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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbet-01.php

REVIEWS

Ayrshire and the Reformation: People and Change, 1490-1600

Margaret H.B. Sanderson

Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 1997; 193pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 898410 91 7

The study of the Scottish Reformation in the latter half of this century has undergone numerous revisions, among the foremost being the shift to localised studies, called for in 1978 by Ian Cowan. Since this challenge was issued, several such studies have appeared, three in book form. Margaret Sanderson's new volume is the most recent addition to this collection, and it proves again the value of the exercise. Ayrshire was, without question, of immense importance in the Scottish Reformation, and Sanderson skilfully charts the ways in which local traditions of religious dissent made an impact upon the region, and indeed the country as a whole. Utilising her surpassing talent for chasing down family connections – which were of tantamount importance in sixteenth-century Scotland – Sanderson demonstrates that those Ayrshire dissenters known as the 'Lollards of Kyle' were followed by children and grandchildren who continued this tradition in their localities. Moreover, they contributed to a developing Protestant network in the 1540s and 1550s, and played key roles in the Reformation Parliament of 1560 and subsequent religious settlements.

The volume begins with a detailed description of Ayrshire parish life before the Reformation, emphasising the social impact of both the strengths and weaknesses of the late-medieval church in Scotland. There follows a detailed account of the Lollards of Kyle, including important scholarly interaction with older historiography (D. E. Easson) and significant new information about family connections. The subsequent chapters offer a chronological narrative of the growth and development of Protestantism in Ayrshire, from its underground beginnings to the formation of 'privy kirks' or conventicles, to the establishment of the new church. A focus throughout is the way in which the church – Roman Catholic and Protestant – ministered to the people.

Sanderson also describes the involvement of Ayrshire natives in the activities of the Lords of the Congregation at a national level, though the account is by no means limited to figures of national renown; it is replete with cameos of everyday life gleaned from extensive research into burgh records. This breadth lends the study a

healthy balance, and consequently a fuller understanding of how lay people supported their church, and how it ministered to them.

Sanderson has managed well the difficult task of writing for a mixed audience. Those acquainted with Scottish Reformation scholarship will find both new information and fresh analysis, the latter suggesting some qualifications to recent revisionist interpretations. While the footnotes are limited, they offer important references to primary sources, and the same may be said for the bibliography. Also useful to the scholar is a revised *Fasti* of ministers, exhorters, and readers in Ayrshire 1559-1600, appended to the text. But the reader less familiar with the field should have no difficulty following either the narrative or the interpretative matter. Sanderson has taken care to explain the terminology of the sixteenth-century Scottish church, from 'benefices' to 'readers', and she introduces the structures of Ayrshire society, both rural and urban.

This excellent study will be of interest to scholars and others interested in the history of the Scottish church. Tuckwell Press is to be commended for including this volume in its vigorous programme of Scottish academic material, and for making it available in paperback.

Martin H. Dotterweich, New College, Edinburgh

Princeton Seminary: Faith & Learning 1812-1868

David B. Calhoun

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1994; xxvi+495pp., £17.95; ISBN 0 85151 670 X

In today's climate of almost ritualistic debunking of anyone or anything historical, it is refreshing to find an openly sympathetic account of the early years of Princeton Seminary. While one would expect this from a Banner of Truth publication, the reader will not be deprived of insightful criticisms of the Princetonians by its author, David Calhoun. Reflecting careful and extensive interaction with original sources and current literature, this volume, the first of two, covers the first fifty years of the Seminary's history. Written by a church historian with a keen understanding of Reformed theology, the book's balanced portrayal of 'events, people and thought' will provide edifying reading for historian and theologian alike.

Those accustomed to thinking of the Princetonians as stodgy intellectuals intolerant of other theological positions will be pleasantly surprised with the men they encounter in the pages of this work. Though intellectuals of unusual depth (Joseph Addison Alexander, for example, could read at least seventeen languages when he became Associate Professor of Oriental and Biblical

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Literature), the Princeton professors were as thoroughly committed to piety as they were to scholarship. The 'Plan of a Theological Seminary', written for Princeton prior to its founding (and included as a valuable appendix), called for the professors 'to encourage, cherish, and promote devotion and personal piety among their pupils'. This they did in the classroom, in private conversation, and in the celebrated Sabbath Afternoon Conferences in which students and professors met weekly for singing, prayer, and a discussion of 'experimental or practical religion'. The piety instilled in the lives of the students was both devotional and active. Seminarians were expected to engage in private and corporate worship and were taught to consider evangelism 'as their highest honour and happiness'. Princeton Seminary considered evangelism so crucial to its philosophy of ministry that in 1836 it became the first school in the world to employ a professor of missions. Fully one-third of the students who attended the seminary during its first fifty years later served in a missionary setting, ministering to American Indians, slaves and peoples in numerous foreign countries.

The author's colourful portraits of the Princeton professors present not only their considerable attainments and dual commitment to scholarship and piety but reveal the gracious humanity typical of these men. It was not unheard of for Charles Hodge to present 'tearful, wide-open eyes' to his class as he spoke of 'the love of God to lost sinners'. Nor was it unusual for Archibald Alexander to spend half of his day in private conversation with his students. While the Princetonians espoused a 'sturdy Calvinistic theology', they benefited from, respected, and aided other traditions. J.A. Alexander exhorted his students to learn from the linguistic research of the European critics (though of course he disagreed with their presuppositions and conclusions). Charles Hodge, while studying in Germany, regularly shared fellowship and interacted with a group of men and women from different churches, including Roman Catholics. And Samuel Miller 'gladly contributed to a fund for constructing an Episcopal church across the street from the seminary'. When the duty of controversy proved inevitable, these defenders of the faith attempted to hold the truth, yet to do so in love.

There are aspects of this volume which will appeal to readers of varied interests: the influence of the Scottish church on Princeton Seminary; intellectual movements such as the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the democratization of American Christianity in the Second Great Awakening; the formative influences on Charles Finney's theology and the contrasting theologies of Princeton, New England (Samuel Hopkins), and New Haven (Nathaniel Taylor); abundant and descriptive historical detail; and warm anecdotes of

family life. The consistent theme, however, of 'faith and learning' is so prevalent throughout that all readers will find it difficult not to be both humbled and motivated by the example of the Princetonians. This reviewer wholeheartedly commends this first volume and eagerly awaits the arrival of the second.

Michael W. Honeycutt, New College, Edinburgh

Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936

Bruce L. McCormack

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995; xiv+499pp., £50; ISBN 0 19 826337 6

In recent years a variety of new perspectives have been offered on Barth by works such as: George Hunsinger's *How to read Karl Barth* (Oxford, 1991), Nigel Biggar's *The Hastening that Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford, 1993), Graham Ward's *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* and John Webster's *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (both Cambridge, 1995). To this list may be added Bruce McCormack's book, which in my estimation is one of the most significant studies of Barth, within the English-speaking world, to emerge for a generation.

The book is a revised version of his doctoral dissertation *A Scholastic of a Higher Order: The Development of Karl Barth's Theology, 1921-1931* (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989), and McCormack's intention is quite simply to overthrow the paradigm which has dominated our understanding of Barth's development for a generation or more. Further, McCormack intimates that the present work is the first half of the project through which he will establish his new reading of Barth. The subsequent volume will offer an analysis of Barth's Göttingen lectures (from the period 1924-25) which were significantly influenced by his adoption of the Christological model unveiled to him through his reading of Heinrich Hepp's *Reformed Dogmatics*.

In plotting the overthrow of this paradigm, he seeks to counter the picture of Barth's development which was established by Hans Urs von Balthasar's *The Theology of Karl Barth* (1951), and maintained in works such as T.F. Torrance's *Karl Barth: An Introduction to his Early Theology, 1910-1931* (1962). For von Balthasar and Torrance *et al.*, the defining moment in that development occurs about 1931 when Barth's engagement with Anselm's *Prologion* led him radically to reformulate his theological method, and effectively discard his

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

previous theological endeavours. The result of this radical reformulation was the *Church Dogmatics*.

McCormack's contention is, quite simply, that von Balthasar and Torrance have misread Barth, with their focus on theological method being effectively shown as inappropriate. According to McCormack, it is theological *content* and not theological method which is central. The tenor and intention of his book is evident in the following programmatic statements, wherein he suggests that

The central goal here will be to demonstrate that the 'turn' to a 'neo-orthodox' form of theology which is usually thought to have taken place with the *Church Dogmatics* in 1931-2 is a chimera. There was no such turn. Subsequent to his break with 'liberalism' in 1915, Barth became what we shall call a critically realistic dialectical theologian – and that is what he remained throughout his life.... The fruit of this genetic-historical work is nothing less than a completely new way of reading Karl Barth's theology.... His mature theology is best understood as a distinctive form of 'dialectical theology'.... Where that has not been grasped, virtually the whole of Barth's theology has been read in the wrong light.

The radical nature of McCormack's proposal is undoubtedly clarified by these statements, and those familiar with the received paradigm may require a little time to recover their composure before attempting to come to terms with the implications of his work.

The attempt so to do is undoubtedly a rewarding experience, with new light being thrown, at every turn, upon the most significant Reformed theologian of the twentieth century. No-one who wishes to engage with Barth and with Reformed theology can afford to ignore this book which will quickly establish itself as required reading for those so interested.

The old paradigm may not yet have succumbed to the new, but battle has now been joined.

John L. McPake, Newtongrange

The Search for God – Can Science Help?

John Houghton

Lion Publishing, Oxford, 1995; 224pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 7459 3305 X

Sir John Houghton was formerly Professor of Atmospheric Physics at Oxford and now, among distinguished pursuits, is co-chairman of the Science Assessment Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel

on Climate Change. He was recently awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society.

When twentieth-century scientific enquiry gets to grips with fundamental questions of existence, such as: 'How did the universe begin?' (cosmology), 'What is the natural world made of?' (Quantum theory), 'What is space – time?' (Relativity theory), 'What is life?' (DNA, etc.), 'What is human consciousness?' (Quantum theory and Chaos theory), it cannot fail to raise questions that border on philosophy and theology. This is evident in the writings (from many diverse points of view) of scientists working in these areas.

John Houghton is one of several writers who, like John Polkinghorne, write from a position of clear Christian conviction. Far from merely putting the case that there must be a Designer, the author takes us into the Judeo-Christian world-view of the Bible, using his scientific knowledge to illuminate such subjects as the 'Hiddenness of God', the 'Personality of God', 'Prayer' and 'Incarnation'. The book is well written and should certainly be readable by an intelligent non-scientist. Even his extra 'boxes' giving further insight for the scientifically trained are not difficult to follow. For those who have read other authors in this general area there will still be much in this book to give further insight.

Like the works of other Christians who are scientists, Houghton's writing is kind to his atheistic opponents such as Richard Dawkins. This reviewer believes the time is far overdue for a much stronger rebuttal of the all-pervasive materialism that is the hidden unfounded assumption of so much modern scientific writing. Nevertheless, John Houghton has given us a very helpful book that is certainly to be recommended to all who are interested in how a scientist who is a Christian reacts to the great questions of humankind about origins, meaning and final purpose.

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

Out of Contradiction. Meditations Towards a Contemporary Spirituality

Patrick Grant

Pentland Press, Edinburgh, 1994; x+64pp., £5.50; ISBN 1 8521 220 0

This book provides penetrating insights into the relationship between God and his creation and at the same time shows unexpected ways of looking at old and familiar themes. The book is learned and scholarly, aiming to explore a personal response to various traditional Christian ideas, especially as encountered in a modern world of deep

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

scepticism and uncertainty. Patrick Grant defines contradiction as 'the discovery of an immediate negative contrast to a hoped-for good'. The author says that we begin with hope and are soon confronted with the contradiction that the flawed world is not as we hoped. Moreover, reflection shows that nature prevents us realising some of our deepest hopes, for instance to live without separation, pain and loss. We then pierce contradiction with love which bears faith. The author suggests that language can penetrate only so far in understanding but that the act of will we call love will take us deeper.

The first brief chapter gives an overview to spirituality setting out basic ideas, the emphasis being on the term *humanum* which indicates 'the condition of being in-process from past to future which is basic to what it means to be a person'. The author acknowledges that the Spirit moves in different ways and that there are many fashions in spirituality. He proposes a skeleton for the meditations and the spirituality they explore which is arranged in the second section in parts under the umbrella of 'The Threefold Humanum' using vivid metaphors in the shapes of crystal, cross and dove (or matter, imagination and spirit) standing broadly in 'a polar relationship' to the ideas propounded in the first section. A third section keys New Testament texts to the main topic of the previous section and a final section links notes to the whole book. This is a book which should be read and re-read, time being taken to ponder so that its richness can be enjoyed.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

The Servant-Son

Donald Coggan

SPCK, London, 1995; 144pp., £4.99; ISBN 0 28104 802 9

Donald Coggan says that the purpose of this book is to help us meet Jesus, 'know him and see him more clearly as he was – the Servant-Son of God – and as he is now, today and always'. He sets out to do this in nine chapters based on Jesus' life with a set of Bible references at the beginning of each chapter. They range through from Formative Years, Baptism, Temptation, Suffering Servant, First Sermon, Minister of Health, to Dramatist. These are chapters on Jesus as a human being and give a brief insight into Jesus the man. There is then a chapter on Servant-Son-Church which talks of Jesus as the Messiah, the one anointed by God to fulfil a certain task. This he did by being the Servant-Son even to death; 'As the Father sent me, so I send you'. Dr Coggan faces us with the fact that the church is here to continue the task, though in different circumstances and under different

conditions. In the final chapter – ‘Jesus Then and Now’ – he poses the question, ‘What is our attitude to Jesus *now*? – Thanks for the memory!’ If there is more to Jesus than that, what does the ‘more’ consist of? He uses different methods in each chapter, some meditative, some reflective, some prosaic to enable any group studying this to gain greater insights. Each chapter is followed by questions aimed to elicit further thought and there are prayers at the end of each chapter to make the point that Bible study not accompanied by prayer is a ‘poor thing’. There is a bibliography at the end of the book followed by an index to Scripture references. This is a powerful little book which Bible study groups would find a great enabler for Christian growth.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

The Funeral Service: A Guide

David Saville

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1996; 128pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 340 65183 0

This is an unusual and possibly unique book. The author himself describes it as ‘very much a popular “consumer guide” to funeral services’. His aims are to help people plan and prepare for a service for a close relative or friend; to help people plan their own funeral service; to help people explore the meaning and significance of a Christian funeral service.

His method is to follow the pattern of a typical funeral service, explain the different parts and along the way deal with issues of general concern. As he is an Anglican minister, there is a bias towards his own tradition although reference is made to the United Reformed Church and Methodist Service Books as well as the Roman Catholic Liturgy and the funeral service prepared by the Joint Liturgical Group.

Helpful comments are provided on appropriate Scripture readings, popular funeral hymns and the place of the sermon or ‘homily’. With regard to the latter, it is encouraging, not to say challenging, for ministers to know that in a survey of bereaved people in Sheffield it emerged that the ‘address’ was what people remembered most clearly and was the part of the service which gave most comfort.

‘Postscripts’ appended to various chapters seek to open up related issues like hell, the nature of heaven and the increasingly pressing question of whether reincarnation can be accommodated within the Christian faith. The nature of the book precludes detailed theological discussion of these but with admirable sensitivity the author argues for orthodox Christian positions.

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

David Saville has obviously reflected deeply on his own pastoral practice and experience and has provided a valuable resource for the whole Christian community.

Fergus C. Buchanan, Milngavie St Paul's Church

Ordinary Mysticism

Dennis Tamburello

Paulist Press, New York, 1996; 160pp., \$12.95; ISBN 0 8091 3634 1

This primer on mysticism is intended to open our eyes to the fact that mysticism was not just for the medieval mystics but is relevant for our world today. Dennis Tamburello challenges misconceptions about mysticism in a direct and thought-provoking way, showing why mysticism should be an important part of all Christians' lives. Tamburello draws our attention to the fact that mysticism was constructed by the Fathers of Eastern Christianity and is the common heritage of all Christians across denominations from Eastern Orthodox to Presbyterian.

The first chapter describes the many meanings of mysticism. The following chapters offer insights from key mystics on topics relevant in today's society such as Christian life as process, contemplation and action, and union with God. The book draws on the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Julian of Norwich, Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, Meister Eckhart and others, showing that the core of mysticism does not refer to 'ecstatic experiences, unusual visions, miraculous powers and psychosomatic gifts (although some mystics have enjoyed these)'. Intimacy with God, and a connection between mysticism and everyday life, should be the foundation of Christian living. Mysticism should integrate action and contemplation of both love of God and love of neighbour and enrich our understanding of God.

I found this book an easy read yet enlightening in the way that Tamburello encourages the reader to ignore twentieth-century society's suppression and denial of things mystical. Instead *Ordinary Mysticism* gets to the heart of this tradition of Christian experience. Tamburello stresses how important it is for Christians to claim everyday experiences as mystical, recognising them as an integral part of our intimacy with God and one another. It is good to know that by doing so it is possible to develop a spirituality that is contemporary yet rooted in tradition.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

The Rough Places Plain. Anglican Evangelical Conclusions, 1995

Latimer House, Oxford, 1995; 128pp., £3.50; ISBN 0 946307 466

This Latimer double monograph is a very valuable document indeed, and ought to be carefully read by all who are concerned with where Evangelicalism is, and where it is going, at least in one of the most influential denominations in Great Britain, the Church of England. In effect it consists of expanded conclusions of the working parties commissioned by the Anglican Evangelical Assembly of 1994 and agreed the following year. They represent the 'unfudged' agreement of representatives of the whole spectrum of Anglican Evangelicalism from classical to radical – which is no mean achievement.

Each of the groups pursued a particular track, Truth, Ministry, Church, Mission, Worship and Learning. Each track attempts to make a clear and concise assessment of the present scene in which the Church finds itself, making recommendations for forward-looking action both at national and local levels. Thus the Truth track, co-ordinated by the Reverend Wallace Benn, Vicar of Harold Wood, representing the more conservative wing, and Graham Cray, Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, representing the more radical, focuses its attention on the authority and interpretation of Scripture, and encourages Evangelicals of all shades to study Scripture *together*, and to debate critical issues relative to its nature and interpretation, an exercise worth pursuing across the wider evangelical movement.

The Ministry track addresses itself to the overall question of ministry, both lay and ordained, and queries the nature of the ordained, whether office or function. The training of ordinands is discussed especially with respect to mission and evangelism in what has become a missionary church in this country. The Church track makes a critical assessment of the Church of England, a mixed denomination in which evangelical involvement is steadily growing. This is one the meatiest sections of the monograph. It urges Evangelicals to work for greater trust and better communication among themselves, and to continue their involvement in the structures of the Church of England – a stance 180 degrees at variance with the call for Evangelicals to come out of the Church of England thirty years ago.

The Mission track sees the Church as the agent of mission, engaged with the rapidly changing culture of the late twentieth century (culture is defined as 'the way we think without thinking'). Justice, especially for the poor and oppressed, is seen as an integral

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

part of mission. Finally, the Worship and Learning track calls for a full recognition of different aspects of worship unfolded in Scripture, and the need for different kinds of services from traditional to seeker, as well as a well worked-out strategy for adult learning.

The monograph also contains a dialogue between Benn and Cray on 'Truth and Biblical Hermeneutics', an address by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the sermon by Sir Fred Catherwood, President of the Evangelical Alliance, urging Anglican Evangelicals to exploit the many great opportunities afforded to an established church in a country of such great moral and spiritual need.

Peter Cook, St Andrew's, Cheadle Hulme

Atonement Today: A Symposium held at St John's College, Nottingham

Edited by John Goldingay

SPCK, London, 1995; 285pp., £17.99; ISBN 0 281 04894 0

This work, a collection of fifteen essays by thirteen people (the editor and Christina Baxter each contribute two), arises out of discussions and investigations among the staff at St John's College, Nottingham, and associated people. It is a good example of the tensions within part of the Christian world (*i.e.* Evangelicals) provoking debate and arguments which could then be proactive for those for whom the atonement may not be at present a live issue.

The work intends to move from a grounding in the biblical theology of the atonement to viewing it from models offered by contemporary experience. However, it is questionable how far one can move when the description of what the atonement was or is within theological understanding remains contentious. John Goldingay's essays are models of clarity and succinctness (a useful by-product of the 'contributing essays' format). Christina Baxter offers a sympathetic account of the attempts by Calvin, Warfield and Stott to insist on a penal aspect to the cross as well as its effects on God's anger. The problems with this (is God divided between Father and Son? . is God really temperamental?) and its substitutionary implications (why should Christ be caught between us and God?) are spelled out with particular reference to the work of Frances Young. Baxter resolves some of the problems by exulting in the paradox of 'the cursed beloved': God himself paid the penalty.

The necessity for theology to avoid so-called legal metaphors is, as in Gunton's 1988 work, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, a motto for Goldingay. The atonement may be better viewed as something which is personal, but does that rule out using the legal metaphor to gain

insight, especially if it is understood as one model among others, and if it seems to be there in both Testaments? Surely there are elements of the personal in the legal, even if the atonement is understood as a matter of public (*i.e.* criminal) and not private law. A basic anthropological understanding shows that, where matters of ritual are involved, it is hard to separate the religious and the personal from the corporate and quasi-legal. Goldingay also wants Christ's death to be understood as representative:

this relationship in whose context Christ's offering took place is an already existing one. It is not the case that people were unable to relate to God before Jesus' act of self-offering to the Father. It is precisely because they were in relationship to God that there needed to be an offering of themselves to God in appreciation, gratitude, joy, commitment, hope, penitence, and recompense, expressed in the self-offering which characterises Christ's life as a whole.

Isaiah 53 is about restitution rather than purification (so-called guilt-offering rather than sin-offering), although purification, not punishment, did happen too. Leviticus is not about (God's) wrath, but about (our) disgust at failing him; Paul is not thinking in OT terms (but presumably inter-testamental ones) when he refers to the *orge theou*.

For Steven Travis, writing specifically about Paul, judgement is to do with the unfolding of the consequences of the sinful deed – not a punishment imposed extrinsically by God. He by-passes the question of whether *hilasterion* should be considered a place or the offering itself but argues that the penal substitutionary language of Maccabees should not be the background for Paul's usage.

Tom Smail asserts what is implicit in many of the contributions, that to talk of penal substitution does not connect with people today. He observes that, as preachers, 'we speak much more with Moltmann of Christ's justifying God to us by sharing on the cross our suffering and God-forsakenness than of Christ's justifying us to God by bearing our sins'. Too much is made of the alienation, sense of desolation, and too little of God's view of human sinfulness. 'Stories about judges coming down from the bench to pay fines or even face the death sentences they have imposed only serve to make the whole process more unreal and indeed unjust,' as Socinians thought even four centuries ago. In my view this seriously compromises what might be called the 'Barthian' view which informs Baxter's essay, and even John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*. Smail finishes his analysis with the wry comment: 'It might perhaps be just as well that others are not listening if we ourselves do not know what to say.' Christ's double identification of nature and love is helpful; the love or divine part of

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Christ has the power to recreate. But Smail wants to avoid any notion of vicarious repentance or satisfaction of God's wrath and replace it with 'he was fulfilling and renewing the covenant'. There was no transaction, but rather a relational and *thus* 'transformational' justice (following Gunton). A humanity is provided which is close to our situation of ruin and which in rising makes heaven available. Jenny Sankey's essay which follows restates participation in Christ's humanity as mediated or at least encouraged by the eucharist; it is a bit anecdotal and magpie-like in its drawing of ideas from a variety of places and finishes with the curious statement, in the context of what 'satisfaction' means: 'To learn what it takes sexually to satisfy another human being is very close to learning what it means to satisfy God.' In other words God remains to be pleased by us: the atonement was just a start.

In the second part of the book, Christina Baxter wonders just *how* female humanity has been saved in Christ. Perhaps the very question illustrates some of the limitations of too strong a participative model. 'What is not assumed is not redeemed' was used by Gregory of Nazianzen with reference to Christ's having to have a human mind if human minds were to be saved. 'Behind the theory lay ideas to which our world no longer adheres, about the solidarity of the human race and about the possibility of one acting for all.' The rather obvious point is that Christ's maleness was necessary in order for him to be human, rather than saying anything about the superiority of males over females. Presumably non-human creation is also affected and yet that was hardly assumed. I think Baxter goes the wrong way here. As in a number of these essays, soteriology is left behind in favour of a wander into Christological territory (*i.e.* more who Christ was/is than how he did what he did). Sally Alsford affirms that the feminist critiques should make us pause before giving too much universal weight to the particular. But, as with Baxter, she takes a long time to get to the crucial point (humans are as much different as they are shot through with a common nature), and again she strays from the central theme, only to return to it in the last few pages to state that self-sacrifice is not a helpful image for women, unless it is self-giving which is genuinely chosen, as it was in the case of Christ.

George Bebawi's piece on Athanasius, Anselm and Islam starts well, but this reviewer admits to finding himself lost after three pages, having by then already smelled a few over-generalisations. The essays of Michael Alsford and Colin Greene share the conviction that the cross is meaningless for humans today because anthropological self-understanding no longer has a place for sin. To speak of the cross in terms of God's identification with suffering may be too much like cultural accommodation. Greene makes some telling points (sin could

be redefined as 'the failure to adhere to our God-given destiny and vocation'), before seeing its effects rather timelessly in the sense of cosmic change (aeonic, new age instigation). Alsford's essay is disappointing because it never gets to grips with the topic, no matter how useful a potted history of epistemology since Descartes he provides: his notion of humans as essentially 'coadunate' (roughly, relational) is insufficiently content-full to be useful. Gordon Oliver introduces Don Browning's model for psychotherapeutic care which is based on the *Christus Victor* model of the atonement. David Atkinson provides something a little more nuanced, by showing how forgiveness of the cross could be applied to four positions, thus providing a fourfold reading of the atonement – mistrust, shame, guilt, conflict: the watchword throughout his wise contribution is 'comprehensiveness' – of vision.

This is a mixed bag which perhaps works best when the contributors, in part, by-pass the tricky question of what the atonement was/is. Certainly the theological foundations are not dug anything like deeply enough. There would have been benefit from dialogue with traditions more conservative – the Pontifical Catholic, or Stuhlmacher and the (newer) Tübingen School, or with Leon Morris and his successors in the Tyndale Fellowship (a position expressed in the M. Selman-R.T. Beckwith volume which would have come too late for consideration), or with the North American Neo-Calvinists, or with Richard Swinburne. Behind the collection there stand the books of Gunton, Fiddes and Aulèn. The writers are to be thanked for moving away from Moltmann's concerns towards considering what the atonement might mean for human beings' guilt. But I am not sure they have made as much progress as might have been expected.

Mark W. Elliott, Glasgow

The Bible as a Whole

Stephen Travis

Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford, 1994; 280pp., £7.99;
ISBN 0 7459 2527 8

The Bible is now available in many contemporary translations, yet on every hand we meet profound ignorance of its contents and not only among non-churchgoers. A preacher I know shook hands at the church door with a member of the congregation who said he had been fascinated by his sermon on Amos as the only Amos he had ever heard of featured in a soap opera. He had no idea there was an Amos in the Bible! Some earlier writers have sought to address this problem by producing 'A Short Bible' or a 'Bible designed to be read as

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Literature'. Stephen Travis takes a somewhat different path by making a selection of 130 passages of Scripture and providing a commentary on each, with chronology of event rather than of authorship determining the order. This is neither an anthology of favourite passages, nor a selection majoring in Bible books regarded as great writing by literary experts. For instance, there is nothing from the Epistle to the Hebrews. A reviewer is prevented from quibbling too much over the choices by the thought, 'What would I have omitted and how would reviewers see *my* selection?'

The book's aims govern its principles of selection, and these are threefold: to introduce the habit of regular Bible reading, to enable readers to see that the Bible is a coherent whole and to introduce the main themes of Christian belief and the main aspects of Christian discipleship. On the whole, this reader's verdict is that these aims have been achieved. There are eight chapters, four on each Testament, although the average length of those on the New is shorter than those on the Old. 'Beginnings', which takes the story as far as Judges, starts, in line with the principle of chronological arrangement and with real theological appropriateness, not with Genesis 1 but with John 1. There is little on Isaac and Jacob but much on Joseph — puzzling perhaps but wise, as this gripping story might be recalled by those who attended Sunday School in childhood, thus providing, quite early in the volume, welcome contact with the familiar among much that would be unfamiliar. As the arrangement is chronological, the author could have given a lot of passages from the historical books in his second chapter. There are some, of course, but also some helpful brief historical summaries, so that he can include more passages from the prophets, from Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. 'Life and Worship' looks at Israel as a community and shows the godly realism of the writers of the Wisdom books and the great diversity of experience with God touched in a well-selected group of seven Psalms. Issues of date, authorship, etc. are handled only in so far as they affect the actual aims of the selection. Not surprisingly, they figure rather more in the chapter 'Exile and After'. The writer's comments on Jonah and Daniel, in particular, will not be acceptable to all.

How difficult to make a brief selection from the four Gospels! Stephen Travis solved the problem by concentrating on the Gospel of Luke, which has been described as the most biographical of the four. This is understandable, but it is a pity that at least the flavour of the other three could not have been briefly conveyed. The next chapter consists entirely of selections from Acts. To read through these passages from Luke's two books therefore means that the reader has not only gained a grasp of the story of Jesus and the early Church in

chronological sequence but also has had major contact with the mind of one great biblical writer. Chapter seven focuses on the Epistles and gives passages from 1 Corinthians, Romans, 1 Thessalonians, Ephesians, 1 Peter and James, plus the whole of Philippians. This is good, as it was important for the reader to appreciate one New Testament letter in its wholeness. The brief closing chapter on Revelation wisely attempts no overall interpretation.

This book could be helpful not only to new Christians but to many more mature ones who, even after years in the faith, still do not feel they have a grasp of 'the Bible as a whole'.

Geoffrey Grogan, Glasgow

Readings in 1 Kings: An Interpretation Arranged for Personal and Group Bible Study with Questions and Notes

Ronald S. Wallace

Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1995; xvi+174pp., £7.00; ISBN 0 7073 0751 1

This is a useful aid to the study of 1 Kings, aimed at the pastor or interested lay person, especially those who lead Bible Study groups. A brief introduction outlines the movement of God's plan of salvation both within 1 Kings and in the wider historical context of which this book is part, mentioning authorship and links with Deuteronomy in the briefest of terms. In the body of the book, Wallace breaks the text of 1 Kings into sixteen sections, each of which is considered in a chapter of his book. In each of his chapters, he provides an introductory paragraph that summarises the substance of the narrative, and then considers the circumstances suggested by the text in more detail and its theological implications under three or four sub-headings. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions that aim to help readers to think through the implications of the text for today, and brief 'notes' on topics of relevance to the chapter, e.g. 'Solomon as a type of Christ', 'Almug wood', 'the factual difficulties in this chapter', etc. The format is accessible and easy to use, the discussions of the text clear and theologically helpful, and the questions for discussion are appropriate for group study, being sufficiently open-ended and yet also sufficiently directional for that context.

Edward D. Herbert, Glasgow Bible College

**Forbidden Revolutions: Pentecostalism in Latin America
and Catholicism in Eastern Europe**

David Martin

SPCK, London, 1996; 96pp., £7.99; ISBN 0 281 04999 8

This short but scholarly book is a slight revision of lectures delivered on several occasions in the early 1990s. Its aim is to understand the massive recent expansion of evangelical religion in Latin America and to highlight the neglected role of churches in the astonishing political and economic revolutions of 1989 and 1990 in Eastern Europe.

David Martin is a retired professor of sociology at London University, well known for his earlier critical work on the theory of secularisation, that is, the decline of religious institutions in Western Europe. Given his background, the author writes from a sociological rather than a theological perspective. Indeed the book appears to be primarily intended for the specialist or the sociologically literate rather than for a general audience. However, this is not a dry academic treatise. It remains sufficiently discursive and illustrative for the main ideas to be accessible to those not initiated in the language and concepts of sociology.

The central claim of the book is that, though the Christian religion and those who practise it may seem to lie at the margins of society, the church remains a powerful vehicle of political, social and personal change on at least two continents.

The first chapter is quite technical and difficult in places, sketching out some of the main theoretical ideas. The second chapter, however, is much easier reading, focusing on the dramatic growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America and its extraordinary cultural impact. Using a rather fragmentary combination of anecdotal evidence, personal observation and social analysis, Martin seeks to explain the appeal of Pentecostalism, especially among the poor and marginalised. The knock-on effects for Roman Catholicism are also considered. Similar expansions in charismatic Christianity are identified and briefly discussed in the cases of China, India and Zimbabwe among others.

With regard to Eastern Europe, the third and final chapter adopts a country-by-country case-study approach, describing in sequence the recent history of Poland, East Germany, former Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary. Although Communism suppressed and infiltrated the churches in Eastern Europe, it failed to prevent religion becoming a major channel of symbolic opposition to the prevailing regime. Martin describes how churches, cathedrals and

individual priests acted as rallying points, powerfully signifying alternatives to the existing order and fostering the revolutionary impetus. The argument is forceful but not overstated. The explosive discord arising from the collision of distinct religious and ethnic identities in Yugoslavia, Georgia and the Baltic Republics is fully recognised.

In summary, this is a fascinating, informative and wide-ranging text. Unlike many social scientists, David Martin adopts a sympathetic attitude towards religion and its social impact. Indeed, his tone becomes enthusiastic in the description of the Romanian revolution. For the Christian reader, the book provides a message of encouragement and hope in its demonstration that though the church can at times seem inconsequential, with little public influence, this impotence is deceptive. For those with eyes to see, contemporary history has proved that the perceived social irrelevance of the church is illusory.

Ian Smith, St Andrews

Where Do We Go from Here? The Case for Life Beyond Death

David Winter

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1996; 99pp., £4.99; ISBN 0 340 65635 2

Twenty years on from his best-selling book *Hereafter*, David Winter takes up the question of life after death for the current generation. He notes that the 1970s' interest in 'spirituality', which made the book so popular, has now given way to cybernetics and technology, but also to scepticism and a lack of meaning. Even the church is unsure about the issues. Thus, this book takes the themes of *Hereafter* to argue that there is no need to doubt the reality of life after death, and indeed, that such belief transforms attitudes to the whole of life as well as death.

Winter begins by making very helpful theoretical and philosophical points. Having introduced death as an 'unknown' which he parallels to the experience of an unborn child in relation to the outside 'still-to-come' world, he defines death as an end of life, a disintegration. While referring to Jung's belief that immortality therapeutically enables people to live and die with dignity, he insists that it is truth which is important. In an excellent chapter headed 'Spirit, soul, self', which begins with the views of Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas, he makes the important point that humans do not have souls: they are souls, which he defines as an awareness of self. In this way,

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

they are in the image of God, who himself cannot cease to exist. To great effect, he borrows the illustration of the self as computer software, and the body as the hardware.

Moving on to evidences for *post mortem* survival, Winter adduces the many similarities in near death experience accounts, as well as the universal longing for immortality throughout history and the world, though these points are unconvincing. The greatest evidence, however, is the resurrection of Jesus, and arguments are given to support the truth of the claim.

Lastly, Winter addresses various questions which arise about 'practicalities'. To the concerns 'What kind of body?' and 'What is heaven like?', he both destroys myths and demonstrates how eternal life is good news, as the personality 'flowers to be like Christ', free from the encumbrances of time and space. The final question 'Who goes there?' raises issues of universalism, judgement and hell, and is perhaps the least satisfactory chapter of the book on account of its brevity. As these are huge contemporary discussions, a fuller treatment would have been helpful.

However, as a short book written in a popular style, it achieves a great deal. It is well argued, with good examples and quotations. It is meant to be read rather than studied, but does provide an appendix with relevant Bible passages and information for further reading. It would be acceptable to Christians, and also to non-believers, and could indirectly serve as comfort to those facing death.

Fiona Barnard, St Andrews

The Apostles' Creed. A Faith to Live By

C.E.B. Cranfield

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993; 68pp., £5.95; ISBN 0 567 29227 4

At a time when in some circles the Apostles' Creed is classed as 'baggage not needed on the voyage' of the contemporary church, where do younger Christians learn of, and learn, the Creed today? It is surely regrettable if they never come to own it as an historically significant confession of the faith of the church universal with which they identify themselves. Its disuse in public worship can only fuel the prejudice against it as 'surplus baggage'. If we followed the example of the Reformers, it would have a central role in catechesis – the preparation of those seeking baptism, admission to the Lord's table or membership on profession of faith.

Charles Cranfield's short exposition is designed precisely with such uses in mind, as well as for 'church members who feel a need for a

more definite and coherent faith'. It is a very timely book, confident in affirming the faith of the Creed and apologetically sensitive to the challenge of believing in a sceptical age. And it helpfully adopts the modern version of the Creed produced by the International Consultation on English Texts – which reads 'the living' in place of 'the quick' and 'He descended to the dead' instead of 'He descended into hell', but is otherwise close to the traditional rendering.

The book will not prove easy reading for some who are learning their way into the church, but it will help many to a firmer grasp of the apostolic faith today.

David F. Wright, New College, University of Edinburgh

Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment

Robert A. Peterson

P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, 1995; xi+258pp., available from Evangelical Press £9.95; ISBN 0 875523 722

In the last decade, the doctrine of eternal punishment has become a focal point for disputes within Evangelicalism, with a significant number of leading preachers and scholars aligning themselves with views which, to a great extent, break with traditionally accepted church teaching in this area. Of course tradition must never be the ultimate criterion for judging the validity of a particular doctrine, but when breaks with tradition are suggested and even encouraged, it is vital that Evangelicals make sure that such changes are required not simply on the grounds of expediency but also on the grounds of fidelity to Christ.

This book is a popular attempt to present many of the issues regarding the afterlife to a wide evangelical audience. In a series of chapters, the author outlines the current controversy, details the biblical teaching on the issue, traces the historical traditions, examines a number of alternatives to the traditional position, and then stresses the importance of the doctrine. The book is, in effect, a restatement of the traditional evangelical understanding of hell as a place of eternal (*i.e.* everlasting) torment. As such it offers a relatively good overview of the issues.

At times, the author's enthusiasm for his subject drives him to make statements that are not entirely well-founded. For example, his hatred of the Enlightenment leads him to claim that John Locke denied the deity of Christ. I would argue that Locke's position on this doctrine, while lacking the clarity of his Puritan forbears, is not quite as black and white as Peterson makes out. Also there is little discussion of the abuse of the doctrine of eternal punishment over the

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

centuries, abuse which, while not in itself making the rejection of the doctrine correct, at least makes it understandable. If now is a time when God as unconditional love is an idea being pushed to unbiblical extremes, it must not be forgotten that there have been periods in the church's history when God as unremitting justice has also been proclaimed in just as unbiblical a fashion.

Such a popular treatment of such a complex issue inevitably contains a number of problematic areas. First, there is no real attempt to grapple with the problem of the nature of biblical language about hell, and yet the question of the degree to which the language of physical torment is literal or metaphorical is crucial to an understanding of the biblical teaching in this area. Second, there is no discussion of the nature of eternity, the author apparently assuming a view of eternity as endless duration of time. In this, he opts for a position which can scarcely be regarded as typical of orthodox theology, from Augustine and Boethius onwards. Indeed, when he criticises F.J.A. Hort and F.D. Maurice for separating ideas of eternity from duration, he apparently fails to realise that such a separation is, in principle at least, entirely orthodox. More detailed study of the medievals may have helped at this point.

A third problem is the choice of modern opponents. John Stott is obvious; as the most significant evangelical leader to reject the orthodox position, his views are no doubt the most influential. But the selection of John Hick seems somewhat bizarre. Hick's views are more famous for their radical nature than for their theological or philosophical coherence, and he has, I suspect, little influence in circles where evangelical theology is esteemed. Far more significant would seem to be the views of Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann and others who, while not being evangelical themselves, have provided rich theological resources for evangelical theologians, and yet whose works also exhibit powerful universalist tendencies. Addressing the issue as raised by these giants would be of more value to the evangelical world at large than dissipating time and effort on a character such as Hick.

Despite these weaknesses, the book should feature on the bibliography of anyone wishing to lead a church study group on the issue. The matter is important, and the erosion of orthodoxy on such a crucial issue is a matter for concern to all who seek to witness to the full counsel of God.

Carl R. Trueman, University of Nottingham

You Have Stept Out of Your Place. A History of Women and Religion in America

Susan Hill Lindley

Westminster / John Knox Press, Louisville, 1996; 384pp., \$35; ISBN 0 664 22081 9

In this first narrative history of women and religion in America, Susan Hill Lindley has tried to span a wide range of American women's religious experiences and contributions presenting the story from the colonial period through to the mid-1990s. She cites the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church as the catalyst which urged men and women members of religious orders to return to the teaching of Christ and the gospel and to find their roots. This influenced American women, Protestants, Jews and Catholics, who, prompted also by the resurgence of the women's movement in the early 1960s and 1970s, set out on a path of liberation. The result was an explosion of research and publications about women and their roots. This work is an attempt to draw together some of the results of that scholarly explosion, highlighting the two-sidedness of women's lives over four centuries. Lindley demonstrates sensitively how, just as religion in the traditional sense has influenced the lives of American women through its institutions, values and sanctions, so women themselves have significantly affected American religion. The experiences of feminist-minded pioneer women who led the way out of women's culturally subordinate roles are interwoven with those of 'ordinary' women, who in their roles in their homes, churches and social communities were equally important. We are given an account of ethnically diverse female experience in various geographic, racial and denominational backgrounds. *You Have Stept Out of Your Place* shows how twentieth-century feminist women have found a new freedom through gradual change but still encounter opposition about religious leadership. The book also shows how American women have come to appreciate what women through the centuries accomplished through traditional roles. Susan Lindley has depicted this changing role of women over four centuries with great thoroughness. This is a book which captures the imagination so that one looks forward to seeing how women's role will further metamorphosise, as Lindley forecasts.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism

Merold Westphal

Eerdmans, Michigan, 1993; 304pp., \$19.99; ISBN 0 8028 0643 0

This study of Freud, Marx and Nietzsche is one of the most original, thought-provoking and disturbing books I have read for a long time. Its central thesis is that 'we should listen carefully and humbly to three of the Christian church's most formidable foes'. The author even ventures to suggest that we should read them as an exercise for Lent 'with an eye towards repentance and renewal rather than refutation'. Read in this way these anti-Christian authors may be used by the Holy Spirit as 'instruments for self-examination and sanctification'.

Westphal argues that there are two kinds of atheism: the atheism of scepticism and the atheism of suspicion. The former is sceptical about the *evidence* for God and seeks to discredit *it*, while the latter (taking scepticism for granted) is suspicious of the *motives* of believers and seeks to discredit *them*. If the evidence is insufficient, why do people turn to God and religion? They do so, argued Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, for suspicious reasons of hidden self-interest of which they are often totally unaware due to the human capacity for self-deception.

These two kinds of atheism, argues the author, demand different Christian responses. We may respond to scepticism by seeking to refute it and showing that the evidence is sufficient, but we should respond to atheists of suspicion, not by refuting them and discrediting them, but by 'acknowledging that their critique is all too true much of the time'. 'We should take them seriously and examine ourselves personally and corporately.'

Westphal devotes a section each to Freud, Marx and Nietzsche. Here the book can be heavy-going, but the writer is probably as lucid as any author could be given the difficulty of the material. At times the insight of these three thinkers into our self-deception and disguised self-interest is quite devastating. All too often God can be a mechanism for dealing with all sorts of hidden, competing psychological drives, of most of which we are blissfully unaware (Freud). He can be an opium to kill the pain of the suffering of the oppressed and the guilt of the oppressors (Marx). He can be the instrument by which those who are 'weak and inferior' gain an imagined superiority (Nietzsche).

Westphal sees much of the criticisms of these atheistic philosophers as 'deeply biblical in spite of their own unbelief',

describing them as 'the great modern theologians of original sin'. After all, they were far from being the first to realise that 'religion can be a work of the flesh'. 'The Bible', writes the author, 'is surely the most anti-religious of all the world's scriptures.' He even accuses Marx of plagiarising Amos! As for Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees, it is more damning than anything in Freud or Nietzsche.

Life would have been much easier if I had not read this book! Having read it, however, I must go to work on some of the areas of self-deception in my own life, bearing in mind that the 'atheists of suspicion' are only confirming that 'the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;' and that 'all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags'. While Freud, Marx and Nietzsche probe the depths of our depravity and deception, they rob us of a solution in the God of grace: he does not require us to be free of all self-deception before he accepts us.

Brian Maiden, Stockport

Augustinian and Pauline Rhetoric in Romans Five: A Study of Early Christian Rhetoric

Marty L. Reid

Mellen Biblical Press, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter, 1996; 216pp., \$89.95; ISBN 0 7734 2367 2

Intended for the scholarly market, this book seeks to provide an alternative to Augustine's rhetorical analysis of Romans 5. The author draws on the rhetorical critical methods of G. Kennedy, aligns himself with the 'new perspective' on Paul, and hopes to add to our understanding of the purpose of Romans.

Reid first outlines Augustine's hermeneutical principles – e.g. his use of rhetorical tools, and his preference for the allegorical method. He then describes Augustine's exegesis of Romans 5:1-11, focusing on his understanding of the phrase *caritas Dei* in 5:5 as an objective genitive, and his argument for infant baptism from 5:6. Romans 5:6-11 portrays Christ as reconciler between God and humanity. He examines Augustine's idea of original sin as disseminated throughout the human race by means of sexual lust, and the concomitant necessity of grace (5:12-21).

Next, Reid gives his own rhetorical analysis. Augustine had failed to see that 5:1-5 and 5:6-11 should be taken together as a coherent argument. The whole is a well-crafted text presenting a christological proof that 'reconciliation between God and man was made possible because of Christ's faithfulness'. Reid argues against the view that an anacolouthon governs 5:12-21 and against the traditional

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

anthropological (individualistic) interpretation of these verses. Rather, they continue the christological proof commenced in 5:1-11. By developing the dissimilarity between Adam and Christ, Paul substantiates the superior consequences of Christ's faithfulness.

Reid then attempts to relate his analysis of chapter 5 to the overall argument of the letter, whose rhetorical *topos* is 'mutuality'. Paul is seeking to establish mutual relationships between himself and the Roman community (1:11-12), and within the congregation itself. Romans 5 shows that a covenant exists because of God's faithfulness exemplified through Jesus. Each believer has his or her own position within that covenant, and consequently, no group should consider itself superior to or boast over another, as is happening at Rome.

The book is well produced: footnotes are at the bottom of each page, bibliography and indexes are clearly set out. The style of writing is fairly clear, with useful summaries at the end of each chapter. The description of Augustine's methods and interpretation is interesting and informative. While it would have been helpful to have had some background information on the controversies behind the exegesis, such as Pelagianism and Manichaeism, this is a stimulating introduction to Augustine's treatment of the text and to the interpretative ideas which held sway for so long.

Unfortunately, Reid's own exegesis is disappointing. His rhetorical analysis is conscientious and thorough, but he takes certain ideas for granted (*e.g.* the Messiahship of Jesus and the 'faithfulness of Christ'), without acknowledging the associated problems. Similarly, his attempt to relate the rhetoric of chapter 5 to that of the entire letter falls short because of inadequate discussion of the situation Paul might be addressing. It is good to see the christological interpretation of Romans 5 supported by rhetorical criticism, but scant engagement with other aspects of contemporary Romans scholarship lets the book down rather badly.

Marion L.S. Carson, Glasgow

Is the Bible Male? The Book of Ruth and Biblical Narrative

Richard Bauckham

Grove Books, Cambridge, 1996; 24pp., £1.95; ISBN 1 85174 331 6

Grove booklets 'aim to make the best in current evangelical thinking about the Bible and its application available and relevant for those teaching and preaching in the local church'. Specifically, Bauckham wants to read Ruth as a story subversive of simplistic androcentrism.

Sadly his analysis of the narrative gets the most basic story-structure question – ‘Whose story is it?’ – badly wrong. He thinks the story is Naomi’s; ‘the story begins and ends with Naomi’; this confuses a framing device, a relatively superficial element of structure, with the main plot.

Tradition is right; the story is Ruth’s. Her decision to stick with Naomi sets the drama rolling; she is the one who risks most (rejection as an alien in Israel; molestation, when she goes gleaning; rejection and disgrace when she approaches Boaz at night). The book’s two biggest scenes (Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor; the scene at the city gate) hinge on Ruth and Boaz, not Naomi. If it were Naomi’s story, then what is mainly at stake might be the economic security which Bauckham sees as central. If it is Ruth’s story, then the desire for a child moves into the centre. If there is any doubt which of these themes is primary, look at Boaz; no economic insecurity there, but there is (unspoken until the end) the simple human longing for a child.

Ironically, Bauckham’s mistake obscures precisely the balance in the text which he wants to assert. There is a balance, right at the heart of the big scene at the gate, between formal, public androcentrism (Boaz doing the legal business) and a more subtle gynocentrism. Amazingly, Bauckham misses it. The scene shows Boaz as a skilful negotiator: Boaz plays his kinsman beautifully, recognising the man’s greed and offering him what seems like an excellent investment. The kinsman, mouthing rectitude, takes the bait. Then Boaz introduces Ruth. On the face of it, this does not make sense. The kinsman should say, at least to himself, ‘So I get to sleep with this young woman, too? Great!’ To make sense of Boaz’ strategy we have to take account of a woman who is never mentioned, yet who determines the scene’s outcome, *viz.* the kinsman’s wife. Imagine the kinsman’s homecoming. Wife: ‘What did you do today?’ Man: ‘I bought a field.’ Wife: ‘Good, something for my son the doctor to inherit.’ Man: ‘Ah well now... there’s this Moabite girl... I have to sleep with her, and her son gets the field.’ Cut to wife’s wrath. Boaz, wisely, has seen it coming. Bauckham misses it completely.

Bauckham undervalues the characters of Ruth and Boaz. He misses their dignity and courtesy. He misses the book’s humour. He misses the balance between the two big scenes – the intimacy of the scene at the threshing floor, the public character of the scene at the gate – and the way that both scenes conduct an astute and gracious negotiation between masculine and feminine worlds. As a result, the true and good things Bauckham wants to say about androcentrism and gynocentrism are only weakly tied to the text of Ruth, and preachers looking for help in reading biblical narrative are poorly served.

Harry Smart, Montrose

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

In the light of the vigour of the criticism in the above review, the Editor invited the author to respond. The reviewer subsequently declined to take the debate further in this context.

The editor has kindly allowed me to respond to this review of my booklet. Readers of it will have very little idea of what my short book is all about: they will not understand at all how I propose we should read Ruth, and they will certainly not guess that actually a third of the booklet is not about Ruth but about the general issue of androcentrism in biblical narratives and about the possibilities of identifying women's perspectives in them – for example, in the Gospels. Nor will they be able to see that, even if one were to accept Smart's major disagreement with me about the story in Ruth, most of my argument in the booklet would be untouched. If they are not aware of the nature of the issue of androcentrism and gynocentrism in the Bible, the review will give them no reason to think it important, even though the reviewer appears to agree with me that it is.

Smart is obviously bursting to tell us his own ideas about Ruth and so fills the review with them. They are both naive in their cultural assumptions and ignore the plain evidence of the text. For example: (1) Only in modern western society do people want children out of 'the simple human longing for a child'. In peasant societies like ancient Israel, the natural desire for children is always overlaid with social and economic needs. Boaz wants a child because he needs heirs to continue his line and that of his kinsman Elimelech: this is obvious in the text (4:10-12). Ruth, like every peasant, wants children to support her in her old age, just as Naomi needs Ruth's son as a surrogate son for her own support (4:15). Any pre-modern reader would take this for granted. In such a society, even people who own a lot of land need sons to manage and to work it if they are to continue to benefit from it in old age. Ruth, I stress in the booklet, is an economically realistic narrative, not the Hollywood romance Smart imagines. (2) Whether the story is primarily Naomi's (and of course I do not deny that it is *also* Ruth's) is arguable, but at least this view reflects real features of the text. Smart's little fantasy about the kinsman's wife has no basis in the text at all. The kinsman states quite clearly why he does not want to take Ruth with the land (4:6): he is thinking of his heirs, not his wife, which is exactly what one would expect in this thoroughly androcentric scene at the city gate where male interests predominate on all sides. The text gives no warrant for introducing the wife at all. But even supposing it did, Smart can only call his idea gynocentrism because he has not begun to understand what gynocentric narrative is. Even if what he suggests is really implied in 4:6, that could not make 4:6 a narrative conveying

a women's perspective. At best we have the kinsman's (implicit) idea of what his wife might think. Androcentric literature is full of men's ideas of what their wives think! In gynocentric literature we really hear from the wives.

The conclusion is clear: the things Smart 'wants to say about androcentrism and gynocentrism are only weakly tied to the text of Ruth, and preachers looking for help in reading biblical narrative are poorly served' by this little exercise in eisegesis.

Richard Bauckham, St Mary's College, St Andrews

The Reality of the Kingdom

Paul Rowntree Clifford

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge, 1996; 133pp., \$12.00; ISBN 0 8028 0867 0

Paying Attention to People

Vernon White

SPCK, London, 1996; 199pp., £10.99; ISBN 0 281 04988 2

The Empowerment Process

Mary Ellen Durbin *et al.*

Paulist Press, New York, 1994; 127pp., \$12.95; ISBN 0 8091 3478 0

How relevant is Christianity to a secular world? The question is highlighted by Paul Rowntree Clifford, former president of the Selly Oak Colleges, in *The Reality of the Kingdom*. He is no Evangelical but accepts that the New Testament writers recorded what they thought they saw and heard. They understood the life, words, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to be relevant to all times and all cultures and hence to have meaning for today. Clifford rejects a Christianity which withdraws into a holy huddle and argues powerfully that 'the kingdom of God has to do with the whole created order: with our stewardship of material resources, with all forms of life on this planet, as well as with the structures of human society. Christianity is not just the promise of salvation to the individual'. Evangelicals will add that the promise of salvation must not be neglected. One of the issues with which Evangelicals are now grappling concerns the wholeness of the gospel, how we express God's concern for all the needs of his creatures alongside the call to individual conversion.

It is the concept of the individual which provides the starting point for Vernon White, the Chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral, in *Paying*

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Attention to People. Historically, the notion of 'the individual' has gained predominance only in recent centuries. White moves deftly between Locke, Mill, Kant and other giants to show how they developed ideas of individual autonomy, self-realisation, human rights and obligations.

By the second half of this century, individualism is accepted as a central concept. Rightly so, for, as White explains, a belief in the value of every individual is a bulwark against soviet-style regimes which would subject individual liberty to the might of the state. And not just the state. White notes the work of Alasdair MacIntyre who attacks 'bureaucratic individualism' in which large-scale private corporations use individuals as no more than economic units. Yet there are dangers in individualism. Over the last twenty years, economic and political individualism has become dominant, culminating in Mrs Thatcher's famous statement, 'There is no such thing as society, only individuals.' This glorification of individualism has led to personal greed, selfishness and a disregard for others. Will Hutton – who is one author not cited by Vernon White – adds that economic individualism has allowed the reign of an economic system which widens inequalities while political individualism creates a political mind which does not care about the disadvantages suffered by those at the bottom of the pile (*The State We're In*, 1995).

What has Christianity to contribute to this analysis? White explains that God created people with an individuality that lasts beyond death. Individuals are precious to God. They should also be precious to each other for they are all equal before God, they are kin, and hence have obligations to share the resources of God's earth. This relational aspect of individuals is confirmed by the actions of Jesus who depended upon, loved and served others. Individuals are not meant to be egoistical selves. White sums up: 'we have been given a tradition of belief in which individual persons are essentially and divinely constituted to flourish by belonging to others in *particular* communities as well as to God'. In short, our individuality is partly defined by our relationships.

One of the important conclusions, from this erudite book, is that Christians have a responsibility to build communities in which individuals can flourish. However, White has little practical advice for those Christians struggling at the hard end where gross inequalities continue to restrict individual choice. In my recent *FARE Dealing. Neighbourhood Involvement in a Housing Scheme* (Community Development Foundation, 1997), I point out that local neighbourhood action, both Christian and secular, is emerging as a force. White does not consider its role in strengthening communities and individuals.

By contrast, *The Empowerment Process*, by Mary Ellen Durbin and her colleagues, is wholly practical. It is a manual which provides knowledge, tips and exercises aimed at recruiting and empowering local volunteers to parish activities. It is Catholic and American but can be applied by Christians of all denominations in the United Kingdom.

Bob Holman, Easterhouse, Glasgow

Prophets and Poets: A Companion to the Prophetic Books of the Old Testament

Edited by Grace Emmerson

Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford, 1994; 301pp., £8.99;
ISBN 0 7459 2599 5

Sowers and Reapers: A Companion to the Four Gospels and Acts

Edited by John Parr

Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford, 1994; 446pp., £9.99;
ISBN 0 7459 2531 6

These two attractively produced volumes are not commentaries in the traditional sense but are designed to help those who wish to read the Bible with greater understanding. They are composed of material previously published in the BRF's *Guidelines* Bible reading notes augmented by fresh introductory articles. Anyone who regularly uses the *Guidelines* notes may find much of the material is not new, but it is helpful to have the material on these two groups of texts brought together and presented in such a usable way.

The introductory articles in both volumes are very useful. In *Prophets* we are introduced to the role of the prophet, the poetic character of much of their preaching, the use of the prophets in the New Testament and the problems of translating the prophets, with their rich use of Hebrew idioms and word plays, into English. In *Sowers* John Parr gives us a helpful and constructive introduction both to the Gospels as witness to Jesus and also to the current work on the 'Historical Jesus'. It is refreshing to see a healthy respect for the Gospels as reliable witnesses to the historical figure of Jesus. When it comes to the notes on the biblical text the two volumes have somewhat different approaches. While *Sowers* follows the text of the four Gospels and Acts through consecutively, *Prophets* tends to treat the prophetic books more thematically and so there is a significant amount of jumping back and forth, particularly in the longer prophets

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

like Isaiah and Ezekiel. This is not a complaint, in that detailed consecutive commentary on all the prophetic books of the Old Testament would have turned the book into something completely different. It can, however, be a bit disorientating for those used to following the biblical text as it stands. The minor prophets are dealt with in the more traditional manner. The comment on the New Testament books is considerably more detailed than that on the prophets, making *Sowers* quite usable as a basic commentary.

The aim of these volumes is to bring the results of biblical scholarship to the Christian who reads his or her Bible in order to hear God's voice in daily life. They therefore are towards the 'heavy' end of the reading-note spectrum, yet there is an obvious concern that the Bible be brought to bear on contemporary life. There are often contemporary references in the notes themselves, there are regular questions for thought at the end of the sections and there are occasional hymns and prayers to encourage meditation on the biblical text. The various authors are well qualified to transmit the results of biblical scholarship to others, most being academics, yet they do so without jargon or intimidating language. What is noticeable is that many contributors belong theologically to the mainstream of critical scholarship. This is particularly so in the Old Testament volume. The books in the short lists of suggestions for further reading are not generally those most familiar or most acceptable to an evangelical reader, and occasionally comments appear to reflect 'critical orthodoxy' more than the concerns of the text itself. Discussion of 'Trito-Isaiah' or the authenticity of a text may come as a shock to someone who is used to other well-known Bible-reading notes. On the other hand, there are often excellent theological comments on the text which get right to the heart of the matter.

To bring the positive results of biblical scholarship into the sphere of day-to-day Bible reading is surely an aim to be applauded. Someone looking for a new approach to try in their Bible reading or for a relatively brief orientation to the texts dealt with will find either of these volumes stimulating.

Alistair I. Wilson, Free North Church, Inverness

Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE

Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin

Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, 1993; xxiii+327pp., \$24.95;
ISBN 0 913573 89 2

This book provides a profile of each of eighteen main roles within village life (e.g. father, mother, farmer, host, widow) and at the state

level (*e.g.* monarch, prophet, priest, slave). The authors sometimes generalise from limited data or play down the undoubted diversity within each role. Nevertheless, it is a clearly-written, well-informed and accessible introduction to the social world of pre-exilic Israel and successfully illuminates much in the Old Testament that seems alien to modern Christians.

An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books

David M. Howard Jr.

Moody, Chicago, 1993; 395pp., \$21.99; ISBN 0 8024 4127 0

This is a clearly-written, well-informed and useful conservative evangelical introduction to the historical books, which generally reaches predictable conclusions (fifteenth-century Exodus, *etc.*). Following a twenty-five page introduction to historical narrative, there are chapters on Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah and Esther. For each of these, topics include authorship, date, historical and cultural context, place in canon, special issues, theology and outline.

Old Testament Introduction (IBR Bibliographies II)

Edwin C. Hostetter

Baker, Grand Rapids, 1995; 106pp., \$7.99; ISBN 0 8010 2017 4

This book (one of fourteen such bibliographies planned by the Institute for Biblical Research, the sister organization in the USA to the Tyndale Fellowship) lists 500 bibliographical items categorised under Criticism, Ancient Texts and Versions, Language, Cognate Literature, and Environment. Within each classification items are listed in date order and include a brief description. Selections are wide ranging, but with some key omissions, and with many descriptions strangely uninformative.

Old Testament Evangelistic Sermons

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1995; xxiii+268pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 85151 683 1

This volume comprises twenty-one evangelistic sermons of Lloyd-Jones (seventeen previously unpublished). The majority were from his early years (at Aberavon), and were preached from a wide range of

SCOTTISH BULLETIN OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Old Testament texts. This is preceded by a twenty-six page introduction by Iain Murray, the authorised biographer of Lloyd-Jones.

Preaching Old Testament Narrative (Grove Biblical Series 4)

Bob Fyall

Grove Books, Cambridge, 1997; 23pp., £2.25; ISBN 1 85174 346 4

A practical, clearly written and helpful booklet that shows how to identify and preach the narrator's emphases in a way that reflects the narrative's place within the overall Old Testament narrative. Fyall also underlines the necessity of relevant and appropriate contemporary application. He illustrates his approach by constructing a series of ten sermons on 1 and 2 Kings and giving more extensive details of two of these.

Ezekiel, Westminster Bible Companion

Ronald E. Clements

Westminster John Knox, Louisville, KY, 1996; x+211pp., \$17.00; ISBN 0 664 25272 9

This commentary series aims to provide 'a guide to Christian faith and practice' for laity. Clements provides a helpful (non-evangelical) non-technical but scholarly theological commentary. The approach is section-by-section rather than verse-by-verse, addressing only issues relevant to the theological interpretation of the Book.

Edward D. Herbert, Glasgow Bible College

Women Before God

Lavinia Byrne

SPCK, London, 1995; 111pp., £7.99; ISBN 0 281 04827 4

This book is a classic of its kind. This revised edition has a new introduction which comments on the changing attitudes of and towards Christian women since the first edition in 1988. Lavinia Byrne says that her desire is for women to come alive in their personal faith because only then will they be able to fully give of themselves in a faith community. The first part of this book is designed to be the catalyst for this and an enabler for people to grow in the knowledge and love of God. The second half of the book develops this debate further, moving 'beyond a sacred / secular divide, beyond the thinking

behind our use of the expression "having a vocation" and beyond questions raised by the movement to ordain women' into personal spiritual development, prayer and the presence of Christian women in the world and in the churches, continually acknowledging tradition but looking forward. I read this in the linear way that Lavinia Byrne suggested and found the book inspiring, exciting and full of hope that there is a groundswell across denominations that suggests we are now living in a time when God's image will be recognised fully in both man and woman.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

Revival Year Sermons

C.H. Spurgeon

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1996; 96pp., £2.95; ISBN 0 85151 703 X

This selection of five sermons preached during 1859 (from Psalm 44:1, Heb. 13:20, Ezek. 36:27, Rom. 8:30 and Acts 20:26, 27) illustrates Spurgeon's conviction that the preacher must faithfully proclaim all biblical truth, even that to which the unregenerate are hostile. It shows his manner of doing so. While the publishers' claim that 'in them will be found the cause of the phenomenal success which attended his ministry' needs some qualification, they illustrate the fact that when such truth is owned of God it is the means of humbling sinners before his throne of grace. Spurgeon lived for another thirty-two years and matured in his thinking through experience and controversy but he claimed that he saw no reason to amend his earliest doctrine, and these sermons, typically Spurgeonic in their freshness, liveliness and theology, introduce a new generation of readers to his doctrine and style.

Hugh M. Cartwright, Free Church College, Edinburgh