives an outline of a healing service from the booklet *Ministry to the Sick*, one of the Authorized Alternative Services of the Church of England.

The past two or three decades have seen an increasing interest in the healing ministry of the Christian church, and it is good to have an account of it in this readable book. Its first part gives a valuable review of the healing practice of our Lord and the apostolic church. Although this increase in interest has been seen in most of the mainline churches and the charismatic movement, the author confines his description of healing in the modern church mainly to the Church of England, giving only three or four pages to other denominations. In his new section he devotes a similar amount of space to the activities of John Wimber which he describes sympathetically but not uncritically.

Christian doctors and nurses will be disappointed that his presentation appears to find little place in the Christian healing ministry for their work. There is no mention of the establishment of church hospitals or the contribution to healing by countless medical missionaries who over the past century have practised the healing ministry using the methods and insights of western medicine. He describes as 'tragic' the polarisation between medicine and the church, but does not recognise that numbers of medical practitioners are church members. The polarisation is thus not between medicine and the

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church, but between those who practise medicine on the basis of secular humanism and those who practise it on a Christian basis. Doctors and nurses reading this book will be given the impression that the Christian healing ministry consists only of prayer, laying on of hands, anointing and reception of the sacrament, and has no place for the daily professional practice of Christian doctors and nurses at home and abroad.

However, the book is well worth reading as a well-written account of the healing ministry of the church today, its basis in the example of Jesus and the practice of the apostolic church, and how it might be practised in the church today.

*John Wilkinson, Edinburgh.*

### **The Promise of Health and Wealth**

Dan R. McConnell

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990; 195pp., £5.99; ISBN 0 340 52340 9

The subtitle describes this book as 'A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement'. It is an expanded version of a thesis for a master's degree in theology at the Oral Roberts University and is published with a commendatory foreword by David Tomlinson, a trustee of the C. S. Lewis Centre in London. In spite of its academic origin the book is very readable and even fascinating!

The term Modern Faith Movement is not very well known in Britain. It is used to describe a movement which has emerged in recent years from the independent charismatic renewal movement in the U.S.A., insisting that material prosperity is to be found in the atonement. It preaches a gospel of success and maintains that in the atonement through the death of Jesus Christ we are assured of forgiveness of sin, healing of the body in this life and spiritual and material prosperity. This is the gospel which is often associated with the U.S.A.'s so-called televangelists.

McConnell traces the origin of this teaching to a zealous and self-educated American preacher named Essex Thomas Kenyon (1867-1948), born and brought up near New York. He was converted as a teenager and ordained a deacon in the Methodist Church, but later became an independent Baptist. Over the following decades he came under various influences including unitarianism and the metaphysical cults which gave rise to New Thought metaphysics and Christian Science, with the result that he developed a unique syncretistic system which is difficult to classify, but has some affinity with classical gnosticism and also with the current New Age Movement.

Shortly before Kenyon died, the leadership of the movement he had founded was taken over by Kenneth Hagin (b. 1917), whom McConnell accuses of the wholesale plagiarism of Kenyon's writings and provides examples to prove his case. Hagin was originally ordained a pastor in the Assemblies of God in 1937. He has turned the Faith Movement into a virtually new pentecostalist denomination based on the teaching of the three-

fold effect of the atonement and on certain direct revelations he claimed to have had from Jesus Christ.

After this historical analysis, the author examines the theological doctrines of the Faith Movement in the light of the teaching of the Bible. The doctrines he discusses are those of revelation, redemption, faith, healing and prosperity. He has no difficulty in demonstrating that they make up 'A Different Gospel' (the title of the book when it was published in the U.S.A. in 1987). It is a gospel which people must find very attractive with its assurance of forgiveness, physical healing on demand and automatic spiritual and material prosperity, but the author shows that it is not the gospel which Paul preached or which his converts accepted. They certainly obtained forgiveness of sins, but not the promise of perfect health or abundant wealth.

The book is warmly recommended to anyone seeking an informed and biblical assessment, albeit polemical, of 'the gospel of prosperity'. An index to the book would have made it even more useful.

*John Wilkinson, Edinburgh.*

### **The Pastor's Opportunities**

Edited by Cyril Rodd

T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1990; 256pp, £9.95; ISBN 0 567 29167 7

These twenty-four articles by seventeen authors were chosen from a series in the *Expository Times* by its Editor. The treatment is selective rather than systematic. There is no index. The chapters, for the most part practically rather than theologically orientated, are arranged under the heads 'Literature', 'Presentation', 'Caring', 'Outreach', and 'Friendship'.

The 'Literature' section starts with the use of poetry in sermons and public worship and suggests individual modern poets and anthologies. The next two chapters deal with the novel and biography and the pastoral value of wide reading. I found all three articles stimulating and they have sent me to the library to follow up their recommendations.

The first chapter in 'Presentation' deals with the importance and use of visual aids. Practical tips are given on how to ensure that they are aids, not hindrances. There is an address list of resources. 'Things that are Seen' speaks to other visual issues in worship, fellowship and mission. The final chapter deals with the parish magazine. These are all 'how to' articles, none of which set the heather on fire for me.

The 'Caring' section is perceptive throughout. The author of 'Mothers and Very Young Children' manages to include a short time of worship in which older toddlers participate. A fine chapter on the mentally handicapped child is followed by another on the hearing-impaired which every pastor should read, with much of insight and important tips on talking one to one as well as in public address. There is a sympathetic article on the confused elderly.

Any church could improve its performance through the ideas on welcoming the newcomer in the 'Outreach' section. 'Hospitality' helpfully discusses the balance between privacy and availability in the use of a pastor's

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home. 'The Church Family Week' is a useful guide to having a student team sharing the life and witness of a church.

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin is thought-provoking on evangelism in the city. 'I know of only one real hermeneutic of the gospel: a congregation which believes it.' On the trend towards abandoning evangelism for dialogue alone in a multiracial society: 'It is, surely, a very peculiar form of racism which would affirm that the good news entrusted to us is strictly for white Anglo-Saxons!'

Those who have tried to produce professionally structured arrangements for sharing the work in a housing scheme church will be vastly encouraged by the radical rethink in 'Sharing Ministry On a Large Council Estate'.

Other articles in the 'Outreach' section deal with community involvement, 'Towards a Theology of Paid Employment', twinning between inner city and richer churches, social and political issues, and special occasions. There is some overlapping of material.

The 'Friendship' section discusses relating with people of other faiths, and with Jews. A final thoughtful chapter, 'Through Another's Eyes,' calls for real friendship and involvement rather than a judgemental spirit, without sacrificing Christian distinctiveness.

Chapters vary in quality but I cannot imagine anyone concerned about Christian mission and service regretting buying this volume. There is much to stimulate thought and action.

*C. Peter White, Glasgow Bible College*

### **Scottish Identity: A Christian Vision**

William Storrar

Handsel Press, Edinburgh, 1990; 255pp., £11.50/£6.95; ISBN 0 905312 44 9 (hb), 1 871828 01 5 (pb).

The brief Introduction to *Scottish Identity* calls for a reexamination of what it is to be human and to be Christian before 'deciding what it is to be Scottish'. Following Hugh MacDairmid's call, it says it is time to see Scotland in true scale to the Infinite. But it argues that the Scottish national identity requires that any change be grounded in first principles. Mrs Thatcher's 'Sermon on the Mound', albeit a professed Christian viewpoint, is seen as deeply flawed, being unduly individualistic, and is labelled a 'Monstrous Vision'.

The main part of the book is divided into three parts. Part 1 on 'Historical Identity' outlines the Catholic, the Reformed and the secular visions of the nation as respectively free, godly and moral. Part 2 discusses 'Theological Identity' (Christ and nation today) through the 'Ecology of Nations' (a biblical view of nationhood), nationalism (the modern Judas) and 'Incarnationalism' (a practical theology of nationhood). Part 3 then deals with 'Contemporary Identity', examining the human identity crisis (a common humanity), the Christian identity crisis (a confessing church) and the national identity crisis (a constitutional nationhood). Between Parts 1 and 2 a 'Prism' speaks of 'the Other Scottish Christ' – which seems to be the role of the minister, examined through three novels (by Grassie Gibbon, Fionn

MacColla and Robin Jenkins) and three ministries (MacLeod Campbell, Edward Irving and Patrick Brewster).

Written from a Reformed perspective the book represents an effort to relate the problems of nationalism and Scottish government to biblical principles. But I found it very difficult going. Others more familiar with the language used (an 'acoustic church' still defeats me) may profit from it. Those not inducted into the mysteries will find this book less than rewarding and are unlikely to persist with it. Mr Storrar has read a lot, but he does not synthesise his material adequately for the audience he would appear to want to speak to. There is no citation or reference given for the many thoughts and paraphrases of other writers, and, though some of the names quoted do appear in the bibliography, many do not.

*F. Lyall, University of Aberdeen*

### **The Sufficiency of Scripture**

Noel Weeks

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1988; 309pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 85151 523 1

This book is made up of two distinct parts – 'Basic Issues' (pp. 3–90) and 'Points of Contention' (pp. 93–298). They are quite different in character. The first, delightfully free of footnotes, is very readable. The second, packed with detailed footnotes, will prove demanding reading even for those well-versed in biblical and theological study. Some readers, identifying strongly with the general emphasis given in 'Basic Issues', may find themselves in greater disagreement with Weeks when he comes to more controversial areas of biblical interpretation. In introducing Part Two as 'quite heterogeneous material', some of which is 'tentative', Weeks acknowledges that he could have avoided controversy 'by refusing to enter into areas where there is no certainty. Nevertheless such refusal would be a disservice to the reader who wonders about the relevance of the thesis of this book to some of the other issues thrown up in the debate'. While agreeing with Weeks that the value of a general approach to Scripture requires to be proved through the careful exegesis of particular passages of Scripture, I wonder whether there is not room here for two separate books.

I can imagine some potential readers browsing through the complex discussion of Part Two, with its many footnotes, and laying the book aside as 'too heavy'. This would be a pity, for they would miss out on a most instructive discussion of the 'Basic Issues' involved in affirming faith in the sufficiency of Scripture. On the other hand, a smaller book – less than one hundred pages – attractive to a wider range of readers, might have served to whet the appetite for the larger book. In making these comments, I am mindful of the author's remarks regarding turning the tentativeness of the investigations in Part Two against the basic thesis of Part One: 'It is a familiar device in refuting a disliked argument, to pick upon a peripheral part of the thesis and to direct criticism against it.' My point is rather to

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emphasize the value of his discussion of the 'Basic Issues', which deserves the widest readership.

Weeks asks the question, 'Should we place all that the Bible says in the religious column and see it as irrelevant to the secular?' Observing that the purpose of Scripture is 'man's redemption' and stressing that the whole of human life needs to be redeemed, he insists persuasively that the range of Scripture's authority must not be limited, which would carry with it a limitation of 'man's... need for redemption' and 'the scope of the gospel's claim'. As a small part of a larger book, bearing such diverse chapter titles as 'The Worship and Government of the Church', "Rabbinic" Exegesis in the New Testament', 'Pseudepigraphy', and 'Bible Translation', I fear that this important discussion of biblical authority will not be as widely read as it should be.

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

### **Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition**

Thomas C. Oden

Asbury Press / Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1988; 233pp. \$16.95;

ISBN 0 310 75240 X

### **What Methodists Believe**

Rupert E. Davies

Epworth Press, London, 1988; 89pp., £3.50; ISBN 0 7162 0450 9

Although the United Methodist Church in the USA has developed a reputation for liberalism in theology, there is a strong evangelical tradition within it, and this has been finding literary expression recently through a subdivision of the Zondervan Publishing House which is publishing books under an imprint which commemorates Francis Asbury, the great pioneer missionary of American Methodism. Professor Oden's book is addressed to current disputes in North America regarding the status of the doctrinal standards of Methodism. It is essentially the work of a historian, demonstrating that the 25 Articles together with (and not without) John Wesley's Notes on the New Testament and his Standard Sermons constitute these standards and should continue to be accepted as such. The content of the Notes and the Sermons is briefly illustrated and summarised, and the relation of the Articles to the Anglican 39 Articles is carefully tabulated. The doctrinal standards of the different Methodist bodies in North America are also tabulated in detail. This is a work which is unlikely to be read by many people outside North American Methodism, but it is of importance as indicating the essential evangelical foundations of the Methodist Church and reaffirming them over against pluralism in doctrine. It is gratifying to see that Methodist evangelicals are standing firm for the truth of the gospel.

Rupert Davies wrote his short and simple account of *What Methodists Believe* in 1976, and it is now reissued in an updated version. He rightly devotes the bulk of his book to showing what Methodists believe in common

with most other Christians before discussing briefly their characteristic emphases and stressing their desire for fuller organic unity in the whole church. It is of course one person's interpretation of Methodism and it lays less emphasis on the importance of evangelism, evangelical conversion and scriptural holiness than many Methodists would wish to lay. The shape of the book in fact plays down the distinctive elements of historical Methodism, and this may well be connected with the author's great longing for the end of denominationalism. This is not the best of introductions to 'What Methodists believe'; the author's own Pelican book on *Methodism* (1963) does a better job at greater length in conveying the ethos.

*I. Howard Marshall, Faculty of Divinity, Aberdeen*

### **Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement**

Ruth A. Tucker

Academie Books (Zondervan), Grand Rapids, 1989; 462pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 310 40440 1

Big books on 'cults' have not been very common recently. Partly this is because the world of alternative religions is such a shifting, bewildering mosaic; factual details date rapidly; even doctrinal analyses become obsolete within months.

And so one opens Ruth Tucker's 462 pages of double columns with some foreboding. It is certainly a monumental work – massive bibliographies, extensive notes, appendices and index – but will it last?

The research has been painstaking. She has visited the key centres of all the movements she has studied, made friends of members, and read impressively widely about most aspects of her subject.

She picks her way surefootedly through tricky country. She is admirably clear on the Spaulding controversy in Mormonism, dispassionate in her assessment of Victor Paul Wierwille, unexpectedly warm towards Charles Russell, Sun Myung Moon, Joseph Smith. It is good to hear the author of a book like this insisting that 'cult members' are people and must be treated with dignity; and that the Christian cause is not served by vilifying heretical leaders. (It is true that after saying this she goes on to regurgitate most of the standard details of scandals usually quoted in evangelical books – from Russell's Miracle Wheat to Garner Ted Armstrong's adulteries – but she discounts some of them, excuses others, and fails even to mention the petty ones, such as Russell's false claim to know Greek.)

She is good at detail, weak at theory. The chapter attempting bravely to disentangle the meanings of the words 'cult', 'sect', 'denomination' and 'world religion' is a naive, clumsy failure. She has a habit of laying down facts alongside one another, without comment, leaving the reader feeling that all this detail should lead somewhere – but it never does. The chapter on fringe religions in history, for example, cries out for a few interpretative comments; but in vain. And she simply reports the conspiracy theories of Constance Cumbey without demolishing them – strange indeed.

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The sketches of the history of major groups, and especially the reporting of their present state of health, is superb; but the analysis of their doctrine, which concludes each section, is partial and often confusing.

Ruth Tucker has produced a book for the lay reader, or the busy minister, which will give an excellent introduction to the 'feel' of any of twelve major groups surveyed. (Not counting the New Age, which – despite the book's title – receives only 37 pages, 5 of them given over to a discussion of astrology, which is not really the same thing.) But her coverage is partial and peculiar (strange to see Transcendental Meditation relegated to 'Lesser-Known Cultic Movements', or Spiritualism as a one-page excursus in the New Age chapter) and provides little guidance about how best to engage in discussion with group members.

A worthwhile book, then, but limited; very American (do we really need two pages on astrology and the Reagans? and is it true that in the mid-nineteenth century anything non-Anglican was seen as a 'cult' in England?); and cursed with a short 'sell-by' date. It will be useful this year, and next. After that, who knows?

*John Allan, Exeter*

### **How to Play Theological Ping Pong**

Basil Mitchell (edited by William J. Abraham and Robert W. Prevest)

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990; 218pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 340 51383 7

Basil Mitchell was Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford from 1968 until his retirement in 1984. Two of his former students have brought together a number of his essays on the topic of faith and reason, which clearly preoccupied him over many years, and which he treated at book-length in *Faith and Justification*.

Although sandwiched between the other papers, the title paper, 'How to Play Theological Ping-Pong' sets the tone for the remainder. It is a masterly put-down of some of the contorted dialectics of the theologians, particularly continental theologians. The treatment is all the more devastating because it is delivered in a deliberately witty way, conveyed in a manner that is calculated to make the teutonic theological brain wince.

A quotation from that paper will serve to reveal how typical it is of the remainder, in mood if not in style: 'This very fascination [of the game of theological ping-pong] this very challenge to virtuosity, means that people are tempted to play it when they would be wiser not to, when a quiet walk along one or other of the everyday paths of reasonableness would be more rewarding, though less exciting' (p. 183). This is, in effect, what the reader gains from the remainder of the essays, a series of quiet walks displaying everyday reasonableness in matters of faith and reason.

The essays struck me as being archetypically English; there is little or no display of learning, the language is for the most part that of everyday life, the tone is reasonable, modest, thoughtful and cautious; conservative in the best



sense, being distrustful of innovation, including intellectual innovation, and of the extremes of both rationalism and irrationalism. Not for Mitchell the flights of continental irrationalism, nor yet the careful and yet bold modalisings of an Alvin Plantinga. For all that I reckon that this material hides a considerable amount of intellectual spadework and even of agonising.

The starting-points of the papers are varied: apologetics, ethics, the law and politics, commitment and neutrality, and the idea of man as a reasonable being. Yet the doctrine remains the same throughout. It can be expressed as a series of theses which, according to Mitchell, ought not to be surrendered whatever else is captured: that there is objective truth; that, while the claims of the Christian religion are not susceptible of apodictic truth, reason nevertheless has a crucial part to play in sifting those claims and rebutting simplistic objections; that in the rational assessment of matters of faith, history and tradition cannot be discounted; that academics are no freer from fashion and prejudice than the rest of humanity; and finally, that most issues in religion are more complex and more ramified than at first they seem.

Taken individually, most of the papers appear fairly slight, but they carry cumulative force; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Two topics, in particular, seem to be illuminated by Mitchell; the relation of law and politics to the Christian religion, and the tension between personal commitment and intellectual detachment. Both the novice and the hardened practitioner could not fail to benefit from Mitchell's sage advice on these topics, as indeed on much else in this rewarding set of essays.

*Paul Helm, University of Liverpool.*

### **Coping with Illness**

Roger Hurding

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1988; 150pp., £1.95; ISBN 0 340 41591 6

This book is the first title in a new 'Christian Doctor' series, which will examine medically-related topics from a Christian pastoral perspective. It is a symptom of the current interest in medical topics, especially medical ethical issues. However, this first book of the series is not concerned with any particular ethical issue, but with the practical problem of how to cope when illness strikes.

Its author writes out of personal experience of illness and practical experience of counselling others. Being a doctor himself, though no longer able to practise clinical medicine, he can view the situation from both the personal and professional aspects. He aims to help not only the sick person, but also those friends and relatives who care for him in his sickness.

The book is a tapestry in which stories from the author's own experience are interwoven with discussion of the questions raised by the incidents he records. This discussion covers the meaning of illness, the Christian response to illness, and how God heals those who are ill by many means and in many ways. Dr Hurding also takes up particular subjects which arise out of his accounts of illness and treats them helpfully and biblically – such subjects as

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anger, anxiety, depression, handicap, weakness, suffering and the response to dying. He treats the latter subject in terms of Kubler-Ross's well-known five stages of the reaction to dying and loss. He suggests that a helpful way to express human reaction to dying may be found in the use of the Psalms of lament in the Psalter. In these Psalms, which compose over a third of the book of Psalms, he finds the four elements of complaint, petition, assurance and praise which are all relevant to a Christian reaction to dying. The last chapter takes up the subjects of suffering and healing, and examines them in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ. The cross meant weakness and shame to him, as sickness may mean to us in this present life. His resurrection meant power and glory, as our rising again will mean for us when we are made completely whole in the life that is to come. That will be our complete healing in Christ.

This book is very well-written and is very easy to read. It is a pleasure to be able to recommend it wholeheartedly as an important contribution to the current literature on care and counselling in the face of illness. It has set a high standard for the new series of books it initiates.

*John Wilkinson, Edinburgh.*

### **Mysterium Paschale**

Hans Urs von Balthasar. Translated by Aidan Nichols.

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1990; 297pp., £19.95; ISBN 0 567 09534 7.

### **The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar**

Edited by John Riches

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1986; 239pp., £14.95; ISBN 0 567 09351 4.

The process of translating the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar into English must say something about the agenda of English-speaking theology. Whereas, for example, the major works of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner were translated relatively quickly, the translation of Balthasar's major works has only recently begun (T. & T. Clark began publishing the seven volumes of *The Glory of the Lord* in 1982). Yet he was certainly a theologian of equal stature with Barth and Rahner. In some ways he could be seen as the Roman Catholic equivalent of Barth: constantly reappropriating the riches of the theological tradition which he knew exceptionally well, conservative in a highly creative way, concerned not with the apologetic movement from humanity to God but with the revelation of God's love for the world in Christ, opposed therefore to anthropocentric tendencies in modern Roman Catholic theology, above all thoroughly Trinitarian and Christocentric, his theology concentrated almost as rigorously as Barth's on the salvific and self-revelatory act of God in the cross and resurrection of Christ.

For this reason, Aidan Nichols' excellent translation of *Mysterium Paschale* (the original German first appeared in 1969) would be a good place for would-be English readers of Balthasar to start. It takes the form of a concentrated theological meditation on the events of the *triduum mortis* (the three days: Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter). By means of this form,

Balthasar turns away from the tendency of traditional theology to deal with soteriological themes in the abstract and focuses instead on the concrete person of Jesus the incarnate Son in the concrete salvific events of his passion, descent to hell and resurrection. In other words, Balthasar takes up the liturgical and devotional tradition of contemplating Christ as Saviour in the Gospel narratives of his passion and resurrection, and attempts a rigorous theological deepening of this tradition. The book is therefore notable for taking the Gospel narratives more seriously than theology is apt to do (though perhaps not yet quite seriously enough) as well as for consistently exploring the Trinitarian dimension of the paschal history. The scheme of the three days also allows Balthasar scope for his original interpretation (which owes much to the visionary Adrienne von Speyr, his close friend, collaborator and inspiration) of the descent into hell as 'the being dead of the Son of God': the necessary final point of the Crucified's solidarity with sinners in the 'second death' of abandonment by God.

Some Protestant readers may be surprised to find that it is this most traditional of the great modern Roman Catholic theologians who can write very appreciatively of Luther's theology of the cross and make frequent reference to Barth as he expounds the crucified Christ's substitutionary solidarity with sinners under the judgment of God. Differing sharply from the debilitated interpretation of the cross in such Roman Catholic theologians as Rahner, Küng and Schillebeeckx, he insists that the incarnate Son of God entered the furthest depths of sinful humanity's alienation from God so that sinners need not do so, and that only the Trinitarian form of the divine love enables this to be fully understood. He reminds us, if we had forgotten, that the Protestant tradition does not have a monopoly on the theological resources for understanding the radical paradox of the cross, and while his treatment of these themes runs in many respects parallel to those of Jüngel and Moltmann, his rootedness in the patristic and scholastic traditions makes it at some points more satisfactory than theirs. Those who are uneasy with the way Moltmann relates the economic and the immanent Trinities may well prefer the way Balthasar retains a more traditional doctrine of God while insisting that God in himself truly corresponds to his radical self-giving and self-abnegation in incarnation and cross. Balthasar's distinctive treatment of the *kenosis* theme should be regarded as one of the more significant recent contributions to Trinitarian theology.

Many of the essays on Balthasar in the useful volume edited by John Riches are by members of the team of translators of *The Glory of the Lord* and so tend to focus, though not exclusively, on that work (itself the first part of Balthasar's great trilogy, the translation of the second and third parts of which – *Theodramatik* and *Theologik* – has not yet begun). I mention just those essays which are most valuable for a general understanding of Balthasar's theology. Rowan Williams compares Balthasar and Rahner, expounding very helpfully the important philosophical difference between them and then rightly focussing on the key Christological difference. John Riches shows how Balthasar uses the analogy of aesthetic judgment to understand the act of faith in divine revelation. Brian McNeil defends Balthasar's hermeneutic (often dismissed as simply pre-critical). He calls it 'iconographic' (aiming to mediate the truth of Christ embodied in Scripture)

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by contrast to the 'photographic' method of historical-critical exegesis, which Balthasar by no means ignores. Andrew Louth's account of the early work *Heart of the World* stresses, among other things, Balthasar's large theological debt to Adrienne von Speyr. It is a pity that the volume contains no very sustained explanation of Balthasar's idea of a theological aesthetics, which is essentially what *The Glory of the Lord* is and which is easily misunderstood by those who have not read him.

It does, however, end with two reflections on his own work by Balthasar himself (first published in 1965 and 1975), which are illuminating on the way he perceived his own writing career as a whole and in particular the great theological trilogy with which he concluded it. The 1965 reflection includes one of his attacks on the theological trend which he saw as epitomized in Rahner's idea of 'anonymous Christianity', the movement to baptize the secular – 'this wholesale method of supernaturalizing what is worldly' – and expresses his alternative: 'the true, undiminished programme for the church today must read: the greatest possible radiance in the world by virtue of the closest possible following of Christ.'

*Richard Bauckham, University of Manchester*

### Book Note

Yet another addition to the medium-weight literature on baptism is David S.M. Hamilton's 1987 Croall Lectures, *Through the Waters: Baptism and the Christian Life* (T.&T.Clark, Edinburgh, 1989; 136pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 567 29178 2). Recognizing how far removed are popular notions surrounding infant baptism from a biblical understanding, the book substitutes good images – washing, deliverance, birth – for bad. It has some sensitive pages on making baptism a basis for teaching and on coping with aspirations for a new (i.e. genuine, if second) baptism, but unhappily leans towards an open baptism policy which will infallibly multiply these aspirations. We will not grapple realistically with the sad shadow of NT baptism that many of our baby-baptisms represent until we abandon the confusing language of unconditionality and let Scripture radically question tradition.