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## REVIEWS

### **Jonathan Edwards: A Life**

George Marsden

Yale University Press, New Haven, 2003; xx+615pp., £25; ISBN 0 30009 693 3

Professor George Marsden's long-awaited critical biography of Jonathan Edwards, published to coincide with the 300th anniversary of Edwards' birth, is set to become the standard intellectual biography of America's premier theologian. All the epithets apply: this book is erudite, readable, scholarly, thorough. It tells a great story, and it tells it well.

The author's intention and purpose appears in the closing paragraphs of the text: 'one of my hopes is that this book may help bridge the gap between the Edwards of the students of American culture and the Edwards of the theologians' (p. 502). While admitting that his own approach is the former, Marsden states that he has his eye constantly on the theological issues.

Indeed, this particular biographer is at pains to set Edwards' works not only within the context of Edwards' own life, but within the nexus of ideas and the intellectual milieu of Edwards' eighteenth-century world. Marsden views Edwards' thought at one level as 'a post-Newtonian statement of classic Augustinian themes' (p. 504); but he is also aware of 'Edwards' sense of the direction that Western thought, culture and religion were heading' (p. 438). It is precisely by addressing his biblical Calvinism to a contemporary worldview that Edwards stands as a great exemplar in the practice of theology. The great biblical themes are everywhere present: the sovereignty of God, original sin, the supremacy of grace. But they are present in order to be re-cast, in order 'to frame an old debate in a new context' (p. 439). Marsden is skilful in the art of contextualisation of Edwards.

In possibly the greatest understatement in the work, Marsden states that 'Edwards' life did not lack for drama' (p. 432), and the dramatic element is never far away. The stories of Edwards' formative experiences, his donning, then discarding, the mantle of his grandfather in Northampton, his engagement with Arminianism, his relation with Whitefield and the Great Awakening, his role in the communion controversy and subsequent removal from Northampton, his tragic death so soon into his Princeton

Presidency – all these are woven into the narrative with the consummate skill of the storyteller. This is a massive volume that is ‘unputdownable’.

Not that it is entirely felicitous – Marsden’s favourite adjective of the young Edwards is ‘precocious’ – which appears several times in the opening pages to the point of being irksome. He also accuses Edwards of playing fast and loose in his editing of Brainerd’s diary, subjecting the Brainerd story to a controlling principle of spirituality. Marsden may be correct to state that ‘the *Life of Brainerd...* is *Religious Affections* in the form of a spiritual biography’ (p. 331), but one wonders whether Edwards’ editing was as severe as Marsden suggests.

The use of the term ‘revivalist’ is also an interesting one. That there were *revivals* under Edwards’ preaching is incontrovertible; but whether Marsden is correct to use phrases such as ‘supreme revivalist’ (p. 244) in describing Edwards is questionable. There were, no doubt, various factors feeding into the Great Awakening: but Marsden’s caution that we ought not to overlook social and political factors, or even the relation of theological controversies to the Awakening, tends to reduce the revival to a social, man-centred movement. Edwards himself would not have looked on the Awakening in that way; and probably would have difficulty in calling himself a revivalist, as if he helped to orchestrate the movement. And is it true that ‘the awakenings were... notable means of gaining control over parishioners’ (p. 209)?

Marsden’s work will inevitably invite comparison with other biographies. Iain Murray’s 1987 biography of Edwards is dismissed as being ‘uncritical’, while Perry Miller’s earlier work suffers, in Marsden’s view, from the creative imagination of the author. Paralleling the ongoing Yale project to publish Edwards’ works, this biography builds on a generation of scholarship. This is reflected in the footnotes; unfortunately there is no bibliography. All of which begs the question: where is the Jonathan Edwards in today’s Yale or Princeton?

Despite one or two minor misprints, this book is a great read. Above all, it is refreshing to be reminded of the fact that America’s premier theologian was, well, not American after all, but ‘an elite male colonial British citizen’ (p. 259), who used the term ‘our nation’ not of America, but of Britain (p. 467). Marsden’s work will prove indispensable for modern study of Edwards, not least in its attempt to find a centre for Edwards’ thought. Perhaps one sentence, tucked away on page 479, brings us close to that centre, as Marsden reminds us that, for Edwards, ‘all reality was of one Christological piece’.

*Iain D. Campbell, Bach, Isle of Lewis*

## Counted Righteous in Christ

John Piper

IVP, Leicester, 2002; 141pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 85111 991 3

This is a good book. In the long perspective, it may come to be seen as the best book that John Piper has written to date.

In the past, I have had reason to be cautious about certain aspects of John Piper's teaching and ministry (I've never been convinced of 'Christian hedonism'). With *Counted Righteous in Christ*, however, no such caution is necessary. Piper has given us here a sound, well-argued, accessible vindication of the traditional Protestant doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness. In his sights is the 'New Perspective' on the apostle Paul. Seemingly integral to New Perspective thinking, at least among its more evangelical practitioners, is its denial of the traditional evangelical doctrine of imputed righteousness. (Non-evangelicals have little reason to deny it, as it is of no real interest to them.) As Piper makes clear, this isn't some side issue in theology, but a revisionism of huge dimensions. If we listen to the New Perspective on this particular matter (on other matters, its exponents can be illuminating thinkers and authors), we will be abandoning something that lay at the heart of the Reformation understanding of salvation, and to which forceful testimony is borne by the great Protestant confessions of faith, such as Westminster and the 1689 Baptist Confession. As Piper convincingly demonstrates, we will also be dealing falsely with Scripture, which the Reformers and the confessions faithfully reflected.

Robert Gundry of Westmont College is the thinker with whom Piper chooses to interact in this book. This is partly because Piper is more familiar with Gundry than with other New Perspective writers, partly because Gundry has perhaps been more uncompromising than others in the clarity of his antagonism to traditional Reformation teaching. Gundry says:

I join the growing number of biblical theologians, evangelical and non-evangelical alike, who deny that Paul or any other New Testament author speaks of a righteousness of Christ (whatever it might include or exclude) that is imputed to believing sinners.

In its place, Gundry teaches that our own faith is our righteousness before God: that is, he substitutes our faith for Christ's righteousness, and argues that faith *per se* is the righteousness that justifies in God's sight. Exactly *why* faith (imperfect faith, coexisting with much unbelief and disobedience) should constitute justifying righteousness before God does not seem so

evident in Gundry. Faith itself clearly is not righteousness; at most, it could be seen as a seed from which full-bodied righteousness will eventually grow. But Gundry appears to hold that God simply chooses (sovereignly?) to regard faith *as if it were* righteousness, the righteousness that avails before him unto justification and salvation. Those who have browsed in the fields of historical theology will recognise in Gundry's view a rehash of the older Arminian and Neonomian doctrine so consistently rejected by our Reformed forefathers, and indeed very explicitly rejected in the Westminster Confession. Westminster says that God declares believers righteous

not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them (11:1).

The flaw in the scheme adopted by Gundry is that it depicts God slackening his standards, and settling for something less than real righteousness as the basis of justification. Apparently God declares that sinners have kept his law and are righteous, on the ground of something that (painfully obviously) is not genuine law-keeping, viz. our own imperfect faith. This is tantamount to saying that God imputes righteousness where there is no righteousness to impute.

Piper takes us through key passages of Scripture to demonstrate that Gundry is incorrect. God declares sinners righteous, not by deciding to accept their own faith as if it were righteousness, but by imputing Christ's righteousness to them: the real righteousness of the Son's perfect obedience. This is a perfection whose apex was the cross, where Christ's endurance of the law's curse (his passive obedience) and his holy self-surrender to the Father's revealed will (his active obedience) coincided in a single and climactic expression of complete righteousness. In other words, if I'm asked what constitutes my saving righteousness before God, on the basis of which I'm justified, my reply is not, 'My own faith', but, 'Jesus Christ Himself, obedient unto death'. Faith is not in itself justifying righteousness, but the instrument by which we receive Christ and his justifying righteousness. Indeed, if we regard our own faith as our justifying righteousness, there seems little real difference between that and the Roman Catholic view propounded at the Council of Trent in response to the Reformation, that our own inherent righteousness, infused into us by grace, is our justifying righteousness before God. It would be a strange paradox if New Perspective evangelicals ended up aligning themselves with Trent against Luther and Calvin!

The richness of Piper's book lies in its exegesis, which forms the core of the work. Piper carefully examines Romans 3:20-26, Romans 4 (a key chapter with its sustained language of imputation), Romans 5:12-19, Romans 10:1-10, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Philippians 3:8-9, and in general the phrase 'the righteousness of God'. On the whole, I believe his case is cogent and persuasive that these passages lay a genuine and firm foundation for the traditional Reformation doctrine of imputed righteousness.

Mostly the present reviewer was both impressed and stimulated by Piper's exegesis. The only area where I sensed a slight weakness was in Piper's treatment of aspects of Romans 4, where I think he lays too much stress on Paul's statement that righteousness is 'imputed' to Abraham, which Piper argues must necessarily be something external to Abraham. But surely the 'righteousness' of justification (a righteous *status*) is always an external reality imputed by God, under any scheme. The question is, on what *basis* does God credit this status? For Gundry the basis is our own faith. For Piper, and the Reformers, it is Christ himself and his perfect obedience, with faith as the appropriating instrument rather than the inherent basis. But I do not think the mere statement that 'God imputed righteousness to Abraham' proves that the imputation was based on something external to Abraham. Other good arguments, however, are to hand. For example, in Romans 4:6 Paul says that the imputation of righteousness involves the non-imputation of sin. But how can our faith in itself be the basis of the non-imputation of sin? Faith is not sinless! If (to adopt Paul's imagery) God looks at faith and logs it in his judgement-book as 'no sin', there must be some other cause than faith itself for this reckoning, since faith in itself does not constitute 'no sin' in the believer.

Allied to this, I felt that Piper made slightly heavy weather of the apostle's teaching in Romans 4 that 'faith is imputed for righteousness'. Gundry builds on this language as the strong foundation of his own view. Piper struggles rather laboriously to overthrow it. Surely the most simple and most fitting response to Gundry is to ask *why* faith is imputed for righteousness? Gundry can give no coherent answer. The biblical and Reformational answer is that faith is imputed for righteousness because faith is the vessel that receives and contains Christ's righteousness. 'Faith imputed for righteousness' is a case of the instrument being treated as the cause, owing to the deep and inseparable connection between the two. Paul can jump from one to the other, saying now that faith is imputed to our account, now that righteousness is imputed. God can be envisaged as writing either 'faith' or 'righteousness' against our names in his judgement-book. Why? Because it is precisely the faith that results in the

righteousness, as the latter's sole and indispensable instrument. It is parallel with 'justification by faith': we are declared righteous by our faith, not because our faith is itself righteousness, but because our faith is the instrument of union with Christ the Righteous.

Ultimately it is union with Christ that is at stake in this debate. If we are truly one with Christ, then when God looks at us, he sees his Son. In terms of that union, we *are* Christ. Why then should there be any difficulty about God crediting Christ's righteousness to our account? The believer is so intimately one with Christ that Christ's righteousness becomes as much the believer's as it is Christ's: just as the believer's sin becomes as much Christ's as it is the believer's. This 'wonderful exchange', the double imputation of our sin to Christ and his righteousness to us, forms the bedrock of Reformation teaching about salvation. Strangely, Gundry does hold to the imputation of our sin to Christ. Quite why he stops short of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us remains a baffling mystery both to Piper and to the present writer.

John Piper has produced a most succinct and helpful defence and exposition of imputed righteousness, and a very pointed critique of the New Perspective on this issue. There can be little doubt that all those interested in this debate should read and ponder this book.

*Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall*

## **God and the Crisis of Freedom**

Richard Bauckham

Westminster John Knox, Louisville, 2002; 221pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 664 22479 2

Some of the material in Richard Bauckham's latest work may be familiar to readers, having been collected from various tracts and articles he has written over the years. In the present work, however, that material has been brought together to form an important and insightful discussion of the 'crisis' facing the contemporary world, namely the widespread pursuit of freedom outside of the context of a glad submission to authority and of a sense of community and mutual interdependence.

The book opens with a discussion of the biblical concept of freedom, a concept founded on the key Old Testament image of the Exodus and on the extensions of this image into the New Testament. Bauckham highlights the importance of the notion of *dependence*, both on God and on one another, and of a *glad submission to authority* as fundamental aspects of the biblical notion of freedom. The second chapter contrasts this with the

concept of freedom that characterises contemporary society, a concept founded on the libertarianism of John Stuart Mill and seen particularly in the all-pervasive consumerism of the modern west.

Having established the biblical concept of freedom and demonstrated how sharply this differs from contemporary notions of freedom, Bauckham addresses the question of *authority*, discussing this in relation to Scripture, morality and tradition (the chapter on 'Authority and Morality' is essentially a discussion of Richard Holloway's *Godless Morality*). These chapters are followed by an examination of the Christian understanding of the role of humanity, and particularly its authority, *vis-à-vis* creation. This chapter demonstrates that the biblical teaching regarding man's authority over creation only became truly destructive when married to Renaissance humanism and Francis Bacon's vision of scientific progress.

The book is then brought to a close with a 'critique from within' as Bauckham uses Michel Houellebecq's novel *Les Particules élémentaires* as a springboard into an analysis of the inherent flaws in the modern pursuit of freedom. This analysis is followed by a discussion of the centrality of the Trinity to a proper attainment of freedom, a discussion both indebted to, and critical of, the theology of Jürgen Moltmann.

The great quality of *God and the Crisis of Freedom* is that while drawing upon Bauckham's immense erudition, it succeeds in dealing with its subject matter in a way that never loses sight of where the ordinary believer is located in the world. It manages to be, therefore, a book that is of equal relevance to both the academic and the lay person. For the same reason, it also succeeds in being both insightful and challenging (disturbing, even) in a way that few other books could match. The discussion of consumerism and Thatcherism in chapter 2, for instance, is both a powerful critique of the world and an unnerving insight into the extent to which the church is stained with worldly values.

At certain points in the book, Bauckham uses language that evangelicals may be uncomfortable with. Notably, in his discussion of the relationship between authority and tradition in chapter 5, he speaks of the church 'creating fresh meaning' from Scripture in each generation, language that some may see as postmodern and others may see as charismatic. When Bauckham's arguments are understood, however, such interpretations of his words can be seen to be inappropriate; his argument in chapter 5 is that *tradition*, the believing community's understanding of what Scripture is saying to the world, can never be static, even though there may be certain elements of continuity through the ages. I stress this point because it would indeed be a great shame if readers failed to grasp the real importance of what the writer is saying because of instinctive reactions



against his language. Indeed, it is at those points where Bauckham's language is at its most controversial that the book contains some of its most important insights.

*Grant Macaskill, St Mary's College, St Andrews University*

## **The Provocative Church**

Graham Tomlin

SPCK, London, 2002; 176pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 281 05476 2

Every so often comes a book to sell your shirt for. Simple, thoughtful, passionate, written by someone who knows their subject and communicates clearly. One that you can read, or give to your group leaders, or even (as a colleague of mine has) make into a Homegroup course. This is one of those books, as Graham Tomlin reflects on what it means for our churches to become once again provocative churches.

What he means is what Paul means in Colossians 4:5-6, and what Peter means in 1 Peter 2:12. He means churches that make people long for God. He goes so far as to say that the Christian God can only be found by those who desire him. 'One of the key themes of this book is that unless there is something about church, or Christians, or Christian faith that intrigues, provokes or entices, then all the evangelism in the world will fall on deaf ears. If churches cannot convey a sense of 'reality' then all our 'truth' will count for nothing.... Churches need to become provocative, arresting places which make the searcher, the casual visitor, want to come back for more.' (p. 10f.).

He begins with Derek Draper, one-time Labour spin-doctor. At a time of personal crisis he was told he needed some spirituality to balance his life. He happened on a provocative church. 'What appealed to him was the practical *wisdom* of the teaching of Jesus' (p. 6) which offered him a much better and less superficial way of life.

The key question is, how can my church be like that? Tomlin shows you. Two brilliant chapters setting out Jesus' agenda for his people in their world are followed by two more that deal with the realities: 'Evangelism makes me feel guilty' and 'Is my church worth going to?' Here's a flavour: 'Evangelism sometimes is portrayed as the kind of thing that only those with a couple of theology degrees, an extrovert character and the emotional constitution of a rhinoceros would try. And because most of us aren't like that, we slink away, a little embarrassed, but greatly relieved' (p. 72). And this: 'The kingdom of God and the lordship of Christ [are] key themes, which lie at the heart of the theology of the church. The two come together

when we grasp that it is life under the kingdom of God that provokes the questions of the curious and even the uninterested' (p. 73).

Particularly helpful is his little section on the power of goodness, demonstrating the lavish generosity of God. So next time you're in the drive-thru' McDonald's, why not pay for the folks behind as well as your own meal? It'll certainly leave them with questions (though I couldn't quite work out how they'd ever know *why* you did that).

The last three chapters major on being and leading the kind of church that provokes questions. What he describes is what I've come to call 'closing the circle'. Think of churches that employ youth workers: they're very glad they're there, and working away on their behalf. But how many of us have 'closed the circle' and allowed the ministry of the youth worker to change the church? So Tomlin describes the Christian who stumbled by mistake into an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, and was given a sudden and startling glimpse of how church should be. Struck by the depth of commitment to one another and the openness of their sharing, he realised 'They were desperate and wanted to change' and that 'church was intended to be a transforming community' (p. 106).

This is thorough theology worked out in practice. Tomlin shows us how Christians are intended to live, in the public domain. Alongside, we're called to tell personal stories of the Lord's transformation of our lives. And then, yes, we work on providing settings to tell the Christian gospel to those who are asking questions, whom we may invite.

So away and sell your shirt and buy this book!

*Mike Parker, General Secretary, Evangelical Alliance Scotland*

## **Ministering Like the Master: Three Messages for Today's Preachers**

Stuart Olyott

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2003; 86pp., £4.50; ISBN 0 85151 830

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The three chapters in this book were originally three addresses given at the Leicester Ministers' Conference in 2000. The author, Stuart Olyott, formerly pastor of Belvidere Road Church in Liverpool, is currently Pastoral Director of the Evangelical Movement of Wales as well as a lecturer in preaching at the Evangelical Theological College of Wales.

Although (as the subtitle implies) this is a book aimed primarily at preachers, it is far from being a mere exercise in homiletics. There is much in it which the general reader may appreciate and enjoy, not least the warm

devotional spirit with which the author approaches his task. It may be a comparatively short volume but the lifetime of pastoral and preaching experience which Olyott has gained is evident on every page.

In chapter 1, 'Our Lord was not a Boring Preacher', he works his way through the Sermon on the Mount, showing the Lord's use of a clearly identifiable teaching method of state-illustrate-apply in his preaching. The aim here is to emphasise how the Lord used ordinary words, short sentences, rhetorical questions, and repetition to state his message. His illustrations were drawn from the home, the church and the everyday experiences of his hearers. The application of the message took account of the diversity of his auditors. Following this approach, Olyott affirms, will prevent 'boring' preaching.

In chapter 2, 'Our Lord was an Evangelistic Preacher', Matthew 11:20-30 is used to illustrate the evangelistic nature of the preaching of Jesus.

'It gives us a clear idea of how to do it, and this teaching can be summarized under three headings: "Point your finger", "Bend your knee" and "Open your arms"' (p. 35). Olyott is careful to distinguish between the words evangelical and evangelistic:

When I say that I am an evangelical I am referring to what I believe; I believe that God speaks in the Bible, everywhere in the Bible, only in the Bible, and nowhere outside the Bible. Evangelical is a word that refers to my personal convictions. Evangelistic does not refer to my convictions but to my practice. It explains what I do with the Bible; I preach from it with a view to the immediate conversion of every single person in front of me (p. 34).

Later in this same chapter, in connection with Matthew 11:28, the author briefly, but emphatically, points up the freeness of the gospel offer:

The Lord Jesus Christ invites everyone who is weighed down with a crushing burden to come to him. That, frankly, is everybody. The invitation is not to stay away, not to keep your distance, but to come. – The invitation is not to come to Christianity, and not even to come to any church or its activities, but to come to Christ! (pp. 57-8).

In the third chapter, the whole of Mark I is used as the basis for the theme that 'Our Lord was not just a preacher.' Ministering like the Master means following his example as he identifies with sinners, undergoes temptation, makes disciples by personal conversation, personally confronts evil, cares for the sick, maintains a life of secret prayer, and touches the untouchable.

All in all, although this is a comparatively short book and can be easily read in one sitting, it will leave the reader (preacher or not) much which can be profitably pondered.

*John Scoales, Edinburgh*

## **Recovering Mother Kirk: The Case for Liturgy in the Reformed Tradition**

D. G. Hart

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2003; 261pp., \$24.99; ISBN 0 8010 2615 6

Intended to serve the Reformed and Presbyterian confessional heritage, Hart's work will be a real stimulus to fresh thinking for all standing within this tradition, but may prove of little interest to a wider readership. Accessible to all serious readers, it will be especially valuable for those in pastoral ministry, as they seek appropriately to lead the praises of the sanctuary. A work composed of several articles published in various journals over the period 1993-2000, it covers a wide field of concerns, and as a consequence sometimes has the feel of a loose collection of articles rather than a single integrated work. Nevertheless the volume is unified by a common set of presuppositions regarding the nature of the church, the role of the liturgy in shaping and nurturing Christian discipleship, and the distortions that have crept into contemporary expressions of the Reformed faith, as much through evangelicalism as through theological liberalism.

Its subtitle notwithstanding, this is *not* primarily a volume about the Liturgy of the church, however. It *is* a powerful argument for a return to an 'older' form of Christian spirituality. Throughout, Hart specifically rejects modern evangelicalism's approach to worship as overly individualistic, an error he traces back to Puritanism and Pietism, from which sprang the eighteenth-century revivals. It is to these revivals that we must point as the true culprits in destroying the churchly piety and liturgical traditions of the Reformed churches. Hart here seems deliberately to reject the usual Reformed distinction between 'true revival' and what has come to be called 'revivalism'. It is as much the fault of Whitefield, Tennent, and Edwards, as it is of Finney, that preaching has been divorced from the liturgy, that Christian experience has been emphasized over covenant membership, that the individual's psychological condition before God has become primary, rather than their place within the covenant community (outside of whose embrace there is 'no ordinary possibility of salvation' WCF XXV:ii). When Hart goes on to reject the contemporary Church Growth

ecclesiology, with its liturgical ally, the 'Praise and Worship' movement, he is simultaneously rejecting the whole trajectory of revivalist evangelicalism that, he argues, lies behind them. Few Reformed and Presbyterian today would wish to disavow the Calvinistic revivals of the past as a major positive factor in shaping their own heritage. This, however, is exactly what Hart does. It is not the era of revival, nor that of the Puritans that Hart calls the church to renew its appreciation of. It is to the Reformation with its high view of the church, of 'office', and of the sacraments we must turn. It is a recovery of the corporate, liturgical, and educational character of the Reformation vision of the Christian life Hart seeks to restore. In short, the 'Truly Reformed' of the contemporary Reformed scene should beware of finding in Hart another ally. In agreeing with him in his repudiation of the broad evangelical piety and liturgy of much of today's church the 'Truly Reformed' might find Hart an uncomfortable bed fellow when he goes on to advocate what he calls 'High Church Presbyterianism', drawn, not from Canterbury, Rome or Constantinople, but from Geneva, but no less High Church for all that!

Much of this analysis is welcome. For too long those of us committed to the historic Reformed and Presbyterian tradition have been more influenced by a piety and liturgical 'style' not our own. Having become divorced from our own liturgical heritage we have been set adrift in a sea of influences. When confronted with the excitement of latest trends in church culture, we respond with either an embarrassed confession that we are still stuck with 'outmoded' forms of liturgy and must struggle on unhappily, or with a wholesale abandonment of such forms in favour of something more 'contemporary'. Hart's demand that we proudly restore our own heritage is a much-needed 'third way'. Reinstating the 'order of service' of Knox, Bucer, or Calvin would undoubtedly refresh (reform?) our practice immensely.

On the other hand, Hart's analysis of the causes of liturgical decline will not find universal acceptance. While lauding the Calvinism of many of the leaders of the First and Second Great Awakenings, and while affirming with them the need for 'conversion' at an individual level, Hart is highly critical of the crisis-oriented theology that prevailed among these evangelicals. Citing John Williamson Nevin (pp.192ff.), Hart highlights what can only be called a paradigm shift in Reformed piety during the era of the Great Awakening, away from the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord' under which Presbyterian and Reformed children were raised as 'heirs of the covenant', towards an approach where, in Nevin's words, 'all this must pass for nothing, and I must learn to look upon myself as an outcast from the family and kingdom of God, before I could come to be in either in

the right way.'(p. 193) So great an emphasis is placed, even to this day, upon the need for a crisis conversion experience, that the churchly and educational model of Christian nurture has been almost totally forgotten, argues Hart. While this may not sit comfortably with many, it is difficult fully to repudiate. The impact of 'revivalism' on the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland in the wake of the campaigns of such evangelists as D. L. Moody, for example, is unquestionable. High Church Presbyterianism as Hart defines it, with its emphasis on the liturgy of the Reformation, is now a relic of the past for all of the strictly evangelical Presbyterian denominations of Scotland, and can be found only among the High Churches of the Church of Scotland, an irony not lost on Hart who points to the same phenomena in the American Presbyterian situation (e.g. pp.179ff.). Why, he asks, should the theologically conservative churches be the most liturgically ignorant? Ought they not to display a conservative liturgical tradition to parallel their theological convictions?

Hart brings a wealth of historical knowledge and a deep love for the Church of Christ to bear on a series of controversial and hotly debated subjects. As he does so he guides us through them in a most stimulating and at times provocative manner. While readers will not agree with Hart in many of his perspectives, the importance of reading set prayers in worship, the culpability of 'revivals and revivalism' for liturgical decay to cite only two, he *will* provoke us to rethink our view of Christian piety, and perhaps even lead us towards a more corporate, churchly and, dare I say it, Biblical and Reformed view. This volume is to be warmly commended to a wide readership.

*David Strain, Cole Abbey Presbyterian Church, London*

## **The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity**

Philip Jenkins

Oxford University Press, New York, 2002; x+270 pp., £20; ISBN 0 19 514616 6

Those familiar with the teaching and writing of Andrew Walls will already be receptive to the thrust of this work, but it is good to find his diagnosis and prognosis of world Christianity being published here also. In essence Jenkins' argument, buttressed by plentiful statistics and demographics, is that within half a century the vast majority of Christians will be non-White, living in Africa, Latin America and Asia, counting among the poor of the world and often suffering for their faith, and in churchmanship predominantly pentecostal or Catholic. Not only is the centre of world

Christianity decisively 'going South', but its strength will be found in countries whose population growth will far outstrip that of Christianity's old homelands in the West. Not all such countries will, on present projections, enjoy a strong Christian presence, but it seems certain that among the most populous nations by mid-century only the USA will represent the earlier Christendom, with the place of Russia, Japan and Germany giving way to Tanzania, Turkey, Philippines, Mexico, Ethiopia and even Yemen.

These massive shifts have huge implications for Christian leadership in the West today. The liberal establishment will increasingly experience Rowan Williams' frustrations with the biblical conservatism on moral issues of African, Asian and Latin American church statesmen. Yet by no means all will be comfortable for western evangelicalism, which is likely to find its strongly Reformation-based assumptions, already threatened by burgeoning Pentecostalism and charismatic-type congregations, further overwhelmed by the more enthusiastic, popular and 'pentecostal' ethos of 'the next Christendom'.

In some respects this is a deeply heart-warming book. I had never previously linked the impressive rise in the proportion of Christians in the South with a relative population growth far in excess of the diminishing West (except for the USA). In terms of forecast numbers and proportions, 'the next Christendom' is an appropriate title, so long as the state-church implications of the phrase are pruned off. But in other respects, Jenkins must make a disturbing read especially for Western Christians (and there are plenty in Scotland) who still talk of 'the mission field' as where it ever used to be, have not retooled to tackle the mission field round the corner, and would not welcome less well-educated and embarrassingly vibrant Christians from Africa or Latin America to help them in their local task. The worst outcome would be if our cerebral Reformed tradition, with the boast of a learned, professionalized ministry, and a bookish Bible-centredness, were to insist on damping down the simple gospel zeal of mission partners from, say, Zambia or Brazil. The serious risk of such a response, redolent of a patronizing imperialism, to the rise of 'the next Christendom' far from enlightened Europe was lamentably exposed in Richard Holloway's fit of pique when the bishops of the Anglican South at the last Lambeth conference decisively refused to approve of homosexual conduct. Evangelicals must rejoice that the coming global Christianity will be of *that* ilk.

*D. F. Wright, Edinburgh*

## God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science

Neil A. Manson (ed.)

Routledge, London, 2003; 376pp., £15.99; ISBN 0 415 26344 1

The teleological argument moves from the seemingly purposeful features of the observable world to posit a supernatural designer. Chiefly associated with William Paley, it was thought well buried after Hume and Kant. However, the recent emergence of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement in the United States has fuelled fresh debate into its legitimacy.

Neil Manson is visiting assistant professor of philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. He was formerly the Gifford Research Fellow in Natural Theology in Aberdeen University. *God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science* contains articles taken from the Gifford Bequest International Conference held in Aberdeen in May 2000. Other articles, not from that Conference, are included in the book for the sake of completeness and fairness. Professor Manson is to be highly commended on the breadth of contributors he has attracted.

*God and Design* contains scholarly discussion of the principles involved in design arguments. It is divided into four sections. Section one is entitled *General Considerations* and covers philosophical arguments. I would particularly commend Elliot Sober's all-too-brief article in this section. Entitled 'The Design Argument', it both educates concerning and engages with Paley's Design Theory and its modern sibling as espoused by the Intelligent Design movement. Sober's critique of Richard Swinburne's popular 'firing squad' approach to the anthropic principle is especially worth reading. Using Bayes theorem, Sober distinguishes between the probability of an event, such as the development of this universe just for us, and its likelihood. This may sound like statistical chicanery to some, but held together with what we know of the Observational Selection Effect (OSE), Sober's article packs a logically powerful punch.

Section two deals with physical cosmology and the anthropic principle. The anthropic principle, as originally formulated and coined by Barrow and Tipler, points out that our universe appears to be fine-tuned for human existence. In his article, Robin Collins gives six examples of such fine-tuning. Given that the approach of the anthropic principle presents the most promising way ahead for both design theorists and proponents of the cosmological argument (i.e. William Lane Craig), this section is indispensable reading for any interested party.

Section three discusses the highly controversial multiple universes alternative to cosmological design. Great Britain's Astronomer Royal,



Martin Rees, proposes the case for a multi-universe scenario. Such a situation, if correct, would go some way to negating the anthropic principle, since out of the infinity of possible universes, it was impossible that there should not have been one like ours. However unlikely the hypothesis sounds, the multiple universe alternative is still in its infancy and deserves a respectful hearing.

Section four deals with aspects of biological design. I would particularly recommend Michael Ruse's well-written article as an example of scholarly balance. Within this section, we find a fruitful exchange between Professor Michael Behe of Lehigh University, Pennsylvania, and Professor Kenneth Miller of Brown University, Rhode Island. Author of *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, Behe defines and develops the concept of *irreducible complexity* to show that notable biochemical cascades and molecular machines display specified complexity and therefore could not have developed by stepwise Darwinian evolutionary processes. In his article, Miller seeks to debunk Behe. The exchange is fascinating and can be followed through the relevant bibliography.

Whilst dialogue is most welcome in the controversy surrounding design, I found the article (pp. 88-104) by Jan Narveson, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, out of step with both the spirit and content of the symposium. I believe his article is deficient in five key areas. First, as a philosopher he seems unaware of advances in other areas of science. For example, in a response to Professor William Lane Craig (p. 90) he writes seemingly unaware of quantum gravity. Secondly, whilst accusing proponents of intelligent design (IDers) of metaphysical bias, for no apparent reason other than metaphysical bias he comments, 'no explanation at all is surely preferable to such proposals' (p. 90). This is hardly a ringing endorsement either for his spirit of scientific exploration or for academic fairness. Thirdly, he misunderstands and therefore consistently misrepresents intelligent design as an argument from ignorance. IDers are at pains to state that design is attributed to a system not from a position of ignorance, but from the positive claim of specified complexity. Fourthly, he infers that design cannot be attributed in the absence of evident purpose and writes, 'the world has no evident purpose' (p. 91). However, the Bible is clear that the world does have a self-evident purpose – the declaration of the glory and handiwork of God (Ps. 19:1-6). Furthermore, humankind is aware of such purpose but holds the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). The problem is not one of lack of data or self-evident purpose. It is one of unrighteousness. Lastly, he ignores special revelation. The Bible is needed to complete the coherence of the

Christian worldview. If the stories of the Bible are belittled as 'inventions... of believers' (p. 100) it is not surprising that the whole revelation – both general and special – is disregarded. Such articles as Professor Narveson's generate much heat but little light, and do nothing to foster dialogue. It is no wonder such polarisation takes place given his further comments on religion as a social phenomenon.

The breadth and depth of scholarship of those contributing to this book is breathtaking, as is their collective reputation. It is probably true that never before have the writings on the teleological argument of such a plethora of talent been collected together in one volume. It makes surprisingly easy reading, although a piece of paper and a pencil may come in handy when authors are discussing Bayes probabilities. The book is also easy to use; both notes and references are included at the end of each article.

In conclusion, *God and Design* represents a significant forward step in the Science – Religion debate. It brings together academics from both perspectives and encourages the fruitful exchange of ideas that are sometimes not as far apart as we think. Read and enjoy!

*Colin Dow, St. Vincent Street Free Church of Scotland, Glasgow*

## **The Pentateuch. An Annotated Bibliography**

Kenton L. Sparks

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2002; IBR Bibliographies No. 1. 160pp., \$16.99; ISBN 0 8010 2398 X

In this annotated bibliography of the Pentateuch, Kenton Sparks provides brief abstracts for over seven hundred monographs and articles (but not commentaries). This material is organized into ten chapters. Five cover the books of the Pentateuch. Three preliminary chapters deal with 'Text and Versions', 'Introductory Works' and 'Composition, Authorship, and Context', while a brief final chapter is entitled 'Other Studies'. An additional chapter – 'Prolegomenon to Exodus-Deuteronomy' – precedes the section on Exodus.

Each of the five chapters on the individual books of the Pentateuch has an introductory section on 'general issues', followed by a list of works dealing with problems of composition and authorship specific to the book. Further subdivisions deal with the interpretation of specific texts and more or less follow a general outline of the biblical book. In the case of Exodus, for example, there are three such sections: 'From Slavery to Sinai: Interpreting Exodus 1-18', 'The Sinai Pericope: Exodus 19-24' (including a subsection on the Book of the Covenant) and 'The Tabernacle of God:

Exodus 25-40'. Within each of these sections and subsections, the bibliographic entries are chronologically arranged.

So vast is the corpus of scholarly reflection on the Pentateuch, that even the choice of several hundred works requires a high degree of selectivity. So it helps to know the criteria that guided Sparks in his selections. The first is a commitment to include 'classic' works – books and articles that have 'profoundly shaped present readings of the Pentateuch'. This explains the emphasis on historical-critical issues and especially questions of composition and authorship. This topic was, after all, the primary focus of Pentateuchal scholarship over the last century. This emphasis will be especially helpful for newcomers to the study of the Pentateuch. In addition to the seminal works of giants like Wellhausen, Gunkel, von Rad, H. H. Schmid, Rendtorff, and Van Seters, more conservative voices – for example, W. H. Green, Cassuto, Allis, Rendsburg – are given their space, so that readers are left with a well-rounded picture of a classic debate. This balance is typical of the bibliography as a whole: both critical and more conservative scholarship are well represented throughout the book.

A second criterion more than balances the focus on classic works. Sparks also seeks to give 'the most up-to-date picture of the debate' on a particular topic. Accordingly, almost half of the bibliographic entries date from 1990, and another quarter from the 1980s. This is one of the strengths of the book. While summaries of 'classic' works provide readers with the highlights in longstanding debates, the emphasis on recent works contributes most at the very point where students and teachers are likely to have lost track of the discussion.

Another criterion is 'breadth of subject matter'. The entries are broken down into more than sixty different topical headings, which ensures a good general coverage of wide range of topics related to the Pentateuch. Finally, Sparks has found room for 'innovative' and 'promising readings'. Obviously, this entails a degree of subjectivity, but his choices are consistently judicious. It should be noted, however, that few entries reflect approaches to interpretation that have emerged in more recent years (e.g., interest in early Jewish and Christian interpretation, postmodern approaches, etc.) but this is primarily due to the focus on classic historical-critical scholarship.

While Sparks is obviously very familiar with non-English language works and the more important of these – mostly in German – are included, over ninety percent of the works referred to are in English. This is not a criticism, rather an indication of the intended audience.

In summary, this book should prove to be a valuable resource for anyone interested in the academic study of the Pentateuch.

*Douglas J. Green, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia*

## **The Problem of War in the Old Testament**

Philip Jenson

Grove, Cambridge, 2002; 28pp., £2.50; ISBN 1 85174 509 2

Jenson's *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* addresses a subject of urgent interest both as a theological as well as a contemporary ethical issue. The theological problem has long been felt: How can a loving God engage in such a violent activity, particularly one that might be construed as genocidal as directed toward the ancient Canaanite population of Palestine?

Jenson has thus done an important service by raising the topic for our consideration. The treatment, according to the constraints of the series, is brief. The choice of texts is illustrative and far from exhaustive. He chooses four texts and a topic before summarizing with a chapter on a biblical theology of war. The four passages are Exodus 15, a hymn celebrating God the warrior's victory over the Egyptians at the Red Sea, Deuteronomy 20, which contains legislation concerning the proper waging of warfare, 1 Samuel 17, an individual holy war combat, and Jeremiah 21, which anticipates God's warfare not for, but against Israel.

There is much that is admirable about his treatment of the sensitive subject of warfare in the Old Testament. The first is that he avoids the easy way out, which would involve some kind of denigration of the Old Testament (as recently illustrated by the Marcionite tendency found in C. S. Cowles' contribution to *Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* [Zondervan, 2003]). He further warns us against reading the Old Testament in the light of modern individualistic, Western democratic ideas. He points out, for instance, that the survival of a nation in the ancient world would be short-lived if that nation were slow to retaliate and defend itself (though here we could argue that the same is true for a modern nation). Jenson also helps us see positive moral characteristics of the so-called ban (which prohibits individuals from keeping the plunder as well as calling for the destruction of all the P.O.W.s). He rightly points out that such a provision, at least concerning the plunder, does not allow for individuals, whether soldiers or king, personally to gain from the warfare.

On the other hand, I would take issue with Jenson on a handful of matters. However, for reasons of space, I will concentrate on only one. I am not sure that it is right to say that 'the OT approach to war is deliberately complex, ambivalent, conditional, and incomplete' (p. 5). Warfare in the Old Testament is an instrument of God's judgement. When Israel is commanded to go to war by God, that means the enemy is an object of God's warfare, and provided Israel is obedient, their warring act is holy and they win. If they are disobedient or they wage war against a foe of their own choice, then they lose. God uses another nation (Babylon) in order to fight Israel. The Old Testament ends with Israel living under oppression but with the sure hope that the divine warrior will come again and defeat their enemies (Dan. 7; Zech. 14). When Jesus comes, John the Baptist expects a violent Messiah, but Jesus wages spiritual warfare, dying to defeat Satan and his hordes. However, this victory is not the final battle. That is still to come, according to the apocalyptic portions of the New Testament, Jesus will return to wage a final war against his spiritual and flesh-and-blood enemies (Rev. 19).

In my opinion, it is Jenson's narrow focus (demanded by the series) on a small number of texts that makes the picture more obscure than it really is. Even so, this is an excellent and interesting starter book on a very important topic.

*Tremper Longman III, Westmont College, Santa Barbara*

## **The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century**

Volume I

J. Ligon Duncan III (ed.)

Mentor, Fearn, 2003; xxii+440pp., £22.99; ISBN 1 85792 862 8

This is the first in a projected three-volume study of issues relating to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The past decade has witnessed three significant '350th' anniversaries connected with the Westminster Assembly: its session in 1643, its final meeting in 1649 and its dissolution in 1652. This volume is the fruit of research into the Confession of Faith, the magisterial product of the Assembly, and is a landmark study of the Confession and its significance.

Dr Ligon Duncan has made an impressive collation of studies from a formidable range of scholars. This is very much an international project, which looks at the significance of the Westminster Confession from historical, theological and ecclesiological perspectives.

The fourteen studies in this first volume represent a broad sweep of themes. David Hall provides an interesting background study in the history of Westminster commemorations. Four studies (Wayne R. Spear on 'Word and Spirit in the Westminster Confession', O. Palmer Robertson on 'The Holy Spirit in the Westminster Confession', Morton H. Smith on 'Theology of the Larger Catechism' and Richard B. Gaffin on 'Westminster and the Sabbath') look at various theological and doctrinal issues. There are two articles relating to baptism, one by Timothy George looking at 'Baptists and the Westminster Confession' and one by David Wright on 'Baptism at the Westminster Assembly'.

The other essays in this volume have in common the relation of the Westminster Confession of Faith to historical traditions. A.T.B. McGowan looks at the relation between the Confession and Scottish federal theology, W.D.J. McKay at the Scottish contribution to Westminster, Stewart Gill at the Australian connection, Mark Dever at the connection with Calvin, James L. Macleod at the Declaratory Act of 1892, Michael Horton at the attacks on the Confession by Charles Finney, and William Barker at the development of church/state relations.

It may seem strange that the bulk of the material in a volume on *The Westminster Confession into the twenty-first century* should be devoted to historical treatments of the Confession in past centuries, but no study of the present significance of Westminster can afford to ignore the historical outworking of its magisterial theology. Professor McGowan's argument for a natural evolution from the Scots Confession to Westminster is an important defence of Reformed federalism against the neo-Barthian approach of Tom Torrance, while Mark Dever cogently demonstrates Westminster's pastoral concerns particularly in the debate over assurance.

Dr Macleod's analysis of the Declaratory Act controversy of 1892 in the context of the origins of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is also an important contribution. It hardly does justice, however, to the position of those who defended the Confession while refusing to join the new denomination; those who remained with the Free Church of Scotland in 1893 did so because they insisted that the Declaratory Act was a piece of incomplete legislation. Do such bypaths of Scottish church history matter now? Perhaps they do as explanations of past movements; whether they are valid reasons for denominational separation over a century later is debatable. At any rate, the discussion is valid in the twenty-first century if only because there are denominations whose commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith is compromised by Articles Declaratory still.

The doctrinal studies are engaging and challenging. Professor Robertson's concern to demonstrate the pneumatology of the Confession is an important rebuttal of the charge that the great omission of the document was a chapter on the Spirit. In particular, he brings out the importance of the *filioque* (p. 73) and double procession. No less vital is Professor Gaffin's discussion of the Confession's insistence that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath, and that the strictures of the fourth commandment are still relevant for new covenant believers. He also raises important issues concerning the need to live all our lives before the face of God while maintaining the distinctiveness of the Lord's Day.

This is a helpful collection of essays of varying degrees of usefulness. One looks forward to the next two volumes in this commemorative series, trusting that it will inspire confidence in the robust federal Calvinism of Westminster, and lead to an increasing appreciation of Westminster theology.

*Iain D. Campbell, Bach, Isle of Lewis*

## **Rome in the Bible and the Early Church**

P. Oakes (ed.)

Baker / Paternoster, Grand Rapids / Carlisle, 2002; xvii+166pp., \$17.99; ISBN 0 8010 2608 3

These six papers were originally presented at the 1999 meeting of the New Testament Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship in Cambridge. They have been gathered together in this slim volume so as to make the fruit of the research more widely accessible, but the essays still bear all the marks of technical scholarship, including untranslated Greek script and full footnoting. These essays will, therefore, be of interest to theological students, teachers and ministers primarily.

After an initial orientation to the volume provided by the editor, Steve Walton provides a substantial essay which surveys scholarship on Luke's purpose in writing Acts, with particular reference to his attitude towards Rome. He concludes that Luke writes with a clear purpose, namely to present a model of Christian discipleship in relation to Rome, but that his writing displays several diverse perspectives on Rome, depending largely on Rome's dealings with particular Christians, which cannot easily be boiled down to a single attitude. Ultimately, claims Walton, Luke seeks to declare the supremacy of Jesus over Caesar through the use of the terms 'Lord' and 'Saviour'.

The next essay, by Conrad Gempf, employs a literary approach to the narrative of Paul in Rome which is found at the close of Acts in chapter 28. He argues that Luke intends to present the Jews rejecting the preaching of Paul.

Next, Bruce Winter examines Paul's engagement with aspects of Roman law in chapters 12-15 of his letter to the Romans, indicating that Paul's ethical instruction challenged much that lay at the heart of Roman culture.

Andrew Clarke's chapter is a study of Romans 16 in the light of Galatians 3:28, in which he argues that Paul's greetings in Romans 16 provide evidence of the outworking of the principle of 'social inclusion' declared in Galatians. He draws attention to the presence of names and expressions which suggest that Paul considered Jews and Greeks, male and female, slaves (or those who were once slaves but have now been freed) and freeborn people of some status as all part of the Christian community.

Peter Oakes' paper emphasises Paul's confidence in God's (and indeed Christ's) sovereignty, as expressed in his letter to the Philippians. Thus, regardless of the circumstances in which Paul himself or the Philippian believers find themselves, the Philippians are to remain steadfast in contending for the gospel.

The final paper moves beyond the NT documents, as Andrew Gregory evaluates recent scholarship on the dating of two documents among the writings of the 'Apostolic Fathers', *I Clement* and *the Shepherd of Hermas*. Gregory's main emphasis is a call for methodological care in treating early Christian writings: to consider documents on their own terms and not to move too quickly to draw 'trajectories' between one and another.

Each paper concludes with a helpful bibliography. These will prove useful to students and teachers as they seek further discussions of a particular topic. There are no indexes and so the reader really has no alternative but to work through the essays systematically.

*Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall*

## **The Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus: Volume 1.1**

Robert Webb (ed.)

Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, Jan. 2003; 127pp., ISSN 1476 8690

As Robert Webb makes clear in his editorial comments, this journal is intended to provide, for the first time, a dedicated home journal for historical Jesus research, an area that until now has simply been discussed



within the more general New Testament theology and exegesis journals. Given the tension that has often held sway in academic circles between the 'historical Jesus' and the 'Jesus of faith', readers may be inclined to avoid such a journal, fearing that its content may be inimical to biblical orthodoxy. A glance at the editorial board listed on page 5, however, would challenge such a prejudice: with members such as Craig Evans, Darrell Bock, Richard Bauckham and Rainer Riesner alongside unorthodox writers like Marcus Borg, we may be reassured that the conservative – indeed, evangelical – voice will be heard as loudly as the liberal.

In fact, an examination of the content of this first volume shows that, surprisingly, the conservative voice is quite considerably louder than the liberal. Two of the articles – Richard Bauckham's development of Byrskog's work on oral tradition and Graham Twelftree's article on the miracles of Jesus – explicitly defend conservative convictions regarding the reliability of the gospel accounts. A further two articles – Dale Allison's discussion of the continuity between Jesus and John (in which he questions the tension held to exist, by John Dominic Crossan and others, between the two biblical characters) and Kathleen Corley's article defending the authentic core of the stories in which Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman – more cautiously challenge assumptions often seen in academic discussions of their subject matter. Even the remaining article by Scot McKnight, discussing whether Jesus would have been regarded as a *mamzer* (illegitimate child) by his contemporaries, and how such a status would have affected him psychologically, does not seem to argue that Jesus *was* illegitimate; only that he may have been *regarded* so. It serves, therefore, as a stimulating discussion of Jesus' background and context, even if an openly speculative one (being largely reconstructed from later rabbinic discussions).

The obvious question that should be asked of such material is whether it will serve a purpose outside of academic circles. The answer to this should be a positive one: as Webb says on page 3, 'the investigation of the historical Jesus is a legitimate and worthy endeavor in and of itself, but from a Christian perspective, it should also have an impact on the faith and life of those professing to be followers of Jesus'. This hope is borne out by the material in the first volume of the journal. The article by Bauckham is perhaps the most significant of all, making a huge contribution to the apologetic issues surrounding the reliability of the Gospels by highlighting evidence for the role played by eyewitnesses in compiling the Gospel material. Twelftree's article is also of apologetic significance, challenging approaches to the historical Jesus that fail to take into account the centrality of Jesus' miracles to his ministry. Both of these articles

deserve to play a significant role in apologetic discussions of the Gospels. The articles by Corley and Allison contain important exegetical discussions that may be important apologetically, but will also prove helpful in sermon preparation. McKnight's article, properly understood and digested, may well provide helpful background material for sermons and for personal study of the Gospel texts.

In short, then, the first volume of *The Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* is both surprisingly orthodox and surprisingly practical. Without compromising academic quality, it provides accessible and stimulating articles of benefit to both academic and lay communities. With a diverse editorial board, future editions will almost certainly contain material that evangelicals will find difficult or disturbing. But we may also look forward to a range of articles to which we will be able to cry, 'Amen!'

*Grant Macaskill, St Mary's College, St Andrews University*

## **Turning the Tide: The challenge Ahead – Report of the 2002 Scottish Church Census**

Peter Brierley

Christian Research & the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2003; 167pp., £7.99; ISBN 1 85321 148 6

At the press conference launching these statistics, the final question came from the Newsnight man. It was impatiently put: 'What would it take for you to admit that no-one wants your product any more?' In just eight years since the last survey in Scotland, one in five no longer attend our main churches. Those groups which showed some growth in 1994 are now struggling. If the numbers are projected – well, you know how it goes.

What do these sobering numbers represent? First and foremost, they are, as Chair of the steering group Colin Sinclair said, a wake-up call to the churches. Christian leaders and congregations must face them, and they are hard to face. We are clearly growing older together, and at one level seem disconnected from our contemporary society.

For some, no explanation is needed: it's quite simple. Were we not always called by God to be a remnant, a minority in a hostile or at least preoccupied culture? What has been unusual historically is a christianised culture such as ours. The Lord is now shaking us to remove those who simply attend our churches because it was the thing to do. At least those who do meet now are more likely to be convinced believers. And although our culture knows increasingly little of the true Jesus Christ, our sadness

is matched by a sense that this is a real opportunity to start from scratch again.

Nonetheless, the trends suggested by Peter Brierley's careful survey are worth further reflection. They do show that Scottish church attendance remains considerably higher than England (11.2% compared to 7.5%). They show that the further north and west you go, the higher the continuing commitment to church life. They also show that although the mainline denominations are mostly in considerable decline, some of our smaller church groups are growing.

My own view is that a number of trends are revealed by the survey. First, the statistics reveal a shift from institutional to independent church life. There is massive decline on the one hand, and some small growth on the other; these are not the same people, but indicate a growing impatience with structured ways of being church and a preference for flexibility. It seems to reflect the well-observed shift from formal to informal in our culture (just watch the TV news – BBC & ITV still have a desk, but it might be see-through; and on C5 they sit on it or dispense with it altogether).

This is no surprise, as it is going on massively around us. All our institutions, including government, are struggling to maintain their place in an increasingly individual and independent culture. Yet it is not the whole story. Alongside it is a massive tightening of legislative frameworks. These are biting particularly hard in the voluntary sector, as we grapple with child protection, health and safety, disabled access and other issues.

Whilst there is some evidence of growth in centres of traditional and formal worship – English and one or two Scottish Cathedrals – it is mostly evangelical groups who have shown a little growth. These take the Bible as the central place where God is known through Jesus Christ; pray as if their lives depended on it; seek to serve their communities; and network with other similar groups, not only locally but internationally.

The second shift revealed by the statistics is from Sunday to midweek. Peter Brierley recognises the decline in Sunday numbers, but points to growing numbers of people who also attend midweek Church activities – and around 200,000 who attend only midweek activities. Even accepting these may have slight connections with the 'main' life of the congregation, this is a remarkable change.

Alongside it is a move from Church premises to other places. Churches are now meeting in hotels, schools, community centres, theatres, pubs and clubs, as well as standard church buildings. And 'standard' church buildings are changing. There are striking examples of renewed and remodelled church

premises across the country, built both to last and to serve local communities at every level.

My guess is that some of the growing churches do not even appear in this survey. The response rate of 52% was very high in the survey game, and Brierley makes very carefully controlled assumptions in order to include those who did not reply. Some of the newer churches would have been quite difficult to contact, and probably think life's too short to fill forms in anyway. These may have an office somewhere, and maybe a web page; but you meet them through individual networks and special events rather than in obvious premises.

The survey threw up some other intriguing trends. Evangelical congregations were allowed to self-select – reformed, mainstream, charismatic. Only those describing themselves as mainstream showed any growth, with others now declining. The number of leaders in a church turned out to be significant: those with smaller leadership teams (under 15 in number) were more likely to have grown than those with larger groups. One response in mainline denominations has been to re-organise leadership teams themselves into teams, and to recognise the difference between pastoral and strategic or decision-making leaders.

Finally, for the first time the survey took a measure of hopes and fears for the future. Urgent action is clearly needed to face the very considerable decline and to respond to the shifts it reveals. Yet one-fifth of churches responding said they expected to grow by 2010; and another two-fifths reckoned they would remain stable or see small growth. That is a remarkable indication of Christian confidence. The question remains whether it is borne out. My own early experiences of energy and commitment across the country and across the church spectrum in Scotland suggest it might.

*Mike Parker, General Secretary, Evangelical Alliance Scotland*

## **Paul: A Short Introduction**

Morna D. Hooker

Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2003; 160pp., £10.99; ISBN 1 85168 314 3

This introduction to Paul is a reflection of Hooker's astute and trenchant treatment of the extensive and oftentimes labyrinthine issues in Pauline studies through the years. The book does exactly as the title suggests – it introduces Paul (the man and his beliefs) who shaped Christianity significantly in its nascent years. While the book is aimed at the

introductory level, Hooker aptly and honestly covers the relevant issues needed for understanding the depth of Paul's theology.

The first four chapters explore the introductory issues: 1. Paul's gospel and its relationship with tradition; 2. reliability of Lukan accounts; 3. authorship and the situational nature of Paul's letters; and 4. the theological background (Old Testament) of Paul's gospel. In each chapter, Hooker moves effortlessly from the contemporary issues and questions, which may be raised by the modern reader to the context of first century.

Chapter 5 assesses the distinctiveness of Paul's gospel and his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. The remaining chapters explore the individual aspects of Paul's theology: the identity of Jesus (Chapter 6); grace versus law (Chapter 7); sin (Chapter 8); atonement (Chapter 9); ethics (Chapter 10); community life (Chapter 11); and eschatology (Chapter 12).

The following features of this book may be highlighted. First, the book is extremely readable. The technical jargon of biblical scholarship, which oftentimes hinders the reader from further investigation, is absent. Second, while the book is readable, it is by no means 'light reading'. Hooker has canvassed simply and directly the depth of Paul's theology and the wide range of issues concerning Paul and his gospel. Third, Hooker not only addresses the contemporary issues and questions of the modern-day reader but frequently links these issues back to the first century. For example, under the subject of 'sonship', the contemporary issue of sexist language is not only identified as a modern day issue but more importantly, Hooker emphasizes the significance of Paul's language applied to women as well as men. The language of 'sonship' conveys not the exclusion of women but the remarkable inclusion of women within the context of first-century patriarchy (p. 55). And fourth, Hooker's treatment of Paul's theology is executed with simplicity without sacrificing the deep significance of the weighty issues (grace, sin, redemption, ethics, etc.). Each chapter is packed with years of study and reflection on these matters: she offers valuable insight to Paul's theology.

This brief introduction to Paul will not only be beneficial for many students of the Bible but also for the lay people who crave answers concerning not only Paul but the gospel which we have inherited from him: both will find satisfaction and encouragement for further exploration of not only Paul but the entire Scriptures.

*M. Sydney Park, University of Aberdeen*

## **Arius. Heresy and Tradition**

Rowan Williams

SCM Press, London, 2001; xiii+378pp., £16.95; ISBN 0 334 02850 7

This masterpiece on Arius, from Rowan Williams, now archbishop of Canterbury, first came out in 1987. It is still a formidable classic of detail and argumentation. It is also an obligatory starting point for all serious work in the field. Moreover, no rival treatment of the subject seems in sight. This edition is enhanced by the author's response to criticism from various luminaries including G. C. Stead and M. F. Wiles.

The book has become the definitive theological introduction to Arius in English and sixteen years later its value is undiminished. The author's introductory chapter shows his hand very early on. He believes that orthodoxy is not a concise deposit of doctrine, the clear-cut triumph of light over darkness and conveniently firmed up for posterity for ever. Orthodoxy develops – and is still developing. Orthodoxy succeeds by deepening whatever images and concepts are valid in so-called heresy, 'the detailed reworking and re-imagining of... formative conflicts'. So today's 'orthodoxy' is conditioned by the past. And there is also such a thing as a future 'orthodoxy'. Such claims do not, the author believes, commit him to an unrelenting relativism. In the newly written appendix to this edition, the author repeats this view. Nicaea's contribution was still critical and made it impossible merely to 'think of God as an individual' – a massive legacy to the present. For those anxious, the archbishop is loyal to Nicaea. However, he thinks Nicaea itself warns against 'canonizing in theology the tempting idioms of human personal interaction'. It is therefore also vital to show how complex are the formative forces around Arius and how misleading is the term 'Arianism', prompting a question mark against seeing only a clearly defined orthodoxy over against a clearly defined heresy.

These points are well made. All the same it is not easy to see in the re-evaluation made by this book just by what road we may come to venture such commitment to Nicaea's wisdom as the Archbishop embraces? How do we know that we are at least on the track of truth and not in a relativistic quagmire? And how is it that the test of time has revealed such a resilience in Nicaea? Can such enduring value really be reduced to the history of power struggles in the church?

Whatever the answers are, if unspoken here, the reader can always expect value for money in the republished chapters of the book. There are many rewards: an unrivalled, penetrating analysis of Arius himself; masterly investigation of the role, even psychology, of Bishop Alexander

and the Alexandrian church; and a *tour de force* mapping of the philosophical background to the dispute and the various postures adopted – especially that of Arius. The new edition allows us to discern that the author's mantle of authority in this field remains firmly round his shoulders and is likely to stay there for a while yet.

*Roy Kearsley, Cardiff University/South Wales Baptist College*

## **Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen**

Sebastian Rehnman

Baker, Grand Rapids, 2002; 215pp., \$19.99; ISBN:0 8010 2501 X

This book, a revision of the author's DPhil thesis, is a study of the approach to theology exhibited in the writings of the great English Puritan, John Owen (1616-1683). As such it is a welcome addition both to the growing number of works on Owen himself and to the field of studies in post-Reformation Reformed dogmatics.

In a series of chapters, Rehnman examines Owen's thought on the concept of theology, the relationship of natural and supernatural knowledge of God, the nature of theology, faith and reason, belief and evidence, and the organization of theology. The work is densely footnoted and will prove an invaluable tool for anyone who wishes to get to grips both with Owen's intellectual context and the sources of his thinking.

A number of points emerge very clearly from Rehnman's work. First, the sheer sophistication of Owen's approach to theology renders any attempt to reduce his thinking to the level of the crude soundbite to be woefully misplaced. This is a theologian as familiar with Augustine as with Thomas, with Aristotle as Maimonides. As much a figure of the Renaissance as of the Puritan movement, Owen cannot be discussed in terms which are not sensitive to the subtlety and care of his own method of argument.

Second, and more theologically, the catholic bent of Owen's thinking is proved time and time again, as any glance at the footnotes will demonstrate, putting to death any notion of Puritan theology as obscurantist or inherently sectarian. Those who wish to deal with Owen in terms of bald, undifferentiated categories such as 'scholasticism' or 'Aristotelianism' are dealt with by Rehnman who implicitly demonstrates the simplistic and banal nature of such categories when used in this field.

Third, the eclectic nature of the metaphysics of Reformed thinking is demonstrated so clearly in Rehnman's volume. Recent attempts to reduce

Reformed Orthodoxy to a Protestant form of Scotism notwithstanding, Rehnman's Owen emerges as a thinker who borrows from all manner of sources and offers what is essentially a Thomistic metaphysics modified in a distinctly Scotist direction at certain points. The details are arguable, depending to a certain extent on how one defines the essence of Scotism and how one constructs the relationship between Thomism and Scotism. I myself would want to argue that Owen's Scotism is, in fact, increasingly negligible as his theology develops; but Rehnman's basic thesis is sound: the philosophical approach of Reformed Orthodoxy is eclectic and variegated, reflecting the complex relationship between Protestantism and the theology of the Middle Ages.

Fourth, Rehnman shows quite clearly the close relationship that existed between a theology pursued in terms of analytical rigour with a theology developed along covenantal lines. The clichéd distinction often drawn between the Voetian and Cocceian approach has in recent years been shown to be massively overdrawn; Owen's fusion of metaphysical and covenantal theology is one more piece of evidence that the old approach was built upon a basic category mistake.

Rehnman, himself trained as an analytic philosopher, has produced a delightful if dense monograph which will serve as one important starting point for all future studies of John Owen.

*Carl Trueman, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia*

## **The Systematic Theology of John Brown of Haddington**

Joel R. Beeke & Randall J. Pederson

Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids & Christian Focus

Publications, Fearn, 2002; xxii+576pp., £19.99; ISBN 1 892777 66 5

At the request of theological students, John Brown produced his 'Compendious View of Natural and Revealed religion' in 1782. It is this book, set out in seven 'books' and 24 chapters which is reprinted here together with a comprehensive introduction to the life and writings of John Brown who was converted in his teens whilst working as a shepherd, and who shepherded his own flock as minister of the Associate congregation in Haddington, East Lothian from 1751, when Brown was aged twenty-nine, until his death 36 years later.

The contents of the book are set out clearly chapter by chapter with a comprehensive word index to each subject covered, although there is no subject index, which might have made it easier to navigate its subject matter. It is both a profound and clearly expressed systematic theology of



the Westminster Confession. Brown's style and scriptural references make it useful to ministers and students of theology.

Each book is clearly laid out in chapters and sub paragraphs, beginning often with a single sentence summary of the doctrine, followed by a full exposition, with every point reinforced from Scripture. There are over 26,000 proof texts in less than six hundred pages. Following his own interpretation, Brown takes leading objections to the doctrine (for example five objections to election and predestination) and answers each one with full scriptural references. Ever the pastor, each section concludes with a reflection. On 'Effectual Calling' his reflection begins, 'Have I indeed been called of God with this holy, this high and heavenly calling, and spiritually united to the all precious Redeemer? Can I appeal to himself, that he is my Beloved, and I am his? – God, forbid that I should profess, should preach a Jesus Christ, that is not my own' (p. 357).

We may feel that we know the theology that we can expect from such a volume, and already have made up our minds which parts we wholly endorse and which we would take issue with. John Brown's desire was that he would make the reader think, and by thinking prayerfully, come to a deeper biblical and personal understanding of his or her faith. To this extent his Christ-centred approach challenges us to understand our theological position, its scriptural basis and how we address objections to it, within the context of our relationship to Christ. 'Let us, therefore, begin all things from Christ; carry on all things with and through Christ; and let all things aim at and end in Christ.' This quotation is from Brown's 'Address to Students of Divinity' which is also included in the book. Reading the book and applying its probing questions to our faith might lead to fewer candidates for the ministry, but we would be assured of a high quality of understanding, faith and service from those who did respond.

Students of history can find in Haddington John Brown's manse (now a private dwelling house), his Church (now a flatted dwelling house in which one of our weekly study groups meet), and his saddle and communion vessels on display in St Mary's Church. He preached three times every Sunday and visited and catechised his flock during the week. He left behind eight children, a pious and loving congregation, a wealth of literature including his famous 'Self-Interpreting Bible', and many ministers and students inspired by his teaching. This reprinted edition of his systematic theology can only further inspire such devotion in others.

*Jim Cowie, St Mary's Parish Church, Haddington*

## Readings from the Ancient Near East

Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer (eds)

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2002; Primary Resources for Old Testament Study. 240pp., \$21.99; ISBN 0 8010 2292 4

The goal of this book is to provide undergraduate students with 'a basic collection of the ancient Near Eastern texts that most closely parallel or complement the biblical text'. I should say from the outset that this volume achieves this goal admirably and in so doing meets the need for an introductory anthology of primary sources from the world surrounding ancient Israel.

Ninety-one texts are organized into eighteen broad genre categories (e.g., 'Royal Records', 'Hymns and Prayers', 'Prophecies, Divinations and Apocalyptic', etc.). Each category is in turn connected to a section of the canon (Pentateuch, Historical Books, Poetic Books and Prophetic Books) 'at the point of closest correspondence'. For example, thirty-eight texts are connected to the Pentateuch under the headings 'Creation and the Flood', 'Tower of Babel', 'Ancestral Customs', 'Epic Literature', 'Covenants and Treaties', 'Law Codes' and 'Cultic Texts'. Given the intended audience, this is probably a helpful method of organization because it implicitly guides readers in making comparisons between the ancient Near Eastern texts and the Bible.

This guidance is made more explicit in the editors' brief introductory comments on each text. In addition to providing helpful background information and a synopsis, these introductions also alert readers to specific comparisons that can profitably be made with the biblical texts.

It should be noted that *Readings* offers no new translations but is instead an eclectic collection of previously published translations, 'smoothed' slightly for the sake of uniformity and readability. No fewer than thirty-five different sources are employed and the inclusion of translations by such worthies as Jacobsen (Sumerian), Lichtheim (Egyptian), Grayson (Assyrian), Gibson (West Semitic) ensures that solid scholarship stands behind this work. Somewhat disappointing, however, is the heavy reliance on Pritchard's now-dated *Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET)*, which is the basis of almost a third of the translations.

Also a little disappointing is the minimal use of translations from Volume 1 of Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scripture (COS)*. (Obviously, Volumes 2 and 3 were published too late to be used.) Only three translations from this recently published collection of translations appear in *Readings*. Perhaps factors beyond the editors' control prevented them from making more use of this volume, but it is a pity that readers

will encounter classic texts like *Enuma Elish* and Gilgamesh through Speiser's *ANET* translation rather than Benjamin Foster's more recent and more elegant rendition in *COS*. I would hope that future editions of *Readings* will make more use of *COS*, which will surely become the standard reference work for English translations of ancient Near Eastern texts related to the Old Testament.

In an introductory textbook, editors face difficult decisions about which texts to exclude. One can always quibble about where the line should be drawn. For example, I was a little surprised at the omission of the Tell Fekheriyeh Bilingual inscription, a text that not only sheds light on the meaning of the word 'Eden' but also aids in understanding the concept of the image of God. Nevertheless, the editors should be commended for their judicious selection of texts. In addition to obvious choices like Atrahasis, the Mesha Stela, the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, and the Baal Cycle, Kirta and Aqhat from Ugarit, the inclusion of a selection of covenants and treaties will assist readers in understanding the important biblical concept of covenant.

If texts only make sense in context, then the study of the literature of the ancient Near East needs to keep playing an important role in Old Testament interpretation. Arnold and Beyer's informative book contributes to both disciplines by encouraging a new generation of students to explore the thought world inhabited by the ancient biblical writers.

*Douglas J. Green, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia*

## St Augustine

Serge Lancel

SCM Press, London, 2002; xviii+590pp., £25; ISBN 0 334 02866 3

Serge Lancel is Emeritus Professor of Latin Literature and Roman Civilization at the university of Grenoble, and this work was first published in French in 1999. The English translation, which reads smoothly, is by Antonia Nevill.

Lancel has written here a massive biography of Augustine, which – while by no means neglecting theology – concentrates somewhat more on Augustine's life story in its ancient classical setting. As such, I recommend it to all students of Augustine and the early church fathers. I am not sure that it will or should replace Peter Brown's magisterial tome, written back in 1967, but it can certainly stand alongside it as a companion volume. Their intellectual and literary styles are sufficiently different to exclude any sense of pointless reduplication, and Lancel spends more time

depicting Augustine's context in the empire of his day. If we have three Synoptic Gospels, why not two modern masterpieces on Augustine?

The most enduring impression on the reviewer's mind was the dark, sickening violence of the Donatist controversy. This was perpetrated by both sides, although the Donatists seemed to me to come across as a more bigoted and unsavoury bunch than their Catholic opponents. If we are tempted to think that (for example) the sectarian conflicts of Northern Ireland are somehow peculiar, Lancel's graphic account of fourth- and fifth-century North Africa paints a picture that surpasses anything in contemporary Protestant-Catholic animosity for its sheer brutality, intensified by a depth of religious and ecclesiastical passion that makes the beatings and the murders all the more grim. Surely those Christians of the patristic era were no sweetness-and-light saints.

I doubt whether I gained any new theological insights into Augustine from Lancel's account, but it succeeded in communicating a portrait, instinct with life, of Augustine the human being, throughout the different phases of his pilgrimage. The sheer length of the work, however, will inevitably mean that its readership will be restricted to scholars and enthusiasts.

A very few mistakes and infelicities have crept into the text. On page 66, the year 395 should be 385. On page 427, Prov. 8:3 should be Prov. 8:35. On pages 164 and 445, Lancel speaks anachronistically about 'celebrating mass'. And on page 470, he writes rather disparagingly of God in the Old Testament as 'the terrible Yahweh'. No more 'terrible', surely, than the Jesus of the New Testament as depicted in its descriptions of final judgement?

I commend this work warmly.

*Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall*

## **Newman and The Word**

Terrence Merrigan and Ian T. Ker (eds)

Peeters Press & Eerdmans, Louvain, 2000; 260pp., \$30; ISBN 90 429 0921 8

John Henry Newman was Britain's most famous convert to Roman Catholicism in the nineteenth century. This publication is a collection of nine papers presented at the Second Oxford International Newman Conference held in August 1998. These conferences aim to reflect on the continuing significance of the work of Newman in relation to

contemporary developments in religion, theology, philosophy and literature.

A variety of theologians, philosophers, historians and literary scholars write on a range of subjects associated with Newman and perhaps the best way to review this book is to give some flavour of the topics covered.

Terrence Merrigan of the Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, compares Newman's views on the nature of Christian faith in the incarnate Word with the pluralist ideas of the contemporary philosopher of religion, John Hick.

The paper by Ian Ker of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Oxford examines Newman's challenge to the Roman Catholic Church's traditional distinction between clergy, religious and laity, and reflects on this in the light of new movements within that church.

R. H. Hutton, the joint editor and part owner of the *Spectator*, was one of Newman's first biographers and had close associations with Unitarianism. His relationship with Newman is examined by Sheridan Gilley, Reader in Theology at the University of Durham, who analyses this in terms of Newman's understanding of the church and particularly with relation to Trinitarianism.

The importance of the Bible for Newman is stressed in the paper by Terence R. Wright, Professor of English at the University of Newcastle, who explores Newman's position against the background of contemporary Higher Criticism. He draws a parallel between Newman's attitude to the Bible and some aspects of postmodernism, concluding that Newman 'sees that the Church needs both to engage freely and imaginatively with its foundational texts and to impose certain limits upon this freedom in order to maintain its living tradition'.

An examination of the contribution made by Newman and the Catholic Modernists to the theology of revelation is the subject dealt with by Gabriel Daly of Trinity College, Dublin.

In a different vein is the paper by Fergus Kerr, Regent of Blackfriars, Oxford. He reflects on Newman as a philosopher and examines the lack of recognition accorded to him as such. Louis Dupre of Yale University investigates Newman's debt to the Neoplatonic tradition while William Myers of the University of Leicester assesses his economical principle.

For those attracted to a highly significant and controversial figure of the nineteenth century, this will no doubt prove to be an interesting volume, but it is questionable if it will demand a wide readership. On the whole the papers are mildly critical and largely adulatory. One significant exception is the contribution by Alister E. McGrath, Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, who takes Newman to task for his presentation of Luther's

doctrine of justification. His concluding sentence probably reflects the attitude of most Evangelicals to Newman. 'I still sing his hymns; I am, however, a little more hesitant when it comes to singing his praises.'

*John W. Lockington, Larne*

### **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**

Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL, 2001; xiii+1328pp., £15.99 hbk, £11.99 pbk; ISBN 1 58134 316 7.

The 'English Standard Version' is the latest in a recent string of new or revised translations of Scripture. The last few years have seen, among others, the inclusive language revision of the NIV (the NIVI) in 1996; the New Living Translation in 1997; and another revision of the NIV in 2002 (the TNIV). Also available gradually over this period was the NET (New English Translation) Bible, produced specially for free access over the web, but also now available in book form. Now, the ESV boasts having had more than a hundred people on the publishing team, including fourteen members on the (rather unfortunately named!) 'Translation Oversight Committee'. It cites its translation philosophy as follows: 'As an essentially literal translation, the ESV seeks to capture the precise meaning of the original text and carry over the full range of meaning into our own language.' At the same time it attempts to do full justice to the range of literary diversity in the canon. There is also a very useful CD-ROM which comes free with some editions.

There are considerable advantages to the translation. For one, it maintains the logical connections between sections when these are sometimes omitted from the NIV, which is clearly its major competitor. So for example, it has 'So if there is any encouragement in Christ' (Phil. 2:1); the connecting 'so' is omitted in the NIV. It is also more helpful in supplying notes which indicate other meanings, so for example one can link up Paul's references to 'flesh' in Romans 3:20, 8:3, and 8:7. On the other hand, what the ESV gains in literalness, it loses in readability. To take one example: 'Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges...' (Rom. 2:1). This is simply a direct translation of Greek idiom which in this reviewer's judgement, at least, leads to a rather wooden result: the transition from 'O man' to 'every one of you' does not really work in English.

Overall, the translation is good and usually clear, and perhaps most importantly, it does live up to its claim to be more accurate than the NIV. However, I have some reservations. I do not want to belittle the labour of

those who have put a good deal of work into the translation, or to dampen the enthusiasm of those who have received it enthusiastically. But it does seem necessary to raise the question of whether we really need yet another English version of the Bible. This question becomes especially pointed when we consider how many people in the world are still without any translation of Scripture. Western Evangelicalism perhaps needs to pause before it considers itself in need of yet more precise (or more colloquial) a rendering of God's Word, especially considering the amount of scholarly hours which goes into such a process.

*Simon Gathercole, University of Aberdeen*

### **Encountering the Book of Romans. A Theological Survey**

Douglas J. Moo

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2002; 230pp., \$24.99; ISBN 0 8010 2546 X

This commentary by Douglas Moo, the Blanchard Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School, is part of the Encountering the Bible series which is targeted at the American college level. The fact that the series has been developed for a particular American constituency does not mean that the individual books would not be useful in a British situation. The format is attractive: guidelines at the beginning of each chapter guide the reader as to what is expected of him, and the summaries, sidebars, and charts which appear alongside the main text help bring about that end. The author points out at the beginning the influence that the new perspective on Paul has had on the interpretation of Romans and interacts with aspects of it throughout his commentary. As he works his way through the book he highlights important themes and explains difficult passages.

It is Moo's third commentary on Romans in recent years, which reveals his ability to write in an appropriate way for different audiences. Of the other commentaries, one is included in the New International Commentary series (published by Eerdmans) and the other is in the NIV Application Commentary series (published by Zondervan). The first of these is most useful for theological students and the second is also of great help to preachers, which raises the question as to who would benefit most from this recent work. This third commentary is not merely a repetition of the previous two, but neither is it written at the same level. It is certainly constructive to read the commentary in order to gain an overall impression of the contents of Romans. It also would give to readers an introduction to

some of the debates that concern Romans today. The inclusion of study questions at the close of each chapter indicates its usefulness as a means of deeper study in the doctrines and issues raised in Romans. Such groups that come to mind are church leaders (a kirk session or set of leaders could work through the commentary together); theological students who are beginning study of the New Testament, and Christians who want to probe and discuss a biblical book at a deeper level than is usually possible at congregational Bible studies.

*Malcolm Maclean, Inverness*

### **Theology of Hope. On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology**

Jürgen Moltmann

SCM Press, London, 2002 (1st edition 1967); xix+327pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 334 02878 7

One of the most significant books of modern time, *Theology of Hope* went through six impressions from 1964 to 1966. Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz judged in 2000 that the book now seemed dated by millennium postmodernism and individualism but for that very reason desperately deserved renewed attention in this generation. No better comment of brevity could be passed. Richard Bauckham provides a valuable introduction to this new edition, from the perspective of Moltmann's completed project. A placing of the book in the present time would have enhanced the edition further.

*Roy Kearsley, Cardiff University/South Wales Baptist College*