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A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

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REVIEWS

The Mediation of Christ (Revised Edition)

Thomas F. Torrance

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1992; 128pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 567 29205 3

Professor T.F. Torrance is clearly one of the major Scottish theologians of the twentieth century, his numerous publications over the past four decades being well known. Curiously, what is not so well known despite all of this is the shape of his theology as a whole. In this little book, happily, the main lines of Torrance's theology appear in a form likely to be accessible to most theologically informed readers. As such, it is clearly the best introduction to Torrance's thought currently available.

The Mediation of Christ is, however, more than an introductory study; it represents, rather, Torrance's mature theological position, and gleans material (unfortunately often without acknowledgement) from all the main sources of his theological outlook: the Eastern Fathers, John Calvin, Karl Barth, and of course, modern physics. Both the value and the difficulty of the book, indeed, is often the sheer diversity of the material drawn upon. What is new in it is the explicit attempt Torrance makes to argue the case for Christian-Jewish theological dialogue.

The first edition of *The Mediation of Christ* covered themes ranging from theological method to the Jewish milieu of revelation and its contemporary importance, the doctrines of Christ and the atonement, and the basis of the human response to God in Christ. In this revised edition, Torrance locates his understanding of each of these themes within the doctrine of the Trinity in an entirely new chapter, arguing that the ground of reconciliation with God must be understood not only nominally in Trinitarian terms, but as a direct function of the doctrine of the Trinity. In this, Torrance echoes the thought of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, for whom the doctrine of the Trinity is, in effect, the mystery of salvation. Since so much of Torrance's work over the years has been concerned with Trinitarian questions, the addition of this chapter was entirely appropriate; indeed, the earlier edition was incomplete without it.

The constructive rather than analytical character of the book means that an index is unnecessary, and none is provided. The more extensive use of headings and sub-headings in this new edition is, however, helpful both for an initial reading and for subsequent study.

There are a number of typographical errors and very long sentences in the book, suggesting that it could have done with careful editing. If the book has a particular weakness, however, it lies in Professor Torrance's tendency to assume that his often sweeping judgements need no detailed

justification. For example, his running critique of theological dualism as stated here is unsatisfactory, for the simplest reason that all Christian theology must be dualist in *some* sense, given that in it we are constantly concerned with God and his creation. In effect, Torrance recognizes this, but greater sensitivity to the problem, in both its historical and theological dimension, would have improved his exposition.

The Mediation of Christ is nevertheless a useful book for students, ministers and others who wish to come to terms with Torrance's theology. For those who know his work, the book will further clarify his understanding of the atonement, and outline his recent thoughts on the question of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Gary Badcock, Aberdeen

A Survey of the Old Testament

Andrew E. Hill and John E. Walton

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1991; 461pp., N.P., ISBN 0 310 51600 5

A beautifully presented evangelical work discussing the content of the Old Testament for the undergraduate is something which has been a need in the publishing world for many years. This book is very helpfully arranged, with an introductory section followed by four sections, each of which studies a major part of the Old Testament: the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, the Poetic Books and the Prophets.

The opening section introduces interpretative approaches to the text and discusses the origins of the Old Testament. Introductory material of this sort is key to an understanding of the Old Testament. Students will be indebted to the authors for the background which they gain by a cursory reading.

Each of these sections begins with an introduction which discusses questions of genre, date and authorship of the works. Each book of the Protestant Old Testament is given a chapter in which the discussion is arranged under the major headings, The Writing of the Book (authorship, date and related questions), The Background (historical, cultural and formal matters), Outline, Purpose and Message (theological thrust), Structure and Organisation (literary analysis), and Major Themes. Every chapter concludes with Questions for Further Study and Discussion and with an annotated bibliography. Two concluding chapters provide a theological bridge with the New Testament and survey an Old Testament theology of God's attributes. Many charts, diagrams and photographs highlight the attractive format in which the book is presented. It is clearly intended as a textbook for the undergraduate beginning studies in Old Testament.

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

In general, I found the book most helpful when it was surveying the Old Testament and reviewing aspects of the message of each of the books. As such, it achieves its purpose and can be used without reservation. I suppose one cannot demand everything of a survey text, so perhaps it is not surprising that the book tends to omit some of the many ideas and approaches which have emerged in the last decade. Where more recent approaches are mentioned, sometimes it is not clear how carefully they have been assessed.

Despite reservations such as these, this work is possibly the best available evangelical survey of the Old Testament, especially for those for whom the content and some of the major teachings of each book are the central concern.

Richard S. Hess, Glasgow Bible College

Credo: Meditations on the Apostles' Creed

Hans Urs von Balthasar

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1990; 105pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 567 29185 5

The publishers are probably correct to claim that the contents of this book 'amount in their extraordinary compactness and depth to a little "summa" of (von Balthasar's) theology'. The lucid introductory summary by M. Kehl makes the book a very useful starter indeed for anyone wanting to explore the attractive writings of an unusual star in Roman Catholic theology.

A commentary on the Apostles' Creed is almost a theological cliché, but von Balthasar makes it much more than theology. How many theology books contain words like the following prayer: 'Be rainfall upon our parchedness, be a river through our landscape. And should your water bring forth ... fruit in us, then let us not regard these as our own produce, for they ... are Yours to use for You and for us, or to reserve for another who has nothing'?

Theology, devotion and service mingle throughout the work, bound together first and foremost by a forceful Trinitarianism. In many ways this is a traditional Western Augustinian Trinitarianism turning unashamedly to the psychological analogy, particularly the attribute of love. The Father is the source of love, the Son a self-declaration of love that receives and gives itself back infinitely and the Spirit a love that binds together infinitely, effecting their overflow into creation. But the love so expounded is attached to the axiom that God, 'in his essence, is love and surrender'. It is that word *surrender*, curiously Islamic in its ring, that provides a fresh twist to the traditional doctrine. The meaning of death in the creation emerges through the cross. Death is a radical image of 'original life'. And what is that, but the 'living process of

REVIEWS

reciprocal self-surrender between Father, Son and Spirit'. The Spirit is called 'the most delicate, vulnerable, and precious one in God' who produces in believers an initiation into the mystery of this love.

For all its attractiveness the book must generate the suspicion that it really aims to resolve a tension faced by the author's own tradition, namely that between Mary as gentle and approachable, and the divine Trinity as formidable power. Others have sought with great integrity to tackle this tension theologically, as for example Karl Rahner by re-defining God as Mystery. Von Balthasar's distinction is his boldness. He has carried traditional Marian qualities right into the Godhead. In a simple and brilliant stroke he has thus found one way within his own tradition of securing a future for both Mariology and Trinitarianism.

Evangelicals would be wrong to think that such a theology has nothing to offer to them. Perhaps we have for too long exalted the power of God above gentleness and mercy, bewitched by the claimed superiority of muscle, masterfulness and ego over mutual submissiveness. Whatever the presuppositions of the author, he has set out a theology which puts the Trinity at the centre and contains some valuable and challenging little epigrams of which the following is a typical example: 'God perhaps finds our feeling of superiority harder to endure than the shortcomings of the weak.'

Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College

Worship Now Book 2

Compiled by Duncan B. Forrester, David M. Hamilton, Alan Main and James A. Whyte

Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh; £7.95, 235pp.; ISBN 0 7152 0633 8

This is a collection of prayers for leading worship. As well as many which can be used for Sunday services, there are also prayers for weddings, funerals and informal fellowship groups. It is a supplement and a follow-on volume to *Worship Now* (1972). The editors represent the four Faculties of Divinity in Scotland. There are 27 contributors, including five former Moderators of the Church of Scotland General Assembly. The aim is to bring together a wide spectrum of current devotional and liturgical prayer, and make this available to those involved in leading worship. There is a recognition that worship in the present day is more varied in setting, style and content, and this collection is a response to, and in some ways an encouragement to these changes. It is also a seed-bed of ideas from which others will conceive their own prayers. The present reviewer has found many phrases and extracts useful in this way. The large clear print and ringbinding makes it easy to use,

but better page headings would be more helpful. There is no index of contributors which is a miss.

The wide spectrum referred to shows the contributions in sharp contrasts. The more liturgical items of (*e.g.*) Longmuir, seem dry in comparison to the warm-hearted spirituality of Doig, which is less formal. The wordiness of (*e.g.*) Kesting would lose our concentration, but the conciseness of McLellan does not. But the real gems of this collection are from W.J.G. McDonald. Here there is material which helps people to be honest about themselves and helps the human spirit to approach God. His prayers are personal, orderly, honest and uncomplicated – all important factors in leading public worship.

In a book which sets out to be widely representative of the current Church of Scotland, it is surprising that there is no place for ministries which are supported by large weekly prayer meetings in their congregations. These ministries have raised the status of prayer in the church to its rightful New Testament place at the very heart of any service of God. A flavour of these ministries would help us to see where much of the inspiration comes from.

Alastair H. Gray, Haddington West Church of Scotland.

The New Chosen People. A Corporate View of Election

William W. Klein

Academie Books (Zondervan), Grand Rapids, 1990; 319pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 310 51251 4

A young and able Reformed theologian in England recently told me that once he had grasped the Calvinistic doctrine of election, everything else fell neatly into place. Most folk of Reformed conviction would want to apply that test also to the teaching of Scripture at large. There are those, however, who, although brought up in the Reformed tradition, do not find themselves in sympathy with the traditional Reformed doctrine of election and predestination, and feel that intellectually and spiritually they must pursue other possibilities. Dr Klein is one such, as he bears witness in the introduction to *The New Chosen People*:

‘I first learned theology from a Reformed position. But I also read the Wesleyans, Arminians, Lutherans, and Barth to name some others. Instead of finding a consensus based on the Biblical evidence, I discovered conflicting claims and mutually exclusive positions.’

Puzzled and unsettled by this experience, Klein decided to pursue his own study of the theology of election, and, taking Sabbatical leaves in 1985 and 1989, spent much of the time in the library of Tyndale House, Cambridge, the fruit of which is this present work.

Klein is quite convinced that both the Calvinist and Arminian positions deviate from biblical perspective, insisting at the same time that the theme of election in the Bible is too important for the serious minded student of Scripture to disregard.

'We cannot understand Israel's position and mission apart from her election', he asserts, and enlarges: 'The New Testament writers devote much attention to God's choosing. Jesus *chose* disciples; Paul was *chosen* prior to his birth; and Christians are God's *chosen ones*.'

But Klein goes on to plead that election to *salvation* should never be seen to refer to *individuals*, but only more widely to the corporate body – the church. *Individuals* are free to accept or to reject salvation; that is, to join or not to join the body through faith in Christ. Klein only admits to an *individual* election to specific acts of service. In this sense, even Judas could be said to be of the elect insofar as he had a particular function, although clearly not for salvation, inasmuch as he voluntarily rejected Christ.

Klein takes us through the Old Testament, the Qumran documents, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Rabbinic sources and then the entire corpus of the New Testament, highlighting what he considers to be the principal texts relevant to the doctrines of election and predestination.

He summarises his findings at the end of each chapter, drawing together all his conclusions into a final section. His style is clear and coherent, and his chapters are neatly broken up, making the work very easy to read and to understand. The text is amply endowed with biblical and other appropriate references. Apt quotations from other scholars appear from time to time with copious footnotes. His bibliography is formidable, nearly 16 pages in length (although theologians and expositors from the Reformed tradition seem to be relatively sparse. His preference is for contemporary liberals!)

While Professor Klein provides a useful exposition of those aspects of election which he will admit, the serious weakness of this work, many will protest, is its unwillingness to accept that election refers to – indeed is *conditional* for – individual salvation, which, of course, is a principal point of his thesis. It is certainly not a corrective of Calvin's exposition of the doctrine which is to be found in his tract 'On the Eternal Predestination of God' (and which, incidentally, entirely scotches the increasingly prevailing teaching that Calvin was not a Calvinist!)

Calvin's biblical theology runs much deeper and is, for the reviewer at least, far more satisfying. Calvin, it should be observed, did not try to *resolve* the doctrine of absolute predestination on the one hand (so near to the heart of his biblical theology), and his insistence on human responsibility on the other, so characteristic of his voluminous commentaries.

He was content to let them lie in a mystery hitherto unrevealed by the Almighty. They can both be found in Scripture, and we fail in our task if we do not go as far as Scripture goes, but we become lost in a labyrinth if we speculate beyond it. An interesting exercise would be to re-examine the texts highlighted by Dr Klein to support his contention that election is only corporate in the light of Calvin's corresponding exegesis and exposition of them, for the preciseness and accuracy of biblical exegesis was ever Calvin's chief concern. His theology was merely the carefully measured produce to be derived undoubtedly from it.

Meanwhile, like our young theologian aforementioned, those of Reformed convictions are not readily going to accept Dr Klein's case, only to find themselves bereft of an aspect of a biblical doctrine to which not only can they assent intellectually but one to which their own deepest experience heartily warms; that which Article 17 of the 39 Articles describes as being 'full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ ... as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation ... as ... their love towards God.'

A belief in individual personal election to salvation is not then only an intellectual matter, it is one of the deepest pastoral significance.

Peter Cook, Stockport, Cheshire

God's Sovereign Purpose: An Exposition of Romans 9

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1991; 328pp., £12.95;
ISBN 0 85151 579 7

This is vintage Lloyd-Jones. To read through this latest addition to the series of his published sermons on Romans is to understand again why so many remain indebted under God to 'the Doctor': for here, as clearly as anywhere in his published work, the full array of his great qualities as an expository preacher are seen to their best. Anyone concerned to 'get understanding' will not be disappointed.

The twenty-five chapters, prepared by his wife for publication, provide, primarily, a masterful and comprehensive exposition of a chapter as difficult as it is important.

His starting point, of course, is an unashamed and reiterated commitment to the absolute authority of Scripture (e.g. '...our view is that our whole faith is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and that we would know nothing at all were it not for their teaching. It is always wrong to sit in judgement upon the scriptural teaching.' p.172). That basic conviction determines his whole approach, and indeed the whole attitude with which the chapter is addressed.

REVIEWS

His exposition is marked by a transparent *honesty* (e.g. 'I am not interested in whether you like it or not. I am trying to expound Paul's argument.' p.130). The theological issues are never ducked, and the perplexing questions never shirked. When he does not know the answer he is not afraid to say so (e.g. "Why are only some saved...?" Let us be clear about this. I do not know! I will go further, I am not meant to know! I will go further still, I should not even desire to know!' p.244).

His exegesis, equally, is characterised throughout by a scholarly *precision* that leaves the reader both informed and persuaded: where necessary, and not least at the points of major controversy, the exact meaning and significance of each word is considered and elucidated; but at the same time Lloyd-Jones is careful to set each verse in the context of the whole argument, whose broad contours are regularly set before the reader.

His application, as one would expect from a man forever a pastor at heart, is always *wise and challenging*, as he constantly earths the principles he expounds in the world and the church of today. God's truth is always contemporary: Lloyd-Jones never lets the reader forget it!

It is not just as a superb exposition of the text of Romans 9, however, that this volume has value: as an object lesson also in Christian instruction it can have few parallels. Time and again Lloyd-Jones draws attention to the teaching methods of Paul, but all that he says about Paul might equally be said about himself – '...we should observe again the great delicacy, the sensitive nature and character of the great Apostle and his tenderness. ...When we are handling a difficult matter like this, we should always do so in a manner which is calculated to win people and persuade them.... We should always try to answer the people who are putting the question.... The Apostle never evades a difficulty, never skirts round it.' (pp.92f, 96, 145). The section, for instance, in which Lloyd-Jones demonstrates that 'there is no such thing as free will in fallen man' (pp.204ff) is quite thrilling in its compelling Christian apologetics.

The book's highest commendation, though, lies in the fact that it enlarges the reader's awareness of the greatness of God, and nourishes genuine worship in the heart. As Lloyd-Jones himself says about the whole chapter (Romans 9), its theme 'is God Himself in the glory of His person and character.... If all this doctrine does not lead us to wonder in amazement and astonishment, and to worship, there is something wrong with our understanding of it' (pp.7ff.). There should be little wrong with the reader's understanding of it after working through Romans 9 with Dr Lloyd-Jones!

Jeremy Middleton, Blackhall, Church of Scotland, Edinburgh

Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement

Edited by N. Lossky *et al.*

WCC Publications, Geneva / CCBI, London / Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1991; 1196pp., £44.95; ISBN 0 85169 225 7

Good reference works are worth their weight in gold, and this new *Dictionary* is a welcome addition to the shelves. It is much more comprehensive than one would expect, and at times comes nearer to being a dictionary of modern Christianity, or even of the modern world. For it contains quite a number of articles on topics on which, it seems, there is little to say ecumenically, such as 'Solidarity', 'Birth Control' and 'Subsidiarity'. But users will find here clear entries on a wide range of subjects, especially lesser known figures within the movement, both international and more local, ecumenical bodies and events, and themes such as 'Revolution', 'Reconciled Diversity', and 'Koinonia' which have featured prominently in recent ecumenical discussion. The range of contributors is very broad (most are responsible for only one entry), bibliographies accompany virtually all entries (but sometimes include nothing in English), the indexes are very helpful and the layout and visual presentation easy on the reader. The photographs add little to the volume.

An article is devoted to 'Criticism of the Ecumenical Movement and of the WCC', and space is found for the ICCA and several evangelical organisations. The North American IVCF appears, but IVF (UCCF) rates a mention only under IFES, and Evangelical Alliance only under 'Evangelicals'. Robert Coote is the author of several of these entries. The editors appear to have followed a policy of selecting contributors sympathetic to their assignments.

Scotland is not generously treated, with notable absentees including Archie Craig, John Baillie, T.F. Torrance, Ian Henderson, the Fellowship of St Andrew (its English counterpart is present) and the Iona Community. Ireland is also poorly covered, with no mention even of the Irish School of Ecumenics in Dublin. Other omissions that caught my eye were pilgrimage, Joseph Ratzinger and the endeavours for reunion during the Reformation.

But these gaps must be set against the remarkable comprehensiveness of the *Dictionary*. It has impressed upon me the far-reaching extensiveness and massive activity of the ecumenical movement. The *Dictionary's* coverage represents, as it were, the movement's bid to embrace the whole of world Christianity – and indeed the whole of the human race. If its scope from time to time seems, imperialistically, to overreach any plausible bounds, the expansiveness of the canvas it paints should remind readers of this *Bulletin* of the inescapably ecumenical

dimensions of most mainstream Christianity in the dying years of its second millennium.

David F. Wright, New College, The University of Edinburgh

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Vol. 2: The Fight of Faith, 1939–1981

Iain H. Murray

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1990; 830pp., £15.95; ISBN 085151 564 9

The long awaited second volume of Iain Murray's biography of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones is to be welcomed. In addition to being an account of a God-honouring and God-honoured many-sided ministry it is also a valuable record of Evangelicalism from the end of the Second World War to the early 1980s. The subject's life is inseparable from the history of the I.V.F. (now U.C.C.F.), I.F.E.S., the Evangelical Library, the resurgence of interest in the Puritans and Reformed Theology and the controversy over separation which shook the evangelical world in England in the 1960s. What Iain Murray has written of the Doctor's not inconsiderable, and sometimes reluctant, part in these events and movements is both instructive and engrossing.

The biography's value as a record, however, is complemented by the relevance of his ministry and emphases to so many areas of contemporary church life where questions are being asked. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was insistent on the primacy of doctrinal preaching and was increasingly critical of the slide toward the priority of experience. He believed deeply that strong Christians are created through the exposition of the Scriptures and the elucidation of the doctrines of grace. He saw this emphasis being replaced by the charismatic movement's fondness for repetitive choruses, mime, dance, drama and other habits which he regarded as entertainment. Though he criticised much that passed for worship in his day he believed that 'atmosphere' was Spirit-given, not artificially cultivated. As a prophet does he still not warn?

Lloyd-Jones believed strongly in separation from those elements in the main denominations which did not hold to evangelical truth. He pulled back from good friends (e.g. Dr J.I. Packer) who, he believed, weakened in their stance and became 'guilty by association'. He rejected the claim that by staying in these denominations greater influence could be exerted; rather he believed that his friends were compromising revealed truth. As a member of a church which declined to have anything to do with the new 'ecumenical instrument' in Scotland (ACTS – Action of Churches Together in Scotland), your reviewer heard bells ringing throughout the account of the controversy in which Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Stott played such leading parts. Where lies our greatest influence over an

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

inclusive body – within or outside? What does the Doctor's stance have to say to much-maligned Evangelicals within a modern denomination?

Though not mentioned specifically in the biography a crucial question is posed by the many years of Dr Lloyd-Jones' ministry in Westminster Chapel. Undoubtedly these were years of anointed preaching but was a church being built? Oblique references are made by Murray to the weakness of the leadership, the Doctor's insistence on 'doing things himself', his failure to train the deacons for a vacancy and so on. Is a yearly Pastoral Letter enough and what knowledge did he have of the homes and background of his congregation? Can his ministry at Westminster Chapel be regarded, in any way, as a model?

One final point of relevance deserves mention. Increasingly Evangelicals are applying themselves to economic, social and political issues. Lloyd-Jones believed that the responsibility of the preacher was to diagnose sin as humanity's greatest problem and offer a life-changing salvation. The pulpit exists, not to offer Christian insights on contemporary problems, but to herald the message of sin, salvation and the nearness of eternity. Was he right?

Many will value this biography, now happily complete. I suspect its main value lies, not in its record of the past, but in its challenges for the present.

James Taylor, Stirling Baptist Church.

Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World: Theology From an Evangelical Point of View

Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells (eds.)

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988; 344pp., \$11.95; ISBN 0 8028 0279 6

As the title hints, the really significant thing about this book is that it represents a serious attempt on the part of evangelical scholarship to interact with, and respond to, modern thought and culture. In an introductory chapter the editors comment that believers are frequently so unconcerned about (one might add, ignorant of) the minds which have shaped modern consciousness that they effectively 'rule themselves out of active participation in the established marketplace of ideas'. The opening contribution from Noll and Wells is a fine piece of work in its own right; they offer a definition of Evangelicalism (seen here as an 'American-British-Confessional-Coalition'), trace the history of the post-war evangelical resurgence, and then proceed to challenge the smugness of a tradition too often content to repeat received orthodoxies which reassure those within the constituency while leaving the secular world totally unmoved. The urgent challenge facing evangelical theology, say the editors, is to understand what faith means 'in a world whose cognitive

horizons are so vastly different from the biblical and whose life poses questions the biblical authors did not see or answer directly'. While the perspective of the contributors is said to be 'antimodernist' (in the sense that they refuse to allow modern thought a normative authority), they insist on the need to understand the secular mind and, to a greater or lesser extent, are willing to utilize the genuine insights of contemporary non-Christian thinkers. When Noll and Wells acknowledge that unbelievers 'may enable Christians to see more clearly the implications of the gospel', one begins to appreciate their earlier claim that this volume provides evidence of 'an unmistakable stirring of something different'.

Contributors like John Stott, Jim Packer, Anthony Thistleton and Donald Bloesch are too well known and respected by readers of this journal to need recommending here (Thistleton's contribution is particularly valuable). What makes this book so significant however, is the evidence it provides of the appearance of a new type of evangelical theology which, while faithful to the foundations of the tradition, is genuinely open, innovative, original and committed to the tasks of apologetics and mission. It is invidious to single out particular contributors but I cannot forbear mention of Stephen Evans' interaction with modern psychology, David N. Livingstone's masterly chapter on the encounter between science and faith, and the essay of the late Klaus Bockmuehl on secularization.

Inevitably, since meaningful dialogue with an unbelieving world involves unavoidable risks, a volume like this contains statements liable to provoke lively debate. Perhaps the most controversial chapter in this book is Clark Pinnock's offering on 'The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions'. Pinnock early lays his cards on the table: 'I dare to hope...for the final salvation of many unevangelized persons who longed for a Savior but never heard of Christ...' It is difficult, in my view, to quibble with the claim that Evangelicals 'have tended to conceal God's generosity in the Bible'. Pinnock deserves our thanks for his candour and honesty in handling a difficult subject, yet this reviewer is left with an uneasy feeling that the doctrine of general revelation offered here could easily become not simply an extension of the evangelical household, but a half-way house toward universalism.

One final point. While this is a superb book which offers encouraging evidence of the maturity and confidence of evangelical theology, one cannot but observe that the intended readership is clearly in-house. In view of the authors' contention that Evangelicals have failed to come to terms with the real world, this orientation is doubtless justified. Nonetheless, this highlights the fact that the really challenging task has scarcely begun; it is one thing to write about the modern world for fellow Evangelicals, but something else to address that world as Evangelicals.

David Smith, Northumbria Bible College

Laid-Back Religion?

J.I. Packer

Inter-Varsity Press; Leicester, 1989; 158pp., £3.95; ISBN 0 85110 799 0

A new book from James Packer (although half the chapters have appeared before) is for most evangelical Christians an event. Nor is it a disappointment. There is nothing 'laid-back' about it but the title!

He writes as a theologian, to help people read and follow the biblical map towards a worthy Christian life. The map needs to exhibit seven basic qualities: it must be accurate, God-centred, doxological, future-oriented, church-centred and freedom-focussed. It is God's plan of basic Christian orientation, found only in the Bible – the whole book, not snippets: its main theme is God, not man. To those who accept the plan, God's purposes are good, but we cannot know all his secrets and must trust him. We were created for his glory, which is both rational and real. It is ours to find what this means.

We do so in the 'Basic Christian Relationship' of personal encounter with the holy God, by atonement, which is a shock (*cf.* Isaiah 6). After this the next chapter on the 'Theology of Pleasure' is a surprise. Pleasure is not only permissible but essential in a world created for God's pleasure, if not sought idolatrously, egocentrically, this-worldly. See Calvin's *Institutes* for the place of pleasure, since 'pietistic asceticism' has 'cracked under the strain'. Live life in two worlds, but love of God is a 'life-transforming motivation' (see Ecclesiastes).

As to 'Guidance', Evangelicals are more 'up-tight' about it than Roman Catholics. It is healthy to want to know God's will, but fear of being misguided is unhealthy 'unthinking unbelief'. He is to be trusted, and obeyed, not irrationally through blank minds or games of chance or plotting stars; but he will not divulge his secrets. Packer offers ten useful check-points on guidance. Other points: the extraordinary is not the ordinary – guidance comes by instruction in wisdom and understanding, not by signs and voices, but by the Holy Spirit authenticating Scripture. Psalm 23 is full of guidance!

Joy is a 'neglected discipline', divinely intended, precious, has models, is commanded and is definable. Being loved incomparably is its source, breeding acceptance of our lot and a sense of worthwhileness. Packer writes eloquently of joy in sorrow, which is necessary to Christian life and ought to be sought.

Sanctification is chiefly progressive in Christian theology, not positional, its purpose transformational. Referring to his *Keep in Step with the Spirit* Packer says sanctification is 'a neglected priority... and fading glory in the evangelical world'. Agreed! Rampant superficial

evangelisticism has taken over. He recommends the Westminster Confession, the Shorter Catechism and John Owen, views rooted in Augustine and in Luther, Calvin, *etc.* Who would dare, but Packer! Good works must be good in content, manner and motive, having reciprocal effect on sanctification.

Three chapters remaining apply principles and practice of holiness to stubborn facts of life, such as 'Poor Health'; 'Disappointment, Despair, Depression', citing William Cowper, and 'Church Reformation'. Reformation must be inward issuing outward in changed lives and society, with many examples from history. Today Reformation would look like standing for biblical authority and seriousness about heaven and hell; would be passionate, holy, deeply concerned for the welfare of Christ's church, willing for change where necessary. Such Reformation is divine visitation, the work of Jesus Christ, calling for repentance. To be achieved it must be perceived as necessary, prayed and prepared for. Amen!

William Still, Gilcomston South Church of Scotland, Aberdeen.

Man, Woman and Priesthood

James Tolhurst (ed.)

Fowler Wright Books, Leominster, 1989; 225pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 85244 162 2

Edited by a Roman Catholic parish priest, this book is a symposium of six contributions from the Anglican, RC, Orthodox and Presbyterian traditions. The inclusion as appendices of several official church documents on women's ordination is a useful feature. The unifying factor is stated to be the writers' opposition to the ordination of women, but the contributions are very uneven in terms of both style and depth. It was surprising to find a conservative Evangelical of the international reputation of J.I. Packer prepared to write the Introduction.

The opening chapter by Graham Leonard, Bishop of London, and those from the RC tradition leave the reader in no doubt that priestly activity in the church today is considered to be a continuation of the priestly ministry of Christ himself. Theologian Joyce Little is convinced that all the pressure for women's ordination to the priesthood stems from the feminist lobby and 'the theological arguments supporting women's ordination wreak havoc with our faith', as they call into question the whole nature of the RC Church!

The chapter by Roman Cholij within the Orthodox tradition, together with the Orthodox paper on the *Place of Women in the Church* (1988), make interesting reading if one is less familiar with the arguments used by the Eastern Church. In stressing that maleness is essential to priesthood, the writer can speak of the priest as the 'liturgical icon of

Christ'. This Christocentric, Christoiconic theology implies that 'if a woman presumed to seek sacramental ordination to the priesthood, she would not be seeking to represent Christ, the incarnate Logos'.

Although Dr Packer, along with other contributors, does concede that there are functions open to women in the church's ministry, it is disturbing to find him endorsing the belief in the essential maleness of ministers in these terms: 'Without in the least denying that informally Christ ministers through women no less than through men...it is regularly better and more edifying that Jesus' official representatives in the Church's life should be male.' This surely comes close to saying that maleness is more important in the Christian ministry than Christlikeness of life and spiritual gifting. How does Dr Packer deal with the reality of the preponderance of female missionaries?

Reviewing the symposium as a whole enables one to see a certain incongruity in the inclusion of the chapter entitled 'Women Elders?' by A.T.B. McGowan, a Church of Scotland parish minister. Taken in its own right, it states very lucidly the 'narrow' conservative evangelical position on women elders and ministers, but at the outset the author has to disown the fundamental presupposition of the book: the priestly nature of ordained ministry. By advocating a pragmatic approach at congregational level which enables him to remain within his denomination, McGowan makes himself an obvious target for criticism.

It is regrettable that neither Dr Packer nor any of the other contributors explores the biblical understanding of ministry in the church, nor even questions the concept of ordination. Those omissions, together with the variable quality of the contributions lead one to question whether this book adds anything constructive to the debate on women's ministry.

Shirley A. Fraser, Tillydrone Church of Scotland, Aberdeen

Book Notes

John Bowden's *Who's Who in Theology* (SCM, London, 1990; 152pp., £5.95; ISBN 0 334 02464 1) is not quite what its title promises. 'Theology' is interpreted loosely enough to justify a 20-page appendix on the popes, and to include Plato, Josephus, Constantine, William Carey and Billy Graham. Within short compass it is surprisingly comprehensive, concentrating especially on modern - and living - figures.

'A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem' is the sub-title of John Wenham's *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1991; 319pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 340 54619 0). The fruit of a lifetime's worrying away at the origins of these Gospels, it dates them before the mid-50s. It is a substantial, carefully argued challenge to a

consensus which is now probably more widely – and variously – questioned than for several decades.

The Banner of Truth Trust has reprinted two volumes of B. B. Warfield's Princeton addresses and sermons: *The Saviour of the World* (1991; 270pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 85151 593 2) and *Faith and Life* (1991; 458pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 85151 585 1). They display a learned and powerful theologian teaching and preaching central facets of Christian belief and practice, without frills or trivialities. If James Denney was right in being interested only in a theology that could be preached, these collections give us the measure of Warfield.

Going Somewhere is the uninformative title of a welcome addition to SPCK's 'New Library of Pastoral Care' by Sheila Hollins and Margaret Grimer (London, 1988; 121pp., £4.95; ISBN 0 281 04336 1). It deals with the pastoral care of people with mental handicaps. This is a helpfully practical survey, which encourages pastors and others to help such people go somewhere. Donald Carson is a widely appreciated author who has now assembled 'Reflections on Suffering and Evil' in *How Long O Lord?* (IVP, Leicester, 1990; 275pp., £7.95; ISBN 0 85110 950 0). They are right up to date, with an appendix on AIDS, but they offer no short-circuit simplicities. In particular, they direct us to some of the oft-forgotten features on the Christian landscape, such as divine providence, the cost of sin, and hell, and engage us in pastoral meditations in this context.

The theme of Anne Borrowdale's *Distorted Images* (SPCK, London, 1991; 152pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 281 04530 5) is not fully exposed by its sub-title, 'Christian Attitudes to Women, Men and Sex'. It is really a probing diagnosis of the evils of patriarchy (one of the principalities and powers of Ephesians 6:12). When read not as a prescription for health (it is thin on Scripture, and indulges in too many unqualified assertions about sexuality) but as a painful analysis of sinful disorder in society it will speak not least to macho Evangelicalism.

David F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh

Gay Christians. A Moral Dilemma

Peter Coleman

SCM Press, London, 1989; 208pp., £8.50; ISBN 0 334 00532 9

This work by the bishop of Crediton in Devon is an informative and balanced guide to the debate of the last three decades in the churches, chiefly the Church of England, about the morality of homosexual behaviour. It is written for the general reader, not the scholar, and hence provides both an introduction to the terminology involved (though I cannot believe that 'gay' is 'etymologically based on the legend of

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Ganymede') and a brief survey of the biblical teaching. This latter has its weaknesses (it fails, for example, to take full measure of the Greek of 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10; see my brief study in the *Evangelical Quarterly* 61, 1989, 291-300), but rightly concludes that in both Old and New Testament homosexual conduct is clearly condemned.

After documenting the debate, Coleman's *via media* Anglicanism ends up preferring most of all a position that holds a close lasting relationship with another human person to be the primary purpose of sexuality – 'and ideally with a person of the opposite gender'. This is less soundly biblical than at first sight appears (quite apart from his reluctance to exclude altogether an option that leaves the gender open), for the Christian tradition knows nothing of human sexuality except in a heterosexual frame. The notion of an indeterminate sexuality whose direction in relationship is open to different possibilities ('ideally') is quite alien to it.

Perhaps what Bishop Coleman does least justice to is the damage such thinking will do to the doctrine and practice of Christian marriage. It was surely no accident when recently in the USA an openly, not to say blatantly, homosexual man was ordained priest, only to be suspended within a few days for teaching that made monogamous fidelity only one option for (heterosexual) marriage between Christians. This ultimately must be the fundamental concern – theological, ethical and pastoral – with the toleration of homosexual liaisons. Marriage is under sufficient pressure from heterosexual disorder – for which an earlier generation of liberal church teachers must shoulder some of the blame. The tragedy will be compounded if Peter Coleman and his fellow-bishops further undermine it by such indecisiveness about homosexual unions.

The book has every sign of being produced in haste – numerous errata and an inadequate index.

David F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh

Christian Ethics: Options and Issues

Norman L. Geisler

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1989; Apollos, Leicester, 1990; 335pp., £14.95; ISBN 0 85111 418 0

This expanded re-write of earlier work by Geisler on Christian ethics offers a welcome overview of, as the title says, 'options' and 'issues'. Approximately the first one-third of the book is taken up with fundamental questions of ethical discussion (with chapters on 'antinomianism, situationism, generalism', and so on) with the remainder focusing on traditional questions like war and homosexuality with a final chapter on ecology. The text throughout is divided into small sections to make it digestible, and much of the discussion is in terms

which any interested reader will be able to follow. Each chapter ends with a short list of 'select readings', which range from standard texts from ancient and more recent times to some popular Christian material and even the occasional doctoral thesis. A lengthy bibliography and a glossary, together with helpfully full indexes, complete this substantial book.

Geisler's approach throughout is to show how each position – both with the general 'options', that is to say basic approaches to ethical discourse, and also with the individual practical questions – interacts with the others. If this does involve a certain over-simplification (because the amount of space that can be allocated to each of these interactions is sometimes rather small) it introduces the reader to ethical argument in every case, and does not leave the different approaches high and dry. It does raise the question of the reader for whom the book is particularly intended, whether the interested lay person or the (presumably Christian) student beginning to approach ethics in an academic context. But for both groups this will prove a useful tool.

*Nigel M. de S. Cameron, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School,
Deerfield*

Baptism

Michael Green

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1987; 141pp., £1.95; ISBN
0 340 41056 6

This examination of baptismal issues from an evangelical Anglican viewpoint starts with present confusions and ends with baptism in the Spirit, which it interprets in terms of the discovery in actual experience of what has been ours all the time through our baptism – a case of 'possessing our possessions'. Michael Green is a fluent writer, with a strong grasp on the necessity of repentance and faith for baptism to be fruitful, but without minimising the objective reality and completeness of baptism itself. Confirmation is rightly cut down to size – a domestic Anglican requirement, quaintly described as 'getting into fellowship with the bishop', although it is still puzzling to find 'confirmation' given two quite different meanings. To fend off demands for 'rebaptism', the author recommends the reaffirming, remembering and possibly quasi-baptismal re-enacting (illustrated from New Zealand Presbyterianism) of a person's original baptism. But clarity is not helped by claiming that "Rebaptism" is wrong because it cannot be done! If it is impossible, why all the fuss? What exactly is the unrepeatability of baptism?

Michael Green is not at his best on historical questions (Kurt Aland will be surprised to find that he is 'a distinguished Baptist theologian'), and some details of the book will not satisfy Reformed Evangelicals,

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

such as the notion of a child speaking through its godparents and the confusing attempt to justify the non-literal meaning of liturgical declarations that the baptized baby is regenerate. But the traditional defence of infant baptism is vigorous, and objections squarely faced, along with an unqualified condemnation of indiscriminate administration. The all-important distinction between what baptism means and what it effects helps on this front, but the argument lacks sufficient tightness to challenge believers-baptist convictions. It is more likely to stiffen wavering paedobaptists.

David F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh

Faith to Creed. Ecumenical Perspectives on the Affirmation of the Apostolic Faith in the Fourth Century

K. Heim (Ed.)

Eerdmans (for Commission on Faith and Order, NCCC)
Grand Rapids, 1992; 205pp., \$13.95; ISBN 0 8028 0551 5

It is not very often that a collection of papers or articles carries the satisfying ring of consistency. Here is one that does. Ecumenism watchers should not be completely surprised to find scholars of stature in the World Council of Churches who take a creed seriously. This group of contributors responded to a call from the WCC for an exploration of the 'apostolic faith' as a means to express visible unity. They worked on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed which had already been identified as a possible universal focus of unity.

The background of the team was mixed, denominationally and ideologically. The distinguished representative of Eastern Orthodoxy, John Meyendorff, appears first with a typically lucid review of the significance of the creed, its place amongst creeds in general and its use. The essay blended well with that of André de Halleux which tackled the history and internal development of the creed as well as helpfully reviewing modern attitudes to its degree of usefulness in ecumenism. W.G. Rusch, the well-known Lutheran writer, comes out clearly against modern radical criticisms of fourth-century Trinitarianism as Hellenistic tampering with a pristine biblical monotheism. However, he also expresses caution about a stagnant reception of any creed and calls for sensitivity towards those churches not consciously credal in nature.

Roberta C. Bondi offers a spirited account of the monastic outlook associated with the pro-Nicean Greek Fathers and finds both in them and 'orthodox' Trinitarianism a social and political concern which calls into question their allegedly compromising opportunist stance. Rosemary Jermann's study of the Cappadocians and Paulo D. Siepierski's

translation of the creed into liberation categories each come to similar conclusions.

Two contributions strike out from the rest in only muted recognition of the Nicene Creed. E. Hoornaert, also a Latin American liberation theologian, finds too little ethical and democratic content in the creed and finds it lacking in admonition to liberate the poor. This seems to expect too much from the document and its context. The Baptist Glenn Hinson expounds an eirenic non-credalist position, reminding us of doctrinal terrorism in the past and arguing that creeds are for evangelising and teaching purposes.

Finally, two contributors from radical starting points, A. James Reimer and Max L. Stackhouse, surprisingly come to the defence of Trinitarianism, claiming it as a pillar of social righteousness. At the same time Stackhouse's pluralism betrays the fact that he is mainly interested in the universal Spirit and his closing pages foreshadow the controversial pluralist strain that so scandalised the Eastern Orthodox and conservative delegates at the WCC's Canberra assembly in 1991. All in all, there is much here to stimulate and sustain discussion, and to keep a great patristic text at the centre of modern debate.

Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College

Incarnational Ministry. The Presence of Christ in Church, Society and Family (Essays in Honor of Ray S. Anderson)

Christian D. Kettler and Todd H. Speidell (eds.)

Helmets and Howard, Colorado Springs 1990; \$29.95, xvii+330pp.; ISBN 0 939443 20 1/21 X

This fascinating *Festschrift* brings together twenty-one essays in three groups around the theme set out in the subtitle. Dr Anderson's life and work are duly assessed and celebrated, and his unusual range of publications listed – the range of contributors and the variety of their subject-matter testimonies to the impression which he and his work have made on many. The perspective of subject and editors is well set out in the introduction: 'the tendency among many theologians is either to adopt uncritically a confessional, traditional theology – gaining a degree of security but forfeiting the critique of the Word of God over our tradition – or simply to reject all tradition for the sake of the novel and the trendy. Anderson has refused to do both, because of his theology of the freedom of the Word of God. This has allowed Anderson as a theologian to draw heavily on traditional incarnational theology, particularly in developing implications for a theology of ministry, while always maintaining the judgement of the Word of God over both tradition and innovation.'

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Part 1 addresses 'A theology of church ministry' and contributors include a number very well known to readers of this *Bulletin*. Thomas F. Torrance writes on 'The distinctive character of the Reformed Tradition', Alasdair I.C. Heron on '*Homo Peccator* and the *Imago Dei* according to John Calvin', Geoffrey W. Bromiley on 'The ministry of the Word of God' and Alan E. Lewis on 'Unmasking idolatries: vocation in the *Ecclesia Crucis*'. Colin Gunton also contributes to this section, on 'baptism and the Christian community'.

Under 'a theology of social ministry', James B. Torrance writes on 'The ministry of reconciliation today' and other essays address the *Imago Dei*, 'Incarnational social ethics', covenant, evangelism, leadership and more besides. Part 3 focuses more particularly and more interestingly on 'A theology of family ministry', a subject – particularly theologically addressed – on which we need all the help we can get. Here we may single out for comment 'The challenge of modernity for the family' by Jack O. Balswick and Dawn Ward, in which a 'radical response' to modernity is sought and suggested. We are encouraged to work towards the 'decommodification' of family life(!), essentially 'reversing the two-hundred-year-old trend of economic institutions usurping the parenting role'. Practical proposals including improvements in employment provision for parents with young children are recognised to have a necessary context in the eschatological expectation in which 'some day', if not today, 'the disintegrating effects of modernity will be overcome'. In 'The Whole Image of God' Frances and Paul Hibert offer 'a theological and anthropological understanding of male-female relationship'. They focus on the 'brokenness' of the image in the Genesis story, where 'the human actors were a man and a woman, not two men'. The image is 'put together again' in Christ. 'The first sin disrupted male-female relationships not only in marriage but between men as a class and women as a class. It is important to realize, however, that this is the consequence of sin and not what God first intended for humanity.' So, there is firm biblical evidence that both Jesus and Paul lived and worked in the reality of restored relationships between women and men. In the new era inaugurated by Jesus, men and women, rather than being at war for the dominant position, are restored to the position of equality that constituted their life before the fall.'

This volume is very much to be welcomed, with its consistent approach to contemporary 'church, society and family' questions in the light of a theological understanding of human nature. Not everyone is going to agree with all of it (indeed, some interaction between different contributors would have been worthwhile, though that is a hard thing to arrange), but every Christian seriously concerned with the issues raised by 'modernity' for church, society and family life should read this book.

Nigel Cameron, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield

Affirming Your Faith. Exploring the Apostles' Creed

Alister McGrath

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1991; 140pp., £2.95; ISBN 0 85110 854 7

It is surely a tribute to the lucidity of this book that the reviewer was able to read it through in a relaxed couple of hours. Given the author's distinction as a writer in academic theology, it is to his credit that he can communicate in a simple and clear style suitable for another kind of readership.

Here he uses the Apostles' Creed as a basis for introducing readers to key affirmations of the Christian faith. It will be particularly useful for putting into the hands of new but thoughtful Christians and as a taster for the more concentrated paperback treatment in Bruce Milne's *Know the Truth*. Alister McGrath has hit the target perfectly for that particular section of the traditional IVP market.

The main phrases of the creed are broken down into manageable sections and handled with an emphasis upon relevant biblical texts and with a welcome sensitivity to historical reflection, showing catholic taste. Each chapter turns doctrine into discipleship in a section handling practical implications. Each chapter also carries three questions for group discussion or personal reflection and three book titles for further reading. The book breathes a robust confidence in the Christian faith and offers healthy prompts to witness and evangelism.

The author plainly aims at introduction and there is little theology that would be new to those with just a foundation course in Christian doctrine behind them. But it is written with a light touch that could well be imitated by those who teach such courses. A pastor or house group leader can hand this book on to the intelligent enquiring newcomer with confidence.

Roy Kearsley, Glasgow Bible College

Sunshine and Shadow: The Story of the Baptists of Mull

Donald E. Meek

Tiree Books, Edinburgh, 1991: 25pp., n.p.

Island Harvest: A History of Tiree Baptist Church 1838-1988

Donald E. Meek

Tiree Books, Edinburgh, 1988: 58pp. n.p.

Donald Meek, of Edinburgh University's Department of Celtic, has established himself as an insightful chronicler of Baptist history in the highlands and western isles of Scotland. His chapter in 'The Baptists in Scotland: A History' (Ed. David Bebbington, Glasgow, 1988) demonstrated that he could paint on a wide canvas and assess trends and movements on a large scale. In these two booklets he uses the microscope, equally effectively, to look at the history of the Baptist cause on two islands, Mull and Tiree. He varies the perspective, examining the churches in terms of their outstanding leaders over the years and then looking at them in terms of their reaction to the social and economic changes which have so transformed remote crofting communities. It is good to be reminded that such churches were once full and that revival touched these distant and, apparently, isolated communities. Pastors, mostly home bred and Gaelic-speaking, were men of unsparing faithfulness who were not slow to travel immense distances in the service of the gospel. Both these booklets make enthralling reading as the author describes church communities, relatively small in size and set in climatically inhospitable places, influencing whole islands and enduring despite immense difficulties. The interest of the booklets owes much to Dr Meek's obvious understanding of the scene of which he writes. In 'The Baptists in Scotland' Donald Meek ascribes much of the strength of highland churches to the presence of Gaelic-speaking pastors. It is interesting that the Mull and Tiree churches are currently experiencing growth. Both their present pastors are English! These booklets are commended to all who have a concern for the church in the western isles.

Jim Taylor, Stirling

Disarming the Secular Gods: Sharing Your Faith So That People Will Listen

Peter C. Moore

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1991, 192pp., £5.50. ISBN 0 85110 697 8

Peter Moore, now rector of Little Trinity Church in Toronto, has had an extensive ministry as an apologist in American high schools and universities. He believes apologetics is a vital element in the church fulfilling her evangelistic mandate, defending a historical faith, clearing away misconceptions, answering serious questions, and helping to equip lay people for ministry. His writing is distinguished from much in the area in that he has not written a technical treatise awaiting professional rejoinder. He has actually engaged in evangelistic apologetics, and he is able to illustrate his approach from personal encounters. That approach is avowedly and unashamedly eclectic (but perhaps practical apologetics demands *ad hominem* flexibility).

His book is an introduction to world-views, and is aimed at the thinking Christian. The defence of the faith is set in the context of five contemporary mind-sets, those of the New Ager, the Relativist, the Narcissist, the Agnostic and the Hedonist. In each case he offers a survey and critique of the world-view, and a Christian response. His treatment is clear and fair, and is illustrated with a wealth of quotations from a wide range of authors. The book concludes with a study guide consisting of chapter outlines and questions to stimulate reflection and discussion.

A dip into his argument on Narcissism may illustrate something of the flavour of the book. Moore borrows from Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, the suggestion that we understand a culture when we look at its sicker members. Emotional illnesses are culturally induced and reinforced, and so when we understand the neuroses prevalent at any given time we have insights into the problems which in milder forms plague the society as a whole. Moore describes Western culture as one hostile to authority of all kinds, fearful of dependence, and preoccupied with the self. In stark contrast to such an age stands a movement whose symbol is a cross, the antithesis of narcissism. This cross reveals a God who suffers as substitute. Narcissism is afraid of the call to dependence and loss of self-centredness. But it is superficial, living off affluence, and cannot deliver what it promises. Christianity calls for commitment outside myself, commitment to another. The glorious paradox, however, is that those who lose themselves find themselves.

For Moore the Christian world-view is to be presented as compelling because it offers over-arching meaning and significance. In his response to agnosticism he quotes C.S. Lewis: 'I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen not only because I see it but because by it I

see everything else'. His final chapter on 'The Christian's Certainty' cautions, obviously enough, against basing assurance on infallible reason, an infallible church, or infallible experience. But he also warns against basing certainty on an infallible Scripture, not because he denies infallibility, but because that belief rests on Jesus' witness to Scripture. 'To begin with an infallible Scripture is to put the cart before the horse.' The only certainty, he insists, lies in the inherent truthfulness of truth, as it presents itself to the total person, mind, spirit, will and body, and as it offers comprehensiveness, tying together the whole of reality. Certainty only comes through personal trust in Christ, putting him at the centre of life. 'Once done, we know him to be true, because he causes the whole story to make sense.'

A. Macleod

The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: An Introductory Study

Aidan Nichols, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1988; 338pp.; ISBN 0 5647 29148 0

Aidan Nichols lectures in theology at the Pontifical University of St Thomas at Rome and holds posts in England as well. He is thus well placed to introduce the thought of the Vatican's senior doctrinal guardian to an English-speaking audience. Cardinal Ratzinger, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, enjoys a high degree of visibility, particularly in the wake of the disciplinary actions recently taken against leading Catholic theologians (e.g., Schillebeeckx, Küng, Curran) and liberation theology (published in English as *The Ratzinger Report*). But Nichols has wisely decided not to focus on the more sensational aspects of Ratzinger's career but to present his broader theology. This he does admirably, and one is left at the end of his study convinced that Ratzinger, despite his reputation in the popular press for heavy-handed theological conservatism, is a major theologian in his own right.

Nichols' own interest in Ratzinger began with the publication of *The Ratzinger Report*. He believed that Ratzinger's criticisms of liberation theology stemmed from a wider vision of ecclesiology and the Christian faith. The present book arises out of his earlier attempts in the *London Tablet* to highlight the positive vision behind Ratzinger's criticisms of liberation theology. Nichols surveys Ratzinger's theological development from his Bavarian roots through his early studies of Augustine to his present Roman Prefecture. He devotes separate chapters to a number of Ratzinger's historical and theological interests: Bonaventure's idea of salvation history, the idea of Christian brotherhood, the Apostles' Creed,

eschatology and ecumenism. Chapters on Ratzinger the preacher, the liturgist and the prefect round out the account. This chronological structure does not obscure the two central themes – ‘eucharistic’ ecclesiology and the unity of the faith – which form the *basso continuo* of Ratzinger’s prolific opus of over fifty books.

The book opens with an account of Ratzinger’s Bavaria, which is best characterized, like Ratzinger himself, by its emphasis on cultural and institutional continuity (p.6). The next chapter, ‘Augustine and the Church’, surveys Ratzinger’s twenty year dialogue with Augustine. Ratzinger studied the contemporary significance of Augustine’s metaphors for the Church as the ‘people’ and ‘house’ of God, in part because of his belief that the twentieth century was indeed going to be the ‘century of the Church’. This strategy of addressing the present situation via the past is typical of Ratzinger; Nichols shows him anticipating both the *aggiornamento* and the *ressourcement* of the Second Vatican Council insofar as his goal was ‘the binding of tradition and contemporaneity in a living unity’ (p.296).

Nichols’ portrait of Ratzinger’s theology may prove helpful to Protestant readers who wish better to understand Roman Catholic life and thought. There are some helpful comments on the relation of Scripture to Tradition: ‘The supreme authority for the Church is Scripture-read-in-Tradition’ (p.275). The Mass and the Magisterium also receive a theological interpretation and rationale: the Church is the sacrament of Christ (p.249). But Nichols’ most intriguing argument concerns Ratzinger’s formulation of the nature of Christian unity. He claims that Ratzinger holds to pluralism in theologies but to unity in faith. The Church finds its unity neither in philosophy nor in social or political praxis. Rather, the unity of the Church is the unity of truth, which is only realized eschatologically. It is precisely because we Christians live on the hither side of the *eschaton* that pluralism is constitutive of present Christian life and thought. And yet Ratzinger also argues that the magisterium is necessary in order to ensure unity in the church. Rome represents the ‘unity-in-plurality’ of the Church. After all, the Church is founded on Peter’s person *and* on Peter’s faith. Nichols offers a helpful paraphrase: ‘The unity of the Christian We is held together by personal bearers of responsibility for that unity’ (p.254).

The remit of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith requires it to adopt the positive function of encouraging good theology in the Church, alongside its historic negative function of discouraging bad. It remains to be seen to what extent Ratzinger can do this while keeping the Catholic Church *Roman*. But Nichols’ introduction to this erudite and ecclesial theologian intelligently charts Ratzinger’s solution to the ecclesial problem of the One and the Many.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Edinburgh

Theology and Politics

Duncan B. Forrester

Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988; 182pp., £7.95, ISBN 0 631 15283 0

Professor Forrester's book, though standing on its own, is part of a series entitled 'Signposts in Theology'. The reader should not expect either a statement of political theology for Britain today, nor a critical engagement with the diverse theologies of the contemporary world, but rather an excellent introduction to the central themes and issues of political theology – a guidemap plotting the terrain for students before they venture into the field for themselves. The author's enthusiasm for his subject is evident throughout, and his liberal sprinkling of quotations, together with an extensive bibliography, points the direction for anyone wishing to follow it up, having had their appetite whetted.

An historical overview of the subject sets the scene. The place of religion in ancient societies is considered, the particular distinctives of Christian theology are alluded to, and three giants of the early church – Eusebius, Tertullian and Augustine – are introduced as examples of varying political-theology positions within Christianity. The present-day politicisation debate is also considered in an historical context.

In the third chapter, Forrester turns to his main subject – liberation theology. While the author's reasons for this focus cannot be disputed ('it is the liveliest and most challenging school of political theology today', p. 150), it is a little disappointing that, with so many other introductions to liberation theology around, more attention was not given to the thought of South Africa, Europe or the Far East (which are all referred to briefly) or indeed Africa or North America (which rate no mention at all).

The main themes of liberation theology having been introduced, the author then considers in turn three theological issues in the light of their treatment in political theology – the use of the Bible; Christology; and ecclesiology.

Throughout, the book achieves what any introduction should – leaving the reader frustrated because greater depth is desired, but despite this inevitable feature, one feels a little more critical engagement with the subject, and a little less passionate advocacy of it, would have provided a better balanced introduction.

For example, in the section on the use of the Bible, though there are discussions of fundamentalism, the Biblical Theology movement, western scholarship and the repossession of the biblical narrative by the poor of Latin America, there is no real critical assessment of the important hermeneutical issues which arise in the methodology of liberation theology. Similarly, no voices of criticism are cited in the Christology chapter, where the priority of the *praxis* of Jesus over the

teaching of Jesus is affirmed. An introduction to critical literature would have been a useful 'signpost' as well.

This book concludes with a stimulating discussion of the responsibilities of political theology, a summary analysis of the present map of the field, and a few pointers to the lessons to be embodied in any political theology of the church of the Northern World.

With the one reservation about the lack of critical engagement this book is highly recommended to anyone, particularly the theological student, seeking an introduction to political theology.

David McAdam, Edinburgh.

A Matter of Life and Death

John V. Taylor

SCM Press, 1986; 88pp., £3.50; ISBN 0334 00977 4

John V. Taylor is known from his earlier book, *The Go-Between God*, as a theologian of the Holy Spirit, and this subsequent volume confirms this general impression. Like many who engage with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, he is also a man with a deep interest in Christian spirituality and life. The key theme of *A Matter of Life and Death* is Christian life, 'life in all its fullness,' lived in the power of the Holy Spirit and grounded in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The five chapters which constitute the book are five addresses given at a mission in Oxford in 1986. The content is geared to the context: the addresses were and are intended as unashamed evangelistic meditations on the life to which Christ calls us. As such, they cover many of the classic themes of the evangelistic campaign: the human dilemma, the divine answer, its basis in the person and work of Christ, and the Christian fellowship. They do so, however, without once either beating the drums of evangelical rhetoric, or ossifying in theological jargon the many fresh insights offered.

There are many things of value in these pages, not the least Taylor's insistence that the work of the Spirit is not confined to the 'religious' sphere as it is traditionally, and narrowly, defined. If God is the one 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being,' he seems to say, then we must understand ourselves as living always in relation to God, or perhaps better, as having the potential to discover ourselves and live most fully when we are open to the winds of the Holy Spirit and the person of Jesus Christ. Taylor's insistence, even in the context of a series of mission addresses, that this does not lead necessarily to a 'religious life' marks the most refreshing aspect of his work: just as Jesus was against religion that inhibits life and obscures the love of God, so we ought to be. Towards the end of the book, Taylor constructs a case for the church and

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

for the necessity of Christian fellowship, but it is one which is honest enough to acknowledge the extent to which those who look for life within the church are likely to be disappointed. It is this honesty, which is so often missing in religious writing, and perhaps especially in the evangelistic address, which I most appreciate in this book.

If the strength of *A Matter of Life and Death* is its non-technical and fresh grappling with the well-springs of Christian life, its weakness is that in so doing it does not present anything like a theological system. I was at times left wondering, for example, whether Taylor's was a Spirit or a Logos Christology. Given the book's aims, it probably does not matter, but it is a theologian's lot to be troubled by such questions. Certainly Taylor leaves a great deal unsaid, but at the same time he writes beautifully and says more than most

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