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Book Reviews

EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER D. J. A. Clines

The New Century Bible Commentary

Eerdmans, U.S.A.

ISBN 0 551 01118 1

Marshall Morgan & Scott 342 pp.

ISBN 0 8028 0017 3

THE ESTHER SCROLL: the Story of the Story D. J. A. Clines

JISOT Supplement Series 30 260 pp. hardcover £19.50

ISBN 0 908774 66 3

paperback £8.95

It is good to see so many evangelicals contributing to the New Century Bible, and David Clines's commentary on Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther is a valuable addition to the series, with full introductions to the books, as well as detailed exposition. Unlike the commentator on Chronicles in the same series, he favours the normal view that the Chronicler is responsible for the present form of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as for Chronicles. After an extended discussion of the historical background, he concludes that the straightforward, traditional view about the order of events in Ezra and Nehemiah, and the century in which they laboured, is probably correct.

In the introduction to Esther, he discusses in a balanced way the evidence for and against the historicity of the book, and returns an open verdict. On the details of the narrative, he refers to his companion work *The Esther Scroll*, in which he propounds a bold theory, partly based upon the two forms of the LXX version of Esther—the standard form and the so-called 'Lucianic'. Both of these forms include the well-known LXX additions to Esther, (those grouped together in the Apocrypha of the English Bible as the 'Rest of Esther'), but they have many differences, and Emanuel Tov has suggested that the 'Lucianic' version was translated from a Semitic paraphrase of the Hebrew Esther, rather than from the original itself. As *The Esther Scroll* includes a text and translation of the 'Lucianic' version, the reader can form his own opinion about it.

David Clines, however, goes much further than Tov, and proposes that the original Hebrew of Esther once ended at or near the end of chapter 8, and that the last two chapters (and not simply the LXX additions) are alien matter added later. This theory seems to rest less on the phenomena of the Greek translation than on the opinion that chs. 1–8 are complete in themselves (which is very disputable) and on the opinion that chs. 9–10 are of inferior literary workmanship and contain various inconsistencies (also very disputable). As the author admits, many scholars can see no good reason to regard the book as other than a unity, and unless one's reading of Esther is the same as the author's, his other arguments will probably seem very insubstantial.

Two small errors in the commentary deserve mention. The priestly courses did not minister for a fortnight at a time (p.201) but for a week at a time, and the earliest external evidence for the existence of the Book of Esther is not Josephus (p.272) but 2 Macc. 15:36, nearly two centuries earlier.

1 SAMUEL R.W. Klein

(Word Biblical Commentary)

Word Books, Waco, 1983 307 pp. pb. £19.95

ISBN 0 84990209 6

This commentary follows the usual pattern of the series, providing bibliography on each pericope, the author's translation of the biblical text, textual notes, remarks on Form/Structure/Setting (justifying the delimitation of the section and explaining its setting and structure) then Comment (the body of the exegesis) and finally Explanation, placing the pericope in the context of the whole book. The division is a lesson in interpretation in itself, and the commentary is inevitably a mine of information unless actually done badly.

Klein's commentary is a useful contribution to the series. The Comment and Explanation sections are usually informative and thoughtful, dealing not only with the points of detail which commentaries can too often pass over, but building up an interpretation of the whole book at the same time. Klein's treatment of 1 Sam 1 is a good example of his alertness to the presence of common Old Testament topoi (barrenness, Naziritism) together with an awareness of their individuality in the case under consideration. The story is unique. He also observes verbal connections across chapters. Hannah denies to Eli that she is a 'daughter of Belial', 1:16, when he finds her distressed; in the next chapter Eli's own sons are 'sons of Belial'. The contrast between Eli's posterity and Samuel himself is thus adumbrated. Samuel will be for Israel what the priest and his house could not be. In similar vein, Klein is good on the relation between etymology and meaning as raised by the names Samuel and Saul. It has often been pointed out that 'I asked him of the Lord', 1:20, is a popular etymology more reminiscent of *Saul's* name than Samuel's, and therefore it has been widely held that the story originally related to the former and not the latter. Klein takes the story to mean, in contrast, that in the book, Samuel will be the 'real' Saul — i.e. Saul will be a false hope; the real hope of Israel is in Samuel.

Having said that the commentary is perceptive one must go on to regret that it is less so than it might have been. It is disappointing to find relatively little interaction with the large amount of writing on Samuel which has drawn upon modern literary insights and methods. The *bibliographies* know e.g. D.M. Gunn's *Fate of King Saul*, D. Jobling's *The Sense of Biblical Narrative* etc., but the commentary itself makes little or no use of them. This means that opportunities for subtle interpretation are often missed. (The discussion of the kingship pericope, 1 Sam 8–12, benefits nothing from E.M. Good's classic study, nor that of the 'doublet', 1 Sam 24 and 26, from R.P. Gordon's exercise in Narrative Analogy (*TB* 32 (1980)) which shows how the two passages take their meaning from each other and from the intervening ch. 25). The result is that traditional interpretations simply re-appear where sharper, newer things might so easily have been made available to an audience that may otherwise miss them.

Some final points: the author's views about the deuteronomistic history (expounded in his *Israel in Exile*, Fortress 1979) sometimes force an exilic perspective which is not always the most helpful interpretation or obvious meaning of the text; the textual notes, furthermore, are somewhat laconic for a major commentary on a book where the textual issue is complex and

important. Finally, the wisdom of distributing 1 and 2 Samuel to different authors in a series such as this may be questioned, though it is perhaps not so strange a decision as in the case of Chronicles.

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GORDON McCONVILLE

PATTERNS OF FAITH: A Study in the Relationship between the New Testament and Christian Doctrine **J.L. Houlden**

first published in 1977

SCM Press 1983 87 pp. £2.50

ISBN 0 334 01215 5

This short book is an attempt to link two disciplines which ought to be closely connected but which in practice are often far apart from one another. These are biblical studies on the one hand, systematic theology on the other, though, as the author himself remarks, it might not be out of place to add a third subject, liturgical studies, to turn the duo into a trio.

The burden of the author's complaint is that research which has been undertaken in one field seldom penetrates as it should to the other. Partly this is because of overspecialization, and partly it is due to a feeling of self-sufficiency which many scholars apparently feel with regard to their own discipline. Mr Houlden tries to be fair in apportioning the blame equally between NT scholars and doctrine specialists, though the weight seems to fall on the latter as the greater sinners. This at least is the impression conveyed by the extended discussion of NT theology (theologies?) and it is implicit in the fact that Christian doctrine is ultimately dependent on the NT for its subject matter.

Mr Houlden freely admits that his presuppositions are not those of the classical Christian tradition, though he is not quite as candid in admitting that his views are only one possible option and that many people today quite legitimately prefer the tradition to his particular brand of novelty. To some extent he can claim the general tone of current biblical and doctrinal research as his defence, but even that is highly fragmented and not nearly as convincing as one might suppose. The fact that Mr Houlden argues quite freely against men like Bultmann shows us just how hard it is to make out a case for the kind of approach he is presenting.

In the end we are left with a number of interesting and important questions which must be tackled by any serious student of theology today, but with answers which are very much the author's own. How many people would follow his analysis of the NT in detail, especially his extraordinary presentation of Pauline thought? And how many would have the same theological priorities which he has, and which he apparently believes are fundamental? It is always a challenging exercise to read one person's point of view and to react to it, and in that sense this is a valuable book. As a pointer to the future, though, it is likely to remain no more than one man's vision.

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GERALD BRAY

Churchman

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CRITICISM Carl E. Armerding

Eerdmans 1983 134 pp. £5.68
(Distributed in UK by Paternoster)

ISBN 0 8028 1951 6

This worthwhile book, written by the principal of Regent College Vancouver, is designed as a companion volume to G.E. Ladd's *The New Testament and Criticism*, though (if my memory serves me aright) Ladd's book was on a larger scale. Its purpose is to show which of the methods of biblical criticism can properly be used, and in what way, by those who do not share the naturalistic presuppositions on which so much biblical criticism has been undertaken.

Since evangelical biblical scholars have for many generations accepted a historical view of the Bible, and have attempted to make right use of such methods of biblical criticism as are consistent with faith, the book is to some extent an analysis of existing practice, but not wholly. In Armerding's view, some evangelical scholars have been too cautious, and have adopted what he calls a 'traditional conservative' rather than an 'evangelical' attitude. He is not afraid to name names, but it might have been wiser not to, as he seems unable to carry the distinction through in a consistent way. In which category does C.F. Keil stand (pp.1, 45), or K.A. Kitchen (pp.5, 18)? Apparently in both.

The book distinguishes eight forms of biblical criticism (pp.15-19), and devotes chapters to four of them: literary criticism, form criticism, structural analysis and text criticism. The most original and interesting chapter, in the reviewer's opinion, is that on structural analysis, the practitioners in which field are themselves subjected by the author to searching criticism.

The least satisfactory chapter is probably that on text criticism, which contains too many loose statements — about the subject-matter of the Letter of Aristeas (p.103), about the date of John Hyrcanus (p.105), about the meaning of 'fence the Law' (p.107), etc. The chapter also argues that the settling of the canon and the standardization of the text took place at the same time (a common belief, but historically a vulnerable one), and, though it recognises that the 'original text' is a concept hardly applicable to some OT books, its attempt to show that this is no real problem (p.99) seems to the reviewer unintelligible.

Latimer House, Oxford

ROGER BECKWITH

TWELVE MORE NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES J. A. T. Robinson

SCM Press Ltd., London 1984 184 pp. £7.95

ISBN 0 334 01693 2

Bishop John A. T. Robinson's work on the New Testament has inspired discussion and controversy in many different circles, not least among conservative theologians who have been at times only too willing to call on Robinson for support of a particular argument while at other times have been prepared to do battle with him. This volume of essays is a collection of pieces most of which have been published previously in learned journals.

A preponderance of pieces on the Gospel of John reflect his deep interest in the Fourth Gospel which gathered momentum towards the end of his life. But other essays also catch the attention. Notable is the essay on the Lord's Prayer (ch. 4) which, while considerably indebted to Jeremias, sets out to show the undergraduate at Cambridge a constructive use of Gospel criticism. The Lord's Prayer is used as a 'working model' and after being subjected to careful comparative study of the texts (from Matthew, Luke and the Didache—which Robinson dates very early) is then studied from a theological perspective, clause by clause.

It is surely for his ability to combine careful exegesis with theological reflection that Bishop Robinson will best be remembered by friend and critic alike. The last essay on 'The Fourth Gospel and the Church's Doctrine of the Trinity' demonstrates this aspect of his work most clearly. For those who find his theological reflection disturbing and frequently lacking in orthodoxy, the challenge of the text remains. This final chapter asks again many of the tricky questions of Christology that John's Gospel raises: the nature of the relationship between Father and Son and between Jesus, Spirit and God; the meaning of Jesus' words 'I am'; and 'Is Jesus God?'

However much we may disagree with his conclusions we may be thankful for Robinson's recognition that the textual and theological issues addressed in this book are important for the twentieth century.

Oak Hill College, London N14

PAUL GARDNER

WATER INTO WINE Stephen Verney

Collins, Glasgow, 1985 223 pp. £2.50

This is a short series of popular studies in John's Gospel, written by the former Bishop of Repton. The style is simple and easily absorbed, which makes it good material for a home Bible study group leader. The author concentrates fairly heavily on the meaning of certain Greek words in the original text of the Gospel, but these are always imaginatively explained, and there is a complete glossary at the end.

Readers should bear in mind that the book is a series of personal impressions, gained from many years of study of the Gospel, and a long association with the Middle East. This provides the different studies with a good deal of local colour which is so often lacking in books of this kind, but it tends to be correspondingly weak on theology. In particular, passages which are beloved of Evangelicals, especially John 3, are not treated as fully as one might wish. Nevertheless, the book is a useful addition to the many small volumes available on John, and used with others, will offer many valuable insights into the meaning of the Fourth Gospel.

Oak Hill College, London N14

GERALD BRAY

CREEDS, COUNCILS AND CHRIST Gerald Bray

Inter-Varsity Press 1984 224 pp. £5.95

ISBN 0 85110 716 8

This book might have been called, had the title not been used already, 'a Defence of Dogmatism'. Gerald Bray is a robust dogmatist, most at home in the company of the fourth- and fifth-century Fathers when they were arguing and defining doctrine (rather than in their more mystical theology) and an admiring advocate of the Athanasian Creed. He offers here not only a lively and highly readable account of the development of doctrine in the early church, but also a spirited apologetic for classical Christian orthodoxy against both modern liberalism and the tendency of modern conservative Christians to dispense with doctrinal definition. Those of us who are a little less confident than he is about the adequacy of dogma to represent the truth to which it points or find the cultural relativity of doctrinal statements a little less easily transcended, can nevertheless be grateful for such a learned and attractive presentation of a point of view which not only needs to be heard but also represents an indispensable form of faithfulness to the Gospel. My major regret is that Bray's treatment of the relation of dogma to Scripture, on the one hand, and to its own cultural context, on the other, will probably encourage the view that dogmatic theology today needs only to understand, repeat and defend the creeds. By simply dismissing most of the achievements of modern historical study of the Bible, he makes the dogmatician's task far too easy and tends, in fact, to subordinate Scripture to the tradition of interpreting it in patristic and Reformed dogmatics.

Bray often conveys the spirit of patristic dogmatism at its best, and one should read him to realise why Christian dogma really does matter. But he seems also to have caught something of the worst intellectual habits of traditional orthodoxy (and traditional heresy, for that matter!). I was, frankly, astonished and embarrassed to find, in a passage where Bray is contrasting other religions with the vitality and expansion of Christianity, the following outrageously offensive nonsense: 'Judaism has never broken out of its ghetto. Islam is uncreative and sterile, expanding as much by force as by persuasion but never developing a civilization of its own. Even the triumphs of the medieval Arabs were largely the work of Christian subject peoples' (p.55). How can Bray possibly have forgotten the extent to which Christian persecution was responsible for keeping Judaism in the ghetto, or that the Muslim jihad was pretty evenly matched by the Christian crusade, or the vast debt of Christian civilization to the non-Christian cultures of Greece, Rome and even medieval Islam? In Tertullian or Athanasius we are used to excusing, with embarrassment, this kind of argument, in which dogmatic conviction is accompanied by misrepresentation of opponents and blindness to the shortcomings of one's own party, but it is very sad to find it reappearing in an age when the easiest and most plausible objection to dogmatism is its indifference to any truth but the truth of its own dogma.

Bray's book will be very useful both to the ordinary Christian reader and to the student, but I wish he had tried harder to distinguish good dogmatism from bad, and to promote an appreciation of dogma without triumphalism.

FORM AND VALIDITY IN THE WORLD AND GOD—A Christian Perspective Trevor Williams

Clarendon Press 1985 350 pp. £22.50

ISBN 0 19 826671 5

Trevor Williams, the author of this essay in philosophical theology, is a young Oxford tutor. He addresses himself here to anyone who is wondering 'how the Christian faith can be interpreted today and what vision of life it can offer.' His position is a radically liberal one, and his essay likely to appeal only to theologically-educated philosophically-inclined readers. It runs the gauntlet of Matt. 11:25f and 1 Cor. 1:26f. and to your reviewer fails to get through. Williams lays down a basic presupposition (a better word than 'assumption'): we live in an evolutionary world. 'We begin with evolution' therefore as we try to answer the question 'Does life have meaning?' But he is too easy in his acceptance of 'the general theory of evolution' (p.9). Almost glibly he asserts that 'no serious case has been raised against it'. This is certainly not true of the evolutionary *origin* of life (which he includes); and even about the *development* of life he underestimates the uncertainties. He has made a bad start! He then sets up a model by which to interpret the creation of the Torah, the qualification of the Torah in Judaism, the revelation of God's relatedness in Jesus, and the working out in history of God's response to Jesus. 'Revelation' has two poles: there is formal revelation (in a Book or in a Person—this is the 'form'); and there is subjective revelation (in experience, through the Spirit—this is the 'vitality'). One is public property, as it were, and one is private. The game (my word) of religion is played between these two poles or touch-lines, as a 'polar dialectic'. Williams goes on to apply this model to the themes indicated. There is nothing perhaps very new in this; what is new however is the radical conclusion drawn from it. In a late chapter headed 'The Abolition of Idols' Williams gives the impression that he regards it as idolatry not only to regard the Bible (a 'human verbal construct') as having 'absolute revelatory value', but also to so regard *the Person and teaching of Jesus* (p.307f.). 'Any genuine spiritual insight which a supposed revealer may actually have becomes destructive rather than creative when its worth is overvalued'. Williams is logical in this conjunction; God could not be expected to give such a revelation (in the Son) and fail to make provision for its authoritative transmission to generations yet unborn (in the Bible). But why does Williams reject both Written and Living Word in this sense? Alas, because not to do so would be to dis-establish the polar dialectic! One is left wondering where the real idolatry lies. (1 John 5:20f.).

Wantage, Oxon

DOUGLAS SPANNER

PROPHECY IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD David E. Aune

Eerdmans U.S.A. 1983 522 pp.

ISBN 0 8028 3584 8

Distributed Paternoster Press £24.20

This is a clearly written book of great learning and originality and considerable length (444 pages of fairly small print, apart from bibliography and indexes). Its scope is also remarkable, devoting the first 150 pages to method, Greco-Roman prophecy, ancient Israelite prophecy, and prophecy

in early Judaism, before applying the findings of this introductory survey to the main subject of enquiry, early Christian prophecy. Moreover, Christian prophecy outside the New Testament, until its virtual disappearance in the second half of the second century, is given almost as much attention as is prophecy within the New Testament.

The author deals with many topics of present-day discussion. He attributes the decline of prophecy after the first century to 'inevitable institutionalization' (p.189). To the question whether all Christians were potentially prophets he gives a decidedly negative answer (p.200f.). He devotes a chapter to the question whether sayings of Jesus in the Gospels could sometimes have originated as post-resurrection sayings through Christian prophets (ch.9), and devotes an appendix to the question whether inspired interpretation of the Old Testament was specially linked with Christian prophets; and he pronounces a negative judgment in both cases. However, some of the judgments expressed, e.g. that there is 'no evidence' that the Essenes themselves used the apocalyptic genre (p.111), seem too dogmatic.

A striking and pervasive feature of the book is the analysis of the literary forms of prophecy. Apart from the use of the actual terminology of prophecy, this is the main criterion by which the writer identifies prophecy, and it enables him to link examples in widely different settings. The importance he gives to this criterion is enhanced by his judgment that the tests provided in the Old and New Testaments for distinguishing true prophecy from false are quite inadequate for their purpose (pp.87f., 222-9). Admittedly, the application of the tests presents problems, but Aune's sharp repudiation of them as simply 'symptomatic of a deeper conflict' really means that true and false prophets are brought down to a single level, provided they use the proper terminology and literary forms. This is not a conclusion which, as an evangelical, the author would perhaps care to draw, but it seems to follow from his premises.

Chapter 5, which is largely devoted to the question whether prophecy ceased between the Old and New Testaments, is the most controversial in the book. Largely on the basis of the continuation of certain literary forms and an occasional loose use of prophetic terminology, the author contends that prophecy did not cease, discounting (and to some extent misrepresenting) the evidence that it did. However, he concedes the great change that occurred, even in literary forms, in the intertestamental period (p.106f.); and one of the arguments that he uses for the continuance of prophecy, the inspired exegesis of the Teacher of Righteousness (pp.132-5), is hardly consistent with the sharp distinction that he draws between prophecy and inspired exegesis in the appendix to the book (see above).

Another paradox manifests itself in the 'Conclusions' to the book (p.337f.), which concede that the literary forms of Christian prophecy are practically indistinguishable from other forms of Christian discourse. The author is therefore driven to say that 'the distinctive feature of prophetic speech was not so much its *content* or *form*, but its *supernatural origin*.' Thus, the distinction between the true and false prophet, having been driven out of the front door, seems to come in again at the back.

All this is said with due deference to the author of a very remarkable book. A work with such merits can afford to carry even serious faults.

IS CHRISTIANITY TRUE? Michael Arnheim

Duckworth 1984 211 pp. £7.95

ISBN 0 7156 1880 6

This book, written from the standpoint of a liberal Jew, argues that Christianity has been successful because it is the Big Lie. Using the sceptical methods of post-Enlightenment New Testament criticism, the author proves to his satisfaction that Jesus was not of Davidic descent, was not virgin-born, and did not fulfil the Messianic prophecies. He was pompous, self-important, hypocritical, lacking in affection for his family and in love for his opponents. His teaching was not original, except where it was impracticable and so a recipe for hypocrisy. He claimed messiahship (though nothing approaching deity), but was rejected by the vast majority of his fellow-countrymen. He died realising that he had failed. But somehow a sufficient number of his followers continued to believe in him and gathered round them new converts, like Paul. Using deliberate distortions and fabrications they put together the story that we now have in our New Testament.

Apart from the occasional blunder (e.g. over the *filioque* debate) most of this is skilfully done. It illustrates the notion of Pascal that God has given ample evidence to convince those who want to believe and has allowed enough difficulties to satisfy those who don't want to believe. The gospels are evidently an affront to the author's Judaism and even more to his liberalism and he is prepared to see the whole New Testament witness in a bad light. The result fails to explain the survival of the frail band of early believers and the conversion of men like Paul. The treatment of the resurrection (in contrast to that of Lapide) is pitifully weak.

Many converts have reacted quite differently to the evidence. They have concluded that the witnesses were honest and well informed and that Jesus was, as the gospels say, conscious of a unique relationship with his heavenly Father. He of course did not go about saying, I am God, but the doctrine of the Trinity has its roots deeply embedded in Jesus' self-consciousness. His attitude was not wilful arrogance, but a recognition of his actual standing. A dilute liberal Christianity, as the author shows, does not fit the facts. Perhaps the best understanding of Jesus is to be found in the works of scholarly Jewish Christians like Adolf Saphir's *The Divine Unity of Scripture* and Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. The writings of these men are constructive, in them nothing is lost of the Old Testament revelation and none of the later Christian distortions are added.

We can be quite certain that, in spite of the clever attempts to diminish him, the Jesus of the New Testament will continue to capture the hearts and minds of thoughtful people in all parts of the world.

55 Bainton Road, Oxford

JOHN WENHAM

WON'T YOU JOIN THE DANCE? Angela Tilby

SPCK, London 1985 136 pp. £3.95

ISBN 0 281 04170 9

The rather odd title of this book belies its contents. Angela Tilby has written a meditation on the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which she treats as a dance. It is not quite clear where she gets this metaphor from, and after

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reading her book it is not entirely clear what use she actually makes of it (apart from using it to provide some not very clear chapter titles), but it is essential for any reader to understand that her approach to the Creeds is basically artistic rather than theological.

This approach accounts for the fact that she ignores history, and says little or nothing about doctrine, but concentrates instead on the kind of impressions a reader might get as he/she considers the role which these Creeds still play in formal worship. The main difficulty with the book is that it makes certain assumptions which are not likely to be widely shared, and which are in some cases almost certainly false.

For a start, Miss Tilby addresses herself at great length to the kind of reader who will almost certainly not be interested in reading her book, and who may not even exist—at least not in great numbers. This is the open-minded, exploratory type of person who doesn't want to be tied down with any firm dogmatic statements, but who is nevertheless trying to come to terms with Christianity. For such a person, the Creeds present an obvious problem, but Miss Tilby (commendably) refuses to explain them away. Instead she tries to reinterpret them along existentialist lines, taking away their historical, factual and dogmatic content and relating them to the collective religious experience of the Church instead. This she finds a helpful approach, not least because it removes any need to believe what one finds difficult, and gives the creative imagination fairly free reign.

The trouble with her approach is that it does not really suit the documents she is writing about. Her attempts to protect faith from facts and to exalt the creative spirit over what she calls 'dead dogma' simply do not correspond to the reality of the Creeds, which—whether we like it or not—are living dogma, seeking to communicate the facts which underpin the Christian's faith. In bending over backwards to meet the sceptics, Miss Tilby has felt it necessary to be fairly critical of those who hold a conservative 'naive' faith—a sure sign that she is on the wrong track. True Christian faith demands the naivete of a little child in one sense, but rewards this naivete with a doctrinal structure which is highly intellectual and spiritually satisfying at the same time. Miss Tilby cannot understand how the mind and the spirit can go together like this, and her book puts asunder what God has joined together.

This is a pity, because many of the things which she says are interesting and helpful, if only they can be extracted from the method which she has used to present her ideas. Some readers will be able to do this and find her book stimulating; many more, one fears, will simply be confused by an approach which does not do justice to its subject.

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GERALD BRAY

CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGION: THE CHALLENGE OF PLURALISM Sir Norman Anderson

IVP 1970 Revised 1984 216 pp. £3.95

(U.K.) ISBN 0 85111 323 0
(U.S.A.) ISBN 0 87784 981 1

Max Warren once called attention to the seriousness of the challenge of other religions by suggesting that the impact of agnostic science may turn out to

have been as child's play compared to the challenge to Christian theology of the faith of other men. It is therefore a pleasure to commend this book from a writer with such intimate knowledge of what other religions and historic Christianity are all about.

There need be no apology for the fact that this is an expanded and updated edition of Norman Anderson's *Christianity and Comparative Religion*, first published in 1970. The references in the Introduction to the recent writings of men like John Hick, Kenneth Cragg, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Raymond Pannikar and Leslie Newbigin indicate how thoroughly it has been brought up to date. There is a quotation from a lecture by Bishop Hugh Montefiore in February, '83, and a page is given to respond to Dick Dowsett's recent book, 'God That's Not Fair!' In a book of this kind it is refreshing to read a telling incident from one of Helen Roseveare's books introduced with the words, 'Only yesterday I read the story of a missionary who . . .'

The Introduction explores the context of the present debate, dealing for example with the current interest in Comparative Religion, and explaining basic words like 'Syncretism' and 'Pluralism'. Chapter 2, entitled *A Unique Proclamation?* takes as its starting point the kerygma of the apostolic church, and shows how the proclamation of unique events points to the historical basis of the Christian faith and distinguishes Christianity from several of the major world religions. Chapter 3, *A Unique Salvation?* shows how the concept of salvation in Christianity differs from salvation in other religions, especially in a political religion like Marxism and in the eastern religions. Chapter 4, *A Unique Disclosure?* seeks to 'consider the light the Christian revelation sheds on the nature and character of God, and to compare the understanding of the Godhead, and how he can be known to men, with what other religions teach.' Chapter 5, *No Other Name?* discusses the uniqueness of the Christian faith, and tackles, for example, attitudes to other religions. The final chapter, *Proclamation, Dialogue or Both?* contains new material and could be of considerable help to anyone who is puzzling over the 1984 BMU Report *Towards A Theology of Inter-Faith Dialogue*.

While this is probably not a book for beginners, there is an immense amount of valuable material for readers who already know the basic ABC of World Religions and may want answers to harder questions like: what is the difference between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism? Is Hinduism monotheistic, monistic or pantheistic? How is the Islamic Revolution in Iran related to the distinctive emphases of Shiite Islam? What makes the book so satisfying is that difficult questions like these are answered with such authority, and by someone who knows how to think biblically and theologically about other religions. It's difficult to think of any other book by an evangelical writer which tackles so honestly and (to the reviewer) so convincingly the persistent questions: What about those who have never heard the gospel? Are only a few going to be saved?

ENLIGHTENMENT AND ALIENATION Colin Gunton

Marshall, Morgan and Scott, Basingstoke 1985 166 pp. £5.95 ISBN 0 551 01121 1

Here is a most interesting and important little book in a new series from Marshalls, entitled *Contemporary Christian Studies*. It is reasonably short, very easy to read, and highly stimulating in the way in which it explains what has happened to our Western culture since the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.

Dr Gunton is rather against the Enlightenment and its results, though he accepts that it is a fact of life and appreciates that it had many useful things to offer. Nevertheless he criticises it here because in his view it promoted a one-sided and ultimately untenable view of the truth. According to the philosophers of the Enlightenment whose ideas have most influenced contemporary thought, truth was that which could be conclusively proved by the mind. Such a narrow definition inevitably excluded large areas of human perception and, as Dr Gunton argues, distorted our general approach to the world as it really is.

One of the exciting things about this book is the way in which it unites classical Enlightenment thinkers like Kant with people who are not usually associated with the Enlightenment at all—Jean-Paul Sartre, for example. Dr Gunton also draws our attention to what he calls an alternative philosophical tradition, that represented by Berkeley, Coleridge and Polanyi, though it must be said that he does little to show that there is any real thread of continuity from one of these thinkers to the next.

Dr Gunton's main purpose however is theological, and it is most interesting to see how he relies on Hans Frei and Brevard Childs for support in his attempts to rescue Biblical Studies from the clutches of a false academic method. Ultimately we find him going back to Calvin himself, and seeking to re-found the Reformation principle of the perspicuity of Scripture as inspired by God and lived in the Church. The book is subtitled 'An Essay towards a Trinitarian Theology', but unfortunately it barely arrives at its stated destination. The Trinity is mentioned, but it would have been nice to have had much more than we are given here. Perhaps Dr Gunton will return to this theme in a later book; meanwhile, this is an excellent introduction to a subject on which every thinking Christian today ought to be properly informed.

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GERALD BRAY

BIBLICAL PREACHING. AN EXPOSITOR'S TREASURY edited by James W. Cox

The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1983 unpriced ISBN 0 664 21397 9

THE SERMON UNDER ATTACK Klaas Runia

The Paternoster Press 1983 £3.20 ISBN 0 85364 341 5

PREACHING FROM SCRIPTURE Neil Richardson

Epworth Press 1983 £3.50 ISBN 0 7162 0395 2

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD R. E. Charles Browne

SCM Press Ltd. 1984 128 pp. £4.50 ISBN 0 334 01009 8

It is said that currently there is something of a revival in the art of preaching.

If the number of books being published on the subject is any barometer by which to judge then perhaps there is some truth in the suggestion. Runia, however, writes believing the opposite to be true, drawing attention to criticisms of the sermon as a means of communication that are raised by sociologists, communication experts, and theologians. More important, he says, are the criticisms of sermons by normal people in the pews who find the message so 'boring' (pp.18ff.). Renewal of preaching 'must begin with a profound appreciation of the nature of preaching' (p.19). This book ranges widely over a discussion of the authority of the preacher, exegesis, hermeneutics, and the authority of the Word itself, before returning in chs. 4 and 5 to a discussion of the listener's situation and the relevance of modern preaching. Copious references to other writers on homiletics (e.g. Karl Barth, pp.57-61) and lengthy discourses on their views make this book heavier in content than is needed and reflect the fact that the book is built around his Moore College Lectures of 1980. An Appendix on 'Women in the Pulpit?' comes to the conclusion, on the basis of 'cultural' arguments, that women should preach.

This book is an interesting and lively call to effective, biblical preaching, but it is perhaps difficult to avoid the feeling that the theories presented about communication are too indebted to Karl Barth and a particular view of preaching as 'encounter' with God.

The tome edited by James Cox is of a very different order. This book looks at various types of literature contained in the Bible, examines historical and literary background and then seeks to show how texts may be used in the twentieth century. Many different writers talk about areas of Scripture in which they have considerable expertise. R. E. Clements writes on 'Preaching from the Wisdom Literature' (ch.5), E. Schweizer writes on 'Preaching on the Parables' (ch.14) and G. Beasley-Murray on 'Preaching from Eschatological Texts' (ch.20). Seventeen other chapters range from a discussion of 'Preaching from the Primeval Narratives of Genesis' (ch.1) to 'Preaching from the Pauline Epistles' by K. Stendahl.

The writers all approach the text from a modern critical perspective although they vary considerably in the amount of authority they seem to ascribe to the Bible. Each author obviously agrees with the assumption mentioned by the editor in the Introduction that 'the Bible speaks a message that is crucial for our lives today' (p.13). The structure of the chapters varies, but all examine the background and *genre* of their texts, before taking several texts and showing how sermon notes may be drawn up and how a sermon may be presented.

Browne's book on preaching was first published in 1958. It has long been a respected work, and rightly so. One of the most striking features of the book is the use to which Canon Browne puts the English language. The reader who never heard him preach is left wondering whether his sermons too were so carefully composed. This is not just a reviewer's flippant comment, for Browne's writing seems to reflect the view of preaching which he had: 'The preacher is to keep on expressing the truth in as intelligible and imaginative way as he can at the time of each utterance, remembering that like poet, painter, musician, dramatist, he changes his function and role if he attempts to bully, flatter or cajole' (p.76).

The emphasis on preaching as an 'art form' dominates the work. The

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author's attitude to authority in preaching or in the Word is perhaps best summarised in his own words towards the end of a whole chapter on the subject: 'Every question about authority is always a question about revelation and revelation cannot be talked about clearly because it is the light by which we see' (p.39).

It is with extreme diffidence that Browne approaches preaching. At times this is attractive and no doubt many preachers have much to learn in this area, but ultimately it produces a Gospel which cannot be stated in propositions (p.114).

Preaching from Scripture by N. Richardson is part of a refresher course for Methodist Local Preachers. It sets out to be deeply practical and raises useful and serious questions for discussion at the end of each chapter. Most of the book is taken up with the 'hermeneutical task', with chapters on preaching from the Epistles, the Gospels, and the Old Testament. Again, the premises in dealing with texts are strongly critical and this leads to some very strange 'symbolic' or almost allegorical use of the text—a tendency that also may be noted among several of the writers in Cox's book.

For example, once having decided that any discussion of the detail of the miracle of the feeding of the 4,000 (or 5,000) 'misses the point' (p.72), we are told to look at the setting—the wilderness. Now apparently we know what to preach on, for 'In the Bible the wilderness has special associations. It's a place of wanderings, a place of challenges ... where people face awkward questions ... —even the question of who they are'![!]

This reviewer was disappointed with each of these books. Potentially the collection of essays in *Biblical Preaching* is the most useful. A clear concern to preach the text for today is noticeable throughout. The same is true of N. Richardson's book, *Preaching from Scripture*. Both, however, are so indebted to higher criticism that all sense of a 'biblical theology' is lost, and whatever lip-service is paid to authority it generally fares little better than the authority of any of the poets with whom Browne so favourably compares the preacher. Runia makes his case for *The Sermon Under Attack*, but sadly omits the careful textual examples that would help us all in our preparations as we seek to be faithful to the task God has given us.

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PAUL GARDNER

THEATRE OF THE GOSPEL: the Bible as native's story Alan E. Lewis
Handsel Press 1984 32 pp. £1 ISBN 0 905 312414

Alan Lewis lectures in Systematic Theology at New College, Edinburgh, and is Associate Editor of the Scottish Journal of Theology. His booklet, one of a series of Handsel Booklets on Contemporary Issues, is the substance of some In-Service Training Lectures on 'the theology of nature' given at conferences for ministers of the Kirk in rural parishes. It was John Calvin who spoke of creation as 'the theatre of God's glory' and this seed-thought leads the author to see opera in the Creation, tragedy in the Fall, and comedy in 'God's joke upon those who imagine that they know and control Him' (p.22).

There are many insights and suggestions here for the Biblical preacher—e.g. on p.6 that the only third way to the alternatives of human idolising of, or tyranny over, nature is 'to hear, and make audible to others, the proclamation of God's reality, goodness and grace by the whole company of heaven and earth'. From a Biblical viewpoint the writer firmly rejects (pp.12–13) the suggestion that nature as such is a sacrament, but he is less clear on p.23 where his suggestion of a new, redemptive relationship for all fleshly, material reality with its Creator, could be read as implying some form of universalism.

Lewis commendably avoids the temptation to escape from the tragedies of this world into an other-worldliness, for he stresses (p.30) that those who believe that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ will work 'to make the lordship and justice of Christ a reality known now in nature also'.

Finally, he sees in the portrayal in the book of Revelation of the slain Lamb at the centre of the worship of all creation 'a triumphant symbol of the end which is as cosmic, as incongruous and as scandalous as anything in Scripture' challenging those who serve him to 'penetrate into the world of decay and suffering as healers of its brokenness and celebrators of its coming wholeness, declaring and demonstrating that the God Who raised the slain lamb will raise with him everything that is wounded and bruised, to newness of life'.

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DAVID WHEATON

'ALONE OF ALL HER SEX': The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin

Mary Marina Warner

Picador 1976, 1985 400 pp. £3.95

ISBN 0 330 28771 0

This is a paperback version of the book published in 1976. The illustrations are now black and white instead of coloured but otherwise the book is complete.

The volume is a large work of over 400 pages which seeks to show that undue devotion to the Virgin Mary has been lacking in justification and has led to a subtle denigration of women. But this is no mere tract for the times. A massive amount of scholarly work is assembled in these pages and it is a most useful reference book to the various attitudes to Mary over 2,000 years.

She points out that by the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception 'Mary ceases to be the instrument of the Incarnation, worthy of reverence because she is Theotokos, the god-bearer, a creature uniquely wonderful but only because she is the mother of the Redeemer. This had been the crux of the devotion to the Virgin since earliest times. The Reformers continued this strain of piety: for instance, the feast of the Annunciation was retained by the Reformed Churches as the feast of Christ's conception.' 'The danger from the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, both then and now, is an ancient one; gnostic dualism.'

But what is more universally relevant is the way in which the perpetual virginity of Mary has led to the church laying undue stress on the virtues of celibacy above marriage. Canon Ten of the Council of Trent's twenty-fourth

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session said this: 'virginity and celibacy are better and more blessed than the bond of matrimony'. And so it is that in Catholic piety the mother of the Lord, the wife of Joseph, instead of being the great inspiration of family life has become the great denial.

St Simon Zelotes, Chelsea

JOHN PEARCE

GROWING UP TO SALVATION John Woolmer

Triangle: SPCK 1983 147 pp. £1.75

ISBN 0 281 04070 2

This is the sort of book that seems to be very much in vogue. As its title suggests, it is about becoming, and growing as, a Christian, and contains some fresh and illuminating material. It seeks to present Christian teaching about discipleship, conversion, faith, healing, guidance, Scripture, prayer, etc., not so much by biblical or theological exposition, but by recounting personal experiences. This anecdotal approach will commend itself to many these days, but this reviewer found it very frustrating—what is one to do with other people's experiences? Does the recounting of stories and incidents, without any real attempt at theological reflection, help the reader to understand the truth? Often the illustrations do not really illustrate the point the author is trying to make—or the point he says he is trying to make—so that the overall impression is somewhat confusing.

More serious is the author's apparent attitude to Scripture. While claiming to be biblical, the book makes no real attempt to take the Bible seriously. Important passages are mentioned in passing, with the implication that what is recounted from personal experience is the same sort of thing as we find recorded in Scripture, and hardly anything is offered by way of exposition. Incidents are recounted which suggest that the author understands the Bible to work in a quasi-magical way, texts being misunderstood and misapplied with wonderful results! On the whole, then, a disappointment, despite the occasional striking illustration or suggestive comment. It is the sort of book that will possibly be widely read, but I doubt whether this is the right way to teach the Christian faith. Whatever may be said, the method conveys an understanding of the Christian life which is pietist and mystical, rather than evangelical. One wonders whether, in its orientation to subjective experience, the historical gospel is in danger of being lost.

Christ Church, Barnet, Herts

SHAUN ATKINS

THE GREAT EVANGELICAL DISASTER F. A. Schaeffer

Kingsway Publications 1985 192 pp. pb. £4.95

ISBN 0 86068 3412

This book is radical and calls for response. The often repeated message that Schaeffer leaves as his last will and testament calls for a radical application of Scripture to *every* area of life. This message is important reading for all Christians. It is easier to read than much of his earlier work. Here there is no dwelling on the fact that death looms imminent as he writes (Schaeffer died

just a month after the book was published in the USA). Rather there is a continuing sense of the urgency of a prophet of the New Testament era, determined to apply Scripture to the age in which he lives.

Two main issues are at stake. i) The first is a challenge to treat Scriptures as God's Word for this is the watershed for evangelical Christians. Others have already decided against the objective truth of the written word, but evangelicals have traditionally asserted its full truth. This position is now being challenged by an air of accommodation. Schaeffer sees liberalism and neo-orthodoxy as two of the major enemies (p.49ff.). The full *inerrancy* of Scripture must be affirmed, 'not only when it speaks of salvation matters, but also when it speaks of history and the cosmos' (p.46). This leads into the second issue which is at stake. ii) With profound insight, Schaeffer shows that unless such a view of Scripture is held then the application of Scripture to *every* area of life (that great principle of the Reformation) is impossible. Absolutes disappear: accommodation and relativism result. Of course, Schaeffer insists that a theoretical acceptance of the inerrancy of Scriptures is not the final issue—and here many traditional evangelicals are challenged—but rather the *practice* of truth. For those who knew this great man of God for whom the Christian faith was part of his daily life, such an emphasis will come as no surprise. Nor will it be a surprise to see him acknowledge the mistakes of evangelicals who have been unloving in their stand for the truth. This book exudes love (the Mark of the Christian—chap. 8), concern, compassion and tears, all of which were so characteristic of the author.

Schaeffer appeals for biblical discipline to be exercised lovingly within the church. He insists that this can be done in a catholic, biblical, and church-expanding way, or else, quite wrongly, it can become sectarian. For the author there is to be a stand made on Scriptures that will divide peoples. Other doctrinal distinctives among such people who accept Scriptures should be discussed 'but in our moment of history we need each other ... The real chasm is not between Presbyterians and everyone else ... or Anglicans and everyone else ... The real chasm is between those who have bowed to the living God and thus also to the verbal, propositional communication of God's inerrant Word, the Scriptures, and those who have not' (p.77).

Much of the second half of this book is devoted to the practice of the truth in several areas of life of particular concern. In every area Schaeffer challenges the reader to be radical. He criticises those who call themselves the 'new evangelicals' or 'open evangelicals' because *they are not radical enough*. They have what he calls the Blue-Jean Mentality'. In the '60s rebels flocked to L'Abri wearing the rebels' mark: worn-out blue-jeans. But they did not seem to notice that jeans had become the mark of accommodation—that everyone was in blue-jeans. What these new evangelicals have not noticed is that 'they have nothing to say which stands in clear confrontation and antithesis to the surrounding culture.' (p.99) The radical Christian is the one who confronts the world and the church with God's full and unerring truth about every area of life—as revealed in the Bible.

There are places in this fine book that will annoy. In spite of a clear attempt to keep a careful balance, some will be disappointed that the biblical challenge to the cultures of the U.S.A. and western Europe is not as closely argued as the challenge to socialism. Others will be disappointed with the particular way Schaeffer himself indicates what he would do if faced with the

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problems of being in a broad denomination where discipline is non-existent. It is *very* frustrating that many quotations are not foot-noted. Others will feel that he skims too easily over issues like feminism and homosexuality. The 'Foreward' by a relative of Schaeffer is perhaps overdone and contains a passing reference to this Journal's recent troubles, which is not altogether accurate.

How readers receive this book may well depend on their own view of Scripture! Here is a challenge to all who would call themselves 'evangelical'. Is the authority of Scripture to be the 'watershed'? Even more importantly, are evangelicals prepared to practise the truth in every area of life? Is Schaeffer's challenge to a 'mistaken pietism' which fails to challenge culture and society (pp.102) also to be found acceptable?

This book can be heartily recommended. It should be widely read, but a response is needed by all evangelicals. Hopefully this will be a clear-cut stand on Scripture which produces the radical challenge to the world and the church and yet does so with the love, prayer and concern which so characterizes the writing of the work. It is perhaps appropriate to conclude with another challenge from Schaeffer: 'If one accepts ecclesiastical latitudinarianism it is easy to step into a cooperative latitudinarianism that easily encompasses doctrine, including one's view of Scripture' (p.78). 'Easy' perhaps, but not inevitable. But we have been warned.

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PAUL GARDNER

EVANGELICAL IS NOT ENOUGH Thomas Howard

Thomas Nelson 1984 160 pp. \$9.95

ISBN 0 8407 5372 1

This book takes on added interest in light of the author's recent, much publicized reception into the Roman Catholic Church. Thomas Howard was brought up in a devout evangelical home. His father was a prominent Free church minister but Howard chose to become an Episcopalian as a young man. *Evangelical Is Not Enough* explains how he came to react against the informal, non-sacramental and ahistorical character of his native evangelicalism.

Howard begins by defining his own evangelical milieu—essentially that of contemporary non-denominational American evangelicalism. This form of Protestant Christianity holds much in common with classical orthodoxy but is in several respects seriously deficient. Howard contends that his sort of evangelicals are spiritually impoverished by their anti-liturgical and iconoclastic prejudices. These prejudices against elaborate ceremonial and use of symbolism in worship arise from evangelicals' failure to appreciate fully the profound implications of the Incarnation. Such an iconoclastic approach can lead, says Howard, to a sort of Platonism that divorces the spiritual entirely from the physical. Human beings are both body and spirit and need to be nourished by more than the purely abstract or cerebral.

From this familiar line of argument, the author moves to consider the benefits of liturgical worship. Here, Howard makes some valuable points regarding the advantages of set (as opposed to extemporaneous) prayers in both public worship and private devotions. There is much in these two

chapters that evangelical Anglicans could agree with (especially since Howard's oft-cited example of liturgical worship is an evangelical parish in Norwich diocese!) Prayer book worship, kneeling for prayer and distinctive clerical garb are all quite familiar to Anglicans but they strike many non-Anglican evangelicals as strange, if not vaguely suspect. Nevertheless, Howard was enchanted with these features of liturgical worship when he first encountered them in an Anglican church. So then, one is left wondering: Why not settle for this happy combination of evangelical doctrine and liturgical worship as embodied in historic Anglicanism?

The answer, I fear, lies in the author's lack of genuine theological discernment. While Howard maintains that the Reformation was his 'tutor in the Faith', he shows considerable evidence of not having learned its lessons. The crucial question here, ignored by Howard, is the relative authority of Holy Scripture. Neither Luther, Calvin nor the English Reformers lightly dismissed ancient tradition but they always took care to measure the worship and doctrine of the church by the ultimate authority of God's Word written. Similarly, Howard misunderstands Richard Hooker's frequently quoted formula; for Hooker, as for the Reformers before him, Scripture's authority was always primary. Moreover, unlike Howard, the Reformers understood that a church was not apostolic simply by virtue of its policy or liturgy but, rather, by remaining steadfast in its faith and order to the apostolic witness of the New Testament.

In many ways, this book is a natural product of American Episcopalianism. Though they were once a very significant element, there are today very few conservative evangelicals in the Episcopal church. A sort of liberal Catholic churchmanship predominates which shows little understanding of pre-Tractarian Anglicanism. The Reformation is dismissed or ignored, while medieval (as well as contemporary) Roman Catholicism is romanticized. Orthodox Episcopalians thus tend often to recognize no real alternative between fundamentalism on the one hand and Anglo-Catholic ritualism on the other.

Nevertheless, Howard does have an important message for American evangelicals. Though a superficial book in some respects, its criticism of evangelical worship strikes me as apposite. Even those churches of the Reformed tradition in the United States with a rich liturgical heritage frequently run Sunday worship services as though they were 'Coffee Hour'. In light of this situation, evangelical Anglicanism can contribute much to the recovery of a form of classical Protestant worship that is both liturgical and truly biblical. Sadly, *Evangelical Is Not Enough* does not make a positive contribution to this important work.

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GILLIS HARP

THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR IN THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION

E. Harris Harbison

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1983 177 pp. £5.65

ISBN 0 8028 1975 3

This is a re-issue of what was long a standard work. First published in 1956 it has been out-of-print for some time; so its re-publication is particularly welcome.

Professor Harbison's study is both brief and readable and its appeal is not limited to professional scholars. It begins with a survey of Christian attitudes to scholarship during the Middle Ages. A second chapter is devoted to a brief review of Christian Humanism during the Renaissance including Petrarch, Valla, Pico della Mirandola and John Colet. Finally, separate chapters are devoted to each of three great Reformation scholars, Erasmus, Luther and Calvin. In his conclusion the author poses the question which has been a source of contention among Christians since Tertullian's famous query—'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, the Academy with the Church?'—can a Christian be a scholar without suffering spiritual loss and can a Christian scholar be objective and professional in his scholarship? Although Harbison does not answer the question directly, clearly he believes there was a positive correlation between Christianity and scholarship in the period covered by his study. He maintains that 'conscious tension between love of learning and devotion to Christ is a sign of health and vitality in the Christian tradition rather than the reverse.' In addition he concludes that in general 'scholarship is a legitimate calling of high significance among Christians', and this is especially true of those in the Protestant tradition who are heirs 'of a movement originated by scholars and intellectuals.'

Professor Harbison's closing plea for Christian scholarship and his concern about the growing separation between Christian and secular scholarship is as relevant today as it was in 1956. The re-issue of the book is a useful reminder that this separation is a departure from both the Christian tradition and the pre-Reformation and Reformation patterns of Western society.

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RUDI HEINZE

THE ELDERSHIP IN THE REFORMED CHURCH T. F. Torrance

Handsel Press 1985 16 pp. unpriced

Professor Torrance has already contributed a booklet on Marriage in the Handsel Basic Studies series, and he will need no introduction to *Churchman* readers. For those not familiar with the Kirk's eldership he provides a workmanlike introduction to, and explanation of, the office. It appears to have had an Erastian origin in the *seniores laici* of the North African communities and was brought to Scotland via Geneva, and reflecting the concern, expressed in a different way in the Church of England, that lay people (those not ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament) should have part in the government of the church.

After summarising the historical evidence, and noting that the concept there outlined of the eldership neither prevails in all Reformed or Presbyterian churches, nor is held consistently in any of them, the author proceeds to suggest that the eldership should be assimilated to the biblical and early Christian concept of the diaconate. This suggestion obviously offers a significant way forward in ecumenical debate.

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DAVID WHEATON

RECONSECRATING AMERICA George Goldberg

Eerdmans 1984 xv + 145 pp. £9.95

ISBN 0 8028 3607 0

George Goldberg, an American lawyer, has written a critical history of the judicial interpretation of the clauses on religion in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The prime object of his candidly partisan criticism is the United States Supreme Court, especially during its 'activist' period, 1940–80. The basic substance of his criticism is that in the course of a century of interpretation, up until the 1980s, the Supreme Court had corrupted the original meaning of the religion clauses, and that it had done so in two ways.

First, whereas the Amendment had been originally formulated only to govern the activity of the Federal government, the Supreme Court had gradually extended it in a manner both 'unilateral and unjustified' (p.109) to state governments.

Second, whereas the clause prohibiting the establishment of any religion had originally been intended to ensure equal public *support* of all religions, it had come to be interpreted as intending their equal *exclusion* from public aid. Goldberg attributes such an interpretation both to the secularist assumption that religion—especially of the traditional, organized species—is in its essence socially divisive, and to the argument that to give non-discriminatory aid to all religions is to discriminate against irreligion. Herein lie the roots of the national 'deconsecration' or secularization that the title of this book presupposes.

Goldberg's response to the first perversion of the 'original scheme' is to accept (though with express reluctance) that there is no return to the Eden of the minimal Federal state: the religion clauses of the First Amendment will continue to regulate all levels of government.

His chief response to the second perversion is to argue that, according to the 'original scheme' devised by the Founding Fathers, secular or humanistic ideals are *not* entitled to the same constitutional consideration as religious principles. They do enjoy constitutional protection under the free speech and press clauses of the First Amendment, 'but religion enjoys something more: the free exercise thereof' (p.118).

It would seem from this that Goldberg has rejected the Supreme Court's Jamesian expansion of the definition of religion to include 'virtually anything anybody deems sacred' and has reverted to the more restricted definition probably held by the Founding Fathers: 'the beliefs and practices associated with the worship of God, whether the Christian God, the Jewish God, nature's God, or Divine Providence' (p.112). He does not make clear how this reversion coheres with his approval (on the very same page) of the expanded definition, on the ground that it relieves the court of the unsuitable responsibility of defining and assessing religious beliefs. Nor, beyond invoking tradition, does he attempt to justify it.

Still Goldberg does go beyond the appeal to the 'original scheme' in his response to the public exclusion of all forms of religion. He makes a cogent attack on the secularist prejudice about its essential divisiveness, by pointing out that secularist intolerance has proven no less capable than religious bigotry of fostering social strife. He also attacks secularism for its disingenuousness in arguing both that public education is value-free and that

religion should be taught at home. Against the latter argument he objects that family strife and materialism are so prevalent as to make either naive or dishonest the expectation that religious education might operate successfully in domestic circumstances.

Goldberg does offer an alternative to the secularist model of public education in the form of 'a non-discriminatory program of public support of all schools within a jurisdiction, public, secular private, and church-sponsored' (p.115). As an (admittedly extreme) example of this, he cites the system proposed by Milton and Rose Friedman, whereby a state offers its citizens educational vouchers redeemable at any school that meets the requirements of state accreditation. Such a happy arrangement, he believes, would preclude the political establishment of religion without introducing political discrimination against it.

In brief, Goldberg assumes a non-secularist liberal position. On the one hand, the individual citizen is free to exercise the religion of his choice, providing that he does not thereby infringe significantly and demonstrably on the rights of others. On the other hand, the state is bound to support him in his choice, providing that it also supports others no less in their choices of different religions or irreligion.

The fact that Goldberg has articulated a liberal solution to the problem of a plurality of faiths in a single state, which is other than that of the secularist exclusion of religion from public affairs, is sufficient to merit his book careful attention. Those who read it with Christian theological intelligence, however, will find themselves provoked to ask after the biblical and theological grounds for following the author in making the assumption that authentic religion is always congruent with liberal political principles.

Latimer House, Oxford

NIGEL BIGGAR

SOCIETY AND RELIGION IN MUENSTER 1535-1618 R. Po-chia Hsia
Yale University Press, New Haven 1984 306 pp. \$25 ISBN 0 300 03005 3

This is a thoroughly researched meticulous study of the history of the Westphalian city of Muenster from the destruction of the millenarian Anabaptist kingdom to the outbreak of the 30 Years War. The author divides the history of Muenster into three periods beginning with a surprisingly rapid recovery and return to normal conditions after the tragic Anabaptist episode. From 1555-1580 the city experienced a brief golden age as economic prosperity was combined with good government and religious peace between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. However, with the establishment of a Bavarian prince as bishop and the coming of the Jesuits in the 1580s Muenster was plagued by religious tensions and the end of political autonomy. By 1618 the fanaticism of the Jesuits in alliance with the ruler had ended toleration and established Muenster as a bastion of militant Counter-Reformation Roman Catholicism.

Although the non-scholar is unlikely to purchase or even read this book, it is written in a readable style and Muenster's tragic story has a wider relevance than simply antiquarian scholarly interest.

Oak Hill College, London N14

RUDI HEINZE

CARL F. H. HENRY Bob E. Patterson
Makers of the Modern Theological Mind
 Word Books, Waco, Texas 1983

In another excellent addition to this *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind* series, Patterson provides a clear and thoroughly understandable survey treatment of the thought of Carl Henry. In respect of the American scene, there is little doubt as Patterson says, that Henry 'is the prime interpreter of evangelical theology, one of its leading theoreticians and ... the unofficial elder statesman for the entire tradition.' It is a great merit of this book that Carl Henry, the leading American evangelical theologian, is treated with the utmost sympathy and sensitivity by a non-evangelical author. This survey of Henry's thought borders on the uncritical but how rare is this indeed in any treatment of the evangelical movement today by a non-evangelical commentator.

Henry stands in the mainstream of contemporary evangelicism (as much due to being a creator of the movement as being a product of it) and so Patterson begins his treatment of Henry with a clear and succinct history of modern American evangelicalism. He is surely right in focusing upon the three main forces shaping evangelicalism in 20th century America—the National Association of Evangelicals, Billy Graham, and the periodical *Christianity Today*. Henry's active involvement with all three as well as his academic background (Wheaton College, Northern Baptist Seminary and Boston University) placed him in a unique position to serve as modern evangelicalism's most authoritative spokesman and theologian. The genesis and subsequent rise of modern evangelicalism is becoming well chronicled both from within the movement and from outside it. The commendable feature in Patterson's treatment of both Henry and the movement, is the way in which he has portrayed their identity being in part derived from their attempt to steer a middle course between neo-orthodoxy on the left and fundamentalism on the right.

Patterson's primary focus is Henry's recently completed six volume series entitled *God, Revelation and Authority*. Henry shows himself the evangelical apologist and philosophical theologian par excellence in this work and Patterson attempts to bring to the surface these two main purposes. Henry has not written a comprehensive systematic theology as Patterson shows, though at first sight it may appear as that. The two foci which dominate the work are the nature of revelation and the nature of God. These do provide a workable framework for a complete systematic theology and as Patterson points out, Henry does offer some statement of his convictions on the full range of theological issues but not primarily as a systematician.

Patterson shows a sensitive awareness of the context of discussion concerning evangelicals and the concept of revelation from an apologetic vantage point (with writers like Warfield, Montgomery, Van Til and Schaeffer) and a theological vantage point (with writers like Pinnock, Ramm, Rogers and Lindsell). He accurately places Henry in the presuppositionalist camp with its emphasis that the Biblical revelation must serve as the fundamental presupposition of the apologetic task. In respect of the theological concept of revelation, Henry's struggle to maintain the two apparently incompatible positions of inerrancy and Biblical criticism, is

nically documented by Patterson. A very high view of Biblical authority has characterized Henry and his defence of that position as entailing 'propositional errorlessness' seems not nearly as middle-of-the-road evangelicalism as Patterson points out. It is true that Henry asserts that propositional errorlessness should not serve as the test of orthodoxy but nonetheless it remains clear that Henry has sided with the inerrancy camp and has not settled for any compromise middle position.

According to Henry, God is neither substance nor event. Patterson paints Henry as reacting against the twin extremes of process theology and an Aristotelian substance ontology. Exactly what Henry's positive position is, remains somewhat unclear. Patterson seems to suggest that Henry asserts an identity between essence and attribute in God (what the medievals called God's simplicity). This seems to allow God to be both active (the expression of love, justice etc., is essential to Him) and stable (He cannot be other than what He is since His attributes are His essence).

Patterson continually portrays Henry as driving the middle road between two extremes. In the end this might well be the only substantive fault of Patterson's treatment. Henry is always the mediator. He is always striving for compromise. Whether this theme is consciously put there by Patterson, it is clear that in the process, Henry loses some of his own self-confessed evangelical radicalness. It may be a credit that an evangelical thinker has been portrayed as sensitive and intelligent. Carl Henry does see himself as striving to avoid neo-orthodoxy on the left and fundamentalism on the right, but his mission is not to present one intelligent position among many. Rather it is to work out a radical and reasonable commitment to his saviour, Jesus Christ.

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RICHARD LINTS

PAUL TILLICH John P. Newport

Word Books, Waco, Texas 1984 264 pp. \$12.95

ISBN 0 8499 2952 0

Dr Newport's book is the latest in the series 'Makers of the modern theological mind' emerging from Texas. The series is designed to give theological students an accurate overview of modern theologians and also to be of interest to the layman. This book does give a useful survey of many areas of Tillich's theology, but the 'interested layman' will have to be a fairly determined character to plough through the theological sections. Newport includes a range of opinion on Tillich's highly controversial personal life which adds a lighter element, and his initial chapter on Tillich's career is proportionately very long. With the centenaries of both Tillich and Barth due in 1986 the book may be around at the right time.

We are given a useful little chapter on historical influences on Tillich's basic system and, although Ritschl, Lotze and Troelsch are not given a mention, Newport is thorough and comprehensive. The reader has a certain feeling of being presented with a list of discrete items here and we miss some penetration of analysis and explanation.

Newport's presentation of Tillich's theology is wide-ranging, and he prefaces it with the tenable view that the dynamic running through the system is the triad of 'essence-existence-essentialization'. Newport bring us back to this time and again in a way which is arguable and valid, yet tends to be repetitious also. The exposition aims at being descriptive with occasional appraisal given. Newport has not managed fully to 'demythologise' Tillichian jargon sufficiently, and this is important if the reader is really to understand this heavy metaphysical structure. Nevertheless theological students will get a useful review of the whole. Thus we are taken through Tillich's method of correlation of the finite questions and the eternal intimations of beyond into his idealist type of epistemology with its mystical overtones. Man is alienated by his finitude from the Ground of Being, yet strives and quests for essentialization or reconciliation with the divine. Man's reason and his being are controlled by this triadic dynamic. God, for whom man's contradictory 'existence' retains a magnetic pull, has both an abyss-character of the unknowable and an expressive Logos character. Spirit holds these two symbolic qualities together in God's Being and moves finite beings into reconciliation. The dialectic at work here is followed and described faithfully by Newport, but again to be truly descriptive some rather deeper commentary is needed.

The account of Tillich's Christology is short and well done giving us the salient points of an immanentist type of doctrine which has no place for eschatological realities. Tillich's is a Christology of the meaning of being. The final chapter on 'History and the Quest for the Kingdom of God' delineates Tillich's interpretation of history and its Christological focus of meaning revealing the dialectic of the concrete and the universal. History is sacramental in fragmentarily pointing beyond itself and its ambiguities to the eternal ground. History yet contains hope because of the intimations of the Kingdom of God emanating from Jesus the Christ. An actual end of history is inherently difficult for such a system, and Dr Newport struggles valiantly to expound Tillich's efforts to re-cast eschatology for Christian theology. We also have a chapter on Tillich's attitude to other faiths.

Of real help to theological students will be Newport's review of opinion about Tillich's work in Chapter 13, one of the best chapters in the book because it covers the most recent contributions.

Overall Dr Newport succeeds in offering us a broad account of Tillich the man and his thought, but it should not be taken as a substitute for some of the standard existing interpretations of Tillich's theology.

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TIM BRADSHAW

THE FOLLOWING PLOUGH J. Neville Ward

Cowley Publications 1978 Rev. 1984 128 pp. \$6

ISBN 0 936384 18 2

The author is a Methodist minister who is well-known as a writer on contemporary spirituality with such titles as *The Use of Praying* and *Five for Sorrow, Ten for Joy*. In the first chapter of this work (*Journey in Faith*) he describes something of his own spiritual pilgrimage (though he finds that word 'portentous') as a Methodist minister into a more sacramentally-based form

of Christianity than is usually associated with Methodism. From this standpoint he decries the assurance found in 'some brands of Christianity' (St Paul and the New Testament?) and quotes with approval a remark of one of Graham Greene's characters 'We are none of us *sure*. When you aren't sure, you are alive' (p.32).

In six apparently disconnected essays the writer pursues various aspects of prayer, and the connecting link in the title appears to be in the words of William Blake—'as the plough follows words, so God rewards prayers'. For one reader at least the first three essays were of more help than are the latter three, and chapter two on *Recollection in Tranquillity* has an important message for many who would pray more meaningfully in the busyness of twentieth-century living. But the chapter on dryness (ch.4), ending as it does by quoting with apparent approval three writers who offer advice on the subject without any reference to God, His purposes or His promises, does not reflect the kind of spiritual direction the Bible-based pastor is likely to give.

There are some perceptive insights in the chapter on *Masculine, Feminine and the Spiritual*, but the sequel in *Mother of God* raises many questions for the reader whose spiritual life is grounded on the fact of justification by faith as a result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

Oak Hill College, London N14

DAVID WHEATON

THE STATE OF THE NATION Anonymous

English Church Tracts, Burton Vicarage, Carnforth, Lancashire 1985

5 pp. 20p plus postage

Within the scope of its five and a half closely-reasoned pages, this valuable little leaflet analyses the causes of the crisis of morals now facing the nation.

Unlike so much of the slick theorizing favoured by many modern commentators, the author traces the causes from the materialist/humanist ferment initiated by Darwin, Freud and Marx. Instead of putting forward the aftermath of the Second World War as the seed-bed of to-day's ills, he believes that the Second World War was little more than an interlude in the revival of primitivism—'the gradual enthronement of the elemental forces of nature' ... the call has been for ever greater freedom from restraints. Modern contraception and 'pop' culture are outward manifestations of the same breakdown in all attempts of man to set limits to his behaviour under the authority of Scripture. Conscience and Religion are alike despised because they impinge on one's freedom to follow one's *primitive* nature, now glorified as '*natural*' and, therefore, '*right*'.

In the Church this liberalisation has removed God from being an external, transcendent, unchanging, all-powerful source of authority and order. Instead, God is within us, shaped and conformed to our own imagination and desires. What feels right for the individual is 'right' because God is another *mode of Love*. The Bishop of Durham is not the architect of the destruction of traditional theology—the plans for the Church's destruction were laid many years ago—but the man implementing the consequences—the man driving the bulldozer which is destroying *in a generation* what has taken centuries to build.

The author presses home the argument by castigating those who meekly accept proposals put before us at church synods out of a mistaken preference for following rather than bucking a trend: a general unwillingness to stand up and be counted. We are urged to remember Jesus' rebuke to Peter when he tried to dissuade him from pressing on to Jerusalem: 'Get thee behind me Satan, thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.' All, however, is not lost if we stand by the Word of God revealed in Scripture. The unchanging truths of God's Word received by each of us in faith will give us the victory.

No room for doubt is left in the mind of the reader that our nation must change course. It must return to the moral standards set forth so clearly in the Bible for all time and for all human societies. Without a vision of God, we perish. The pamphlet speaks prophetically to the nation at the present time.

Church Society, London SE11

MALCOLM BARKER

GROW IN WISDOM Susan Harding

A Child's booklet of easy-to-read Christian doctrines

Banner of Truth 1984 24 pp. 96p

ISBN 0 88151 437 5

VOYAGE TO FREEDOM David Gay

Banner of Truth 1984 149 pp. £2.45

ISBN 0 88151 384 0

THE MILK OF THE WORD Peter Barnes

Banner of Truth 1985 80 pp. £1.50

ISBN 0 88151 434 0

Christians with young children are always on the look-out for good books—for books that are attractive and inviting, as well as instructive and edifying. Here are three, all from the same publisher.

Grow in Wisdom is for the very young. As the back cover tells us, Susan Harding uses the number method to introduce a wide range of important Christian teaching. In the space of some 24 pages children are introduced to God, as Creator, Judge, Law-giver and Triune; to Jesus, His nature, love and work; and to themselves, as people accountable to God, who must repent and believe, and who are to be thankful always. The print is large; the text tastefully and colourfully illustrated; and the subject matter Biblical. It is a pity that the prayer at the end lapses into old English, but do not let that deter you from buying and using this excellent booklet in your home and Sunday School. It represents a useful partner to 'The Life of Jesus' produced by the same publisher in 1982.

Voyage to Freedom is for older children and teenagers. In an age when so much Christian biography is superficial and sensational, it is good to find this book that points us to the heart of Christian discipleship. By means of the fictitious, yet typical, Lovelace family, the author vividly recaptures the experiences of those on board the Mayflower on her journey to the New World in 1620. The style is gripping and racy; the illustrations sensitive and pleasing; and the message clear. Discipleship entails living by God's Word; listening to the voice of conscience; and self-denial. The path ahead may prove difficult and rough, yet the Lord never fails to care for His own. This book will be enjoyed by all, adults and children alike who read it.

The Milk of the Word is for the enquirer, the new Christian and those who wish to be reminded of the essentials of the Christian faith. In five well

Churchman

structured chapters Peter Barnes sets out the Biblical teaching on Scripture, The Trinity, Jesus Christ, The Atonement and The Holy Spirit. At the end of each chapter further reading is suggested. The text contains many Biblical references and some telling quotations from authors old and new, orthodox and unorthodox. The author is not afraid to grasp nettles. Erroneous views are stated and refuted with sensitivity and tact. An encouraging faithfulness to God's Word written and a passionate desire that men may know the truth that liberates shine through this volume. Here you have the Biblical gospel presented in a compelling and straightforward way. All who love that gospel will find many uses for this book in nurture groups, confirmation classes, personal counselling and the like. As an introduction to the Christian faith this book is highly commended.

St. Stephen's Vicarage, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

GEORGE CURRY

FAITH AT THE BLACKBOARD: Issues Facing the Christian Teacher

Brian Hill

Eerdmans, USA 1982 143 pp. £5.65
distributed by Paternoster Press in the UK

ISBN 0 8028 1932 X

This rather expensive paperback aims to show that Christians should think 'Christianly' about their teaching, both in the church and state schools. The author writes from an American/Australian viewpoint, with the result that some of the discussion—for example, 'Is it possible to teach religion in school?'—seems slightly inapplicable to the British reader. Yet the book, on the whole, is laudable in that it tackles, with sensitivity and objectivity, the important philosophical issues facing any Christian teachers.

The author shows much evidence of careful research and is able to draw on psychological theories of such important practitioners as B. F. Skinner with conviction and cogency.

The book would seemingly be valuable for every Christian teacher to read during the years of training, and perhaps at five-year intervals afterwards, as it is easy for the teacher of many years' experience (like this reviewer!) to forget the principles of Christian teaching as the practice becomes all consuming.

The author has words of encouragement for the Christian teacher who works in a secular school, and indeed goes so far as to state that there is no clear biblical mandate for the establishment of Christian schools *per se* and that the reasons for their existence are cultural and idiosyncratic—there is no one Christian model for handling general education. This chapter seemed the most provocative and interesting part in what was sometimes a rather dry and irrelevant book.

London NW1

GILLIAN HYLSON-SMITH

YOUTH MUSIC AND THE CHURCH Andrew Thornton

The Handsel Press 1985

When a Church Music Director comes across a book entitled 'Youth Music

and the Church', he may get that uneasy feeling that he is about to read what the youth group have been longing to say about the Church's musical fare in congregational worship. Andrew Thornton's booklet meets all those expectations!

The author's aim is to point out the gulf between the youth 'pop' culture and church culture. This he does by outlining the development of youth music from the rock and roll era. He says rightly that it isn't all bad and that if the church is a family, surely some of the younger members can express themselves in their type of music through praise bands and perhaps even dancing or 'moving' to the music. His plea is that instead of lamenting the lack of youth in our churches, we should take risks and incorporate them into our worship. Andrew Thornton touches on the common dilemma for musical directors between young and old, and he is right to encourage the gifts of the young.

However, modernizing the church and the music will not necessarily lead to a deeper worship of God by the young. Worship, after all, is more than music! The author thus highlights the problem of the young in our churches, but somehow the answer doesn't 'sound' quite right.

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STEPHEN JAMES

A HYMN COMPANION Frank Colquhoun
Hodder & Stoughton 1985

It is a fact that when congregations sing hymns in church they rarely know how or why such hymns came to be written or indeed what they are really all about. It is with this in mind that Frank Colquhoun has produced his Hymn Companion which gives factual information, Biblical insights and relevant biographical details of the authors of 300 well known hymns.

The book is, without doubt, a valuable aid to the Church Music director or indeed anyone who selects hymns for congregational use. Examples abound of useful snippets of information. Lyte's missing stanza in 'Praise my Soul' shows just how masterly is his treatment of Psalm 103. Fanny Crosby's blindness brings to life the last line of 'To God be the Glory' with the climactic 'our wonder and Transport when Jesus we see', while it is revealing to discover the Quaker background to 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind', which makes the hymn too quietistic for some.

The selection of 300 hymns seems to cover all those commonly used and the whole publication is a mine of useful information. Added to that, it is a lot easier to get off the bookshelf than Julian's massive Dictionary of Hymnology! All in all an excellent reference book.

Oak Hill College, London N14

STEPHEN JAMES

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