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

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_sbct-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php)

## REVIEWS

### **Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity**

Wallace M. Alston Jr and Michael Welker (eds)

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2003; 449pp., £ 26.87; ISBN 0 8028 4776 5

It is encouraging to see a major new book on the theme of reformed theology and its place in the church and the world. This scholarly volume arose out of a consultation held in Heidelberg in 1999. The twenty-eight essays are divided into five sections which focus in turn on: reformed identity in historical context and contextual awareness, the shaping of reformed ecclesiology, reformed pneumatology, the place of reformed theology in ecumenical conversation and, finally, ethical profiles of reformed theology. In their introduction, the editors state that the book is an attempt to represent and explore the 'rich, structured pluralism... in reformed theology today' (p. x).

The book's first essay in discussing the identity of reformed theology helpfully sets out the book's definition of what reformed theology is. Yung Han Kim identifies the foundations of reformed theology as *sola scriptura* and *solus Christus*. All reformed Christians will be happy to see these foundations, but will be less happy with some of the definitions used. For example, in discussing the authority of Scripture we are told that

We must have biblically realistic thinking that does not evaluate critically but instead accommodates what the scripture is saying. We who are listening to and interpreting the Word of God can interpret it in diverse ways (p. 9, 10).

Many of the essays that follow use a similar methodology and, as a result, serious questions must be asked as to just how faithful to the reformed tradition this book really is. To cite another example, in the chapter 'Rethinking the Scripture Principle: Friedrich Schleiermacher and the role of the Bible in the Church', we are told that

The biblical texts are human reports of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and not strictly speaking the Word of God.... I do not see how we

can go on appealing to Scripture as the 'written Word of God' and face in all honesty the history of abuse associated with such appeals (p. 308).

There is an agenda at work here which is at variance with the reformed tradition, and it is therefore tempting to close the book and dismiss all of its contents. But this would not be entirely fair.

The book is stronger in the sections that deal with the socio-political aspects of the gospel. H. Russell Botman's essay 'A Cry for Life in a Global Economic Era' reminds us that

Reformed theology is at the same time deeply personal (never merely private), existential (never disinterested) congregational, (never dislocated) ecumenical (never parochial), and contextual (never ahistoric and abstracted) (p. 375).

This is a helpful reminder that reformed theology must always engage with our deepest personal needs, beginning with our need of salvation and moving from there into all areas of life. It is this movement that has been difficult for some and which needs to be recaptured, so that a fully-orbed reformed theology may be seen at work in the church and in the world.

This is an important book which ought to be read by those who wish to be informed about, and engage with, current scholarly theological trends. At the same time it needs to be handled with care, since in its redefinition of reformed theology it has departed significantly from the biblically-based Calvinism that places a genuine belief in the Bible as the written Word of God at its centre and moves from there to enable the church to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

*Sandy Finlayson, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia*

## **Parallel Lives: The Relation of Paul to the Apostles in the Lucan Perspective**

Andrew C. Clark

Paternoster, Carlisle, 2001; xii+385pp., £24.99; ISBN 1 84227 035 4

This scholarly volume is the fruit of Ph.D. research done substantially at Tyndale House in Cambridge under supervision from Professor Max Turner of London School of Theology (formerly London Bible College). It belongs to the eminently useful series of Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs. The ample footnotes (frequently making up between a quarter and a half of the page), detailed exegesis,

untransliterated Greek, seven-page general index and thirty-one-page bibliography all bear eloquent witness to the book's origins.

You would, however, be completely incorrect to conclude that the above observations point to a boring, over-difficult or ill-composed read. Far from it. Certainly Andrew Clark makes substantial demands of his reader, but the theme itself and manner of execution render the book both readable and immensely valuable. There is a great deal of insight and raw information within its covers. The book deals with the broad theme of the depiction of Paul in Acts in relation to the portraits of Peter, the Twelve, Stephen, Philip and Barnabas rather than focusing upon the atomistic analysis of short passages. It spans the entirety of Acts and integrates topic into the overall purpose of the book. As such this monograph can be described as holistic and narrative in approach and is impatient of the reductionist tendency to explain away textual phenomena as a result of Luke's sources or 'Lucan style'.

Of course such a project warrants great care in terms of method. Clark identifies considerable methodological problems in previous studies of parallels in Acts especially those between Peter and Paul. Namely, there has tended to be a lack of precision in what constitutes evidence of an intentional parallel, and a general lack of credible external criteria from the Greco-Roman literary context. Clark seeks to remedy this by establishing internal criteria for determining when two accounts really are intended as parallels, using genre, verbal links, order of events and themes. It is accepted that individual verbal parallels may be insufficient on their own to make a case. However, Clark insists that a cumulative case can be made and that there are significant parallels bearing a distinct purpose in Luke's writing. The case is made through focusing upon the accounts of Paul's conversion and upon the speeches in Acts.

External criteria are sought in comparison with Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. In this it could be observed that there is no certainty that Luke and Plutarch were bound to use the same approach. He may have followed similar literary procedures selectively or he may have transformed what he saw. This problem is not very fully addressed. Strangely the ample bibliography contains no reference to the articles of Samuel Sandmel, 'Parallelomania' (*JBL* 81:1-13) or T. L. Donaldson, 'Parallels: Uses, Misuse and Limitations' (*EQ* 55:193-210).

Such quibbles aside, let me say straightforwardly that this is a highly interesting, informative and even enriching read. The quality of scholarship is very high and the spiritual interest of comparing Luke's presentation of such seminal figures in the history of earliest Christianity is enormous. Most significantly Clark concludes that the parallels

between Paul and Peter, and Paul and the Twelve support the contention that for Luke there is essential unity between the Jewish and the Gentile missions as part of God's plan of salvation. Paul is shown to be the equal of both Peter and the Twelve. Like them, Paul has seen the risen Lord, has been commissioned as a witness, proclaims that same Lord and performs signs and wonders to validate his message.

*Robert Willoughby, London School of Theology*

## **The Irish Puritans. James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church**

Crawford Gribben

Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2003; 160pp., £7.95; ISBN 0 85324 5364

The reviewer suspects that he is not the only Northern Irishman who would confess that his knowledge of English and Scottish church history is more extensive than his grasp of the situation in Ireland. This book will help remedy the deficiency.

Dr Gribben begins with a sketch of the 'colourful and diverse' religious scene in modern Ireland. He is convinced that the reasons for the present position must be sought in a careful study of men and movements in the 16th and 17th centuries. The complexity of the 16th century situation is well described, with the interplay of religion and politics among the different population groups. The progress of the Reformation in England was not paralleled in Ireland. Dr Gribben lays part of the blame on the policy of the English government with regard to the Irish language. A switch from Latin to English liturgy brought no increase in comprehension to most Irish people; 'the demonstration of English culture was more important than the clear communication of the gospel'. And the dominant popular Roman Catholicism owed as much to ancient pagan survivals as to the doctrines of Trent. By the end of the century the protagonists were consolidating their positions, with the training of Irish priests in many continental seminaries, and the foundation in 1592 of Trinity College, Dublin, to provide clergy for the Reformed church.

One year after its foundation, James Ussher entered Trinity at the tender (but not unusual) age of 12 years, already 'nourished in the Puritan atmosphere of home and school'. His success as a student inspired him to devote his life to the study of the Scriptures, and he began his famous work on biblical chronology. His rise to prominence was rapid; by 1613 he was vice-chancellor of the college, and in 1625 he became Archbishop of Armagh, the one-hundredth primate of that ancient see. And he was an

anti-Roman polemicist of no mean order. Far from being in the legitimate succession of St Patrick, contemporary Roman Catholicism was a 'great dunghill of errors'.

In 1615, under Ussher's guidance, a convocation of the church endorsed a detailed statement of faith known as the Irish Articles. (The 104 articles are printed in full in a useful Appendix.) Dr Gribben provides a detailed analysis of the Articles, seeing them as 'most significant', a considerable advance on the 39 Articles with 'a profound influence on the major Puritan confessions'. They were 'rigorously scholastic but charitable to weaker consciences'. Prospects for the evangelization of Ireland seemed favourable but for 'the interference of English Protestants'.

Ussher now had to face the opposition of the new Lord Deputy, Thomas Wentworth, and the baleful influence of Archbishop Laud. The Catholic counter-reformation was advancing under the 'limited toleration' granted by Charles I. This toleration did not extend to the development of Presbyterianism within the church in the north, where Scottish influence was strong and revival much in evidence. The clampdown from the English church and state was severe, and Ussher's position became almost intolerable. In 1640 he departed to England, hoping to pursue his scholarly interests in peace.

There was no peace in Ireland, however, as the 1641 rebellion resulted in the slaughter of large numbers of Protestants. In England the Civil War culminated in the execution of Charles I, an event abhorred by the irenic Ussher. Meanwhile the Westminster Assembly was convened. Gribben convincingly demonstrates that Ussher, though not present, had a 'massive influence' on the deliberations. His influence therefore persists to this day.

Continuing also to this day, much less happily, is the legacy of Cromwell's campaign in Ireland, with the savage massacres at Drogheda and Wexford. The 'bloodthirstiness and ethnic hatred', Gribben suggests, may be to some extent explained, but certainly not excused. The reader may raise an eyebrow at the views of John Owen and Jeremiah Burroughs. The thousands of English soldiers brought a 'bewildering array' of ecclesiastical opinions, many of them still with us. From the foundation of the first presbytery in 1642 Presbyterianism flourished, particularly in the north, but Dr Gribben concludes that the native Irish were never really evangelized.

In 1656 James Ussher died in England. Synods met in Ireland in attempts to establish a united Protestant church. These efforts came to nothing with the reinstatement of the established church under Charles II. Sadly, the heading of the last section in the penultimate chapter is 'The

collapse of Irish Puritanism'. Dissenters thereafter suffered much discrimination.

'Why study James Ussher and the Irish Puritans?' asks the author, as he gives a rapid survey of developments in the last 300 years, which included the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1870. Very significant also was the partition of Ireland in 1920 and the subsequent dramatic fall in the Protestant population in the Republic. In answer to his own question, Dr Gribben suggests that 'modern evangelicals need to learn from the Irish Puritans' failure to evangelize'. Ireland is a neglected mission-field. Gribben is fairly critical of modern evangelicals, whom he sees as complacent and respectable. They need to recognize that 'the gospel will never win Ireland when it comes packaged in any kind of national flag'.

The book, though short, is highly concentrated. Compact almost to a fault, it requires close attention. The account of the confused ecclesiastical situation is expertly done but does not make for light reading. There is no detailed portrait of James Ussher but he emerges as a pivotal figure in 17th century Ireland, a godly man, peaceable and reasonable, who retained the respect of his opponents. A few intriguing questions remain: What has gone wrong with the arithmetic on p. 123? Why did Ussher present Cardinal Richelieu (of all people) with Irish greyhounds? (p. 79). And do *all* Dublin accountants and management consultants wear blue suits? (p. 11).

This enlightening book has a serious purpose and deserves to be widely read.

*Robert Thompson, Belfast*

## **Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West**

Lamin Sanneh

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2003; 138pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 8028 2164 2

The growth of the church in Africa, Asia and Latin America has occurred while the church in the West has continued to decline. Yet this worldwide Christian resurgence seems to be largely ignored if not treated with scepticism and suspicion by many. Lamin Sanneh chooses to close the gap between 'robust secularism' and private piety through a question and answer style, although he acknowledges that this will entail 'taking liberties with nuance and niceties in order to be responsive'.

Following a short introduction, in which the author describes how he will proceed, are two chapters, a select bibliography and an index. The

first and main chapter looks at Christianity as a world religion, largely in the form of 90 questions and answers. The second deals with issues centering on Bible translation, largely through a further 25 questions and answers.

This 'interview approach' works remarkably well and is flexible. It is easy to imagine oneself present during a good-natured but robust interchange. There is the variety you would expect in such a debate: some questions receive one-word answers while others are dealt with over a page or more. What is at issue is not the fact of Christian expansion but the attitudes displayed by many towards this expansion and its significance. The author interacts with a wide audience, so many questions and objections reflect a secular viewpoint, or that of an ecumenical rather than an evangelical standpoint. Nevertheless since priority is given 'to indigenous response and local appropriation over against missionary transmission and direction' the answers reflect a different perspective for those used to seeing through missionary eyes.

'World Christianity' is preferred to 'global Christianity', which carries vestiges of the imperialism of Christendom as well as connotations of parallels with economic globalisation. This shift in world Christianity is traced to the development of mother tongues as the means of receiving the gospel. The possibility of a new religious cold war is rejected. Several points are made with reference to the continent of the author's birth and upbringing: the significance of adopting African names for God is emphasised, as is the fact that African Christianity has not been a bitterly fought religion. 'Christianity helped Africans to become renewed Africans, not remade Europeans.'

Examples are given where world Christianity could benefit the West: 'Christianity is a world religion of recent vintage with energy to renew the church as it reels exhausted from its pact with secularism.' 'Christianity should not anywhere be about the refusal to change the old; it should be about the willingness to embrace the new.' 'A post-Christian West is not so far gone that it cannot make live contact with a post-Western Christianity.'

At different points in the book contrasts are helpfully drawn with Islam, and throughout there are echoes of the author's earlier writings. This is particularly the case in chapter 2, dealing with translation issues. We are reminded that 'Christianity is a translated religion without a revealed language.' Nevertheless Christians have tended to arrogate a position to the language most natural to them and the Bible in that language, the Authorized Version acquiring 'an apocryphal reputation as the only Scripture Jesus knew!' However, 'No culture is so advanced and

so superior that it can claim exclusive access or advantage to the truth of God, and none so marginal or inferior that it can be excluded.’

In reminding us that God is continuing to build his church, and the means he uses, Lamin Sanneh encourages and challenges. The, at times, hostile secularism implicit in many questions reminds us of the mindset so prevalent in our culture. We might well benefit from reflecting on the issues raised as they impact our attitudes and our ways of ministry.

*M. Gavin Smith, Latin Link Scotland*

## **The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Simplicity and Immutability**

Jay Wesley Richards

IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 2003; 267pp., £17.99; ISBN 0 8308 2734 X

Jay W. Richards examines the case for jettisoning classical theism for its derivation from, and continued dependence upon, classical Greek metaphysics. He notes, for example, the Christian use of Greek words (and possible attendant concepts) such as *ousia*, *hypostasis*, *physis* and *hyparxis* and their Latin and English counterparts: *essentia*, *substantia*, *existentia*, *natura*, substance, essence and nature. He finds the case for wholesale Hellenization of theology to be ill-conceived and poorly argued. In a series of chapters, some of which are not for the faint-hearted, Richards examines the complex relationship between philosophy and theological expression.

The opening chapter is a *tour de force* in its historical analysis of the classical (deductive) formulation of Christian theism according to the *via triplex*: the *via eminentiae* (the way of eminence), the *via negativa* (the way of negation) and the *via causalitatis* (the way of causality). Richards notes, with more or less explanation, the differing contributions of Karl Barth, Charles Hartshorne and Jürgen Moltmann on the issue of the viability of classical formulations. Disappointingly (but in a subtly amusing way), he relegates Clark Pinnock’s *Open Theism* point-of-view to a three-line footnote (p. 41, n. 38). It is to be feared, however, that for the evangelical church, it is this deconstruction of classical theism that causes (and *will* cause) the greater damage.

How does Richards propose to deal with this issue? Answer – with the use of ‘modal logic’. Part of the assumption underlying this book is that religion (theology) and philosophy have not been on speaking terms for some time. His aim is get them talking! And talking about the core issues of Christian theism: God exists, God has created everything else that exists, God is sovereignly free from all that is outside of himself and

God is perfect. Certain formulations of these doctrines have caused tension when, for example, expressing the 'change' involved in the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity or God's freedom to create a world different from one he has (the question of *possibility*: could things be different from the way that they are?). Richards believes that modal logic aids in this issue.

As examples of this premise, Richards analyzes the antipodal theologies of Karl Barth and Charles Hartshorne (the latter willing to jettison various aspects of classical theism entirely).

The final two chapters are, perhaps, the most accessible. They are certainly the most interesting. Richards examines the classical formulations of God's immutability and simplicity, highlights modern disaffection for both tenets, agrees that certain aspects of both are difficult to sustain and finally makes an argument that (in the main) both of these doctrines are biblical and sustainable theologically and philosophically.

*The Untamed God* is an example of the utilization of philosophy in the cause of theology. Some will find the use of modalism to be itself suspect and ultimately unverifiable. One assumes that presuppositionalists will, for example. In the current challenges that Christian theism faces from atheism, agnosticism, pantheism and especially process theology, this book will have some important contributions to make.

*Derek Thomas, Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson, Mississippi)*

## **Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary**

Ben Witherington III with Darlene Hyatt

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2004; 421pp., £24.99; ISBN 0 80284 504 5

Witherington is one of the most prolific NT scholars around and he keeps producing a prodigious amount of good quality NT studies and commentaries. In his Romans commentary Witherington begins by noting that many previous commentators seem more influenced by Calvin and Barth than Paul in drawing their conclusions. I am a big fan of Calvin and Barth, but I sympathize with his observation. Witherington states that he wants to escape from this reformed monopoly on Romans, although he does not want to offer merely an Arminian/Wesleyan reading of Paul, but desires to move beyond the reformed mould (pp. xi-xii).

As such, I would agree with Witherington in places like Romans 7:13-25, which is not an autobiographical account of Paul's pre-Christian struggle with sin, and chapters 9-11, which are not concerned with

formulating a doctrine of individual predestination. Nor does Romans 4 speak of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Moreover, Witherington does not completely repudiate all standard reformed conclusions. For instance, his understanding of the origin of sin in Adam as 'corporate personality' (pp. 143-45) leans towards the reformed view of federal headship. He also argues that *hilasterion* in Romans 3:25 means 'propitiation' which most reformed exegetes would be in accord with (pp. 108, 138).

However, at several points he introduces a caricature of reformed theology only to dismiss it quite abruptly, often in pejorative terms (pp. 71, 84, 121-23, 133, 183, 197). He regards imputed righteousness and Luther's maxim of *simul iustus et peccator* ('at the same time both justified and sinner') as a license for antinomianism (pp. 122, 133, 199, 210 n. 3, 248, 368). In fact he charges, 'If God were simply to impute to believers his righteousness, then there would be no basis to require righteousness of them after their conversion' (p. 133). This was an accusation I am certain Calvin and Luther knew of and rejected. In their thinking, the separation of justification and sanctification did not nullify the necessities of faith, obedience, holiness and love outworking from faith (see Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.16.1). Witherington also walks into the cross-hairs of his own critique since his view of election as occurring in Christ (pp. 61, 255, 394 n. 82) sounds more like Barth than Paul.

Witherington has indeed held to his initial promise: he isn't offering an Arminian/Methodist reading of Romans as much as he appears (at times) to be offering an anti-reformed one. Whether Witherington's critique of reformed dogmatics is correct or not is beside the point; his comments against the position are often just unnecessary intrusions and on some occasions do not even appear to be tied to the argument of the text.

Yet, lest reformed readers be discouraged, this is the only major misgiving in what is otherwise a fine commentary. The strengths of the book are many. First, it represents a sound application of rhetorical criticism and demonstrates the relevance of the tool for Pauline exegesis. Second, Witherington represents what I suspect will become a standard feature of Pauline studies, that is reaching a post-New Perspective equilibrium by neither affirming antiquated nor revisionist views of Paul, but instead critically appropriating the post-Sanders landslide on Paul and Judaism (see in particular his excursus on justification and covenantal nomism on pp. 102-7). Third, the section on 'Bridging the Horizons' enables Witherington and Hyatt to ask the question I wish more exegetes would ask, namely, 'So what?' This is no ivory tower commentary but

keeps an eye on the meaning of Romans for Christians today. Fourth, the excursions are good summaries of debates in recent scholarship. Fifth, he provides good interaction with recent scholarship, particularly books by Wright, Grieb, Talbert, Bryan and Johnson.

Overall, Witherington's commentary is sound and, though hardly ground-breaking, it is a worthwhile study to have on one's bookshelf. Finally, it is more affordable than other more well-known commentaries by Moo or Byrne, which makes it a useful textbook for cash-strapped students.

*Mike Bird, Brisbane, Australia*

## **The Gender Neutral Bible Controversy**

Vern Poythress and Wayne Grudem

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 2003; 501pp., £12.99; ISBN 1 85792 879 2

Issues of 'gender' are very prominent and often controversial topics currently, not least in the area of Scripture translations. Arising out of the publication of 'gender neutral' Bible translations, and in particular the *New International Version: Inclusive Language Edition* (published in the UK in 1996), this book seeks to prove that the way in which gender-related terms in Scripture are translated impinges upon the translation, integrity and authority of the Bible as God's Word. The aim of the book, as well as the importance attached by the authors to the subject, can be seen in its subtitle: 'Is the age of political correctness altering the meaning of God's words?'

The authors set out in pursuit of their answer by firstly defining the term 'gender neutral', taking it as descriptive of translations that deliberately and unjustifiably (although not all for the same reasons) avoid being gender-specific where the textual context clearly calls for it. The term 'generic he' refers to the use of the masculine pronoun 'he' so as to be inclusive of male and female, such as in Matthew 16:24-26.

Poythress and Grudem then show how gender-neutral translations of the Bible arose, followed by an excellent chapter on the Bible as the Word of God, including the truthfulness, inerrancy and authority of Scripture. The remaining chapters deal with principles of Bible translation, the various ways in which 'generic he' is avoided in gender-neutral translations, and finally a treatment of specific words like 'father', 'brothers' etc.

Pages 299-491 consist of 12 Appendices ranging from the 'Colorado Springs Guidelines' (for translation of gender-related language in

Scripture) of which both authors were signatories, to an analysis of relevant Greek words, and a detailed treatment of the points of criticism levelled at *Today's New International Version*, in which the authors disagree with other prominent evangelicals like Don Carson and Craig Blomberg.

This is a detailed, scholarly and balanced presentation of the issues of gender neutrality. It also reminds us as we read it that Bible translation is a holy work, dealing as it is with the Word of God. With admirable clarity the authors show that the real issue is not one of changes in gender language required to conform to modern English styles. They accept unequivocally that language does change and that translations of the Bible need to be revised from time to time to take account of such changes.

The real issue lies in the systematic exclusion of male components of meaning that are found in the original text. Many of those who are in favour of a gender-neutral translation seem to be motivated by a desire to reflect current attitudes towards women, whereas Poythress and Grudem insist that a translation of the Scriptures must be motivated primarily by a desire to present God's Word as it was written, when it was written. When a translation by conviction uses gender-neutral language it is more or less what the translators wish had been written or would have been written had the text been written today. The authors convincingly argue that such a translation actually obscures the original meaning of the text, and so deprives its readers of the privilege of reading God's Word as it was written, leaving them free then to interpret it in accordance with personal faith.

The process at work in the natural development of a language is very different from what drives the juggernaut of 'political correctness'. Pressure groups who seek to push the agenda for gender-neutral translations are effectively a 'language police' in the opinion of the authors. Submission to what Scripture says, in all its nuances, is as essential to the translator as to the disciple; the alternative is a modification of Scripture to sit more comfortably with modern patterns of thought. Ultimately it is the doctrine of Scripture that is affected, and once that has been modified access is opened for the same process to be applied to all other doctrines founded upon it.

*James Maciver, Knock Free Church of Scotland*

## Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism

Christopher R. Seitz (ed.)

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2001; 240pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 84227 54 7

This absorbing collection of fifteen papers emerged from a 2001 ecumenical conference in Charlestown, South Carolina. The essays are penned by an international group of theologians from across the denominational spectrum. By focusing on Nicene Christianity pre-dating the later 'rending of Christ's body' (p. 18) the authors hope to describe a basis of belief and praxis around which orthodox Christians from all traditions can unite. This is what is meant by 'a new ecumenism'.

This agenda emerges more sharply in some essays than in others. William J. Abraham's chapter on 'the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church' challenges our casual acceptance of profound division and wonders if we need to reckon on the possibility of divine judgement for our sins. His words are echoed by Ephraim Radner in his discussion of the challenge of creedal Christianity. He argues with passion that our 'atomized Christianity' works against not only the spirit of Nicene faith, but against the very truth of the gospel itself.

Other essays concentrate on unpacking the theological content and significance of different articles of the Nicene creed. Here I can offer only a few brief snapshots of some. The late Colin Gunton contributes a fine piece on 'Jesus Christ... begotten not made' relating fourth century struggles with Arianism to contemporary restatements of that heresy. Alan Torrance's article explores the heart of Nicene Christianity – its proclamation of Jesus as of one substance (*homoousious*) with the Father. If this defines the faith of the church catholic, he notes that at times what unites much modern theology is 'a common desire to reject it' (p. 50). Robert Jenson contributes a difficult chapter on 'For us... he was made man' that in this reviewer's mind at least, appears to redefine the incarnation in terms at odds with the Nicene confession. David Yeago develops six richly rewarding propositions on preaching the cross in his essay on 'crucified... under Pontus Pilate'. Carl Braaten offers a refreshingly forthright apologetic for the necessity and uniqueness of resurrection faith. Ecumenical progress, he contends, cannot be made unless there is agreement that 'there can be no authentic Christianity without belief in the resurrection of Jesus' (p. 116). John Webster concludes his discussion with the realistic assessment that a renewed emphasis on the creed will only be effective if accompanied by our cry to God to renew us through his Spirit (p. 131). Douglas Farrow appeals for a bold reaffirmation of Christ's second coming suggesting that 'a church

whose “Maranatha!” is spoken *sotto voce*, is a church that has lost its nerve together with its christological nerve center’ (p. 148). Thomas Smal does an excellent job of exploring the theological and practical implications surrounding the *filioque* clause for the pneumatology of Western and Eastern Christianity. Susan Wood’s reflection emphasises the ecumenical implications of ‘one baptism for the forgiveness of sins’.

The book’s title implies perhaps that the ‘old ecumenism’ has failed. The strategy of building unity around a classic articulation of orthodox faith is certainly more welcome than an attempt to minimise theological debate under the blanket of lowest-common-denominator Christianity. Huge problems persist of course. Can the agendas of fourth-century Christianity adequately address the very different challenges facing the Christian faith in the twenty-first century? What would the success of such an enterprise actually look like in practice? Philip Turner, in the Introduction, states that none of the authors wish to start another party, a Nicene party lying ‘between the spent force of theological liberalism and the dogmatic certainties of its evangelical critics’ (p. 18). Leaving aside what some of the evangelical contributors may think of his comment, this an issue largely left ill-defined and vague throughout.

A couple of minor points: rather disappointingly no index is included and, rather surprisingly for a book on Nicene Christianity, the full Nicene creed is nowhere available to hand. However, overall I warmly recommend this book as a resource full of historical and theological insight on fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. The essays assume familiarity with the issues addressed, yet are fairly short and are not packaged in the impenetrable wrappings of academia.

*Patrick Mitchel, Irish Bible Institute, Dublin*

## **God’s Man for the Gilded Age. D. L. Moody and the Rise of Modern Mass Evangelism**

Bruce J. Evensen

Oxford University Press, New York, 2003; 232pp., £18.99; ISBN 0 1951 6244 7

Dwight L. Moody was one of the great sensations of the nineteenth century, sweeping through Britain and Ireland and then the major cities of the USA in an evangelistic campaign that was, in style and scope, wholly unprecedented. In just over 25 years, Moody was estimated to have preached to one hundred million people, speaking to packed houses in cities from Edinburgh to Philadelphia, and from London to New York. He made Christian evangelism the stuff of headlines, and began a way of

taking the gospel to the masses that has been much imitated but in many respects never equalled.

In his excellent new book *God's Man for the Gilded Age*, Professor Bruce Evensen discusses the five pivotal years of the Moody ministry, from 1873 to 1877. He argues eloquently that the key to understanding Moody's extraordinary success in these years is to see the intimate relationship between Moody the evangelist and Moody the publicist. In our current age of spin doctors and public relations, it is astonishing to see just how modern Moody's campaigns were, with meticulous planning and at times ruthless exploitation of the mass media being used to begin and then maintain the momentum that would bring hundreds of thousands out to see and hear the spectacle in cities across Britain and the USA.

As Evenson observes, his techniques allowed the creation of 'the kind of crowds and civic spectacle that encouraged the simply curious to come. That was what made the careful cultivation of the secular press such a crucial strand in campaign planning.' The press attention was backed up by painstaking attention to detail to ensure that the events were as successful as they possibly could be – in London in 1875, for example, every house was targeted by Moody's volunteers as part of a door-to-door campaign, with all contacts kept in a log which was then shared with supervisors. The results were astonishing, with over two and a half million people attending Moody's meetings there in the Spring of 1875.

Moody is a fascinating character, but Evensen does not set out to paint a biographical portrait, nor does he pay much attention to Moody's career outside these five implausible years of evangelistic superstardom. Instead he portrays in great detail the precise nature of the campaign as it made its way through the British Isles and then through Brooklyn, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Boston. He provides a wealth of information about these American cities and the contexts into which the Moody mission placed itself in each one. While each place was different, and the personalities of the Christian leaders and the local newspapers were varied, the story becomes a fairly repetitive one by the time Moody reaches the last stop in Boston.

Professor Evensen's book is well written and splendidly researched – there are 38 pages of endnotes – and it contains many evocative contemporary illustrations. The combination of the newspaper accounts and the line drawings of the meetings allows you to picture clearly what these amazing afternoons and nights must have been like. The book's focus is on how Moody used the mass media and on how the mass media used Moody; it provides little analysis of his long-term impact and even less of his theology. The questions of where this explosion came from in

1873 and where it went in 1877 and, perhaps more importantly, what was left behind when all was said and done, are questions that Evensen leaves for another writer to answer. It is a testament to the quality of this book, however, that the reader is left much better informed about Moody and his mission, but feeling hungry for more.

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Evansville, Indiana*

## **An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity**

Delbert Burkett

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002; xv+600pp., £60 h/b, £20.99 p/b; ISBN 0 521 00720 8 p/b; 0 521 80955 X h/b

The author, Delbert Burkett, is Associate Professor at Louisiana State University. The book is aimed at 'first-/second-year undergraduates, and seminary/bible college students in courses on the New Testament, biblical studies, Christian origins, and early church history; and also teachers, church professionals, and other general readers interested in the New Testament, its background, and the origins of Christianity.... It aims to provide students with a balanced critical overview of the origins and early expressions of Christian belief.'

Burkett introduces all the books in the NT canon and much other Christian literature written before AD 150. The main section headings are Historical and Religious Background; Acts; Pauline Christianity (including Ephesians); Judaic Christianity (examines the Letter of James and the Didache); Gnostic Christianity (examines the Gospel of Thomas); Proto-Orthodox Christianity (including 1 Clement, the Pastoral Epistles, Jude and 2 Peter, the Johannine Epistles, Hebrews, the Epistle of Barnabas, 1 Peter and Revelation); Appendices (in which he provides a useful series of primary texts (e.g., Lucian on sacrifices, the Essenes, Jewish messianic hopes, etc.).

As one may gather from the above section headings, Burkett views the NT as containing several 'perspectives' on Christianity. As such, it follows a standard historical-critical approach. Indeed, Burkett deliberately avoids the confessional method of studying the New Testament. Thus, the Gospels are said to contain not only authentic sayings of Jesus, but other traditions which were created by the church, and sayings which were incorrectly attributed to Jesus by the evangelists. Moreover, whatever authentic Jesus material is found in the Gospel of John, much of it is believed to have undergone development before being included in the

Fourth Gospel. The Johannine community are said to have retrojected the glory of the exalted Lord into Jesus' ministry. However, the chapter on 'The Quest for the Historical Jesus' is well written and brief.

Burkett does not believe Acts to be historically accurate, a conclusion he bases on various inconsistencies, the emphasis on the miraculous, the composition of the speeches and the presentation of Paul which he does not believe accords with information gleaned from Paul's extant letters. He does not believe that the Pastoral Letters were written by Paul and remains on the fence with respect to 2 Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians. Nonetheless, he writes lucidly on 'Pauline' theology with respect to the ten letters.

The section on Proto-Orthodox Christianity (represented by 1 Clement, the Pastoral Epistles, Jude and 2 Peter, the Johannine Epistles, Hebrews, the Epistle of Barnabas, 1 Peter and Revelation) describes the type of Christianity that became dominant as that which arose out of Pauline, Johannine and related forms of Christianity. It is neither Judaic nor Gnostic in focus. It combines the Jewish and Greek conceptions of God, presents salvation as that which was necessary because of sin (not ignorance), believing, like Paul, that salvation from sin is only possible by the death of Jesus as the sacrifice for sins. It also follows the Hebraic emphasis on the soul and the body, including a hope for life in the body in a renewed earth. Moreover, in this Proto-Orthodox Christianity, Christ is regarded as both human and divine.

This book is written in an extremely lucid, uncluttered style. It is well illustrated throughout and provides the reader with an introduction to the New Testament and the origins of Christianity from a non-conservative perspective. Burkett insists on treating New Testament texts on the same level as other Christian texts. While this may be valuable at some levels, it also poses its own problems. There are, of course, good conservative introductions to the New Testament written with undergraduates and serious Bible students in mind which more fairly present the New Testament on its own terms, and with a higher regard for the books of the Old and New Testaments as revelation from God: e.g., *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology*, Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, Marianne Meye Thompson (Eerdmans, 2001); *An Introduction to the New Testament*, D. A. Carson, Leon Morris, Douglas J. Moo (Apollos, 1992); or the older (1970) work *New Testament Introduction*, D. Guthrie (IVP, Downers Grove).

*John A. MacLeod, Free Church College, Edinburgh*

## The Fall and Sin: What We Have Become as Sinners

Marguerite Shuster

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2004; 280pp., £21.99; ISBN 0 8028 0994 4

A Ph.D. in psychology, former pastor, and present professor of preaching at Fuller Seminary, Shuster deftly wields the tools of these three trades in this third in a series of theology texts (following Paul Jewett's *God, Creation, and Revelation* and *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human*, which was written with Shuster). The book is divided into two sections on 'The Fall of Humankind' and 'The Doctrine of Sin'. Included are five sermons which effectively recapitulate and refocus the salient points Shuster discusses.

Shuster's unflinching account of human depravity is written out of two convictions. First, she is adamant that 'the doctrine of sin is an essential protection of human dignity' (p. 101). That is, while we may have *become* sinners, we are not *naturally* sinners. The Fall and sin are in no way necessary constituents of human existence but are decidedly alien to our true dignity as those created in the image of God and for right relationship with him and one another.

A correlate of this is Shuster's second conviction: 'By trying to define sin out of existence, we deprive ourselves of our only remedy' (p. 180). She laments the explanatory choices on the contemporary scene: therapeutic sin-as-sickness, hopeless determinism, ridiculously optimistic self-making. Rather, armed with a strong doctrine of the will's freedom and humanity's God-given capacity of self-transcendence, she stares sin, and its daughter death, in the face. Sin and death are decidedly real, and we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Shuster's discussion of the Fall is a nuanced revalorization of a doctrine that has been dismissed frequently as naive, unethical, unscientific or mythological, particularly in these disorienting post-Darwinian, post-critical days. After a wise overture to the complexity of the issue, she details a view of primal history as covenantal and as in some sense *history*, which is key to our recognising that God works in history rather than on some idealized plane. This has a knock-on effect in christological and soteriological issues, as Shuster emphasises Paul's paralleling of Adam and Christ in Romans 5. In her chapters on the root, nature and consequences of the Fall, Shuster makes much of the 'mystery of iniquity' ('Moral evil is a surd', p. 43), at the same time recognising that, while Genesis gives no explanation for Adam and Eve's sin, it does *describe* their sin as a free act of rebellion against their Creator. Sin's source is volitional, and the Fall itself was an act of unbelief and pride.

In the second half of the book, Shuster deals with sin's nature as act and condition, the difference between *sin* and *sins*, degrees and categories of sins (including discussion of 'the unforgivable sin', mortal versus venial sins and the seven deadlies), the doctrine of original sin, a cluster of issues related to freedom and 'civil righteousness'. On specific issues, readers will be interested in her discussion of total depravity in terms of its 'extensive' rather than 'intensive' definition. Against the objection that original sin pulls the rug out from under moral responsibility, Shuster affirms two things at once: 'we are now incapable of doing the good by our own power; and we are responsible for our sinful state' (p. 183).

Yet at times, Shuster's otherwise irenic Reformed perspective obscures insights into sin that might come from elsewhere. Wesleyan Arminianism is dismissed in a parenthesis – in a section on Pelagianism, no less! Similarly, Orthodox and Roman Catholic perspectives become occasional foils rather than frequent friends. While far from provincialism, this is unfortunate, in that she misses the helpful correctives these traditions might provide to an all-too-often Protestant split between ontology and ethics. In the process, our acting and our being are divorced, as if what we do is not integrally related to who we are.

*The Fall and Sin* will be an excellent resource for theology teachers, pastors and thoughtful Christian readers. Its accessibility rarely trades away intellectual rigour; and Shuster's keen interest in doing Bible-breathing, preachable theology is evident throughout, not least in the fascinating anecdotal and psychological insights she uncovers in what seemed to be dry and dusty, overtrodden theological territory.

*Matt Jenson, University of St Andrews*

## **The Cambridge Companion to St Paul**

James D. G. Dunn (ed.)

Cambridge University Press, 2003; 301pp., £15.99; ISBN 0 521 78694 0

This work comprises one chapter by each of nineteen scholars, a bibliography, and two indices. The editor's introduction traces the story of Pauline interpretation from Baur to the New Perspective, and notes some strands in the ongoing debate. The remainder of the work falls into four parts.

In Part One, 'Paul's life and work', Klaus Haacker pieces together the chronology of Paul's life from the fragments of evidence in his epistles

and in Acts, while Stephen Barton addresses Paul's work. He considers some of the metaphors which the apostle employs, documents the hardships involved in apostleship, and demonstrates the local and small-scale nature of Paul's evangelism.

The main aim of Part Two is to summarise the contents of the Pauline letters in probable chronological order. Some contributors make interesting, and sometimes illuminating, comments on the background and main themes. Margaret Mitchell sees loss of hope as the key to understanding 1 Thessalonians. Bruce Longenecker finds the heart of Galatians in 'cruciform' Christian lifestyle. However, to summarise Galatians without a single reference to justification is odd. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor well catches the pastoral passion underlying the Corinthian correspondence. Robert Jewett reads Romans as four successive proofs of the thesis that the gospel overcomes human hostility, but fails to do justice to the overcoming of divine-human hostility. Morna Hooker convincingly defends the integrity of Philippians and its Roman origin, while Loren Stuckenbruck's piece on Colossians includes an interesting section highlighting both the wisdom background to the Christological hymn, and the use of themes from the hymn later in the epistle. Andrew Lincoln's essay on Ephesians and Arland Hultgren's on the Pastoral Epistles, in which he defends the threefold ordering of ministry, conclude this section.

In Part Three five essays each address a different aspect of 'Paul's theology'. Alan Segal traces the methodological continuity between Jewish techniques and Paul's writings as a Christian, which in turn means that Paul is an important witness to the nature of first-century Judaism. Graham Stanton identifies the dominant strands in Paul's understanding of the gospel as divine initiative enacted through the Spirit's power, the death and resurrection of Jesus, justification, and reconciliation. L. W. Hurtado focuses his account of Paul's christology around the apostle's devotion to Christ as the agent of redemption and the legitimate recipient of worship and obedience. Luke Timothy Johnson finds Paul's ecclesiology centred in the notion of community, but considers community organisation to be functionally, rather than theologically, legitimated. Brian Rosner makes a useful contribution to the debate about law and gospel: Paul's ethic is the application of both.

The use of the Pauline corpus by the church developed slowly. Calvin Roetzel opens Part Four, arguing that it was largely Marcion who rescued Paul from obscurity, and that the anti-Marcionite opposition, led by Irenaeus and Tertullian, cemented the place of the epistles in the canon. Robert Morgan traces the impact of Pauline interpretation from the

fathers via the Reformation to dialectical theology, and suggests that there are wider perspectives, such as the possibilities in the Pauline epistles for motivating environmental concern, still waiting to be applied. Finally Ben Witherington assesses four contemporary perspectives on Paul – Jewish, feminist, rhetorical and canonical. He is rather generous to some readings which are bizarre.

The book is marred by criticisms of the inspired apostle as a biblical interpreter, allegations that his theological emphases were sometimes mistaken, and frequent statements incompatible with the authorship claims of the letters themselves. Nevertheless, as an indication of the present, albeit transient, state of Pauline research, it serves a useful purpose, not least because its succinctness makes it accessible.

*Jonathan Bayes, Hambleton Evangelical Church, Carlton Miniott,  
Thirsk*

### **The Salvation of Souls: Nine Previously Unpublished Sermons on the Call of Ministry and the Gospel by Jonathan Edwards**

Richard A. Bailey and Gregory A. Wills (eds)

Crossway Books, Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL, 2002; 190pp., h/b, £13.99; ISBN 1 58134 451 1

### **An Absolute Sort of Certainty: The Holy Spirit and the Apologetics of Jonathan Edwards**

Stephen J. Nichols

P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, 2003; 202pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 87552 791 4

### **The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition**

D. G. Hart, S. M. Lucas and S. J. Nichols

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2003; 255pp., £16.50; ISBN 0 8010 2622 9

It is not surprising that the tercentenary of the birth of one of the most influential thinkers and theologians of the late Puritan period should spawn several new studies and editions of his life and work. Those for whom the published works of Jonathan Edwards appear prohibitive can now access his thinking through several new publications; those who

have ploughed through the voluminous writings will benefit from the further reflection of these volumes.

In *The Salvation of Souls* nine sermons on the nature of the gospel ministry, only one of which has been published previously in a theological journal, are made available to us from Edwardsean manuscripts. They are quintessential Edwards, distilling the essence of the Puritan understanding both of ministry and of preaching. A useful introduction by the editors sets these sermons in context, while the modernised English makes them easier to read. These sermons cover subjects such as 'Ministers need the Power of God', 'The Minister before the judgement seat of Christ' and 'Preaching the Gospel brings poor sinners to Christ'. They are a useful addition to available Puritan literature.

In *An Absolute Sort of Certainty* Stephen Nichols looks at the Holy Spirit in the thinking of Edwards, and seeks to find a role for Edwards as an apologist of the faith. For Nichols this is a kind of *via media* between studies which have focused on Edwards the theologian and others which have focused on Edwards the philosopher. Against those who have concluded that Edwards held these in tension, Nichols argues that they coalesced in Edwards' apologetic for the faith.

The centre of Edwards' apologetic is located by Nichols in epistemology. This allows Nichols to find a central core to Edwards' thought, relating both his philosophical and theological writings. It also enables Nichols to demonstrate how Edwards' use of different sources relate to one another; how, for example, he is able to draw theologically on Augustine and Calvin in his discussions on the nature of knowledge, and to draw philosophically on Newton and Locke. The net result is that, far from seeing a tension in Edwards' thinking, Nichols actually finds a harmony in it, as Edwards grounds our knowledge of God both in the external witness of Scripture and the internal work of the Holy Spirit.

With these emphases Edwards, according to Nichols, is able to steer his listeners safely between the arid wastes of rationalism and the excesses of religious 'enthusiasm'. Knowing God is a matter both of mind and heart. Nichols' approach to Edwards provides a useful interpretative grid within which to understand his thought. Written in a clear and engaging manner, it is a welcome contribution.

Nichols is one of the editors in the new volume from Baker Academic, *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*, which seeks to examine the impact of Edwards' thought on the later evangelical tradition. In four parts, 'Vision', 'Theology', 'Legacy' and 'Reflections', it is a collection of thirteen essays from various scholars.

The first part looks at Edwards's worldview, his mission work, his emphasis on preaching and the sense of Christ in his theology. The second examines the Two Dissertations, with their challenge for views of the world then current, his work on divine foreknowledge and its impact on the open theism debate, his apologetic for Christianity in the light of the total effects of sin, and his federalism. The third section looks at the growth of experimental Calvinism following Edwards, the gradual dissolution of the New England theology, and the impact of Edwards on Southern Presbyterian theology. The final part contains an interesting piece on the difficulties in editing Edwards, and concludes with a fine bibliographical essay.

As with any collection of essays, the contributions are somewhat unequal, but the essays by Darryl Hart, George Marsden and Sean Lucas are particularly noteworthy. All in all, these three new publications demonstrate a renewed interest in, and appreciation of, one of the world's leading thinkers, and will give renewed impetus to studies of his theology.

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

### **Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis**

Richard Burnett

Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, Germany, 2001; xiv+305pp., €49.00; ISBN 3 16 147677 8

As one trained in biblical studies of the overly historicist type, Burnett's work on Barth's theological exegesis came as a clarifying and refreshing call back to the subject matter of Scripture, namely, God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of Burnett's elucidation of Barth's exegesis for today's biblical scholars. As optimistic as this reviewer is about the significance of Burnett's work, my optimism fades regarding its reception in the realm of biblical scholars. This reviewer simply wonders whether or not the guild of biblical scholars has the ears to hear such a call.

For Burnett, Barth's theological exegesis was not a one-off 'virtuoso performance' but was actually an intricately and loving participation in the subject matter of Scripture as well as a direct response against the empathetic tradition of biblical hermeneutics espoused by the likes of Herder, Schleiermacher and Dilthey. According to Barth, the goal of exegesis is not to know the author better than the author knew himself by means of a highly-tuned grammatical analysis and an intuitive, artistic psychologizing of the author. Rather, the goal of exegesis is to

understand the *res*, or subject matter, towards which the authors of Scripture were pointing. The revolution for Barth, in light of his study of Paul, was that Paul does not point to himself in his writings. He actually witnesses to God. Barth's response to his critics who charged him with a lack of interest in Paul himself or Paul's time was, and I paraphrase, 'I would be interested in Paul if Paul were interested in himself.' If the reader of Scripture is going to take Paul seriously, the reader should respect the substance of Paul's own concerns. In Barth's understanding, Paul acts as apostle and points beyond himself to God's actions in Jesus Christ.

Barth's model of exegesis, as expounded by Burnett, involved several different, yet overlapping, aspects. A theological exegete does not read Scripture as a disinterested observer hampered by a hermeneutic of suspicion. Instead, the theological exegete actively participates in the subject matter and reads the text in light of that self-same subject matter, content, and substance. Also, the theological exegete reads the authors of Scripture in a loving manner, seeking to understand them humbly, before casting aspersions on the author's words and thought (a vocation that Barth's exegetical contemporaries were all too happy to do). As such, Barth is no enemy of historical criticism *per se*. Barth is an enemy of the idolatry of historical-criticism. Historical criticism serves a preparatory role in the reading of the *text*, but it is not the goal of exegesis. Put another way, expounding the historical background of the text is, for Barth, not the primary aim of a commentary. Pressing on to the subject matter of Scripture is.

Any criticisms of Burnett's treatment are actually related to this reviewer's desire for more. Barth describes his exegetical hero, Calvin, as one who was always concerned about *Aktualität*, or relevance. This reviewer yearned for a bit more of this from Burnett. What does Barth's theological exegesis have to say to a James Dunn or N. T. Wright, both of whom claim to be first and foremost historians? This reader believes Barth has a good deal to say to modern exegetes (even evangelical ones). Also, at the end of the day a work on theological exegesis must at some point deal with the text of Scripture itself. Burnett does not do this. In fairness, however, Burnett ends his work by humbly claiming that much more needs to be said regarding Barth's theological exegesis. We can only hope that Burnett, with his own lapidary and lucid style, will have more to say himself regarding Barth's theological reading of Scripture.

*Mark Gignilliat, Wycliffe Hall, University of Oxford*

## Universal Salvation? The current debate

Robin Parry and Chris Partridge (eds)

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2003; 291pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 84227 199 7

This book is a collection of essays by a dozen authors of differing viewpoints on the issue, 'Will God one day save all people through Christ's atoning work?' Gabriele Farke, in a foreword, suggests that Paternoster 'has given a platform in the opening chapters to the most thoughtfully wrought argument for universalism to date from within the contemporary evangelical community' (p. xiii). The main protagonist is the universalist, Thomas Talbott, who writes the first three chapters (Part I) in an attempt at a sustained case for universalism. Parts II – V follow with responses from a biblical, philosophical, theological and historical perspective. Finally (Part VI) Talbott responds to his contributors.

His combatants include other universalists, Thomas Johnson and Eric Reitan. Arminians are represented by Howard Marshall and Jerry Walls. Daniel Strange is the Calvinist/Augustinian representative and John Sanders upholds the Open Theism school of thought. Two chapters are given to an historical overview of the issue (Morwenna Ludlow, David Hillborn and Don Horrocks).

The book gets off to bad start, inaccurately suggesting that the desire of God for the salvation of all (not simply all *kinds* of people, but *all* people) is a tenet only true of Arminianism. However, even a stalwart Calvinist such as John Murray believed this, bringing to life a memorable sentence: 'there is a will to the realization of what he has not decreetively willed, a pleasure towards that which he has not been pleased to decree.' ('The Free Offer of the Gospel' in *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, p. 131).

Thomas Talbott makes an able case for universalism based mainly on the Adam/Christ parallel in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. Traditionally, the 'hell-texts' have been taken at face value and seeming universal passages interpreted in the light of it. According to Talbott (and the reasoning isn't rocket science!) if you take the Augustinian notion of sovereignty (that ultimately God will be victorious over evil) and add the (wrongly attributed as) Arminian notion that God *desires* the salvation of all, it is but legerdemain to emerge with universalism. It is a mere shift of hermeneutical perspective giving weight to the universal-passages rather than the hell-passages. Strange counters with a crucial text (for Talbott's case as argued), Revelation 22:11: 'He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still.'

Sanders adds a perspective that, by now, has become the commonplace argument of the Open Theists: Scripture presents us with a God who makes himself vulnerable to being hurt by creating beings who have the freedom to reject him. This God takes risks and leaves himself open to being despised, rejected and crucified. The creator and sovereign lord is one who suffers with, because of, and for his creatures. (p. 174). Quite how this case for divine vulnerability and possibility aids in the argument for universalism isn't always clear. What is clear is that this view lies outside of historic evangelicalism.

J. I. Packer has noted elsewhere that universalism has in this century quietly become part of the orthodoxy of many Christian thinkers as it did in Origen's day. This book is testimony to it. To that extent it is an insightful glance at current skepticism of an historic Christian doctrine. It is also a testimony as to the breadth of hermeneutical licence now acceptable to modern evangelicalism.

*Derek Thomas, Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson, Mississippi)*

## **New Testament History: A Narrative Account**

Ben Witherington III

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2001; 430pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 84227 114 8  
(currently out of print)

Biblical scholars are in general agreement that a precise knowledge of the historical, social, and religious movements in the first century CE is crucial for properly understanding the New Testament. Few scholars, however, have had the adeptness to produce a streamlined monograph on these complex topics. In this regard Ben Witherington's *New Testament History* has filled a genuine lacuna by chronicling in sixteen chapters the major people, events, and social and religious ideas of this period, including a cursory treatment of the intertestamental period. Witherington enhances this book with various excursions on significant topics under the heading 'A closer look' (e.g. Pharisees, zealots, speeches in Acts), along with many helpful charts and brief insets.

Upon close inspection one can find few faults with this work. One may observe, however, a few areas where this monograph could have been significantly strengthened. To begin, his brief discussion on the topic of Jewish rights in the Roman world does not reflect the current state of scholarship. Witherington adopts the traditional view that Jews were granted special participation in the imperial cult – i.e. offering sacrifices 'on behalf of' and not 'to' the emperor (p. 77 – thus apparently

unaware that this consensus has largely been overturned among ancient historians (e.g. T. Rajak and M. Ben Zeev).

Furthermore, a monograph covering such an extensive range of subjects requires strict discipline in order not to become unduly cumbersome. Although Witherington deserves praise for condensing such vast material into a single publication, he could have trimmed the book's length even more had he exercised more discipline in at least two ways. First, at several points the information contained in his excurses and insets is repeated verbatim in the main body of his work. A much better job could have been done to omit these unnecessary redundancies for a more succinct read. Secondly, Witherington sometimes indulges in unnecessary (and wild) speculation. Just to cite one of the many available examples, Witherington postulates on p. 297 that perhaps a large portion of the funds reserved for the 'Jerusalem collection' may instead have been used to pay for ritual expenses incurred when Paul (at the behest of James) sponsored four men when undertaking their religious vows (Acts 21.17-26). Whilst these tantalising tidbits add a personal flavour to his narrative account, perhaps they are unfitting in the light of his stated aim to produce a reliable history that refrains from outrunning the available evidence (p. 10).

Finally, there are at least two organisational shortcomings. Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of this book is that it does not contain a bibliography. At several key points in the monograph Witherington raises an interpretative debate but fails even to provide a bibliographic footnote citing those key scholars upon whom he relies (or with whom he disagrees). Furthermore, it would have been quite helpful from a reference point of view had his charts, insets and excurses been included in the table of contents. For some scholars, therefore, this monograph will not serve as a very convenient bibliographical reference work.

Even with the few weaknesses of this monograph, there is no doubt that Witherington has successfully achieved his goal to produce a carefully narrated account of New Testament history. Engaging thoroughly both with the primary and secondary sources whilst eliminating much of the cumbersome technical language, Witherington has written a first-rate history both for the expert and the non-specialist in Graeco-Roman and Jewish history. For many years to come this important work will serve as a solid treatment of New Testament history for theology students, pastors, as well as any serious student of the New Testament.

*Justin K. Hardin, Cambridge University*

**Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch**

John Webster

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003; 144pp., £35 h/b, £13.99 p/b; ISBN 0 521 83118 0 h/b; 0 521 53846 7 p/b

Written for upper-undergraduate and graduate students of theology, this work seeks to give a dogmatic account of the nature of Scripture. Chapter 1, 'Revelation, sanctification and inspiration', introduces the term 'sanctification' alongside two terms that are more common in discussions of Scripture. 'Sanctification' is used to describe the way God sets apart the biblical texts for the purpose of revelation. Webster holds that problems have arisen in Christian accounts of revelation because revelation has tended to be related too closely to contemporary intellectual conventions and too little to the doctrine of the Trinity. He complains of the way therefore that discussion of revelation has tended to come first in dogmatic treatments so as to form the starting point for epistemology while somehow detached from the doctrine of God. He finds rather that revelation is a 'corollary of more primary Christian affirmations about the nature, purposes and saving presence of the triune God' (p. 13). Considering attempts to describe the relationship between divine and human elements in Scripture, he finds problematic the use of the concept of divine accommodation and also the use of the hypostatic union of Christ as an analogy for the divine and human properties of Scripture (pp. 22-23). The notions of Scripture as testimony or as a 'means of grace', as well as of its 'servant-form' are found to be helpful, though the author judges the concept of 'sanctification' to be most useful as it 'can more readily be applied to the full range of processes in which the text is caught up from pre-textual tradition to interpretation...' (p. 26). In common with classic Reformed positions, inspiration is said to be verbal, that is to involve words; inspiration applies not only to the subject matter of Scripture but also to its form. Chapter 2, 'Scripture, church and canon', insists that the church is a product of the divine word and that 'the church is not competent to confer authority on Holy Scripture' (p. 53), though at the same time Webster wishes to avoid 'denials of the element of human decision-making in the process of canonisation' as might be found in some 'older theories of inspiration' (p. 58). Chapter 3, 'Reading in the economy of grace', contrasts attitudes to reading in contemporary culture, as represented by Schopenhauer, and the approaches to reading Scripture advocated by Calvin and Bonhoeffer. Whereas Schopenhauer contrasts reading with 'thinking for yourself', stressing human autonomy, Calvin and Bonhoeffer emphasise the need

for thought to be subordinate to the word. Webster maintains, 'Reading Scripture thus involves mortification of the free-range intellect which believes itself to be at liberty to devote itself to all manner of sources of fascination' (p. 90). Chapter 4, 'Scripture, theology and the theological school', considers the catechesis of the sixteenth-century Reformed theologian Zacharius Ursinus. His theological 'method' was simply a question of organising matter to help the reading of Scripture. Webster contrasts to this the primacy given to universal reason in prestigious theological institutions today along with the fourfold division (or fragmentation) of theology into biblical, historical, systematic and practical. He calls for a reformation of the curriculum, realising that in many situations this will mean that

theology will find itself moving to the edge of the modern university. In contexts committed to the sufficiency of natural reason (or at least to the unavailability of anything other than natural reason), theology will have something of the scandalous about it (p. 134).

In days when the church continues to wrestle with its relationship to academic institutions, and when even evangelical curricula are in danger of theological fragmentation, there is much to heed in this book.

*P. J. Williams, University of Aberdeen*

## **One Faith. Biblical and Patristic Contributions Towards Understanding Unity in Faith**

William Henn

Paulist Press, New York, 1995; 334pp., \$22.95; ISBN 0 8091 3577 9

Here's an ambitious book on an important subject! William Henn hopes in this work to trace a common thread to the idea of unity of faith in Old Testament, New Testament and Historical Doctrine. The book is successful and helpful. In the Old Testament he follows the thread through the themes of community, monotheism, basic creeds and universalism. Short confessions, such as the *shema*, enshrine Israel's common and continuous faith, underscoring a reliable relationship of covenant love. The New Testament's contribution is to add to all this a focus for faith upon the identity and action of Jesus. Even then, dialogue and discussion in the early church was a healthy sign of common unity of faith, for it just disclosed diversity of perspectives, not conflict about what formed the core teachings of the apostles.

The result is an excellent contribution to debate. The chief thrust sets out a 'multi-dimensionality' to the concept of faith. In the words of the early martyr, Ignatius, faith is 'a way of living' as well as the essence of Christian convictions. According to the author five factors combined to preserve unity in faith: common credal statements, dialogue, charisms and ministries, the composition of the NT canonical books and the development of a regulative role by church leaders. True to denominational preference, Roman Catholic, Henn makes much of the fifth factor, in my view *too* much. Having conceded that the NT does not justify the magisterium, attempts to re-instate its fundamental character on historical and theological grounds will lack conviction for non-Catholic readers. The case is read off the unity of the church and the Lordship of Christ, but one could equally read off an alternative case – one for a lordship exercised through the consensus of the whole church (much more difficult) and a voluntary, not top-down imposed, unity.

Readers from a different theological persuasion to the author's, should not be put off. Henn's sound, careful scholarship bears the fruit of a readable and rare integration of biblical and doctrinal material vital for properly assessing the church's future and mission.

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

## **Mark: Good News from Jerusalem**

Geoffrey Grogan

Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 2003; 302pp., £8.99; ISBN 1 85792 905 5

The Principal Emeritus of Glasgow Bible College (now the International Christian College) will be well known to most of our readers. Geoffrey Grogan has written on both Old and New Testaments over many years, and this revised and enlarged edition of a commentary first published in 1995 deserves to be noted and welcomed.

After an introductory survey of issues such as author, readers, literary features and relationship to the rest of Scripture, Grogan works through the Gospel in eighteen sections (up to 16:20, taking the longer ending as a genuine product of the apostolic or post-apostolic ages). Each section is clearly outlined and expounded, often with additional discussion. So, for example, the miracles of 4:35-5:43 are bounded by attention to the purpose of miracles and the presuppositions behind these stories.

There is a refreshing sanity about the whole thing, eschewing novelty and focussing on explaining the text. The flow of the story is maintained and there is a constant focus on the Good News in Christ. This is a

popular commentary and not a detailed verse-by-verse treatment, but it is based on wide reading and devout scholarship.

The writing is warm, as one would expect from this author, and there is constant engagement with the discipleship of the contemporary reader. The book would be accessible to most Christians, and it includes brief questions for personal reflection at the end of each chapter.

It would also be a helpful companion to the preacher working through Mark, looking for an adjunct to the academic commentary. Grogan always keeps the bigger picture in view, and is often homiletically suggestive. I had never, for example, seen 10:13-16 and 10:17-31 as balancing one another in successively stressing the need for faith and for repentance, but Grogan's approach opens up that kind of perspective.

There is a useful Subject Index, but no Scripture Index.

*Alasdair I. Macleod, Free Church, St Andrews*

## **Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in the New Testament and Contemporary Contexts**

Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2003; 232pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 84227 246 2

This work originally appeared in the USA in 2000, and has been republished in the United Kingdom by Paternoster. At the heart of the volume is a supreme evangelistic issue: how may the Bible's doctrine of the atonement be communicated today in a way that will recover the 'scandal' of the cross? The authors are motivated by a twofold concern: first, that much evangelistic preaching and missionary work has failed to see the many metaphors used in the Bible regarding the atonement; second, that contemporary evangelicalism is obsessed with the idea of the cross as penal substitution – a view, according to the authors, which does nothing to communicate the significance of the cross meaningfully to the modern world.

It will be appreciated, therefore, that the position of this volume has profound consequences for the way in which we handle and contextualise the biblical data. That Christ died for our sins is, according to Green and Baker, a fundamental Christian message. And yet, even within the New Testament, the cross was not a straightforward doctrine: it was 'a puzzle to be contemplated, a paradox to be explored, a question on which to reflect' (p. 16).

Three chapters of this book handle the New Testament material relevant to the theme, and conclude that both in the teaching of Jesus and that of the apostles, a wide variety of metaphors is used to describe the

atonement. Jesus himself, we are told, uses 'creativity and innovation' to draw together concepts illustrative of his saving work, while the apostles continue this use of imagination to find ways of expressing what it was Jesus actually did, and what it was the cross actually achieved. Thus the total message of the New Testament is that no one metaphor is adequate to convey the doctrine of atonement to us.

The final chapters of the volume reflect on ways in which the church today must follow the example of Jesus and the apostles in using creative imagination to communicate the meaning of the cross. Reference is made to the work of Norman Kraus, a missionary to Japan who used the concept of 'shame' in Japanese culture as a way of communicating the atonement. Ultimately this book is missiological rather than doctrinal, demonstrating that 'the images of the atonement that have surfaced in the history of the church have often taken shape through... commitments to articulating the significance of the cross in particular settings' (p. 221). The lesson is clear: we need to articulate the atonement with primary reference to contemporary contexts.

Driving much of the discussion, however, is an evident antipathy towards the idea of penal substitution. In the overview of historico-theological perspectives on the atonement in chapter 5, Charles Hodge is singled out as the culprit who championed this view of the atonement, to the detriment of the modern missionary movement. Penal substitution, according to Green and Baker, is not taught in Paul (p. 95 – which New Testament are the authors reading?), and therefore ought not to dominate the discourse of contemporary evangelicalism. Hodge found his doctrine in Western views of guilt and punishment, we are taught; straightjacketing the atonement in Hodgian language is neither biblical, nor helpful to the modern church in its various missionary settings.

To be sure, the biblical data on the atonement does employ wide-ranging vocabulary, drawn from different areas of life, as the authors rightly say. The lawcourt provides justification language; commerce provides redemption language; worship provides sacrificial language, and so on. But the wide imagery of the Bible surely does not give us a warrant to create new metaphors; the biblical language nuances for us the nature, implications and effects of the death of the one who did, in fact, die in our place. It was for us Christ was made a curse. It was to redeem us that the lamb was slain. The biblical testimony is unified in its insistence that the broken relationship between man and God can only be restored on the basis of the substitutionary death of Christ.

The argument of the authors that penal substitution distorts the biblical view of God, or that it legitimises suffering and violence, is

impossible to justify. No Reformed scholar ever argued in these terms (least of all Charles Hodge). The net result of the arguments of this volume is that it leaves us, as communicators of the message of the cross, with a vacuum. If the Bible simply warrants the use of our imagination in the creation of new metaphors, then the Bible's message is insufficient. How could we ever be certain that we were preaching the correct message? The scandal of the cross remains simply the fact that apart from the shedding of (Christ's) blood, there is no remission of sins.

The authors have legitimate concerns in this book; but to follow their directives is to do precisely what Paul feared: to make the cross of no effect through human ingenuity. To be faithful to our missionary task today requires new ways of preaching the old message of the substitutionary death of Christ as the ground of all our justification and hope. It does not require substituting the message itself with new images of the cross. This book is a rare thing: a volume with much useful insight into biblical material, yet with the potential of doing immense harm to the work of the gospel.

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

### **Amyraut Affirmed**

Alan C. Clifford

Charenton Reformed Publishing, 8 Le Strange Close, Norwich, NR2 3PN, 2004; 64pp., £3.50; ISBN 0 9526716 7 0

Following writers like B. G. Armstrong, Alan Clifford has been an active proponent of the view that later Calvinists turned the Biblical teaching of John Calvin into a hard legalistic system exemplified in the Westminster Confession (1646) and the writings of John Owen. He thinks the French Reformed theologian Moses Amyraut (1596-1664) was the true disciple of Calvin. Thus, over against the general Calvinist position that Christ's atonement was intended for the elect (although not without lesser benefits for the non-elect), Amyraut taught that the atonement was made for all 'in case they should believe', although in God's secret will it was effective only for the elect. So Amyraut maintained a double reference theory or 'hypothetical universalism', and this is to be distinguished from Arminianism, which said the atonement was actually made for all, although benefiting only believers.

In *Amyraut Affirmed*, Clifford responds to a lecture by Ian Hamilton prepared for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales in 2003. The form of response is not very helpful to the debate since there is little direct quoting of the lecture and frequent reference to Clifford's

earlier publications such as *Atonement and Justification* (1990, 2002) and *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism* (1996). The standard of documentation does not meet scholar's requirements, and the booklet is too disjointed to serve a popular constituency. No one not already convinced is likely to find *Amyraut Affirmed* establishes the thesis.

The general approach of pitting Calvin against the later Calvinists has been debunked through the work of scholars such as Richard A. Muller and Carl R. Trueman, to name but two. Interestingly, Clifford cites Muller (p. 4) as admitting the later reformers were more rationalistic than Calvin, but does not do justice to the context in which Muller makes this statement. On the same page he says Muller admitted (in an email to an unnamed person known to Clifford) that Trueman had not disproved Clifford's thesis. Muller has no recall of such an email and thinks precisely the opposite (email to this reviewer 2/2/2005).

Clifford's thesis assumes scholastic language is evidence of scholastic content, but all scholarly discourse in the 16th and 17th century used such language: it is found in Calvin as well as Beza, in Amyraut as well as Owen. There is development in the systematic presentation of truth as the Reformed church becomes established, but in setting Amyraut against men like Owen, Clifford is also failing to appreciate the diversity which existed within the bounds of Reformed theology. He takes a debated minority position in 17th century orthodoxy and makes it out to be the only orthodoxy. Mind you, if Amyraldianism is not excluded by the very terms of the Westminster Confession, as I consider it is, it is excluded by the terms of the Act by which the Church of Scotland Assembly adopted the Confession in 1647.

As a closing appendix Clifford gives some quotations (not well referenced) from Amyraut's 'friends', who include Augustine, Luther, the synod of Dort, Twisse, Calamy, Boston, J. C. Ryle, John Murray and Lloyd-Jones. Probably only Ryle was a true Amyraldian. Clifford is confusing 'Christ freely offered in the gospel' (Shorter Catechism, 31) as maintained by these men, and Amyraut's rather novel construction which presumably he thinks to be the only proper ground of the free offer. His booklet is not recommended.

*Rowland S. Ward, Knox Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia,  
Melbourne*

**Theology and Science, Volume 1, Number 1, April 2003**

Routledge, Abingdon, 2003; 140pp.; ISSN 1474 6700

personal subscription rate £22 per annum for two issues, available from Taylor and Francis Ltd, Rankine Road, Basingstoke, Hants, RG24 8PR.

*Theology and Science* is the latest journal to come from CTNS (Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences), the American equivalent of Christians in Science. This journal purports to be a bridge for dialogue between the disciplines of the natural sciences and theology.

*Theology and Science* has two aims: first, to investigate areas both of consonance and dissonance between the natural sciences and theological reflection, and secondly, to encourage rigorous, careful and constructive reporting of the science/theology dialogue. It does not limit itself to Christian theology, but encourages contributions from scholars of other religions. The editors conceive of their scope as multi-religious, but not syncretistic, encouraging Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Judaistic theologians to presume the truth commitment of their respective faith tradition.

This journal views the dialogue between science and theology from the viewpoint of two complementary philosophies. Methodological naturalism is a philosophy of God's interaction with his world. I can find no better definition of methodological naturalism than that given by one of the editors, Robert Russell, who writes, '*since nature is God's creation and not divine, scientific theories cannot include reference to God. "Do not put God into my equations!" is the scientific version of the theological command against idolatry.*' Critical realism is a philosophy of science which represents a middle way between the morass of idealism and that of absolute realism. Most of those who contribute to the first edition of this journal, e.g. John Polkinghorne, would be avid proponents of critical realism.

*Theology and Science* has two main editors, both top-flight scholars in the theology/science dialogue: Ted Peters from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and Robert John Russell from CTNS. The editorial advisory board is a 'Who's Who' of the theology/science dialogue, claiming such names as Ian Barbour, Malcolm Jeeves, Howard van Till, Nancey Murphy and Owen Gingerich. This first edition boasts articles by scientists and theologians as well respected as Francisco Ayala (biology), John Polkinghorne (physics) Philip Hefner (systematic theology) and William Drees (philosophy of religion). Topics dealt with include the intelligent design argument, cloning and stem cell research, Trinitarian physics and metaphysics and the philosophy of the theology/science dialogue.

*Theology and Science* presents a real step forward in the science/theology dialogue for three reasons: first, the breadth of scholarly contribution and academic presentation is breathtaking; secondly, its peer-reviewed status contributes to its quality and academic appeal and thirdly,

it is attractively bound and presented – a good journal to have on your shelf. It also contains a book review section.

This journal holds appeal to all those interested both in the philosophy of the science/theology interface, but also to those working in areas of scientific ethics. It is a surprisingly easy read given its subject matter. It has no sympathy with the creationist position and may therefore act as a useful corrective to the perceived sub-science and incomplete philosophy commonly associated with that position. Whilst I do not recommend *Theology and Science* to the average reader, it certainly provides much grist to those working in this most controversial area of modern theology.

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

### **The Gospel and Henry the Eighth: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation**

Alec Ryrie

Cambridge University Press, 2003; 306pp., £48; ISBN 0 521 82343 9

The conventional wisdom about the course of England's Protestant Reformation in the last decade of Henry VIII's reign has long been that from the enactment of the Act of Six Articles in 1539 and the fall of Thomas Cromwell in 1540, this movement encountered a serious checkmate which placed it under terrible constraints for the balance of the reign. Thus, these years witnessed the resignations of advanced Protestant bishops Latimer and Shaxton, the executions of others who denied the transubstantiation affirmed in the Six Articles, and the forced parting of married clergy from their spouses. Under these circumstances of checkmate, the Reform movement was variously understood to stand in abeyance (so Dickens, 1964) anticipating the later emphasis upon 'via media' or, to stand at a virtual stoppage (so Haigh, 1993).

Ryrie, a recent Oxford D.Phil. whose research was supervised by the respected Diarmaid MacCulloch, and now of Birmingham University, has put this period under the lens and come to a strikingly different conclusion, i.e. that the evangelical Protestants who endured during this period themselves saw the era differently. These, maintains Ryrie, persisted in believing (in spite of much contrary evidence) that their King sympathized with their cause and that the chill represented by the notorious Six Articles represented the determined efforts of a Catholic faction led by Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester. Drawing confidence from the spotty enforcement of the Articles during the 1540s, the English evangelical movement learned to expand.

While there were hot-gospelers who assailed Henrician religious policy both from foreign exile and from within the nation (some paying with their lives for their outspokenness) the mainstream of the movement learned both to shun contention over the issues specified by the Articles and to concentrate on gospel proclamation within the constraints imposed by the royal supremacy. After 1543 these constraints included attempts to restrict access to the English Bible.

Ryrie's reinterpretation of the era is to be welcomed. Here is the most plausible explanation yet put forward for the show of strength mounted by English evangelicals immediately upon King Henry's passing. Older explanations could not so plausibly explain the rapid liturgical revision, the haven immediately extended to distinguished foreign Protestants, or the openness of Protector Somerset and the Duke of Northumberland to the Continental Reformation at and after 1547. English evangelical religion thus finished the reign of Henry in greater numerical strength than in 1539, all the difficulties of the preceding eight years notwithstanding.

The contemporary significance of this fine work deserves to be noted. On the one hand, here is further evidence, supplementing that recently brought to light by such writers as MacCulloch, Hylson-Smith, and Daniell, that evangelicalism in England – far from being the creature of the eighteenth century – is of a much more ancient pedigree. Christ-centred, Scripture-based, conversionist religion with an activist bent was already in clear evidence in this period. Again, the book draws attention to the fact that the cause of the early evangelicals grew steadily stronger in times so seriously adverse that we might judge them hopeless; they determined to keep to the main things and await a time of greater liberty. Has such a strategy outlived its usefulness? Superb bibliographies conclude the work.

*Kenneth J. Stewart, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, GA, USA*

## **Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in the Free Church Tradition**

Christopher J. Ellis

SCM Press, 2004; viii+327pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 334 02967 8

For the benefit of Scottish Presbyterian readers let me say at the outset that *Gathering* has nothing to do with the worship of the Free Church of Scotland. The 'Free Church Tradition' being explored here is that of a particular branch of English non-conformity, namely the Baptists.

The title belies the fact that much of this book is historical. It does indeed explore the 'Theology and Spirituality' of Baptist worship but does so within the framework of a detailed survey of four hundred years of Baptist history.

The author has researched this history well. His primary focus is the history of Baptist worship and in particular, the principles and practices of Baptists in relation to prayer, preaching, singing, the Lord's Supper, and baptism.

Many interesting facts emerge from this survey. Up until the twentieth century, for example, prayer in corporate worship was virtually always *free* prayer, i.e. unwritten and unread. Baptists have historically made the preaching of God's Word the central feature of their worship, giving the major part of their gathering to it. Congregational singing was at the outset of their history a matter of great controversy, with some churches excluding it from their worship altogether. In regard to the Lord's Supper, there has been ongoing debate as to whether it should be regarded as a sacrament or simply as an ordinance. And in regard to believers' baptism, it is intriguing to learn that early in Baptist history candidates were sprinkled rather than immersed.

*Gathering*, however, is considerably more than a historical survey of principles and practices of Baptist worship. It is fundamentally an exercise in liturgical theology. 'In liturgical theology', writes the author, 'we observe the worship practices of a community and then draw from them what we perceive to be their theological meaning.... We can observe what is done and listen to what is said and build a picture of what a particular worshipping community believes' (p. 14). Hence the historical facts about Baptist worship. They constitute the building blocks from which a liturgical theology of Baptist worship is constructed.

Of special interest to the author are four core values that emerge in all the aspects of Baptist worship that he surveys: 'attention to Scripture, devotion, community and kingdom' (p. 98). These 'core worship values... influence worship or are expressed in it' (p. 97), and a great deal of space is given to illustrating this in connection with prayer, preaching, singing, the Lord's Supper, and baptism. Thus in preaching, to take just one example, *Scripture* is clearly central because preaching is both commanded in Scripture and undertakes to expound Scripture. On the part of the preacher this preaching is an expression of *devotion*, and aims to kindle devotion in its hearers. It has a *community* aspect to it because it is addressed to a congregation. And it has *kingdom* dimensions too for its aim is the furtherance of God's kingdom plans.

The author is very aware of the ecumenical context in which Baptists find themselves today and of the ongoing debate within the wider Christian community over liturgy and worship. His book is intended as a contribution to that debate and it is a fine one. For this writer, however, the chief value of the book lies in the historical facts and core values themselves, and the unavoidable challenge of evaluating them in the light of Scripture. Toward the close of his book the author acknowledges that 'as well as an upward movement from practice and experience, there is a need for a downward, critical movement, as the liturgical phenomena of worship are tested against a systematic theology which can claim to be founded on the witness of Scripture' (p. 250). The results of such evaluation will undoubtedly not be uniform. But if Scripture is normative for Christian worship it is an evaluation that must continue to be made.

*David Campbell, Grace Baptist Church, Carlisle, Pennsylvania*

## **The Case for Traditional Protestantism: the Solas of the Reformation**

Terry L. Johnson

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 2004; 182pp., £6.25; ISBN 0 85151 888 5

Terry Johnson has produced his fourth popular monograph, this time an introduction to important biblical doctrines. The first chapter introduces readers to five Reformation 'solas' (an odd pluralizing of a Latin term). Subsequent chapters treat each 'sola' in turn, explaining the scriptural basis for each doctrine and illustrating its importance and significance with thoughtful anecdotes and illustrations. Johnson devotes twenty-eight pages each to *Sola Scriptura*, *Solo Christo*, and *Sola Fide*. *Sola Gratia* is given a somewhat shorter chapter and *Soli Deo Gloria* two chapters, one of them discussing Reformed worship which, from the pen of Johnson, is always a treat. Joining a host of others, Johnson does not mention that the popular delineation of these five solas is not a Reformation idea but a modern one. That is to say, if the Reformers were told to list their core doctrines they might as readily have spoken about salvation by the Holy Spirit alone in the church alone.

Johnson's theological exposition of these doctrinal loci is sane and simply stated and I appreciated his frequent doxological and hortatory comments. This is a book written for the edification of the church and the glory of God. It is also written to provide a broader doctrinal foundation than the beguilingly simple chapter headings would lead a reader to believe. Johnson often imports condensed discussions of related doctrinal subjects under each head. His discussion of active and passive obedience

may be too condensed since Johnson sometimes equates Christ's active obedience with his life and his passive obedience with his death (p. 89). Yet while the Saviour's active obedience includes the obedience of his life it extends to his passion as well, and though his passive obedience is most evidently and movingly exhibited in his sufferings and death, it began in the virgin's womb.

Historical portraits and landscapes in the book are generally accurate. However Johnson's assertion on pp. 13 and 103 that Luther identifies grace as the hinge on which his debate with Erasmus turns needs some adjustment since the Reformer actually locates the hinge in the freedom or bondage of the human will. Additionally, it would take an army of social and political theorists to prove Johnson's (very traditional) assertions about the connection between the Reformation and representative forms of government (pp. 1 and 154). Although Protestants pushed for civil reforms, it is by no means clear that the dominant force behind eventual political changes was Protestant theology.

I end by stating that I found the book compelling, but I am not sure if I am the one who was to be compelled. To whom is the case for traditional Protestantism being made? In other books Johnson explains why and to whom he is writing but here he does not. In correspondence with the author I learned that this book is for 'evangelicals who don't know that they are Protestants, that is, who are ignorant of their protestant heritage and core convictions. Their numbers are legion.' It may have been better to have said so in the preface. In any case, for churched people wanting a book-length explanation of major biblical doctrines, I heartily recommend Johnson's fresh restatement of these dearly bought truths at the heart of traditional Protestantism.

*Chad B. Van Dixhoorn, Wolfson College, Cambridge*

## **Contours of Pauline Theology**

Tom Holland

Mentor (Christian Focus), Fearn, 2004; 384pp., £14.99; ISBN 1 85792 469 X.

Tom Holland's conviction is that two 'major lenses' have been missing from New Testament exegesis which have had a detrimental effect on the study of Paul: the lens of the Passover, and that of a corporate reading of the texts. His burden is to establish the significance of these themes in understanding Pauline Christology, soteriology and anthropology.

Holland begins by arguing the prominence of the 'New Exodus' theme in the teaching of both Jesus and Paul, the dependence of Paul on Isaiah and the faithfulness of Paul to the teaching of Jesus. There is a useful and timely chapter on the limits of the use of the pseudepigraphal writings for the study of the New Testament. He then seeks to support the argument that Paul worked from an Old Testament basis by studying the 'Servant' in Isaiah and concluding that as Paul takes this over into his writings it is to be seen as a Hebrew, not Greek, metaphor. A consequence of this is that a Christian is 'not a slave of Christ, but is a servant with all of the dignity and privileges that such a calling carries'. One might accept what Holland asserts without jettisoning what he denies: does not Paul's use of 'slave' contain the precious idea of ownership by Christ?

Perhaps the least convincing section for this reviewer is that in which the author argues that 'the body of sin' (Rom.6:6) is not individualistic but corporate, and represents 'the state of unredeemed humanity in its relationship to Satan', 'the opposite of the body of Christ'. Later he says that 'Sin is the personification of evil, Satan, the husband of the body of Sin.' If Holland wants to establish a 'corporate' interpretation of what Christ has done for fallen man it would be better to maintain the clear distinction between 'the old man' which Ridderbos defines as 'the supra-individual sinful mode of existence' (man in Adam) and 'the body of sin' which is the 'concrete mode of existence of sinful man' (Ridderbos). Instead Holland compounds the two, seeing the 'old man' as 'being part of the description of the "body of sin" in Romans 6:6'.

Holland pursues the 'corporate' theme in seeing the work of Christ as a 'bride-purchase' price for the church and here equates Babylon with the 'body of sin'. On baptism he concludes that 'Paul saw the death of Jesus to be his exodus and identified the moment of the birth of the community under its new representative to be in the moment of its Messiah's death. Thus all Christians have been baptised into his death.'

The third section of the book highlights the Passover motif in Paul's understanding of redemption and deals helpfully with the 'New Perspective'. Holland questions the reliability of Sanders' 'covenantal nomism' as a general description of first-century Judaism, and challenges Dunn and Wright at a number of points, especially the latter on the adequacy of 'martyrdom' as a category for Christ's death. He argues that the Reformers got justification basically right but we need to add to their formulations the notion of entry into a covenant which is contained in the concept of justification. This would have been accepted by the Reformers and Puritans, says Holland, but they did not express this

relational aspect of justification as clearly as the forensic because of their focus on the latter.

A final section deals with the significance of 'the firstborn'. There are four appendices, mostly reviewing relevant scholarship, and a full bibliography. There are also a few examples of ugly grammar, e.g. 'Paul, nor indeed any Christian, is not a slave of Christ, but is a servant with all the dignity...'

This book is certainly aimed at the serious reader. Some of Holland's arguments persuade; others provoke to further thought; some (to this reviewer at least) are unconvincing. In the end, are the Passover motif and the 'corporate' nature of salvation really as radical as is claimed? However, readers will certainly not come away from this book without having been made to think.

*Mostyn Roberts, Welwyn, Herts*

### **The Portable Bunyan. A Transnational History of *The Pilgrim's Progress***

Isabel Hofmeyr

Princeton University Press, 2004; 314pp., £14.95; ISBN 0 691 11656 3

Isabel Hofmeyr, Professor of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, has researched the impact of the writings of John Bunyan – notably *The Pilgrim's Progress, Parts 1 and 2* – in a non-European context, and notably in different parts of Africa.

Ms Hofmeyr adopts a structurally different approach to Bunyan's writings from that of other Bunyan scholars in her field such as Christopher Hill and Roger Sharrock. Her view of Christianity and the Bible is not in any respect 'evangelical' or 'conservative'. She refers to conversion as 'ideally an emotional event...' (p. 58), and elsewhere 'a form of magical transformation' (p. 17).

Her lack of sympathy to evangelicalism, however, does not stop this from being a challenging book. When reading it, one has to keep constantly in mind the anti-Christian paradigm from which her thinking emerges.

Isabel Hofmeyr considers Non-Conformity as a social rather than spiritual phenomenon, and the missionary movement of the nineteenth century an endeavour, at least in part, to export it and make it socially acceptable in other parts of the world. Central to the modern missionary cause was not only the translation of the Bible, but also the translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and this is examined and considered in terms of

its translatability, the material and social practices of translation, and then how the book, or elements from it, were circulated.

Research into how Bunyan's writings were received in Africa suggests that there was a high level of indigenisation, involving some of Bunyan's theology being discarded (notably the doctrine of original sin) and the erosion of other elements in the translation process. Hofmeyr posits that, in many instances, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (like the Bible itself) was accepted into local cultures in Africa largely owing to the view, current at the time amongst Africans, that books held magical properties. To be literate, and to be able to use such a 'fetish', gave a local person an advantage over others in his or her society.

Ms Hofmeyr aims to reformulate (or at least to stimulate the academic debate to such an end) the diverse terrain of Bunyan scholarship through what she terms 'rethinking Bunyan historiography'. Rather than assessing Bunyan from the perspectives of 'at home' or 'abroad', she adopts a broad-based reconfiguration that takes into consideration Bunyan both as a *spiritual icon* (the legacy of nineteenth-century missions) and the fact that he is recognized internationally as a *national English figure*, through the power of English literature. It is likely that her work will stimulate further research, discussion and debate in secular academic circles.

The extent of reference of Ms Hofmeyr's research is considerable, encompassing what she terms the Protestant Atlantic (where she refers to numerous examples in substantiation of her argument), Bunyan, the Public Sphere and Africa (in which she assesses the response of African intellectuals and audiences) and, finally, a section entitled Post-Bunyan, in which she examines again the tensions between the *universal (spiritual)* and the *English* perspectives that there are on the writer.

People who love reading Bunyan for his sheer biblical and spiritual brilliance will not enjoy reading Ms Hofmeyr's book. At times, it is repetitive, and its man-centred presuppositions have to be constantly challenged. However, for missionaries and educators, particularly those working in a cross-cultural context, this material may contain some interesting observations.

The book is intended for an academic readership, is generally well written, and well footnoted. An extensive bibliography and index conclude the work.

*Jim Holmes, Darlington*

## **Karl Barth**

John Webster

Second edition, Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series. Continuum, London, 2004; 181pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 8264 7463 2

In the preface to the second edition, John Webster states 'One of the aims of this book is to unsettle its readers into exploring Barth for themselves.' This brief but thorough book is an excellent resource for introducing the major works and dominant theological themes of Karl Barth to students and pastors. This book is particularly helpful in helping a novice just beginning their journey through the field of theology and the realm of Barth studies. Entering the field of Barth studies may be intimidating because of the staggering amount that Barth wrote during his career and the ever-increasing pool of secondary materials available for study. Webster's introduction to Barth provides enough background on Barth's life and his significant contribution to theology to assist someone entering the field of Barth studies in gaining an initial understanding of Barth while also encouraging readers to continue the exploration by reading more material by Barth and about Barth.

Webster, Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Aberdeen, skilfully articulates the significant contributions Barth made to theology without overburdening the reader with lengthy quotations or overly technical vocabulary. The strength of this book is the manner in which Webster summarises and explains detailed concepts in a simple yet accurate manner. For example, in only 16 pages Webster's opening chapter provides relevant biographic information concerning Barth's life and the specific theological concerns Barth wrestled with during his career to facilitate an understanding and awareness for a reader encountering Barth without significant prior study.

Webster provides an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary literature but primarily draws upon *Church Dogmatics*, *The Christian Life*, *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, *The Epistle to the Romans*, and relevant secondary resources. Webster balances direct quotations from the English translations of Barth's writings with comments and analysis from the growing secondary research. The book for the most part is arranged chronologically, with Webster beginning by exploring Barth's life and work and 'the deep secret YES' with the development of Barth's early writings. Then, Webster focuses primarily on the *Church Dogmatics* while exploring the doctrines of God, creation and reconciliation. Webster then addresses Barth's concern with ethics and his involvement in politics

before turning in the final chapter to analyse the legacy Barth left for the continuing study of Christian theology.

In writing a book of this type, the author is forced to include some material and leave out other material while highlighting specific topics and choosing to exclude other topics. It is particularly interesting that Webster devotes only six pages to Barth's development of the doctrine of election as part of Barth's doctrine of God, even though Webster believes election 'forms the centrepiece of the doctrine of God' and 'is one of the most crucial chapters in the *Church Dogmatics* as a whole' (p. 88). Although the doctrine of election is addressed only briefly in the chapter concerning the doctrine of God, Webster addresses it again in the chapter that discusses reconciliation (as does Barth). Webster's articulation of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation provides an outstanding foundation for those newly interested in Barth's writings. Webster clearly describes the complex structure of the lengthy doctrine of reconciliation and explains Barth's thoughts while providing careful and insightful analysis.

Although the book reads Barth favourably, Webster attempts to present an accurate introduction to Karl Barth as he does not hesitate to include the thoughts of Barth's critics or point out areas of weakness in Barth's work. While describing the fragment of writing concerning baptism Webster warns, 'Read as an essay on sacramental theology, the fragment is rather obviously unsatisfactory' (p. 157). Webster also states that the exegesis in the fragment 'is sometimes surprisingly shoddy' (p.157). Readers of this book will gain insight into the theology of Karl Barth, and I think many readers will want to continue their investigation as a result of Webster's fine presentation.

*Heather Paige McDivitt, New College, University of Edinburgh*

## **Houses of the Interpreter. Reading Scripture, Reading Culture**

David Lyle Jeffrey

Baylor University Press, Waco, TX, 2003; x+288pp., £27.50; ISBN 0 918954 89 4

In this book by the Provost of Baylor University, known to many for his *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, the author seems interested in breaking the monopoly on the Bible held by professional theologians and Bible scholars. In the Introduction he claims, 'the really great readers of Scripture include fewer trained theologians than one might expect.'

What he wants is that we listen in to the Bible's wider conversation with the fuller church. All the same, there are a few buzz words borrowed from theology and its recent trends, e.g. power has replaced authority (which relates to truth); there is a need for exegesis in *communio*; and a retrieval of an understanding of Scripture as sacramental.

Picking up on the scene in *The Pilgrim's Progress* where Christian is directed to the House of the Interpreter, and where we learn that we must read for profit and not for certainty of finding the one meaning of the text, the conclusion to be drawn is that there is more than one House. In fact, there are a number of possibilities of interpretation, which does not mean that the individual should come up with their own but attempt to listen to the rich variety of others. 'Reading with' is a good discipline which works against the postmodern tendency to be interested in one's own private interpretation.

The arts are presented as that which lead us part of the way to God: it is a bit like getting the cable car halfway up the mountainside. One example of literature helping to get theology on its way is the Roman classical tradition. The main theme of *The Aeneid* is that the journey is not one which takes us home (as in *The Odyssey*) but is one which leaves that past behind: a tale of two cities (Troy and Rome) receives a refiguring by Paul with his teaching on old law and a new fresh start (Sinai and Zion?), then by Augustine in *The City of Man* and *The City of God*. Virgil guides Dante only part of the way and it is clear that in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* the trip is from the earthly towards the realm of the heavenly.

One of the most interesting essays first saw life as a dictionary article and deals with the 'slipperiness' of the word 'love'. *Amor* can be *caritas* or *cupiditas* depending on its object and intention. We find a parody of chaste love based on the text of *The Song of Songs* in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*. In the medieval era, chastity and charity were almost interchangeable but perhaps this meant that eventually charity became seen as something 'cold' in the Enlightenment period, even though the Romantics reversed this. A nice balance is located in the thought of T. S. Eliot who stressed the need for love to help detachment of desire so that love can grow.

There are some memorable moments in these essays: 'though argument does not create conviction the lack of it destroys belief', and the author's insistence that the Bible should be more often changing than confirming its readers' views.

Another helpful interaction is with recent interpretations of Isaiah that stressed the political nature of his message. When the hymn-writer

Whittier uses Isaiah 45:8 in his 'Drop thy still dew of quietness' and John Sawyer in *The Fifth Gospel* criticises Whittier for rendering the abstract noun as 'quietness' not 'justice', then Jeffrey objects: 'In fact, prophet and poet are both misrepresented in this instance. Neither the Hebrew text (*tsedeq*) nor the KJV translation used by Whittier ('righteousness') uses the word *justice* at all (nor do RSV, JPS, etc.)' (p. 80). But 'righteousness' means exactly the same thing as 'justice', and anyway, it is actually more likely that Whittier was not quoting Isaiah 45:8 at all. On Isaiah, Berrigan and Sawyer are both criticised, for 'each is limited by a curiously common failure to see that, for all the partiality in interpretation in every place and time, the common threads that run through the fabric of our historic understanding are not only many, but most are persistently visible and anchoring' (p. 83). In other words the message of the gospel and the thrust of the Bible produce similar kinds of things in every generation.

Jeffrey calls for an attitude of self-effacement before the text: where this happens, the paradox of grace means that some of the most creative and human art ensues.

*Mark W. Elliott, University of St Andrews*

## **Building Your Spiritual Life: The Best Contemporary Writing on Christian Spirituality**

Ian Paul (ed.)

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2003; 352pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 00 713332 4.

This book is a compilation of various articles from the Grove Books spirituality series. It draws together essays by various authors who would all have broad evangelical sympathies. It deals with issues like pilgrimage, working with a spiritual director, appreciating silence, learning from the English mystics and personal confession.

The book is not so much a plea but a mild request to evangelicals not to throw the baby out with the bathwater when engaging with other traditions of spirituality, especially Anglo-Catholicism. I am ashamed to admit that I often approach books with an unhealthy degree of scepticism and this was more than true on this occasion. The problem is, I was taken by surprise.

Let me give two examples. As an unreconstructed Scottish Presbyterian I would not be seen dead in a confession box giving auricular confession! I most certainly would agree with Calvin who called it, 'a pestilential thing and in so many ways pernicious to the church'. There is however a place for mutual accountability and Scripture would

go further in requiring us to 'confess your sins to one another'. Mark Morton's chapter in the book on this issue certainly calls us to consider the question. This chapter is typical of the book in that it calls us to redefine various terms which we have regarded with suspicion in the past. One example of this is 'penance' which Morton would want us to regard as restitution. He would argue that mutual confession is simply part of normal church life and why should the Roman and High churches have all the good concepts? This chapter is typical of much of the book, however, in that it tends to be over-generous to the Anglo-Catholic position, e.g. he argues that sacramental confession is essentially no different from mutual accountability.

In the chapter on pilgrimage, David Osborne, encourages us to look for pilgrimage experiences every day. He argues that too many of us equate pilgrimage with trips to Lourdes or Taizé. Osborne argues that there are evangelical equivalents, e.g. an annual trip to Minehead for Spring Harvest. Osborne basically tells us to forget about less laudable reasons for pilgrimage such as the cult of the saints and buying time out of purgatory through the pilgrimage experience. A pilgrimage is the appreciation that the destination of the journey is not the entire story; he says that if we are travelling to a conference then the whole pilgrimage experience comes into play the moment we begin to pray over the possibilities which the event may present. A journey to work can be a pilgrimage if we view the process and possibilities through God's eyes. Travelling time is never wasted if we reflect on the providence which placed us on that journey.

I liked the book and I recommend it to those of us who need to look at our world through a different lens.

*David C. Meredith, Smithton-Culloden Free Church, Inverness*

## BOOK REVIEWS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| WALLACE M. ALSTON & MICHAEL WELKER (eds): <i>Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity</i> (Sandy Finlayson).....   | 81  |
| ANDREW C. CLARK: <i>Parallel Lives: The Relation of Paul to the Apostles in the Lucan Perspective</i> (Robert Willoughby).....  | 82  |
| CRAWFORD GRIBBEN: <i>The Irish Puritans. James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church</i> (Robert Thompson).....  | 84  |
| LAMIN SANNEH: <i>Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West</i> (M. Gavin Smith).....   | 86  |
| JAY WESLEY RICHARDS: <i>The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Simplicity and Immutability</i> (Derek Thomas).....  | 88  |
| BEN WITHERINGTON III WITH DARLENE HYATT: <i>Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary</i> (Mike Bird).....   | 89  |
| VERN POYTHRESS & WAYNE GRUDEM: <i>The Gender Neutral Bible Controversy</i> (James Maciver).....   | 91  |
| CHRISTOPHER R. SEITZ (ed.): <i>Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism</i> (Patrick Mitchel).....   | 93  |
| BRUCE J. EVENSEN: <i>God's Man for the Gilded Age. D. L. Moody and the Rise of Modern Mass Evangelism</i> (James Lachlan MacLeod).....  | 94  |
| DELBERT BURKETT: <i>An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity</i> (John A. MacLeod).....   | 96  |
| MARGUERITE SHUSTER: <i>The Fall and Sin: What We Have Become as Sinners</i> (Matt Jensen).....  | 98  |
| JAMES D. G. DUNN (ed.): <i>The Cambridge Companion to St Paul</i> (Jonathan Bayes).....   | 99  |
| RICHARD A. BAILEY AND GREGORY A. WILLS (eds): <i>The Salvation of Souls: Nine Previously Unpublished Sermons on the Call of Ministry and the Gospel by Jonathan Edwards</i> (Iain D. Campbell)..... | 101 |
| STEPHEN J. NICHOLS: <i>An Absolute Sort of Certainty: The Holy Spirit and the Apologetics of Jonathan Edwards</i> (Iain D. Campbell).....   | 101 |
| D. G. HART, S. M. LUCAS AND S. J. NICHOLS: <i>The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition</i> (Iain D. Campbell).....   | 101 |
| RICHARD BURNETT: <i>Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis</i> (Mark Gignilliat).....  | 103 |
| ROBIN FARRY AND CHRIS PARTRIDGE (eds): <i>Universal Salvation?: the current debate</i> (Derek Thomas).....  | 105 |
| BEN WITHERINGTON III: <i>New Testament History: A Narrative Account</i> (Justin Hardin).....  | 106 |
| JOHN WEBSTER: <i>Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch</i> (P. J. Williams).....  | 108 |
| WILLIAM HENN: <i>One Faith. Biblical and Patristic Contributions Towards Understanding Unity in Faith</i> (Roy Kearsley).....   | 109 |
| GEOFFREY GROGAN: <i>Mark: Good News from Jerusalem</i> (Alasdair I. Macleod).....   | 110 |
| JOEL B. GREEN AND MARK D. BAKER: <i>Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in the New Testament and Contemporary Contexts</i> (Iain D. Campbell).....                                       | 111 |
| ALAN C. CLIFFORD: <i>Amyraut Affirmed</i> (Rowland S. Ward).....  | 113 |
| <i>Theology and Science. Volume 1, Number 1, April 2003</i> (Colin Dow).....  | 114 |
| ALEC RYRIE: <i>The Gospel and Henry the Eighth: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation</i> (Kenneth J. Stewart).....   | 116 |
| CHRISTOPHER J. ELLIS: <i>Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in the Free Church Tradition</i> (David Campbell).....   | 117 |
| TERRY L. JOHNSON: <i>The Case for Traditional Protestantism: the Solas of the Reformation</i> (Chad B. Van Dixhoorn).....   | 119 |
| TOM HOLLAND: <i>Contours of Pauline Theology</i> (Mostyn Roberts).....  | 120 |
| ISABEL HOFMEYER: <i>The Portable Bunyan. A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress</i> (Jim Holmes).....  | 122 |
| JOHN WEBSTER: <i>Karl Barth</i> (Heather Paige McDivitt).....   | 124 |
| DAVID LYLE JEFFREY: <i>Houses of the Interpreter. Reading Scripture, Reading Culture</i> (Mark W. Elliott).....   | 125 |
| IAN PAUL (ed.) <i>Building Your Spiritual Life: The Best Contemporary Writing on Christian Spirituality</i> (David C. Meredith).....  | 127 |