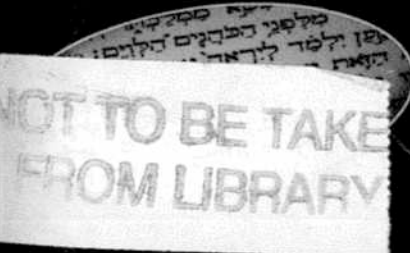


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Life, Theology, and All that Jazz

Ask any jazz buff about the most important moments in the history of music and you will almost certainly be told that the early recordings of Jelly Roll Morton, the Miles Davis' album, *The Birth of the Cool*, the arrival of Charlie 'Bird' Parker on sax and Thelonious Monk on piano in the late forties, and the innovative work of John Coltrane in the fifties and sixties are the central events which define the genre. In addition, you will also almost certainly be referred to a series of recordings from the twenties by two combos whose now legendary line-up included the then little-known cornet player, Louis Armstrong. Indeed, these so-called 'Hot Fives' and 'Hot Sevens' perhaps constitute the two most important musical events in jazz history – the technical brilliance of the Armstrong improvisations simply moved jazz to a new plane and opened up whole new vistas of experimentation which effectively meant that nothing was ever to be quite the same again.

Given the watershed nature of these sessions, I was interested recently to hear Wynton Marsalis, probably the greatest living jazz musician, discussing the music of Armstrong and making what was to me a surprising but almost certainly accurate observation. Yes, Marsalis said, the Hot Fives and Hot Sevens changed the face of jazz forever; but any reasonably accomplished musician could listen to the tracks, follow Armstrong's breathing and fingering techniques, and then go off to reproduce all of the solos just as Louis had himself played them; however, Marsalis continued, if one tried to do the same with the Armstrong recordings from the late fifties – for example, his classic 1959 version of 'When You're Smiling' – one could again learn the breathing and fingering, but, try as one might, one could not reproduce the sound that the great trumpeter achieved in these sessions. The reason? By the late fifties, Marsalis said, Armstrong had learned not just to play brilliant jazz; he had also learned to live it, to feel it, to breathe it. The notes and the improvisations on these recordings were more than just elaborate technical exercises; they were saturated in Armstrong's own life and experiences; they had a tone and a timbre, a quality and a texture, which could not be captured simply by following the movements of his fingers and his lungs. They derived rather from the inner qualities of the man himself.

What Marsalis said about Armstrong impressed me deeply – not simply because he seemed to have hit the nail on the head regarding Armstrong's development as a musician, but also because what he said about his music seemed to have a certain relevance to theology and to theological education. Much of educational culture, at least in Britain, has tended over the last twenty years to identify learning with the acquisition of skills, techniques, and information. Now, of course, education has never been less than this – schools have always taught people to read, write, do arithmetic etc. In the past, however, at least in intention, acquisition of skills and information was not seen as the be-all-and-end-all of the educational process, but simply as one particular part of a larger whole. The wider intention was that of producing men and women who were capable of being mature and useful members of society, who were prepared for the service of others, and whose very existence as such was seen as a benefit to society at large and not just to themselves. This is to an extent the vision captured in the great book of John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*. Yet it is a vision which has sadly dropped from the agenda of modern pragmatic educational theorists with their reductionist, free-market view of society. Now, schools and universities are regarded simply as training grounds for individualist entrepreneurs rather than contexts for the maturing of balanced and rounded members of society with a usefulness beyond their own creation.

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The change in the cultural perception of what education is all about has, inevitably, effected theology. There was a time when university theology faculties and seminaries were specifically intended as places where students could not only learn about theology in its deepest technical sense but also where the college culture provided a place where men and women were able to develop in terms of their own spiritual maturity as they prepared for lives of church service. Sadly, this is often no longer the case, particularly at universities but – and here I confess my ignorance – quite possibly at seminaries as well. The modular system, with its emphasis upon skills, techniques, and information, has meant that young theologians can, if they wish, become highly proficient at the technicalities of their subjects and do exceptionally well in examinations while failing to mature as Christians. This is often simply because their willingness to read and learn from books and lecturers is not matched by their willingness to pray and to serve within the context of the church.

Given the nature and purpose of theology, this is a most serious situation. As the music of Louis Armstrong in the fifties cannot simply be reduced to breathing and fingering techniques but actually gains its true greatness because of the life and experience of the man playing it, so theology cannot be reduced simply to using the correct doctrinal vocabulary and knowing the correct exegetical techniques for any given biblical passage – though we should all strive to make sure that our ambition is never less than this. Being a theologian is, so to speak (and I do hate using such political clichés!) a lifelong learning experience. The whizz kid with the First in Theology from Oxford has achieved something truly impressive, but must remember that the ability to memorise great chunks of theological textbooks and write in a lucid, original, and pleasant way does not in itself qualify him or her to be of great service to the church. Theology needs to be lived out and applied, tried and tested, worked at in the context of daily church life, if it is to be at all useful in bringing us to spiritual maturity. There should be a tone and a timbre to our theology which only a faithful and consistent life of Christian service for the church can provide.

How is this to be done? First, one could do worse than read Newman's *Idea* (which is still in print). Here one will find a vision of education fundamentally at odds with late twentieth century pragmatism and far more conducive to the kind of personal development which education in general, and theological training in particular, should embody. Then, from an evangelical perspective, and pitched specifically at the theological students, the wonderful little book of the great Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (also still in print), is a stimulating and provocative statement of how a trainee theologian should perceive his or her place and task within the church. The great lessons to be drawn from Thielicke are those concerning the need for humility and for service. For the Christian, increased knowledge is never to be used as an excuse for lording it over others or avoiding the daily routines of individual Christian and corporate church life. Knowledge in itself, without the life to back it up, counts for nothing. In addition, from those to whom much has been given, much will be expected; and with great privilege comes great responsibility. Thus, the great privilege of theological education brings with it even greater responsibilities of servanthood in the church. Indeed, failure to be involved in a church and in the day-to-day mundane business of running a church is a recipe for disaster. Having taught at university for seven years, I have seen numerous individuals come unstuck while studying theology and I can honestly say that it is rarely what they are taught that does the damage, however unbiblical some of it may be. No. The problem almost always starts with a neglect of the little things in the Christian life: church attendance; personal prayer and Bible reading; and fellowship with older, often less learned, but invariably more mature, Christians. Because Christian theology is only part of being a Christian, neglect of

the more practical aspects of obedience and service inevitably starves the spirit of the theologian who is willing to read, discuss and debate theology till the early hours of the morning yet who has no time to meditate on God's word, to pray and to have fellowship with others.

Compared to the technical excitement of the lecture theatre, of course, the local church can often seem a dull and uninspiring place. Yet it is there that Christians enjoy their closest fellowship with each other and with the Lord, and it is there that one finds the proper context for growing into true spiritual maturity. Christian Unions, hall fellowship groups, Bible studies – all have their place, but none is a substitute for church. The Sunday service may sometimes be overlong and tedious, but it is the primary place where Christians meet to worship the Lord and remember his saving work at the Lord's Table. The church prayer meeting may not be the appropriate place to raise questions about the Synoptic Problem or the Documentary Hypothesis, but it is the place to do serious business with God as a people, and to grow to spiritual maturity under the watchful eyes of those who may not be so technically accomplished, yet who perhaps have the Christian experience of joy or suffering which sets them apart and gives them a wisdom which cramming for university finals cannot on its own achieve. Teaching Sunday school may also not be the first choice of the First-bearing Oxbridge graduate – but it might well be the context in which all that vast and impressive knowledge finds its most immediate and helpful application.

Finally, we should all strive for humility in our work. Those young jazz trumpeters are seriously mistaken who think that, because they have the Armstrong solos of the Hot Fives and Hot Sevens by heart, they are actually greater than Satchmo; let them turn to the discs of the late fifties for a quick lesson in humility; let them spend time mulling over those intangible and unique qualities of Armstrong the man which made Armstrong the musician so influential. So, too, the young theologian who is tempted to look down upon those who cannot argue as eloquently or as precisely as he or she can might do well to spend a little time in the company of an older Christian who has served the Lord faithfully for years, or even to turn to the pages of the NT, to remind themselves that, while Christianity is never less than doctrinal, it is also always so much more; let them spend time mulling over the intangible spiritual quality that only a close walk with God can give. Let us, then, focus not just on acquiring theological techniques and information but on developing our theological life and character as well. There is no special secret involved in this; on the contrary, the steps are very simple: get involved in your local church wherever there is a need and you have something to offer – even if it is just making the coffee on a Sunday; support the Sunday services; pray regularly on your own, with a prayer partner, and at the church meeting; and see your studies as an opportunity for service, not for self-promotion. In this way, you will move beyond mere emulation of the words and phrases of the theological giants of the past and present and go on to capture something of the living, passionate, devotional texture of their theology as well.

THE POSTMODERNIST CHALLENGE TO THEOLOGY

Douglas Groothuis

Douglas Groothuis, is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary. He is the author of seven books, most recently The Soul in Cyberspace, and of the forthcoming, Truth Decay: The Postmodernist Challenge to Christian Faith.

Postmodernism poses a plethora of challenges to Christian theology. Those who are receptive to postmodernist ideas believe that Christian theology must abandon its residual attachments to modernism and embrace a new model more in accord with postmodernist thinking. Others are less radical, but still take postmodernism as a generally helpful development that can open theology to new avenues of thought and relevance. I disagree with both approaches.

Instead of attempting a comprehensive treatment of how theology should respond to postmodernism I will address a few areas of central concern to those facing the postmodernist challenge. First, given the postmodernist critique of language, some are claiming that an emphasis on the Bible as propositional revelation is problematic or even errant. They argue that our view of Scripture must be re-evaluated. Community should take precedent over doctrinal propositions. Second, along these lines, some claim that theology should be primarily narrational in nature and not systematic or abstract. Telling the Christian story should replace stipulating Christian doctrine. These contentions need a careful investigation if theology is to rise to the challenge of postmodernism.

Propositions, Truth, and Theology

Roughly stated, the task of Christian theology is to identify and articulate the revealed truths of Scripture in a logical, coherent, and compelling manner. As Carl Henry put it in the introduction to his magisterial six volume set, *God, Revelation, and Authority*: 'The fundamental issue remains the issue of truth, the truth of theological assertions ... Durable theology must revive and preserve the distinction between true and false religion.'¹ Theology is not merely an endeavour of academic theologians, but the concern of every Christian who desires to understand and apply God's truth for life and make it known to others. Consequently, our theology affects all that we do, whether or not we have thought it through systematically. It directs our sermons, our evangelism and

¹ Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, I (Waco, TX: Word Publishers, 1976), 14.

apologetics (or lack thereof), and our personal and social ethics. In other words, it is indispensable and inescapable. This underscores the urgency of developing a theology that is both faithful to Scripture and which speaks forcefully and truthfully to our postmodern situation.

Before assessing the critique of a propositionally oriented theology given by some evangelicals, we should first explain what is at issue. The defence of propositional revelation has always been a central tenet of evangelicalism and a primary plank in the debate over biblical inerrancy.

The correspondence view of truth, held by the vast majority of philosophers and theologians throughout history until recently, holds that any statement is true if and only if it corresponds to or agrees with factual reality. The statement, 'the desk in my study is brown', is true only if there is, in fact, a brown desk in my study. The statement, 'there is no brown desk in my study', would then be false because it fails to correspond to any objective state of affairs (i.e., to the facts of the matter). Or, as Christian philosopher, Nicholas Wolterstorff succinctly states it:

If I believe of something that it is a duck, that is true of it if and only if it is a duck. And if that is indeed true of it, it is not true of it relative to some conceptual scheme. It is just true, period. Thoughts are true or false of things, period – not relative to something or other.²

There is no reason for theology to alter or adjust this definition of truth when it comes to Scripture as God's revelation or with respect to the formulations of theological systems. Scripture presents God's truth as objective, absolute, universal, eternal, antithetical, and systemic. In light of this, theology should affirm that the entire content of the Bible is true. Since Scripture is God's word, every claim made in Scripture is factually accurate.³ Of course, Scripture gives us a wealth of literary forms – poetry, history, wisdom literature, prophecy, and more – but every form consists of propositional content. In other words, Scripture is informative and correct on every matter it addresses. It discloses knowledge about the nature of God, humanity, salvation, ethics, history, and things to come. This revelation came through a variety of cultures and individuals, but it is no less propositional for that.

The language of Scripture consists of more than declarative statements, such as 'Jesus wept'. It also presents questions (Jesus'

² Nicholas Wolterstorff, in Stephen Louthan, 'On Religion – A Discussion with Richard, Rorty, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff,' *Christian Scholars Review*, XXVI:2, 180.

³ I cannot here give a defence of the doctrine of inerrancy, although it goes hand-in-hand with a propositional view of biblical revelation. The most detailed defence of inerrancy is found in Henry's volumes. An excellent article on the logic of inerrancy is: J.P. Moreland, 'The Rationality of Inerrancy,' *Trinity Journal NS*, 1986, 75–86.

statement: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'), imperatives ('Thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbour'), requests ('Lead us not into temptation') and exclamations ('Hallelujah!'), which are not, strictly speaking, propositional. Nevertheless, they are always presented in an intellectually rich environment of propositional truths and can be transposed into propositions quite easily. For example, God says, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'. A command is not propositional because it does not refer to a state of affairs in itself, although it assumes several propositions. It is true that God gave this command, and it is true that adultery is immoral, because it violates God's very character and the kind of moral world that God made. The statement can be easily transposed into a proposition by saying, 'Adultery is morally wrong'. The foremost defender of propositional revelation of our time, Carl Henry is right on target: 'Regardless of the parables, allegories, emotive phrases and rhetorical questions used by these [biblical] writers, their literary devices have a logical point which can be propositionally formulated and is objectively true or false.'⁴

Poetic utterances are also propositional, no matter how imaginative or emotional they may be. David cries out, 'Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow'. (Ps. 51:7). This is the metaphorical language of contrition, confession, and hope. It also makes claims on objective reality. Consider the some of the propositions it encompasses:

- David prayed this prayer.
- David needed to be forgiven by God, or, more poetically, 'cleansed' and 'washed'.
- God heard David's prayers.
- God forgave and restored David.
- David believed statements 1-4; and so on.

Certainly, God's revelation comes through historical events (supernatural or otherwise), personal experiences (Exod. 3; Is. 6; etc.), the witness of creation (Ps. 19; Rom. 1-2). But these modes of revelation are all communicative, intelligible, and informative; they can be understood in terms of propositions. An event wrought by God – such as the parting of the Red Sea or the resurrection of Christ – is not itself a proposition, but it is a fact that can be accurately described in propositions.⁵

Divine revelation was given to people in various communities, but the source of the revelation was not the community, but God

⁴ Carl Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 3 (Waco, TX: 1979), 453; quoted in McGrath, *A Passion for Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 172.

⁵ See Ronald Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1982), 43-46.

working through communities to make objective truth known. Henry's thesis is accurate, despite some postmodern detractors: 'God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible and meaningful words, that is, in conceptual-verbal form.'⁶ Henry's concern was not postmodernism as much as neoorthodoxy and theological liberalism, but his point still stands.

Revelation in the Bible is essentially a mental conception: God's disclosure is rational and intelligible communication. Issuing from the mind and will of God, revelation is addressed to the mind and will of human beings. As such it involves primarily an activity of consciousness that enlists the thoughts and bares on the beliefs and actions of its recipients.⁷

Some who impugn a high view of propositional revelation as reflecting an outmoded modernist approach to theology, have confused the *effects* of God's revelation with its *nature* when they claim that revelation comes through the community of faith and the experience of Christians, as we will see below. God's revelation creates a community, whether the community of ancient Israel, the early church, or manifestations of the body of Christ around the world today. Revelation also produces relationships between believers and between believers and unbelievers. Revelation, when it is truly understood, likewise induces certain emotions such as reverence for God, joy over salvation, sorrow over sin, outrage over evil, and hope for the future restoration of the universe. But these communities, relationships, and emotions ought to be rooted in God's objective revelation, they do not constitute or comprise that revelation itself. Moreover, these responses would not be possible without God's prior revelation of objective truth. David's prayer of contrition and hope is uttered because God's revelation (through Nathan) convicted him of his sin, because he knew God would hear his prayer and because he knew God would forgive and restore him. Prayer (or community) without truth is pointless and pathetic.

When postmodernists seek to disparage meta-narratives, deconstruct truth into language games, and render spirituality as a mixture of subjectively compelling elements, evangelicals must bring objective truth back to the table as the centerpiece of concern. The issue is whether God speaks in ways we can understand. As Schaeffer said a generation ago, 'The whole question [for modern people] ... is whether there is anyone adequately there in the universe to *speak*'.⁸ Several evangelical thinkers have made, I believe, key mistakes with regard to the nature of truth and biblical revelation

⁶ Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 3, 248. Henry's entire treatment of propositional revelation is excellent, and remains the best philosophical and theological treatment of the matter.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Francis A. Schaeffer, *He is There, He is Not Silent* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1972), 54. Schaeffer was concerned with existentialism and language philosophy, but his point still stands for postmodernism.

that inadvertently let loose the contagion of truth-decay, thus threatening our ability to hear God speak in Scripture. I cannot treat their ideas thoroughly, but I will attempt to highlight what I take to be their essential confusions and errors.

McGrath and Grenz on Propositional Revelation

Making propositional revelation central is not an error of rationalism or modernism, as Alister McGrath alleges. McGrath, who sometimes carelessly quotes postmodernists to support his views (as we will see), claims that Carl Henry and others have 'laid too much emphasis upon the notion of a purely propositional biblical revelation'.⁹ He then caricatures this view: 'Any view of revelation which regards God's self-disclosure as the mere transmission of facts concerning God is seriously deficient, and risks making God an analogue of a corporate executive who disperses memoranda to underlings.'¹⁰

Henry's sustained treatment of Scripture as propositional revelation bears little resemblance to McGrath's description. Henry recognises that God makes himself known (self-disclosure) through a variety of media. His insistent argument, which Christians must appropriate if we wish to reverse postmodernist truth-decay, is that God's revelation is irreducibly propositional, although this propositional truth comes to us in many forms and has many effects on us. Henry would agree with McGrath's statement that 'Revelation concerns the *oracles* of God, the *acts* of God, and the *person and presence* of God.'¹¹ However, it must be the case that the oracle is a true oracle of God (as opposed to the counterfeits of the false prophets), that the act of God is rightly interpreted propositionally, and that the person and presence of God is cognitively apprehended as well as affectively felt.

Stanley Grenz agrees with McGrath's critique when he says that a 'postmodern articulation of the gospel is post-rationalistic. It no longer focuses on propositions as the central content of Christian faith'.¹² Grenz thinks that a personal encounter or experience of God articulated within the community of faith should characterise our witness, not a focus on propositional truth. At points, Grenz seems to give up or at least dilute the notion of propositional truth. At other points, he simply minimizes its relevance for postmodern situations. Grenz appeals to Polanyi's notion of 'universal intent' as exemplary for theology. We should distinguish a 'concern for universality with any *claim about* universality', since for Polanyi, 'truth always transcends our apprehension of it'.¹³ Grenz appears to endorse

⁹ McGrath, *A Passion*, 106.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 171.

¹³ Stanley Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 78.

Polanyi's idea that if 'propositions themselves [express] final truth' this 'represents a truncated view of belief'.¹⁴ However, Grenz says that a 'faith community claims to represent in some form the truth about the world and the divine reality.'¹⁵ He also writes of the 'propositions we accept as reflecting the nature of reality.'¹⁶

This seems confused. 'Propositions themselves' either express truth or they do not. There is no middle option. For that matter, nothing but a proposition can express truth in a conceptual sense. (Truths can be *manifested* through divine actions, as we have pointed out; but these factual actions still bear witness to propositions.) No one proposition can express all the truth, but this hardly disqualifies a theological proposition from expressing certain and fundamental 'final truths'. No human theology can lay claim to perfection, but certain statements are true in a definitive and final sense, such as 'Jesus is Lord', 'God is triune', 'Humans are sinful', 'Jesus' death atoned for human sin', 'There is a hell', and so on. Confessing Christians are concerned both to 'express universality' and, therefore, make a 'claim about' universality. Jesus' lordship covers every square inch of the universe (Acts 4:12; Col. 1:15-19; etc.). No human (or angel, for that matter) has a perfect or comprehensive grasp of what Jesus' lordship entails, but this does not mean that we cannot utter 'final' or 'universal' truths about Jesus, his gospel, and his Kingdom.

Consider Jesus' identity as God Incarnate. One can formulate this truth in various propositions, each with a greater level of conceptual sophistication. Consider:

- Jesus is truly divine and truly human.
- Jesus is one person with two natures: divine and human.
- Jesus' two natures express a hypostatic union of divinity and humanity.

All three statements are objectively true because they correspond with the reality of Jesus Christ himself as God Incarnate. These propositions 'themselves express final reality', but they each do so with a different level of conceptual content and specification. None of these statements supplies the comprehensive truth of the Incarnation (nor does the Council of Chalcedon's highly nuanced articulation), but they are all equally true and biblically congruent. These truths may serve as a foundation for further knowledge and clarification, but they *succeed* in their intent to be universally true. 'Universal intent', Grenz says to the contrary, is not sufficient for

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

theologising, although it is necessary. Our theological statements that intend to state universal propositions must *succeed* – that is, connect with objective reality, – in order to be true and biblical.

Grenz, following post-liberal theologian George Lindbeck, claims that theology and 'its propositions are second-order propositions', which derive from religious experience and communal life.¹⁷ Without assessing Lindbeck's controversial views in detail, Grenz's appropriation of Lindbeck is, nevertheless, troubling, because Lindbeck stresses that doctrine has a regulative function in various communities that is not directly (if at all) propositional. If so, doctrinal 'truths' only apply within the community; they cannot successfully or normatively refer to a reality outside of the community. Therefore, as Paul Griffiths point out, this view of doctrine (sometimes called 'rule theory'), rejects the idea that 'doctrine-expressing sentences primarily [are] expressive of propositions, and so bearers of truth-value and conveyers of information about extramental and extralinguistic realities.'¹⁸

If the rule theory is correct, the doctrine of a Buddhist community and the doctrine of a Christian community cannot contradict each other, since they refer only to internal practices or rules of those respective communities, and not to objective truths expressed in propositions. But since both communities do lay claim to final realities outside of themselves, this cannot be the case.¹⁹ Consider two key doctrines: Nirvana (an impersonal state beyond desire) and the Trinity (a tri-personal being with desires) cannot both be the ultimate reality. One cannot find final refuge both in the Buddha and final refuge in the Christ. They are contradictory, antithetical. Such is the nature of all truth-claims, in religion and elsewhere. Truth-claims must exclude whatever contradicts them.

Therefore, Grenz's use of Lindbeck's concepts tends to undercut his own positive remarks about propositions. Theological propositions should have a first-order status in theology and all of life. Theology ought to be derived from Scripture, not community and experience, although these will always shape our theologies in various ways. Revealed truths, articulated theologically, ought to guide our lives, give us hope, and make us discerning, because their revealer is trustworthy and good. Theology rightly received does *result* in rules for godly living, but these rules are cognitively meaningful only in relation to objective realities that are true for everyone, both inside and outside the community of faith. For instance, John says to 'test the spirits to see whether or not they are of God.' This is done by checking their doctrine – the propositional affirmations – concerning Christ's identity (1 John 4:1-4). Paul speaks of 'the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness' (Titus 1:1). A deep knowledge of the objective truth leads to subjective godliness demonstrated

¹⁷ Ibid., 77-78.

¹⁸ Paul Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 39.

¹⁹ Ibid., 39-44.

without the Christian community and before the watching world. Francis Schaeffer is on target:

Our calling is not primarily to an alternate lifestyle. Considering what the Bible teaches, what is crucial is not the word community, nor the form the practice of community takes.

Our primary calling is to truth as it is rooted in God, his acts and revelation; and if it is indeed truth, it touches all of reality and all of life, including an adequate basis for, and some practice of, the reality of community.²⁰

Henry has eloquently argued that God's revelation is inherently, intrinsically, and incorrigibly cognitive; its intellectual content fuels our existential transformation as we submit to and internalise these truths, graciously made known to us by the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13). He highlights the first-order nature of divine revelation:

Revelation is actual only as God gives himself to our knowing. All a priori conceptions, all conjectural postulations, all subjective expectations are answerable to a subject to what is given through divine self-revelation. The objective given reality with which theology must begin is God manifesting himself in his Word.²¹

The purpose of divine revelation is not merely the enunciation of a set of true propositions. Nevertheless, without these true propositions, revelation vanishes as a conceptual category, for there is nothing left to be revealed. There would be no cognitive content. Revelation is God's activity to make himself known in ways that bear on every dimension of the human being – the mind, the emotion, and the will. The entire person must bow before one's Creator and Redeemer in submission to the Holy Spirit. We are to love God with 'all our hearts, soul, strength, and mind' as of first priority; within that first-order theological context, we then love 'our neighbour as ourselves' (Matt. 22:37).

Logical Consistency and Theology

This whole-person submission to God, however, ought to stem from a logical understanding of what Scripture teaches and how it applies to us today. As God said through Isaiah, 'Come let us reason together', (Is. 1:18). Yet some have rejected logical consistency as a criteria for theology, taking it to be a holdover from the rationalism or Enlightenment modernism. McGrath accuses evangelical leaders such as Carl Henry, John Warwick Montgomery, Francis Schaeffer and Norman Geisler of succumbing to 'a strongly rationalist spirit' that is ill-advised. He criticises Henry by saying that 'even Carl Henry can offer such hostages to fortune in his affirmation of belief in a "logically consistent divine revelation"'.²² Henry's appeal to logic

²⁰ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who is There*, 30th anniversary edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998; orig. pub., 1968), 207.

²¹ Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* 3, 275.

²² McGrath, 170. He is quoting Carl Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* 3, 476.

makes it 'a more fundamental authority' than Scripture itself. McGrath asks, 'What logic is to be allowed this central role? Whose rationality provides the basis of scriptural authority?'²³

Henry and his followers, supposedly, do not recognise the effect of sin on human rationality.²⁴ McGrath scolds them: 'Evangelicals, of all people, cannot allow revelation to be imprisoned within the flawed limits of sinful human reason.'²⁵ He illustrates his worries by discussing how theologians have handled christological questions. He cites Tertullian, a fideist, as instructive, since he 'pointed out the danger of grounding or judging the gospel in what passed for human wisdom'.²⁶ Henry has 'rendered evangelicalism intensely - and needlessly - vulnerable at this point', because of his insistence on logical consistency for the possibility of knowledge.²⁷

McGrath fails to make some crucial distinctions. First, in saying that logical consistency is a criterion for understanding Scripture, one is simply appealing to a basic fact of all intelligible discourse. We are made such that we cannot knowingly believe contradictory statements. But even if we could, they could not both be true! Jesus did not rise from the dead and fail to rise from the dead. As Henry tellingly says: 'If the law of contradiction is irrelevant in the sphere of transcendent ontology, then God and the non-God, the divine and the demonic, cannot be assuredly differentiated.'²⁸

Moreover, as Henry and others have developed at length, John's Gospel (1:1-3) refers to the pre-incarnate Christ as the Logos (or Word). This means, among other things, that the personal Word is intelligible and rational and created a knowable world peopled by creatures who can know truth. The Word is God communicating, God speaking. Henry powerfully articulates this: 'The Logos of the Bible is personal and self-revealed, transcendent to man and the world, eternal and essentially divine, intrinsically intelligible, and incarnate in Jesus Christ'²⁹ as well as being 'the foundation of all meaning, and the transcendent personal source and support of the rational moral, and purposive order to created reality'.³⁰

Many early Christian apologists employed this notion to argue that any truth discovered by non-Christian philosophers was only possible because of God, the Logos.³¹ This doctrine is not an aberration of rationalism, but intrinsic to biblical revelation.

²³ McGrath, 170.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 171.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 2 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 60.

²⁹ Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* 3, 194.

³⁰ Ibid., 195.

³¹ Ibid., 164-247; and Ronald Nash, *The Word of God*, 59-70.

Dividing revelation asunder from logic generates a dangerous and false dichotomy. When McGrath asks, 'Which logic, whose rationality?' he befuddles matters, since no human owns or controls logic. Humans use logic, either poorly or wisely; humans do not create logic - although they may manipulate opinion, employ propaganda, and offer fallacious arguments. The basic laws of logic - such as non-contradiction and excluded middle - and essential argument forms - such as *modus ponens* and *modus tollens* - constitute proper thinking. These are not contingent social constructions that are revisable by anyone.

Moreover, McGrath himself appeals to logic in his own denigration of logic. This is inescapable, even if self-contradictory. He argues:

- (1) Human reason is fallen.
- (2) Logical tests for revelation play into the hands of secular critics.
- (3) Therefore: Human reason should not be used to test revelation.
- (4) Therefore: Those who use reason to test revelation are mistaken.

The problem is that: (1) is ambiguous and (2) is false. Therefore, (3) and (4) do not follow logically from (1) and (2). Let us see why.

Human reason-*ing* is affected by sin in that we often do not attend to matters logically at all or we reason only in a half-hearted or slothful way. We may employ logical fallacies without knowing it and/or the stock of facts from which we argue is sometimes limited in ways that hinder reaching sound conclusions. As Pascal mused:

*The mind of this supreme judge of the world is not so independent as to be impervious to whatever din may be going on near by. It does not take a cannon's roar to arrest this thought; the noise of a weathercock will do. Do not be surprised if his reasoning is not too sound at the moment, there is a fly buzzing in his ears; that is enough to render him incapable of giving good advice.*³²

The greatest defect in human reasoning is seen in its vain attempts to become autonomous of God and divine revelation. This is the fault of human hubris, not of reason itself. Paul indicts such people: 'Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools' (Rom. 1:22). Being a finite person in the created cosmos under God calls for an openness to a disclosure of truth from a source beyond ourselves. It is reasonable to expect to receive information beyond what human reason *left to itself* can provide.³³ It is true that I cannot simply observe my environment, use the laws of logic, and - without

³² Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, ed. Alban Krallsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1966), 48/366, 43.

³³ For a concise but strong case for a reasonable openness to revelation beyond what reason alone can provide, see R. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips, 'A Particularist View: An Evidentialist Approach,' in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 216-29.

Scriptural revelation – deduce the existence and nature of the holy Trinity. However, I can discover the truth of the Trinity through divine revelation and rationally comprehend the basic framework of this doctrine as central to all of Scripture.³⁴

Nonetheless, the problems with human reasoning count nothing against the validity of logic itself, which flows from the being of God and is intrinsic to our created nature and cognitive structure.³⁵ There is more to being in the ‘image and likeness of God’ (Gen. 1:26) than being rational, but we are not less rational for that. Reason itself is not fallen. Reason is a fact of God’s reality – his character, the order of his creation, and the minds of his rational creatures. Human reason-ing, however, is subject to all manner of ills, because we are sinners who abuse God’s good gifts.

D. Elton Trueblood argued that revelation must be tested by reason ‘for the simple reason that there are false claims to revelation. We know, in advance, that many alleged revelations are false, because there are absolutely contradictory claims’. More pointedly: ‘Unless the law of contradiction is recognised as the necessary condition of all rational discussion, we give up everything’.³⁶ If McGrath asks us to suspend basic logic for core Christian claims, why not suspend logic for non-Christian claims as well? For instance, Christians have deemed pantheism illogical. It claims first that everything is one and divine, and two, that individuals exist who typically don’t recognise this oneness and divinity. Rationality sees these pantheistic truth-claims as contradictory because a comprehensive divine oneness rules out real individuality and also the possibility of a lack of divine realisation (ignorance of the comprehensive deity).³⁷ Yet if Christians defensively cloak themselves in mystery without invoking logic, they lose their ability to criticise other worldviews. Ironically, McGrath himself has written a book on Christian apologetics, which discredits other world-views as illogical and, therefore, unworthy of belief.³⁸ Why, then, does he disparage reason with respect to propositional revelation?

The invocation of ‘mystery’ in describing Christian doctrine must be done with great care, and only after intense intellectual scrutiny. A logical contradiction is not a mystery; it is a falsehood and an absurdity, such as a square circle. Regarding the Incarnation, the appeal to logical consistency is not a modernist mistake that

³⁴ For an excellent treatment of the Trinity, see Millard Erickson, *God in Three Persons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995).

³⁵ Arthur Holmes has given an excellent account of how and why humans commit intellectual errors in *All Truth is God’s Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 49–69. However, Holmes does not concur with McGrath’s ideas on ‘fallen human reason’.

³⁶ D. Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1957), 32.

³⁷ See Winfried Corduan, *No Doubt About It* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, Holman, 1997), 92–95.

³⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God, and Other Myths* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993).

exonerates Christian theology from secular appraisal. Beyond the basic framework spelled out by the Council of Chalcedon (which is faithful to Scripture), philosophers and theologians have tried in various ways to make the notion of one person with two natures intelligible and consistent. McGrath himself gives some helpful ways of explaining Christ’s deity and humanity in another book. Consider an analogy of a friend who holds dual citizenship. Although we typically think that one can only be a citizen of one country, this man is a citizen of both England and Switzerland. McGrath says:

*A logical contradiction exists if, and only if, being British excludes being Swiss. But it does not. And why, at the theological level, should being human exclude Jesus from being divine. Might he not be a citizen of heaven as well as earth?*³⁹

This is not a complete apologetic, but is intellectually suggestive, and appeals to the need for logical consistency for a statement to be true.

More philosophically, Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demerest argue that the divinity and humanity of Christ do not contradict each other. To make the argument, they explain the difference between contraries and subcontraries. If two statements are contraries, they cannot both be true, but both can be false, such as: ‘All dogs are brown. No dogs are brown.’ If two statements are subcontraries, they can both be true, but cannot both be false, such as: ‘Some dogs are brown; some dogs are not brown.’

Within his one person, some of Jesus Christ’s attributes are divine and some are not divine (human). The truths about Jesus’ humanity are in a subcontrary relationship with the truths about his divinity. The divine attributes do not conflict with the human attributes, as would be the case if we said, ‘All of Christ’s attributes are divine and some of Christ’s attributes are not divine’. That would be a flat contradiction and therefore false, because ‘the affirmation and the denial of the universal truth claim could not be true’.

*In contrast, in a subcontrary relationship neither the affirmation nor the denial is universal, hence both may be true. For example ... ‘Some of the attributes of a person are physical’ and ‘Some of the attributes of a person are nonphysical’. Similarly, ‘Some attributes of the person of Jesus Christ are divine and some are human’. Neither the divine set of attributes nor the human set of attributes is said to be all that he has, and so neither affirmation is necessarily false.*⁴⁰

The logical category of a subcontrary relationship comes from Aristotle (a pre-modern!), but serves theology well here. This is not modernistic rationalism, but rather faith seeking understanding through God-given logic. Lewis and Demarest admit their ‘lack of full comprehension’ of ‘how the divine and human attributes exist

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁴⁰ Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1992), 350.

together, but that is not sufficient ground attributing logical nonsense to the focal point of God's century-spanning redemptive programme! In understanding the Incarnation, they 'acknowledge complexity... but not contradiction'.⁴¹

McGrath's attack on Henry's supposed rationalism – which would apply to Lewis and Demarest and many other evangelicals (myself included) – rings hollow for another reason. McGrath claims that insisting on logical consistency plays into the hands of critics, such as Spinoza, who view the Incarnation as a contradiction – as illogical as a square circle.

*Yet why should evangelicals feel under any such pressure to conform to the highly questionable dictates of the limits of fallen human reason? And how often has it been pointed out, even by secular philosophers, that 'logic is the enemy of truth'?*⁴²

This poisons the well by accusing Henry of conforming to 'fallen human reason', which we have already addressed. Moreover, no secular philosopher – pre-modern, modern or postmodern – will be persuaded by the Christian who says, 'We don't conform to fallen human reason, so we need not make the concept of the Incarnation intelligible to outsiders. Now that this is settled, please accept our theology and follow our God.' This would only give more fuel to the charge that Christianity is illogical and anti-intellectual.

As for the statement, 'logic is the enemy of truth', I know of no philosopher who ever held this. In fact, it would be difficult to even *be* a philosopher and hold this. McGrath gives no reference. If anyone holds this, it reveals his or her illogic and inability to discover truth. This slogan provides no help for Christian theology.

Sounding very postmodernist, McGrath asserts that 'the notion of 'universal rationality' is a fiction, a dream, and a delusion.' He is so concerned about the purported errors of the modernist attempt to establish a 'universal rationality,' that he enlists an epistemological nihilist, Paul Feyerabend, for his cause. Feyerabend says:

*There is hardly any difference between the members of a primitive tribe who defend their laws because they are the laws of the gods ... and a rationalist who appeals to objective standards, except that the former know what they are doing while the latter does not.*⁴³

Instead of attacking this radical constructivism, McGrath calmly adds, that 'this comparison has alarmed many; it has, however, yet to be refuted by a philosopher of science'.⁴⁴ However, it is false that Feyerabend's philosophy of science has won the day academically or

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² McGrath, *A Passion*, 171.

⁴³ Paul Feyerabend, *Science in a Free Society* (London: Verso, 1983); quoted in McGrath, *A Passion*, 90.

⁴⁴ McGrath, *A Passion*, 90.

is impervious to cogent critique.⁴⁵ (His motto for describing the philosophy of science was 'anything goes'. Would we want to apply that to theology?)⁴⁶

Moreover, inasmuch as the tribespeople mistakenly attribute events to the gods instead of natural laws, they are flat-out mistaken. If they take the earth to be flat and the sun to move, they are mistaken as well. Many of their false beliefs keep them in the thrall of superstition. Primitive tribes have not found vaccines for polio or smallpox, nor can they reattach a detached retina, remove brain tumours, perform heart transplants, or send in paramedics by helicopter. These benefits are attributable to the advances of modern science (which originated within a Western, theistic world view), which has used rationality to discern many truths and cure many ills. One need not be a secular rationalist – who rejects divine revelation – to see this. McGrath throws the rational baby out with the rationalistic bath water.

In a critique of John Hick, McGrath also claims that 'in these postmodern times ... the idea of a universal morality has been abandoned'.⁴⁷ He also claims that 'no universal moral framework exists by which such a public and universal judgement can be made' about what religion is morally superior.⁴⁸ McGrath is not merely being descriptive. He thinks that the move away from metanarratives and attempts to explain the big picture is healthy. Because 'the old certainties of the Enlightenment' – concerning universals such as experience, religion, and rationality – are dying, the 'belief in cultural or experiential metanarratives ... is acknowledged to be at best flawed and at worst an invitation to oppression'.⁴⁹ He is also happy that 'claiming privileged access to a total and comprehensive knowledge of reality is generally treated with intense scepticism' because it cannot be verified or falsified.⁵⁰ McGrath quotes Terry Eagleton's observations with approval:

Post-modernism signals the end of such 'metanarratives' whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a 'universal' human history. We are now in the process of awakening from the nightmare of modernity, with its manipulative reason and fetish of the totality, into the laid-back pluralism of the post-modern, that heterogeneous range of

⁴⁵ On the philosophy of science, see J.P. Moreland, *Christianity and The Nature of Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989).

⁴⁶ See Paul Feyerabend, 'Anything Goes,' in *The Truth About the Truth*, ed. Walter Truett Anderson (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 199–203. For a biographical and critical interaction with Feyerabend's ideas, see John Horgan, *The End of Science: Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 47–56.

⁴⁷ Alister McGrath, in *Four Views*, 67.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 200.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 158.

*life-styles and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalise and legitimate itself.*⁵¹

Although McGrath does not mention this, Eagleton's review was *critical* of postmodernism.⁵² However, Eagleton's description of postmodernism is apt; and it is not good news for Christian theology. The error of modernism was the construction of a false totality based on autonomous reasoning and humanistic utopianism that excluded divine revelation. The new error of postmodernism is the abandonment of metanarrative, the embracing of relativism, and the endorsement of cultural constructivism. In the very review McGrath cites, Eagleton himself worries that Jean Francois Lyotard's postmodernist rejection of metanarrative has no standpoint from which to condemn social injustice, such as Nazism, as objectively evil, since, according to Lyotard each narrative 'certifies itself in the pragmatics of its own transmission without having recourse to argumentation or proof.'⁵³

McGrath seems sanguine at the prospects of postmodernity but he fails to note that Christian theology is a metanarrative based on God's rational self-disclosure. The postmodernists on whom McGrath relies see the collapse of Enlightenment rationalism as the end of *all* metanarratives. If Christians cannot appeal to universal standards of rationality and morality in their apologetic and in their theological articulations, the postmodernist criticism of metanarratives ends up eroding the very Christianity we seek to present to the postmodern world. The very concept of divine revelation presupposes that those that receive that revelation *do* have 'some access to objective reality'. God has made himself known in creation, Christ, and the Scriptures. Followers of Christ have the privilege of knowing that Jesus is Lord; others do not (1 Cor. 8:6). Jesus' lordship covers all of reality, and all wisdom and knowledge is found in Christ (Col. 1:15-17; 2:3). We know only in part in this life (1 Cor. 13:12); but we do know, because we have been privileged with knowledge by God, the omniscient Revealer.

This privileged knowledge leaves no room for pride and has plenty of room for growth and correction, as I pointed out earlier. We do not equate the supreme truth of God with our limited grasp of it; but we do have something to grasp because God has grasped us in Christ by his matchless grace.

McGrath likewise joins postmodernists in dismissing the correspondence view of truth through a kind of caricature.

⁵¹ Terry Eagleton, 'Awakening from Modernity,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 Feb. 1987, 195; quoted in McGrath, 187. Eagleton's article is a review of two books by Jean-Francois Lyotard, which defend postmodernism. Eagleton pans both books and the postmodernist project as a whole.

⁵² See Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996). This is a neo-Marxist critique.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 194.

*It is a travesty of the biblical idea of 'truth' to equate it with the Enlightenment notion of conceptual or propositional correspondence, or the derived view of evangelism as proclamation of the propositional correctness of Christian doctrine.*⁵⁴

Strangely enough, McGrath also writes of evangelism as proclaiming 'an objective truth with the expectation that this will give rise to a subjective response – that is to say, a response which involves the heart, mind, and total being of those who hear it'.⁵⁵ Truth cannot be objective unless it corresponds to objective reality. In another book, McGrath stipulates that faith must involve 'belief in the existence of God and his promises'.⁵⁶ He is concerned about propositional proclamation without a call to commitment, but to say that the belief in the 'notion of conceptual or propositional correspondence' is a 'travesty' and a capitulation to Enlightenment notions is acutely errant. The truth makes demands on the totality of our being. It is truth *disclosed by a personal God*; this is not some abstract and impersonal Platonic notion of truth disconnected from the Supreme Being. But God's truth must be objective truth in order to make these all-encompassing demands on us, his creatures, subjectively. To limit theology, evangelism or apologetics to formulating and reciting a clinical list of propositional truths would be to truncate both disciplines, but to remove truth as correspondence would be to abolish theology, evangelism, and apologetics entirely.

The Enlightenment notion of truth was not new to the Enlightenment. The correspondence view of truth is ancient, going back to Plato, Aristotle and to the Bible itself. Both Christianity and many Enlightenment philosophers agree on the *nature of truth*; they disagree on *what is true* and what *effect truth should have on us*. McGrath, like many evangelicals flirting with postmodernism, fails to make these substantial distinctions.

There is a better way for Christian theology than making accommodations to postmodernist errors – the way of God's knowable and gripping truth. We have a true story to tell.

Back to God's Metanarrative

The grasp of God's grace encompasses all of cosmic and human history in one grand narrative or story – a story we can apprehend truly, if only partially. Despite my disagreements with Grenz, he puts this point well:

Our world is more than a collection of incompatible and competing local narratives. Contrary to the implications of Lyotard's thesis, we firmly believe that the local narratives of the many human communities do fit together into a single grand

⁵⁴ McGrath, *A Passion*, 177.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵⁶ McGrath, *Intellectuals*, 49.

narrative, the story of humankind. There is a single metanarrative encompassing all people and all times.⁵⁷

Postmodernists are correct in emphasising the centrality of stories in culture, from bedtime stories told to children to the narratives of nations and peoples. Their downfall comes in shrinking the narratives from the meta-narrative to the micro-narrative and severing these stories from objective truth. These mini-stories have been freeze-dried and shrink-wrapped for postmodern consumption, but they fail to nourish or satisfy or inspire – however much they may distract us from broader concerns.

We tell and hear stories to find meaning, not just for entertainment. They involve a place for human significance, plot and character development, characters, moral value, and resolution. More significantly, they require a storyteller – a narrator. Howard Synder explains:

You simply can't have a story without a storyteller. A tale demands a teller as surely as tale and tell come from the same root. No teller, no tale. Without a novelist, no novel; without dramatist, no drama. This is obvious, yet its major meaning is often missed: A story requires a person as surely as lungs need air. The existence of a story is proof positive of the existence of a person. His means that story requires a consciousness, that strange fact of self-awareness, including will, intention, imagination, and purpose, the constituents of personality.⁵⁸

Christian theology – whether articulated in seminary classes, Christian colleges, or preaching and teaching in the local church – ought to capitalise on the postmodernist fascination with narrative by speaking of God's own story in all its richness, complexity, and drama. It is a drama in four principle acts: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. But we must exhibit this narrative, not as just one among many micro-narratives that give meaning to disparate communities, but as the cosmic story of the Creator himself. This Creator who has not only given us the key to history in Scripture, but has entered history in the Incarnation for the sake of our liberation from sin and death. Hopelessly conflicting micro-narratives – 'You have your truth; I have mine' – give no final meaning to life; they set up ghettos instead of charting the terms, rights, gifts, and responsibilities of citizenship in God's world, of being actors in God's divine drama. God is the personal being who tells us the true story and orchestrates the whole story.

Christopher Jencks, a leading analyst of postmodernism in relation to architecture and the arts, discerns that postmodernism's rejection of meta-narratives places it at a cultural impasse. Thinking that traditional religions have nothing left to offer, he presents the outline of a 'new metanarrative', which strives rather desperately to

⁵⁷ Grenz, *Primer*, 164.

⁵⁸ Howard Synder, *EarthCurrents: The Struggle for the World's Soul*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 263.

anchor meaning in an aboriginal nothingness from which came chaos, from which evolved into order and increasing complexity.

In the beginning (one cannot expunge the biblical overtones) was the quantum vacuum, or plenum, the seething nothing that, because of the Uncertainty Principle, allows particles to come into go out of existence for short moments ... Whatever happened (according to the Standard Model) there was a hot explosion and expansion ...⁵⁹

From this, Jencks pronounces about life coming from nonlife, purpose emerging from non-purpose, and eventually, culture springing forth from nature. This is the new 'universe story' – a tale told by no one, full of speculation and folly, signifying insignificance.⁶⁰ The biblical overtones have been theologically expunged, but the psychological quest for a unifying and inspiring Story remains.

Jencks's author-less and meaning-less story reveals the prodigious and prodigal quest of postmodernism for some larger meaning beyond contingently constructed cultures. Nevertheless, capitalising 'Uncertainty Principle' and speaking of a 'seething nothing' is philosophically bankrupt.⁶¹ First, metaphysically, if all began with nothing, there would still be nothing because 'from nothing, nothing comes' (*ex nihilo nihil fit*, as the ancients said). Nothing, which has no properties whatsoever, by definition and necessity has no causal properties or powers. We know, as John Locke said, 'by intuitive certainty, that bare nothing can no more produce any reality, than it can be equal to two right angles'.⁶² Therefore, it is ontologically paralysed, inert, and incapacitated. Invoking exotic terms from physics does nothing to solve the problem of the nullity and uselessness of nothingness.

Second: in speaking of the 'quantum vacuum or plenum or seething nothing,' Jencks flatly contradicts himself, since a *vacuum* (quantum or otherwise) is just the opposite of a *plenum* which means a fullness of something. Using these two antithetical concepts interchangeably makes no sense. Fullness cannot be the same thing as nothingness. Placing the exciting adjective 'seething' before the barren noun 'nothingness' is likewise unable to make nothing into something since there is no existing object available for the attribute 'seething' to attach itself. And 'seething nothingness' is just as incapable of bringing anything into being as just plain nothing.

Third: even if we grant (per impossible) that nothing produced everything without a cause or reason, nothing subsequent would have any reason for its existence. History – whether cosmic or human

⁵⁹ Christopher Jencks, *What is Postmodernism?*, 4th ed. (Lanham, Maryland: National Book Network, 1996), 72.

⁶⁰ I am here playing on Shakespeare's famous phrase, 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.'

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 4, ch. 10.

or subhuman – would utterly lack any meaning, purpose, value, or significance because its foundation would literally be in nothing. This is hardly a metanarrative fit to inspire beleaguered and confused postmoderns. We are simply thrown back to social constructions, contingencies, and chaos – the very things Jencks wants to transcend. His impersonal and arbitrary universe leaves persons adrift and rudderless.

If Christian theology is to hold its ground and advance in confronting the challenges of postmodernism, it must clearly and powerfully affirm the propositional truth of God-inspired Scripture and its rational know-ability. It must recognise and heed the demands and privileges of God's great cosmic story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Nothing less will meet the need of our postmodern hour.

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DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES (PART 1): CHURCH AND STATE, THE 1988 EDUCATION REFORM ACT, AND SPIRITUALITY IN SCHOOLS

William K. Kay and L. Philip Barnes

The Revd Dr William K. Kay is Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Theology and Education, Trinity College, Carmarthen, Wales, and Dr L. Philip Barnes is Lecturer in Religious Studies and Education, School of Education, University of Ulster at Coleraine, Northern Ireland.

Setting the Scene

The churches can legitimately lay claim to having initiated the entire education system within England and Wales. From 1808 onwards the churches founded schools, trained teachers and organised the daily curriculum of many millions of pupils.¹ Voluntary congregational giving largely funded the educational efforts of the churches although from 1833 onwards the state began to offer support for building costs and to insist that, where public money had been made available, inspection should follow.² Only in 1870 did the State, recognising that the churches were failing to keep pace with population growth, reluctantly step into the educational arena. From this date onwards, under Mr Gladstone's Liberal government, new Board Schools were founded, supported largely by money raised through local rates.³

¹ The British and Foreign School Society (Free Church) was formed in 1808 and the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (Anglican) was formed in 1811.

² The first grant was of £20,000 'for the erection of school houses for the education of the poorer classes in Great Britain', F. Smith, *A History of English Elementary Education 1760-1902* (London: University of London Press, 1931), 139. Annual grants followed, disbursed at the discretion of a special committee of the Privy Council.

³ There was a complex interplay between local and central government funding of education in the years that followed. Local funding through rates was subject to heated argument, particularly when some of this money was made available to church schools. Nonconformists, in the stratified society that was Victorian Britain, objected to the financing of Anglican schools. Board schools were so called because local boards ran them. They later became Provided schools and then County schools, but the point was that they were entirely funded out of the public purse. It should be noted that worship in school was allowed, even in Board schools, and that the teaching of religion was subject to a 'conscience clause' that allowed children to be withdrawn from it if their parents wanted.

Church and State collaboration

The story of education in the years that followed is one of the knitting together of church and Board schools into one integrated system administered through local education authorities. In 1944 the final convergence of these two types of schools into one system was achieved by Butler's reforming Act of that year.⁴ The Act ensured the continued funding of the church schools within the state sector and a common religious policy across both types of school.⁵ Contrary to uninformed opinion the Act did not specify that schools within England and Wales should be selective. It only stated that education should be according to the abilities and attitudes of pupils and, at the time, this was interpreted as an endorsement of a selective system that eventually placed approximately 20% of academically able pupils in grammar schools and the remaining 80% in secondary modern schools. There was meant to be transfer between the two types of schools but this rarely happened and the third category, the technical high school, was intended to offer technical education for selected pupils, but few of these were built and in practice, it is reasonable to think of children as being assessed at the age of 11 and then allocated irretrievably to one kind of education or another. Social destiny was largely determined by the selection process at 11 plus since the best jobs were available to pupils from grammar schools and to university graduates and, in the early post-war period, only about 6% of the relevant age group received a university education.

Religious education was provided slightly differently in the various categories of church school⁶ but, in essence, there was a commonality between the great majority of schools within the state system.⁷ Each local education authority, making use of statutory procedures laid down by the 1944 Education Act, drew up or

⁴ There had been bitter disagreement between Anglicans and Free Churchmen (especially in Wales) over the funding of church schools envisaged by the 1902 Education Act. But during the 1939-45 war inter-church rivalry died down and Butler was able to bring about a masterly compromise that brought all the church schools into the same system.

⁵ The religious input to school contained a daily act of morning worship (in County as well as church schools) and religious education according to an agreed syllabus. In this respect the position of religion in the British education is quite distinct from that found in the USA, and we have given an historical perspective to indicate why this was so.

⁶ There were 'aided' and 'controlled' schools. Aided schools were aided by the state and so received less money towards their upkeep. Controlled schools were controlled by the state and received more money. The differentiation of governance was through the proportion of church appointees on the governing bodies of these schools. Aided schools had a majority of church appointees. All Roman Catholic schools were aided (apart from two that filled in the forms incorrectly). Church of England schools were more likely to be controlled, though in some dioceses the policy was to go for aided status. There were also a small number of 'special agreement' schools left over from legislation in the 1930s.

⁷ The 'conscience clause' introduced in 1870 continued, and continues to the present day.

adopted an Agreed Syllabus. Because local representatives of religious bodies were on the syllabus-making committees, the idea was that the religious education offered in schools within a particular area would reflect local religious affiliations while avoiding the doctrinal distinctiveness of individual denominations.⁸ Thus, for instance, the history (but not the doctrine) of Methodism might be particularly represented in the syllabuses in use in the south-west of England.

Although the 1945 general election surprisingly produced a landslide victory in favour of the reforming Labour government, no one seriously questioned the apparently solid psychological findings in favour of selective education.⁹ Many of the Labour Cabinet ministers had themselves benefited from some form of selective secondary schooling and they saw no reason to question the system which had served them well. Economically the era was one where a mixed economy of public and private ownership seemed to offer the best guarantees of job security and commercial success.

Religious education in the 1950s, though carried out within the parameters laid down by agreed syllabuses, was largely seen as being confessional in aim, that is, intended to press the claims of Christ on the minds of young people. Britain was still thought of as a Christian country and when parents were surveyed many, even those who were not church attenders, still believed that it was important, often for moral reasons, that young people should receive Christian teaching at school.¹⁰

Secularisation, Social change and Schools

Of the many changes to Britain that occurred in the 1960s four are especially relevant to religious education. The first concerned the transformation of the educational system from a selective one into a comprehensive one. Complaints about the unfairness of selection had been made on a number of grounds: it was patchy since grammar school provision varied from one part of the country to another; it was inaccurate since some secondary modern pupils excelled academically; it was wasteful since it did not encourage the utilisation of a pool of talent within the secondary modern sector; it was socially divisive since middle-class pupils won the lion's share of grammar school places; it was not prevalent in progressive Sweden

⁸ Each syllabus was the work of four committees and each committee had one vote. Syllabuses were only agreed or adopted after receiving all four votes. One committee contained representatives of religious denominations, another representatives of the Church of England (except in Wales where the Anglican Church had no separate committee), a third teachers and the fourth the local authority. Committees made decisions by majority voting.

⁹ The now tarnished reputation of Sir Cyril Burt (1883-1971), London's eminent educational psychologist, lent credence to the accuracy and reliability of mental testing of children aged 11.

¹⁰ P.R. May and O.R. Johnston, 'Parental attitude to religious education in state schools', *Durham Research Review* 18 (1967), 127-38.

or the economically successful USA. So, from 1964 onwards, the Labour government under Harold Wilson began to merge secondary modern and grammar schools into large comprehensive schools that were open to all pupils over the age of 11 years within a defined catchment area.

The second change concerned the arrival of immigrants to Britain from the 1950s onwards. The immigrants brought with them traditional but non-Christian religions.¹¹ Consequently it was no longer possible to speak about non-Christian religions in the same bookish way or to defer teaching about them until the last year or two of secondary education. This change also brought with it a realisation that Britain was becoming plural. This notion of plurality is ill defined but the general idea is clear enough: whereas previously religious, social, cultural and moral values had been implicitly and often explicitly shared, there was now a diversity that conferred equal validity upon a variety of positions and, as a consequence, religious values were transferred from the public domain into the realm of private life.¹² Pluralisation, then, had the effect of relativising religion while tacitly strengthening the position of secular neutrality.

Thirdly, Goldman's research published in 1964 appeared to indicate that pupils in junior schools were unable to understand the Bible properly.¹³ The argument is simple though the interpretation of empirical data is more complicated and Goldman's conclusions have since been severely critiqued.¹⁴ In essence Goldman contended that the Bible requires an ability to think abstractly for its understanding and that children under the age of about 12 years are incapable of this. As a result the Bible must be largely removed from the primary school and deferred till secondary education.

Fourthly, church attendance in Britain declined in the post-war era. Along with this decline was a similar decline in belief in a personal

¹¹ For instance in the first ten months of 1961, 113,000 immigrants arrived from India, Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 168. Between 1964 and 1969 entries from Pakistan, India, Ceylon and the West Indies exceeded departures by 226,000, Social Trends (London: HMSO, 1967), No 8, chart 3.17.

¹² See B. Martin, and R. Pluck, *Young People's Beliefs* (London, General Synod Board of Education, 1977).

¹³ Ronald J. Goldman, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).

¹⁴ From a lengthy literature, the following is a sample: Kenneth G. Howkins, *Religious Thinking and Education: a critique of the research and conclusions of Dr R Goldman* (London: Tyndale Press, 1966); Nicola Slee, 'Cognitive developmental studies of religious thinking: a survey and discussion with special reference to post-Goldman research in the United Kingdom', in James W. Fowler, E.N. Nipkow and F.Schweitzer (eds.), *Stages of Faith and Religious Development: implications for church, education and society* (London: SCM, 1992), 130-46; William K. Kay and Leslie J. Francis and Harry M. Gibson, 'Attitude toward Christianity and the transition to formal operational thinking', *British Journal of Religious Education* 19 (1996), 45-55.

God. Survey figures demonstrate that as this religio-cultural change took place so also atheism increased.¹⁵ In brief, fewer people really cared about religious education in school. Most were at best lukewarm and even some evangelical Christians opposed the notion of morning assembly on the grounds that, where no believers were present in school to lead worship, what took place was organised hypocrisy and likely to inoculate pupils against real faith.

As a result of these combined factors, agreed syllabuses in the 1970s underwent extensive revision. In general many of them became slimmer and simply provided aims and objectives but left teachers free to use whatever classroom materials they thought suitable. In some cases local authorities produced bulky handbooks to accompany their syllabuses and the best of these handbooks were usually adopted by other local authorities, thus saving themselves the work.¹⁶ Other curriculum subjects were also adjusted though the mechanisms for making this happen were less specific and not legally defined. The most powerful influences upon curricula within secondary schools stemmed from the examination boards that were themselves influenced by the requirements of university entrance. There was therefore a drip-down effect from university entrance to A-level and then to O-level (now GCSE) and from there to the curriculum of 13 year-olds.

Religious education changed by stages and at different speeds in different parts of the country. The overt Christian aims gradually gave way to more general aims that stressed the importance of religion as a factor in understanding culture or in helping young people to find their own meaning in life. Religion was 'explored' and the importance of Christianity depreciated. Moreover, although non-Christian faiths had been delayed until the upper stages of secondary education, quite quickly, partly because of children from non-Christian backgrounds, non-Christian religions were introduced into the primary school where Christianity (if it had been banished after the Goldman era) was re-introduced but this time with a stress on phenomenological or descriptive approaches that were intended to be non-judgemental and almost invariably thematic.¹⁷

Church schools, however, continued to be numerically important, particularly in the primary sector. In 1995 there were, for example, 4,693 Anglican and 1,806 Roman Catholic primary schools together catering for 839,197 pupils. All in all about a third of all primary pupils in England and Wales are educated in church schools, a figure

¹⁵ William K. Kay, 'Belief in God in Great Britain 1945-1996: moving the scenery behind classroom RE', *British Journal of Religious Education* 20 (1997), 28-41.

¹⁶ The Hampshire handbook was widely used outside the county.

¹⁷ Schools Council, *Working Paper 36, Religious Education in Secondary Schools* (London: Evan/Methuen, 1971) was very influential in the promulgation of the phenomenological approach.

that indicates why the voice of the church in education, though often muted, is at least heard.¹⁸

The abolition of educational selection at the age of 11 produced vast comprehensive schools completely lacking in the pastoral care and academic monitoring that had been one of the features of smaller schools.¹⁹ It came as no surprise that comprehensive schools appeared to be unable to maintain the academic rigour that had characterised grammar schools at their best. Religious education, particularly the old style found in Grammar schools, where bright children added another 'O' level pass to their collection by examination questions on the gospels, began to disappear. The arrival of comprehensive schools coincided with numerous cries about falling educational standards, particularly from parents whose children might have hoped to have obtained a grammar school education.²⁰ Moreover, after 1979 when the Conservative Party gained power for what turned out to be 18 years of rule, connections were made between the poor performance of pupils in England and Wales and economic decline. Even if no direct causal link could be found between academic standards and Britain's poor economic performance, employers who found children leaving school after ten years of compulsory education and unable to calculate percentages or fractions were vocal about the difficulties of accepting such pupils for jobs in commerce or industry.²¹

How should educational standards be raised? As the Conservative Party moved to the right during its long period of ascendancy, the principles of the market economy were increasingly applied to areas that had previously been deemed off limits. The mixed economic policies that had held sway since 1945 were thrown overboard and competition on an open market was thought to be the best way of ensuring the survival and prosperity of the fittest and the removal of the weakest.²² In order to make the competition between schools for pupils more rational, schools were required to teach a national

¹⁸ Figures provided by the Department for Education and Employment and the Welsh Office for January 1995. The most important discussion of church schools in the post-war period was provided by *The Fourth R, The Durham Report on Religious Education* (London: National Society, 1970).

¹⁹ The Circular 10/65 (i.e. the 10th circular in 1965 of the Department of Education and Science) asked local authorities to submit plans for 'going comprehensive'.

²⁰ The Black Papers (that is, opposite to government White Papers) were published independently from 1969 onwards and contained sharp conservative and academic thinking on education. Authors looked at the philosophy of comprehensive schools, at relevant statistics and at the functioning comprehensive schools abroad and concluded that a selective system was inevitably better.

²¹ This was partly behind the Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College in 1976. See James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London: Collins, 1987).

²² See for instance David Lawton, 'Ideologies of education', in David Lawton and C. Chitty (eds.), *The National Curriculum, Bedford Way Papers 33* (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 1988); S. McClure, 'Parents and schools - opting in and opting out', in David Lawton (ed.), *The Education Reform Act: choice and control* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989).

curriculum. Again, the model that was employed was one that had been lifted from the commercial world. An efficient factory needs a production line and a quality assurance system; similarly, it was thought that a curriculum that was assessed and inspected, but delivered through schools that were competing with each other for pupils, would provide the necessary social engine to raise standards. Poor schools would go out of business as parents switched their children to better schools. Mediocre schools would feel the hot breath of a new breed of inspectors on their necks and be forced to respond to publicly reported criticisms with action plans designed by their governors.²³

The inspection of schools had long been carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who were 'the eyes and ears' of the government minister responsible for education. HMIs had high status but tended to be ignored by teachers and public alike: they had no power to enforce change. As part of the standards-raising agenda a new body, the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED), was brought into being during the Conservative period of power (in September 1992). The OfSTED inspectors were more rigorous and operated according to pre-set criteria related to the curriculum. Moreover, they were recruited from many walks of life in sufficient numbers to inspect every state maintained school every four years.

The major piece of legislation that crystallised this way thinking was the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA).

The 1988 Education Reform Act

Commentators are agreed that this Act is the most important piece of educational legislation in the second half of the twentieth century. The text of the Act runs to four parts, nine chapters, 238 sections and 12 schedules but only part 1 (sections 1-119) deals with education in maintained schools.

Despite its length and complexity the basic ideas behind the Act were relatively simple. After an important introductory statement (see below) it introduced a new nationally controlled curriculum and a new type of school free from local authority control. Only religious education, having been established by statute within the 1944 Act, had to be dealt with separately from other curriculum subjects. These, which until that time had not been directed by any national legislation whatever, were now quite closely specified. Altogether three of core subjects (mathematics, English and science - with a fourth, Welsh, in Wales) and six foundation subjects (history, geography, technology, music, art and physical education) were stipulated. These 10 subjects (11 in Wales) formed the National Curriculum. When religious education was added the total package was referred to as the 'basic curriculum' (see section 2.1 of the Act).

²³ Schedule 2 part 2 of the 1992 Education (Schools) Act requires governors to issue action plans for dealing with points made by inspectors.

The mechanism for producing agreed syllabuses is closely related to that which was set up by the 1944 Education Act but with significant differences to allow for the multi-faith or plural nature of British society. Non-Christian groups were specifically included as participants on the committees drawing up the new agreed syllabuses and arrangements for religious education were made more flexible to allow non-Christian groups to accept them. The control of worship within schools was also delegated to the conference (or Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, SACRE) that drew up the agreed syllabuses so that, instead of simply coming into existence to produce the syllabus, the SACREs had a continued existence and a monitorial role.²⁴

A new generation of agreed syllabuses came into being following the 1988 Act. One of the statutory bodies set up by the Act to give advice on the curriculum was the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) and during John Patten's reign as Secretary of State for Education (April, 1992 – July, 1994) two model syllabuses were produced, both of which were to be influential.²⁵ The most revolutionary of the syllabuses took a rather different view of the materials of religious education from that common at the time. It took the view that the data of religion belong to the religious communities themselves and that theological concepts should help to construct and classify religious materials. In other words, it allowed religion to present itself rather than allowing educationalists to seize religious materials or ideas and to shape them together into themes and topics that appeared to have educational validity. A third model syllabus, one that was thematic in style, was rejected by Mr Patten much to the outrage of religious educationalists who felt that thematic religious education had the advantage of allowing religions to be dealt with in an undifferentiated, and therefore non-discriminatory, way. Nevertheless recent empirical research suggests that thematic presentations of religious education, when mixed with non-thematic presentations, are confusing to children and, with hindsight, it is arguable that Patten was wiser than he knew.²⁶

The setting up of grant-maintained schools has been interpreted as a political attempt by the then Conservative government to weaken local authorities by preventing them creaming off public money that was earmarked to 'follow the child'. In theory, as parents made their choices between different kinds of schools, more and more parents would have chosen well financed grant-maintained schools and the budgets of local educational authorities would have diminished until

²⁴ Circular 3/89 pointed out that SACREs and agreed syllabus conferences were similar.

²⁵ See Terence Copley, *Teaching Religion: Fifty years of teaching religion in England and Wales* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1997), 178 f.

²⁶ D.L. Smith and William K. Kay, 'Religious terms and attitudes in the classroom (part 1): empirical evidence on how to avoid pupils' confusion', *British Journal of Religious Education* (in press).

Whitehall had complete control over the entire education system without the mediation of local authorities controlled by local politicians. Whether this interpretation of events is accurate is impossible to say without access to confidential documents.²⁷ But what is clear is that the Major government (1990–97) courted the church schools in the hope that they would *en bloc* leave the care of local authorities and thus, at a stroke, get rid of tiresome and purportedly the high-spending Labour-dominated fiefdoms.²⁸

This aspect of the ERA has been sidelined since the Labour victory of May 1997. Three reforms remain: central government determination of the curriculum, the modernisation and retention of religious education as a separate subject, and the pursuit of spiritual development in schools. It is to this third matter we now turn.

Spiritual Development in Education

*The child's spiritual development, and education towards spiritual maturity, is of greater importance now than ever before in the history of our civilisation.*²⁹

These words may have a surprisingly contemporary ring to them, though they were first written by Ronald Goldman in 1963. If the complete essay from which they are taken is read, however, it soon emerges that there are differences between Goldman's understanding of spirituality and that to be found in more recent educational literature. For Goldman, spiritual development is specifically religious development and this in turn is chiefly concerned with 'how the child grows in terms of his awareness of God'; the context makes clear that it is the Christian God which is meant.³⁰ His view is that spiritual education is equivalent to religious education of a broadly Christian confessional form. In this identification of spiritual education with Christian religious education, Goldman is clearly reflecting the aims and intention of the 1944 Education Act.³¹ Provisions within the Act for confessional religious education and for daily acts of worship were intended to 'contribute towards the spiritual ... development of the community'.³² In a similar vein, the 1988 Education Reform Act also requires

²⁷ Personal contact with the Inspectorate suggests, however, that it was so.

²⁸ Priscilla Chadwick, (1997), *Shifting Alliances: church and state in English Education* (London: Cassell, 1997) discusses the dilemmas faced by the churches when courted by the Conservative government.

²⁹ Ronald Goldman, 'Children's Spiritual Development', in *Studies in Education: First Years in School* (London: Evans Bros. for the University of London Institute of Education, 1963), 168.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

³¹ Copley, *Teaching Religion: Fifty years of teaching religion in England and Wales*, 15–42.

³² (London: HMSO, 1944), Preamble, Part 2, Section 7. The White Paper which preceded the Act, entitled *Educational Reconstruction* (1943), had spoken even more clearly by calling for education 'to revive the personal and spiritual values of the nation'.

schools to promote 'the spiritual ... development of pupils and of society'.³³ However, in the light of subsequent official pronouncements that are designed to give substance to the rather bald reference in the Act, it is clear that spiritual development is now more broadly and less religiously conceived.

If spiritual development is not a new theme in British post-war education,³⁴ it has certainly increased in prominence and importance over the last few decades.³⁵ There are a number of reasons for this. Renewed interest in spirituality in education undoubtedly reflects wider cultural interest in spirituality generally. Despite the continuing decline of institutional religion in Britain,³⁶ recent studies of the frequency and nature of religious experience suggest that such experiences are quite widespread among the population at large.³⁷ Moreover, the period since the end of the Second World War has been marked by a significant expansion in the number and range of religious groups and movements.³⁸ Within the context of religious education, interest in spiritual development indicates perceived weaknesses in the phenomenological approach to religious education (see Part 2 of this article). The accusation is made that phenomenological religious education deals only with the external, public phenomena of religious faith, in a strictly 'objective' manner, to the neglect of the human experiences and feelings (the 'subjective' side of religion) that give vitality and meaning to religion. Finally, interest in spiritual education has been politically driven. The last Conservative government and the present Labour government have both pursued policies that ensured spiritual development received a higher profile in education. Recognition of this raises the further question of why there is political support for a more rigorous and accountable approach to spiritual development than hitherto has been the case. A renewed focus on spiritual development is probably in part designed to assuage the voice of those critics, vocal since the eighties, who allege that religion is increasingly marginalised in British institutional life, particularly within the domain of education.³⁹ More important still in accounting

for political endorsements of spiritual development is the accumulating evidence of the positive effects of religion and spirituality both for individuals and for society in general. At a personal level, there is a close relationship between spiritual maturity and perceptions of personal well being, expressed in terms of mental health, self-fulfilment, perceived contentment and happiness. At a social level, the spiritually mature are more likely to make a positive contribution to the community, and less likely to engage in anti-social and criminal activities.⁴⁰ Quite simply, spiritually mature individuals make better citizens, and this is an end that is in any government's interests to promote and further.

Spiritual Development: The Official Sources

Early in 1993 the National Curriculum Council drew up and circulated a discussion paper entitled *Moral and Spiritual Education*. Two years later the same document was republished by The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and was used as the basis for a major conference on spiritual and moral aspects of the curriculum in January 1996.⁴¹ One outcome of the conference was a further discussion paper entitled, *Education for Adult Life: the spiritual and moral development of young people* (SCAA Discussion Papers: No. 6), that summarised its deliberations.⁴² Another outcome was the establishment of The National Forum for Values in Education and the Community. This brought together prominent educationalists, politicians, community leaders, and representatives from the different religions. A consultation exercise was undertaken in order to take account of public opinion on the role of schools in the promotion of spiritual and moral values; its results were published in December 1996.⁴³ These initiatives, coupled with the announcement by the Office for Standards in Education that schools' provisions for spiritual development would be inspected, served to underline the importance government attached to the spiritual and moral dimensions of human development.⁴⁴

The original NCC/SCAA Discussion Paper on *Spiritual and Moral Development* has been widely influential. As the first official expansion of the references to spiritual development in the 1988 Education Reform Act it has naturally served as a focus for commentary and debate.⁴⁵ At the outset it maintains that '[t]he

³³ (London: HMSO, 1988), Chapter 40. 1.

³⁴ Peter Gilliat, 'Spiritual education and public policy 1944-1994', in Ron Best (ed.), *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child* (London: Cassell, 1996).

³⁵ The contemporary debate on spirituality is usually dated from the references to spirituality in HMI Report, *Curriculum 11-16* (London: HMSO, 1977) and its *Supplement* (London: HMSO, 1977). An important study from the same period that places spirituality at the heart of religious education is Raymond Holley, *Religious Education and Religious Understanding* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

³⁶ R. Gill, C.K. Hadaway, P.L. Marler, 'Is religious belief declining in Britain?' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 37 (1998), 507-16

³⁷ David Hay, *Religious Experience Today* (London: Mowbray, 1990).

³⁸ Grace Davie, *Believing without Belonging: Religion in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

³⁹ A complaint echoed in the debates that preceded the 1988 Education Reform Act, see J. Burn and C. Hart, *The Crisis in Religious Education* (London: Educational Research Trust, 1988); Colin Alves, 'Just a Matter of Words? The Religious Debate in the House of Lords', *British Journal of Religious Education* 13 (1991), 168-74.

⁴⁰ John Gartner, 'Religious Commitment, Mental Health, and Prosocial Behaviour: A Review of the Empirical Literature', in Edward P. Shafranske (ed.), *Religion and the Clinical Practice of Psychology* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 1996), 187-214.

⁴¹ *Discussion paper No. 3* (London: SCAA, 1995).

⁴² (London: SCAA, 1996).

⁴³ *Findings of the Consultation on Values in Education and the Community* (London: SCAA, 1996).

⁴⁴ *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools* (London: HMSO, 1993), 12; *Guidance on the Inspection of Secondary Schools* (London: HMSO, OFSTED, 1995).

⁴⁵ Ron Best, *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*.

potential for spiritual development is open to everyone and is not confined to the development of religious beliefs or conversion to a particular faith'.⁴⁶ Spirituality is given a broad and wide-ranging definition. The spiritual

*needs to be seen as applying to something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and/or expressed through everyday language. It has to do with the universal search for individual identity – with our responses to challenging experiences, such as death, suffering, beauty, and encounters with good and evil. It is to do with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live.*⁴⁷

Beliefs, a sense of awe, feelings of transcendence, the search for meaning and purpose, self-knowledge, relationships, creativity along with feelings and emotions are then listed as aspects of spiritual education. While the document acknowledges the central role to be played by religious education and collective worship in the promotion of spiritual education, it also stresses that all subjects of the curriculum should be involved.

The framers of the NCC/SCAA Paper clearly wanted to distinguish spiritual development from religious development. Spirituality is regarded as something wider than religion, the former focusing on experience, creative awareness and human values, the latter on formal or institutional patterns of religious belief and practice. The distinction is a familiar one.⁴⁸ The linking of morality with spirituality, however, is a more interesting feature, for it seems to challenge the assumption, influential since the late 1960s, that moral education should be advanced on an entirely secular and ostensibly rational foundation.⁴⁹ *Moral and Spiritual Development* effects a kind of reconciliation between morality and religion in education by placing both within a wider framework of human values which it is the school's duty both to uphold and to exhibit.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Spiritual and Moral Development*, 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ William Hague, *Evolving Spirituality* (Alberta: University of Alberta, 1995), 15–16. The origins of this distinction within religious education (though they did not quite frame it in this way) can be traced to Harold Loukes, *Teenage Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1961), *idem.*, *New Ground in Christian Education* (London: SCM Press, 1965); and Violet Madge, *Children in Search of Meaning* (London: SCM Press, 1965).

⁴⁹ The Schools Council Project in Moral Education under the Directorship of Peter McPhail and the Farmington Trust Project on Moral Education are two clear examples; Peter McPhail, J.R. Ungeod-Thomas and Hilary Chapman, *Moral education in the secondary school* (London: Longman, 1972); John Wilson, Norman Williams, Barry Sugarman, *Introduction to moral education* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

⁵⁰ For an interesting and provocative discussion of SCAA's strategy to advance moral and spiritual values in schools see Trevor Cooling, *Slaying the Dragon of Moral Relativism* (Sydney: Aquila Press, 1998).

This newly forged connection between moral education and spiritual development is probably best interpreted as an attempt to harness and utilise spiritual energies for socially positive (political/moral?) ends.⁵¹ There are merits to this, for example, recognition is given to the contribution of religion to personal and civic values, but there are also dangers. Spirituality could potentially be pressed into the service of some particular, politically endorsed social and economic agenda that has little to do with 'good citizenship' and even less to do with religion or spirituality.⁵² This is by no means impossible, given SCAA's failure to specify any substantive content for spiritual education and its identification of spirituality with the 'inner life'. Such an identification may serve to reinforce a subjective and reductionist reading of religion. It may also perpetuate the Enlightenment dichotomy between facts and values, objectivity and subjectivity, with religion consigned to the latter category in each case. Spirituality is effectively evacuated of meaning and divorced from the public domain of knowledge.⁵³

Interpretations of Spiritual Development in Education

The heightened profile of spiritual development has met with the approval of those who see the introduction of spiritual education as a needed antidote to secularism within the school system⁵⁴ and the disapproval of others, such as John White, who feel that the pursuit of spiritual values within state-maintained schools with a mixed religious and secular constituency is inappropriate. White also voices the criticism that the term 'spiritual' does not carry 'any clear meaning',⁵⁵ a not uncommon complaint, compounded somewhat by the fact that no clear official guidance has been given about how spiritual development is to be advanced and achieved in schools.

The importance attached to spirituality in recent official literature coupled with perceived ambiguity regarding its content in these same sources has naturally stimulated a debate on the proper interpretation and purpose of spiritual development in education. This has resulted in a rich variety of proposals and positions.

⁵¹ This is the interpretation usually placed upon Nicholas Tate's speech to the SCAA Conference 'Education for Adult Life' (1996); see Clive Erricker, Jane Erricker, Danny Sullivan, Cathy Ota and Mandy Fletcher, *The Education of the Whole Child* (London: Cassell, 1997), 23–27.

⁵² John Hull, 'The ambiguity of spiritual values' in J. Mark Halstead and Monica Taylor (eds.), *Values in Education and Educational Values* (London: Falmer Press, 1995), 33–44, and *idem.*, *Utopian Whispers: Moral, Spiritual and Religious Values in Schools* (Norwich: RMEP, 1998), 63–66; Nigel Blake, 'Against Spiritual Education', *Oxford Review of Education* 22 (1996), 443–56.

⁵³ Sampson, P. & Samuel, V. & Sugden, C. (eds) (1994) *Faith and Modernity* (Oxford, Regnum Books).

⁵⁴ Brenda Watson, *The Effective Teaching of Religious Education* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), 24–36, and 72–87.

⁵⁵ John White, 'Instead of OFSTED: a critical discussion of OFSTED on 'Spiritual, Moral Social and Cultural Development'', *Cambridge Journal of Education* 24 (1994), 369–77.

Some proposals stress the religious nature or potentially religious nature of spiritual development,⁵⁶ others, while referring to religion, emphasise the 'humanistic' nature of spiritual values,⁵⁷ and still others advance an entirely secular interpretation.⁵⁸ A more religiously neutral taxonomy of interpretations could distinguish between *capability-orientated approaches* that focus on the shared human dimension of spirituality rather than on particular traditions of belief and practice;⁵⁹ *knowledge-orientated approaches* that focus on the intellectual and cognitive domain;⁶⁰ and *response-orientated approaches* that attend to the particular and different responses people make to the spiritual dimension of life.⁶¹ The first category is broadly concerned with spiritual experience, the second with spiritual beliefs and the third with spiritual choices; thus corresponding to the affective, cognitive and volitional or conative aspects of the human personality. A helpful understanding of spiritual development has recently been outlined by David Smith.⁶² He identifies four 'windows which open out onto spirituality': spiritual capacities, spiritual experiences, spiritual understanding and spiritual responses. Perceptively, Smith remarks that '[p]eople's own spiritual commitments will influence what views of spiritual development they will find most acceptable'.⁶³ This in turn suggests that assessments of the relative worth of different interpretations of spiritual development will involve wider educational, religious and philosophical issues: there is no Archimedean point from which to judge contrasting or rival positions.

A number of writers have argued that spirituality provides the foundation for a broadly progressive, holistic education that focuses upon the child and his or her creative powers (over against a traditional knowledge based education)⁶⁴ Spiritual intuition is

⁵⁶ David G. Kibble, 'Spiritual development, spiritual experience and spiritual education', in Best, *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*, 64-74.

⁵⁷ Michael Grimmitt, *Religious Education and Human Development* (Great Wakering: McCrimmon, 1987), 121-29.

⁵⁸ Mike Newby, 'Towards a secular concept of spiritual maturity', in Best, *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*, 93-107, *idem.*, 'Spiritual development and Love of the World', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 1 (1996), 44-51.

⁵⁹ E.g. Brian V. Hill, "'Spiritual Development' in the Education Reform Act: A Source of Acrimony, Apathy or Accord?' *British Journal of Educational Studies* 37 (1989), 169-82.

⁶⁰ E.g. David Carr, 'Towards a Distinctive Conception of Spiritual Education', *Oxford Review of Education* 21 (1995), 83-98; *idem.*, 'Rival conceptions of Spiritual Education', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 30 (1996), 159-78.

⁶¹ David Carr's work, this time drawing attention to his focus upon distinctively spiritual virtues.

⁶² David Smith, *Making sense of Spiritual Development* (Nottingham: Stapleford House, 1999).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁶⁴ Clive Erricker, *et. al.*, *The Education of the Whole Child*; John G. Priestley, 'Towards Finding the Hidden Curriculum: A Consideration of the Spiritual Dimension of Experience in Curriculum Planning', *British*

believed to lie at the heart of not just religious commitment but of all authentic moral, aesthetic and educational commitments.⁶⁵ In support of this position John Priestley quotes approvingly Alfred North Whitehead's remark that 'the essence of education is that it be religious'.⁶⁶ Moreover, these same writers presume spirituality to possess an impartial and neutral quality denied to the different religions. Accordingly, it provides a vantage point from which the different religions can be assessed and judged.⁶⁷ How well does this or that religious tradition expedite spiritual sensibility? This interpretation of spirituality has obvious attractions to some professional religious educators who are anxious to avoid the charge of religious indoctrination or confessionalism, while simultaneously wanting to present a positive view of religion in the classroom. Typically the different religions are (controversially, and in our opinion, illegitimately) interpreted as diverse cultural and personal responses to the same spiritual object.⁶⁸ Such a conclusion, however, is notoriously difficult to maintain in the face of the contrary doctrinal claims advanced by the religions on the basis of both experience and (claims to) revelation.⁶⁹

A worrying trend in some recent writings is the way in which spiritual experience is treated as an end in itself – what could be called its self-referential or self-reflexive character. Spiritual experience is valued for the satisfaction and pleasure that it provides for its subject, rather than for any insight it might reveal into human nature or the ultimate character of reality.⁷⁰ The question of whether spiritual experiences carry deeper metaphysical import is conveniently ignored, and as a result spirituality is effectively evacuated of cognitive significance and its educational importance diminished. Occasionally this refusal to consider deeper religious and philosophical issues is prompted by the fear that controversy will be aroused. The tacit assumption is that controversial religious matters are best ignored in the classroom. A similar attitude lies behind much contemporary religious education's refusal to engage pupils in the quest for religious truth and the way in which judgements of truth or untruth in this domain are to be assessed and evaluated.

Journal of Religious Education 7 (1985), 112-119; David Hay and Rebecca Nye, *The Spirit of the Child* (London: HarperCollins, 1998). A devastating critique of this position is provided by Andrew Wright in *Spiritual Pedagogy* (Abingdon: Culham College Institute, 1998).

⁶⁵ Derek Webster, 'Spiritual Growth in Religious Education' in *Aspects of Education* 28 (1982), 85-95; David Starkings (ed.), *Religion and the Arts in Education: Dimensions of Spirituality* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

⁶⁶ John G. Priestley, 'Whitehead Revisited - Religion and Education: An Organic Whole', in Brenda Watson (ed.), *Priorities in Religious Education* (London: Falmer Press, 1992), 27.

⁶⁷ Brenda Lealman, 'Grottoes, Ghettos and City of Glass: Conversations about Spirituality', *British Journal of Religious Education* 8 (1986), 65-71.

⁶⁸ L. Philip Barnes, 'Relativism, Ineffability, and the Appeal to Experience: A Reply to the Myth Makers', *Modern Theology* 7 (1990), 101-114.

⁶⁹ Keith E. Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge, 1999), 65-80.

⁷⁰ Cf. Adrian Thatcher accuses OFSTED's approach to spiritual development (see notes 41 and 42) of precisely this error in 'Policing the sublime: a wholly (holy?) ironic approach to the spiritual development of children', in

Given the different interpretations of spirituality and spiritual development that obtain in our (post-) modern plural societies it is unlikely that any common definition or understanding will emerge upon which education can build.⁷¹ Against this background the challenge for educators is to provide a workable account of what it means both to regard all pupils as spiritual (and therefore to be capable of *spiritual* development) and to grow spiritually (and thus *develop* spiritually), while at the same time exposing pupils to the diversity of spiritual beliefs and practices in such a way that they recognise the seriousness and the contested nature of the issues.

Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis (eds), *Christian Theology and Religious Education: connections and contradictions*, London: SPCK, 1996), 117-39.

⁷¹ Josephine M. Cairns, 'Placing Value on consensus: an elusive goal', *The Curriculum Journal* 9 (1998), 23-39.

DR D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES: AN INTRODUCTION

D. Eryl Davies

Dr Eryl Davies is Principal of the Evangelical Theological College of Wales. A well-known writer and speaker on evangelical themes, most notably the nature of heaven and hell, he here presents an introductory portrait of perhaps the most significant British evangelical leader of the twentieth century, Dr D. Martyn Lloyd Jones. Dr Davies is singularly well placed to write on this subject, being intimately acquainted with Lloyd Jones' writings and work, as well as having known 'the Doctor' as a personal friend and mentor.

After achieving outstanding results, a young medical student in Bartholomew's Hospital, London, was promoted quickly in 1923 to the position of chief clinical assistant to Sir Thomas Horder, the king's physician. This high-flying medic was the Welsh speaking D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981). By the age of 25, he had amassed a string of medical undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, including MRCS, LRCP and MRCP. When only 23 he had earned the London MD, a real medical doctorate, and he was affectionately referred to as 'the Doctor' for the rest of his life. A brilliant thinker with exceptional skills of analysis, logic and oratory, Lloyd-Jones (abbreviated to ML-J) was assured of a prominent medical career.

Although he was an active member of a Welsh Presbyterian Church in London, his profession of Christianity was nominal until his early twenties. At that stage he was deeply aware of his sin and guilt before the holy God, he was converted and given a stronger sense of call to the Christian ministry. For about four years prior to his conversion, ML-J had known a measure of constraint and conviction concerning his own future place in the ministry, now the call became irresistible. Major contributory factors included his growing realisation and experience of the love of God in Christ, the fact he was 'a debtor' responsible for preaching the gospel (Rom. 1:14) and this was related partly to the spiritual needs of his patients. Despite their wealth and fame, many of them were dying and ML-J knew that their greatest need was the gospel.

His first pastorate was a Presbyterian' church in Aberavon, Port Talbot, in South Wales where he exercised a powerful preaching ministry from February 1927 to the summer of 1938. Facing a large building debt, the Port Talbot church was spiritually impoverished

¹ Alternatively called Calvinistic Methodist. This local church was a mission church under the supervision of the denomination's Forward Movement.

and majored on a social gospel. This small church of 93 members was transformed by 'the Doctor's' biblical and Christ-centred preaching. Remarkable church growth took place as many were converted. ML-J himself reports, '... the church was filled from the very first. There were amazing conversions. In my 11½ years the church grew to 530 members and the attendance ran about 850.'² In other areas of Wales thousands flocked to hear him preach.

From 1938–43 ML-J was an assistant to the Revd Dr Campbell Morgan in Westminster Chapel, London, and then succeeded him as minister in 1943. His influential London ministry continued until March 1968 when he underwent major surgery then formally retired. Until 1980 he exercised a helpful itinerant preaching ministry and prepared some of his material such as Romans and Ephesians for publication. ML-J died on 1 March, St David's Day, 1981 in London. His anticipation of the glories of heaven was typical of the man who knew the Word of God and the God of the Word so profoundly and experimentally. A couple of days before his death, he wrote on a scrap of paper for the benefit of his family, 'Do not pray for healing. Do not hold me back from the glory.'³

The major authorised biography of ML-J is provided by Iain H. Murray in two volumes, published in 1982 and 1990. This biographer knew ML-J well and maintained regular contact with him over the years. Murray's biography of ML-J is valuable for several reasons. First, it is well written and abundantly resourced with primary data and interviews with ML-J, his family and many who knew him closely. Second, the value of the biography is enhanced by placing the ministry of his subject in the wider religious context of the period. Third, it was the first, and still is the only, major biography of ML-J and was completed within nine years of his death.

I am aware that some academics criticise this two-volume biography because it lacks penetrating, critical evaluation of ML-J's theology and work. There are five observations which are pertinent concerning this criticism. First of all, as ML-J has been grossly misunderstood and, by some, misrepresented, it is a pleasure to have a biographer who is sympathetic to his theological position and aims. Second, Murray respected ML-J's wish in providing a biography that is substantial both in content and length with 'ample materials from which the reader could arrive at his own assessments'.⁴ And that is good scholarship! Third, agreeing that the man 'cannot be understood apart from his message', Murray endeavours to 'bring forward' the 'big message' of ML-J 'in its God-centredness, in its features which put him in the succession of Calvin, the Puritans, Whitefield, the Calvinistic Methodists and Spurgeon'.⁵ This point is important in assessing the value of the

² *Christianity Today* (8 February 1980), 28.

³ Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The Fight of Faith 1939-1981*, Vol. 2, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1990), 747.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

biography. Fourth, while inevitably selective, the biographer assures us that he has included more rather than less of the extensive material available to him.⁶ Related to this is the fact that ML-J's sermons, addresses and Bible study material continue to be published so that this may facilitate over the next decade a more comprehensive analysis and evaluation of his theology. Fifth, let no-one imagine that Murray endorsed all the views or actions of ML-J and this is illustrated, for example, with regard to the charismata, baptism with the Spirit and secession, but this biography was not the platform for articulating his own views over against those of ML-J. I urge *Themelios* readers to engage with this valuable and fascinating biography of ML-J.

Another earlier and smaller (60 pages) outline of ML-J's life and work was provided by his grandson, Christopher Catherwood, in 1984.⁷ While helpful, it is weak in terms of theological assessment, thoroughness and even in understanding his grandfather's approach to some crucial issues.⁸ Allow me to refer to a useful and necessary contribution provided by Hywel R. Jones in 1991 on the neglected and controversial subject of 'the Doctor and the British Evangelical Council' in *Unity in Truth*.⁹ This is required reading for those who want to understand post-1966 developments from the perspective of ML-J. Hopefully, the centenary of ML-J's birth in December 1999 will stimulate additional writing on this remarkable man as well as further evaluation of his contribution and significance.

Reading

One cannot appreciate ML-J's theological development without understanding his challenging approach to reading and there are three aspects I want to underline. Firstly, he read privately the whole Bible each year and followed the practice until his death. This was a priority for ML-J and remains a profound challenge and example to us today. Secondly, ML-J read widely, including many major theological volumes of varying theological shades. For example, while his children played on the beach during a summer holiday in the late 1920s, ML-J was only a few yards away but engrossed in Emil Brunner's *The Divine Imperative*.¹⁰ He then read Karl Barth's writings concluding, to the surprise of many contemporaries, that Barthian theology was a serious compromise of the Reformed Faith.¹¹ From 1928 he began to read the Bampton and Gifford Lectures annually and he maintained his habit of reading major medical

⁶ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁷ C. Catherwood, *Five Evangelical Leaders*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984), see 51–109.

⁸ *Ibid.*, see, e.g., issues related to 1966 on 83–89.

⁹ Evangelical Press, edited by H.R. Jones; see 7–19.

¹⁰ Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The First Forty Years 1899-1939*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), 254.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 291.

journals. He also read widely on a Bible book before commencing a new series of expository sermons or Bible studies. Before embarking on *Romans*,¹² for example, he declares that he 'had read, not only the well known commentaries, but also many sermons and addresses on it'.¹³

Third, he believed 'that the business of reading is to make one *think*, to stimulate'¹⁴ and one should not accept uncritically the contents of any book except, of course, the Bible. When, for example, in 1931, he read Kenneth E. Kirk's *The Vision of God*¹⁵ he reports that it 'had a great effect on me ... I found that book absolutely seminal. It gave me a lot of background. It made me think'.¹⁶ Years later he remarked, 'I am convinced a pastor must nourish his mind, it cannot be too well stocked ... You will always find that the men whom God has used signally have been those who have studied most, known their Scriptures best, and given time to preparation.'¹⁷

Theological development

Being an avid and wide reader contributed significantly to ML-J's theological development and this can be illustrated further in identifying specific theological influences upon him. There was clearly from his early years the influence of his denomination, the Calvinistic Methodist Church of Wales, particularly its theology and history. His awareness of the glory of God came gradually in his early teens, especially in 1913 while reading a small booklet describing the ministry of Howell Harris, a leading figure in the eighteenth-century Welsh revival. Four years later in reading the Scriptures he embraced the truth of predestination and taught it vigorously to friends and relatives.¹⁸ Reading the history of his denomination with its countless regional, local as well as national revivals stimulated ML-J's life-long interest not only in church history and historical theology but also in revival.

Alongside his on-going reading of this history, he 'discovered' the writings of Richard Baxter in 1925 then other Puritans like John Owen. It was 'sheer enjoyment' for him also to read Luke Tyerman's two-volume *Life and Times of George Whitefield*. In 1929 he succeeded in purchasing second-hand copies of the two-volume 1834 edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. 'I devoured these volumes,' he explains, 'and literally just read and read them. It is certainly true that they helped me more than anything else.'¹⁹

¹² He began this exposition in October 1955 and ended it abruptly with his illness in 1968.

¹³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 6. The New Man* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1972), xi.

¹⁴ Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The First Forty Years 1899-1939*, 157.

¹⁵ Published in 1931 as the 1928 *Bampton Lectures*.

¹⁶ Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The First Forty Years 1899-1939*, 254.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 254.

Only a year earlier ML-J was advised to read James Denney's *The Death of Christ* (1903) and P.T. Forsyth's *The Cruciality of the Cross* (1909), the latter 'proved of especial help at this stage'²⁰ in his theological development, despite weaknesses in Forsyth's doctrine of Scripture. During the war years, 1939-45, the main authors he read were B.B. Warfield (10 volumes), Charles Hodge and J.C. Ryle. Warfield's writings, as Iain Murray also observes, gave ML-J 'new insight into the necessity for doctrinal teaching'²¹ and apologetics.

These various theological influences contributed to confirming ML-J as a conservative evangelical, an unashamed and robust Calvinist and a weighty theologian. It is impossible to understand ML-J apart from his Reformed theology and his influence in this respect on the growing Inter-Varsity Fellowship (IVF) and International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) movements was immense. One example is the Welsh IVF Conference near Aberystwyth in 1951 in which he gave three addresses on 'The Sovereignty of God'. After providing a careful definition of the title, he explained why the subject was unpopular at that time. He suggested two major reasons, namely, the fact that 'all doctrine is at a discount' and this doctrine 'particularly is disliked because of its implications to man'. A second reason is that 'human philosophy militates against this doctrine'.²² ML-J also explained why the subject received such little support among evangelicals. The answer is that 'in their anxiety to present salvation in terms of the person and work of Christ', they had 'become unbalanced and tended to forget God the Father. There was a danger of "Jesusology". The worship of God as three Persons must always be remembered.'²³ Emphasising the relevance of divine sovereignty, ML-J argued in four ways:

- 'There is no answer to the problem of history' or world affairs, 'apart from the sovereignty of God'.
- It is also 'necessary for the church' and will remove 'the disease of pessimism' as Christians face the future.
- The subject is essential in order to put aside subjectivism and 'return to the knowledge of the sovereign God' and provide virility as well as stability in the Christian life.
- 'You can have no doctrine if this is not right' as it is 'the foundation doctrine of all Protestant and Reformed theology'.²⁴

By the late 1930s his growing theological stature and compelling preaching gifts made ML-J a likely candidate for academic theological teaching. As early as 1933 he gave a series of lectures on preaching and pastoral work in his denomination's theological college in Bala, North Wales, and there was a widespread conviction that he should

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 286.

²² Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones Vol. 2*, 239.

²³ *Ibid.*, 239-40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 239-40.

have been appointed as Professor in this college in 1938. ML-J was invited to become Principal of London Bible College when it opened in 1943 but he declined the invitation.²⁵ He lectured and preached in numerous other colleges over the years including Wheaton College and Westminster Theological Seminary. In the former he delivered a series of addresses in 1947 on Apologetics, subsequently published as *Truth Unchanged, Unchanging*.²⁶ Along with others, ML-J was instrumental in establishing Tyndale House, Cambridge, for biblical research and he gave a considerable amount of time in the early 1950s to strengthening the doctrinal position of the IVF. But his vision for a theological change extended to the church at large and, as one way of achieving this, he encouraged publishing companies to make available old and new books of quality to the Christian public.

Preacher

But it was as a preacher, not as a lecturer or theologian, that ML-J was better known. 'A powerful evangelist' was how the *British Weekly*²⁷ described ML-J whereas Emil Brunner claimed he was 'the greatest preacher in Christendom'.²⁸ For Carl Henry, ML-J was 'one of Britain's great evangelical churchmen', 'a dedicated and disciplined expository preacher'.²⁹ According to ML-J, because the *kerygma* and *didache* need to be declared and declared authoritatively to both sinners and saints, preaching is 'the primary task of the Church'³⁰ and there is 'no substitute for it'. 'And the work of preaching', he emphasises, 'is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.' To this he adds, 'the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is true preaching; and ... it is obviously the greatest need of the world also'.³¹

But what is true preaching? Essentially it is 'the delivery of a message from God'³² to the congregation in which the preacher is an 'ambassador for Christ' and 'the mouthpiece of God and of Christ'. The idea that the preacher should entertain and amuse the congregation was anathema to ML-J. 'He is there ... to do something for these people; he is there to produce results of various kinds, he is there to influence people ... his preaching is meant to affect the whole person at the very centre of life.'³³

²⁵ See, e.g. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones* Vol. 2, 92.

²⁶ Published in the UK in 1951 by James Clarke and reprinted by Bryntirion Press in 1989.

²⁷ Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones* Vol. 2, back cover.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 329.

²⁹ *Christianity Today*, xxiv.3. (8 February 1980), 27.

³⁰ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1971), 26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³² *Ibid.*, 53.

³³ *Ibid.*, 53.

The act of preaching, too, received close attention from ML-J. Authentic preaching involves 'the whole personality of the preacher',³⁴ 'a sense of authority and control over the congregation'.³⁵ The element of freedom and control by the Holy Spirit is of the very essence of this act of preaching as well as interaction and interplay between preacher and congregation.³⁶ Seriousness, liveliness, zeal, and a sense of concern, warmth, urgency³⁷ and the element of pathos are also essential in preaching. Interestingly, ML-J felt that this is one aspect which was 'most lacking'³⁸ in his own preaching ministry. This pathos arises from a love for the people and the realisation of that God has done for us in Christ. He laments: 'We do not know what it is to be carried away, we no longer know what it is to be moved profoundly'.³⁹

Another vital feature of preaching is power. 'True preaching, after all,' he insists, 'is God acting. It is not just a man uttering words: it is God using him... He is under the influence of the Holy Spirit... (1 Thess. 1:5).'⁴⁰ His more famous definitions of preaching are: 'Logic on fire! Eloquent reason! ... theology on fire ... theology coming through a man who is on fire.'⁴¹ And ML-J warns that it is possible to be knowledgeable and thorough in sermon preparation yet 'without the unction of the Holy Spirit you will have no power and your preaching will not be effective'.⁴² However, this power 'is entirely the gift of God'.⁴³ When God empowers, the preacher himself is conscious of the fact as well as the congregation. In fact, hearers 'sense it at once ... they are gripped, they become serious, they are convicted, they are moved, they are humbled. Some are convicted of sin ... and begin to delight in the things of God'.⁴⁴ In this respect the preacher's responsibility is to seek the Lord. 'Seek Him always ... expect Him ... seek this power'.⁴⁵ ML-J's biblical conviction regarding the necessity of the Spirit's power to accompany the preaching of the Word was strengthened by his extensive knowledge of earlier generations of preachers like the Protestant Reformers, the Puritans, eighteenth-century men like George Whitefield, John Wesley, Daniel Rowlands, Howell Harris, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd and many others who knew in a glorious way this divine empowering in their ministries.⁴⁶

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 89-92.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 319.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 324.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 324-25.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁴⁶ See, e.g. *ibid.*, 315-24.

Pneumatology

ML-J's pneumatology is Reformed, stimulating and, at least in two areas, controversial. The Reformed character of his pneumatology is illustrated especially with regard to the necessity, priority and nature of regeneration. The total depravity and total inability of all sinners renders regeneration necessary if they are to be made alive to God. This supernatural, inward and miraculous work of the Holy Spirit is prior to any human response to the gospel. And this emphasis upon the rebirth should be shared, ML-J argues, by all evangelicals. 'The evangelical is a man who emphasises the rebirth: a new beginning, born of the Spirit, new life in Christ, and partakers of the divine nature'.⁴⁷ ML-J proceeds to warn us that 'as men cease to be evangelical, they put less and less emphasis upon regeneration, and they tend to put more and more upon the activity of the human will and the decision of the individual person. But the evangelical sees everything in terms of regeneration, the action of God.' This is a challenging point. In turning to the more controversial aspects of ML-J's pneumatology, it is helpful to place his teaching within the religious and academic context of the period.

A number of academics have debated the subject of Spirit-baptism in considerable depth since James Dunn's seminal work, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, was published in 1970. This was the first academic work in the United Kingdom to interact with Pentecostal and charismatic teachings. Geoffrey Lampe's *God as Spirit* in 1977 was a significant liberal contribution that pointed in the area of Unitarianism. Thomas Smail wrote extensively in *Theological Renewal* journal between 1975 and 1983. His 1988 book, *The Giving Gift*, represented his developed pneumatology and re-evaluation of earlier charismatic teaching. Over recent years studies in Luke-Acts have been extensive and fruitful with useful contributions from scholars like Max Turner,⁴⁸ R.P. Menzies⁴⁹ and Gordon Fee.⁵⁰ There is evidence to suggest that ML-J was at least aware of these early developments in academic pneumatology. All that he taught and wrote on the subject, however, including Spirit-baptism and the *charismata*, was through sermons and Bible studies at Westminster Chapel, London.

Within the general religious context, one needs to note the emergence of the charismatic movement in the early sixties with its emphasis on post-conversion Spirit-Baptism and *charismata*. Many charismatics, early in the 1970s, gradually tended to reject the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism evidenced by tongues and

⁴⁷ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 332.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now, and Power From On High*, (Paternoster Press, 1996).

⁴⁹ R.P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*, (Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

⁵⁰ Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, (Hendrickson, 1994).

preferred to understand it as being initiatory for all Christians. But was ML-J a charismatic or a Pentecostal? The answer is a negative one because his views were formulated and taught several years before the charismatic movement emerged. He also insisted that 'the need for prophets [and apostles] ends once we have the Canon of the New Testament. We no longer need direct revelations of truth; the truth is in the Bible.'⁵¹ Nor was ML-J a Pentecostal for he rejected the idea of Spirit-baptism as a 'second-blessing' or as evidenced by tongues. For ML-J, the Holy Spirit can come in power upon a preacher or individual Christian or church several, or even many, times and without tongues or other extra-ordinary gifts. Although charismatics and Pentecostals have both claimed him as an advocate of their views, a careful reading of ML-J establishes that they have misunderstood him.

In looking briefly here at his doctrine of Spirit-baptism, one needs to appreciate there is development in his understanding of the subject and, at times, some ambiguity in what he says, as well as the terms he employs, concerning it. For this reason alone one can easily misunderstand his teaching. Remember, too, that he explained his view of the baptism with the Holy Spirit on three main occasions. The first was a series of five sermons on Ephesians 1:13 preached in 1955; second, 15 sermons on Romans 8:15-16 preached in late 1960 and early 1961; third, in 1964-65 when he preached 24 sermons on John 1:26, 33.

Perhaps it is ML-J's *Joy Unspeakable: the Baptism with the Holy Spirit*⁵² published in 1984 which is better known to Christians; the content of this book and *Prove All Things*⁵³ were preached by him as a series of sermons in 1964-65. From *Joy Unspeakable* a number of important principles emerge. First, a person can be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and converted to Christ without having been baptised with the same Spirit.⁵⁴ Second, Spirit-baptism for ML-J 'is something that happens to us'⁵⁵ but not automatically⁵⁶ for it is 'given' and 'it is the Lord who does it'. This point he establishes from the Acts narratives.⁵⁷ A third and 'still more important'⁵⁸ principle for ML-J is that Spirit-baptism is 'clear and unmistakable', personally and corporately recognisable so is different in this respect from regeneration. Here he appeals to Acts 2:4, 6-7, 12-13; 4:8, 31; 6:3-5, 8, 10; 8:17-18; 10:44-47; 11:15-18 and 19:2-6. Interestingly, he employs the term 'revival' interchangeably with that of baptism in

⁵¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones *Christian Unity, an Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980), 183-86, 189-91.

⁵² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable: the Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, (Kingsway Publications, 1984).

⁵³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Prove All Things*, (Wheaton, Harold Shaw Publishers 1985).

⁵⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, 25-48.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

the Holy Spirit and uses illustrations from the 1904–1905 revival in Wales and then other Christians in different periods such as John Wesley, Henry Venn and Charles Simeon. The interchangeable use of these two terms is significant.

Fourth, he argues for the fact that, apart from Ephesians 5:18, the term 'filled' is interchangeable with baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is in his exposition of Ephesians 5:18 where ML-J provides a more rigorous analysis of the way in which terms like 'full' or 'filled' are used in the NT. He distinguishes two usages of the term 'full' or 'filled'. For example, Luke 1:41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31 and 13:9 he understands as a 'special endowment, a special filling with the Spirit ...',⁵⁹ 'an abrupt and sudden enabling' equipping a Christian for a specific task. Another usage of the term he discerns in Acts 6:3; 7:55; 11:24 and 13:52 as 'an account of a state or condition'.⁶⁰ Ephesians 5:18 is also included in this usage by ML-J where he notes that the verb is present imperative with regard to an ethical injunction. By contrast, he insists that the baptism with the Spirit is sovereignly bestowed by the Lord and is never the subject of a command in Scripture or within the ability of the Christian to achieve himself. This two-fold distinction by ML-J in the use of the term 'full' or 'filled' is described by Michael Eaton as both a 'continuous' and an 'aoristic'⁶¹ filling with the Spirit. I fear that the relationship between the two kinds of filling is not always discussed consistently by ML-J but he understands the aorist usage as being interchangeable with Spirit-baptism but not necessarily.⁶² He does regard the filling of Acts 4:31 as 'another baptism' and 9:17 as Paul's baptism with the Spirit. In order to strengthen the interchangeable use of terms like 'full' and 'filled' with Spirit-baptism, ML-J rightly emphasises the important distinction between the 'regular' and the 'exceptional' or the 'indirect' and 'direct' work of the Holy Spirit. This he sees illustrated in Acts 2 and in other revivals in the history of the church where the Spirit's 'regular' work in convicting and regenerating coincides with the 'exceptional' degree of the Holy Spirit's power granted sovereignly to the church in periods of revival. He insists that those who identify baptism with the Spirit with conversion 'rarely, if ever at all, speak about revival ... There is no room left for revival in that teaching'.⁶³

Fifth, other terms like 'sealing', 'earnest'⁶⁴ and 'bears witness' (Rom. 8:16) are also for ML-J interchangeable with 'baptism' with the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵ Perhaps it is more accurate to say that he regards

⁵⁹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974, 1986), 40–54.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶¹ M. Eaton, *Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, (IVP, 1989), 184.

⁶² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God's Ultimate Purpose: an exposition of Ephesians 1:1 to 23*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), 264.

⁶³ Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, 269–70.

⁶⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *God's Ultimate Purpose*, 301.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 299–310.

these different terms as all referring to the same spiritual experience but highlighting different aspects of the experience such as assurance, profusion and power.

Finally, ML-J is clear that the 'primary purpose and function' of baptism with the Spirit is 'to enable us to be witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ'⁶⁶ and he uses Luke 24:45–47; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:32; Hebrews 2:3–4 and 10:14–15 to establish and illustrate the point. In other words, its purpose is not primarily for sanctification but for power in witness and preaching. Such baptism gives 'an unusual sense of the presence of God'; and divine glory, 'a sense of awe', a humbling of oneself, a deep assurance of God's love to us in Christ as well as joy, 'love to God' and 'light and understanding concerning the Bible'.

From this brief overview of his teaching on Spirit-baptism, it needs to be emphasised that ML-J was not a charismatic. He highlighted divine sovereignty with regard to this subject and rejected any form of conditionalism or human agency for obtaining the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Sadly, what is not understood by some Christians in relation to ML-J's teaching is that for him revival and baptism with the Holy Spirit refer to the same work of God. The terms are interchangeable. The only difference is that the former is extensive and corporate while the latter is personal but still christocentric and empowering for witness, and love, to Christ.

There are weaknesses and ambiguities in ML-J's position but there are also strengths and insights which need to be reflected upon. I encourage you to engage seriously and fairly in a biblical and theological assessment of his pneumatology.

1966 and all that!

Some readers may be unfamiliar with this sad incident which was 'to dramatise a fracture in the evangelical world',⁶⁷ at least in Britain. Briefly, ML-J was invited by leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals to address its second Assembly in October 1966 on the subject of Evangelical Unity.⁶⁸ The request was that ML-J should repeat in public what he had already shared privately with the NAE Commission.

In his introduction to the subject, ML-J explained that the doctrine of the church is prominent in the NT and that it needed to be addressed in view of alarming ecumenical trends. At the heart of his address were three major questions. First, are evangelicals content to be 'nothing but an evangelical wing of a church'⁶⁹ where the majority

⁶⁶ See Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable*, 81–110.

⁶⁷ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s*, (Unwin Hyman, 1989), 267.

⁶⁸ The address is included in, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 246–57.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

have liberal views of the Bible and theology? The second question raised by ML-J concerned the nature of the church. Is biblical doctrine of the essence of the church?⁷⁰ Does not the church consist of converted people? His third major question concerned schism and his argument that only Christians can be guilty of this sin but then only within the context of a true visible church when they divide over persons and secondary issues.⁷¹

The closing part of his address constituted a practical challenge to his audience. 'What reasons have we for not coming together?'⁷² 'I am a believer,' he continued, 'in ecumenicity, evangelical ecumenicity. To me, the tragedy is that we are divided.'⁷³ He emphasised that the Holy Spirit will only bless the Word, not churches where the essential doctrines of the Word are denied. Despite the problems, Christians must act courageously like their forefathers for the sake of the truth and the true church. The burden of this major address was not secession but evangelical unity and obedience to the NT. The chairman of the meeting, John Stott, had earlier in the meeting expressed his own view yet after ML-J's address he again spoke but this time contradicted the views of ML-J. 'I believe history is against what Dr Lloyd-Jones has said ... Scripture is against him ... I hope no one will act precipitately.'⁷⁴ A sad moment indeed.

What is disappointing is the way that ML-J's call for evangelical unity has continued to be misunderstood and misrepresented since 1966. One expects the media to get it wrong, even some Christian newspapers. *The Christian*⁷⁵ weekly newspaper and *The Life of Faith*⁷⁶ weekly both misrepresented the message of ML-J in emphasising secession and the plan to form a united church. It was left to the *English Churchman*⁷⁷ to put the record right: ML-J 'was not putting forward some negative scheme into which we are to be reluctantly forced, but rather was pointing us to the glorious opportunity of taking positive action because we realise we ought to if we are to be true to our evangelical convictions'.

What about the authors of popular books who refer to the 1966 incident? Christopher Catherwood, grandson of ML-J, in his readable *Five Evangelical Leaders* appears confused and refers to ML-J 'vision of a united evangelical church'.⁷⁸ Later, Catherwood sees the 'tragedy of the split' as being divided over what was 'essentially an ecclesiastical issue'.⁷⁹ But the prior and major issue

⁷⁰ Ibid., 251-52.

⁷¹ Ibid., 253.

⁷² Ibid., 254.

⁷³ Ibid., 255.

⁷⁴ Vol. 2, 525.

⁷⁵ 21 October 1966, 1.

⁷⁶ 27 October 1966.

⁷⁷ 28 October 1966.

⁷⁸ Catherwood, *Five Evangelical Leaders*. 87.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 89.

for ML-J was the gospel itself; it was from the gospel that he insisted on the importance of the nature and unity of the Church. Soteriology and ecclesiology were inextricably bound together in the theology of ML-J. More recently, Clive Calver and Rob Warner wrote a volume entitled *Together We Stand*⁸⁰ marking the 150th anniversary of the Evangelical Alliance in the UK. Again, however, the 1966 division is dealt with in a disappointing way and some of the reported details are wrong. For example, ML-J is supposed to have argued for 'a single united evangelical church'⁸¹ but that was not what ML-J wanted. Nor is it accurate to speak of ML-J's 'impassioned eloquence ... in the heat of the moment'.⁸² I am afraid that even in this book ML-J is pictured as the culprit who shattered evangelical unity in the UK from 1966 onwards.

As an example of academic writing with regard to ML-J and 1966, I turn to Alister McGrath. In an interesting article entitled 'Evangelical Anglicanism: A Contradiction in Terms?',⁸³ McGrath makes only a fleeting reference to 1966 and 'the separationist programme outlined and commended by' ML-J. Again, McGrath misunderstands what ML-J wanted in his 1966 appeal. Acknowledging that 'one of the most attractive features of Lloyd-Jones's vision' was 'the emphasis placed upon doctrinal purity' he wrongly assumes that ML-J wanted 'an evangelical denomination'.⁸⁴ What ML-J wanted, and on biblical grounds, was a 'fellowship or an association of evangelical churches'. ML-J admired Cromwell's attempt to find an expression of unity between Protestant churches which tolerated differences over church government. ML-J did not care 'whether he is a Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent or Episcopalian or Methodist as long as he is agreed about the essentials of "the faith"'.⁸⁵ He certainly did not want a new denomination: 'If I had wanted to start a denomination,' ML-J explained only five weeks after his 1966 Assembly address, 'I would not have left it till now.'⁸⁶ What McGrath fails to do in this chapter is to engage with ML-J's plea for doctrinal fidelity to the Bible and the gospel message as it relates to the nature of the Church.

Albeit briefly, McGrath refers to the 1966 event in his *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*⁸⁷ but repeats the same factual errors in viewing ML-J's address as centring on separatism and asking evangelicals to 'form a denomination of their own'.⁸⁸ McGrath is guilty of these errors again in his biography of James Packer.⁸⁹

⁸⁰ Hodder & Stoughton, 1996.

⁸¹ Calver and Warner, *Together We Stand*, 127.

⁸² Ibid., 65.

⁸³ R.T. France and A.E. McGrath (eds.), *Evangelical Anglicans: Their role and influence in the Church today*, (London, SPCK, 1993), 10-21.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁵ Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones* Vol. 2, 511.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 530.

⁸⁷ Hodder & Stoughton, 1994.

⁸⁸ McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, 37-38.

⁸⁹ A.E. McGrath, *To Know and Serve God: a Biography of James Packer*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), 121-27.

Stephen Clark has provided a detailed critique of McGrath's understanding of this event and challenges 'those areas in which Dr McGrath is *demonstrably* inaccurate'.⁹⁰ ML-J was not arguing for independency versus Anglicanism. Although opposed to the modern tendency to insist upon bishops within ecumenical circles, ML-J declared in 1971 that 'for the sake of evangelical unity among evangelicals, I would even be prepared to consider at any rate the possibility of some form of modified episcopacy for the sake of unity'.⁹¹ Nor was ML-J advocating separation *per se* in 1966 or a 'pure' church or isolationism. His primary concern was to uphold the uniqueness of the revealed gospel and he concluded rightly that it was in the area of the doctrine of the Church that this concern had become most acute.

To appreciate this primary concern of ML-J for the gospel, it is important to recognise that a major shift occurred between 1954 and 1966 in the attitude of evangelicals towards ecumenism. The formation of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in August 1948 was a watershed for church relations as well as eventual theological change and ML-J recognised this. In his 1966 address he refers to the WCC which presented 'an entirely new situation ... a situation today such as has not been the case since the Protestant Reformation ... denominations are telling us ... they are prepared to reconsider their whole position'.⁹² Another significant feature was the neutrality of the Evangelical Alliance with regard to the WCC. From 1954 onwards, too, the evangelist Billy Graham co-operated with non-evangelicals in his evangelistic missions. This again served to compromise the gospel. Vatican II Council (1962-65) was also to exercise a profound influence in Rome's new favourable relations with Protestants (now only 'separated brethren') and world religions. The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, made an official visit in March 1966 to the Pope in the Vatican. Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey issued a *Common Declaration* aimed at 'a restoration of complete communion of faith and sacramental life' between their two churches. The first step was the establishment of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Council (1967-68) out of which came the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) from 1971 onwards. Other church mergers were also being negotiated so that ML-J could tell the 1966 Assembly, 'You are familiar with what is happening between the Anglicans and Methodists, between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists ... during this present year'.⁹³ Not only was the situation opportune for an ongoing, wide expression of evangelical unity but the situation called for evangelicals to be together in an association of churches which preserved rather than

⁹⁰ S. Clarke, 'Rewriting the 1960s: Is Dr McGrath right?' *Foundations* 41 (Autumn 1998), 33-42.

⁹¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, 353.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 248.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 248-249.

compromised the doctrines of the faith and the gospel. That was the concern of ML-J.

ML-J refused to allow the gospel to be neglected or compromised and that is what led him to make his famous 1966 call for evangelical unity. He wanted unity in the gospel rather than in a new denomination. For ML-J it was a gospel issue, not an ecclesiological one. How could evangelicals continue in denominations where nothing was done to discipline those who modified and denied the gospel?

One final word. For ML-J 'the greatest need of the hour' is not secession or schemes of unity but 'an ... outpouring of the Holy Spirit in ... revival. Nothing else throughout the centuries has ever given the Church true authority and made her, and her message, mighty. But what right have we to pray for this, or to expect that he will honour or bless anything but the truth that he himself enabled the authors of the Old Testament and the New Testament to write? To ask him to do so is not only near blasphemy but also the height of folly. Reformation and revival go together and cannot be separated. He is the Spirit of truth, and he will honour nothing but the truth.'⁹⁴

The 1966 incident will not be understood from ML-J's perspective unless it is appreciated that the Word is primary, supreme, sufficient and entirely trustworthy. Nevertheless, the Spirit upon the Word is needed to make it effective and powerful. The issues of 1966 will not go away; they are still with us, perhaps more urgently so. A new generation of students and church leaders need to face the challenge of ML-J's teaching.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

REVIEW ARTICLE: SELECT WORKS OF DR. D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

Martin Downes

Martin Downes studied theology at Newport and is currently the Staff Worker for the Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship in Wales and the South West of England. At present he is writing a student introduction to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones was pre-eminently a preacher and not a writer. That his published writings should exceed sixty volumes, the bulk of which have appeared posthumously, is something of an anomaly. The vast majority of his books are edited sermons, consecutively preached and expository in nature. (There are nine volumes in his series on Ephesians and eleven on Romans.) Although he was not an academic theologian, Lloyd-Jones (ML-J) had a profound effect on the resurgence of evangelical theology in the UK at student and church level.

What then can be found of interest in his writings for today's evangelicals? The answer to that question is probably a deep reverence for the Word of God, the fusion of logic and prayer, clarity, conviction, stability, correction, warning, encouragement, and above all an appreciation of the sheer greatness of God.

Readers should not expect to find these volumes as up-to-date commentaries. The Romans series for example was preached on Friday evenings from 1955 to 1968 to a London congregation of considerable diversity. Stylistically there is much repetition and recapitulation, as one would expect in preaching, and few open-ended conclusions. Although lacking the exegetical precision of technical commentaries ML-J is always far from naïve and is consistently sensitive to the text. His sermons are devotional in the best sense; deeply doctrinal, covering the great truths of the faith, and pastoral in intent, applying God's diagnosis of our need and his remedy. In short here is theology which does not exist in a vacuum.

There are several areas where ML-J can and should be read with profit.

Preaching

Far from being out of place in the modern world he considered a recovery of true preaching to be the need of both the church and the world. ML-J's high view of the primacy of preaching is set out in *Preaching and Preachers* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1976). In the act of preaching the message must control the methods used. Preaching can never be detached,

so often we discuss theology in a light manner ... as if we were handling something quite apart from our lives and our well-being and eternal destiny.

Style is not unimportant but is subsidiary to the content of the sermon, and so, for ML-J, illustrations, humour and eloquence must be regulated by the message. His central thesis is that preaching is 'logic on fire ... theology coming through a man who is on fire'. The rare combination of passion, oratory, and doctrine is subsumed under the ultimate goal of the ministry:

What is the chief end of preaching? I like to think it is this. It is to give men and women a sense of God and his presence.

For ML-J the act of preaching involved a transaction between the pulpit and the pew. It required the anointing of the Spirit ('unction') and spiritual-mindedness in the congregation, coupled with the expectation that God is present and is dealing with people. This point is so important that ML-J reserves it for the last chapter and advises 'seek it until you have it; be content with nothing else'. He advocates a holistic approach to preparation, catering for differing temperaments and aiming to secure the preparation of the preacher and the message, as well as the presentation of the message. Preaching should be serious, lively, persuasive, warm, urgent, and touched with genuine emotion. Preaching ought never to become lecturing. Here is a voice from the past that all who enter the pulpit should listen to. ML-J's primary calling was as an evangelist, although his published material does not indicate this. *God's Way Not Ours* (Banner of Truth, 1998) is a good example of his evangelistic preaching. In these sermons, from Isaiah 1 and preached in 1963, he diagnoses the radical effects of sin, exposing how we have failed to glorify God, and cuts to the heart of human autonomy. Stripped of all pretensions before a holy God, and humbled to the dust, one can then appreciate the awesomeness and heights of grace. It was such preaching on sin and judgement that revolutionised the life of R.V.G. Tasker when he was Professor of New Testament Exegesis in the University of London.

Evangelical Unity and Ecclesiology

This may come as a surprise since he was accused of dividing evangelicalism over the issue of secession. Nevertheless there are several significant addresses (as opposed to sermons) in *Knowing the Times* (Banner of Truth, 1989). Although not restricted to evangelical unity the addresses entitled 'Maintaining the Evangelical Faith Today' (1952), 'The Basis of Christianity Unity' (1962), 'Consider Your Ways: The Outlining of a New Strategy' (1963) and 'Evangelical Unity: An Appeal' (1966) are particularly germane. Given in the context of the denominational turbulence of the 1950s and 1960s, and the evangelical responses to the ecumenical movement, ML-J argued the case for separation and greater evangelical unity. His reading of the times was that evangelicals were at a turning point and should respond to the rising tide of doctrinal indifference and 'paper' unity by coming together in closer fellowship and co-operation. This, in time, would mean separation from the doctrinally compromised historic denominations:

Are you content with a kind of paper church, with a formula that people interpret in their own way, you being just an evangelical wing in the comprehensive, national, territorial church? ... The church surely is not a paper definition. I am sorry, I cannot accept the view that the church consists of articles or of a confession of faith ... A church consists of living people.

Unfortunately the ill effects of ML-J's failed appeal to evangelicals in the UK has, in many quarters, obscured the issues that he was raising. His appeal was not just negative (separation) but positive (evangelical unity). Far from desiring division he was appealing for a return to the NT teaching, the true combination of orthodoxy and spiritual life without which unity in or between denominations is illusory. 'What is an Evangelical?' (1971) is an altogether more positive presentation of evangelical distinctives, essentials and priorities. In laying these foundations ML-J calls upon us who are 'evangelical' to examine whether we stand on this ground or if we have shifted geographically. It is a piece that remains searching, despite its age, and cuts through the fog of triumphalism and smug self-congratulation. His more detailed teaching on the church, without the immediate intrusion of ecumenical issues, can be found in *Christian Unity: Ephesians 4:1-16* (Banner of Truth, 1980).

Pneumatology and Revival

It is probably true to say that ML-J is remembered today chiefly for his views on the post-conversion baptism (or baptisms) with the Spirit. Before the charismatic movement began he taught, as part of the regular exposition of Romans and Ephesians, the experimental nature of the Spirit's work in the Christian life. Of particular note are *God's Ultimate Purpose: Ephesians 1-23* (Banner of Truth, 1978), *The Sons of God: Romans 8:5-17* (Banner of Truth, 1974), *Joy Unspeakable* (Kingsway, 1984) and *Prove All Things* (Kingsway, 1985). The purpose of the baptism is to give the believer the assurance of adoption and sonship. It is a felt experience. As such it is non-deductive and forms the highest possible awareness of the love of God. Far from being worked up, or claimed, it can only be 'given' by the Spirit. The primacy of assurance as the meaning of the baptism is certainly unique to ML-J in the twentieth century, although he lays great stress on its importance among earlier evangelicals. ML-J's expression of the doctrine is highly Trinitarian, patiently argued, refuses to capitulate to phenomena, and is taught within the context of God's sovereignty and holiness. He complains that by and large evangelicals have become superficial in their dealings with God and argues for an experience that is framed within the parameters of Romans 8:15-17. It is doubtful whether the plethora of texts cited can sustain his argument, and there seems to be an over reliance on the authority and normative status of past Christian testimony, so that whether a text has been read into is not a redundant question. However, exegetical disagreement ought not to mask the issue of true experience. ML-J, whether at fault or not, probes the errors of superficiality and poverty of experience, and

causes us to ask uncomfortable questions of our own spiritual lives. ML-J's teaching on revival forms a unity with his teaching on the Spirit. References to revival are scattered throughout his writings but are given clearest expression in *Revival* (Marshall Pickering, 1992). These sermons were originally delivered in 1959 to commemorate the centenary of the last major revival in the UK. ML-J stands in the tradition of Jonathan Edwards and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists. He thoroughly eschews all attempts to bring about revival that are not God-centred, especially those associated with Finney. For ML-J the greatest need of the hour was a true revival, one that issued in repentance and a desire to behold God's glory. Yet in his view revival is no different to the normal pattern of conversion, it is only the numbers that are greater. Likewise in revival the Spirit's work of baptising believers is carried out in numerous cases simultaneously. In point of fact Christians find that 'they were suddenly given an absolute certainty and assurance of their relationship to God'. Neither is revival divorced from the preaching of Christ crucified, as if it were something mystical and non-rational that carried no doctrinal awareness. Rather it is a time when:

these things are made so clear by the Holy Spirit that the whole Church is filled with this glimpse of his glory; the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Given the resurgence of interest in revival at church level the mature distillation of wisdom and theological weight found in this volume is essential reading.

Sanctification

The return among evangelicals from a perfectionist and passive understanding of holiness to a more robust and biblical model is in part due to the influence of ML-J. From the beginning of his prominence among British evangelicals he was the odd man out in rejecting the Keswick teaching. Although much of this is only of historic interest, though not exclusively so, the fundamental methodology of starting with God and not our sins and problems is as needed as ever. ML-J is hardly alone in pointing this out but the thoroughness with which he employs this method and the pastoral sensitivity which accompanies it are exemplary. It is the estimation of Peter Lewis that ML-J's chief theological contribution is *The New Man: Romans 6* (Banner of Truth, 1972). This volume deals with Romans 6:1-23 and emphatically asserts that the greatest aid to holiness is to know that we *have* died to sin with Christ and that we *are* now raised with him. Before we are called to do anything we must understand what has been done to us in an objective sense. This may be called the great indicative of the Christian life without the knowledge of which the many imperatives have greater weight. I can only add that his exposition brings a clear understanding of just how we have been liberated from sin by Christ, it is a shame to miss out on such riches.

Spiritual Thinking

ML-J firmly held to the principle that much 'counselling' could be done from the pulpit and was largely a matter of clear biblical thinking. His handling of the various states of Christian experience is both the product of a 'puritan' pastoral mindset and the necessary skill he learned as a physician. In *Spiritual Depression* (Marshall Pickering, 1991) he argues that an unhappy Christian is a pretty poor recommendation for the Christian faith, yet such unhappiness is far from uncommon. The causes range from false teaching, regret, fear of the future and ignorance of God's dealings with us, to weariness, feelings, imbalance between mind, heart, and will, chastening and a refusal to learn godly contentment. The failures to practise self-examination and the neglect of thinking in a doctrinal manner are the two chief reasons why we are often swamped by problems. The same principles can be seen in *Faith on Trial* (IVP, 1965) where in a series of sermons on Psalm 73 ML-J sees the recovery of the psalmist as his ability to think correctly about his position. Having the presence of mind to think and act in situations instead of merely reacting is the product of disciplined godly reflection. The same methodology, when applied to understanding the mechanics of Scripture, is seen in *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (IVP, 1993). For those wishing to read his books this volume is simultaneously the best place to start and the finest example of his thinking. What he achieves in these books is the transformation of thinking that is merely coloured by a few verses to that which in the highest sense is formed by the mind and ways of God.

Church History

The record of God's dealings with his people in the past, in their successes and failures, is an integral part of ML-J's writing. Chiefly it is the reformers, puritans, and the men of the eighteenth century that he utilises, as can be seen in *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Banner of Truth, 1987). The role of church history for ML-J was threefold. We must learn from the past in order to apply former lessons to present situations. This was particularly so in the mid-1960s as he drew on the lessons of the great ejection (1662). Secondly, in the day of small things we are to remember what God has done in the past, especially in revival, and therefore what he can do again. Thirdly, and in connection with his pneumatology, we should not let our present experience determine the meaning of texts. The details of former Christian testimony can give us a salutary lesson on the profound richness available to us. ML-J is not exempt from the criticism of giving history too much weight, he can even refer to it as a 'canon of interpretation' when dealing with experiences of assurance. Similarly his use of past historical debates and events is clearly used as an endorsement of the point he is making. Not a little of this borders on reductionism. Nevertheless his knowledge of church history is both very detailed and impressive. Its importance to his ministry should cause us to ponder how well Christian history is known and loved in our own churches, especially in a post-modern age.

What ML-J once said of Jonathan Edwards, quoting 'Rabbi' Duncan, is also true of him, all his doctrine was application and his application, doctrine. In many ways his writings show him as a model preacher, not to be imitated, but with a blend of theology and life that was well matched and can serve as an example for all in ministry. This comes to the fore in *To God's Glory: Romans 11* (Banner of Truth, 1998). After dealing with the complex problem of the Jews and their place in God's purposes he ends with three chapters focusing on Paul's doxology. In his estimation if we can pass through even these deep, and often murky, exegetical waters without rising to the note of praise and adoration then we have not even begun:

So the test of our view of salvation and of our appreciation of it, is simply this: whenever you think of it does it bring you to this doxology? If it does not then I take leave to suggest to you that you know nothing about it ... if when you contemplate your condition as a Christian, as a saved person, if you do not come to this doxology, I say, there is something radically wrong somewhere.

This doxological element is at the heart of ML-J's writings, as it is at the heart of all God-centred theology. It may well be that at this point ML-J's writings will continue to do us great service as they direct us back to the great and glorious God whose wisdom is unsearchable and whose ways are past finding out.

NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTOLOGY – OR NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTOLOGIES?

Geoffrey Grogan

Dr Geoffrey Grogan is the former Principal of Glasgow Bible College (now International Christian College). He is well-known for his sound scholarship and his commitment to generating enthusiasm for theology and biblical studies among students. In this article, with typical clarity and precision he surveys contemporary trends in New Testament Christology and argues that traditional evangelical orthodoxy still offers the most coherent account of the Christ of the Bible.

What the issue really is

The question in our title seems very simple and easily answered. Here is a matter of supreme theological importance; does the NT speak with one voice, or with several voices, on it? Reflection and investigation, however, show it to be more complex. In the Epistles and Revelation we encounter the Christology of the writers. So we have simply to discover whether or not one Christology formed the sub-structure of their various christological statements. The Gospels and Acts also show us the Christology of their writers, but in addition they record sermons revealing the Christology of Jesus and of preachers like Peter, Stephen and Paul. This prompts an important historical question: have the sermons been correctly reported or have they been influenced by the Christology of the writers of these books?

This is important for Acts but absolutely crucial for the Gospels. Christology is central to the Christian message. How serious it would be, then, if it could be shown that the Christology of the Christian Church, expressed by the NT writers and later in the great Creeds, is quite different from that of Jesus himself!

Moreover, at least one major NT writer, Paul, claims to base his thought on the common tradition of the church,¹ given to it by Christ and presumably represented in the early Christian preaching recorded in Acts. Some elements of a Christology may be discerned in these sermons. There are also of course sermons by Paul himself recorded there.

The history of the issue

Chalcedon and the challenge of Strauss

Until the 19th century it was generally assumed that the NT had one Christology and that this was firmly based on our Lord's own view

¹ Especially in 1 Cor.15:1-11.

of himself. This affirmed belief in his full deity and perfect humanity and their perfect unity in one Person without the loss of any qualities proper to either nature. The classic historical expression of this is found in the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451).²

The Enlightenment, when all traditional beliefs were subjected to rational criticism, produced a major work devoted to Christology. In his book David Strauss issued a most radical challenge.³ To him the NT accounts of Jesus are largely mythological, so that the records of his teaching about himself are unreliable. The early church put into his mouth words reflecting its own beliefs, not his.

Later writers reacted to the challenge of Strauss in more than one way.

Some said it was Paul who had muddied the waters and invented the Church Christology. The Gospel accounts, they said, had been 'Paulinised'. They published books with titles like 'Jesus or Paul?'. Someone has said of writers of this genre, 'By their lives of Jesus you shall know them!'. Adolph Harnack declared that the gospel Jesus preached had nothing to do with the Son but everything to do with the Father.⁴ The record of the christological teaching of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel was widely regarded as most unreliable and it was thought that the best sources for discovering the Christology of Jesus were Mark and Q.

Then W. Wrede asserted that Mark's Gospel, too, was unreliable, for it places emphasis on the 'Messianic Secret', in passages where Jesus warns people not to say whom they knew him to be. Jesus, Wrede said, did not actually teach his Messiahship, and these passages were a stratagem of the Gospel author to cover up this fact.⁵ Writers with a little more respect for the Gospel sources held that many of the sayings traditionally thought to teach a high Christology had been misinterpreted by Christian commentators and that they meant something less than they appeared on the surface to mean.

Ritschlian Christology and James Denney

Many Gospel scholars of this period belonged to the Ritschlian school. They were not really concerned if ontological statements about himself from the lips of Jesus were denied to him or re-interpreted. This was because, following Kantian philosophical

² The full text of this and its historical background may be found in J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A. and C. Black, 2nd edn., 1960), 280-343.

³ David Strauss, *Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972, first published in 1835-36). In some ways he was anticipated by a much earlier writer, H.S. Reimarus (1694-1768).

⁴ Adolph Harnack, *What is Christianity?* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1901).

⁵ W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret in the Gospels*, (Cambridge: T. and T. Clark, 1971, first published 1901).

principles, they held a 'value-judgement' Christology. To them his real significance is that he did as man what we would expect God to do. Whether he was actually the God-Man or not, they could neither affirm nor deny, on philosophical grounds. So they had a functional rather than an ontological Christology.⁶ In this they were followed somewhat by Oscar Cullmann in his major work, *The Christology of the New Testament*.⁷

A writer largely critical of Ritschlianism was James Denney. In *Jesus and the Gospel*,⁸ he argued that the NT writers all had the same basic attitude to Jesus, no matter how differently they expressed this. He went on to demonstrate that this was firmly grounded in the self-consciousness of Jesus. The first of these tasks is superbly accomplished in his first 104 pages. For all the writers, Denney shows, Jesus was a true Man but was also 'on the divine side of reality'. The second is also well done, but in the course of it Denney deals with current issues of gospel criticism, which have changed their shape somewhat since his day.

The challenge of Bousset

The History of Religions School maintained that Hellenism was the main source for alien ideas entering Christianity. This school's main christological work was Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*.⁹ He argued that these influences predated Paul, being present already in the Christology of the Antioch church he contacted soon after his conversion.

Three fairly brief but important books emerged to combat this. Hoskyns and Davey¹⁰ showed that there is no non-supernatural, no merely human, Jesus in the NT. He had been diligently sought but never found, simply because he was not there! C.H. Dodd¹¹ identified one basic Kerygma as the sub-structure for the whole NT. This has obvious implications for Christology. A.M. Hunter¹² showed that Paul's teaching and his Christology are firmly based on the beliefs of the early apostolic preachers.

⁶ A brief but useful bibliography of works on the Ritschlian Theology may be found in the article, 'Ritschl, Albrecht (1822-1889)', by Colin Brown in J.D. Douglas (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 850.

⁷ Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 2nd Edn. 1971).

⁸ James Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908).

⁹ Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (ET, Nashville: Abingdon, 1970).

¹⁰ Hoskyns and Davey, *The Riddle of the New Testament*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1931).

¹¹ C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936).

¹² A.M. Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors* (London: SCM, 1940, rev. ed. 1961).

The challenge of Bultmann

The ultimate in reductionism was reached in the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. He was sceptical both about the historical and the theological elements in the NT. He was uncertain about the historical truth of all but a very few items in the Gospels, notably the crucifixion, the triumphal entry, and possibly the baptism. He dubbed as mythology the theological elements, including the resurrection.

Is this identical with the view of Strauss? No. Strauss considered the mythology valueless, while Bultmann, who followed the Existentialist philosophy of Martin Heidegger, affirmed its uses. It consisted of so many ways of facing the reader with the existential challenge of Jesus to an authentic existence, one in which we realistically confront death before it comes. The disciples encountered this challenge through his presence among them and it confronts us today through Christian preaching.¹³

Bultmann's radical historical scepticism dissatisfied some of his most able pupils, who sought somewhat painfully to build up a more solid picture of the historical Jesus.¹⁴ They did not however put much theological flesh on the historical bones, nor was the question of the relationship of the NT Christology or christologies to his own teaching very fully addressed.

Karl Barth and the Barthian School generally were much more positive theologically. Following Kierkegaard, they tended to unite the Christology of Jesus and that of the NT writers, but showed less certainty on the historical issue, which often interested them less.¹⁵

Some more recent developments

Three volumes written about twenty years ago set the agenda for the next two decades or so. We will deal with them in their historical sequence.

The Myth of God Incarnate,¹⁶ was a radical symposium that continued Bultmann's extreme scepticism about the doctrine of the Incarnation.

¹³ There is a helpful chapter on Bultmann's Christology, 'The Kerygmatic Christology of Rudolf Bultmann' by H.D. McDonald, in H.H. Rowdon (ed.), *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* (Leicester: IVP, 1982), 326-40.

¹⁴ J.M. Robinson surveyed this movement in his *A New Quest for the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959).

¹⁵ The primacy of theology rather than of history is shown in Barth's positive attitude to the virgin birth. 'The reason is not that it is mentioned in the Bible. The reason why Barth accepts it is that in his opinion it is in conformity with the whole New Testament's view of the incarnation'. (K. Runia, 'Karl Barth's Christology' in H.H. Rowdon, ed., *Christ the Lord*), 302.

¹⁶ J. Hick (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM, 1977).

J.D.G. Dunn in his *Christology in the Making*,¹⁷ promoted the view that NT Christology developed from quite simple ideas to the full Incarnationism of the Fourth Gospel's Prologue. He particularly disputed the idea that other NT writers believed in the pre-existence of Jesus, arguing against this understanding of passages usually held to teach this. He does however maintain, especially in the second edition (1989) and some later articles, that this is an unfolding of what already existed in seed-form in the earlier Christology, 'the recognition of what had always been true of Jesus and only awaited the eye of faith to see with increasing clarity'.¹⁸

There is another side to Dunn's Christology. He stresses the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit and draws very close to a binitarianism in which his nature as divine appears to depend on the nature of the Spirit indwelling him. He says, for instance, 'The Spirit was the "divinity" of Jesus ... so Jesus became the personality of the Spirit'.¹⁹ Later he repudiated this,²⁰ but still seems to toy with the idea. Writing of his even more recent work, Max Turner, summarising without agreeing with his thought, says, 'In earliest Christianity and Paul, the Spirit is not so much under Jesus' lordship, as stamped with his personality; and since this does not break the mould of Jewish analogies it does not entail a full divine Christology'.²¹

Finally there was I.H. Marshall's *The Origins of Christology*.²² This cogently argues both that NT Christology is fundamentally one, despite terminological differences, and that it goes back to Jesus himself. This was also the view of C.F.D. Moule in his book, *The Origins of New Testament Christology*.²³ Moule says,

*Was the process ... comparable to the apotheosis of a Heracles from hero to god? Or was it, rather, that the successive descriptions and evaluations of Jesus constituted only new insights into what was there from the beginning, and new modes of expression for an original datum?*²⁴

¹⁷ J.D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, (London: SCM, 1980).

¹⁸ J.D.G. Dunn, 'The Making of Christology – Evolution or Unfolding?' in J.B. Green and M. Turner (eds.), *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ: Essays in the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 1994), 437.

¹⁹ J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), 325.

²⁰ In an article, 'Rediscovering the Spirit', *Expository Times* 94 (1982), 14–16.

²¹ M. Turner, 'The Spirit of Christ and "Divine" Christology' in J.B. Green and M. Turner (eds.), *Jesus of Nazareth*, 419.

²² I.H. Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Leicester: IVP, 1976).

²³ C.F.D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1977). See also M. Hengel: *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (London: SCM, 1976).

²⁴ Moule, *Origin of Christology*, 22.

His own view was very definitely the latter.

Both Dunn on the one hand and Marshall and Moule on the other think in terms of development, but with one major difference, for Moule and Marshall argue that, right from its start in the teaching of Jesus the NT has a Christology of the deity of Jesus.

We may say then that the three main positions today are as follows:

- NT Christology is deeply influenced by a mythology alien to the theology of the OT and of historical Judaism. This is often paired with the idea that Jesus did not himself teach such a Christology.
- The NT writings reveal variety on a line of development, which did not begin with a doctrine of Incarnation but led to it eventually and, perhaps, inevitably.
- NT Christology, in all its essentials, is the Christology of Jesus with its implications spelled out more fully in various ways. This does not exclude development but sees it as application of the same basic truths in various new ways.

Crucial Issues in the Debate

In 1981, S. Kim wrote of 'the tumultuous sea of present NT scholarship concerning the development of NT Christology'.²⁵ The tide from this sea shows no sign of ebbing and so it is quite impossible to cover or even touch everything. Instead we will select some particularly important issues.

The teaching of the Fourth Gospel

There is wide agreement that this teaches a full incarnational Christology. Dunn has argued powerfully for such an interpretation of John 1:14.²⁶ This finds contextual support in what is probably the true reading of John 1:18, 'God the only-begotten'. So much else in the Gospel serves to confirm and expound that basic Christology.

The same is true of the Johannine Epistles, widely believed to be at least from the same school if not the same author as the Gospel. I.H. Marshall says,

'the same concept of incarnation as is in the Gospel is present in 1 and 2 John, and indeed is the principal christological idea in these Epistles. The concept of incarnation fundamentally shapes the Christology of the Johannine Epistles and forms the key idea around which John's other statements can be logically organised'.²⁷

²⁵ S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), 105.

²⁶ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 241.

²⁷ 'Incarnational Christology in the New Testament' in Green and Turner (eds.), *Jesus of Nazareth*, 4, 5.

It is central to 1 John's introduction (1:1–4), determining how we should understand what follows, including the importance of recognising that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 John 4:2). This also is important in 2 John 7. In fact in the Johannine Epistles these christological affirmations are considered so central that to deny them is serious heresy. Is this feasible if the teaching was comparatively new? Surely not!

Casey places the Christian break with the synagogue after AD 70, and says it accounts not only for the anti-Judaism of a late work like the Gospel of John but also its teaching about the deity of Jesus. The church now saw itself as more Gentile than Jewish, so that it could adopt a Gentile-type theology. He says, 'This Gentile self-identification was a necessary cause of belief in the deity of Jesus, a belief which could not be held as long as the Christian community was primarily Jewish'.²⁸

The Fourth Gospel's criticism of Judaism can however be otherwise understood. It is somewhat akin to the OT prophetic criticism of Israel, which was internal to the community. This is especially pertinent if this Christology has at least a basis in that of Jesus, the prophet of Galilee, himself. Certainly this is allied to universalism in the Fourth Gospel, but there are wider concerns in the prophets, for instance in Jonah, Amos and in the Isaianic Servant Songs. Moreover, there is so much in this Gospel that is thoroughly Jewish.

The teaching of Paul about the pre-existence of Christ

Pre-existence is an essential implication of incarnation. Dunn is convinced that the full incarnation doctrine is found only in the Gospel of John and he argues against its assumed presence in Paul's writings.²⁹ In this respect he is more radical than many earlier critics, who certainly held Paul to be an incarnationist, although also less radical because he personally shares John's Christology.

He says that texts in Paul regarded as teaching pre-existence (e.g. Phil. 2:5–11) actually refer to the human self-sacrifice of Jesus or to the way God's creative power was manifested in him. What can we say to this? Marshall says, 'Despite his attempts to justify his position, it is very dubious whether he has succeeded in purging the non-Johannine literature of the concepts of pre-existence and incarnation'.³⁰ We will seek to see why this is.

Philippians 2:5–11 is obviously a key passage. Dunn says it contrasts Adam and Jesus and refers to our Lord's rejection of

²⁸ M. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: the Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 37, 38.

²⁹ E.g. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 211, 212.

³⁰ Marshall, *Origins of New Testament Christology*, 135. See also the criticisms of Dunn's position in L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright (eds.) *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Memory of G.B. Caird* (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 267–80.

temptation, not to pre-existence or incarnation,³¹ but Kim has well countered this in his work, *The Origin of Christology*. He emphasises the theological bearing of Paul's conversion, obviously the starting-point for Paul of a true Christology. Jesus to him was the exalted Christ in glory, and the wonder was not so much that Jesus was the glorious Lord, but that the glorious Lord had become Jesus of Nazareth.³²

Marshall points out that 'being found in fashion as a man' (Phil. 2:7), is strange language if Jesus had never been anything else. He points out that 2 Corinthians 8:9 has the same basic thought differently expressed, and that Paul often describes heavenly glory as 'riches' (cf. Phil. 4:19; Eph. 1:18; 3:16; Col. 1:27).³³

When Paul writes about Jesus being 'sent' for certain purposes, this is usually taken as a reference to his pre-existence. Instead, Dunn points to Mark 12:6 and says that 'sent' there is unlikely to refer to pre-existence as the servants too are 'sent'.³⁴ Marshall, however, argues that Galatians 4:4 should not be read in the light of Mark 12:6. Paul says Jesus was sent, 'born of a woman', such a strange expression if he was never more than a man. In Paul's sentence this follows the sending, strongly suggesting pre-existence. Also, if he was never more than a man how can we account for the references to his physical body in Colossians 1:22 (cf. 2:9) and Ephesians 2:16? Why state anything so obvious?³⁵

Marshall also says,

*Neither Colossians 1:22 nor 2:9 taken by itself necessarily points to the personal pre-existence of the divine Being incarnate in Jesus, but this thought is demanded by the language of the 'hymn' in 1:15–20; here it is extremely difficult to take the language to refer to anything other than the personal activity of the One who is the image of God in creation; Dunn's attempt to make the wording mean merely that the power which God exercised in creation is now fully revealed and embodied in Christ is quite unconvincing.*³⁶

In relation to 1 Timothy 3:16, Marshall says,

*Although no subject is expressed ... the language is based on that used elsewhere to describe how the Son of God was incarnate. The thought is of an epiphany in human form and the implication is that a divine or heavenly subject is intended.*³⁷

³¹ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 114–21.

³² It is a major theme of his book (see n. 25 above), but see especially his very thorough argumentation in ch. 6.

³³ Marshall, *Incarnational Christology in the New Testament*, 6, 7.

³⁴ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 36–44.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁶ Marshall, *Origins of New Testament Christology*, 99, contra Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 1st edn., 187–94.

³⁷ Marshall, *Incarnational Christology in the New Testament*, 10.

Max Turner argues that 'Lordship of the Spirit' (e.g. in 2 Cor. 3:17, 18) does imply a Divine Christology, and such a Christology of course integrates well with pre-existence.³⁸

A useful contribution to the debate is an article by R.T. France that does not actually mention Dunn.³⁹ He points to a number of passages in Paul's letters where 'the same divine function is credited sometimes to God and sometimes to Jesus'. These include Colossians 1:16, 17 (cf. Rom. 11:36), 2 Corinthians 5:10 (cf. Rom. 14:10–12), Colossians 1:13 (cf. Col. 4:11) and many other passages.⁴⁰

The alleged 'adoptionism' of the Primitive Christian preaching in Acts

This has often been alleged, especially for the earliest Christian sermon in Acts 2.

So, for instance, John Knox says there is a primitive adoptionism in the NT, giving Acts 2:36 as an example. He says this adoptionism did not last long, because in Acts 2:23 there is an implicit affirmation of pre-existence, and it is only a short step from the belief that Jesus existed in God's mind and purpose to the concept of personal pre-existence.⁴¹ Macquarrie remarks, 'I myself am inclined to argue that we may equate pre-existence in the mind of God with *real* pre-existence'.⁴² This however sounds like Platonism or Berkeley's idealism and is open to question.

Marshall points out that in Acts Jesus is also God's Son (9:20; 13:33) and that this is why he, the Holy One, does not see corruption, but is raised to new life (2:27). He considers the reason why the Incarnation as such is not discussed in Acts is because the birth narrative at the start of the 2-volume work was intended 'to provide the background for subsequent christological statements'.⁴³

In fact, John Knox holds that the NT contains a number of incompatible Christologies.⁴⁴ Colin Gunton has pointed out however that Knox's basic presupposition is that to hold to the divinity and

³⁸ In his chapter, 'The Spirit of Christ and "Divine" Christology' in Green and Turner (eds.), *Jesus of Nazareth*, 413–66.

³⁹ R.T. France, 'The Worship of Jesus: A Neglected Factor in Christological Debate?' in H.H. Rowdon (ed.), *Christ the Lord*, 17–36. See also the criticisms of Dunn's position in an article by J.F. Balchin, 'Paul, Wisdom and Christ' in the same volume, 204–19.

⁴⁰ R.T. France, 'The Worship of Jesus: A Neglected Factor in Christological Debate?' in H.H. Rowdon (ed.), *Christ the Lord*, 31, 32.

⁴¹ J. Knox, *Humanity and Divinity of Christ: A Study of Pattern in Christology*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1967), 7, 8.

⁴² J. Macquarrie, *Christology Revisited*, (London: SCM Press, 1998), 64.

⁴³ 'Incarnation Christology in the New Testament', in H.H. Rowdon (ed.), *Christ the Lord*, 12, 13.

⁴⁴ This is a major theme of his book.

the humanity of Jesus at the same time is impossible. Once grant this possibility, and his arguments seem thin indeed.⁴⁵

John Robinson, in an essay, 'The Earliest Christology of all?'⁴⁶ saw several different christological positions in the sermons attributed to Peter. Acts 2 he viewed as adoptionist, an interpretation against which we have already argued. He did not however consider adoptionism to be the earliest Christology. This is rather that found in Acts 3:20, 21, where Jesus, he says, is only the Christ-elect until his second advent. Verses 19–21 read,

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Robinson's position however depends on dismemberment of the sermon, for verse 18 reads, 'But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer'. Jesus is here plainly designated the Christ in respect to his sufferings.

But what was the earliest Christian confession? Our evidence for this is not restricted to the sermons in Acts. There is the Aramaic term *maranatha* in 1 Corinthians 16:22. Divided as *maran atha* this means 'Our Lord comes' while as *marana tha* it is 'Our Lord, come!' A devotional rather than a theological phrase is often considered the more likely, but this is perhaps disputable and is not crucial in the debate.⁴⁷ This phrase must have come from the earliest Aramaic-speaking church, which means that Jesus was confessed as Lord very early indeed. This fits the evidence of Acts, and finds support in Stephen's prayer in Acts 7:59. It is the nail in the coffin of Bousset's theory. So it seems virtually certain that 'Jesus is Lord' (Rom. 10:9) was the characteristic theological affirmation of the early church about Jesus.

The Christologies of the Synoptic Evangelists

These post-date the earliest preaching, but they are best taken here because of the need to relate them to the teaching of Jesus himself.

The Synoptic Gospels possess a remarkable sobriety in their language and this is powerful evidence for their integrity. There is no attempt to glamorise the Person of Jesus or to bring excessive

⁴⁵ C.E. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983).

⁴⁶ J.A.T. Robinson, 'The Most Primitive Christology of all?' *Journal of Theological Studies* 7 (1956), 177–89.

⁴⁷ See, however, L. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord* (London: SCM, 1988) for a powerful presentation of evidence that the NT church worshipped Jesus as God.

emotional force to bear on the readers of the Passion story. In presenting the physical fact of the crucifixion, Mark simply says, 'they crucified him' (Mark 15:24), Luke 'there they crucified him' (Luke 23:33), while the words of Matthew 27:35, translated 'when they had crucified him' (NIV), actually constitute a prepositional phrase, giving them an even lowlier syntactical status. How amazing this is when we consider how central the cross is to NT theology!

The phrase 'Son of God' occurs in each of the Synoptics and in most significant contexts, for instance the Baptism, Temptation, Transfiguration, Trial, Crucifixion. One passage which is substantially parallel in two of them (Matt. 11:25–27; Luke 10:21, 22) seems Johannine and yet the textual evidence is very firm. In each of them, too, the Day of Questions closes with the challenge of Jesus as to the status of the Christ and his assertion that David called him 'Lord'.

R.T. France, writing of the many passages where Jesus assumes divine functions for himself, says,

*All this ... is evidence not of a formal claim to divinity so much as an assumption of a divine role which is the more impressive because it does not require argument or defence, and which occurs in a wide variety of Gospel traditions, Synoptic as well as Johannine.*⁴⁸

At the moment, we are citing this as evidence, not so much for the beliefs of Jesus about himself as of the beliefs of the Gospel-writers about him.

In addition, it is worth pointing out that Matthew and Luke record the Virgin Birth early in their accounts of the life of Jesus and in such a way as to make it clear that they regarded this as the birth of a divine Person. In this way they established a theological context for his life and ministry. Mark does not do this, but his first chapter appears to lay special stress on his exalted status as 'Son of God', 'Lord' and 'Holy One of God'.

Don Carson notes that Matthew 1:1 uses the anarthrous phrase, 'Jesus Christ', following the more usual style of the Epistles than the Gospels, which normally prefer the article. This shows his initial verse to be confessional rather than purely historical. He goes on,

*But whenever he describes the events of Jesus' ministry, during which 'Christ' was never a name in any real sense, he uses a titular form ... In short Matthew ably distinguishes between his own linguistic practice and christological understanding, and that enjoyed by the disciples during the days of Jesus' ministry.*⁴⁹

⁴⁸ 'The Worship of Jesus', in H.H. Rowdon (ed), *Christ the Lord*, 28.

⁴⁹ Don Carson, 'Christological Ambiguities in the Gospel of Matthew', in H.H. Rowdon (ed), *Christ the Lord*, 101.

The beliefs and teaching of Jesus about Himself.

This is the crucial issue. Cullmann wrote, 'The early Church believed in Christ's Messiahship only because it believed that Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah'.⁵⁰ We will concentrate on several issues here:

The teaching ministry of Jesus

Not even the most radical sceptics have denied a teaching ministry to Jesus. Not only was he a teacher but his teaching was often very memorable, either because of its form (in parables or pithy sayings) or its repetition, or its startlingly original nature, especially in giving a new interpretation to well-known OT material. So it would be most surprising if a great deal of it was not remembered in verbatim or near-verbatim form. In ancient times and especially among the Jews, memorising was important in the life of a great Teacher's disciple.

The role of Jesus as eschatological Prophet

There is much interest in this just now. This was, of course, the emphasis of the Consistent Eschatology school of Albert Schweitzer and Johannes Weiss a hundred years ago, and it has come into prominence again in the work of the Jesus Seminar and of Tom Wright. The Jesus Seminar has largely come to sceptical conclusions on the basis of it,⁵¹ while Tom Wright, knowing much of their work, is much more positive.⁵²

He maintains that to think of Jesus in this way is the best initial model for understanding him, but that we must study very carefully how he functioned in this role. He not only proclaimed God's judgement and salvation but both symbolised and, very importantly, actually effected them in his actions. So the cleansing of the temple was an actual judgement, even if it foreshadowed other judgements; the healing and exorcising miracles and ultimately the cross itself produced real blessing and salvation. In effecting and embodying such judgement and such salvation Jesus was actually embodying God himself. He says, for instance, that when Jesus offered forgiveness, such a practice had the effect of 'a private individual approaching a prisoner in jail and offering him a royal pardon, signed by himself'. He evidently believed 'he had to do and be, for Israel and the world, what, according to Scripture only YHWH himself could do and be'.

Anthony Thiselton develops a somewhat similar approach in applying speech-act theory to the sayings of Jesus. The whole Bible from Genesis 1 onwards testifies to the speech-acts of God, and

⁵⁰ Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament*, 8.

⁵¹ R.W. Funk, R.W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

⁵² N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996).

Jesus appears, through his speech-acts, to be identified as God. In christological terms, “My son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20; cf. Matt. 9:2) depends on a *state of affairs about the identity, role and authority of Jesus*. Thiselton says the same applies to his speech/acts of exorcism.⁵³

The filial consciousness of Jesus

Much of the discussion about the Christology of Jesus centres on this. In his discussion of ‘Abba’ as used by Jesus, Joachim Jeremias showed that Jesus possessed an intimate personal awareness of filial relationship to God which was quite unique, going much beyond anything in the OT or in later Judaism. It was linked to his messianic consciousness, but not submerged in it. It is not so much that because he was the Messiah he was God’s Son, as vice versa. Here is a divine person taking up an historical role.

We may add that some at least of his sayings in which he calls himself ‘Son of God’ could hardly be inauthentic. This is especially true of his words in Mark 13:32, which have caused problems for Christians down the ages and so could hardly have been the creation of the church. Often it is the difficulties of the Gospels that witness to their authenticity. The same is true of the four accounts of the day of Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

His use of the term ‘Lord’

The use of this term of himself is very rare in the words of Jesus, and is practically confined to the event at the close of the Day of Questions. It is however supported by a passage where he declares, ‘the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath (Mark 2:28; cf. Matt. 12:8; Luke 6:5). It was a monumental claim to assert lordship over the God-instituted sabbath. We should weigh passages rather than simply count them, and the Day of Questions passage is especially important, representing the virtual closing of his public teaching ministry.

The two terms ‘Son of God’ and ‘Lord’ are particularly exalted christological titles. The first appears to dominate the opening of his ministry in each Synoptic Gospel, and is important both in the baptismal and temptation narratives. The second has a controlling place at the close of his ministry as recorded in each. They therefore form a kind of *inclusio*. ‘Son of God’ comes across to us as a divine title emphasising the relationship of Jesus to the Father and ‘Lord’ as one underlining his relationship to the world and to human beings. This is peculiarly fitting, and there is no good reason, apart from strong historical scepticism, for denying either.

⁵³ A. Thiselton, ‘Christology in Luke, Speech-Act Theory, and the Problem of Dualism in Christology after Kant’ in Green and Turner (eds.), *Jesus of Nazareth*, 461.

Conclusion

The historical/theological issue

Martin Hengel makes a very good point when he says,

The basic question of New Testament Christology is: How did it come about that in the short space of twenty years the crucified Galilean Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, was elevated by his followers to a dignity which left every form of pagan-polytheistic apotheosis far behind? Pre-existence, Mediator of Creation and the revelation of his identity with the One God: this exceeds the possibilities of deification in a polytheistic pantheon.⁵⁴

Sometimes the simplest answer to a question is the best. Here it is that the Christology of the NT writers follows that of Jesus, simply bringing out its implications in some significant ways. C.H. Dodd, in ‘According to the Scriptures’, where he shows that the NT writers uniformly interpret the OT in terms of Christ, argues that such hermeneutical unity which was at the same time original, must show the influence of a powerful creative personality and says we need look no further than Jesus himself.⁵⁵ The same is true for the essential unity of the NT in the teaching it has about the nature of his Person.

The practical implications

What then are the practical implications for us today? If Jesus, in his full deity and true humanity, is central to the teaching of the NT and to his own, then Christian preaching should be as clearly ‘preaching Christ’ as that in Acts was. Moreover, we have the comforting assurance that this Man understands so fully what human life (with all its joys and sorrows) involves, while at the same time we are challenged to accept his Lordship over all life’s practical affairs and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, who indwelt Christ, to take up our cross daily and follow him.

⁵⁴ M. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, (E.T., Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1995), 383, 384.

⁵⁵ C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952).

Book Reviews

Pentateuch/Torah Mercer Commentary on the Bible Volume 1.

*Mills, Watson E. and Richard F. Wilson (eds.)
Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1998,
lviii + 226 pp., \$19.95/£14.99*

Packed with information, this volume, the first of a series, contains two sections: appropriate articles from the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (1990), then commentaries on the individual books of the Pentateuch from the *Mercer Commentary on the Bible* (1995).

The aim of this series is to provide convenient introductory texts for the classroom, and the editors achieve their purpose admirably. I have often thought that there is invaluable material in IVP's *New Bible Commentary* and *New Bible Dictionary*, but these are often inaccessible due to their cost, or inconvenient for classroom use on account of their size. They are meant to be reference works, and serve that purpose very well. It would be worthwhile for something like this to be attempted from NBC/NBD for theological students of conservative persuasion.

The volume under review is a well-organised and well-written book by some outstanding scholars in the field. The ten introductory articles deal with general themes such as cosmology, covenant, creation, etc., and are informative and comprehensive. Themes are presented in the light of biblical materials, and a general Hebrew/Christian idea is established before comparison is made with relevant ancient Near Eastern materials. While the articles are well

presented, a scepticism about sources, historical events and miracles is sometimes apparent (82, 93, 119–20, 146). For instance, information on the date, the plagues and the route of the Exodus is presented in a balanced way, but the literary interpretation of these stories is emphasised more than their historical possibility (xxviii, xxix). Similarly, the article on OT Law is comprehensive, but its abiding value is obscured by the final comments: 'Because it is historically conditioned, no law or interpretation of law can be considered privileged simply by its being attributed to divine origin' (xli). The article on Religion of Israel concentrates on prophetic assessment, and hardly mentions the cultic practices of Israel. On the other hand, the articles on The Ten Commandments and Moses are well presented in the light of the relevant ancient Near Eastern materials.

In the commentary section, each book is divided into logical sections and explained systematically though not verse by verse. The authors make every effort to get to the meaning of the text faithfully and explain clearly, without getting lost in the details of composition. All the authors follow the JEDP source analysis while acknowledging the possibility of reading the books synchronically. However, only lip service is paid to the contributions of Robert Alter, while no mention is made of the major critiques by Rolf Rendtorff and Norman Whybray. The influence of Albrecht Alt is still felt in the interpretation of covenant stories as myths (e.g. Gen. 15, pp. 33–35), ignoring R.S. Hess's study in *He Swore an Oath* (1993). Regarding

clean and unclean animals in Leviticus, Mary Douglas's anthropological interpretation is taken as the 'most credible explanation' (131), ignoring alternative explanations by Walter Houston in *Purity and Monotheism* (1993).

There are a number of errors, e.g. 'Isaac', not 'Jacob' (54); 'four decades', not 'four centuries' (72). Also, the incomplete bibliographic information and the lack of a list of abbreviations assume that the MCB and MDB are accessible to the reader, which is not always the case. But on the whole, this volume is to be highly commended for what it achieves within its limited scope. It is perhaps the most convenient textbook for a classroom setting.

Augustine Pagolu

South Asia Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore

From the Ancient Sites of Israel. Essays On Archaeology, History and Theology

*T. Eskola and E. Junkkaala (eds.)
Helsinki: Theological Institute of Finland, 1998,
197 pp., 100 FIM*

This book is a tribute to the memory of Aapeli Saarisalo (1896–1986), pioneering biblical archaeologist and Professor of Oriental Literature at the University of Helsinki, Finland. The collection of essays is itself representative of Saarisalo's archaeological and biblical interests.

In the first essay, Heikki Palva offers a good introduction to Saarisalo's explorations and scholarly publications, while Moshe Kochavi, Rafael Frankel and Zvi Gal in the next three essays write on the subjects of their own research in Galilee and the Golan, the regions of Saarisalo's pioneering research. Kochavi describes how the ancient Bashan-Akko highway followed different routes in the Bronze and Iron Ages respectively. Frankel reexamines

the relevant lists of the Israelite tribal territories, arguing that they are geo-political divisions which largely reflect those of earlier periods, and that the territory of Asher was the continuation of the Canaanite city kingdoms of Akko and Achshaph mentioned in the Amarna letters. Gal argues that the bedouins' agricultural landscape in the Nahal Zippori area is a relic of ancient times, demonstrating the relationship between settlers and environment in antiquity. Though difficult for the non-specialist, these articles – together with the following technical essay by Mikko Louhivuori on the mapping of ancient sites – offer interesting insights and perspectives on geographical and topographical matters. However, it is unfortunate that several of the maps are almost unreadable and of little help.

In the next three essays, Alan Millard, Antti Laato and Eero Junkkaala discuss the relation between Near Eastern archaeology and the Bible. Millard is well aware of the problems of bringing the biblical and the ANE material together, but argues convincingly that, since the biblical books reflect similar ancient contexts, it is logical to read them in the light of knowledge about the ANE. Millard offers the reader exciting examples from his own field of Assyriology, arguing for the possibility and probability of Israelite religious practices as they are described (and dated) in the OT. Laato and Junkkaala take us right into the hot issue of current OT scholarship, the question of biblical Israel's origins. Noting the crucial distinction between the date of the extant OT texts and the date of their content, Laato argues convincingly that the comparative material does not preclude the possibility of an early monotheistic Yahwism in Israel. This is an important and much needed contribution to the discussion on Israel's religion and history. Junkkaala begins his article with a brief introduction to the so-called paradigm shift in historical

studies related to the OT. This is perhaps too brief, since ranking Van Seters together with Davies, Thompson, and Lemche as proponents of a new paradigm hardly does justice to his quite different approach to the historical questions and the biblical texts. Junkkaala proceeds to give solid arguments for an early origin of biblical Israel on the basis of the archaeological and epigraphical data. However, he does not discuss or refute the key principle of the proponents of the new paradigm, namely that the biblical texts are useless as historical sources to the early history of Israel.

In the final essay, Timo Eskola has a most readable discussion of another hot issue, the question of the 'works of the Law' of Paul. He argues that Paul introduced a radical reformation of the positive and synergistic concept of *Avodat Israel* in contemporary Judaism. Instead of solving the problem within the frames of covenantal theology, as does Sanders, Eskola suggests that it is the polarization between man's sin and God's grace in Paul's letters which confronts the traditional Jewish faith with a new gospel. Paul interprets the *Avodat Israel* as a negative effort, useless as regards salvation, thus emphasising the saving act of Christ.

Jens Bruun Kofoed

Copenhagen Lutheran School of Theology

The publisher has informed me that only a few copies are left for sale. For further information contact The Theological Institute of Finland

Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy New Studies in Biblical Theology 6

J. Gary Millar
Leicester: Apollos, 1998,
216 pp., £12.99

Deuteronomy: The God Who Keeps Promises

Paul Barker
Melbourne: Acorn Press, 1998,
104 pp.

These books on Deuteronomy share a common purpose: to demonstrate the relevance of Deuteronomy to a modern Christian audience. The authors share the conviction that the OT in general, and Deuteronomy in particular, speaks a timeless message to the Church. Both succeed in communicating that relevance.

Millar's volume is a substantially revised version of his doctoral thesis. He argues that Deuteronomy can and should be understood as presenting a coherent theological and ethical message. He begins with a helpful introduction to the study of OT ethics, including a brief history of earlier work and an analysis of the difficulties involved in such an enterprise. He concludes that understanding 'Old Testament ethics' involves first analysis of the ethical stance or stances of the biblical text (the exegetical task), then synthesis of the material, and finally its application. His book concentrates almost exclusively on the first two aspects.

Analysis of the text begins with an examination of the significance of covenant in Deuteronomy. He notes that, while the book is not a treaty document, the idea of covenant is an important description of Yahweh's relationship with Israel. This has ethical implications as it demonstrates that Israel must

respond to Yahweh's initiative in establishing a relationship with her.

Millar then describes the significance of the idea of 'journey' in Deuteronomy, arguing that the book presents the people as being always on a journey. They are a people ever 'on the move,' as they listen to the Lord and respond in obedience. Moses' preaching in the framework (chs 1-11 and 27-34) demonstrates that Israel is to be ever at Moab, the place and time of decision, and can either move towards the promised land in obedience, or away from it through rebellion.

The idea of journey allows the laws to take on new theological and ethical significance. They allow Israel to keep 'moving forward' in obedience to God, even after she has settled in the land. Millar makes a persuasive case for the careful theological integration of the so-called law code of chapters 12-26 with the rest of Deuteronomy, demonstrating that the laws further the theological argument of the framework.

His final two chapters deal with 'the nations' in Deuteronomy and the issue of human nature. Millar succeeds in presenting a balanced picture of Deuteronomy's view of the nations without minimising the serious concerns that are raised for modern readers with regard to the destruction of the Canaanites. Concerning human nature, he shows that Deuteronomy presents human nature as utterly flawed and in need of transformation by God. But the book promises just such a transformation in chapter 30, and so is ultimately to be seen as a book of hope and optimism.

Barker's book traces the idea of Yahweh keeping promises in Deuteronomy. He follows this theme throughout the book in six chapters. He too, sees theological coherence in Deuteronomy. His analysis of the text is clear and concise, but never trivial. He does not detain himself with in-depth

treatment of complex critical questions, but rather always seeks to make the meaning of the text plain. He also shows important connections between Deuteronomy and the teaching of the NT.

Most helpful, however, is Barker's application of Deuteronomy to modern life. Each chapter concludes with several relevant study questions designed to allow the reader to apply the message of the book to his or her life. In addition, Barker uses masterful analogies and illustrations in his explication of the text which makes the text clear and further demonstrates its relevance. It is ideal for use in a church setting (the study questions provide much fuel for discussion), or for an individual who seeks to understand this key book better.

These books are valuable resources for students who wish to understand Deuteronomy better and for pastors who want to communicate its message to a postmodern world.

Peter T. Vogt

Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, Cheltenham

Joshua, A Commentary

Richard D. Nelson, OTL
Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997,
310 pp., h/b., £29.95

The overwhelming impression given by this commentary is that the author is an expert in his field. His own translation, backed by detailed comments on the Hebrew text, the extensive bibliography with further references in footnotes, and the depth and extent of the indices combine to convey a powerful sense of authority, and a mastery of the text. There is a formidable mass of well-researched and well-presented detail here.

Nelson's views may therefore cause us some dismay. The book of Joshua, we are told, is literary and theological,

but not historical. 'Joshua's account of a large-scale invasion and conquest of Canaan by Israel ... cannot be supported by the archaeological evidence' (2-3, 4). Rather this 'chronicle of brutality and genocide' (2) witnesses to what later generations believed happened to their ancestors (4-5). It is historiography, designed to create and support the identity of the people it calls all Israel (15).

At the same time, the text of the book is clearly the product of a multilayered tradition and a process of literary growth (1), and it is possible to reverse some of the later editing with confidence (5-7, 12-13), particularly by comparing the Hebrew and Greek versions and removing the obvious scribal expansions of each, on the basis that the shorter reading is better (23).

All this is expressed as if no other view were tenable. If I were to accept Nelson's thesis, as the depth of his scholarship encourages me to do, then my trust in the text as witnessing to the acts of the God that Jesus described as our loving heavenly father would be severely dented if not destroyed. And yet, he appears both highly knowledgeable and supremely confident in his views, and not to be lightly dismissed. No wonder I feel threatened by what I read!

In fact, each point of view summarised above can be balanced by another. Archaeology cannot prove or disprove anything with the degree of certainty claimed. Unearthed stones and artefacts need to be interpreted, and there will be different opinions as to the correct reading of each riddle. Even Nelson's own index of archaeological sites has the word 'probably' against a quarter of the sites. So to claim that archaeology rules out an invasion is to go too far.

To talk of brutality and genocide is to ignore the Bible's own explanation of the conquest, found in Genesis 15:16. This key text appears not to be quoted

in the commentary, which is a serious omission, since much of the OT story is illuminated by it.

Those who attempt to isolate previous sources of a text in a dead language from a distant culture would do well to ponder Dame Helen Gardner's remark that this is 'like trying to weave ropes in sand' (Oxford: *The Business of Criticism*, 1959, 120). They should also note E.V. Rieu's sadly neglected discussion about layers of editing in his introduction to *The Iliad* written as long ago as 1950, (Harmondsworth). And to describe the conquest of Jericho as a foundational myth (68) is to run the risk of committing the mistake so ably exposed by C.S. Lewis in his essay 'Fernseed and Elephants'.

The weakness of this commentary lies in the overuse of phrases such as 'there can be no doubt that' (41), 'obvious redactional links' (91), 'it is almost certain that' (147). Few things in biblical studies are certain! Having said that, its strength lies in the clear, precise and painstaking way in which the author has presented his case. It is as good an introduction to the views of OT authorship associated with Noth's Deuteronomistic History theory that one could hope for, even if its underlying assumptions are not always sustainable.

It seems to me that if one compares this commentary with, say, Cranfield on Romans, it becomes evident that a dogmatic approach is less helpful than one where the author presents different possibilities with the pros and cons of each, and encourages readers to decide for themselves. Let those who aspire to write commentaries please take note.

David F. Pennant
Woking

Hear, my Son: Teaching and Learning in Proverbs 1-9 (New Studies in Biblical Theology 4)

Daniel J. Estes
Leicester: Apollos, 1997,
174 pp., £10.99.

The Message of Proverbs: Wisdom for Life (The Bible Speaks Today)

David Atkinson.
Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996,
173 pp., £8.99.

These two books are designed to help readers apply the teaching of Proverbs to their lives. Daniel Estes focuses on the broad theme of Education in Proverbs 1-9. He first describes the Yahweh-centred worldview of these chapters, outlining the implications for the themes of creation, order, rationality and the fear of Yahweh. Estes then applies this basis to different aspects of education. Its *values* should be centred in Yahweh, since his wisdom is the prime value and the objective standard by which every facet of life is measured. Its *goals* are to make the learner a mature godly person rather than to transmit specific knowledge, since God's wisdom will inevitably lead to a better life in personal and social respects. Hence its *curriculum* encompasses Yahweh's direct revelation, instruction by godly teachers, and personal observations. *Instruction* builds on the authority of the teacher and heavily involves students in the learning process by presenting them with the choice to act wisely, that is, in line with the teacher's instruction. Accordingly, the *teacher* is foremost a guide who leads the learner in accordance with his maturity, while the *learner* must value the teacher, listen attentively, value wisdom by embracing the way of Yahweh, and assimilate wisdom in his life.

While Estes draws heavily on other authors, the book nevertheless presents a helpful overview of the values of Christian education in an institutional setting. The book's structure of exposition and summary makes it easy to comprehend, and the extensive bibliography provides the opportunity for further study.

David Atkinson covers the whole book of Proverbs, concentrating on the theme of Wisdom. In a refreshing way he first portrays Wisdom as 'a personification of a particular aspect of the nature of God' (170), explaining how each verse that thematises Wisdom contributes to its portrait. Wisdom is God's way of educating his people. It builds on God's creation, and can be discerned in everyday life. Atkinson shows the significance of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 for the teenager and young adult, addressing topics such as sexuality, laziness and relationship to parents. He discusses the collection of proverbs in 10:1-22:16, its significance for learning from wisdom, its main themes of love, justice and the fear of the Lord, how various proverbs relate to these themes, and how they may be applied to everyday life today to form Christian character. Here he explains in some detail the significance of Wisdom for topics such as marriage, family, diligence, health, security, materialism, speech and freedom, setting them in the wider context of the NT where appropriate. The section on the 'Words of the Wise' (Prov. 22-24) continues the discussion of Wisdom's values, with some additional points. Treatment of the remaining chapters (25-31), however, is rather condensed, being restricted to individual proverbs, headings and keywords.

With its concentration on Wisdom, this is not a full commentary on Proverbs; much more could be said about the biblical book. Nevertheless, it is a well-worked reflection on Wisdom as the message of Proverbs.

and an application of this message to everyday life.

Wolfgang Bluedorn
Cheltenham

Isaiah 1-39 and Isaiah 40-66 (Westminster Bible Companion)

W. Brueggemann
Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox
Press, 1998, x + 314 pp., \$20/£15;
x + 263 pp., \$18/£13.95

Brueggemann is generally regarded as one of today's most creative and exciting OT scholars. He recently produced a massive *Old Testament Theology* with which I expect to be interacting for the next twenty years – or as long as I've got. This commentary is for non-specialists, who will nevertheless have to be quite serious about seeking to understand the OT. Brueggemann espouses a 'canonical approach': he expounds the final form of the text including only a minimum of critical information and argument. So there are several passing references to what scholars have said about the date and authorship of certain sections, but the whole book of Isaiah, complete with editorial additions and arrangements, is taken seriously as part of the Christian canon. I found little emphasis on canonical concerns such as a found in Brevard Childs' work (whom he avoids mentioning when he introduces his own canonical approach). Generally he deals with texts as they come – indeed he regards this as the place where the power and importance of Isaiah lies – but does not give much attention to the structure and progression of thought of larger sections.

The arrangement adopted is: brief introduction to a fairly large section of text; then smaller sections of the (NRSV) text – usually in full; comment on these sections. The comment usually reads like a (helpful) extended paraphrase of the section, with additional comments.

Those who have read Brueggemann before will immediately recognise his style and favourite vocabulary, e.g. 'massive', 'odd', 'theologically freighted', 'articulate', 'construal', including many unusual (striking or 'odd') juxtapositions of abstract nouns with qualifying adjectives. Thus we have 'Yahweh in awesome, ferocious power', 'intense mobilization', 'odd slippage', 'abrupt devastating reversal', 'saturated with the severity of Yahweh', 'concrete practicality' (30, 34f., 37), etc. In the commentary (but not the translation) he uses 'Yahweh' regularly and avoids the use of masculine imagery or pronouns for God. I wonder why he is so accommodating to feminists but not to Jews (though I do recall a remark of an American friend after a feminist seminar: 'If they find out I've had a male child I'm in trouble!').

Unlike many commentators today, Brueggemann regularly relates the message of Isaiah to the contemporary world, either explicitly or, quite often, neatly and subtly, by his graphic choice of words, e.g. 'inexorable workings of economic processes'. Although concrete application is not usually offered, readers will not fail to make connections with their own situation.

Two examples of the commentary may illustrate my overall reaction. First, the section Isaiah 7-11, which contains several 'child' passages, including the famous 'virgin' passage (7:14) and the child 'whose name shall be called ... Mighty God ...' (9:6). Surely they need to be interpreted together, but Brueggemann deals with chapters 7-11 as part of 5:1 - 10:4 (6:1 - 9:7 as a possible insertion at a later time) plus 10:5-34 plus 11:1-16. Brueggemann remarks that the 'church's subsequent development of the interpretation of the virgin ... cannot be said to be 'wrong', but it can be said to go in a quite fresh direction, surely other than the Isaiah text itself. This looks very much like what I would call 'wrong' and I'd like to know why Brueggemann thinks

otherwise. However, he doesn't tell us. I think that he actually misunderstands this section by failing to note that 'Immanuel' signifies very bad short term news for a sinful people. Only in 8:9-10 do we get a positive longer term hope associated with 'God with us'. There is again a great deal that is illuminating and thought provoking, e.g. 'The sign (7:11) is "a visible gesture" whereby the theological claim of God is made concrete and therefore inescapable', but Brueggemann waves aside matters that are precious to many Christians: 'it is undoubtedly clear that the status of virginity is not of any interest or importance for the sign of Isaiah'. The commentary would not, in my opinion, serve well as one's only commentary on Isaiah.

The same conclusion follows from looking at 52:13 - 53:12. The text is 'undeniably *inaccessible and without clear meaning*' (his italics), that 'interpretation is completely bewildered by the specificity of the text that we simply do not understand' and that neither 'Christian nor Jew knows how to decode this poetry'. He confesses to being a Christian but almost apologises that his reading may be 'more Christian than I know or intend'. He describes the broad themes and outlines the action in terms of the servant's death for others and continuing life, commenting on parts of the text and omitting others. All that is fine but I want to say: 'We do understand this text. Until well into the Christian era both Jews and Christians understood it to be a prophecy of the Messiah. It gives a picture of a person that only Jesus fulfils.' Perhaps that doesn't count as understanding?

Overall: plenty of good stuff for everyone and plenty of disappointment for people like me.

Mike Butterworth
Bicester

The Books of Esther

Charles V. Dorothy
Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, JSOT, 1997,
384 pp., h/b., £50.

Charles Dorothy has given himself two tasks: a microstructural analysis of Esther, and a source critical history of the books of Esther.

Microstructural analysis is a new way of studying the text in its final edition. It examines the small grammatical markers such as 'and', 'after this', sentence endings and tense changes. This method is useful for finding either the subconscious structure of the original author or the fine-tuned structure of the final editor.

The microstructural analysis is an especially valuable part of this book, because there are very few published attempts at such analysis at present. I know of only two other published works so far: Ekkehardt Müller, *Microstructural analysis of Revelation 4-1* (Berrien Springs, Andrews UP, 1994); and Daniel Hojoon Ryou, *Zephaniah's oracles against the nations: a synchronic and diachronic study of Zephaniah 2:1 - 3:8* (Leiden, Brill, 1995). Others are working on similar projects, but this is a very young discipline.

Dorothy's microstructural analysis of Esther is reported in great detail, but without much space given to the methodology. This would have been very useful, especially as there is not yet any consensus about how to go about this task. It also would have been useful to have a macrostructural analysis, though, as he says, one could abstract it from his microstructural details. He does give some guidelines to microstructural analysis in his first chapter, which also contains a good summary of different types of text criticism. He discusses the many ways to study a text, by analysing genre, redaction, narrative structure, plot structure, and finally microstructure. This overview is necessary because the rest

of Dorothy's work is concerned with source criticism, using mainly the tools of form criticism and plot structure.

The source criticism of Esther is an equally valuable task. The title of the book indicates the extreme problems involved in the source criticism of Esther. We have four versions of Esther: Hebrew Esther (EH), Esther in the Septuagint (which Dorothy calls *o'*, the Greek siglum for 70), Esther in the Lucianic LXX (L) and Josephus' version. Dorothy does not state exactly what he means by the LXX in distinction to L, but he appears to depend on Hanhart's work in the Göttingen Septuagint.

Dorothy argues that the Lucianic text cannot be attributed to Lucian, and that it preserves very old readings, including some from the pre-LXX Old Greek. He argues that each of these sources must be taken seriously, and we should not continue to speak of the Greek 'additions' to Esther, which is how the Greek versions are presented in the Apocrypha. He concludes that the different versions of Esther are collections of 'different traditional elements which existed within a larger matrix, probably comprised by several communities' (296). These elements were collected from a 'narrative pool'. The earliest material is probably the Semitic *Urtext* which existed in two forms which were translated into Greek in the Lucianic text and the LXX.

He convincingly suggests that the text of Esther was structured on an Egyptian form called a Royal Novella. He traces several stages of development, from the merging of an 'Esther' source and a 'Mordecai' source to form the Royal Novella, followed by various stages of editing, culminating in the addition of 9:1-19. This addition, which took place in various stages, was used to make the story into an origin for the Feast of Purim. This addition can be dated to the period of Jewish independence in

164-68 BCE, but it is difficult to date the earlier stages.

The two tasks in this book, the microstructural analysis and the source criticism, do not sit comfortably next to each other. It is difficult to know how microstructural analysis could be used for source criticism, except perhaps by comparing two styles of final editing (which he does not do). The two tasks are both useful in themselves, and they are both significant contributions to the study of Esther, but they are really two separate endeavours.

David Instone Brewer
Tyndale House, Cambridge

Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension: Pragmatics, Poetics and Polemics in a Narrative Sequence about David (2 Samuel 5.17-7.29). JSOTS 264

Donald F. Murray
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998,
260 pp., h/b., £55/\$85

Murray's extensive close reading of 2 Samuel 5.17 - 7.29 focuses on literary interpretation and on expounding how a royal political ideology promoted by David clashes with a more basic prophetic world view.

Murray's thesis is that the polemical rhetoric of the section polarizes David and Yahweh in their opposing views on royal rights and divine authority in relation to the temple and the dynasty. After introducing methods and perspectives, and delimiting the unit of study (ch. 1), Murray comments on text criticism and linguistic issues (ch. 2). Three middle sections are verse by verse readings of each chapter (chs 3-5,) which are then neatly summarised around the opposed notions of king (*melek*) and leader (*nāgīd*) (ch. 6). Murray then presents comparative ANE texts dealing with the role of kings in temple-building as a

transtextual context (ch. 7) and then the view of kingship and leadership in Samuel as an intratextual context (ch. 8). All is sharpened in a final reflection on the supreme mediacy of the prophetic word (ch. 9).

The monograph reads exceptionally well as a commentary and as an ideological attack on any attempt at temple-building. The treatments of royal ideology and leadership are pearls in their own right. The language is beautiful and non-technical, with wordplays on Derrida's key terms *différance* and *déférence*. At the same time, deconstruction is simply dismissed as counter to communication (21 n. 5). This last point well illustrates Murray's style; with technicalities summarised in helpful figures or relegated to footnotes. The advantage is that he communicates extremely well, the disadvantage that one is completely at his mercy. Murray could be much more informative, but never breaks his delightful flow of language to prove it.

My greatest disappointment is that the title led me to expect an informed discussion of pragmatics and how it differs from literary readings. But Murray simply footnotes 4 key works on pragmatics (20 n. 4, cf. 116 on Blakemore), and one has to read his commentary to get some understanding of his use of terms like performative (70, 185), implicature (21-34, 191, 291, 300 etc), context (118), cohesion (191), indirection (169), topic (172). Despite a glossary of technical terms (317-19) and an extensive index, this is a long way from a proper introduction to these terms. Murray seems well-read in pragmatics, but he hides it well!

The same problem pertains to the lack of interaction with other scholars in the commentary. This results in a stream-lined interpretation, with David in a bad light in 2 Samuel 6 - 7a. Those with misgivings about an almost Hegelian reading in terms of thesis (5), anti-thesis (6-7:1 ff.) and synthesis (7:5 ff.) are not afforded an

alternative. It is interpretation as hit and run, albeit in a stylistic slow motion. It bothers me that he has to erase 7:13 to make his interpretation work (198). Messianic theology is not treated at all.

In sum, the monograph is very well written and has many superb readings helpful to the average student. Due to the neglect of scholarship on pragmatics and interpretation, it is primarily useful for the literary reading of 2 Samuel, where it has its own polemical voice against David and the temple.

Nicolai Winther-Nielsen,
Lutheran School of Theology,
Aarhus, Denmark

**Order Amid Chaos:
Jeremiah as Symbolic Tapestry
(The Biblical Seminary 57)**

Louis Stulman
Sheffield Academic Press, 1998,
204 pp., £13.95

This book argues that Jeremiah has a coherent theological purpose. Unlike much critical scholarship, Stulman sees the prose sermons of Jeremiah (on which he has written a more technical monograph) not as inferior and secondary to the poetic oracles, but as the key to the book's organisation and thus its message. The specific thesis is that Jeremiah consists of two scrolls (cf. Jer. 36), namely chapters 1-25 and chapters 26-52. In each case the poetic sections, which bespeak a 'wild and undomesticated God' (53, 187), are framed by prose, imposing theological order on the book. Thus Judah's experience of chaos in the Babylonian invasions and their consequences is expressed in the poetry, and her theologising about her future with God is contained in the prose.

The first scroll (1-25) is dominated by judgement on Judah's corrupt institutions. It 'aims at dismantling the state religion's major symbol

system and domain assumptions' (53). This aim is traced systematically through successive sections, which target in turn temple, covenant, land, election, and Davidic dynasty. Jeremiah's own suffering at the hands of members of his own community expresses both Yahweh's pain and theirs, as they begin to face the anguish of his rejection of them.

The second scroll (26-52) expresses hope for a future beyond the collapse of traditional Judah. Jeremiah's own role in his relations with members of the hierarchy of Judah (especially in ch. 26) begins to demonstrate the different nature of the renewed community, incorporating an element of suffering which Jeremiah himself embodies. There is a further challenge to old ways of thinking in that 'insiders' become 'outsiders', that is, members of the 'elect' community have been responsible for its rejection by God, while 'outsiders' (Babylon) become the means of its salvation.

All of this is well enough said, if not quite new. Stulman captures well some of the movements within the book. One movement is plainly chronological, as a history unfolds from Josiah's reform to the community's scattering by Babylon. More interestingly, there is a movement from 'orality' to writing, that is, from the prophet urging the people to repent, to the written word whose 'hearers' are readers. This shift, articulated within the discourse (ch. 36 again), alters the notion of audience, and helps determine the meaning of the book.

The book is least satisfactory in its vision of the new community, which the author calls a 'Judaism of Redemption'. This vision features continuity with the past yet 'modernisation', adapting to new diverse circumstances. It has four elements: (i) a critique of monarchical institutions; (ii) a new egalitarianism; (iii) a recasting of religious values, with idolatry including the straitjacketing of God and community suffering as a

witness to divine rule; (iv) Scripture as a new unifying symbol for the dispersed communities (180-84).

This makes Jeremiah too much a programme for Torah-Judaism. Certainly Stulman correctly highlights the critique of Judah's institutions, and his redefinition of idolatry is apposite. It is also true that Scripture becomes a new standard for the community. However, 'egalitarianism' does not do justice to all the data, especially in Jeremiah 30-33 (this aspect is truer for Deuteronomy). Images of restored king and priests are regarded as untypical, dim voices that still privilege certain groupings in community life (180-81). In fact, far too little weight is put on the promise of restoration. The lineaments of Jeremiah 30-33 are almost ignored, as is the force of the highly political Oracles against the Nations. There is little too on the election of Israel, and the exilic literature's development of the way it can witness to the nations. The conclusion focuses almost entirely on the problem of suffering, at the expense of the concept of God's rule in the world, though this is where the vision of Jeremiah begins and ends (as the author initially pointed out). Jeremiah faces the chaos and does not entirely resolve it. God remains wild and untameable, the book's powerful achievement (though the meaning of this repeated idea is never quite clear). This is no doubt helpful enough as an encouragement to confront 'chaos' in experience and maintain faith. But it seems to foreclose the possibility of New Covenant being a new beginning to the story of God's rule in the world, a rule that issues in time in the kingdom of the Messiah.

Gordon McConville

Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education

The Message of Nehemiah. God's Servant in a Time of Change (BST)

Raymond Brown
Leicester: IVP, 1998,
256 pp., £9.99

As the thirty-seventh volume, this book joins a long established series that has a distinctive place among Bible commentaries. Having already contributed two volumes (on Deuteronomy and Hebrews), Brown is evidently comfortable with the series style, producing a book that is extremely easy to read. In keeping with that style, the discussion of background material and technical issues is especially brief: a mere four pages, in which he adopts a traditional conservative position. The emphasis in this series lies instead on overall themes (eight pages of introduction) and a consideration of the relevance of Nehemiah to contemporary society (another four and a half pages), an emphasis that continues throughout the volume.

Brown's study divides Nehemiah into two sections - rebuilding the walls (chs 1-7) and reforming the community (chs 8-13) - with the alliterative section headings suggesting the sermonic origin of much of the commentary. In place of a verse by verse analysis, the series style considers larger portions of the biblical text. Brown neatly dovetails the narrative into his commentary on the events before moving smoothly and easily to their implications. The ease with which some points are related to examples from recent church history and the challenges of modern life serves as an excellent model. Overall, though, I would have preferred it if the analysis had given more illustrations from and applications to contemporary life - at times it barely moves beyond 5th century BCE Israel. Chapter 13 (on Neh. 10:30-39), for instance, includes a short evaluation of the contemporary state of marriage but

otherwise barely looks beyond the Bible for expansions.

Nehemiah's uncompromising approach to faith and life makes for a commentary that will readily challenge the attitudes of readers. Whilst I occasionally found the exegesis over detailed - for instance, a full two pages on the nature and variety of fear from the statement 'I was very much afraid' (Neh. 2:2) - most of it is solidly based in the overall thrust of the biblical text. Brown's study on Nehemiah 3 is especially effective, finding relevant comments in such mundane source material. Even if some of those examples betray Brown's generation, ethical considerations are clearly drawn out and precisely stated without a heavy-handed moralism. Indeed, there are occasions when Brown could have been much firmer when stating important implications, but he apparently prefers to be under-stated and to leave readers to draw their own conclusions.

As with so many of the volumes in this series, this book functions well in two ways: first, as a source of private devotional reading with significantly more bite than the popular publications; second, as a source for ideas for developing preachers. If in the past Nehemiah has always seemed to this reader to be rather like a super-saint - always doing just the right thing, his faith always triumphant, always dependent on God through prayer and spiritual discipline - what I gained from this study was an appreciation of Nehemiah as a person beset with problems. This picture is one I can relate to and has given me renewed impetus to investigate these memoirs.

John Wilks

London Bible College, Northwood

Families in Ancient Israel

L.G. Perdue, J. Blenkinsopp, J.G. Collins and C. Meyers
Westminster, John Knox Press, 1997,
xiii + 285 pp.

Families in the New Testament World

C. Osiek and D.L. Balch
Westminster, John Knox Press, 1997,
x + 329 pp.

These two books are part of a series entitled 'The Family, Religion and Culture' which seeks to present findings about the family in the Bible using social-scientific methods, archaeological findings, epigraphic and non-Biblical literary data. They bring together disparate material in coherent form, isolate and clarify a hitherto neglected biblical theme and are a useful source to inform and extend contemporary debate about the family. In a nutshell, these are an excellent pair of books, well worth buying if you are interested in the subject and well worth careful reading.

The first three chapters of *Families in Ancient Israel* explore the family in three periods: 1200-1000 BC (Meyers), the first Temple era (Blenkinsopp) and the second Temple era (Collins). An important finding is that, in the period of the first Temple, measures were taken which increasingly concentrated power in the monarchy at the expense of the family. The fourth chapter presents a summary and conclusions (Perdue) and the final chapter (also Perdue) seeks to extend the findings of chapters 1-4 to contemporary life, offering some 'critical ethical reflection' (246).

The book argues that the key to understanding the family in the Hebrew Scriptures is the household (better rendered as 'family household', 'extended household' or 'compound family'), which functioned in the context of two other social units, the

clan and the tribe. The household, which was multi-generational, patrilineal and patrilocal, served economic needs (it provided labour for the economic survival of the family) and was held together by an ethic of solidarity, grounded in mutual interdependence. The book offers a very good social description of the family in ancient Israel.

Additionally, the book argues that 'the family household became the social matrix for shaping much of the Hebrew Bible's understanding of God, Israel and the world ... [and] that the social reality of the household became the major crucible in which a great deal of Old Testament theology and ethics was formed' (x).

The conclusion of the book is that the Israelite family 'provided the primary locus for human existence, social interaction, social roles, moral value, and religious belief arising from its 'corporate identity and solidarity'; it is these characteristics of the ancient Israelite family which, in the view of the authors, may provide a 'social basis for contemporary ethical action' by modern families (253).

Families in the New Testament World contains a wealth of material about the social background of the Graeco-Roman world of the New Testament and seeks to understand the family within that context. The breadth of background material is distilled into readable and accessible form. There are helpful illustrations and photographs. This reviewer read the book for pleasure and was reluctant to put it down!

Part I looks at the Graeco-Roman household in relation to archaeology, social anthropology and the social world of the first century. Part II explores early Christian families and house churches in the context of the social location of early Christians, gender roles, marriage and celibacy, education and learning, slavery and family life, meals and hospitality. The authors conclude that the family

was used as the model for the church, and they explore both the advantages and disadvantages of this model.

The reviewer had odd points of disagreement, e.g. the assumption (117) that Romans 16:7 refers to a woman, Junia, not to a man, Junias. Also, it is obvious that modern questions are being asked of texts that were addressing quite different questions. Osiek and Balch are well aware of this difficulty - see page 174, for example. The conclusion they draw is that few Christian writers 'were interested in the family as such, but rather in family and household as image and proving ground of the church' (215). The authors quite properly begin with understanding the texts as we have them and then move on to explore the inferences of those texts to understand better families and family life in the NT world. As a result, useful information can be inferred from the material we have.

Osiek and Balch's book is highly recommended and deserves a wide readership. No student interested in the Graeco-Roman background of the NT should ignore it.

Anthony Bash
Hull University

Economic Keystones. The Weight System of the Kingdom of Judah

Raz Kletter
Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998,
299 pp., h/b., £46.00.

'The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight' (Pr. 11:1, NIV). It was far more difficult to regulate weights and measures in ancient than in modern societies. Systems varied from place to place, sometimes being very localised, giving freedom for fraud. The Bible often refers to the shekel, the common ancient Semitic weight, also to the 'royal shekel' and the 'shekel of the sanctuary'. Babylonian and Egyptian kings issued officially approved

weight stones, duly marked, to control standards.

Hundreds of small stone weights have been found in the Holy Land, many marked with symbols, numerals and denominations. Famously, recovery of some marked *pym* has elucidated the translation of 1 Samuel 13:21. These weights are the subject of Kletter's volume, primarily a study of archaeological material. He has listed every example he could trace, 434 in all, cataloguing them in two appendices. Many have no known provenance, but a considerable number were found in archaeological excavations, almost all within Judah. Where the excavated examples can be dated, most come from seventh century BC contexts, although a few may be slightly earlier. Kletter presents all this information and discusses critically earlier attempts to understand the weights. He concludes that all belong to one system. There was a shekel of 11.33 grams, with weights in multiples of 2, 4, 8, 12, 16, 24 and 40, sub-divisions of netseph (5/6), payim (2/3) and beqa' (1/2). Gerah units, probably 24 (as in Babylonia), made a shekel and weights of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 gerah are reported. This conclusion is sensible and economical, contrasting with previous studies which held that the weights belonged to different systems. Kletter suggests the system began in Hezekiah's reign, possibly under the impact of Assyrian domination, and was perhaps related to trade with Egypt.

The names were engraved in ancient Hebrew script, a symbol for 'shekel' and Egyptian hieratic numerals for other values. According to Kletter, the Egyptian numerals were read at face value on gerah weights, but weights of 4 shekels and above were marked with hieratic numerals for 5 and above, apparently indicating the equivalent of the shekels in Egyptian *qedet*. He observes, 'The duality of the numerals ... probably caused fewer headaches to the Judaeans than

to modern scholars (including the present one).

The stone weights are quite small in value, the smallest, 2 gerah, being only 1.7 grams, the most common being the 1, 2, 4 and 8 shekel, that is, up to 90.6 grams. Weights of the same value vary by about 5%. In daily life presumably such weights were used for transactions in precious metals and other costly goods, precious stones, spices and incense.

Among unanswered questions is the value of the 'shekel of the sanctuary' comprising 20 gerahs. Kletter treats this as 'late' because the references come in Exodus 30:13 ('P') and Ezekiel 45:12, and so apparently outside the range of his study. Yet Ezekiel was exiled from Judah before the fall of Jerusalem, when Kletter argues the 24 gerah shekel disappeared, so the prophet would have known it and his statement does not imply the 20 gerah shekel was an innovation. The 'royal shekel' (2 Sam. 14:26) does not receive enough attention; no more may be intended than assertion that the weight was of official standard.

Kletter has performed a useful service by setting the study of these stones in order, making clear that there is room for more research into the economy of Judah in the seventh century, which required them, and into their antecedents. The names and functions of weights in the Bible also need more attention, preferably with a more positive attitude than the author adopts, and with more comparison with other ancient weight systems.

Alan Millard
Liverpool University

Reminiscences of an Octogenarian

Bruce M. Metzger
Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997,
242 pp., h/b.

Reminiscences of an Octogenarian is the autobiography of one of the best known NT scholars in the contemporary English-speaking world. It is an attractively written account by a learned, orthodox and gracious man who has been a lifelong academic, teaching for nearly all his working life at Princeton Theological Seminary, but at the same time moving widely throughout the academic world. The information his book contains, even from his earliest years, is remarkable for its precision.

Besides being a teacher, Metzger is also a writer, and his books feature prominently in his narrative. As an able linguist, he has concentrated particularly on the textual criticism of the NT, and this is the theme of his book, *The Text of the New Testament: its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* (1964), and indirectly also of his book, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: their Origin, Transmission and Limitations* (1977). For the latter volume he had the help of other experts, and it is a unique repository of information about the ancient translations. He has put textual criticism into practice in the International Greek New Testament Project, a large co-operative enterprise with much work still before it (see ch. 5), and in the joint-preparation of the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (see ch. 6). In both of these tasks he has played a leading role. The UBS *Greek New Testament* has gone through several editions and is widely used by students and translators, but lately it has come under much criticism from J.K. Elliott and others for its strange method of assessing variant readings.

An important work in rather a different field is his book *The Canon of*

the New Testament: its Origin, Development and Significance (1987). This appeared at much the same time as F.F. Bruce's book *The Canon of Scripture* (1988), that is also mainly devoted to the NT. It is interesting to have two independent accounts of the NT canon which both, in the light of modern knowledge, endorse the broad conservative conclusions reached by Westcott and Zahn 100 years ago.

In addition, Metzger has played a prominent part in Bible translation, as a leading member of the companies that produced the RSV and the NRSV. The RSV differs from other modern English translations in that it is the most literal, the most traditional (being a revision of an older translation, with a long pedigree), and the most widely accepted (being approved by Roman Catholics and Orthodox as well as Protestants). The NRSV differs from the RSV chiefly in being an 'inclusive language' translation. Although Metzger tells us that a copy was presented to the Pope, he does not mention the report that the Pope has since prohibited its use by Roman Catholics, as not being a faithful translation. The many footnotes to the NRSV give some indication (but not a complete picture) of the degree to which the acceptance of a taboo unknown to antiquity has caused the translators to depart from the original text.

Metzger mentions many other of his publications, and no disparagement of these is intended by not discussing them here, where the reviewer has simply concentrated on what are probably the most important. Among the more serious chapters of his autobiography Metzger includes some that are rather more light-hearted. In chapter 12, 'Vexations of an Author', other authors will sympathise with his lamentations of the long delays, sometimes inflicted on authors by editors, and with his complaint that 'especially vexatious is the creation of a typographical error by the press after the author has

approved the correct final page proof. In chapter 11, 'Literary Forgeries', readers should not overlook his discussion of Morton Smith's alleged fragment of Clement of Alexandria, containing quotations from a supposed Secret Gospel of Mark. Though Metzger speaks with caution, he is clearly among those scholars who are inclined to view the whole document as a forgery by its editor.

Roger T. Beckwith
Oxford

Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy

Walter Brueggemann
Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997,
xxi + 771 pp., h/b, £35.00

This is an important book, the first major systematic theology since Eichrodt and von Rad to integrate contemporary concerns with the comprehensive witness of the OT Scriptures. Its size is certainly comparable to, if not larger than, those multi-volume works that defined OT teaching for the mid twentieth century.

Like many such works, the opening section reviews work done in the field since the Reformation and Enlightenment. These 114 pages form a virtual monograph on the development of the subject. But what is surprising and disappointing here and throughout the book, in the midst of a huge array of secondary literature reviewed and examined, is the virtual absence of any evangelical theologian. In a text written in America, where fifty million claim evangelical status of some sort, the silencing of this minority group is a betrayal of the volume's agenda.

Using the image of a trial, Brueggemann first examines Israel's testimony from several angles. The first and longest of these is the 'Core Testimony'. In this section the

customary characteristics of God are rehearsed in terms of verbs, adjectives, and nouns. Alongside these is an examination of lesser-used nouns such as healer, mother, and shepherd. The study of Israel's 'Counter testimony' is shorter than that of the Core Testimony, yet far more significant in terms of the issues that it raises. Brueggemann deals with texts that raise basic questions about God's presence and reliability, particularly Job and Ecclesiastes, in which the reliability of God is questioned and never established. Leaving aside the possibility of other interpretations of Job and Ecclesiastes, their canonical context allows for an amelioration of the stark messages which Brueggemann reads from them. It is in this context, however, that Brueggemann refuses to consider, preferring to let the texts speak forcefully but in isolation.

The section on Israel's 'Unsolicited Testimony' focuses on current practical issues. The partners of Yahweh are presented as: Israel, the human person, the nations, and creation. Regarding Israel, there is the question of Christian supersessionism. Despite Galatians 6:15-16, Brueggemann insists that Judaism and Christianity share the hope of a common God (true) and a common life (not clear). The chapter on the human person, understood only in terms of community and relatedness to God, raises questions of sexual and economic ethics. That on the nations and their relationship to God raises issues of international ethics. Finally, Brueggemann contrasts the OT testimony regarding creation with the modern ideology of scarcity/self-sufficiency and its denial of brokenness, and affirms reason and consumer resources as the answer to human need. Human brokenness, characterised by failure, stupidity, incompetence, and guilt, needs divine healing. These are major concerns for the contemporary church. One may question the title 'Unsolicited Testimony' - surely

'Partners' would be better (even though it would deviate from the titles of other sections). Nevertheless, this section clearly contains theological implications that are most important for ethics.

In the final section on 'Embodied Testimony', Brueggemann reviews the traditional institutions that comprise Israel's life: Torah, king, prophet, cult, and sage. The Torah with its Mosaic authority appears primary, but is always available to new interpretation. The kings lead Israel to justice, while the prophets summon it away from its failures and back to its true identity. The cult enables Israel of the monarchy and of the exile to live out its 'odd' or 'alternate' life of exclusive loyalty to Yahweh. The sages guide Israel in understanding the natural theology of creation and gradually use this to point to Torah as the true basis for all wisdom. While the messianic hope of a future king may have remained in the exile, its rationale is nowhere explained. This important concept deserves more elaboration than the five pages devoted to it.

Brueggemann picks up the plurality of OT voices in the summarising conclusion. Although it may not be possible to go all the way to an indiscriminating pluralism of voices among witnesses, the OT has an enduring message regarding a transcendent holy creator God who has entered into an ongoing relationship with his people, which calls them beyond the acquisitive concerns of this world to love of neighbour and love of God. In this Brueggemann has identified a key message of the OT for the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the next.

Richard S. Hess
Denver Seminary, Denver, CO.

Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment

Christopher Forbes
Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997,
xi + 377 pp.

This work began life as a PhD thesis, supervised by E.A. Judge and submitted at Macquarie University (1987), where Forbes presently lectures in New Testament and Hellenistic history. It was subsequently revised and published in the prestigious WUNT series (Mohr) in 1995 (perceptively reviewed by A.C. Thiselton in *Evangelical Quarterly* 70 (1998), 80-82), before being given a wider audience through its publication by Hendrickson. As might be expected of a publication with such a history, it is a substantial and meticulous piece of research, grounded in a thoroughly critical and competent grasp of the primary and secondary literature.

In essence, Forbes takes to task the common *religionsgeschichtliche* view that Christian prophecy and tongues were simply minor variants of a much more widespread pattern of Graeco-Roman inspired speech, and that the conflict between Paul and the Corinthians stems from their adoption of traits of hellenistic prophetism. Having argued on exegetical grounds that *glossolalia* in Acts and 1 Corinthians was conceived of as real languages (whether earthly or heavenly), normally unintelligible/foreign to the speaker - *contra* (e.g.) Thiselton, who took the Pauline phenomenon as sub-linguistic - Forbes demonstrates that this was a new and unparalleled phenomenon. The 'consensus' view took tongues to be very similar phenomenologically to what was held to be the 'ecstatic' and 'unintelligible' speech of the Delphic prophetess, which had to be 'interpreted' by other 'prophets' if it were to be understood. Forbes successfully shows this to be a misunderstanding. The Delphic *promantis* uttered her oracles in

Greek, originally in verse and at a later stage in prose (and put into verse by oracle poets). The oracles were thus *linguistically* intelligible, even if what they declared was often riddling and incomprehensible. The 'prophets' who 'interpreted' the oracles to the inquirer was simply an oracle official, and was not conceived of as offering such clarification under any kind of divine inspiration. This most oft-used 'parallel' with glossolalia thus breaks down at almost every point. Forbes can show alleged parallels of tongues with the frenzied speech of the Mystery Religions, or with the unintelligible incantations in the magical papyri, fail similarly on close examination. Nor was there a Jewish 'background': the apocalypses knew of charismatic praise (1 *Enoch* 40; 71.11) and of seers speaking heavenly languages (*Apoc Zeph* 8), but these were fully *intelligible to the speakers*. The final chapters of the *Testament of Job* depict charismatic speech in angelic tongues, but this portion was probably a Christian (or Gnostic) *addition* to the work.

Forbes admits that the parallels between Christian *prophecy* and its nearest Graeco-Roman relation - *manticism* - are more extensive and subtle. But, as he is able to show, in social/functional terms they are still miles apart (Christian prophecy has no priestly hierarchy, no ritual, no oracular shrine, no procedure for soliciting an oracle, etc.), and they do not even share a common vocabulary.

Scholarly discussions of both prophecy and tongues have been bedevilled by the use of the term 'ecstatic' speech, and Forbes makes merry of the confusions regularly involved between Greek notions of *ekstasis* and modern psychological ones - though it must be said he could profitably have paid more attention to Josephus and Philo on this matter (see now J.R. Levison, *The Spirit in First Century Judaism* (Brill 1997)).

In all, this is a robust work - the best available on the NT phenomena of

prophecy and tongues, and on their relation to alleged non-Christian parallels in the ancient world.

Max Turner

London Bible College, Northwood

Christ on Earth: The Gospel Narratives as History

Jacob van Bruggen, trans. Nancy Forest-Flier
Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998,
320 pp., \$24.99.

This book (originally published in Dutch in 1987 by J.H. Kok, Kampen, Netherlands, as *Christus op aarde*) presents a refreshingly 'Back to the Future' approach to the study of the life of Jesus. Van Bruggen (since 1967 professor of New Testament at the Theological University in Kampen) agrees with the many scholars who have concluded, after surveying the literature of the past half-century, that research into the personality and ministry of the so-called 'historical' Jesus has reached virtual gridlock. He illustrates the apparent hopelessness of the church today reaching any consensus regarding Jesus by sketching the widely diverse images presented in recent years by Herbert Braun (European Protestant), E. Schillebeeckx (modernistic Roman Catholic), Jon Sobrino (Latin American Roman Catholic liberation theology), David Flusser (Jewish), the Jesus Seminar in the United States, and the so-called 'Third Quest for the Historical Jesus'.

Are the historical resources for the life of Jesus really that obscure? No, says van Bruggen! The problem is that some two centuries ago the Christian church's study of the person whose name it bears was turned in the wrong direction by the post-Enlightenment *historical* criticism of the Gospels (Strauss Reimarus) and the later *literary* criticism (the two source hypothesis, William Wrede, form criticism, redaction criticism). Starting from the philosophical insistence that all history is 'of a

piece' (i.e. non-supernatural, non-miraculous), the historical reliability of the Gospels was rejected out of hand and scholars were thrown back on their own subjective preferences to select the sources and rework the sources as their prejudices dictated. The detachment from the Gospels has become so profound that the methodological-historical underpinnings of many modern images of Jesus are no longer derived from the Gospels but rather from one of the many hypothetical reconstructions of sources *behind* the Gospels ... detachment from the four Gospels has become a kind of dogma. It may well be the only dogma that goes unchallenged in modern theology' (22-23).

But it is van Bruggen's purpose to challenge that dogma, and to do so by offering what must now be considered (in academic circles at least) the 'revolutionary' proposal that we take our start from the possibility that the Gospels are *reliable historical sources* that present a clear and plausible picture (historically, psychologically and sociologically plausible) of the life on this earth of the Jesus worshipped and served by the church as the Christ, the eternal Son of God. And he does this by a method that must be considered as revolutionary as his basic thesis; i.e., not by focusing on the picture of Jesus presented by one of our four canonical Gospels, or by each of the Gospels in turn, perhaps each in a different chapter - but rather by presenting a *harmony* of the Gospels and the image of Jesus that results from listening to the symphony presented by all four Gospels together and not merely the individual parts. A Gospel *harmony*? As van Bruggen himself acknowledges, the very suggestion seems hopelessly 'old-fashioned and unscholarly' (74). But unscholarly he is not (a simple review of the *Bibliography* of the works with which he interacts will make that clear), and so powerful is the portrait of Christ that emerges that his book may

well serve to rehabilitate the 'harmony' approach, at least among evangelicals.

This is not to deny that there are some controversial positions taken which many will not find fully convincing; e.g., first, the suggestion that Luke's was the first of our Gospels to be written and published; second, the insistence that the first three gospels give no evidence of any literary interdependence; and finally, uniform acceptance of the readings found in the 'majority' of manuscripts (e.g., at Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53 - 8:11) rather than in what most textual critics view as the 'earliest and most reliable manuscripts' (NIV). But reading this book will be an edifying and faith-strengthening experience for any believer, especially for one who has been exposed to the acids of modern Gospel criticism; and it is highly recommended.

Robert B. Strimple

Westminster Theological
Seminary, California

God's Final Envoy: Early Christology and Jesus' View of His Mission

Marinus De Jonge
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998,
176 pp., \$18.00/£11.99

The burden of this short Christology by Marinus De Jonge, author of the well received book *Christology in Context* (1988) is to identify Jesus as 'God's final envoy' and to define the Christology of both Jesus and the early church as 'theocentric'. As God's final envoy, de Jonge argues that Jesus perceived his mission as that of the inaugurator of God's saving rule in human history. Jesus performed this work in anticipation of the kingdom's future consummation, which would take place in God's final transformation of the world. Jesus' understanding of these unfolding events was distinctively 'theocentric' in the sense that his salvation hope

focused on the sovereignty and fatherhood of God, rather than on his own identity as 'Messiah' or 'Son of God,' though de Jonge considers it highly possible that Jesus did have these self-perceptions. Jesus' 'theocentric' Christology therefore did not jeopardise Jewish monotheism. And in this respect the author argues that NT Christology displays continuity with the thought of Jesus himself.

Surprisingly, de Jonge begins rather than ends his study with a chapter that surveys major interpretations of Jesus' death. He unearths three complementary interpretations: (1) Jesus' death was that of an envoy of God rejected by Israel; (2) Jesus was a suffering, righteous servant of God; (3) Jesus died the death of a martyr for others. Cautiously, he concludes on the basis of 'implicit' evidence in Paul, Mark, and the hypothetical source 'Q' that 'Jesus may have interpreted rejection and possible death as that of God's final envoy to Israel. It is also possible that he saw himself as an obedient suffering servant who would be vindicated by God' (33). As to whether or not Jesus foresaw his death as that of a martyr dying for others, de Jonge judges 'it is impossible to say ... but it is certainly possible that he did so' (33). Regardless, Paul, Mark, and Q agree in identifying Jesus as God's final agent who, by both heralding and inaugurating God's reign on earth, spearheaded the decisive turning point in human history. This conviction, De Jonge argues, was present both before Easter in the thought of Jesus and the disciples, and after Easter in the Christologies constructed by the authors of the NT.

There follows a short chapter addressing Jesus' perception of the kingdom of God (ch. 3) and another surveying extrabiblical conceptions of the kingdom contemporary with Jesus (ch. 4). de Jonge's conclusions display parallels with Jesus' expectation for 'an immanent definitive intervention of God that determines the behaviour

of the faithful in the present' but no parallels to Jesus' concept of the dynamic presence of God's rule in his own words and acts. He downplays the significance of this distinction, however, by appealing to the possibility that non-extant extra-biblical contemporary Jewish writings may have shared Jesus' concept of the kingdom.

De Jonge then turns his focus to Mark 14:25 and other sayings of Jesus which describe aspects of the future coming of the kingdom. He finds noteworthy the silence of Mark 14:25 – that it does not mention Jesus' role in the final breakthrough of the kingdom, nor does it speak of Jesus' *parousia* (second coming). This observation in turn is corroborated by his study of the *parousia* and its associated epithet 'Son of Man' as witnessed in Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Q. This broad survey leads to the Christological judgement:

Jesus himself did not expect to return as Son of Man after a period of time, however short. Inspired by Daniel 7, he expected his vindication as messenger of the kingdom to take place, during his suffering in life or at his death, in the form of his appearance as the Son of Man at the moment when God would intervene to establish his sovereign rule on earth once and for all. After his death his followers realised that Jesus' personal vindication, now viewed as resurrection, and the complete breakthrough of the kingdom of God, accompanied by Jesus' return from heaven, were two separate events – one now in the past, the other awaited in the future. (144)

Hence, with Albert Schweitzer et. al., de Jonge concludes that Jesus had either a flawed or an ambiguous eschatology that later was set right or clarified by the inspired reflections of his followers. In so concluding, de Jonge presumes the secondary origin of Jesus' sayings which explicitly

anticipate his resurrection (e.g. Mark 9:31), which implicitly equate Jesus with a future coming Son of Man (e.g. Mark 13:26). Furthermore, the reader is called upon to interpret all the 'coming' Son of Man sayings in a purely 'this worldly' sense, despite the partly future 'otherworldly' orientation of important sayings such as Mark 14:61–62. As it stands this reconstruction as quoted lacks substantiation by references which clearly equate suffering/death with vindication/*parousia*. Until such support is added, de Jonge's perception of early Christological development will lack force and cause confusion.

In the final analysis, this work commends itself as an introduction to the major questions addressed by the discipline of Christology. The author's conclusions, however, are not entirely persuasive, because they are based on a surface level treatment of a select body of sayings, with very little attention given to the often-explicit significance of Jesus' symbolic acts. The accuracy of the title might also be questioned: Did not Jesus and his followers view the apostles as 'envoys' in the special sense that they were commissioned by Jesus to transmit the saving message of the kingdom of God (Luke. 6:22–23; 10:16; Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:7–8)? And in the Johannine writings at least, might not the same be said of the Holy Spirit? Hence, though his Son has come and gone, God continues to speak through his church and the Holy Spirit.

Ed Meadors

Taylor University, Upland, Indiana

The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: its unity and disunity in the light of John 6. (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2 Reihe 78)

Paul N. Anderson
Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996 and
Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1997,
329 pp., \$21.00/£28.00

Paul Anderson's *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* has been so widely acclaimed by such noted scholars as R. Brown, D.M. Smith, R. Kysar, C.K. Barrett, and U. Mauser that the book hardly needs another positive review. And yet, after reading through this massive piece (22 tables, 8 appendices, 5 bibliographies, 3 indexes), my reaction to his central, overriding concerns is one of great appreciation.

Anderson's purpose is to explore the unitive and disunitive christological tension within the Fourth Gospel. His thesis is that this is best explained by viewing the Fourth Evangelist as a dialectical theologian – one capable of looking first at one side of an issue and then the other, seemingly able to hold the inherent tensions together. In order to illustrate this Anderson appropriately selects John 6 (the place in the Fourth Gospel where a great number of literary, historical, and theological issues converge) as the window through which to view the larger Gospel.

The book as a whole is ordered into three major parts, each comprising a central piece of his argument. Part I is organized into three chapters. The first recounts 'approaches' to John's christology (comprehensive overviews; text-centred; theological-christological; literary-christological; historical-christological) and notes the relative absence of any direct engagement with the unitive and disunitive christological tension. The second chapter treats the commentaries of Bultmann, Barrett, Brown, Schnackenburg and Lindars as they pertain to the relation between

christological tension and theory of composition. Anderson persuasively concludes that while it is not necessarily causal, a definite relationship exists between one's theory of how the Fourth Gospel came together and how one deals with the christological tension. This is most evident in John 6. The third chapter, then, contains a discussion of approaches to the christological unity and disunity of John 6. The general conclusion of these careful investigations is that the origin of the christological tension is multifaceted in the sense that one must deal in a mutually illuminating way with the situation in the Johannine community, those to whom the Gospel is addressed (at each point), the composition of the Gospel, and most provocatively, the internal dynamics of the evangelist's thought. This last aspect is where Anderson's analysis is most stimulating and methodologically fresh. He uses the cognitive and epistemological insights developed by theologians James Fowler and James Loder to help understand the christological tension as a unity and disunity held together dialectically.

Part II moves into John 6 itself and Anderson deals at almost every point with Bultmann's contribution. This is as it should be, for critical investigation of this chapter has never fully left behind the brilliant foundations of Bultmann's insights (whether appreciated or criticised). Chapters 4–6 deal with the philological, literary and theological style of John 6 and concludes that Bultmann has given us remarkably incisive starting points, but that his source-critical theory is unnecessary and fails to account for the dialectically worked out christological themes. Chapter 7 introduces in an extended way Fowler's and Loder's work and sets the ground for an investigation into the dialectical nature of the evangelist's christology. Thus, Part II establishes the authorial unity of John 6 and the appropriateness of investigations that

are directed toward the internal thinking of the evangelist.

Part III is a detailed exegesis and discussion of John 6. Verses 1–24 reflect the dialectical interchange between the evangelist and his tradition wherein the Johannine understanding of Jesus' feeding and sea crossing ('God's saving revealing discourse with humanity') is set over against their Mark an understanding ('thaumaturgic demonstration'). Verses 25–66 reflect the dialectical interchange between the evangelist and his audience. Anderson thus analyses the way in which the elements of the narrative are structured and used so as to bring the reader/hearer to the conclusion that Jesus 'is the fulfilment of Judaism', but that to follow him is to go the way of the cross. Finally, verses 67–71 reflect the dialectic inherent in the evangelist's engagement with the socio-religious historical context of Johannine Christianity (mainstream Christianity, docetists, followers of John the Baptist). In portraying Peter as returning the keys to Jesus, these verses function to correct the prevalent Petrine hierarchical understanding of christocracy (the way Christ continues to lead his people) with an insistence upon a familial model of church leadership. The book concludes with a very helpful summary of the implications of Anderson's findings for the treatment of Johannine christology, and a much reiterated bold statement that the evangelist's dialectical christology belies not a great distance from Jesus or an eye-witness tradition but more likely a radical proximity to it.

The strengths of this book are manifold. I will simply mention three. First, Anderson makes a remarkably synthetic effort. The interpretative enterprise is not lost beneath a quagmire of disjunctive details. Second, Anderson's treatment of the 'agency' motif goes a long way in

terms of helping one to make sense of the 'exalted' and 'subordinated' christology (and has great implications for the development of Christian monotheism). Third, Anderson clearly recognises that the gospel traditions were passed on by *human beings* (rather than being disjointed nebulous ideas), and that it is therefore appropriate to examine a text for evidence of a human mind. Hence, his cognitive analysis of John's dialectical christology is novel and perceptive. In sum, Anderson's book is a feast for all who are interested in the theology of John's Gospel.

C. Kavin Rowe

Duke University, USA

Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity

Gerd Luedemann

London: SCM, 1996,

xiv + 335 pp., £17.50

Virgin Birth? The Real Story of Mary and her Son JESUS

Gerd Luedemann

London: SCM, 1998,

xvii + 157 pp., £12.95

Themelios readers who were to take Luedemann's advice and begin to read his *Heretics* at the 'Ten golden words of his epilogue' might be discouraged from continuing. That would be a pity. These ten theses, more in the tradition of Spong than Luther, begin by asserting that the Bible is the word not of God, but of man, and amount to a call to debunk historic orthodox Christianity as handed down both in Scripture and in the tradition of the church. But this dogmatic agenda appears to reflect more the presuppositions of the author than the necessary conclusions of his historical reconstruction, and this historical work is of value to those who would reject his theology just as much as to those would embrace it.

Of particular importance is the book's emphasis on the importance of the first two Christian centuries as the time in which Christianity emerged as a separate phenomenon. Perhaps uncomfortable to some will be its insistence that there was already Christian faith and a Christian church before there was a New Testament.

Luedemann builds on Walter Bauer's influential *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, which argued that 'heresy' was often a form of belief which preceded 'orthodoxy' rather than a subsequent deviation from it. He ranges widely across what he describes as 'the multiplicity of Christianities' in the second century and the battles waged between them. Individuals and topics covered include Irenaeus, Tertullian, Jewish Christians, Marcion, successors of Paul and John, and the formation of both the Apostles Creed and the NT canon. Luedemann's sympathies are with those whom he sees as having been branded heretics retrospectively by the victorious Catholic church. His chapter on Paul he titles provocatively 'The only heretic of the earliest period, or, a Human Paul'. This fits with his argument that the earliest Jewish Christians of the Jerusalem church, those who had made Paul out to be a heretic, were themselves confounded when Paulinists changed from heretics to heresiologists. Thus the originally orthodox Jewish Christians became themselves the heretics.

Exhilarating and infuriating, this was a book which I found hard to put down. Conservatives may wish to differ from its conclusions, but we cannot fault Luedemann on his insistence that all Christian theology should be made subject to Jesus always, and that theology and history must go hand and hand. Nor, at our peril, should we ignore the importance of the second century, the period in which 'more important decisions were made for the whole of Christianity than were made from the end of the second century to the present day'.

Yet despite realising the importance of this period, Luedemann's weakness is an apparent inability to empathise with certain church fathers who took steps to exclude views which came to be seen as incompatible with reflecting on the person and message of Jesus.

Whereas *Heretics* provides a broad outline of Luedemann's approach to the second century and its important for Christian theology today, *Virgin Birth?* focuses on a more specific point – what Luedemann calls the real story of Mary and her Son Jesus. Unfortunately, historical research is taken utterly captive to 'theological' presuppositions. Despite the agenda set in *Heretics*, Luedemann works not from the conclusions of historical investigation, but from what Richard Dawkins has called the law of incredulity – I can't believe it, so it isn't true.

Here Luedemann states that he is happy to be called an Enlightenment or historical fundamentalist by those who see him as 'slashing and burning religion and sowing only doubt'. To them he retorts 'I would rather live in a house built on solid foundations than in a priestly castle in the air'. His tone has changed, and the passion that gave *Heretics* such an edge seems to have become little more than vitriol. 'The tomb was full and the manger empty' is the conclusion he reaches, and scholars whom he acknowledges to be 'stars of biblical exegesis' like Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmeyer and J.P. Meier are deemed either too cowardly to contradict Catholic dogma, or those who have become used to living in a spiritual ghetto.

Luedemann's analysis falls in three main parts. First, an introduction to Mariology. Second, the redaction, tradition and history of Mary in the NT and in extra-canonical sources. Third, the theological results which he extracts and their application.

Even the possibility of a historical virgin birth is excluded from the

outset. Various modern theologians, notably Pannenberg, are quoted and their differing grounds for rejecting the virgin birth are considered to overturn both the traditional Protestant view, represented here by Luther, as well as the more wide-ranging doctrinal pronouncements made about Mary by the Roman Catholic Church. Confessional Protestants accept that Mary was the mother of God – Cyril's *theotokos* – and to this Roman Catholics add three further articles of faith: the perpetual virginity, the immaculate conception and the bodily assumption of Mary. Of interest to students of the Reformation will be Luedemann's discussion of how Luther accepted the perpetual virginity as biblical but rejected the immaculate conception as not; the third point only became official dogma in 1950.

The second part of the book is likely to be of most interest to *Themelios* readers. Here Luedemann goes through the early sources in chronological order. Paul knows that Jesus was born of a woman; Mark gives her a name and a family, thereby seeking to neutralise the morally problematic absence of any mention of a father. Matthew, Luke and John all delete Mark's problematic phrase, 'Son of Mary'. Matthew and Luke go further by introducing Joseph (albeit at different points) and making him Jesus' father, so responding to Jewish criticism of Jesus' premarital birth. Luedemann suggests that the historical basis for this may be that Joseph adopted Mary's son who was conceived as a result of premarital rape. Christology develops in parallel with this defence against criticism. Thus the role of the Holy Spirit in the conception is the result of the Palestinian title 'Son of God' being reinterpreted in a Hellenistic environment. By endorsing the perpetual virginity of Mary even after the birth, the *Protevangelium of James* (a second century infancy gospel) only continues the development

that Luedemann traces in the canonical texts.

At no point however does Luedemann interact critically with confessional scholarship that differs from him. Simply to rule them out of court is not an academic approach, and here his passion overtakes his erudition. Thus Werner Keller, as someone who seeks to defend the historicity of the Bible, is a soft target to hit. Luedemann tries to accentuate the differences between the Matthean and Lucan birth narratives, but at no point even acknowledges, let alone refutes, the points of correspondence identified by Brown in his *Birth of the Messiah* (1993), page 34.

Students looking for a balanced historical and theological approach to the Virgin Mary and the virginal conception would be much better looking at collections of essays such as *Mary in the New Testament*, edited by R.E. Brown and others, or *Chosen by God: Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, editor, D.F. Wright. Their historical investigation is shown to be no enemy of faith and orthodox belief. Luedemann's refusal to give such scholars a voice is just as imperialistic as his understanding of the German churches whom he critiques.

Andrew Gregory
Oxford

**Life in the Face of Death:
The Resurrection Message of the
New Testament McMaster NT Series**

Richard N. Longenecker (ed.)
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998,
x + 314 pp., \$22.00/£12.99

Some evangelicals may be surprised, but Scripture relates the resurrection of Jesus to far more subjects than just apologetics and soteriology! The third text in the McMaster New Testament series addresses the significance of this event 'for the living of life, the facing of death, and the

longing for the future after death', as editor Richard Longenecker states in the Preface. Thus it 'resonates with most of the deepest concerns of the human consciousness' (ix). This volume is popularly written by distilling the best of the academy for believers, in order to help them in their Christian pilgrimage as they face death (x).

Eleven distinguished scholars contribute to a text that includes four sections: background, Jesus, Paul, and the early church. After Longenecker's Preface and Introduction, the background chapters deal with death and the afterlife in several ancient cultures. Edwin Yamauchi addresses the subject in the ancient near east, Peter Bolt in the Greco-Roman world and Richard Bauckham in Second Temple Judaism. The chapters on the teachings of Jesus include Donald Hagner's treatment of resurrection in the synoptic Gospels and Andrew Lincoln's exploration of John.

The section on Paul includes studies of the relation between resurrection and immortality by Murray Harris, whether Paul's view changed by Richard Longenecker, and G. Walter Hansen's analysis of Jesus' resurrection as a basis for the Christian life and ethics. Early church issues include Joel Green addressing the impetus that Jesus' resurrection gave to discipleship and mission in Acts. William Lane considers Christian living in the face of death and persecution in Hebrews. Allison Trites treats the Book of Revelation's encouragement to believers in their confrontation with persecution and other tough times.

This book is simply packed with relevant information. It is a masterful overview bringing years of research to an intelligent, though general, audience. Most of the authors have published previously on their topics. While each chapter includes a selected bibliography, no footnotes or endnotes are given. Citations of

sources – both ancient and modern – are sprinkled throughout the text. Some authors (like Yamauchi, Bolt, and Bauckham) use this option more frequently.

The three background chapters provide a wealth of extra-biblical sources, traditions, and beliefs existing in contrast throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. Yamauchi's treatment of the mystery religions (especially 30–32) and his critique of the popular view that Judaism borrowed its views on the resurrection of the body from Zoroastrianism (39–42, 47–49) are among the most instructive portions of the entire book. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of Bolt's mention of apotheosis (70–72).

The remainder of the volume is basically a NT biblical theology of resurrection – both Jesus' and the believer's. Along the way the reader is given plenty of helpful instructions for Christian living. Harris' entire chapter is a brilliant comparison of the differences and similarities between resurrection and immortality that is a real encouragement for the believer's eternal hope in Jesus Christ.

Following the theme of the book, other snippets provide fertile ground for further development and application. Hansen's thoughts on the relation between Jesus' resurrection and Christian ethics (206–209) and breaking sinful habits (212–13), Green's linking this event to mission (239) and feeding the hungry (242), are examples. So is the encouragement provided by both Lane (254) and Trites (281–282) to stand firm during tough times. Many of these comments are devotional in nature. I was puzzled, however, that Lane had virtually nothing to say about Hebrews 2:14–15, given the theme of his chapter and the excellent opportunity for application.

The book also highlights prominent themes from recent theological discussions—like the centrality of the

Kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching (118–19), the dominance of Jesus' resurrection throughout the New Testament (99, 122, 147), and the argument that this event confirmed Jesus' person and message (118–20, 208, 244–45). Almost every theological chapter discusses various aspects of the relationship between Jesus' resurrection and that of believers.

The use of critical methods is obvious throughout the volume, although not flagrant. I also wondered about the stated goal of writing popularly to assist believers in their pilgrimage through life and towards death. The application is there, but most frequently not 'delivered' in the way that I think the average, intelligent reader might want it. While there are certainly many wonderful insights, some who read the Preface or the back of the book may wonder how *actually to bring home* these lessons in real life. How are these fears quelled, or at least eased?

Still, for those who want to be both challenged and blessed by many aspects concerning Jesus' resurrection beyond those normally discussed in evangelical volumes, this text is a treasure. Although some careful thinking needs to be done, much is contained here that might be crafted in the direction of further application.

Gary R. Habermas

Liberty University, Virginia, USA

The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide

G. Theissen & A. Merz
London: SCM, 1998,
xxix + 642 pp., £25

Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History

J Gnilka,
Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997,
xiii + 346 pp., £16.99

The Contemporary Jesus

J J Altizer,
London: SCM, 1998,
xxvii + 225 pp., £14.95

Of the writing of books about Jesus of Nazareth there is seemingly no end. Indeed it is probably true that Jesus Research is one of the most vibrant furrows of New Testament scholarship as we approach the New Millennium. Each of the volumes under review here contributes in a distinct way to the current state of the quest for the historical Jesus. Joachim Gnilka, for instance, offers us not so much a portrait of the historical Jesus but a set of contours by which to understand the impact made by the artisan from Nazareth.

Theissen's *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* is exactly as its title describes. It covers briefly the initial phases of the Jesus Quest before analysing in detail and evaluating the sources we have for piecing together a life of Jesus. Part 2 of the book (125–85), which is a *Sitz im Leben* for the life of Jesus, is perhaps the most stimulating. It covers Second Temple Judaism, a historical chronology for Jesus' life, as well as providing a geographical and social framework. Given that Theissen dialogues primarily with Anglo-Saxon scholarship, readers will be surprised that there is no interaction with N.T. Wright's *The New Testament and the People of God* (London, 1993). This is not excusable given that the German

edition of Theissen's text was published in 1996. Nevertheless, what Theissen offers in the book is a 'state of the art' description of the Jesus Quest which forces the reader to interact. From his analysis of Renan and Schweitzer to his questions regarding the emergence of early Christology, Theissen shows himself to be a master practitioner. I suspect that some Evangelicals will find this scholar slightly suspect. Yet he presents the evidence and assesses the work of other scholars and leaves the reader to draw his or her conclusions. This he does by having questions and exercises at the end of each section. This 'open learning' style means that sections will need to be engaged with and primary sources evaluated in order for an informed opinion to be reached. NT scholars will base modules on this book, postgraduates working in the area will need to have it, and undergraduates will find it an essential text for their NT studies. All theological libraries will want to stock it. I am impressed by the volume but trust that I do not exaggerate by saying that this is a volume against which others published in the field will need to be evaluated.

Gnilka, unlike Theissen, dialogues primarily with German, rather than Anglo-Saxon, scholarship. Like his compatriot, Gnilka begins with a brief survey of the quest for the historical Jesus, although his survey is slightly more substantial than Theissen's. He then offers two chapters that focus on the historical context in which the life and ministry of Jesus took place. Chapter 3 on Israel's intellectual, religious and social setting is more impressive than chapter 2 which primarily focuses on the political context. The most substantial chapter (5) looks specifically at the message of the kingdom (80–131). It contains a wealth of information that will be vital to an undergraduate writing an essay on the kingdom. Theissen perhaps offers more information more quickly, so inevitably the student

will be drawn there rather than to Gnilka. However, if one needs a combination of information and seeing a redaction artist at work, Gnilka trumps Theissen! What will impress readers of *Themelios* about Gnilka the most (I suspect) is his combination of biblical scholarship with biblical faith. One gets the impression that Gnilka is a scholar to remind people of the living Christ as well as the one rooted in history. The Appendix 'Jesus, the Christ an Interview' is well worth a wider audience.

Altizer presents the *Contemporary Jesus*. Here is the Jesus of different traditions; from apocalyptic to Blake and Milton; and from Schweitzer to Crossan. Altizer's book is refreshing in that it points to the fascination that the non-theological academe still has with Jesus of Nazareth. Altizer's work could almost be described as a religious studies look at the lives of Jesus. This is by no means meant as patronising, for indeed his work should be on every biblical scholar's shelf as a reminder that there is a world beyond the confines of the text. Altizer's approach differs totally from that of Theissen and Gnilka. Different types of Jesus are examined. Traditional 'Jesuses' are presented: apocalyptic, Pauline, that of the Jesus Seminar and J.D. Crossan in particular. Catholic, Protestant, Nihilistic, and Buddhist portraits of Jesus of Nazareth are also offered. He has also, somewhat strangely, included an anonymous portrait. Both the strengths and weaknesses of religious studies as a discipline are evident in Altizer's work. He offers a good overview of the many portraits of Jesus – although he ignores the evangelical contributions to the Jesus Quest (Wright, Bockmuehl and Hurtado are all strangely missing). Because of the diffuse nature of his quest, Altizer is unable to offer an in-depth appreciation of any of the portraits presented. Indeed this might not be his reason for writing. He is certain that the present time is truly

apocalyptic and it is only against an apocalyptic setting that the meaning of Jesus can be understood. I will leave it to readers to judge whether Altizer is correct about this. Although it seems to me that while he accepts that Jesus should be regarded as a man of his time, he makes the first century too like the twentieth for his Jesus to be entirely plausible (I wonder whether Altizer really understands Jewish and Jewish-Christian apocalyptic). This is something that Schweitzer attacked at the beginning of this century. It is remarkable that certain forms of scholarship are still falling into the same trap at the end of it. Even more surprising is the fact that Schweitzer is the dedicatee of Altizer's book.

At the beginning of this review I noted that the Jesus Quest is indeed alive and well. These books demonstrate that fact. *The Historical Jesus* will find its way into NT courses and deservedly so, for Theissen (and Bowden) has offered us a masterpiece. *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History* will perhaps not have the same wide reading as Theissen, although, perhaps more so than the latter, it is a supreme example of what a combination of faith and critical scholarship can produce. Gnilka really is an artist. I found Altizer's book informative. It offers nuggets of gold about how those outside biblical studies understand the quest for the historical Jesus. It also is a cause for lament. It seems, as we stand on the threshold of a New Millennium, that practitioners of biblical and religious studies still have much to learn, not least how to talk to each other. For this reason alone, NT scholars would do well to ensure that Altizer stands alongside Theissen and Gnilka in their departmental libraries.

Kevin Ellis

The Open Theological College,
Cheltenham

**Romans, Ancient Christian Commentary
on Scripture New Testament VI**

Gerald Bray (ed.), Thomas C. Oden (Gen. ed.)
Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998,
xxvii + 404 pp., \$39.99.

Recently a friend suggested the further Western Culture moves into the 'postchristian' era the more useful the early church writers would become. His point was, as modern believers become the minority in their culture they should consider learning from earlier 'minority Christians'. But where would one begin? Ancient Christian thought is a nearly foreign world for most evangelicals. We are interested primarily in Jesus, Paul, some of their contemporaries, Augustine, a select group of Reformers and our contemporaries. We may have heard of Origen and Chrysostom, but who is Methodius of Philippi or Symmachus of Rome? Where to begin indeed!

One beginning point is the ACCS under Thomas Oden's general editorship. The series' goal is 'the revitalisation of Christian teaching based on classical Christian exegesis, the intensified study of Scripture by lay persons who wish to think with the early church about the canonical text, and the stimulation of Christian historical, biblical, theological and pastoral scholars toward further inquiry into scriptural interpretation by ancient Christian writers'. (xi) A further agenda is to provide the reader with sources 'for preaching, for study and for meditation'. (*ibid.*)

Gerald Bray, professor of Anglican Studies at Beeson Divinity School, has edited the Romans volume. Following his limited introduction, focusing more on commentary usage than background issues, Bray divides the letter into thematic units and provides the RSV translation for each unit. He then summarises the unit's theme and gives an overview of how the patristic writers approached the text under consideration.

There follows, in double column format, verse-by-verse citations relating to the biblical text. These quotes are arranged thematically. For example, Romans 7:11 *Sin Deceives and Kills* is followed by the thematic sub-titles: 'Satan as Source of Sin' (with a Didymus the Blind quote), 'Sin, Finding Its Opportunity' (with one quote each from Ambrosiaster and Chrysostom) and 'Sin Deceived Me' (with two Augustine quotes). Each quote is generally noted in the main body and specifically noted in a footnote. For example the Chrysostom quote just noted is from Homilies on Romans 12 (general notation) and the translation cited is from *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series One, Volume 11, page 422 (specific footnote).

Bray has assembled in one volume the selected thoughts of 53 early Christian writers on Romans, and this text is a wonderful gateway to the world of patristic thinking relating to this foundational biblical text. Instead of fumbling about the diverse original texts one can take this volume and look for specific information. At the same time, the double notation facilitates further study by pointing the reader to a specific ancient source, should one seek greater exposure to the original texts. Moreover Bray has accomplished the series goal of providing material to trigger both lay and scholarly thinking, along homiletical and meditative lines. Repeatedly I scribbled 'good preaching point' in the margins.

Despite the text's great value, there are weaknesses. I wonder about the attempt at 'exhaustiveness'. Frequently it seemed quotes were included more to produce a thorough text rather than a useful one. I was not quite sure what I was to do with very brief quotes or single line citations like Basil's 'The ruler is saved not through much power but through divine grace' (13:1). Such short quotes are not helpful in understanding a writer's thought.

It would have been better to limit the quotes and devote the space to resolving the main problem: all the texts are pulled from their historical contexts. Many patristic writers communicated in the context of doctrinal controversy as is evidenced repeatedly by the quotes which refer to Manichaeans, Docetics, Marcionites and Patripassians, or make allusions to these and other groups. Unfortunately the reader is not given even a brief summary of these groups and how patristic writers wrestled with their alternative world-views which were eventually rejected. Such an introductory essay would have been invaluable.

Still, there can be no doubt, this is a valuable text. If the other volumes are as well done as *Romans* this series will become a significant tool.

J.E. McDermond,

Messiah College, Grantham, PA

**Romans Baker Exegetical
Commentary on the New Testament**

Thomas R. Schreiner
Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998,
xxii + 919 pp., \$39.99

One can scarcely complain of a dearth of major, recent, evangelical commentaries on Romans. Beginning with Cranfield's two volumes (1975-79), we now have Dunn (2 vols., 1988), Moo (1996) and Schreiner. At least each successive work is slightly shorter than its predecessor. The Baker series is an ambitious endeavour (only Bock's 2 volumes on Luke and Silva on Philippians preceded Schreiner in appearance), designed to make treatment of the Greek text as user-friendly as possible. To date, all volumes in the series have admirably succeeded.

Schreiner is a NT professor at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and best known for numerous articles and books on Paul and the Law. He sides more

with recent writers like Westerholm, Thielman and Moo than Sanders, Dunn and Wright but recognises the validity of elements from both the so-called old and new looks on Paul. A relatively brief introduction nicely balances situation-specific with timeless elements behind Paul's penning this epistle. His outline follows the recent trend to include chapter 5 with 6-8 on sanctification rather than with 3:21 - 4:25 on justification, but otherwise it is quite predictable.

Admitting he has changed his mind several times in his published works, Schreiner now takes 'the righteousness of God' in 1:16 as both forensic and transformative. He deals at greater length than most with the issue of homosexuality in 1:26-27 and convincingly demonstrates that Paul does not limit his condemnation only to certain forms of homosexual behaviour. He finds no hint in 2:7, 14-16 or 26-29 of Paul suggesting that anyone comes to salvation apart from explicit faith in Christ; the first two of these texts refer to Christians performing works that flow from their faith, while the middle text merely demonstrates the futility of Gentiles trying to live up to the light they have received. *Hilasterion* in 3:25 refers to both propitiation and expiation.

Somewhat creatively, Schreiner translates the enigmatic *ep ho* in 5:12 as 'on the basis of'. On chapters 6-8 he captures well the balance between the old and new persons that shape Christian identity. The old person is not merely a reality of our past but impinges on the whole of our human existence even as we enter into the stage of salvation-history in which the new self comes to us via redemption. This 'both-and' approach shapes Schreiner's understanding of 7:14-25 as well. While Paul is primarily talking about human existence under the Law, 'the arguments are so finely balanced because Paul does not intend to distinguish believers from unbelievers in this text'.

Romans 6:12, 8:10-13, and 23 'demonstrate that there is tension between inaugurated and consummated eschatology in believers. Complete deliverance from sin is not available for Christians until the day of redemption' (390-401).

With the difficult material in chapters 8-9 on election, Schreiner shows himself to be most comfortable with classic Calvinism: the perseverance of the saints and double predestination, not merely corporately but individually. Romans 11:25-26 does envision an outpouring of faith in Jesus Messiah by many literal Jews just before Christ returns, but dispensationalist distinctives about Jews restored to the land of Israel and rebuilding the temple may not be read into this passage.

Schreiner's exegesis of Paul's exhortational material (12:1 - 15:13) proves equally traditional but solid. He helpfully weaves the reader through the balancing perspectives on loving one's enemies versus the role of government in 12:17-21 and 13:1-7 with nuanced conclusions regarding civil disobedience. He understands the debate between the 'strong' and the 'weak' in 14:1 - 15:13 most likely to be Gentile versus Jew over kosher laws, religious days, and the like, despite the obvious similarities in Paul's instruction with his treatment of more purely Gentile issues in 1 Corinthians 8-10. He highlights the role of each of the people greeted in chapter 16, believing this material to belong to the letter from its inception. He notes that Phoebe (1) is most likely the letter carrier, deacon and patron (but not pastor), that Junia (7) is most likely an apostle (in the sense of missionary), and that women have counterculturally prominent roles at several other points on the list. But he does not believe that any of this data in and of themselves compel a full-fledged feminist or egalitarian position.

It is impossible to do justice to all of Schreiner's views in a brief review like this. One could quibble with his treatment of this or that passage (I do, for example, with 2:7, 14-16 and with his treatment of individual election in OT times in 9:6-18). But, overall this is a welcome and immensely helpful piece of work. Having recommended Moo's NICNT commentary (on the dust jacket no less!) just a few years ago as the one commentary I would recommend to theological students on this epistle if they could own no other, I wondered whether or not I should have to quickly rescind my judgement when Schreiner's work appeared! Probably largely because Moo more consistently gives the standard grammatical labels for all of the options over detailed exegetical questions - subjective genitives, causal participles, *et cetera* - I don't sense the need to change my mind. As a former Lutheran (as was Moo), I am also slightly more drawn to Moo's neo-Lutheran rather than Schreiner's neo-Calvinist perspectives at several points. And since Cranfield has already given us as much detail from a Calvinist perspective as anyone could want, I am not sure Schreiner's work fills as much of a gap as Moo's did. Still, I am happy to suggest that Schreiner merits strong consideration by the serious student as at least 'third' (after Moo and Cranfield) in importance and validity among modern detailed commentaries on Romans.

Craig L. Blomberg
Denver Seminary, Denver, CO.

Paul's Early Period

Rainer Riesner (trans. D. Scott)
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998,
xvi + 535 pp.

The work published through an admirable translation was originally the author's *Habilitationschrift* submitted to Tübingen University in 1991 and published in Tübingen in 1994.

In the Introduction, a survey of the history of research reveals how the various attempts undertaken during the last 20 years to reconstruct Pauline chronology solely from Paul's letters with complete disregard of the framework of Acts have resulted only in confusion. This state of affairs leads Riesner to take up the methodology of giving Paul's letter a 'relative' (rather than 'absolute' priority over the data in Acts). Then Riesner lays out his book in three parts.

In Part 1 'Early Pauline Chronology From Jerusalem to Achaia', Riesner 'attempts to determine absolute or relative dates for [Paul's] activity by relating information from Paul's letters and Acts to extra-testamental evidence'. Jesus began his ministry in the apocalyptically significant sabbatical year AD 27/28 and was crucified in AD 30. Paul was converted in AD 31/32. Having dealt with the important events in Paul's career and the development in various stages of the early church's mission to the gentiles, Riesner discusses in detail Claudius' Roman edict concerning the Jews (AD 49), Paul's encounter with Gallio (AD 51), his ministry in Ephesus (AD 52-55), his final journey to Jerusalem, his appearance and trial, and his transport to Rome (AD 57-60).

In Part II 'Stages in Pauline Missionary Strategy', Riesner establishes a 'correlation between the chronological data thus gained, the stages of Paul's ministry that become visible in his letters, and the framework of Acts'. Here he is particularly interested in

inquiring a specific geographical sequence of Paul's mission.

From Galatians 1:15-17 Riesner ascertains that Paul understood his conversion/call in terms of the call of Deutero-Isaianic Servant of Yahweh that expresses a hope for the gentile world the most clearly in the OT. Yet Riesner thinks that the realisation of his call to the gentile mission occurred to him later through another revelation (Acts 22:17-21) which took place during his first conversion visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18/Acts 9:26 ff).

From Paul's report that he has accomplished 'from Jerusalem to the boundary of Illyricum', his projection of a mission to Rome and on to Spain, and the other descriptions of his gentile mission in Romans 15:16-28, Riesner develops the hypothesis that Paul read Isaiah 66:18-21 as being fulfilled in his mission and so accordingly he chose his geographical route in consideration of the list of the places in Isaiah 66:19.

Then Riesner follows through Paul's itinerary from Syro-Cilicia, Antioch, Cyprus, Galatia, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia, Ephesus, Corinth etc. according to Acts' framework correlating with the relevant data from Paul's letters and commenting on Paul's circumstances and strategic intentions. In this process Riesner affirms the South Galatian theory for the destination of Galatians. Paul's separation from Barnabas after the Apostolic Council led Paul to pursue his own missionary strategy according to Isaiah 66 more freely. From Thessalonica Paul probably wanted to travel to Rome. But the news of Claudius' ban of the Jews persuaded him to turn south to Athens and Corinth instead. With the death of Claudius in October 54, the way to Rome was opened up at the end of his ministry in Ephesus. So Paul attempted to go to Rome and Spain, but only after taking care of the troubles in Corinth and completing the collection from the churches in Macedonia and Achaia

and delivering it to Jerusalem. In accordance with Isaiah 66:19 Paul regarded Spain as the 'boundaries of the world' and as the conclusion of his own commission before the *parousia* of the Lord.

The direct information from Paul's letters and Acts and the inferred information from his geographical movements lead Riesner to a chronological synthesis. It confirms that 'the overall framework of the sequence of events portrayed in Acts is chronologically possible and coherent', having real problems only with two details: the census of Quirinius (Luke 2:1 f) and the uprising of Theudas (Acts 5:36).

Finally, Part III 'Early Pauline Theology: The First Letter to the Thessalonians', Riesner deals with Paul's mission to Thessalonica and analyses Paul's theology reflected in Thessalonians. Luke's account of Paul's founding mission in Thessalonica (Acts 17) harmonises well with the data obtained from 1 Thessalonians and the other Pauline letters. In 1 Thessalonians 1-3 Paul is not delivering just a moral *paraenesis* in the manner of a Hellenistic moral philosopher or Cynic orator. Rather, he is defending himself against the accusations of deception, greed, trickery etc as well as the *possible* criticism of his abrupt desertion of the Thessalonian Christians. The defence was necessary because in order to extract from the Christian fellowship their relatives and friends, the pagan Thessalonians denounced Paul as one of the wandering, charlatan preachers with those bad traits in the Hellenistic cities.

Having briefly surveyed the main teachings of Thessalonians, Riesner counters the influential view based on the absence of the doctrine of justification in Thessalonians namely, that the doctrine developed late during Paul's third missionary journey. Riesner maintains its origin from Paul's conversion experience and the chronological priority of

Galatians to Thessalonians. Pointing to the many hints in Thessalonians of the readers' previous knowledge and to the various elements in Thessalonians that imply the doctrine or substantively agree with it, Riesner argues that Paul preached in Thessalonica the same gospel as in Galatia and Corinth. But the doctrine is not expounded in Thessalonians because 'in his hasty response, the apostle concentrated on what was immediately necessary'. This conclusion leads Riesner to deny that 1 Thessalonians represents an early form of Paul's theology, a theology which Paul supposedly shared with the Hellenistic Jewish church in Antioch before developing the specific 'Paulinism' in connection with various controversies.

In the 'Summary: Chronology and Theology' Riesner's final conclusion is

Although chronology was indeed one important factor in the development of Pauline theology, it cannot bear the burden of demonstrating radical, fundamental transformation.

This bare summary of Riesner's work hardly does justice to the wealth of information and insights contained in the work. Riesner's treatment of the various aspects of Pauline chronology is most comprehensive, his examination of the ancient Jewish, Greek, Roman and Christian source most impressive, and his discussion with modern authors almost exhaustive, so that the work as a whole is a model of thoroughness. Riesner displays a probing, critical and independent mind which is not easily satisfied with the answers already provided nor easily intimidated by the fashion of the day to abandon a traditional view that proves to be well founded. Throughout Riesner's arguments are well substantiated and clearly presented. With all these qualities Riesner has provided us with, on the whole, a reliable chronology of Paul. His convincing

rehabilitation of the framework and the chronological/geographical details of Acts is also an important contribution.

Riesner's suggestion that in his missionary strategy Paul used Isaiah 66:18-21 as his guide, as well as the Deutero-Isaianic Servant passages has opened up a new vista. This suggestion, together with J.M. Scott's emphasis on the list of the nations in Genesis 10 for a similar view (*Paul and the Nations*, 1995), will stimulate further research into the OT background of Paul's missionary strategy.

However, inevitably one may query Riesner's conclusion on some details. It appears somewhat incongruous, e.g. that having designated Paul's interpretation of his Damascus call in terms of the Servant of Yahweh as 'a matter of decisive significance' and having conjectured Christ's appearance in 'Damascus' as having led Paul to his interpretation of his call in terms of the gentile mission, Riesner goes on to say that until the new vision in Jerusalem Paul was not conscious of his call to the gentile mission and that 'Paul lived in "Arabia" somewhat reclusively' (cf. my article in *NTS*, 43 [1997], 426-29).

Since many critics point to the primitive character of eschatology and the absence of the doctrine of justification in 1 Thessalonians as evidence for their theories of radical developments in Paul's later theology, Riesner's detailed examination of 1 Thessalonians is understandable. However, since Riesner regards Galatians as prior to 1 Thessalonians, is it not required of him also to discuss the theology of Galatians with Paul's work in Antioch and southern Galatia for a comprehensive picture of his theology during his 'early period'? At any rate, it is regrettable that Riesner leaves such an important matter as the dating of Galatians undecided between AD 48 (before the Jerusalem council) and AD 50 (after the Jerusalem council).

However, these are just minor points that in no real way diminish the value of Riesner's great work. It will serve as the most reliable chronological guide for Pauline scholarship for a long time to come.

Seyoon Kim,
Fuller Theological Seminary

History and Theology of the New Testament Writings

Udo Schnelle, Trans. Eugene M. Boring
London: SCM Press, 1998,
xi + 573 pp., £19.95.

The goal of this book is 'the illumination of both the historical origins ... and the theological intention' (10-11) of the canonical writings of the NT. Schnelle starts with a short overview of the history of the discipline *Introduction to the New Testament*, focussing on the relationship between theological affirmations derived from the study of the NT as canonical scripture, and the results of a 'purely historical' study of the same documents (2). His own approach entails the conviction that theological considerations have to form a necessary part of any Introduction to the NT, not because of the external canonical concept, but because the NT documents themselves make a binding theological claim. The limitation to the canonical writings is justified by Schnelle 'both on pragmatic grounds and due to the influence that the concept of canon has had in history' (12). These introductory remarks about the theoretical basis of *New Testament Introduction* as an academic discipline and about the relationship between historical investigation and Christian faith (13-14) are a bit too short to be adequate.

The discussion of each NT writing is clearly structured and falls into ten parts: 1. literature, 2. author, 3. place and time of composition, 4. intended readership, 5. outline, structure, form,

6. literary integrity, 7. traditions, sources, 8. history-of-religions standpoint, 9. basic theological ideas, 10. tendencies of recent research. Within the limits of a short review only a few comments on selected issues will be possible. Schnelle communicates his own views clearly and gives fair accounts of different positions. An example of this is his discussion of the synoptic problem: although he clearly favours the two-source-hypothesis (he spends nearly as much pages on the hypothetical sayings source Q - 18 pages, than on Mark - 20 pages), he describes Farmer's two-Gospel hypothesis, Boismard's multiple-stage hypothesis, Goulder's variation of the utilization hypothesis, and Reicke's variation of the oral tradition hypothesis. These hypotheses are only introduced shortly, but nevertheless the interested student is given first hints where to look for alternatives of the predominant two-source hypothesis. The discussions of time and place of composition in particular, but to a degree also those of authorship, literary integrity, traditions and sources display all the difficulties involved in these highly speculative areas. It is here that Schnelle's occasional talk of 'purely historical' investigations proves to be a positivistic illusion. Inevitably the theological views intrude every now and then and it would probably be best to avoid the phrase 'pure history' altogether.

Most of the sections on the tendencies of recent research are helpful. Here the reader can quickly get a good idea of the central problems of interpretation of each NT book, as well as the major solutions suggested. Not surprisingly, Schnelle reflects primarily German scholarship (this is a translation from a 1994 German original), but he also includes a number of British and American contributions. Although every part of the NT is treated adequately for such an introductory book, the Johannine writings get special attention

(46 pages on John's Gospel alone; cf. 20 pages on each of the Synoptics). Additional chapters on the chronology of Paul, ancient letters, methodological considerations concerning partition hypotheses about the Pauline letters, pseudepigraphy, the collection of Pauline letters and the formation of the canon make the book a very complete introduction with the potential to replace Kümmel's Introduction to the NT.

Rainer Behrens
Cheltenham and Gloucester College
of Higher Education

Interpreting God's Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor

R.J. Gibson (ed.)
Carlisle: Paternoster Press/Adelaide: Open Book, 1998,
xii + 130 pp., £12.99

Biblical theology as exemplified in the work of Graeme Goldsworthy and others has been becoming popular in a number of circles over recent years. Goldsworthy's *Gospel and Kingdom* in particular has brought his tripartite understanding of Scripture to the attention of many students and provided a framework for not only understanding Scripture, but also for interpreting Scripture. This collection of essays, originally presented at Moore College Australia in 1996, brings together much needed reflections on this form of Biblical theology.

An opening essay by Donald Robinson outlines the interesting historical background to the teaching of biblical theology at Moore. Perhaps the most helpful of all the essays comes second, by Goldsworthy himself, on the viability of biblical theology. It provides a well reasoned and crucial defence of the approach, much needed when globally there are numerous interpretations of the phrase 'biblical theology' amongst the theological community. Along the way there is critique of Brevard Childs' canonical approach, of some of the surprising

omissions of Geerhardus Vos, and a defence of the kingdom of God as a central theme in reaction to Charles Scobie's criticisms. Goldsworthy also provides a helpful definition of biblical theology, and sees its understanding as intimately tied to an evangelical doctrine of Scripture. One point of difficulty may concern his use of the principle of non-contradiction as an extra-biblical source for evaluating claims, yet this is a criticism that may be levied at many such doctrines of Scripture.

Barry Webb relates the issue of biblical theology to interpretation, with some comment on contemporary hermeneutical issues. He explores the relationship between the various theological disciplines, uses Mark 1:14,15 as a starting point for biblical theology and mounts a helpful defence of the need for historical as well as biblical context to be taken into account when interpreting Scripture. Webb also brings a useful reminder of the need for repentance in true biblical interpretation, and the role of the Spirit.

Peter Jensen interacts with an article by Packer as he looks at the role of the pastor in teaching doctrine. There are some salutary reminders of the need for the teaching of good doctrine, although at times it seems as if no pastor would be fit for such a job! Michael Hill follows with an exploration of the link between biblical theology and ethics, arguing that as biblical theology sees Jesus as the key to correct biblical interpretation, so Jesus is the key to true ethical reflection and understanding. Finally, Goldsworthy concludes the collection with a look at the pastor as biblical theologian.

There are three criticisms that can be made of this book. Firstly, it is a shame that a number of irritating typographical mistakes detract from the book's cohesion. Second, it seems unnecessary that some of the authors include unhelpful side-swipes at experiential Christianity, and at

the notion of 'balance' (which Goldsworthy does attempt to defend). Finally, although this is a charge which the authors cannot be held responsible for, it is a pity that their work came too early to interact with two recent but important works – those of Kevin Vanhoozer on hermeneutics (*Is there a meaning in this text?*), and James Barr on biblical theology (*The Concept of Biblical Theology An Old Testament Perspective*). Barr's work is vital for reflecting on the future of biblical theology, and Vanhoozer's for understanding biblical theology against the background of contemporary hermeneutics (Webb's article does in fact reflect some of Vanhoozer's thinking).

Having said all that, this collection is invaluable. It provides accessible but rigorous reflection on the task and nature of biblical theology and will benefit scholar, pastor and student alike. Highly recommended.

Tony Gray
Leicester

Dictionary of Biblical Imagery

*Leland Ryken, Jams C. Wilhoit,
Tremper Longman III (Gen. eds)*
Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998,
1058 pp., h/b., £29.99

The handsome quality of production that marks IVP's recent series of Dictionaries is a more relevant review factor in this latest volume than in most; for this one will find sales in the general market, as much if not more than the specialist market for which its contributors usually write. Its primary market, the editors point out, is 'not scholars but laypeople'. In the specialist market, nevertheless, there is nothing quite like it. There have been predecessors: Benjamin Keach (1640–1704) tackled similar issues in his *Tropologia*, and later authors who recognised the importance of literary devices in biblical texts include D.R. Dungan, who in his 1888

Hermeneutics included three chapters on 'figurative language', and J.W. Monser who around the turn of the century wrote on 'Types and Metaphors of the Bible'. None of these, of course, had the benefit of the immense amount of work done in the past decades by secular (and some Christian) scholars in the field of metaphor and image generally. The present work's contributors have had, and it shows.

'Image' is a broad term. It means generally 'metaphor; symbol; striking language; any sensuous effect provoked by literary language'. Many commentators in recent years have included literary qualities as part of the meaning of the text. As a non-theologian trained in literature, I've been struck by the attention paid, for example, to literary structures in the work of such scholars as Oscar Cullmann and Stephen Smalley in their books on the Fourth Gospel. The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* takes such dimensions of the text as its starting point. Here you won't find detailed information about the sacrifice system, but you will find an article on 'Offering' that explores the symbolic and metaphorical idea of sacrificial offering in a way that is found usually only in footnotes elsewhere. The result is a deeper understanding of the text, but also a tendency for each article to offer devotional and expository insights that multiply the uses of the book.

The articles are very well judged, giving as much factual information about topics as is needed to understand their function as imagery. They range from short articles on simple ideas to extended treatments, some of the most rewarding of which are the ones that discuss each of the books of the Bible in terms of imagery. Naturally, topics like 'Israel' receive thorough treatment, and some, like the moving article on 'Prostitution', are virtually sermons in themselves. This really is a book that will find its readers browsing long after they found what they consulted it for.

There are some disappointments. The quality of the article bibliographies makes one wish there were more of them, though presumably the literature is not large. And though the editors' reasons for not signing articles with their authors' names are understandable (the articles underwent several stages of editorial revision, reorganisation and other modifications after submission), I sometimes wished I knew who was behind a particular article so I could read more of him or her.

One substantial disappointment is that the organisational logic of the articles is sometimes very strange. It looks as if the book has been organised from the specific to the general instead of the other way round, with the result that a number of sub-topics are not properly gathered under their generic article, and sometimes there is no generic article at all. Cross-references are often arbitrary: 'Rags to Riches' is cross-referenced to 'Poverty', but not vice versa – which is unfortunate, as the reader is most likely to begin with the more general topic. 'Iron' is cross-referenced to 'Metals', but there is no article on 'Metals'. 'Weapons' is in, but not 'War'; and 'Warfare' simply refers you to several other articles. In the process, Spiritual Warfare gets merely a paragraph or two under 'Weapons', though as a major biblical image it surely deserves a substantial article of its own. 'War' does appear in the index, but the index consists of long lists of anonymous page numbers and is not going to be very useful for detailed study.

The problems in organisation do limit the usefulness of the Dictionary, but I have no hesitation in recommending this.

David Porter
Greatham

Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters

D.K. McKim (ed.)
Downers Grove, IL and Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998,
xxiii + 643 pp., h/b., \$29.95 and £24.99

The history of Biblical interpretation is a major growth industry these days and therefore it is a particular pleasure to welcome this handbook, which contains biographies of 104 major interpreters from early times down to the present. The editor has made a real effort to ensure that writers from before 1800 are given adequate representation, with the welcome result that they take up about half the book. Different specialists write the articles and on the whole they are extremely well done. In every case we are given brief biographical details, a list of publications relevant to Biblical interpretation and an analysis of how each individual writer approached the Scriptures. It is this last feature which is especially valuable and which will make the book an essential resource for anyone studying the history of Biblical interpretation. There is also a bibliography of the person's own writings and a selection of studies to round off each article. In most cases, the compiler of the article has engaged directly with significant recent work on their subjects, which is a great help in deciding which of the bibliographical items to look at first.

The handbook is divided into chronological sections, beginning with the early church and continuing through the middle ages, the reformation and post-reformation period and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (combined in one section). The twentieth century is divided into two parts, one devoted to Europe and one to North America. Each section begins with an overview of the period as a whole, which is then followed by the biographies in alphabetical order. This makes it easy to find whoever one is looking for, though F.J.A. Hort is combined with

B.F. Westcott under W, and Thomas Aquinas is put at the beginning of the alphabet instead of towards the end, where he more properly belongs. The disadvantage of the alphabetical approach is that it is impossible to follow the development of concepts and ideas, like covenant theology for example, or the documentary hypothesis, unless one is fully aware that a man like Julius Wellhausen, with whom the documentary hypothesis is now usually associated, was actually developing and refining a theory which was already at least two generations old.

Of the chronological divisions, the most interesting is the one devoted to the reformation and its aftermath. Luther and Calvin have so dominated study of this period that others have been pushed to the sidelines, and seventeenth-century thought has frequently been ignored on the ground that it is too dogmatic and 'pre-critical' to appeal to a modern audience. This handbook does its best to correct that impression, and both the introductory essay by R.A. Muller and a number of the biographies are outstanding. The medieval period is short-changed by comparison, but at least it is there. More controversial is the division of the twentieth century along geographical lines, something that is almost certainly due to the book's American origins. Ninety percent of the contributors come from North America, which will also be the book's main market, so a special interest in American Biblical interpretation is understandable. Yet it is noticeable from the introduction to the final section how dependent Americans have been on European models, even in this century. Some readers (and not only Europeans) will be surprised to discover that since 1980, in the essayist's judgement, the brightest and best American scholars have stayed home and gone to American graduate schools. Others may not see the fact that the USA is now the great trendsetter in Biblical interpretation in quite as

favourable a light as he does. Some American scholarship is extremely good, but a great deal of it is very third rate, and that unfortunately includes most of what might reasonably be called 'trendsetting'.

Inevitably, in a book like this, readers are bound to wonder what the criteria for selection were, and the editor has tried to anticipate objections to his choices in the introduction. Unfortunately it appears that the main principle of inclusion was his own personal preference, which is not very satisfactory. Personal preference is bound to play an important part in any selection, but it would be reassuring if at least some objective criteria could be mentioned as well. Biblical interpretation tends to be rooted in exegesis, theology and exposition (preaching) and most Biblical interpreters can be appreciated from one or more of these starting points. Some, like Luther and Calvin, shine equally in all of them, but most are remembered for their contributions in only one of these three fields. If the editor had borne that in mind over the book as a whole it might have been easier to justify certain entries and provide a more balanced approach over all.

For example, it is hard to see how Irenaeus, Justin Martyr or Tertullian can be regarded as major Biblical interpreters from an exegetical point of view, though their stature as theologians might justify including them. John Chrysostom and Bernard of Clairvaux are remembered mainly as great preachers, though Chrysostom was also a gifted exegete, as his biographer points out. But there are no great preachers to represent the modern period, not even Spurgeon or Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Has preaching disappeared as an important vehicle of Biblical interpretation? Perhaps it has, but the question is surely worth discussing in a historical study like this one.

Among omissions, the saddest is Ambrosiaster, an exegete on a par

with Origen and Chrysostom, who does not even get into the index. Also missing are Bede, Gregory the Great and the German pair Keil and Delitzsch. They really ought to have been included and if space was an issue, people like Miles Coverdale and Richard Hooker could easily have been left out. Neither of them could qualify as a major Biblical interpreter in any of the above categories and the same must be said of Pilgram Marpeck and Kierkegaard. In cases like these it is impossible not to think that clearer guidelines on what type of person should be included would have produced better choices.

Evangelicals will be disappointed to discover that they are not well represented, which is surprising given that the book comes from an evangelical publisher. That may help to make it more credible in the non-evangelical world, but it is a pity that there is so little sign of the evangelical renaissance in Biblical studies which has gone on since 1945. No doubt, part of the reason for this is that with a biographical approach current trends in Biblical studies are not really considered in the way that they should be. Few of the subjects treated are still alive and those that are have made their contribution already. The up and coming generation will have to wait until it enters history for a book of this kind to include its leading representatives and perhaps then we shall see a more substantial evangelical presence.

Any book of this kind will have its gaps, but for what it covers it will be hard to beat. Certainly those who take a serious interest in studying the history of Biblical interpretation will have to obtain it and will want to consult it often.

Gerald Bray
Samford University

The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible

Gail Corrington Streete
Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997,
219 pp.

Streete began writing this book because of a perceived lack of feminist commentary on the adulterous woman. With this explicit feminist agenda in mind, Streete approaches the Bible in the manner of Schüssler Fiorenza, as a text which is androcentric, toxic and (I quote) 'a waste dump'. Streete takes this as a given, relying, I assume, on others' works to substantiate her view. She considers the Bible's interpretation and its meaning to be the same and thereby merges a misogynist and sexist interpretation with the Bible itself, concluding that the Bible must be undeniably androcentric and misogynist. She interweaves biblical texts with extra-biblical ones (such as Jewish midrash and Christian commentary) and it is therefore at times impossible to see how Streete is interacting with the Bible because she doesn't differentiate it from other texts in her 'evidence'.

From this framework Streete focuses on the 'strange woman', or adulterous woman, and the relationship between adultery, idolatry and its gendering as female. Streete considers this fusion to be a male strategy to curtail female sexuality and to blame women for apostasy. The females Streete focuses on are those that fit with her hypothesis, and she ignores those that would challenge it. For example she ignores Deborah and Jael as women empowered but not categorised as adulterous, because they lived in a 'confused time'. She also ignores Esther as she is supposedly a wholly apocryphal figure, which she is not. Her scholarly inadequate argumentation, exemplified here, makes her overall analysis weak.

Arguing that marriage is a social construct, she wants to assimilate the

biblical poles of the female gender (namely the wise woman and the adulterous woman of Proverbs) and take away the boundaries that constrict women's identity. She wants to open up a space in which women can be free to be wise and adulterous if they desire.

Written from a view that considers the Bible to be simply a 'paradigmatic meta-narrative', this book approaches adultery and human relationships from a God-less point of view in which the primary principle is self-pleasure, empowerment and fulfillment. Streete is not presenting a theological understanding of the adulterous woman but a sociological one. She ignores the ethics of relationship and responsibility and focuses solely on the 'marginalised' woman and redresses the gender disbalance to an unhealthy extreme.

Streete outlines how the literary symbol of the female adulterer has tragic effects upon the imagination. She claims that (literally) violent condemnation of female adultery 'sanctions and dictates the appropriate behaviour for those societies for which this literary code is a divine code'. Streete contends that 'metaphors are never "simply" metaphors'. Not entering into a hermeneutic debate of any depth, Streete does not substantiate her assumptions. Although to some extent a historically viable claim (such passages have indeed been used to defend misogynist behaviour) it is not exhaustive and is making unrealistic propositions about the power of a metaphorical trope upon ethical decision making. She also makes metaphor more authoritative than other elements of biblical writings on adultery, such as the more explicit moral teaching.

Throughout the book Streete looks at examples of the 'strange woman', and claims that the biblical portrayal of the adulterous woman exhibits a 'diachronic consistency'. However, a paragraph earlier she sees the OT as

making women responsible for adultery and idolatry but then cites the NT as shifting the responsibility to men. This is but one example of the way in which Streete not only contradicts herself, but subtly moves her boundaries and suppositions according to her current argument. Not only confusing, it makes it difficult to understand exactly what she is arguing for and against.

Much of this book is written on assumptions: that adultery and marriage are simply social constructs, that marriage's sole purpose is to reduce female sexual freedom and that adultery is 'a strategy of resistance'. She does not explicitly defend her views and does not enter into any debate with the biblical view of marriage or the view that marriage is about relationship and may serve the family rather than just the male.

Streete's approach obviously shapes her entire argument. Throughout the book she struggles to juggle her postmodern precepts with her condemnation of misogyny. She is relativistic and yet contends that the Bible is a misogynist text - two precepts that don't stand easily together. She is motivated by gender ethics and yet explicitly distances herself from ethical judgements: 'I intend neither to endorse nor to condemn adultery in women'. This slant therefore results in an ethical analysis of gender that ignores wider ethical issues, which makes her conclusions questionable. In her understanding of the main theme of the Bible as being about control (namely 'ethnic integrity, controlling female fertility... retaining lines of leadership and authorship within a fragile nomadic tribal structure'), she completely misses out the overarching theme of a loving relationship between God and his people and therefore the marriage and adultery, she analyses are devoid of relationship, love or the reality of the dynamics of human-human and God-human relationships.

Streete's sociological insights are the most interesting aspects of the book. Christian responses to sexuality have been dubious historically, Augustine called it the 'perversity of the will', and misogyny has been common within Christian theology from the Church Fathers, through Medieval and Reformation theology and even, scarily, to the present day to some extent. Highlighting this problematic area in church and theology's history presents a challenge to theologians today. These questions need to be personally answered. Why is Israel's idolatry always figured in the language of female prostitution? Do we as readers unthinkingly adopt these images that unbalance the scriptural view of gender?

However, as a 'feminist' analysis of the Bible, as a woman, I was sadly disappointed by the way Streete, in order to strengthen her ammunition against sexist interpretations, merely exaggerated misogynist and sexist interpretations. As a woman who disregards the Bible as God's word, Streete can make the Bible her enemy, but for Christian women, and men, who try to live by it, a more ingenious approach to these difficult texts is required.

Joanne Carruthers
Manchester

Christology

Hans Schwarz
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998,
352 pp., \$25/£16.99

This study of Christology is a survey of the subject written from a generally conservative point of view and aimed at theological students and others with a more than elementary knowledge of the subject. It is well written and achieves an admirable balance between statements of general principle and detailed arguments, giving the reader just enough of both so that the overall picture is kept in

view even as particular points are illustrated and defended.

The book is divided into three parts, each of which is further subdivided into chapters. The first part gives us an overview of the history of Christological reflection since the time of Reimarus. Here the author tells us what the particular approach and emphases of the major contributors to the different debates have been. Not surprisingly, he brings out the particular significance of Albert Schweitzer and Rudolf Bultmann, but he places them in their wider context and shows how their ideas have both influenced the ongoing scholarly debate and been modified by it in the process. Of particular interest is the chapter that deals with the Jesus Seminar, in which Professor Schwarz shows clearly how much it reflects its origins in secular American universities, and how little it actually contributes to our understanding of Jesus.

The second part of the book is a detailed examination of the Biblical evidence for our faith in Christ. The author makes it very clear just how important the Biblical foundation is for subsequent theological constructions, and does his best to demonstrate how strong (and occasionally how weak) the Biblical evidence is for the different aspects of traditional systematic Christology. Of particular interest is his examination of the historicity of the birth narratives of Jesus, where he points out that we cannot exclude the possibility that the visit of the wise men, for example, has a historical basis. What emerges very clearly from this discussion is that we are left with a stark alternative. We have either to accept the basic reliability of the Gospel accounts, or we have to picture a Jesus who was illegitimate by birth and who later preached as only a madman could or would. Schwarz makes it plain that although the evidence of the NT does not conclusively 'prove' that the church's

traditional interpretation of the historical Jesus is the right one, it does lead us to the point where we have to admit that any alternative is worse. That is probably as far as historical research can or ought to go, and Schwarz has done us a great service in taking us to that point.

The last chapter of the second part of the book takes us through the history of the church, showing how the patristic synthesis represented by the creeds and councils of antiquity developed. It then takes us through the medieval debates about atonement to the Reformation, and the different positions adopted by Luther and Calvin. From there we move on to the Enlightenment and subsequent developments, though here there is greater emphasis placed on systematic thinkers like Hegel and Karl Barth and less on speculative biographers of Jesus like Renan and Strauss, who are dealt with in the first part of the book.

The third part attempts a synthesis of historical and theological considerations which might form a plausible basis for the church's faith today. Schwarz discusses all the major issues that have surfaced in recent years, including such matters as the Jewishness of Jesus and the possibility of a feminine 'Christa'. In every case he is fair to the exponents of such ideas, often quoting them directly, even though he does not accept their conclusions. On the question of whether Christ is the unique saviour of mankind his presentation is somewhat less satisfactory, perhaps because he himself seems to be inclined towards a form of universalism. It is in this context that he mentions Evangelicals, but it is clear from the very brief consideration which he gives them that he has not explored evangelical theology in any depth. This superficiality stands in sharp contrast with the remarkably wide coverage which he gives to other movements, for example feminism,

and it must be regarded as an unfortunate weakness in what is generally an excellent and very fair survey.

Occasionally there are points which he could have used to defend a conservative position but which for some reason are ignored. The most obvious of these occurs on page 239, where he states that Matthew 1:23 alters Isaiah 7:14, so that Isaiah's 'young woman' becomes a virgin. Actually this 'alteration', if that is the correct term for it, appears in the Septuagint, which Matthew was quoting. One may still dispute the translation, but it is hardly correct to say, as Schwarz does, that Christians were responsible for it.

A particularly valuable feature of this book is the way in which it constantly relates the theological constructions of the medieval and Reformation eras to the Biblical evidence on which they are based. This does not put an end to all controversy, of course, but it does show that the classical doctors of the church were much more deeply rooted in Scripture than they are often given credit for. Indeed, their theology is Biblical in a way which is seldom the case with modern systematic theologians, a point which also emerges as the author develops his arguments.

Finally, it can be said that Schwarz is equally at home in the German and in the Anglo-American theological worlds. He wrote the book in English for the second of these markets, which may explain why Anglo-American scholars have been given a prominence which is unusual in German works, but his knowledge of the field is good and his assessments are accurate, apart from his failure to do justice to Evangelicals. From what he does say about them, it seems that this weakness is more a matter of ignorance than of hostility, and it can only be hoped that in a second edition more space will be given to them, since it can be argued that they are far more significant than the feminists

or universalists of the John Hick type, who are so generously treated here.

In sum, this book can be highly recommended as a lucid and fair presentation of its subject, which generally speaking offers a reasoned defence of orthodox Christology. It will be a valuable addition to any student's library, and an excellent introduction to the main points of debate in this ever-contentious field of theological inquiry.

Gerald Bray
Samford University

The Person of Christ Contours of Christian Theology

Donald Macleod
Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998, 303 pp.,
£14.99

This is the latest volume in IVP's generally sound and satisfying series, *Contours of Christian Theology*. Within the context of the series as a whole, it stands as a companion volume to *The Work of Christ* by Robert Letham, published some years ago.

Donald Macleod is well known in the United Kingdom as a gifted preacher and teacher, and this book will hopefully serve to bring his work to the attention of a wider audience. In it, Macleod commits himself to an exposition of classic, catholic christology while at the same time engaging some of the contemporary challenges which have been posed to such christology in recent years. His conviction is that, despite the inevitable weakness which any human doctrinal formulation inherently possessed, the language and concepts of classic christology still represent a sound and adequate statement of the biblical teaching. With this in mind, the reader will find within these pages a thoroughly orthodox treatment of all the classic christological topics (pre-existence, *kenosis*, the problem of historical particularity and universal truth).

The book divides into two parts, the titles of which ('Very God of Very God' and 'Very God, Very Man') reflect Macleod's self-conscious desire to stand within the traditional boundaries of Christian orthodoxy and indicate the movement of his argument from establishing the divinity of the second person of the trinity to establishing the union and integrity of the two natures in the incarnation. Nevertheless, while remaining within orthodox trajectories, Macleod does not ignore major modern challenges - exegetical, theological and philosophical - to such teaching and is also open to learning lessons from those with whom he disagrees when he feels it is necessary.

In the context of the British scene, one of Macleod's most significant contributions lies in his critique of the work of James Dunn who is taken to task, among other things, for his downgrading of John's Gospel and his rather contrived exegetical methods. In addition, Dunn's rejection of pre-existence comes in for some searching and, in the opinion of this reviewer, decisive and long-overdue theological criticism. To have the theological and exegetical case for orthodoxy on this issue laid before us so clearly by someone who has such confidence in the authority and clarity of Scripture is a refreshing and encouraging turn of events within the evangelical world.

On a more positive note, it is stimulating to find an evangelical theologian prepared to listen to non-evangelical writers and thinkers without surrendering his orthodoxy. Particularly pertinent in this context is Macleod's interaction with the christologies of Bonhoeffer and South American liberation theologians. Here Macleod reminds the reader that christology is not simply - or even primarily - about metaphysics but about the action and example of God, something which in itself passes judgement on the world and calls

Christian themselves to action. That Macleod shows that this point can be made without abandoning the traditional christological language and formulations is an important lesson, particularly for students who will no doubt be told again and again that such are inadequate for the challenge facing contemporary Christianity.

The book's major drawback is, as Macleod himself confesses, that it is a book written in the eighties, not the nineties, and so some of the issues currently dominating christological debate are not dealt with – but those who are not so concerned with being on the cutting-edge and simply want solid catholic christology expounded with precision and wit, could do little better than start with this fine volume.

Carl R. Trueman

King's College, Aberdeen

The God Who Risks

John Sanders

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, USA, 1998, 367 pp., \$21.99

Upstream from many tormenting theological puzzles lurks the basic question of God's nature and providence. John Sanders, associate professor of philosophy and religion at Huntington College (Indiana), joins a spate of recent theological voices in challenging the classical (often Reformed) view that God exercises sovereign control over all that occurs. He contends that the traditionally accepted divine attributes such as omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence and impassibility are not fully compatible with an honest reading of the biblical data, are not logically inconsistent and are unable to support a viable Christian experience.

Sanders develops a case for 'relational theism' or a 'risk' view of God. In this view God engages his creation,

including human life and destiny, without determining or even knowing in detail the final outcome. Anticipating rejoinders Sanders claims that this view neither diminishes God's character nor evacuates his promises of content. God, to Sanders, is 'omnipotent,' having all the strength and wisdom needed to accomplish His 'overarching goals' (66). Yet, God can be genuinely disappointed and surprised. Sanders states, 'The portrait of God developed here is one according to which God sovereignly wills to have human persons become collaborators with him in achieving the divine project of mutual relations of love' (12).

God, according to Sanders, could have created any type of world he wanted, including one in which every detail is either foreordained or foreseen. Yet, God has freely chosen to create a truly free world subject himself to that condition. For Sanders, human freedom to love God cannot coexist with any sort of divine coercion. Furthermore, God cannot foreknow what has not yet happened anymore than he can make a square circle.

In dealing with the biblical evidence Sanders challenges the claim that accommodationist language does not portray God as he really is, but only as he appears to us. Metaphorical language, he claims, may not tell all there is to know about God's inner reality, but we must not project onto it our preconceived notions of what God *must* be like. Sanders asks,

If the Scripture is God's *lisp*ing discourse to us and we have no means of observing God's non-lisp^{ing} discourse, then on what grounds do we claim that God is indeed *lisp*ing to us? How would anyone know, since we cannot observe God's 'normal' discourse? (68).

In the NT Sanders sees Jesus Christ as our only epistemological axis for understanding God. He offers Jesus'

temptation, compassion and passion as evidence that God has made himself truly vulnerable to those who bear his image. Jesus's crucifixion he understands, not as God's original plan for dealing with human sin but as used by God to heal our relational brokenness, the resurrection then representing God's power to respond to evil and keep human history moving toward redemption.

Sanders attempts to show that relational theism is compatible with historic orthodoxy, even citing Louis Berkhof's belief in 'changeable faithfulness' (184) as evidence. He presents God as transcending the confinement of classical attributes, redeeming his world more freely than with the coercion depicted in Reformed theology and more authentically than portrayed in the passive foreknowledge of Arminian theology. Unfortunately, he occasionally argues against simplistic caricatures of 'specific sovereignty' views, ignoring the time-tested debates that have sought to qualify God's exercise of providence so as to account for evil and preserve human integrity.

On the whole Sanders' 'relational theism' may evade the charge of heterodoxy that some evangelicals will make. It is more than possible, however, that the logic of his case may have a retrogressive impact on other critical areas of theology. Sanders' view of sin hardly accounts for the depths of human depravity we experience. Nor does his view of grace seem sufficiently forceful to unshackle human bondage.

Critics of this work are likely to debate Sanders' theological method as much as his exegesis and conclusions. While he has anticipated and addressed the most predictable reservations about his argument, some critical questions remain: For example, does the risk model adequately account for all prophetic foretelling and the specific futuristic promises in Scripture? Does his distinction between the 'formal'

freedom and 'material' bondage of humans allow God's grace to function any differently than in Reformed theology and still save us?

Sanders has, nonetheless, exposed some danger points: the depersonalising risk of Reformed hamartiology, the influence of Greek philosophy on our preconceptions about God's attributes and the sometimes crippling personal effects of overdone views of sovereignty.

Sanders' work is far from conclusive. Yet he poses helpful questions and outlines the debate in a fresh, engaging manner. Ultimately, the importance of *The God Who Risks* is best captured in Walter Brueggemann's comment on the back cover. 'It matters hugely that in the end the God of our faith can be "prevailed upon".'

Don Payne

Denver Seminary, Denver, CO.

The Evangelical Left

Millard J. Erickson

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998, 152 pp., £17.99

'The Evangelical Left' is Erickson's term for a North American movement which others have dubbed 'postconservative evangelicalism'. He identifies its protagonists as Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, Stanley Grenz, Bernard Ramm and James McClendon. He also detects a postconservative agenda at key institutions like Intervarsity Press, Fuller Seminary, and *Christianity Today* magazine.

Erickson casts postconservatism as a reaction against the Enlightenment, and most especially, the reliance of American evangelical theology on Scottish Common Sense philosophy. Where this produced strong propositionally-based dogmatics, Pinnock and Grenz in particular prefer more relational, narratively-based paradigms. Postconservatives are

typically more Arminian than Calvinist, more ecumenical than separatist, and more willing to dialogue with liberal, neo-orthodox and postliberal thinkers than with conservative evangelicals. As Erickson points out, these trends reflect a desire to develop theological methods suited to a postmodern, rather than a modern, world.

Erickson focuses on three key areas of doctrinal concern for postconservatives: Scripture, God and salvation. On Scripture, he shows that postconservatives support a 'functional' version of biblical infallibility which allows for mistakes in the text while maintaining the role of Scripture as God's primary means of self-disclosure. While admitting that conservative evangelicals have often neglected the human side of biblical composition and interpretation, Erickson casts significant doubt on the ability of postconservatives to distinguish between 'erroneous' empirical information and 'inerrant' religious or theological statements. Serious generic problems are also exposed in their distinction between 'narrative' and 'propositional' discourse.

Erickson notes that the profile of postconservatism was most firmly established by publication of *The Openness of God* in 1994 – a volume to which Pinnock and Sanders contributed along with William Hasker and David Basinger. Espousing a 'free will theism' which questions traditional attributes of God such as omniscience and impassability, the 'openness' view criticises these attributes for owing more to Greek philosophical categories than to the 'Hebraic' thought-forms of Scripture. Erickson accepts the need to distinguish biblical revelation from cultural presuppositions, but argues that 'Greek' models are not so alien from the biblical text. More seriously, he questions the validity of seeking guidance from a God whose will is undeveloped, or of squaring predictive prophecy with a God whose foreknowledge is conditional.

On salvation, Erickson shows that postconservatives are motivated by 'hermeneutic optimism' about the population of heaven. He goes on to discuss the preference of the New Left for conditional immortality over eternal conscious punishment, and charts Pinnock's support for a 'postmortem encounter' or 'second chance'. Again, Erickson finds positive, as well as negative points in all this. He admits that evangelicals have sometimes been heartless in their doctrinal treatment of 'the lost', but insists that Scripture is frequently pessimistic about the proportion of the redeemed, and that Pinnock's 'Hades Gospel' depends overmuch on highly disputed material from 1 Peter.

Erickson is a skilful summariser of others' views and presents those views in a thematically coherent way. He also proves an astute but generally fair-minded critic of postconservatism, although his analysis could have been integrated more fully into the body of his text, rather than appended to the end of each chapter.

Readers of this new British edition will see parallels between Erickson's 'Left Wing' and recent work by Nigel Wright, John Drane, Michael Ridell and others. Postmodernity is presenting a challenge to classical evangelicalism not only in America, but across the developed world. As they respond to this challenge, evangelicals on this side of the Atlantic will find Erickson's study to be a useful starting-point.

David Hilborn
Evangelical Alliance, UK

The Personal God: Is the classical understanding of God tenable?

Gerald Bray
Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998,
76 pp., £7.99

Written against the background of the 1994 *The Openness of God*, Gerald Bray presents an account of the traditional view of God. Introducing the issues, Bray helpfully concedes that new environments deserve new statements of the core beliefs of Christianity. The issue, in Bray's words, is 'whether that new approach should involve a change of fundamental doctrine' (8).

Bray's answer is to begin with an exploration of the theme of covenant throughout the Bible, and how this covenant has always been founded on a relationship of grace, extended from God to humanity. Important to his case of outlining the biblical data is the point that being affects doing, so that 'who God is determines what he does, and what he can do'. (27). This then is related to the way in which theology is and has been done, and how doctrine is extracted from the revelatory data. God is sovereign and in control, though not responsible for evil. In God there is no time, he is eternally present. God is immutable in himself, but can manifest himself and relate to us in various ways. God is loving towards his covenantal people, but love is not always what we like to think it is. God himself defines our language and talk about him, rather than the other way around.

In a final chapter, Bray explores the personal dimension of God, in reaction to the openness critique of a supposedly non-personal traditional God, under the title 'I Am has sent me to you'. At the heart of Bray's work are two points – that the openness position underestimates human sinfulness, and that openness theologians confuse their categories of thought. Thus 'they supposed that God's infinite flexibility in dealing with

us must indicate that his being is somehow changeable. It did not seem to occur to them that it might be possible for the creator to relate to his creatures without changing, or that such a relationship is essential if we are ever going to trust God, or become the people that he wants us to be' (74).

In evaluating this book, a final decision is hard to come to. In one sense, I have huge sympathy with Bray's position. Given to someone relatively new to the issues, it presents an extremely helpful narrative introduction to a biblical picture of God, and responds along the way to the important issues. Bray puts his enormous knowledge of historical issues to good use, and acknowledges the force and attractiveness of the openness position without being seduced by it. On the other hand, the work does not offer a point to point refutation of an openness position. Those looking for such a work will have to seek elsewhere, and will be disappointed. In conclusion, recommended, depending on your starting point!

Tony Gray
Leicester

The One Purpose of God: An Answer to the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment

Jan Bonda (trans. Reinder Bruinsma)
Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998,
xxv + 278 pp., \$25.00/£16.99

Jan Bonda who died in 1997 was for many years a pastor in the Netherlands. Throughout his life he was deeply troubled by, as he puts it, 'the gloomy doctrine of eternal punishment' and so, upon retirement, he began a serious study of the Bible's teachings on hell and final judgement. The results of his labours are found in this book. He concludes that the traditional church with its doctrine of everlasting punishment for the majority of humankind is not only unthinkable, but unbiblical.

Bonda cannot imagine that the same God who commands us to love our neighbours could ever possibly ask us to concur with their endless tortures.

More poignantly, Bonda asks, 'How can I love him with all my heart and at the same time keep silent when he predestines my little daughter to eternal damnation?' (29). Something is desperately wrong, and Bonda thinks he knows what it is. None of the traditional, horrific teachings about eternal punishment comes from the Bible. In fact, the biblical writers believed just the opposite. They believed that God 'desires everyone to be saved' (1 Tim. 2:4), and hence the title of the book, *The One Purpose of God*.

Throughout this work the reader gets the impression that Bonda writes not from theological curiosity, but from inner passion. The issues truly bother him and he is honestly trying to find answers that satisfy. In his first few chapters he makes the case for the unreasonableness of the traditional view, both by giving personal illustrations and by examining the beliefs of church fathers such as Origen and Augustine. From here he moves on to the OT and then to the main thrust of his book, an analysis of Paul's letter to the Romans. Nowhere, concludes Bonda, does Scripture support the outrageous doctrine of eternal punishment. Rather, God's intention is to draw all humanity to himself: 'God in Christ wants to save the entire human race' (105). If someone has not had proper opportunity to embrace Christ in this life, or even if he has flatly rejected God's mercies, he will be given ample opportunity to repent and turn to Christ in the afterlife. For God 'death poses no limit to what he can do' (108). God is God of both the living and the dead.

Although Bonda writes with sincerity and purpose, many will be disappointed in his presentation. From the philosophical point of view a much stronger case for universalism

is made in the earlier works of H.H. Farmer, *The World and God*, N. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, and J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*. Equally, many will find the biblical support for universalism (which purports to be the strength of this book) has been done more thoroughly by E. Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes* and N. Punt, *Unconditional Good News*.

Readers will find a number of Bonda's arguments lacking in historical understanding. He acknowledges, for example, that Jesus does talk about eternal punishment, but suggests that the idea of everlasting punishment 'was so totally foreign to the thinking of the early church' that endless punishment never entered their heads (72). In fact it was quite the opposite. The largest and most popular group of Jews in first-century Palestine were Pharisees who expected the souls of the wicked to be eternally punished (Josephus, *Ant* 8.14, *War* 2.163). When Jesus talked about eternal punishment, his Pharisaic audience would have understood him to mean endless suffering.

Second, Bonda makes it sound as if the doctrine of eternal punishment were a later church invention: 'Eternal damnation was first taught by Augustine' (12). He ignores the consistent testimony in the first half of the second century that shows post-apostolic Christians as having a firm belief in eternal, conscious punishment for the wicked (Ign. Eph 16:2; Diog 10:7f; 2 Clem 6:7; 17:7; Mart Poly 2:3; 11:2; Apoc Pet 6).

Third, in trying to make the case that 'all Israel' in Romans 11 includes the entirety of Israel (179-82), Bonda seems unaware that everywhere else prior to the writing of Romans, the words 'all Israel' refer to Israel as a corporate body, not as individual Jews. This would bolster the usual arguments (against Bonda) that Paul is using 'Jews' and 'Gentiles' as collectives in Romans 11.

Students and educated laypeople interested in universalism will profit from this book. At times the translation reads a bit awkwardly, but theological jargon is kept to a minimum and scholarly points relegated to footnotes. Certainly, no one will fault the kindly spirit Bonda brings to the task.

William V. Crockett
Alliance Theological Seminary
Nyack, NY

Text and Psyche. Experiencing Scripture Today

Schuyler Brown
New York: Continuum, 1998,
141 pp., h/b., \$18.95/£9.99

The axe is at the root of the historical critical tree.

Schuyler Brown's new book will inevitably be seen as a reworking of Walter Wink's explosive 1973 tract, *The Bible in Human Transformation*; indeed Wink's back-cover commendation ensures this. As such it offers us an equally invigorating survey of the same problem which exercised Wink: how may the transformative power of the Bible be experienced after the desert of historical criticism? Twenty-five years on, and thus with postmodernism deftly bracketed out of the way, one has to say that not much has changed. The question is, then, whether Brown has succeeded in pointing a way ahead in the wake of Wink's famous declaration of the 'bankruptcy' of historical criticism. I suggest that he is successful in some ways, but frustrating in others.

The introduction, 'Reading the Bible in a Changed World', is masterful. Brown starts with the 'changed context' in which the Bible is read today (a context including the predominance of pluralist religious paradigms and the rise of empiricist and historical-critical method), and then surveys various 'reading paradigms': the historical; the

doctrinal; the liberationist; and then at greater length the 'literary paradigm'. Here he is cautiously positive, noting that 'the narrative paradigm has sometimes been used as a way of evading tough historical questions and of introducing doctrinal assumptions in narrative disguise' (21). His survey ends with what one might call a 'psychological paradigm', although Brown does not label it such, which draws on Jung's work to look at how a text may 'be understood as the *mimesis* of the psychic processes which produced it' (26). In a nice touch, he credits Anglicanism with the prerequisite openness to *liturgical* aspects of the Reformation to take on board these psychological angles.

Chapter 1, 'Biblical Empirics', follows this overview as something of a manifesto. Biblical empirics is proposed as the study of what actually happens when the Bible is read. Brown's suggestion is that the essentially mystical process of personal transformation through encounter with the God behind the text is more worthy of our attention than the recovery of original or correct meanings. Devotional readings, allegorical readings and, so far as I could judge, flat-out gnostic readings are all respected, and in the inevitable rearguard action which ensues against 'legitimacy' (that horn of the hegemonist white beast), Brown suggests that 'We must be prepared to entertain the dangerous notion that anyone who is affected by reading the Bible thereby demonstrates an interpretive competence' (46).

Thus far I am reasonably persuaded, even if it seems ever elusive for a defender of this kind of interpretive realism to present non-historical-critical approaches without going overboard into a criteria-less interpretive malaise which is always very non-Nietzschean ('the survival of the nicest?'). However, I was disappointed that the remaining chapters made only sporadic progress beyond this initial sketch.

'Literary Criticism', chapter 2, revisits some of Brown's earlier work on author, text and reader, and probes more fully his introductory comments. However, I wonder if he underrates the difficulty of his closing section on how literary the Bible may be; and in his positing of 'cognitive' and 'affective' dimensions of narrative (75) perhaps a more polyvalent speech act model would avoid a tendency towards over-polarisation.

Chapters 3 and 4 pursue the less cognitive approaches via Jung and oral and aural texturing. Again there are some interesting ideas, such as the significance of word sounds and reading aloud, but sometimes the opaque mystery of Jungian analysis (chapter 3 is entitled 'The Mysterious Revelation') seemed to be appealed to at precisely the point where it needed clarification. The final chapter is a bizarre detour into gnostic reading habits as 'an interesting parallel' to biblical empirics which 'does not prove anything' (135). This seemed something of an anti-climax.

Brown's rousing conclusion reminds us of the challenges, and I found myself heartily agreeing with its call for an approach to the Bible which will wait on God for personal transformation. But in some ways this simply restates the problem, and reveals that in fact the book has not taken us a great deal further down the road. While there is much that I appreciate in *Text and Psyche*, and incidentally it is written with a beautiful economy of expression and lightness of touch, I am not sure that Jungian archetypes represent an entirely well articulated way ahead in the promising project of biblical empirics. Perhaps a more generous estimate of historical criticism, mediated through some such mechanism as reception history, will provide a framework within which biblical empirics could flourish alongside, rather than instead of, more normative concerns such as interpretive legitimacy.

I don't have any clear answers to these questions. The disappointing thing appears to be that Brown doesn't either. But as a thought-provoking manifesto, this is still a valuable read.

Richard Briggs

University of Nottingham

Praying as Believing: The Lord's Prayer and the Christian Doctrine of God (Regent's Study Guides 6)

Tim Bradshaw

Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1998,
viii + 214 pp., £10.99

If Christian scholarship is to be properly Christian, then it must at the very least attempt to bridge the gulf between the academy and the church. This work by Tim Bradshaw, the Dean of Regent's Park College, Oxford, is a fine example of that attempt. In a systematic and clear way, Bradshaw weaves together contemporary Christian doctrinal reflection with the Lord's prayer. Thus there are chapters exploring each of the main clauses of the prayer, relating each issue to both pressing theological themes, and also to practical issues within the life of the Christian community.

For example, in considering 'Our Father in heaven', Bradshaw takes the reader through issues of Trinitarian thought, the nature of image, the use and abuse of religious language, and concludes this section with a challenge to anti-realist theologians such as Cupitt who have an influence on both the academy and sections of the church. Similarly, in dealing with the subject of forgiveness, he deals not only with the transactional elements of forgiveness, but also with how our understanding of person affects both divine and human forgiveness.

In a book which examines both petitionary prayer and the doctrine of God, one major issue confronting

contemporary theology is bound to raise its head. This consists of the interconnected questions of God's immutability, his impassability, and whether God is timeless or everlasting. Whilst carefully avoiding the perils of the process theologians (which is seen in their conviction that prayer is an event which can change God), Bradshaw is prepared to challenge at least some of the elements of the classical view. He is at home with the image of God as a grand master chess player, and whilst wishing to maintain the dependability of God, does not want to obliterate the role which human free will has to play. Some of this discussion later in the book is fairly tantalising – for example, he quotes the work of some openness theologians without engaging with it – and it would be helpful to see these thoughts expanded further into a fully fledged doctrine of God.

Bradshaw has provided a fine example of how to relate systematic theology to a regular and transforming church activity – praying the Lord's prayer. This work will serve as an excellent model for this approach, and also may suit some students as a good way in to contemporary issues in theology.

Tony Gray

Leicester

Pentecostal Perspectives

Keith Warrington (ed.)

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998,
xviii + 222 pp., £12.99

This collection of nine essays from Pentecostal ministers and scholars operating in Britain demonstrates that British Pentecostalism can no longer be accused of anti-intellectualism. The book consists of two historical essays surveying the history and development of Elim and the Assemblies of God respectively, followed by chapters covering: the inspiration and authority of the Bible; the gifts of the Spirit; baptism in

the Spirit; eschatology; healing and exorcism; worship; and the ordinances.

The book will prove invaluable to those who wish to learn more about current Pentecostal belief and practice. I, for one, learned much from the historical essays. However, the chapters are primarily descriptive in nature and as such, do not particularly engage with other theological views. This is the collection's greatest weakness. I would have appreciated much more space being given to addressing questions concerning how particular Pentecostal perspectives can both enrich and challenge other perspectives. More critical self-reflection on Pentecostal beliefs would also have been welcome. The kind of theological reflection that Pentecostals certainly are capable of as seen, for example, in the excellent *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, is sadly generally absent.

The major exception to the above comment is Siegfried S. Schatzmann's excellent chapter on the gifts of the Spirit in which he carefully critiques the majority Pentecostal view on the relationship between salvation, Spirit baptism and the gifts of the Spirit. Despite David Pett's articulate exposition in the following chapter, of the majority Pentecostal view that Spirit baptism is an experience subsequent to regeneration, I found Schatzmann's position the more persuasive. The chapters by Schatzmann and Pett highlight the fact that this collection of essays is by no means homogeneous. Differences clearly emerge between scholars from Elim and Assemblies of God. In this connection the lack of any contribution from representatives of either the Apostolic Church or the Black Pentecostal churches is disappointing.

As well as Schatzmann's chapter and the two historical essays, another highlight for me was D. Neil Hudson's chapter on worship. This chapter moves beyond a description of the historical development of Pentecostal

worship. Hudson highlights a number of theological concerns about contemporary Pentecostal worship namely: the danger of triumphalism; an inadequate view of spiritual warfare; the lack of awareness of other Christian traditions; the lack of attention to confession and intercession; and the danger of individualism.

In conclusion, this collection of essays provides a highly readable outline of the history and current beliefs and practice of British Pentecostalism. As such it is to be welcomed and there is much to learn from it. However, it is not the place to look for sustained reflection on a Pentecostal contribution to theology.

Lloyd K. Pieteresen
University of Sheffield

Pentecost – Today? The Biblical Basis for Understanding Revival

Iain H. Murray
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998,
viii + 226 pp., h/b., £9.95

'I would advise you, my brother, not to talk too much about a "revival". You will wear out the very word.' With these words of Theodore Cuyler, Iain Murray begins this biblical and partly historical examination of the concept of revival. They are of course wise words, in a time when much popular literature and teaching has devoted itself to 'revival', either attacking the notion and the contemporary claims to its occurrence, or perhaps more forcefully defending the reality of revival in our day and age.

Murray provides a sensible and clear thinking approach to the issues. He presents an understanding of Pentecost that sees it as a decisive event for the establishment and history of the church, rather than an event to be repeated again and again. In this context, he wisely cautions against making a confusion between the Old and New Testaments, and

operates with a carefully worked out concept of revivals as larger measures of the Spirit of God.

This is then followed with an exposition and criticism of the work and views of Charles Finney, perhaps the father of modern revivalism, and how the old school opposed such views (for the history of this readers are directed to Murray's former work, *Revival and Revivalism*, where he details the differences between old school revival, and revivalism). The rest of the work proceeds methodically through the following issues: our responsibility and God's sovereignty, the Holy Spirit and preaching, the interpretation of experience, the dangers of evangelical fanaticism, and six things revival will bring.

This is a work written for the readership of the church at large, rather than for the academy, and for this it is to be commended. This does mean that at times it will not interact with critical issues often faced by students (for example, the supposed conflicting accounts of the pouring out of the spirit on the church in John and Acts).

Unfortunately reviews can often be guilty of 'judging a book by its cover', or in this case, of judging a book by its publisher and its author. However, I must confess to being pleasantly surprised, and to having my prejudices challenged. Murray is keen to challenge traditional churches as 'we can easily begin to forget how urgently we stand in need of the supernatural' (26). On the next page, after having carefully delineated three different positions on revival, he is also ready to admit that 'Christian opinion may be divided at times only by verbal differences.' Much of contemporary revivalism is obviously in his sights as he writes, but Murray is careful not to offend or reproduce caricatures unnecessarily.

There are times when Murray's portrayal of views other than his own

may be a little unfair. For example, he quotes Dodd's criticism of the role of altar calls in revivalism, whereby he accuses revivalists of thinking that some 'wonder-working' occurs as the person rises before the congregation. Although this may have historically been the case, it is not necessarily the thinking behind altar-calls today.

Nevertheless, this is a sane, biblical, and immensely practical book on revival, and on Christian experience in general. Recommended as an examination of the biblical and historical issues.

Tony Gray
Leicester

Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness. Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan and Principalities

Stephen F. Noll
Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, USA, 1998,
255 pp.

Stephen Noll began investigating angels long before it became a fad. Under the supervision of the late Professor F.F. Bruce at the University of Manchester, Noll researched and wrote his Ph.D. thesis on the topic of 'Angelology in the Qumran Texts'. Now Noll has sought to provide for the church a holistic biblical-theological treatment of angelology.

Noll approaches the topic as a believer in the actual existence of this realm of beings. In fact, his hope is that his volume would contribute to 'rehabilitating our knowledge and appreciation of our invisible heavenly companions'. He warns that disbelieving the personal character of evil is 'playing with hellfire'. Consequently, he eschews the prior generation of modern interpreters who dismissed the biblical evidence regarding these intermediaries as artefacts of a primitive worldview. Noll finds more in common with the interpretations of Karl Barth,

John Milton, and in some ways, even Frank Peretti.

This book, however, is not an apologetic for angels, nor does it contain much speculation. It is a descriptive biblical theology that attempts to find answers to some of the questions we might bring to the text – where the Scripture is silent. Noll remains silent. Yet the point of the book is that the Bible has a lot to say about angels. Given this purpose, the book is quite successful. Noll expertly guides the reader in grappling with the key texts and synthesising their meaning against the backdrop of the ancient cultures standing behind the texts.

A strong theme in Noll's book is the prominence of the divine council, which he interprets as a group of angels through whom God indirectly rules the nations of the world (see, for example, Deut. 32:8-9; Pss. 29, 82, 89; Job 1-2; Zech. 3; Dan. 10:12-14, 20-21). These 'sons of God' have become corrupt, led the nations away from God and into idolatry, and correspond with the 'principalities and powers' in Paul's letters. Noll contends that the work of Christ, represents a 'palace revolution in the heavens', but that the officials of this deposed regime continue to function as if nothing has happened. Herein lies the struggle faced by the church today. Yet a time is coming when the Messiah will come and put an end to the rebellion, pacifying the rebellious members of the divine council.

This overall portrait of the biblical drama is presented in a compelling fashion. It has long been an undervalued and neglected way of understanding life from the divine perspective. It corroborates much of what Gregory Boyd has recently argued is the 'warfare worldview' of Scripture in another IVP volume entitled, *God at War*.

Perhaps the only point I would quibble over is Noll's interpretation of Paul's term 'principality' in the non-personal

sense of 'regime' or 'spiritual order'. Although a domination system may be assumed to be in the background of many of the texts, it is important to note that the term itself does not denote the regime but the actual angelic being (e.g. as in Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10; 2:15). This was the way the term was used in Jewish texts, especially when it occurs in conjunction with other angelic powers (see *1 Enoch* 6:7-8; 61:10; *2 Enoch* 20:1; *Test. Levi* 3:8; *Test. of Solomon* 3:6; 20:15; *3 Baruch* 12:3; *Test. of Abraham* 13:10 [shorter recension]). At this point, Noll appears to travel too far down the road with Walter Wink, although he decisively and effectively rejects many of Wink's conclusions throughout his volume.

At the end of each chapter, Noll provides a few pages of 'theological reflections' where he attempts to draw out the implications of the text for contemporary faith and practice. These are very helpful sections and provide Noll with the opportunity to address many contemporary questions, such as 'Can Christians Have Demons?' and the issue of combating territorial spirits. Noll's handling of these issues is all too brief, but nevertheless insightful and suggestive.

Clinton E. Arnold

Talbot School of Theology, CA

A Shattered Visage: the Challenge of Atheism

Ravi Zacharias

London/Sydney/Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996,
ix + 203 pp., £7.99

The author, who has a widespread speaking ministry, has addressed 'the challenge of atheism' in a book of two parts. The first deals with 'Man - The Measure of All Things', the second with 'God - The Treasure of Life's Pursuits'. Pride of place in the introductory discussion of 'morticians of the absolute' is given to Friedrich

Nietzsche, the grey eminence who is present in the book, a seminal figure who saw that the worthy alternative to God is the self-appointed Superman. Zacharias then takes the questions of (a cause for) the universe, morality, meaninglessness and death and seeks to show how God is the best explanation for the world; that 'the morality that atheism teaches, implies or espouses is unliveable' (67) and has led to violence; that a world without God is meaningless and that inability to cope with the fact of death is the death-knell of atheism. Pithily, this is an attempt 'to argue that to find their way; atheists must make sense out of a random first cause, denounce as immoral all moral denunciation, express meaningfully all meaninglessness, and find security in hopelessness' (112); or '[t]he naturalist has no intelligent cause to look to, no moral law to point to, no essential meaning to cling to, and finally, no hope to look forward to for his destiny'. (157) The path from atheism to Christ in its positive contour is sketched out in fewer than fifty pages, responding to all the points above, and the book concludes with two appendices; touching on truth and reality and then on a Christian worldview.

One must welcome the serious, conscientious and eminently readable account Ravi Zacharias offers at a level that will be accessible to most concerned to think seriously about these issues without being subjected to an academic treatment. Of course, many as seriously committed to meeting the challenge of atheism as is the author will challenge the author's apologetic approach which begs questions well aired in discussions of apologetic method and philosophy. Without entering into those here, one may nevertheless make two critical remarks about this presentation of the theistic and Christian case. The first is that we need to take seriously points made by Bonhoeffer over half a century ago about the

'world come of age' and the fact that we should not presume on our ability to show that life is meaningless and death is fearful for all the religionless people whom we encounter. The second is that the author needs to justify and not just to assert the claim that 'without a doubt, the intellectual community must bear the brunt of the blame' for 'our present moral confusion' (54). Certainly, the intellectual community must certainly heed carefully the judgements of one like Zacharias who is concerned with the practice, not just the theory, of apologetics and the people, not just the positions, that deal with death and meaninglessness. Yet the ingredients of atheism are surely more complex than the author implies in this work, grateful as we are for it.

Stephen Williams

Union Theological College, Belfast

Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism

Peter S Heslam

Carlisle: Paternoster Press/Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 1998,
x + 300 pp., £14.99

The evangelical public owes Dr Heslam a debt of gratitude for producing such a clear and elegant monograph on a thinker whose influence on the shape of British and, especially, American Reformed theology has been profound. Any who have ever benefited from the work of Francis Schaeffer, Cornelius Van Til, or Hans Rookmaaker, to name but three, have benefited indirectly from the work of Kuyper. A giant in every field to which he turned his hand - journalism, politics, philosophy and theology - he is yet little read (and, it must be said, little translated) in the English language.

One of Kuyper's works which is available in English is his *Lectures on Calvinism*, delivered at Princeton in 1898 before an audience which

included the eminent theologian, B.B. Warfield. While tradition often sees these two men as representing two discrete apologetic streams, with Warfield as an evidentialist and Kuyper as the fountainhead of modern presuppositionalism, it is clear that the historical reality was not so simple, and that both men had a high regard for each other's work.

It is these lectures which form the object of Heslam's study. After initial chapters which deal with Kuyper's significance, his life, and his visit to the USA, the rest of book is occupied with analyses of the individual lectures, with each lecture having its own chapter. The topics of the lectures are as follows: Calvinism as life-system; Calvinism and religion; Calvinism and politics; Calvinism and science; Calvinism and art; and Calvinism and the future. The whole is rounded off with a conclusion looking at the reception of the lectures both at the time and in terms of later developments.

The picture that emerges from the book is one of Kuyper's breathtaking vision for Christianity. By 'Calvinism', Kuyper did not mean a theological system which could be reduced to distinctive teaching on predestination or atonement; he saw it rather as an all-embracing view of God's sovereignty, a 'world-view' (a concept he borrowed from James Orr) which shapes the believer's attitude to the world and which provides him or her with a distinctively Christian view on all areas, whether intellectual, cultural, political, or scientific. This thinking has, of course, provided the framework for much of evangelical Christianity's engagement with cultural and political issues this century.

An example of the application of this thinking by Kuyper is his attitude to science. In dealing with this, Kuyper took very seriously the epistemological impact of sin and the need for the Holy Spirit, and therefore rejected the notion that science was a neutral discipline which could be pursued

according to criteria agreed upon and shared by both believer and unbeliever. Instead, there was such a thing as the science of the regenerate, pursued according to Christian principles – Christian presuppositions – which was mutually exclusive of that pursued by the unregenerate. Such a regenerate science worked on the premise that the world was the creation of the sovereign God and thus, for example, assumed that as such it exhibited unity, stability and regularity – presuppositional beliefs which inevitably shaped the whole enterprise.

It is interesting to note in this context that, of Warfield and Kuyper, it was the former who adopted a more positive – indeed almost, but not quite, uncritical – attitude to evolutionary theory while the latter was very negative towards it indeed. This is a difference which Heslam traces to Princeton's positive approach to certain elements of Enlightenment epistemology in contrast to Kuyper's rejection of the continental tradition of rationalism. The point is well-made, though Heslam does not engage with some recent literature on Kuyper and Warfield which has called into question such an assessment by pointing to the Kantian roots of Kuyper's thought, in contrast to the pre-Enlightenment currents in the curriculum at old Princeton where the influence of Bacon and Reid was not as strong as many have claimed.

All in all, this is a most fascinating and enjoyable read. Evangelicalism has consistently failed this century to produce anyone of the stature of a Warfield or a Kuyper, and it is a pleasure to be reminded that the evangelical world was one which was once populated by giants. We may not have them anymore, but thanks to books like this, we may still profit from what they have to say and, in a day of small visions aspire to greater things.

Carl R. Trueman
King's College, Aberdeen

Liberating the Future: God, Mammon and Theology

*Joerg Rieger (ed.),
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998,
viii + 168 pp., £8.99*

The common thread of this diverse collection of essays from representatives of liberation, political, feminist and black theology is how theology should respond to economic globalisation.

The title might have been 'the future of liberation theology'. Gustavo Gutiérrez courts the possibility that liberation theology might belong to a passing context. He concludes that its fundamental contribution – which, he says, is 'the preferential option for the poor' – is still valid with unrestricted markets creating greater social exclusion. Jürgen Moltmann defends the different guises of political theology – theologies of peace, ecology, feminism and human rights – from the charge of faddishness. Joerg Rieger says the context of contextualisation cannot be defined by my concerns alone, but must include the 'other'. This creates the potential for 'common interest theology' rather than the marginalisation of liberation theology as a special interest.

There are also signs of a growing critique of postmodernism from liberation theology. Both highlight the link between truth and power. But by denying all truth, postmodernism denies the truth of the underside. If you deny alternative projects, says Gutiérrez, the first victims are the poor and marginalised.

But the main theme is globalisation. There is a consistent call for theology to, in Reiger's words, 'to watch the money'. Economics should not be left in the hands of economists. 'Those who worship God', says John Cobb, 'should not yield to the expertise of those who service idols'.

In an impressive essay Cobb argues that what he calls 'economism' has become the global religion of our time, that it is idolatrous, and that Christians should name its god, wealth, as an idol'. Cobb's thesis is nothing new. Describing shopping centres as the new cathedrals has become commonplace. But the deadly seriousness with which he names this idol should cause us to pause. Cobb acknowledges the strengths of market economics, but outlines its inability to deliver all it promises, especially to the poor. Indeed, what each author demonstrates in their different ways is that the omnipresence of the global market economy is matched the omnipresence of the poor and marginalised.

Douglas Meeks suggests the alternative to 'market logic' is for the church to rediscover itself as the alternative economy (*oikonomia*) of God – 'to embody the logic of grace as opposed to the logic of the market so that it manifests alternative forms of property, work and consumption'.

Meeks' essay notwithstanding, the overall impression is of liberation theology still able to articulate radical questions, but unable to provide answers. The lack of an alternative to market economics is, by its very absence, one of the most apparent aspects of the book. The one common answer is that we should listen to the poor. Yet, despite disavowals, it sounds somewhat romantic. We have a book of academic theologians telling us to listen to the underside while they mediate those voices for us through their own ideological grid.

But evangelicals should not be too critical for it is doubtful whether we have more convincing answers. More than one writer points out that 25,000 children die each day from preventable causes. Globalisation is not improving this and may be making it worse. Those who worship the God who upholds the cause of the oppressed cannot ignore globalisation.

The book is dedicated to the late Frederick Herzog – how embarrassing then to have a typo in his name in the dedication.

Tim Chester
Tearfund UK

Providence and the Problem of Evil

Richard Swinburne
Oxford: OUP, 1998,
xiii + 263 pp., £14.99

This is the final volume in Swinburne's tetralogy on the philosophy of Christian doctrine, tackling one of the most pressing problems for Christian belief. Some of the book develops material published in his *The Existence Of God* and subsequent articles, but it integrates this material with new analysis of specifically Christian themes, to produce a systematic, Christian theodicy, a plausible account of how God can justly allow evil.

Part I explores the problem. Being perfectly good, God would want to prevent evil and, being all-powerful, would be able to prevent evil. Why then is there evil?

Swinburne takes the usual line that it makes no sense to say that God can do logically inconsistent things. Roughly speaking, he argues God may justifiably accept evil if it is logically unpreventable given his pursuit of a greater good.

In response, atheists often point to many evils in the world that do not appear to be thus justified. Swinburne argues that an appeal to our ignorance of God's ways is an inadequate response to their argument. We cannot assume that we are merely ignorant of greater goods justifying the evils. We might be ignorant of greater evils undermining apparent goods. We need some further argument, he thinks, to show that there are more likely to be hidden justifying goods than there are hidden

evils. One such argument would be that God exists and therefore all evils must be justified. However, he does not discuss how strong reasons for belief in God need to be before one can conclude that all evils are justified, even when one cannot see their justification. He does suggest that significant progress in discovering justifications when initially there seemed none would give reason to believe that other hidden justifications exist. This leads to a brief survey of theodicy in Christian tradition, noting important themes and pointing out possible problems.

Part II looks at God's goals in creation. This discussion is not always closely related to solving the problem of evil. However, Swinburne here argues for the value of being able to make a difference for good or evil, of being of use to others and of choosing God, values to which he appeals later.

Part III argues that God's allowing evil is logically necessary for certain goods. Bad desires are necessary for resisting temptation and growth in holiness. Allowing moral evil is necessary for free choice between right and wrong. Moral evil is necessary for forgiveness and the making of amends. Ignorance and false belief are necessary for growth in moral and factual knowledge, individually and co-operatively. Inequalities are necessary for generous help and aid. If God prevents evil then creatures cannot be responsible for its absence. A tendency to decay is necessary if creatures are to be responsible for maintaining good states and for not causing evil by neglect. Allowing death makes creatures responsible for matters of life and death. It also limits the amount of evil suffered in this world and means later generations are not forever subject to their ancestors. Suffering and dangers are necessary for endurance, courage and compassion, and for animals and humans to be responsible for protecting and saving themselves and others. All these

arguments are developed in a cool, methodical way.

One argument original to Swinburne is that a natural order that causes evils is the best way for God to give creatures the knowledge they need to be responsible. We get knowledge of the evils we must avoid or prevent by observing evil in nature. If God implanted this knowledge then creatures could not be responsible for obtaining it, and if he made it available in some miraculous way then God's presence would be inescapable. We would then have no choice whether to seek God or to share our knowledge of him with others and given our desire for divine approval and our fear of punishment we would have no real choice between right and wrong unless we had overwhelming sinful desires. I suspect that this argument is too subtle and involved to convince sceptics, but it does offer a novel and constructive perspective.

Sin is necessary for Christ's salvation, a good that helps explain why God gave us freedom. Swinburne argues that this good cannot outweigh the evil of sin or we should sin to bring about greater good. This argument assumes that the end justifies the means and seems inconsistent with his earlier claim that, though nothing justifies wrongdoing, a balance of good may result from it.

Swinburne argues that it is valuable to have a choice of destiny, a choice of whether to become someone who loves God and enjoys him forever. Suffering in this world, like warnings of suffering in the next, can cause dissatisfaction with worldly concerns and a turning to God, even by those with little love for him. Conversely, if God never respected our considered decision to reject him then we would have no ultimate choice of destiny. God, Swinburne argues, would be like a jilted lover stalking his beloved.

Part IV argues that God, like a parent, has some right to expect his creatures

to suffer for the sake of greater good, so long as he gives them a good life overall. He suggests that responsibility and usefulness to others are more valuable than mere pleasure and freedom from pain. One might choose a world with significant responsibility like our own, despite its pains, just as one might choose the painful process of giving birth over the painless pleasure of taking heroin. Doubtless many will reject Swinburne's judgements here, but the underlying problem may be that the relevant goods and evils cannot be compared objectively. Many goods and evils seem to have no common denominator. Comparing them with each other looks like comparing chalk and cheese. Although we have subjective preferences about how much evil we would accept for the sake of some good, it seems doubtful that there is any objective scale on which all goods and evils can be compared.

The book as a whole makes frequent use of the Bible. However, Swinburne's theological sympathies lie more with Catholicism and Orthodoxy than with evangelicalism. The emphasis is more on human action than on God's grace and forgiveness. Purgatory gets favourable mentions. Swinburne's reliance on the value of freedom to do wrong is also questionable. If the possibility of choosing wrongly is so important then why is it denied to Father, Son and Spirit and to the blessed in heaven? Swinburne himself argues that such freedom is incompatible with God's knowledge of future choices, let alone effective predestination, despite his admission that this renounces much Christian tradition. Nevertheless, although it will not convince everyone, the value of this book should not be underestimated. It provides a philosophically informed, comprehensive theodicy, sensitive to the concerns of Christian tradition, proving that the problem is not so intractable as it may first appear. This book should be required reading

for all serious students of apologetics and philosophical theology.

Patrick Richmond
Leicester

The Great Restoration

Meic Pearse
Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998,
320 pp., £17.99.

This work is an apt introduction to the continental and English radicals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Pearse's approach is to view the material from a dynamic rather than an organic perspective. Instead of trying to discover historical connections between individuals or groups through their actions or confessional statements, Pearse simply indicates the similarity of thought. This is especially true in Pearse's comments on the relationship between the continental Anabaptists and the later English radicals. He says that he does not claim an 'organic connectedness' between these groups, but suggests that they had a similar purpose. Each individual or group that Pearse spotlights had the ultimate goal: 'the restoration of primitive Christianity along (in the sociological sense) sectarian lines'.

The various groups that Pearse surveys include the Lollards, the Swiss Anabaptists, the North German-Dutch Anabaptists, the Mennonites, the Spiritualists and the English Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. The seventeenth-century groups which receive attention are the Separatists, the General Baptists, the Particular Baptists, and the Quakers. As Pearse begins his treatment of the continental Anabaptists, he is especially keen to point out that many of these radicals were simply acting on the logical conclusions of the thought of the magisterial Reformers, for example, Karlstadt and Grebel began as impatient followers of Luther and Zwingli, respectively.

Menno Simons is characterised in an inspiring manner. He is presented as the catalyst for rebuilding Dutch Anabaptism on an evangelical foundation. Pearse describes Simons as having 'the most fruitful ministry of all the Anabaptist leaders of the sixteenth century'.

On the English scene, Pearse concentrates his efforts on the early leaders of movements. Robert Browne, John Smyth, Henry Jacob, and George Fox are presented respectively as pioneers for the Separatists, General Baptists, Particular Baptists, and Quakers. The contrasts in the ecclesiology and theology of these four groups are discussed in detail. However, the similarities in their thought are also indicated.

The strengths of Pearse's work include his clear writing style. Even those students with only a casual interest in church history will find the text interesting and cogent. Pearse has organised his material well, the manner in which the individuals and groups are presented does not sacrifice their diversity in an attempt to place them within a specific movement. Also, Pearse interjects something which is missing in many historical texts, humour. His sarcasm appears in statements such as the one about the General Baptists of England who apparently had no concern if 'the Church of England kept bishops, abolished them, or converted to Islam'.

The drawback of the work would be for those historians who are looking for a detailed examination of certain figures of the radical movement, but this is not the author's purpose. He provides an introduction to the radicals for those who are just entering their study of these fascinating groups. In general, the author attempts and achieves to create an interest in the sectarian movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Jason K. Lee
Southeastern Baptist
Theological Seminary
North Carolina.

Calvin and the Calvinists

Paul Helm
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998 (rep),
88 pp., h/b., £6.95.

This book is a reprint, without revision, of Paul Helm's critique of R.T. Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*. No doubt prompted by the re-issuing of Kendall's work by Paternoster Press in 1997, it is good to see Helm's early response being made available to a new readership. Kendall's work, which earned him the D.Phil at Oxford, argues that the development of Calvin's thought by Beza and the English Puritans (principally Perkins and Ames) represents a radical departure from the views of the Genevan reformer. For Calvin the atonement was universal and faith was a passive persuasion of the mind. The later 'Calvinists' held that the atonement was limited and that faith was an act of the will. The upshot of this divergence, as represented by The Westminster Confession (which Kendall labels 'crypto-arminian'), is that the Puritans taught a subtle form of salvation by works, preparation for grace and diverted the grounds of assurance from the atonement to acts of the will. Helm begins his response by asserting that Kendall has not only misread Calvin but has also 'thoroughly distorted and misunderstood the teaching of the Puritans on preparation and on the nature of faith'. In a helpful introduction Helm traces the implications of Kendall's thesis for our understanding of the gospel and for the retarded value of historic Reformed theology and literature (a substantial body which enjoyed a publishing renaissance in the 1960s).

Helm takes up the essential points of Kendall's argument up in the

remaining four chapters. The first of these outlines is on Calvin's teaching on the atonement and the nature of faith. There is an impressive section has an impressive series of quotations from Calvin illustrating that an actual remission of sin took place in the atonement and that this was intended for the elect. Although Calvin is not committed to a limited atonement (it was a debate he did not live to see) it is deducible from his writing. Similarly, his view of faith as a firm and certain knowledge is qualified by the reality of doubt and is thus a recommendation of what faith ought to be. In chapter three Helm examines Kendall's claim that whilst Calvin proposed a universal atonement, he did concede that the intercession of Christ is only for the elect. Helm deals with this on three levels. Historically such a presentation of Calvin is as elusive as the Scarlet Pimpernel, and only Kendall has found this item in Calvin's thought. On the textual axis Helm shows that even in the passages using 'all' and 'world', what Calvin actually says and what Kendall claims he says are so very different from the conclusion that it is impossible to reconstruct Calvin's doctrine on such 'flimsy foundations'. Kendall's solution begs questions, theologically speaking, for while I may be assured of the love of God by a universal atonement, how may I know that I am one of the elect for whom Christ intercedes? This is followed up by a discussion of conversion and the will. Again Helm demonstrates the unity of Calvin and the Puritans. For both, the will is renewed and not replaced at conversion; for both, faith is passive and active. In a somewhat embarrassing paragraph Helm shows that Kendall omitted a crucial word in a citation from Calvin and dubs his use of evidence 'cavalier and unscholarly'. The final chapter deals with the Westminster Confession and the accusation that it teaches salvation by works. Once more Helm exonerates the Puritans by showing that the evidence does not support the theory. There is a brief reference at

the end to the unity of Kendall's thought with that of the English antinomians, a charge that he has had to face more than once.

The price of the book is somewhat disappointing, as it may be a deterrent. As an example of a response that critically engages with its subject, is based on solid scholarship, and which demonstrates a well marshalled argument and a compelling rebuttal, this book deserves to be read. This book is not only a good introduction to an important debate but is also a convincing refutation of a clearly untenable thesis.

Martin Downes
Pontyclun, Wales

God and the Biologist: Faith at the Frontiers of Science

R.J. Berry
Leicester: Apollos, 1996,
ix + 143 pp., £12.99

Richard Dawkins may, by bluff and bluster, attempt to convince unsophisticated readers that only a pea-brained numbskull could regard science and theism as anything other than implacable foes, but the existence of highly visible, scientist/Christians like R.J. ('Sam') Berry overturns his case. Berry is an ecological geneticist, who since 1974 has been Professor of Zoology at University College London. Throughout his career he has unstintingly argued that science and religion - specifically, biblical Christianity - provide complementary descriptions of the same reality. It is a theme he returns to in *God and the Biologist*. Both the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture have God as their author, and the reverent study of each will provide the believer with opportunities to learn more of God and to worship him better.

This book is more of a personal testament than Berry's earlier works. It is part autobiography, part introduction to science and

faith issues, and part polemic. The autobiographical material covers Berry's own conversion the year after his father's suicide. The explanation of the New Testament events was intellectually satisfying and blindingly obvious.' He draws an interesting parallel between his reaction to the gospel and Thomas Henry Huxley's response on first reading Darwin's *Origin of Species*: 'How stupid not to have thought of that oneself' (4). From Cambridge, he proceeded to further study in London. But the path into a research career was not well signposted for evangelicals, and a career in biology was understood to be a particularly dangerous choice. The young Berry struggled to reconcile the mismatch between prevailing views about appropriate careers for Christians with his own gifting. 'Looking back, it took me some time to accept that I was in a place that God had prepared for me' (5).

Much of the book is arranged around three case studies, corresponding to some of the main themes of the author's career: evolution, human life issues, and environmental ethics. Each study presents useful material and observations, with many insights drawn from Berry's personal involvement in the formation of public policy by government, international bodies and the Synod of the Church of England.

Perhaps it is the author's experience of a lifetime of having to answer the absurd charge that 'Christian biologist' is an oxymoron that accounts for this otherwise engaging book's tendency to overstatement. For example, he refers to 'the fact of evolution' (36), quotes with approval Richard Lewontin's specious assertion that 'it is time for students of the evolutionary process ... to state clearly that evolution is a *fact*, not a theory' (37), and himself criticises those who describe it as 'only a theory'. This, he asserts, 'betrays an ignorance of scientific language'. According to Berry, 'a theory in

scientific language is an established interpretation of facts and is thus quite different from the speculative rationalisations which are called theories in detective novels.' This is generally true, except in the case of origins science, such as (macro-) evolutionary theory, which uses *precisely* the same methodology of 'speculative rationalisation' as is used in crime detection. Evolutionary theory may be the most popular current theory of biological origins, but to suggest that it has attained a status beyond fundamental revision serves no-one.

Berry's certainty in reading the evidence for evolution is in marked contrast to his reading of the early chapters of Genesis. Having discussed four different understandings of these he says, 'All these interpretations are possible ... What is important is that they are *interpretations* ... It is wrong to be dogmatic.' (43) This confidence in science set against a more cautious approach to the Bible deserves to be given more attention than it receives.

Berry is a key figure in the formation of public policy on human life issues, sitting as a member of the UK Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority which licences research projects and fertility clinics to work with human embryos. In Berry's view 'the evidence is against the proposition that life begins at conception' (76). This enables him to assent to the use – and disposal – of early embryos in research and infertility treatment. This pragmatic conclusion sits uncomfortably with his admission that 'if we are honest, we need to be agnostic about the relationship between God and early embryos. He *may* be involved with and overseeing every fertilised egg, but ... the balance of probability is against it' (73). I would have liked to see some justification of how it is possible to licence embryo research when it is admitted that God 'may be involved with and overseeing every fertilised egg'. Is this another instance

of scientific certainty winning over theological caution?

The section on environmental ethics provides a useful overview, though readers of Luke 20:9–19 will be surprised to learn that 'it speaks ... of [the wicked husbandmen's] task of straightforward environmental management; their poor stewardship was firmly and massively judged' (117). Surely the only basis of judgement in the passage is the rejection of the owner's authority and the murder of his son. The subject of environmental management is not even alluded to.

This is a thought-provoking book, dealing with hugely important issues. But in its more polemical passages this reader found himself asking *which takes precedence, science or theology*, and observing with uncomfortable regularity, *methinks he doth protest too much*.

Norman Fraser
Leicester

The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart. The Classics of Western Spirituality

John Comenius (Translated and Introduced by Howard Louthan and Andrea Sterk. Preface by Jan Milic Lochman.)
New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 1998,
vi + 170 pp., £14.50

Let me declare at the beginning the reasons for my interest in this book. The first is circumstantial: Recently I moved to Prague, Czech Republic, and as a result my interest in Czech theological thought, as well as other issues related to Christianity in this region, was rekindled. The second reason is interpersonal: I have known Andrea Sterk for several years and met Howard Louthan recently. Thus I am interested in their academic pursuits. The third reason comes from the subjective interest in the kind of allegorical literature which is difficult to characterise but includes, among

others, works such as Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Praise to Folly* and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. *The Labyrinth* can be said to stand in the same literary and religious lineage as these two works.

The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart by John Amos Comenius (Jan Amos Komenský), a leading Czech educator and thinker of the seventeenth century and the last bishop of *Unitas Fratrum*, is published in the series 'The Classics of Western Spirituality'. The edition comprises a useful Preface by Jan Milic Lochman, a lengthy Introduction by Howard Louthan and Andrea Sterk with notes and the new English translation of *The Labyrinth* with copious notes, followed by Selected Bibliography on Comenius.

Comenius divided his allegorical narrative in 54 chapters that depict the spiritual journey of a Pilgrim. On his strenuous and long journey through the world that has lost sight of its Creator, the Pilgrim is accompanied by two guides, Ubiquitous and Delusion, is forced to wear glasses that impair his vision, and a bridle which constraints his movement. He finds the world a senseless maze of professions and occupations behind whose facades he is able to penetrate and discern their corruption, vanity and purposelessness. In the end the Pilgrim finds peace through a conversion experience in an ongoing personal relationship with Christ the Lord.

The introduction is useful as it brings together much information about *The Labyrinth*. The first biographical section provides illustrations of parallels between events in Comenius' life and episodes in *The Labyrinth*. In the second section the editors note how *The Labyrinth* echoes certain ideas of Comenius on pedagogy expressed in other works, his critique of the circumstances in contemporary educational institutions, and his views on the prevailing educational

philosophy and methods. According to Comenius, 'God has provided humanity with three tools to learn wisdom: the five senses to discover the secrets of the natural world; reason and intelligence to increase their knowledge; and faith, for it is only with this spiritual gift that God's children may hear his voice through Scripture, meditation, or prayer' (25). At the end of the section the editors note that this pansophic ideal, a principle by which all human knowledge could be united (18, 19) underlies *The Labyrinth* which, then, 'is not simply an expression of narrow pietism, nor is it merely a utopian alternative composed in response to personal tragedy. On one level it is a pedagogical allegory, a creative examination of the educational process' (26).

The third section which situates Comenius' thought in contemporary theological context particularly informative. Comenius' spirituality is demonstrated to show affinity to, draw from and contribute to several strands in the history of Christianity. A prominent literary device Comenius uses is *negative allegory*, the stripping away of any meaning (30 f.). He also utilizes a common classical and medieval motif of the 'expelled Truth' (33 ff.). In commenting on Comenius' view of spirituality the editors make a few interesting observations. For instance, while the emphasis on truly changed life comes out of the Christology of *Unitas Fratrum* (38 f.), in describing the Pilgrim's spiritual experience Comenius transcends their customary disinterest in introspection (36). Comenius also emphasises the importance of the renewed church (38 ff.). When in the end of the book the Pilgrim goes back to the world, this reflects Comenius' conviction that the Christian church must be involved in the transformation of the society.

The translators have provided us with an easy-to-read English text of *The Labyrinth*. The placing of notes, textual as well as those dealing with

subject matter, as endnotes increases this impression. This is in contrast with the authoritative Czech edition in Jan Amos Komenský, *Opera omnia* (3). (Prague: Academia, 1978), which provides strictly textual notes at the foot of the page in addition to endnotes which are of a more general nature.

There are very few critical remarks about the edition. One may be that it would be useful to know in what respect this translation differs from the two earlier English translations mentioned only in the bibliography. Further, the text contains very few typographical errors ('Jablonksy' instead of 'Jablonsky' 17). However, it is slightly annoying that the short biographical section on Lochman mentions that Lochman wrote among other languages in 'Czechoslovakian' (x) instead 'Czech'. This reference to the language which never existed anyway is culturally rather insensitive against the background of the current European political situation in general, and particular after the split of the former Czechoslovakia. The editors' comparison between Comenius and Václav Havel (7-8) is an interesting exercise.

Davorin Peterlin
International Baptist
Theological Seminary, Prague

Science Meets Faith. Theology and Science in Conversation.

Fraser Watts (ed.)
London, SPCK, 1998,
ix + 266 pp., £12.99

Fraser Watt's compilation of lectures and essays about the relationship between science and faith succeeds in achieving the stated goal of providing a good guide to the current dialogue between science and religion. It is a heartening testimony to the richness of the discussions now taking place on the science/faith interface. For the most part, the contributions contain work which presents high-quality thinking from the disciplines of philosophy, science and theology, in an engaging, accessible manner. It would be an ideal book to give to any student showing signs of succumbing to a Dawkins-ian reductionist approach to religious faith.

The book moves from contributions focused on particular aspects of science to a number of essays concerned with broader reflections on the science/faith debate. As is perhaps to be expected, both sections contain stronger and weaker contributions. John Polkinghorne and Fraser Watts turn in polished, punchy, thoughtful essays concerned with, respectively, the religious implications of cosmology and of research into the human mind. There is an excellent digest of recent work in biology by Derek Burke which succeeds, within a few pages, in pointing Christians beyond a scientifically discredited creationism. Less clear is an essay entitled 'Uncertainties of Science', which aims to draw morals from quantum mechanics, relativity and chaos theory. Whilst there is something important to be said here, the author's attempt to motivate a Kantian philosophy of science (with theories relating to the world of our observations, not of an independent reality) looks rather hasty. Clarity is also sacrificed in an article which

aims, intriguingly, to delineate the neuropsychology of religion. It is hard to know how assertions about a 'causal operator' in the brain which 'organises strips of reality' are to be understood. At this level, it seems rather more helpful to leave things at a programmatic stage: as Watts nicely puts it, we are both natural and spiritual beings, so that there ought in principle to be both natural and spiritual accounts of what is going on in religious experience.

Amongst the best contributions to the book are the broader reflections by John Bowker and Mary Hesse. I for one would buy the book for these alone! John Bowker begins with a salient reminder to participants in the science/religion discussion: both science and religion are multi-faceted enterprises. Trying to find the relationship between them is thus as naïve as trying to find the relationship between, say, history and ethics. Bowker thus proceeds by tracing out some of the historical issues which have come under the 'science and religion' umbrella, before making the interesting suggestion that the debate over how the propositions of science relate to those of religion has obscured a more pressing question, namely that of authority: to what extent should science, rather than religion, be given authority to answer questions about what should happen in human life?

Bowker's article points to an underdeveloped aspect of the science/faith discussion. The ethical theme is picked up in Hesse's dense and stimulating chapter which asks whether science itself can be seen as a religion. Hesse draws attention to the diverse roles which scientific theories play in modern culture. Beyond empirical work, well-grounded in observation, much of modern science contains speculative theories which take on, in her view, the status of modern myths. A notable example is modern cosmology, a domain in which theorizing runs well beyond the

domain of the experimentally testable. The inescapable place of the mythic in our attempts to make sense of the world points us back to the role of religion. Hesse finds interesting linguistic parallels between science and religion: as both attempt to characterise a reality beyond that which surrounds us in ordinary life, both find themselves forced to rely on symbolism and metaphor.

In all, then, the Fraser Watts compilation provides a worthwhile, enjoyable digest of recent work in the science/faith dialogue.

John Taylor

Regent's Park College, Oxford

Testing Darwinism An Easy-To-Understand Guide

Philip E. Johnson

Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997,
131 pp., £6.99

What are Christians to make of Darwinism? In the USA, Darwinism has stirred up storms of controversy which have raged not simply within the church, but throughout the educational system and even within American courts of law. Happily, over this side of the Atlantic pond, there has been less fuss. Many Christians, following the lead of thinkers such as Michael Poole, have grasped the crucial distinction between the theory of evolution itself, and the reductionist philosophy which is often smuggled in by biologists such as Richard Dawkins on the back of the theory's success. In short, many of us rest fairly content with a theistic evolutionary view. As Frederick Temple nicely put it, evolution is the way God makes the world make itself. Helped by Michael Poole's incisive work on Dawkin's reductionism, we accept the possibility of different modes of explanation: the causal tale about origins given to us in evolution can co-exist with a 'personal' explanation, in terms of the reasons and intentions of the divine creative

mind, which is pointed to in the opening chapters of Genesis.

Philip Johnson's view of Darwinism, articulated in this volume which aims to provide non-scientists with a basis for critical thinking about the claims of evolutionary biology, is more sinister. Johnson is convinced that Darwinism is the thin end of a materialist wedge. Evolutionary biologists are dogmatic materialists, who foist an essentially atheistic theory on an unsuspecting public in the name of science, when in fact they themselves cannot justify the theory except by recourse to a materialist philosophy which insists that the truth about origins cannot include reference to a Designer.

It is understandable that a lawyer such as Johnson, who has spent years contending against evolutionists who themselves treat the theory as a cornerstone of a naturalistic worldview, should take the view that Darwinism is a dangerous threat to Christian faith.

Understandable – but regrettable. Regrettable because it can easily lead Christians towards an anti-scientific attitude which plays into Dawkins' hands by making faith look rationally discredited. Regrettable because it encourages a paranoid distrust of the scientific community. But most of all, regrettable since it is unnecessary. Johnson's book entirely fails to give adequate grounds for seeing Darwinism as the thin end of the materialist wedge. Theistic evolution is dismissed on the basis that evolutionary theory is inescapably premised upon a commitment to naturalism – that the only reason biologists still hold to it is that they seek a naturalistic account of origins, come what may. But Johnson offers only anecdotal evidence for his claim that most biologists cannot distinguish between science and materialism.

More seriously, the author overlooks a more plausible, less contentious justification for the widespread

adherence to evolutionary theory, namely its fertility. As Kuhn pointed out, fertility is one of the key theoretical virtues. Scientists are attracted by theories which clear up puzzles, and hold promise for future empirical success. Evolutionary theory, notwithstanding the gaps which Creationists dwell on, has proved far more fertile than any other proposed theory of origins. So an ongoing commitment to the theory need not indicate a dogmatic materialist philosophy, but simply a reasonable hope that a theory that has succeeded in the past will continue to do so.

Johnson's aim in the book is to help non-scientifically educated Christians to think critically about Darwinism. It thus contains brief but helpful comments on a general strategy for 'critical thinking' about science, as well as more extensive discussion of how the debate has been represented in American culture (there is a lengthy discussion of the play 'Inherit the Wind', based around the notorious 1925 Tennessee law suit concerning the teaching of evolution).

Encouragement of critical reflection is admirable. But 'critical' here tends to mean 'hostile'. It will be hard for non-scientific Christians to read Johnson's book and not come away with a very negative impression of Darwinism, and indeed of contemporary evolutionary biologists. Such readers will not have been given a fair chance to assess the true scientific case for evolution. Johnson tends to attack extremely weak arguments for evolution, and neglect the more powerful theoretical considerations in its favour. There is, for example, no mention at all in the book of the significance of the Grand Synthesis of evolutionary theory and genetics which filled in much that was lacking in Darwin's own work. Instead of encouraging an openly reflective attitude, the book tends instead to promote the suspicion that most biologists have themselves

uncritically and dogmatically bought into a naturalistic worldview and are now part of a grand conspiracy to propagate atheistic materialism in the name of science.

If this line of thinking begins to gain credence in the UK, then we could well be in for the same futile, destructive conflict between science and religion which has characterised the American debate over Darwinism. Johnson's bold stance against materialism is something every thinking Christian will wish to applaud. But the manner in which he has chosen to conduct the counter-attack is less laudable. I am reminded of what the boy scout said when asked for directions to a nearby hilltop: 'if you want to get to there, I wouldn't start from here'.

John Taylor

Regent's Park College, Oxford

Christian Theism and Moral Philosophy

*Michael Beatty, Carlton Fisher and Mark Nelson (eds),
Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998,
320 pp., h/b., \$39.95.*

A collected volume of essays should only be judged a successful publication on judicious expedition of the editorial role. In this, a case of three editors, it is not an injustice to the contributors to select the excellent introductory essay for special commendation. The programme of the book is outlined thus: 'three generalisations can safely be made: Christians are *moral realists*; they deny *moral scepticism*; and they affirm the centrality of the biblical mandate to *love one another*'. The volume is accordingly divided into three sections of four (mostly newly commissioned) essays each dealing with these respective facets of the Christian understanding of ethics: The Metaphysics of Morals; The Epistemology of Ethics; and The Ethics of Love are lucid in their justification for this approach, helpfully setting each essayist's contribution into the context of inquiry in the broader field

of moral philosophy. Contributors include Robert M. Adams, Marilyn McCord Adams, John Howard Yoder, Philip Quinn, Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches.

The editors note that the division of the material is artificial to the extent that essays inevitably overlap in their treatments into the other areas. This is a strength; for the student, under the guidance of the editors' introductory essay, is equipped to observe a number of philosophical and theological commitments operating in different ways for each of the essayists.

We do, however, catch academics in mid-research and the novice to the field might feel intimidated by the weight of the philosophical jargon. But the volume deserves careful consideration for at least two reasons: (i) the crossover between academic philosophy and theology in the field of Christian ethics cannot be shirked; (ii) students must develop their own evaluation of the editors' claim that 'the complexity involved in these issues warrants an appeal to philosophical expertise. Conceptual mapping and identification of logical implications and inconsistencies are some of the specific skills of the philosopher. Thus integrating theology and ethics into a coherent whole is a philosophical task'. An evaluative task which is all the more pressing for readers once they have digested Yoder's 'anti-essay': 'Walk and Word: the alternative to methodologism'; wherein Yoder attacks the very grounds for tidy analytic-philosophical contributions to the field. His thesis is broadly that the efforts of the philosopher more often straightjacket an understanding of ethics that poorly reflects traditional and biblical pluralism. In his view 'pluralism as epistemological method is not a counsel of despair but part of the Good News'.

Yoder's caution is apt inasmuch as the student must beware allowing theology to be moulded on

philosophical presuppositions rather than vice versa. Indeed, the diversity of approaches taken by the essayists indicates that owning *Christian theism* does not inevitably produce agreement, methodologically or normatively. This is probably a helpful caveat for any student of Christian ethics who would presume to reach easy answers and prescriptions from selective Biblical warrant without engaging with serious thought on the level of a Christian worldview. The aptly chosen cover illustration for the volume (Titian's 'The Sacrifice of Isaac') serves as a reminder of the dangers of that route. If ever a Bible story has inspired energy and angst amongst ethicists it is this one - not always to illuminating effect.

If the philosophers can teach us anything it will be, in the words of Alvin Plantinga that inspired the editors, to tackle problems in moral philosophy with 'integrity, independence, and Christian boldness'. As Beaty and the others state in their introduction 'one person's insurmountable difficulty can be the central part of another's belief system'. Being able to articulate one's primary commitments as a Christian studying ethics is vital and these essays demonstrate ways in which this is being done.

Andy Draycott
Canterbury

God of the Poor – A Biblical Vision of God's Present Rule

Dewi Hughes and Matthew Bennett
Carlisle: OM Publishing (imprint of Paternoster Press), 1998,
x + 330 pp., £6.99

The daily bombardment on our screens of the atrocities suffered around the world makes *God of the Poor* of continuing relevance to readers of *Themelios*. Indeed, it is precisely because we don't seem to be getting any better at dealing with conflict and poverty that this is such

a timely, if sober, book with which to prepare ourselves, if you'll forgive the cliché, for a new millennium.

It is clear from the title what the book is about and the fact that Hughes and Bennett are both theologians who work/have worked for *Tear Fund* means that it comes as no surprise to see them doing what they do best - theologising on issues such as overseas development, social justice, ethnic cleansing, population control and the environment.

The book takes as its overarching theme the Kingdom of God and explores the implications of this with regard to the world's poor. Within this grand schema, the book is divided in two. In the first section, solid biblical foundations are laid. These include biblical views on the place of law, the role of the church, and the status of wealth within the Kingdom. In section two, our attention is directed to practical applications and each chapter lays out the big issues, illustrates them well with contemporary examples and then seeks to offer a biblical response. In each case the chapter closes by offering helpful guidance on further reading. The book ends with a six-page prayer which appropriately wraps up the conclusions reached.

It is clear from the outset that the authors are well informed and also clear communicators who succeed in providing balanced conclusions when they touch on controversial themes (which is most of the time!). In addition, they should be particularly congratulated for tackling head-on the subject of spiritual warfare. As they themselves recognise, it is a subject that is often glossed over in this context, yet they are persuasive in arguing for its relevance and point out that development workers dodge the issue to the detriment of their work. To illustrate this they tell the story of an Ugandan hospital that had recently identified three wells in nearby villages requiring protection from animal and human pollution.

The clean water could then be piped to those in need, thus improving the health of the villagers. At first sight it would seem a straightforward project, but less so when we are made to understand that there is a local suspicion that the wells are haunted. Some believe that a creature, half man and half fish, visits at night and will cause the wells to dry up if they are interfered with. As Hughes and Bennett point out, ignoring these forces and the strong beliefs surrounding them would be to put the whole development process in jeopardy. It is for this reason that a discussion of the theology involved is so valuable, especially for development workers and ministers who regularly face such dilemmas.

On subjects such as this, the book unapologetically assumes evangelical premises, although it is not afraid to challenge assumptions when necessary. On occasions, however, it is a shame it makes so much of its evangelical roots since in doing so, it reduces the number of potential non-evangelical readers. Nevertheless, evangelical or otherwise, it is quite clear that readers cannot fail to be challenged by the issues presented and, though it is not particularly unique in its message, it is still one that desperately needs to be heard and particularly by those of us wishing to make practical use of our theology.

Rhiannon Jones
Cambridge

Just Business

Alexander Hill
Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998,
232 pp., £9.99

One of the biggest pressures on Christians working in the secular marketplace is, according to research done at London Bible College, the pressure to be dishonest. In the 'good old days', about forty years ago or so, stockbrokers and bankers used to

operate on the principle that a gentleman's word was his bond, now the word on the stock exchange floor is that his bond is junk. It isn't true in every company, it's certainly not true of everyone, but it's remarkably widespread – from the little white lies that subtly undermine trust to whopping great deceptions that ruin careers and lives. So *Just Business* arrives in British bookshops at an opportune time. Alexander Hill teaches in the School of Business and Economics at Seattle Pacific University and this book is characterised by both the thoroughness of research one can expect from Americans and also by the plethora of real life case studies that tend to mark US teaching method.

Just Business is a helpful introduction to business ethics from a Biblical perspective. Hill's concern is to provide a framework to explore a number of overall issues rather than to look at the particular challenges that face Christians in particular industries – it's not the place to look for everything you always wanted to know about environmental ethics but it is a place to start.

Hill lays his foundation on the three Biblical concepts of holiness, justice and love, arguing that they need to operate together – an over-emphasis on holiness leads to legalism, an over-emphasis on love can lead to what he calls 'altruistic sinning' – sinning to protect someone else from the consequences of their dishonesty. For Hill, holiness is fundamentally about pleasing God – I will honour those who honour me – and this makes pleasing God the number one priority in any context – business or otherwise. While other business ethicists consider stakeholder approaches to the problem and wonder who should be included in the model – customers, staff, suppliers, future generations, shareholders, etc. – Hill's emphasis on God as in effect the primary stakeholder is helpful. That said, he is under no illusion as

to the possible consequences of making a stand, citing research that indicates 'that up to two third of such "ethical resisters" suffer job loss, demotions, personal harassment, punitive transfers and/or negative reviews that affect their employability at other companies'.

The book moves on from its foundational principles to examine a variety of issues: dual morality – one rule for the office, another for the home; the law as an incomplete guide to appropriate behaviour; issues to do with 'agency' – what if my boss tells me to do it; honesty and deception; concealment and disclosure; employer-employee relations; affirmative action; environmental ethics and property. Hill provides a discussion case at the end of each chapter plus a summary of the major concepts with questions linked to scripture references. You may not agree with all his conclusions but the book provides a useful grid to consider business challenges and it is well grounded in the character of God and in a respect for Scripture. Hill knows you can't make a simple leap from the agrarian economy of the OT or the Imperial economy of the New into the high-tech global economies of the turn of the millennium. Importantly, Hill is untainted by a disdain for business, rightly recognising business' role as a steward of resources, human and material, for the benefit of humanity and to the glory of God. Still, a slightly greater measure of pastoral empathy or even advice on how to cope with the emotional impact of the struggles Christians face would have been welcome. That said, here's how Hill concludes the book in the following way:

This is why even our ethical failings can have a silver lining. Recognising our imperfections, we are drawn to the grace of God, which in turn leads us to assess ourselves modestly and to treat others with tolerance.

Grace, humility, empathy – not a bad place to end – or start, for that matter.

Mark Greene

London Bible College, Northwood

The Meaning of Freedom: A Study of Secular, Muslim and Christian Views

J. Andrew Kirk

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998,

x + 262 pp., £12.99

In the introduction to this volume the author suggests that for modern people freedom constitutes, and possibly defines, the 'most fundamental good'. The rise and spread of modernity has resulted in a situation in which the pursuit of individual liberty in 'free' societies has become the chief goal of almost all people on earth. Yet there is paradox: even as the modern notion of freedom comes to define the goal toward which developing societies aspire, massive doubts have surfaced in the West concerning the adequacy of this concept as a central value. In Kirk's words, 'the pursuit of freedom, in so far as it becomes a self-referring goal, is intrinsically self defeating.'

Given such an introduction one might anticipate an attack on modernity and a recital of the evils flowing from the Enlightenment. In fact, although Kirk certainly subjects secular worldviews to searching critical analysis, the tone adopted here is irenic and the purpose is missiological. Indeed, what makes this book remarkable is that it seeks to engage in dialogue with modern people concerning the nature of freedom. Andrew Kirk indicates that his book is intended to encourage people 'who live on the basis of secular assumptions' to understand the importance of 'establishing an open, transparent and unrestricted dialogue with Christian perspectives concerning some of the most important human issues that affect us all ...'. This is a remarkable statement that perhaps needs to be com-

plemented by similar encouragement to Christians to enter such dialogue.

The book traces the origins and development of the concept of freedom from Greek philosophy, through seminal Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Erasmus, to the rise of modernity and the revolutionary assertion that freedom is inseparable from human autonomy. Kirk's survey of these developments is comprehensive and informative and it concludes with a moving description of the ambiguities and tensions in the modern situation. Thus, Albert Camus is quoted as saying that 'the task of every person thrown willy-nilly into the world is to make what he can of the freedom he possesses'. It is a short step from here to either complete nihilism or mindless hedonism and the evidence of both consequences of the loss of agreement on the meaning of human existence is all around us.

Before outlining a Christian response to this situation Andrew Kirk takes a detour to note Muslim perceptions of freedom. This is important since the most passionate and searching critiques of western anthropologies have come from this source, based on the fundamental Islamic belief that freedom is inseparable from submission to the will of God. Islamic views thus challenge secular thought and are also capable of disturbing Christians who have accepted an uncritical synthesis between faith and modernity.

In the final section Kirk outlines a Christian view of human freedom. He concludes that ultimately we are free only when serving 'the liberating purpose of the One who is both the source, goal and meaning of freedom'. There are aspects of the author's argument that may provoke critical questions. For example, the claim that knowledge of God apart from explicit faith in Christ is no more than 'a fiction of the imagination' of religious pluralists seems strangely at odds with the dialogical approach to Islam

mentioned above. Kirk's distrust of 'religion' is well known but seems here to be in conflict with his willingness elsewhere in the book to learn from Islamic theistic perspectives on the issue under discussion.

Overall though this is a stimulating and challenging study and in addressing modern people on a subject of central concern within Western culture, Andrew Kirk offers an admirable model of the way in which both theology and mission will need to be done in the future.

David Smith

Whitefield Institute, Oxford

Power for God's Sake: Power and Abuse in the Local Church

Paul Beasley-Murray

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998,
xiv + 194 pp., £8.99

This book takes a long, hard look at the issues of power in the local church. Beasley-Murray recognises that the use of power language, particularly among charismatics, is deeply problematic. Yet he sensibly refuses to regard power as intrinsically evil and acknowledges that, although power can be destructive, 'it can also be extraordinarily creative'. It would be a mistake, however, to think that the author only has charismatics in his sights. He recognises that power games within the church at large have served seriously to undermine the credibility of the church and thus its mission and growth. The author also recognises that church leaders are not only sources of the abusive use of power, they too can often be abused by power struggles within the local church.

Astonishingly, Beasley-Murray discovered during his initial research that no serious work had been done on the use and abuse of power in the local church at large. One of the most significant aspects of this book,

therefore, is the results and detailed analysis of a questionnaire on perceptions of power sent in 1996 to 231 ministers in pastoral charge who were members of the Richard Baxter Institute for Ministry (RBIM). This population was chosen due to restrictions imposed by the lack of funding for any larger scale survey and also due to the relative ease of access occasioned by the author being chairman of this organisation. Beasley-Murray fully recognises the dangers of using such a self-selecting sample but counters this by arguing that members of the RBIM are, by definition, interested in the practice of ministry. As such he suspects that they would be more likely to be open and self-aware and more willing to complete and return the questionnaires. The ministers approached were also sent two additional questionnaires designed for officers within their church and were encouraged to send an additional ministerial questionnaire to a colleague in another church in the area. A copy of each of the questionnaires is helpfully included in two appendices.

116 RBIM members completed the questionnaire in full. In addition, 25 non-RBIM ministers responded and 120 church officials. However, church officials whose minister had not replied were excluded from the survey and so the final sample figure for church officials was 112. Three chapters totalling 96 pages are taken up with a description and analysis of the survey. This makes fascinating, and at times disturbing, reading. For example, 59% of ministers under forty-five who were surveyed have seriously considered leaving the ministry - mainly as a result of power struggles of one kind or another.

After the detailed analysis of the survey results, the fifth chapter provides a useful summary of various analyses and models of power which have been proposed. The chapter

concludes with a brief overview of the language of power and authority in Paul, before highlighting Jesus as the ultimate model for the wise use of power. This leads naturally on to a chapter about learning from the life of Jesus in which the temptation narratives are read as three temptations to misuse power. The author then goes on to emphasise Jesus as servant and shepherd as the outstanding models for ministry.

The final chapter concerns handling power with care. Here Beasley-Murray decisively rejects the idea that power is intrinsically evil and convincingly argues that authentic exercise of power - 'power for God's sake' always has the welfare of others at heart.

I thoroughly recommend this timely book as essential reading for all who are engaged in Christian ministry and for those struggling with the use of power language in the church. It is highly readable and the author is obviously well versed in the literature concerning power within the field of the sociology of religion.

Lloyd K. Pieteresen

University of Sheffield

Character, Choices and Community. The Three Faces of Christian Ethics

Russell B. Connors Jr and Patrick T. McCormick
New York: Paulist Press, 1998,
ix + 266 pp., \$15.95

The authors' intention is to provide an introductory 'overview of the fundamental elements and themes of the moral life generally and Christian morality specifically'.

Opening with a chapter entitled 'Experience: Morality's Starting Point', this is an account of ethics that leads with the epistemological question. As a theological ethics one might want to start elsewhere but this approach does strike the reader as in line with intuitive feelings about moral learning. Coupled with the 'case

study' examples that begin and run through each chapter and the closing 'Questions for Discussion' this makes for a beginner friendly book.

The next three chapters set out the shape of the moral life as the authors see it, viz., eponymously: Character, Choices for action and Community. This triadic conception pervades the ensuing discussions dealing with the oft-neglected subjects of conscience and conscience formation, as well as moral norms, moral reasoning, sin and morality, and Christian moral conversion.

Whilst eschewing philosophical jargon the authors nevertheless struggle, in the context, to set out the nuances of Roman Catholic understanding of the moral life, with such concepts as 'pre-moral values' and the teachings on 'mortal' and 'venial' sin. Whilst the integrity of their approach is not to be doubted the weightier close of the book does not sit so comfortably with the gentle yet helpful beginning.

The most striking omission in the authors' approach to Christian ethics is instanced in their characterisation of eight Biblical themes of use for ethics: Creation, Sin, Covenant, Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, Love of Neighbour, Reign of God. Whilst it is encouraging to read a book on ethics which takes sin seriously, the authors find no room for Eschatology in their list, an omission impacting not least on their pervasive discussion of 'social sin' and their reference to 'liberationist' theologies. Is it more confusing than helpful to write of communities being 'born again'? The evangelical basis for some good observations is not as clear as one would have hoped.

The book deserves consideration, not least in that it might cause some evangelical Protestant students to consider how and when it might be appropriate to engage their imaginations as they seek Christian responses to ethical questions under the ultimate authority of Scripture -

without succumbing to Biblicism and proof-texting which the authors rightly criticise. If sometimes the terms of debate are uncomfortably alien, students would be rewarded by not dismissing talk of, say, *tradition* or *co-operating with grace*, too quickly, lest they belie their own blindness to the multifaceted formation of their conscience and character.

In presenting a current of Catholic thought influenced by the narrative school this book is useful: also for its treatment of the Bible and ethics, character and conscience and Catholic teaching on sin and imagination – although at times the emphasis seems skewed toward the subjective side of moral issues. Students who have come across ‘narrative theology’ will need to note and carefully evaluate the work done by this approach in the whole book, with central chapters on ‘Morality and Stories’ and ‘Christian Stories and Christian Morality’. Need we agree that it is a ‘fact that human experience is primarily narrative in character’? Frustrating for the student is the absence of an index or bibliography, and endnotes rather than footnotes – and not all will forgive the citing of ‘Amazing Grace’ as an ‘*American folk spiritual!*’

Andy Draycott
Canterbury

The Explorer's Guide to Judaism

Jonathan Magonet
London: Hodder and Stoughton,
1998, xi + 340 pp., £8.99

As Principal of the prestigious Reform Judaism Leo Baeck College Rabbi Jonathan Magonet introduces his readers to Judaism from an obviously more liberal perspective. The book immediately impresses us with its open-hearted candour and its very Jewish use of humour and aggadic illustrative stories. Rabbi Magonet happily admits to the unexciting boredom which often afflicts those

who attend synagogue services, but shows how he and others have penetrated beyond this to the riches of Judaism's tradition. Like his co-worker and close friend Lionel Blue he clearly delights in his Jewishness while seeing all the weaknesses. Jewish practice is rich and meaningful even if generally not understood – but, as he says, many still sincerely believe and mean what they don't understand at all!

The conflict between more liberal contemporary forms of Judaism and the more traditional Orthodox authorities lies close to the surface in many of the topics discussed. Throughout the book Magonet takes every opportunity to advocate and support the cause of women – Orthodox rabbis might disagree quite radically! The relatively short section on homosexuality is more cautious, but seems also open and positive towards homosexuals. Strangely the details of divorce procedures are described without a parallel description of weddings and marriage – a sad reflection on contemporary British society?

Readers looking for detailed descriptions of Jewish festivals and their theological or historical meaning, *kashrut* or other key elements of the practice of Judaism may be disappointed. Likewise this book will not give a systematic presentation of the theology of Judaism. But the reader will gain an excellent and well-written insight into the issues and debates within the life of many Jewish people.

As a Jewish Christian I regretted the author's failure to address the topic of messianic Jews. The Lubavitch Chassidic Jews are still accepted as Jewish although they consider their dead Rabbi Schneersohn to be the messiah, but somehow Magonet's liberalism cannot stretch to accept as Jews those of us who believe Jesus of Nazareth to be messiah. Indeed the only reference to the very Jewish mission Jews for Jesus is lumped

together with Moonies and Hari Krishnas as a cult. In a diplomatic liberal way the book is further sprinkled with tolerantly negative comments about Christianity generally.

Despite the negatives I would warmly recommend this book as one which will give its readers a feel of Judaism from the inside and in a genuinely Jewish way.

Martin Goldsmith
All Nations Christian College, Ware

Religious Pluralism in Christian and Islamic Philosophy: The Thought of John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Adnan Aslan
Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998,
xiv + 290 pp, h/b., £45.00

As the title indicates, this interesting book is a comparative discussion of the philosophies of religious plurality developed by two eminent thinkers, one of which writes from within the Islamic tradition, the other from within the Christian tradition. Moreover, interested readers of *Themelios* who are familiar with Christian and Western treatments of the issues raised by religious plurality will find this study from an Islamic perspective particularly thought-provoking. (Dr Adnan Aslan is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Islamic Studies in Istanbul.)

A helpful introductory chapter comparing the intellectual biographies of the two thinkers, followed by a second chapter introducing the reader to some of the key elements of the philosophies of Hick and Nasr provide an excellent and accessible overview for the reader who knows little of their work. The following chapters explore some of the principal issues raised by religious pluralism and the ways they have been dealt with by Hick and Nasr (i.e. religious language, religious experience, epistemology, relativism, the nature of religions, salvation,

and the nature of God). The volume concludes with a short (too short) chapter looking at attitudes to other faiths in the scriptures and histories of Christianity and Islam. Finally, in a brief Appendix Aslan provides the transcript of an illuminating discussion he had in 1994 at Hick's home with both Hick and Nasr about ‘religions and the concept of the Ultimate’.

John Hick, one of Britain's foremost philosophers of religion, has famously critiqued exclusivist religious belief systems (particularly Christian exclusivism) and developed a ‘pluralist’ thesis which argues that the religions of the world are all responses to the same ineffable, transcendent Reality. Indeed, in an attempt to accommodate as many conceptions of the Absolute as possible, Hick has abandoned the term ‘God’ (which is invested with too much theistic content) for ‘the Real’. Similarly, Seyyed Hossein Nasr does not adhere to traditional Islamic exclusivism, but rather working within the tradition of ‘perennial philosophy’, argues that God has manifested himself within the different world religions. Although there are some obvious similarities between the two thinkers, Aslan's book carefully draws out the important differences and judiciously evaluates their respective strengths and weaknesses.

Perhaps the most important difference between the two (which is clearly apparent in the Appendix) is the subtle but profound one that, whilst Hick speaks of ‘the Real’ as being simply ‘there’ to be discovered and responded to, Nasr (although there is some ambiguity in his thought) wants to work with an understanding of revelation. That is to say, he believes God to be actively manifesting himself in culturally relevant forms within the world religions. As Aslan quite rightly argues, whilst Hick's thesis is more philosophical (ideological), Nasr's is more ‘religious’ (111). To use Pascal's phrase, whilst Hick has construed a

'god of philosophers'. Nasr (although he agrees with Hick's conception of 'the Real'), working much more from an Islamic theistic perspective, tends to presuppose 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'.

Although Aslan makes some valuable criticisms of both Hick's and Nasr's thought, and although there is of course nothing wrong with agreeing with one thinker instead of another, the impression one gets is of an overly prejudiced treatment. There must be convincing reasons for preferring one thesis over another. In too many cases these were not given. Nasr's thought is simply not subjected to the same critical scrutiny as Hick's. For example, Aslan makes the following statement: 'Hick maintains that the absolute truth claims ... stem from human subjectivity not "divine objectivity"'. In challenging Hick's view one might claim that if the absolute truth claims of each religion ... come from ... the Absolute itself [Nasr's position], then Hick's hypothesis of religious pluralism requires a reformulation' (106). However, although Aslan goes on to unpack this a little, he does not demonstrate in what way this is a 'challenge' to Hick's pluralism or why it might be a philosophically more cogent thesis, only that it is another position which he finds more acceptable. Indeed, it has to be said that, although throughout the book Hick bears the brunt of Aslan's criticism, his pluralist hypothesis appears more coherent than Nasr's inadequately critiqued perennialism.

Although, as might be expected, Aslan has an admirable grasp of both Islamic thought and Nasr's philosophy, there are some arguments (if I have understood them correctly) over which he seems to lose his grip. For example (and this quotation draws attention to the book's great need of a proof-reader), 'Religious exclusivism is self-contradictory. If the Christian feels entitled to adopt a position exclusivism, then it must be equally acceptable that a Muslim,

by virtue of being a Muslim, can adhere to an Islamic exclusivism ... A religious exclusivism must be formed in a manner that eventually nullifies its won existence' (103). This is hardly a cogent critique of the exclusivist position. Exclusivism is not self-contradictory. It is rational and logical (some would say, to a fault). The exclusivist, adhering to the principle of non-contradiction, argues that, regardless of what other faiths claim, where their doctrines disagree with those of the exclusivist's faith they are to be considered false. People have the right to believe what they want, but in the final analysis there is a truth to be accepted or rejected, and that truth is manifested principally in the exclusivist's faith. As to whether exclusivism 'eventually nullifies its own existence', nothing could be further from the truth. In an ambiguous world where not everyone accepts 'the truth', the existence of the exclusivist's truth-proclaiming faith will always be of cardinal importance.

As to Aslan's own position, he writes as a Muslim who is critical of, but who has nevertheless felt the force of Hick's and Nasr's arguments. As such he attempts to provide a framework for an 'Islamic pluralism' (187-96). However, his thesis is in fact influenced much more by Islamic considerations than by pluralist or perennialist philosophy. As such, what he unwittingly presents us with is not 'Islamic pluralism', but 'Islamic inclusivism'. It is not a case of all religions leading to 'the real' but rather to Allah: 'The God of the Qurun is not only the God of the Muslim people by the God of all humankind' (197).

Despite these criticisms, this is a thought-provoking and worthwhile study which I have no hesitation in recommending to Christian seriously interested in theological approaches to religious plurality.

Chris Partridge
University College, Chester

Pluralism and the Religions: The Theological and Political Dimensions

John D'Arcy May (ed.)
London: Cassell, 1998,
ix + 99 pp., £9.99

Originally the main papers read at a 1995 conference at the Irish School of Ecumenics in Dublin, there are six chapters: two by Asian theologians, Wesley Ariarajah and Rosario Narchison; two by theologians of dialogue, Gavin D'Costa and Paul Knitter; and two by feminist thinkers, Ursula King and Pia Gyger. Part One tackles the theological issues and Part Two examines the political challenges inherent in religious pluralism.

The first chapter by Ariarajah provides an interesting overview of particularly the World Council of Churches' approach to mission and interfaith dialogue. In particular, he demonstrates and celebrates the shift of missiological emphasis from conversion to 'mutual witness' that has taken place as a result of the pressure of 'interreligious reality'. In so doing he criticises the exclusivist approach taken by Hendrik Kraemer and Lesslie Newbigin as the remnant of a bygone era which ignores the revolution that has taken place in Christian thinking. Indeed, all who work with a similarly conservative theology are urged to leave behind their 'tribal god' and 'narrow understanding of salvation history' and embrace 'the wider ecumenism', the 'ecumenism of religions'. (With the exception of D'Costa's contribution, this pluralist mantra can be discerned in all the papers.)

The second chapter by D'Costa is an unsystematic and, it has to be said, unconvincing treatment of two paintings which deal with the doctrine of the Trinity: Andrei Rublev's *The Trinity* and Jyoti Sahi's *The Word Made Flesh*. Although some interesting points emerge, such as the importance of the Trinitarian dynamic in the Christian dialogue with the

Other, one cannot help feeling that a more creative and constructive essay is in there waiting to get out.

Chapter Three by Ursula King, which would have made an excellent second chapter, since it follows on nicely from Ariarajah's discussion, examines the issue of interreligious dialogue from the perspective of women. Noting that the initiative in interfaith work has often been taken by Christians, and that it has historical roots in earlier colonial and missionary activities, she cogently argues that it is 'linked to strongly established patriarchal structures and androcentric modes of thought' (40). After commenting on the conspicuous lack of women involved in prominent interfaith endeavours, she indicates how interreligious dialogue is both challenged by and a challenge to feminism. Although I disagree with King's apparently pluralist presuppositions, I found her overall thesis convincing and challenging. 'Women's great invisibility, marginality and voicelessness in world religions are paralleled by the marginality and voicelessness of women in interreligious dialogue' (52). This needs to change.

In the first chapter of Part Two, Narchison provides an engaging argument for a multifaith approach to 'theological education for pluralism' in India. More particularly, he argues for a concerted attempt to secularise India, 'secularisation' being 'the will to breathe the air of freedom, to grow in a context of pluralism, to make room for views other than those of the churches/religions. Pluralism and secularism are two sides of the same coin; education for pluralism means education for secularism' (67). Although his thesis is interesting and inspired by an obvious concern for the future of India, it seems too idealistic to be politically helpful and too ideologically pluralist to appeal to the many mainstream Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and revivalist Hindus of contemporary India.

In the penultimate chapter Paul Knitter expounds a thesis with which he has been concerned for some years, namely the idea of a 'global ethic.' Clearly aware that the possibility of such a project is seriously questioned by many postmodern theorists, he nevertheless seeks to demonstrate that (a) an interfaith ethic possible, (b) it can serve as a universal criterion for truth without (c) becoming a new foundational norm. Although this makes for an engaging discussion which raises several interesting points, it suffers from a couple of serious flaws. Firstly, his argument that there is 'a shared diagnosis and remedy for the human predicament' is dodgy to say the least. It certainly fails to take seriously the difference between, for example, those faiths which believe humans to have a fundamental misunderstanding of their relationship with Ultimate Reality and those which speak of some form of separation between humanity and the Ultimate Reality. More significantly, because the nature of the problem determines the nature of the solution, in smudging the differences at this stage he fails to adequately address the far more important soteriological differences between the religions. Secondly and similarly, his desire to see the faiths of the world united around an ethic of 'eco-human well-being' doesn't take seriously enough the variety of ethical responses to what is best for humanity and the planet. Thirdly, if the peoples of the world were able to agree over this matter, it is very unlikely that this most basic of agreements, which would always be heavily qualified, would constitute 'a walkable path' toward the solution of other disagreements including religious ones. Although peace, happiness and global co-operation would be nice, the words 'get real' spring to mind. Certainly some consideration needs to be taken of the seriousness with which people take their faith. Indeed, a long hard look at the emergence of 'fundamentalisms'

around the world might also be in order.

In the final and shortest essay by Pia Gyger, Knitter's call to action for the sake of the planet is repeated. Expounding a thesis which will have many new agers nodding approvingly, and which is clearly indebted to the work of Teilhard de Chardin, she urges us to abandon our dualistic thinking and informs us that 'the unification of the family of humanity' 'is a necessary human development that cannot be avoided'. This latter point, it seems to me, rather undermines the important warning in both essays that unless we act later generations will face serious eco-human problems.

Although I disagree with many of the authors' presuppositions and conclusions, I did enjoy the book and was genuinely challenged and stimulated by most of the papers. I recommend it as a short, accessible introduction to contemporary liberal/radical thought on the subject.

Chris Partridge

University College, Chester

Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions

Winfried Corduan
Downers Grove : IVP, 1998,
363 pp., \$24.99.

For most Christians there are three big issues of apologetics that, historically, have caused consternation among believers: the problem of evil, the hegemony of science, and the multiplicity of truth claims by other religions (postmodernism might be a fourth, depending on who you read). Since about 70% of the world is not Christian, the issue of 'neighbouring faiths' is urgent indeed.

Corduan, professor of philosophy and religion at Taylor University in Indiana, approaches his subject from an 'unabashedly evangelical

orientation'. For him that means affirming that Christianity is based on a revelation from God, Nicene Christology, human sinfulness that necessitates redemption, and finally, that 'Christians should relate to other religions on the basis of sacrificial love' (16). For Corduan, interreligious dialogue is an opportunity for evangelism.

In an introductory chapter Corduan defines religion, then explains the origin of religion by rejecting the so-called subjective (religion as psychological projection) and evolutionary models in favour of defending 'original monotheism'. Successive chapters then describe the beliefs and practices of Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, African traditional religions, native American religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, three 'offshoot religions' (Jainism, Sikhism, and Baha'i), Chinese popular religions, and finally, Shinto. There is no chapter on Christianity. Each chapter ends with a section called 'So You Meet a Jew or Muslim', etc., a dozen or so bullet points identifying the material one should be able to master from reading the chapter, a dozen or so term paper ideas, and a 'core bibliography' of eight to ten books.

But what makes this book, as the title says, a uniquely 'Christian' introduction to the world religions? I am not sure. Presumably anyone, atheist or religious, could do an equally good job on the history and theology of the world religions. Corduan does try to show how a Christian might respond to each specific religious person, but his suggestions are very general and they almost always repeat some suggestion about 'contextualising' the gospel. Most disappointing of all, Corduan gives the presumably Christian reader no help at adjudicating *other* religious revelation claims. This is all the more egregious, it seems to me, since he admits that 'many of these non-Christian folk appear to be happy

with their religions and are not searching for a better way' (14). Should the college sophomore view other revelation claims as gross impostors under the judgement of God (Barth), as beautiful approximations of the Truth that are a point of contact with Christianity, or as something in between? And how does one make such a determination? Corduan does not say. Granted, this is really not the purpose of this book, but can a Christian really give due consideration to other world religions without it being so?

So, read Corduan for a fine summary of what people of other religions believe and practise, but not for any help on how to counter the claims of a John Hick who believes that whatever path people choose is God's, or a Barth who believes that they are irredeemably under the judgement of God.

Daniel B. Clendenin

Stanford University, California

Partners or Prisoners? Christians Thinking About Women and Islam

Ida Glaser and Napoleon John Carlisle: Solway Press, 1998,
xv + 331 pp., £9.99

Co-written by a western woman and a Pakistani Anglican clergyman, currently working in east London, this book knits its authors' diverse experiences into a coherent and valuable whole. Glaser and John write separate contributions to most chapters, covering between them an ambitious range of issues. While the reader might sometimes wish for a lengthier treatment of a particular issue, the work's breadth contributes to its achievement as a genuinely original contribution to the discussion.

The basic thesis of the work is that oppression of women cuts across religious traditions and leaves adherents of both faiths with 'much to be ashamed of' (2). Turning first to

Islam, two conflicting Muslim voices, traditional and feminist, are presented. The traditional apologists explain why some aspects of the role of women in Islam which tend to be viewed negatively, such as divorce and inheritance laws, are in fact both practical and beneficial. The second voice is that of Muslim women writers who have recorded women's suffering and sense of oppression. These writers feel that such problems arise because Islam has not been understood and practised as it should have been.

In the only chapter written entirely by one author, Glaser discusses Christian biblical interpretation. She aims to show that many traditional understandings of women's roles have misunderstood the texts, (noting en route the parallel with Muslim feminists' calls for textual re-interpretation). For example, Glaser rejects the argument that Genesis 2:23 and 3:20 are essentially parallel accounts of Adam naming Eve and thus, according to Hebrew understanding, exercising his authority over her. For Glaser, Genesis 2:23 is not about naming, but about recognising woman as of the same type as man. The exercise of male authority is therefore confined to the time after the Fall, and is not part of original, ideal creation.

Following this chapter there is a wide-ranging sweep through the pattern of Jesus' way of relating to women, and a look at marriage and authority in practice, where the emphasis is on authority as characterised by servanthood. In the final chapter the authors emphasise what they consider the fundamental difference between the two religions; attempts to establish right male-female relationships. Christianity's different diagnosis of human nature, as fallen, is accompanied by a different solution. Whereas Islam offers laws to be obeyed, Christianity offers a person, Jesus Christ, and principles derived from his life.

The book has many strengths, including its commitment to presenting various Muslim and Christian voices fairly. Some readers (not this one) will disagree with some of its interpretative emphases given the subjects tackled, but the authors seek to argue carefully within the constraints of space. There is also valuable insight into cultural factors. John argues, for example, that comparing Muslim and Christian divorce statistics is best done by analysing a society where the two communities have co-existed for centuries. This helps to eliminate cultural variables that influence the divorce rate but do not arise from the teachings of either religion.

Positives far outweigh negatives, but there are minor frustrations. Several typographical errors occur, including the important Galatians 3:28 twice being labelled as 3:24. More significantly, John states that there are only two permissible Christian reasons for divorce, these being adultery and desertion. It seems curious, (the limitations of space notwithstanding), that the question of whether persistent violence constitutes another reason for divorce is not given even passing comment in a book which elsewhere mentions domestic violence. However, to dwell on such points would be unfair to authors whose discussion of sometimes emotive issues combines cool heads with compassion.

Martin Whittingham
University of Edinburgh

Islam and the West: Conflict, Co-existence or Conversion?

Colin Chapman
Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998,
x + 198 pp., £12.99

This book is an expansion of four Easneye lectures on missiology given at All Nations Christian College. The result, while inevitably somewhat piecemeal, is highly informative. In

the course of each chapter some of the best specialist literature by Muslims, Christians and others on any given topic is analysed with admirable insight, the resulting subtlety of thought being combined with exceptionally clear presentation.

After the almost obligatory exploration of diverse definitions of 'Islam' and 'the West', the author stresses the need to listen to each others' interpretations of history in order to truly understand the other. There follow two chapters exploring Islamic mission to non-Muslims past and present. Chapman argues that in the past the creation of a total Islamic environment, comprising dominance of social institutions, was a more influential factor in conversion than coercion, although this also occurred. Widespread conversion to Islam in the contemporary West is therefore unlikely because of the difficulty of creating such an environment. The next chapter follows offers a critical historical survey of different Christian approaches to theological discussion and debate with Muslims.

Three issues of wider public concern are then addressed, all illustrating Chapman's point that 'dialogue doesn't have to be about theology at all' (109). These are human rights, education and the debate over the establishment of the Church of England. The discussion of human rights challenges both Muslim and Christian readers. The author examines changing Christian attitudes to human rights and explores Islamic law, at times critically. The key contention is that human rights and Islam are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Not everything done in the name of Islam is Islamic, often being motivated instead by the political agendas of ruling élites. As for education, Chapman believes that there is no legal reason to deny Muslims state-funded schools. Regarding the future of church establishment in a society of many faiths, he endorses a middle way.

While the Church of England should share some privileges it can justifiably retain a degree of primacy, at least in the immediate future. If the book has an underlying thesis, it is perhaps found in the concluding chapter. This presents reasons for guarded optimism that conditions are ripe for more constructive relations between Islam and the West.

Occasionally I wanted further clarification. On page 1 the term 'conversion' is used to denote not only a change of beliefs but also the possibility that, for example 'Islam might somehow be changed through its contact with the West'. Yet elsewhere Chapman draws a distinction between conversion and 'significant changes of attitude' (194). Discussing education, he outlines a number of values that he suggests people of any faith or none could affirm. One of these is equality (168), but his preceding treatment of human rights argues that many interpreters of Islamic law cannot accept the equal legal status of certain groups. Does this attitude to equality disappear completely in the sphere of education, and if so, as Chapman presumably thinks, why?

These are minor caveats amidst a wealth of excellent material. The author hopes that his book, 'may suggest a kind of framework within which this kind of exploration can be continued, ideally with Christians and Muslims working together' (3). His own exploration is unafraid of addressing awkward issues, yet willing to make the effort genuinely to understand another's position. Chapman's book will significantly help to develop its reader's thinking beyond the exchange of misinformation that can so easily mar discussion of Islam and the West.

Martin Whittingham
Edinburgh

Book Reviews

- Mills, Watson E. and Richard F. Wilson (eds)
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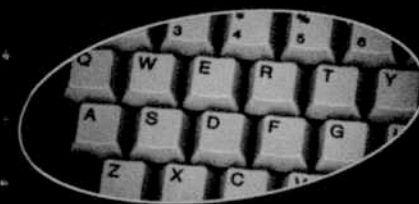


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