

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Book Reviews

THE WELLS OF SALVATION Charles and Norma Ellis

The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1986 219pp £2.95 ISBN 0 85151 457X

These ninety-eight short meditations on the book of Isaiah emerged from what the authors claim to be 'a glimpse, fuller than before, of the beauty of God and His truth' resulting from a reading of the N.I.V. translations of Isaiah's prophecies. They are not a plain, literal commentary, but short personal studies distilled from a leading idea in each section. In this, the book may not appeal to a biblical theologian who judges the plain literal sense of the text as the ground of interpretation. For example, the authors accept all the prophecies as the product of the eighth-century Isaiah of Jerusalem, and have no difficulty in believing that the prophet named Cyrus a century and a half before he was born. Or again, they turn historical circumstances into eschatological forecasts and seem to gloss over that Isaiah was speaking to the people of his day of events in which they were involved and by terms they could understand. A case in point is chapter 22 where Isaiah wept over his people when, instead of their repenting and turning to God, they engaged in revelry, drunkenness and sensuality after Sennacherib's army retreated from Jerusalem without a blow being struck. But the authors of this book make the chapter refer to a prediction of the Babylonian exile, perhaps also the 70 A.D. fall of Jerusalem, and the final dispersion of the Jews.

Having said that, the book is of immense value in relation to its deep spiritual insights into the nature of God, the Church, and Man and his sinfulness. Many sections open with a helpful analogy to illustrate a leading thought, and end with a helpful prayer. Particularly apposite to the modern world are the truths set forth in relation to the spiritual and moral confusion of the late twentieth century. Abortion, violence, sexual permissiveness, debased values, false religions, non-Christian ascetical disciplines, and the failure of world leaders and political parties to serve God's cause are some of the facets of present day life that are dealt with. Altogether, this book could well form a selected course of sermons, or House Group studies, and in homes where family prayer is held it would be a well of salvation to all members.

5 Green Lane, Clapham, Bedfordshire

ARTHUR BENNETT

A COMMENTARY ON THE MINOR PROPHETS VOLUME 3: JONAH, MICAH AND NAHUM John Calvin

The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1986 534pp £6.95hb ISBN 0 85151 475 8

This volume should be in every preacher's library. I thank God for the day when I stumbled across the writings of this expositor of expositors, for the commentaries of Calvin stand head and shoulders above the rest. Why is this? The editor, John Owen, one time Vicar of Thruxington, provides the answer when he says in his introduction, 'The main object throughout seems to have been to exhibit the genuine sense and design of the Sacred writers'.

Invariably Calvin provides us with both that and much more in these thirty-four lectures that he gave on the prophecies of Jonah, Micah and Nahum, contained in this volume. Consider, for example, his comments on the greatness (p.24) and size of the city of Nineveh; the reasons why Jonah ran away (p.27); the fish (p.72); the conversion of Nineveh; and his comments on fasting and sackcloth (p.103f.). His analysis of the repentance of the Ninevehites is masterly, as are his comments on God's 'repentance' (p.115). Yet it is not only the author's spirituality that shines through. His scholarship does too. In his exposition of Jonah 4 we are provided with some helpful and enlightening comments on the views of Jerome. Calvin raises and answers objections to his own views in a sensitive manner. He provides arguments in support of the interpretation that he favours, although it must be said these are not always convincing. His minority view, for example, concerning the exegesis of Micah 2.12f. (pp.210ff.) illustrates this point. Keen students of both Latin and Hebrew should note that an errata table is provided at the end of the volume. This follows Calvin's translation of the prophecies (pp.508-34) commented on. Some take exception to the Editor's marginal notes, but I find them, in the main, helpful and instructive (e.g. see note 2 on p.107 and that on p.117). One cannot speak too highly of this commentary. The author's concern, from first to last, is (i) to expound the text; (ii) to tease out the implications of it; and (iii) to apply it. In a word, it is to provide all that the earnest preacher wants. The publishers are to be congratulated for issuing this series on the Minor Prophets, and for doing so at such a keen and competitive price. Take advantage of it whilst you can.

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

GEORGE CURRY

JESUS AND THE POLITICS OF HIS DAY Edited by Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule

Cambridge University Press, 1984 xi + 511pp £37.50 ISBN 0 521 22022 X

The theory that Jesus sympathized with the Zealots (or their predecessors) in supporting armed resistance to Roman rule in Palestine has had a long run for its money. In our generation it was brought to the fore especially by S.G.F. Brandon (*Jesus and the Zealots*, Manchester, 1967, and other works), and has been popular in certain branches of liberation theology and elsewhere. The present volume consists of twenty-six essays (seven of which are by Bammel, one of the editors) dedicated to examining the details of Brandon's case and refuting him. There are essays on the history of the debate (Sweet, Bammel); on the methods of gospel study in relation to the question (Bruce, Moule, Styler: Moule's essay, like its author, is short but full of wisdom); on sundry details of the case (the two swords, the Temple tax, the trial, the 'render unto Caesar', and so forth).

The essayists have little difficulty in mounting damaging objections to Brandon's case. Since the book appeared (owing to delays, some of the essays were already several years old at that point) further weight has been lent to the argument by the work, among others, of Sanders and Borg (Sanders points out that had Jesus been executed for being a political trouble-maker it is inconceivable that his followers and/or family would have escaped, at least, arrest). There are several telling points that can be made:

for instance, that of W. Horbury (p.192), who points out that Paul's picture of the self-abnegation and gentleness of Christ would make no sense at all had it been known that the life of Jesus had differed radically in character from the model suggested. The wholesale rewriting of the Jesus-tradition by the early church (leaving only the occasional saying, such as the 'two swords', uneliminated) which has to be postulated for the theory to work is simply too far-fetched, and the details do not in fact match up as they should.

But Brandon was on to something nevertheless, and it should remain an open question — particularly after M. Borg's book, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, — whether, by dismissing Brandon himself and others who think that Jesus was a supporter of armed anti-Roman struggle, one has thereby disposed of a 'political Jesus' altogether. There might be other sorts of 'political' meanings, such as the one Borg suggests — that Jesus, like Jeremiah, was warning his people of imminent judgment at the hands of the Romans and was thus seen (a picture amplified by his fellowship with quislings and outcasts) as a threat to Israel's stability. As J.A.T. Robinson argues in the final essay in the book, at this point John seems to have got it right, historically and theologically (cp. *Jn.* 11.45–53). Thus, to show that Jesus was not anti-Roman, by no means proves that he was — in our modern, post-Enlightenment sense — apolitical. The religion/politics split makes about as much sense in first-century Palestine as it does in twentieth-century Poland. These essays therefore do a first-class job in disproving a line of thought which still emerges into popularity from time to time (see, most recently, G.W. Buchanan's *Jesus: The King and the Kingdom*), and in cleaning up quite a bit of the material that has to be assessed if Jesus is to be understood in his own context (as must be done by anyone committed to the doctrine of Incarnation). But it does not attempt the harder task of giving a positive account of the social and political meaning — not alongside or instead of the 'theological' or religious meaning, but as part of them — of Jesus' ministry. There, even (especially?) after Meyer, Harvey, Borg and Sanders, the field is still wide open.

Worcester College, Oxford

TOM WRIGHT

COMMENTARIES ON ROMANS 1532–1542 T.H.L. Parker

T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh 1986 226pp £14.95

ISBN 0 567 09366 2

Does anyone know how many commentaries were produced on Romans during this decade? Dr. Parker produces the remarkable figure of eleven, one for every year under discussion (though in fact there were two years in which nothing of significance appeared). His researches have taken him all over Europe, and revealed the wide world of Renaissance scholarship which existed on the eve of the wars of religion.

The period 1532–1542 was one of intense theological debate, in which the cry of the Lutherans was debated far and wide. Romans occupied a central place in Lutheran apologetic, so it is natural to find so much attention being paid to it. Yet, as Dr. Parker reveals, this attention was by no means confined to Protestants. In fact, a majority of the commentaries during this period was written by Roman Catholic apologists — six, as opposed to only five from the pens of the Reformers.

Dr. Parker shows, by painstaking analysis of the key passages of the Epistle (1:18–23; 2:13–16 and 3:20–28), just how different each commentator was. This was still an age of individual enterprise, before a tradition of interpretation had emerged and confessional lines had hardened. The sheer creativity of so many minds during this period makes it a golden age of New Testament studies, even if it is obvious that not everything produced is of equal value.

Yet even more interesting is that Dr. Parker demonstrates how, behind the obvious points of controversy, there lay a surprisingly large area of agreement. In particular he demonstrates that the Catholic side in the debate appealed to Scripture as its final authority in practice, whatever their theory might have claimed. Had this been followed through more consistently, Dr. Parker argues, the whole church might have been reformed and general agreement reached, as Calvin himself said would happen. Sadly, the initiative died and conditions altered before this happy convergence could take place, and Calvin's hopes were never realised.

The book is written with painstaking scholarship throughout, and students of the period, as well as exegetes of Romans, will be deeply grateful to Dr. Parker for providing such a useful and enlightening summary of the Reformation debate.

Oak Hill College, London N14

GERALD BRAY

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA IN THEIR LOCAL SETTING Colin J. Hemer

J.S.O.T. Press, Sheffield 1986 338pp. £22.50 cloth
£10.50 paper

ISBN 0 905774 957
ISBN 0 905774 965

It is very sad to be writing this review as news has just come in that Colin Hemer has died. For many years those of us engaged in New Testament work have benefitted greatly from the wisdom and encouragement of this fine man of God.

This book is a somewhat shortened version of his doctoral thesis presented at Manchester University in 1969. Much of the work it contains has in fact already appeared in commentaries on Revelation that have been written in the intervening years. However, it makes fascinating reading indeed. Here Dr. Hemer addresses, in particular, the cultural and archaeological situations of the seven churches addressed in *Revelation* chapters 2 and 3. There is a chapter on each of the seven churches.

The breadth of knowledge and reading is outstanding and yet it is written in a manner that will make it accessible to most who would normally be able to use a weightier commentary. After reading through this book one is left with a sense of wonder and awe that Jesus, who stands in the midst of the lampstands, really does know these churches and their situations intimately! Hemer's work confirms that there are many references and allusions in these letters that are much clearer to us once the background of the particular church or city is known. Just three examples from the list of twelve conclusions from his examination of Laodicea should serve to stimulate desire to read the whole work!

The 'lukewarmness' of Laodicea is to be related to the local water supply . . . 'hot' and 'cold' allude respectively to Hierapolis and Colossae.

. . . the words 'I am rich . . .' allude to the aftermath of the great earthquake of A.D. 60. It is further suggested that this ostentatious self-sufficiency reached a climax when the reconstruction was completed by the erection of great public buildings . . . The monumental triple gate thus donated may have been in mind in the writing of Rev. 3.20.

The contrast between 'white raiment' (v.18) and the clothing made from wool of the local breed of black sheep is accepted . . .

Perhaps the one failing in the work is that the author does not seek to apply his conclusions in any expository thoughts. This is very much an academic work in which relationships are clearly shown between the letters and their environment, but it is left for others to draw out this material and make it useful, as it most assuredly is, for the preacher and teacher. So many of the issues in the seven letters are relevant for today, that this work of application should not be that difficult; so I would warmly recommend this book to any who plan to teach or preach on the subject.

Oak Hill College, London N14

PAUL GARDNER

IN SEARCH OF HISTORY: HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD AND THE ORIGINS OF BIBLICAL HISTORY

John Van Seters

Yale University Press, 1986 399pp. £12.95

ISBN 0 30003 633 7

The reviewing of *In Search of History* has involved three daunting tasks. The first has been simply to read the 362 pages of densely packed information and complex argument. The second has been to summarise such a wealth of material and to extract from it the main themes. The third has been to venture any form of critique, since this reviewer approaches from the perspective of the interested but non-specialist reader. A comment on the back cover states that this book 'gives specialists and the uninitiated alike a well written and thorough survey of the field'. The survey is certainly well written, but its indisputable thoroughness makes it hard work for 'uninitiated' readers who would probably find it helpful to read and digest thoroughly both the Introduction *and* the Conclusions before tackling the complexities of the intervening chapters.

In Chapter 1 Van Seters explains his use of the terms 'history writing' and 'historiography', drawing upon Huizinga's concept of history as 'the intellectual form in which civilization renders account to itself of its past' (p.1). He defines history writing as a literary activity through which a nation examines the significance of its past in order to understand its present, thereby expressing the essence of its corporate identity. Historiography covers, besides history writing *per se*, other genres which may or may not have been intended to be preserved for posterity. Van Seters then outlines his book's overall plan, namely 'to lay out a broad survey of all the historiographic material that might have some relevance for the study of Israel's own writing of history' (Chapters 2-6) . . . [so to] . . . 'enable the

reader to make an informed judgement on the significance of such comparisons and to evaluate the scholarly discussion of Israel's history' (Chapters 7–10) (p.6). Finally, in Chapter 11, he marshals the evidence provided by the forgoing survey to demonstrate that the first true history writing was that which emerged in Israel; specifically, from the 'pen' of the Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr.).

Van Seters's main thesis, then, is that Dtr. was the 'first known historian in Western civilization truly to deserve this designation' (p.362); a thesis which is most easily discovered by reading the last sentence of the book first! On the way to this overarching theme there are numerous sub-themes, many of which, in the words of another back-cover comment, are 'sure to provoke controversy'. One of the first of these occurs in Chapter 2 which deals with Early Greek historiography. Here, Van Seters suggests that the earliest Israelite histories should be dated in the sixth century B.C. rather than the tenth, and cites in support 'recent' (1962?) research positing considerable similarity between Greek and Hebrew thought forms of this period. On this basis, he argues that Early Greek historiography could have had an even greater influence on Israel's history writing than that of other Near Eastern cultures. The main text used for comparison is Herodotus' history and Van Seters identifies many similarities between this text and Israelite history writing.

In Chapters 3–6 Van Seters surveys and classifies the enormous variety of texts from Mesopotamia, the Hittites, Egypt and the Levant, seeking to understand how they were meant to function and intending to concentrate on 'those forms that might have some relevance to Israelite historiography' (p.6). Inevitably, perhaps, in a work of this length and comprehensiveness, it is all too easy for the reader to lose track of this intention amidst the details of King Lists, Royal Inscriptions, Chronicles and other genres discussed. To be fair, he does point out some of the similarities and comparisons with Israelite history writing, and he recognizes in his conclusion that 'the similarities have not always been explicitly stated' (p.354). Apart from this difficulty, these chapters provide a rich collection of ancient Near Eastern literary material which will be of great value to specialists in these fields.

Chapters 7–10 deal with Israelite historiography. Chapter 7 is an introduction to the issues involved; Chapter 8 covers 1 Samuel 8 to 1 Kings 2; Chapter 9, the rest of Kings; and Chapter 10, Joshua 1 to 1 Samuel 7. In Chapter 7 Van Seters outlines and evaluates the Gunkel-Gressman view of the evolution of history writing from myth through legend to historical narrative, and considers the survival of this view through many attempts at its modification. Whilst this broad classification remains, in Van Seters's opinion, 'both legitimate and reasonable' (p.212), he doubts that the existence of these genres in itself necessarily implies chronological development from one to the other, and considers that 'to date a unit of narrative by its form alone, for example the legends of Genesis to the premonarchy period, is a dubious procedure' (p.213). Dating requires not only identification of the particular form but also an assessment of its function in the community for which it was written; so an author from a relatively 'late' and developed culture might well have chosen myth or legend as a form which best suited his purpose in communication. Presumably it is such reasoning which underlies Van Seters's inclination to a late dating not only of Deuteronomy-Kings (his delineation of

the Dtr. history), but also of the Jahwist (J) and the Priestly Writer (P) whom he regards as both post-exilic and post-Dtr. This controversial and well-argued assertion is unlikely to go unchallenged; it has the merit of forcing the reader to question his own presuppositions in this area.

If the matter of dating is one in which Van Seters's work will generate controversy, another is his view of the unity, or otherwise, of the main blocks of Old Testament material. Here he is likely to be in disagreement with scholars at both ends of the critical spectrum. On the one hand, for example, he agrees with von Rad that the account of Gideon's life and exploits is 'a conglomeration of very diverse sagas' (p.215) and finds the text of Joshua 1-12 to be 'greatly complicated by . . . secondary additions' (p.325). On the other hand, for some texts he argues for rather than against unity of authorship; for example he sees 'no reason to suggest a plurality of Dtr. redactors' (p.307) and in relation to the Story of David's Rise (1 Samuel 16:14-2 Samuel 7) he comments, 'no amount of source analysis, tradition criticism or redaction criticism can solve what is basically the result of this author's particular literary techniques' (p.269). It is noteworthy that, whether upholding or demolishing a particular claim to textual unity, Van Seters generally offers contextual evidence to support his view; the validity of his conclusions can only be assessed with reference to the particular texts concerned. This stimulus to deeper Biblical study is another reason for commendation of his book.

Arriving at Chapter 8, one wonders why Van Seters takes 1 Samuel 8 as his starting place rather than the apparently more logical point of Joshua 1. He explains this choice by saying that, 'the rise of history writing in Israel is most often associated with various parts of the book of Samuel' (p.249), an explanation which is unsatisfying at first reading since he does not say who makes this association or why. One reason later appears, namely that the literary problems of Joshua and Judges are too numerous and complex, and that there is still much dispute as to whether these books belong properly with the Pentateuch or with Samuel-Kings. Though there are also many uncertainties about the early traditions in Samuel, there is apparently enough consensus that substantial parts — the Story of Saul, the Story of David's Rise, and the Court History — are documents which Dtr. incorporated largely unmodified into his own history to justify beginning an analysis of Israelite historiography at 1 Samuel 8. Van Seters argues that the first two of these 'documents' are in fact the work of a single author-redactor (Dtr.) who happens to have used two different historiographic techniques in creating a unified account of the whole of the early monarchy. But he excludes the Court History (2 Samuel 2:8-4:12, most of 9-20, and 1 Kings 1-2) from Dtr.'s work on the ground that it presents a contradictory view of David, one which Dtr. would not have written into his history in its present form. He writes, 'there is scarcely anything exemplary in David's actions in the whole of the Court History . . . (it is) . . . a post-Dtr. addition to the history of David from the post-exilic period' (p.290) and most likely a contrived rather than an eyewitness account of the events concerned.

As one progresses through Chapters 8-10, one realises the enormous regard in which Van Seters holds Dtr. who, for him, is the one author-redactor of the whole Deuteronomistic History, suitably divested of its later additions some of which will be indicated below. In company with Hoffman,

he goes beyond Noth in seeing Dtr. not just as a compiler and editor, but as 'an author and a storyteller who composed his literary work with a great deal of freedom and creativity . . . [and who] . . . could also freely construct analogous fictional traditions if he felt the need to do so' (p.320). This felt need was the concern to account for the past in a way that articulated Israel's identity as the covenant of God, chosen and called out by him, and owing him constant obedience. In certain respects, Van Seters sees comparable features in the Early Greek histories, for example in Herodotus' concern with the theme of divine providence, and in the Near Eastern historiographies which deal with the special election of the king as ruler. But, 'nowhere outside of Israel was the notion of special election extended to the nation as a whole such that the complete history of the people could be viewed in this way' (p.360–1). Indeed it was the possession of this corporate identity that motivated and made possible the rise of history writing in Israel; and which gave her a literary genre that was distinctive among all the historiographies and histories of her Near Eastern neighbours.

Thus far it is clear that Van Seters has a high opinion of Israelite history writing in relation to that of comparable ancient cultures. But one wonders whether this accolade is given more for the writing than for the history. For Van Seters, Dtr.'s history is a 'literary work of superb accomplishment' (p.359) but it is not clear whether he also sees it as a record of the actual acts of Israel's God in that history. He repeatedly asserts that substantial elements of the text are 'a late fabrication' (Saul's war with Amalek in 1 Samuel 15) (pp.258–9), a 'rather artificial creation' (the Elisha collection in 2 Kings 2, 4–7, 8, 9) (pp.305–6), or 'contrived and added' (Rahab in Joshua 2) (p.325). Even if it is possible to separate these units as late additions, and Van Seters's justifications for so doing on literary grounds are plausible if not necessarily compelling, one still has to ask why the later redactor(s) saw fit to include them, and why in the course of time they came to be regarded as canonical, and how, therefore, they are to be interpreted. Van Seters has a ready answer, namely that these additions were made in order to articulate particular theological perspectives on Israel's God, for example the extent of his salvation (to Rahab); the folly of disobedience to him (Saul's treatment of Amalek); and his power to work miracles (through Elisha). But would not an able redactor have invented better fitting and more plausible stories to make these additional theological points? Perhaps the very strangeness of some of these units is an argument in favour of their historicity? In the concluding chapter, Van Seters reminds the reader that 'all Hebrew historiography . . . is written from a theological perspective', (p.361) and it would be quite unfair to expect such writing to provide near-objective reporting of events; a goal to which even modern historians do not aspire. Nevertheless, many readers come to the Old Testament narratives with the assumption that its various units centre on events which did take place in history, even allowing for some elaboration during the historiographic process. If, for example, the story of Rahab is an invention, granted with the intention of presenting a more universalistic soteriology, the reader has only the assertion of a theologian (albeit of sixth century B.C. antiquity) that salvation can extend beyond Israel. He is deprived of the assurance that God had acted in history to achieve the salvation of a trusting non-Israelite. It may be possible for those whose chief concern is an academic pursuit of the

development of history writing in Israel to dismiss such units on the ground that 'they do not add anything directly to the discussion' (p.361). But some will search for Israel's history because they perceive in it a continuity between the acts of God in that history and the acts of God in their own personal histories; they may not be able to be so easily dismissive.

Van Seters has done an extremely thorough job in examining the literary form of the Old Testament historical works, comparing them with other ancient historiographies and history writings; he has provided valuable insights for understanding the function and hence the interpretation of the Deuteronomistic History; he has also suggested how the works of J, P and the Chronicler, all of which he regards as responses to Dtr.'s work, could have come to their present form. As he points out, further research is needed especially into the relationships between these three histories and the Early Greek and Near Eastern historiographies, and between these three and Dtr.'s history itself.

To read and digest *In Search of History* requires in itself something of the commitment demanded in a research project. In this respect, this original and thought-provoking book is really one for the specialist, though there is plenty of interest in it for anyone who is willing to make the effort to search it out. Van Seters has set out 'in search of history' and has found much of value in relation to the origins of Biblical history writing. But if his search was for Biblical history itself, it seems that he has not yet found what he was looking for.

62 High Street, Oakley, Bedfordshire

MARY KENCHINGTON

HOW DO CHURCHES GROW? Roy Pointer

Marshall Pickering, Basingstoke 1984 206pp. £5.95 pb. ISBN 0 551 01070 3

Dr. Roy Pointer of the Bible Society is becoming increasingly well-known as a writer and lecturer on church growth. This book, subtitled *A Guide to the growth of your church* will encourage those who fear that the modern church growth movement is too concerned with techniques and programmes, for it is clearly rooted in the Scriptures, and in a study of growth in the New Testament church, as well as in stressing the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. However, the writer wisely draws our attention to the many things that can, indeed ought to, be done in the local church to create the conditions for growth.

Here are helpful chapters on laying a foundation for growth, organizing for growth and planning for growth, and Appendix 5 (Understanding your church) suggests how to run a church growth survey which will help parishes wishing to conduct the sort of audit recommended in the *Faith in the City* report. At the same time the author is not prepared to give slick answers to complex questions. While he is glad to use the insights of the behavioural sciences (cultural studies, psychology and sociology) he also demonstrates (p.88) that churches grow when they pray constantly, respect the authority of the Bible; appoint effective leaders; mobilize their membership; worship God in eventful services; engage in continuous evangelism and compassionate service; develop genuine community life; are open to Spirit-directed change and release the resources of the church for the mission of God.

In case anyone should jump to the conclusion that Roy Pointer is thereby urging all churches to become involved in 'charismatic' renewal, he has some penetrating comments on this point. He sees that movement at present as tending too much towards introversion—'there is an over-emphasis upon worship and fellowship to the detriment of witness and service' (p.43).

He is also very frank in exposing the deadening effect of liberal theology upon church growth and quotes Clifford Hill and Rupert E. Davies on that point. The pendulum, he tells us on p.65, is swinging back with encouraging signs of a growing confidence in the Bible and its message. However, it is a little too sweeping to assert, as he does on the same page, that 'the vast majority of ministers now being trained have confidence in the Bible for preaching and teaching in the churches'.

Another interesting point of controversy, which he handles with wisdom, is the so called H.U.P. (Homogeneous Unit Principle). Because it has been identified with the stance of the Church Growth Movement he relegates consideration of it to Appendix 3, and there quotes those who do not accept it. At the same time, the principle should raise a challenge to those of us who minister in the Church of England as to how far our congregations are too closely identified with one particular culture in the parish.

The book is well documented with graphs, charts and diagrams as well as quotations from a variety of sources. On p.129 the proof-reader has omitted to insert appropriate page numbers for reference, which could well go in in a further edition (which we hope will be required) and there are just one or two spelling mistakes.

This is a book for all those who have charge of a congregation to read and then assess themselves and their congregations. They would then be well advised to pass it on to their lay leaders for further study, discussion and then action.

Christ Church Vicarage, Ware, Hertfordshire

DAVID WHEATON