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Book Reviews

FIRE FROM THE HEIGHTS Moelwyn Merchant

Christopher Davies, Swansea 1988 125pp. £6.95pb.

ISBN 0 7154 0708 2

Another novel by the writer of *Jeshua*, based on the biblical account of the life and ministry of the Prophet Elijah. A slighter volume, it keeps very close to the relevant sections in I and II Kings. Once again the author writes out imaginative projections into the thoughts and reflections of the main character. A notable feature is Merchant's filling out of the character of Jezebel, whom he presents almost as an 'anti-heroine'! Absorbing reading with gripping descriptions of Elijah's dramatic successes as well as his surprisingly paranoid reactions to Jezebel's threats. Beautiful descriptions of nature adorn the narrative adding to the reader's enjoyment of the novel. I was a little disappointed, though, that Moelwyn Merchant did not 'fill out' for me the character of Obadiah. His several brief appearances in the narrative of II Kings offer some good material for character projection and portrayal. Instead Merchant introduces an entirely fictitious character named Joseph, a servant of Naboth whom he develops as a faithful supporter of Elijah.

The dramatic climax to the story of Elijah is described with colourful projections which by no means detract from the somewhat restrained tone of the Biblical narrative. We see it through Elisha's eyes:

From a cloudless sky came a single shaft of lightning which struck the ground between them. Then without a sound, but like the sight of a tempest on Sinai, the lightning shafts followed swiftly, circling Elijah into their fire. As Elisha cowered before this silent storm, Elijah was swept into the heart of the flame and as the chariot flew upwards, so the lightning ceased and there was greater peace than before the vision.

Splendid writing!

22 Woodland Way, Fairlight, East Sussex

OWEN THOMAS

REDATING MATTHEW, MARK AND LUKE. A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem John Wenham

Hodder & Stoughton, London 1991 346pp. £9.95 ISBN 0 340 54619 0

If any book can kindle my interest in the synoptic problem, this is it.

For me, the synoptic problem was killed stone-dead by one of the scholars with whom John Wenham debates in this book: his lectures seemed designed to turn us off, and to make this subject the special preserve of a wacky coterie for whom *the order in which the Gospels were written* was the vital question in New Testament study—far more vital than what they *meant*. I found I had no sympathy with that at all, and ever since then I could not really have cared less whether Matthew used Mark or Mark used Matthew, or neither used the other.

Every now and then I have been required to say something intelligent about it in front of a class, and I have usually concealed my ignorance by emphasizing the power of oral tradition in the ancient world, and the extent to which this seemed to have been neglected in the scholarly debate, which has assumed *literary* dependence between the Gospels.

According to John Wenham, my ignorant remarks were not wide of the mark. He too emphasizes the importance of oral tradition for the synoptists: in fact, he says, dependence on a common oral tradition is the best explanation for both the coincidences and the differences in wording between the Gospels. He suggests, however, that they drew on each other (specifically, Mark and Luke drew on Matthew) for the *order of events* which coincides remarkably between them and cannot really be explained by oral tradition. In this way, he disposes of the hypothetical 'Q'.

In line with this, he brings an historical emphasis to bear on the question, and does not just try to solve the 'problem' by minute analysis of differences in wording. He makes his 'fresh assault' part of a whole case about the composition of the Gospels in the setting of the history of the early church. In a nutshell, his argument is the following:

1. Acts ends where it does because nothing more had happened at the time of writing! It must therefore be dated c. 62 AD, and so Luke's *Gospel* must be set in the 50s.

2. Luke shows evidence of knowing Mark (rather than the other way round), so Mark may be dated before this (Wenham suggests 45AD).

3. The view that Mark drew on Matthew, adopting his *order* as a framework for the material that had formed Peter's preaching ministry, is more convincing than the view that Matthew adopted Mark's order and expanded it with material from other sources so Matthew must be earlier still (Wenham suggests 42AD).

In arguing for this case he lays considerable emphasis on the significance and reliability of later church traditions about the composition of the Gospels, especially the tradition that they were written in the canonical order, and the tradition that Peter went to Rome in 42AD and founded the church there (and that it was his preaching there which Mark wrote up after he returned to Jerusalem). His motivation appears at the end: the synoptics

were written at dates when many were alive who could confirm or contradict what was written. This means that the Christian is fully justified in accepting anything that is written in these books until it is proved beyond reasonable doubt to be in error. (p. 244).

This is a major piece of scholarship from a much-respected senior evangelical. I am so glad that this book has been written—but not because he has proved his case: more because he has shown that such a case can be made. I was happy to presume the basic reliability of the Gospel traditions quite apart from the rather specific arguments he employs here. And I think that, if asked to defend the reliability of the Gospels, these would not be the arguments I would use. The trouble is that it is all so very speculative. John Wenham has brought no more *certainty* into the area. At almost every point, the argument concerns the balance of the probable within a vast range of the possible. So I am encouraged and helped, not because I am persuaded, but because he makes his case with erudition and care, with minute attention to detail, and with a lovely sense of loyalty to the church, both ancient and modern.

Within the context of Gospel scholarship, this book offers a 'sideways look' at the problem which deserves to be taken far more seriously than I expect it will.

One or two more detailed comments:

1. He does not apparently attach much significance to the translation of the Gospel traditions from Aramaic in affecting the wording of the Greek traditions. I would have thought that this was another complicating factor!

2. Readers will need Greek to follow his argument in the detailed chapters on the relationship between each Gospel.

3. Each chapter is furnished with a summary of its argument (at the start), and with full notes gathered at the end of the volume (61 pages in total).

4. There are full indices of biblical references, authors and subjects.

5. It is all thoroughly readable, and serves as a good introduction to all the main scholars and the solutions they have proposed.

John Wenham has put us in his debt with a major contribution to an ancient debate.

London Bible College, Northwood, Middlesex

STEVE MOTYER

CLOTHED WITH CHRIST: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1–15.13: J.S.N.T. Supplement 59 Michael B. Thompson
Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1991 292pp.
£35hb. (subscribers £26.25) ISBN 1 85075 309 1

The 'Paul and Jesus question' remains central to New Testament studies. In its simplest form it has two related parts: (a) Did Paul accept and develop the religion of Jesus, or did he invent a new religion which was far from the intention of Jesus? (b) Why does Paul make so little reference to the life and teaching of the earthly Jesus? Was he ill-informed, or just not interested?

Michael Thompson's doctoral dissertation aims to tackle the second of these questions by (1) establishing criteria for discerning allusions to Jesus by Paul; (2) raising the issue of what degree of reference to the earthly Jesus we might reasonably expect to find in Paul's letters; (3) using Romans 12:1–15:13 as a test case, to see whether this important section of ethical teaching does in fact display Paul's alleged ignorance of or lack of interest in the earthly Jesus. It is a good plan, and it is expertly carried out. The result is one of the most important recent contributions to the 'Paul and Jesus' debate.

Few doctoral theses make easy reading, and this is no exception. It is a book to refer to rather than to read from cover to cover. The chosen section of Romans is tackled bit by bit, focusing on every point where an allusion to Jesus may plausibly be claimed. Thompson cautiously steers a middle course between the 'maximalists' (who discover 'allusions' in quite remote verbal or conceptual similarities) and the 'minimalists' (who can find other sources for every supposed echo of the teaching or example of Jesus).

But before he tackles Romans 12–15 Thompson sets the whole question in perspective by a study of other early Christian 'letters' to see whether they are any more free than Paul in references to the historical Jesus. In the New Testament they are not, but in the Apostolic Fathers there is a modest increase in quotation and more in allusion, notably in the *Didache* and 2 Clement (the latter written late

enough for the gospels to be widely available as 'scripture' to be quoted). Throughout this material, however, he finds the tendency is not so much to refer explicitly to Jesus as to echo words and ideas familiar in the sayings-tradition, on the assumption that the readers will be sufficiently well-informed to pick up the allusions.

So has Paul's lack of direct reference to the historical Jesus been blown up out of proportion? Is his practice in this much different from that of other early Christian teachers? Is the explanation not that he did not know traditions about Jesus, but that not only he but also his readers knew them so well that he could take them for granted? The sheer common-sense and realism of these introductory chapters (especially pp. 61-63 and chapter 3) alone make the book worth while.

We cannot go through the study of Romans 12-15 in a review. It proves to have been a well-chosen section, offering excellent test-cases for the thesis. Thompson is scrupulous to avoid claiming too much, but the reader is left in no doubt of how thoroughly Paul's ethical teaching (like that of other New Testament writers) is imbued with a knowledge of what Jesus said and did. Romans 13:14 (the source of Thompson's title) shows how he expects his readers to display 'behaviour consistent with what the Romans know to be the teachings and behaviour attributed to Christ', p. 160, and the whole of 15:1-13 is found to depend on the imitation of Jesus as the model for Christian living.

A rewarding book, as full of common sense as of scholarly accuracy and caution. Would that all doctoral theses were as worth-while as this one!

Wycliffe Theological College, Oxford

DICK FRANCE

JESHUA Moelwyn Merchant

Christopher Davies Ltd., Swansea 1987 426pp. £10.95hb.

ISBN 0 7154 0684 1

How does one write a 'Life' of Jesus? What materials are available to fill out the relatively scant information about his personal life found in the four Gospels? One can sketch out projections from the occasional personal details encountered in their narratives. Imaginative portrayals of what went on among family and friends, as they journeyed to Jerusalem for his *bar mitzvah*, and on the way back, Jesus debating with the Rabbis in the Temple—what were his questions and answers, his observations which amazed the Rabbis? There have always been preachers who have dared to make imaginative projections in their sermons. There have been many writers who have attempted a 'Life of Christ'—but they have often approached this most intriguing Subject not only with imagination, but with convictions of their own, in most instances lending a measure of distortion to their portrayal of the main Character. The purpose of some writers has been to present Christ as being merely human and to trim off what they consider to be 'hagiography'—decorative accretions added by Christian tradition. Such works, though, from *Vie de Jésus* by Renan to *The Nazarene* by Sholem Asch have left us with a strangely remote and inaccessible character.

Now the work before us by Moelwyn Merchant is in complete contrast to these. He quite honestly describes it as a 'Novel' not a 'Biography', yet his approach to the main Character is fully in harmony with orthodox christology. And the result-

ing portrait is of a full-blooded human being, but with a mysterious 'other' dimension which gradually unfolds as the plot develops. Yet this is no ethereal other-worldly wraith, but a true human being, who is at the same time God Incarnate.

The modern novel owes much in its shaping as a literary genre to the *Romans* and *Contes* of the French nineteenth century Romantic writers. One in particular came to mind as I was reading this work, Benjamin Constant, who quite remarkably became the precursor of the modern 'Roman Psychologique' (Psychological Novel), especially in his novel *Adolphe*. The subject is very different, of course! But in this genre the plot revolves around not the actions of the main character, but his mental processes. The 'intrigue' is woven through the warp and woof of the psychological cross-currents and reflections of the main character. In much the same way Moelwyn Merchant draws the character of 'Jeshua'. There is perforce plenty of action, but the on-going development of his awareness of Who he is, Where he is from, and What is his mission, is pressed out in long graphic passages projecting the thoughts and reflections provoked by the inter-play of Scripture recalls, contemplation of Nature and conversations with family and friends. A device which this writer employs is to take characters who appear momentarily in the Synoptics and John, fill them out, and relate them more closely and personally to Jeshua. This tightens the rather loose literary texture of the canonical records and adds momentum to the plot development. For example, the Centurion of Capernaum is given a name and identity, and meets Jeshua on a long 'hike' among the hills and by the shores of Galilee. He is now coming to terms with a destiny wrapped up in a unique relationship with God. The Centurion, 'Justus' is a 'God-fearer' and Jeshua gently questioned how far he has really discovered 'that quickening delight' in God's Law. In replying Justus playfully remarks, 'You speak with such sublime confidence of "your Father"!'. Then comes the vital turn in the plot,

Jeshua was silent, for a second path had opened before him without his seeking it. 'I meet Him in the silent and lonely ways', he murmurs in reply, . . . 'praying, for me then, has the scent of mint leaves. . . . The scent of crushed leaves is for me the incense of the wild and lonely and there He answers.' (p. 101).

He has already felt the ageless eternal depth to his Being when, on a visit to Jerusalem, in conversation with Joseph of Arimathea (another literary device!), he is faced with a quotation from Job,

'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?' Jeshua's heart stirred, he was poised again like an athlete. Was this question a rebuke, a challenge? Scarcely breathing the words, he replied, 'Where was I, indeed?' (p. 43).

But the Centurion's teasing observation is seminal and leads to the reflection later that pushes the plot further on towards its goal of self-realization:

Through all this he marvelled each day at the fact that an alien soldier had drawn from him the conscious, humble certainty of his union with 'his Father'. Nazareth would not again be quite the same. (p. 103).

This is the turning point which leads Jeshua to conclude that he must now leave home and his carpenter's bench for the higher yet sterner *métier* of fulfilling his prophetic Name, 'Jeshua, Saviour'. This is even more vividly brought out in the thoughts expressed by a devout 'hasid', whom he meets in the home of the local

Nazareth Rabbi, Lazar. With uncanny discernment the hasid's reply to Jeshua's question about his destiny was sonorous and disconcerting.

I have words to tell you, not my own. Hear the words of the Lord: . . . before Elijah, before David, before Moses, before our father Abraham, your way was clear. And one, our prophet Isaiah, has spoken so openly to you and perhaps to you alone: 'He had done no violence neither was any deceit in his mouth yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.' That bruising you, Jeshua, will know, even to its end, (p. 113).

(Shades of old Simeon!). On some pages Moelwyn Merchant's narrative runs side by side with the sacred text, and even allows it to take over. Strangely this at first seemed to me an anti-climax, yet on more mature reflection one felt in each instance a valid intrusion of historical realism, as in some other historical novels. There is no attempt to romanticize and certainly not to dwell with vivid and horrific heightening on the crucifixion narrative. The quiet, gradually increasing certainty of the resurrection is orchestrated with restraint rather than all-out triumphalism.

I recommend this novel as not only a 'good read' but also as a useful companion to the Sacred Texts; absorbing and sometimes even inspiring. I have a little difficulty with the Title-Name. Surely it should be 'Yeshua'? For this is how modern 'Messianic' Jews write it. And it seems unfair for me further to point out that cursive Hebrew script on the dustcover has the letters the wrong way round! The *waw* is wrongly printed before the *shin*. But not many readers would be worried about that! More to the point on pages 213 and 214 the typeface has been transposed—only a technical fault!

22 Woodland Way, Fairlight, East Sussex

OWEN THOMAS

TRUTH TO TELL The Gospel as Public Truth **Lesslie Newbigin**
S.P.C.K., London 1991 90pp. £5.99 ISBN 0 281 04566 6

This little book is the second in the Österhaven lecture series, the first being an even slenderer one on Systematic Theology by Wolfhart Pannenberg. But in its small compass it packs a lot of things well said and of great contemporary importance. The author, well known for his traditional stance, is concerned to defend the significance of the Gospel as *truth*, objective and to be received and proclaimed publicly as such, as real knowledge. This brings him into opposition with not only the pluralists but also with many in the liberal camp. He insists that God's revelation in Jesus Christ is the starting point; there is nothing more ultimate. This makes some of his liberal friends angry, he says, and he tries to answer their objections. But the Bishop is not on the side of the fundamentalists either, though he gives the impression of being gentler with them than with the liberals. He attempts to characterize the difference between the two in terms of Polanyi's philosophy of knowing (on which he lays considerable stress); fundamentalists emphasize the objective pole of knowing, liberals, the subjective. To the latter with their fear that giving in to a more conservative attitude to the Bible's authority would mean jettisoning all the positive gains of the Enlightenment, he replies by drawing a parallel with the age of Augustine, which he regards as in many ways similar to our own. The new start to intellectual understanding that Augustine provided did not cause

the loss of all that classical thought had positively achieved; rather it was the only thing that could (and did) preserve it. Similarly, a return to the ultimacy of Jesus Christ and the Gospel as traditionally understood is the only way in which the real achievements of the Enlightenment can be preserved. The alternative is that the current disillusionment with the Enlightenment will lead to their eventual loss. It is a bold thesis, and one with which conservatives can fully sympathize.

But there are elements in the author's case which are more questionable. In effect he sets theology and science side by side analogically. In the 'republic of science' as Polanyi called it, new scientists inherit a tradition built upon the findings of past members. This forms a firm paperwork for their own research, and they must first be well apprenticed into it. It is not an infallible or incorrigible tradition; it is constantly being modified by new discoveries. This would appear to be to him the pattern to which theology also should conform. But then he seems to introduce a disparity. In his analogy the author does not determine satisfactorily the elements in the two disciplines which correspond. Let me illustrate it in this way. In science there may come rare occasions when some editor brings together the outstanding historical advances in the discipline so far, and publishes them in what might be called a *Festschrift*; Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Einstein and Planck would doubtless be some of the names featuring in one from near the turn of our century. Such a *Festschrift* presents an understanding of the world of nature as then perceived and it is certainly *corrigible*. But corrigible by what means? Clearly, by an appeal to an original 'given' which remains accessible to each succeeding generation of scientists; to a 'given' which from ancient precedent has often in fact been called the 'Book of Nature'. This is the authority to which every scientist worthy of the name gives his unquestioning allegiance. Now the Bishop seems to make the Bible the analogue not of the Book of Nature (as the conservative does) but in effect, of the *Festschrift*. In other words, the Bible becomes a *Festschrift* composed of the contributions of an elite of special observers who have left us reports of their understanding of what they consider are certain uniquely great events, of salvation history. What they have reported becomes, of course, like the contributions to a scientific *Festschrift*, not infallible, but corrigible. But corrigible by appeal to what? *The original events are no longer accessible*. Through what, therefore, is theology to be corrected? The Bishop can hardly say 'through Jesus Christ' (as his stance suggests he might like to), for He is no longer accessible in the required sense. Nor can he say, 'through the Holy Spirit'; for that would seem to put the whole matter in the realm of the unacceptably subjective. This leaves the Bishop's position wide open to attack on the flank. If the analogy between science and theology is to be of constructive validity therefore, a fully conservative position on the Bible would seem to be essential. The Bible must be the Word of God in the traditional authoritative sense, not merely a work of special human religious genius, a mere theological *Festschrift*.

The last chapter in the book is on politics (*Speaking the Truth to Caesar*). It discusses 'what might be involved in the attempt to prove the validity and power of the Christian faith in the public life of a nation'. The characteristics of the kingdom of God are of course the issue. So far, so good. But the author says nothing at all of two supremely important elements of the message. One is the truth that 'except a man be born again *he cannot even see* (or conceive) *the kingdom of God*'. The other is that 'here we have no continuing city'. We were created not ultimately for time but for eternity, and that is our destiny. Surely these are two of the most important elements of the Gospel as Public Truth, and elements without which

much else becomes meaningless? It would have added enormously to this valuable little book if they had been at least mentioned. But that, alas, would doubtless have angered his liberal friends even more.

Ivy Cottage, Grove, Wantage, Oxon.

DOUGLAS SPANNER

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY 1 Wolfhart Pannenberg

T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh 1992 460pp. £27.95 ISBN 0 567 09697 5

A systematic theology by a leading German theologian is bound to be an event. Writing from a Lutheran position which is open to other branches of Christianity, Wolfhart Pannenberg's first volume (or a projected trilogy) takes us through the inevitable *prolegomena* of theology and the doctrine of God. In contrast to the Scriptural approach with which we are familiar, Pannenberg begins with the more philosophical question of the truth of Christian doctrine. In what sense can the dogmatic assertions of Christian faith be regarded as 'true'? Ultimately, says Pannenberg, this can only be a matter of faith, and so the Reformation *sola fides* takes on a new life, separate from, but in many ways still linked to, Scripture as the formal source of claims of Christian truth.

The second chapter discusses the concept of God, again from a basically philosophical point of view, and argues for its credibility in the modern world. There is a full discussion of natural theology, which Pannenberg views more favourably than those in the Barthian tradition, but which he also feels quite free to criticize. His third chapter is basically a discussion of religious anthropology, in which he analyzes the experience of God and of gods claimed by the various religions. Naturally, he prefers Christianity to other faiths, but he does not exclude their witness from consideration.

The fourth chapter is a study of the concept of revelation, again from a philosophical rather than from a strictly Biblical standpoint. He is severely critical of the notion of the 'Word of God', as this has been understood in Barthian theology, and prefers a concept of revelation as the Word turned into historical action. It is the prophetic and eschatological dimension of revelation which attracts Pannenberg most, and which provides him with a criterion for distinguishing it from the myths of paganism.

Chapter five is an extended discourse on the Trinity, which Pannenberg rightly sees as the culmination of God's self-disclosure. He locates this doctrine in the Christology of the New Testament, which eventually led the Church to formulate a Trinitarian belief. He is always concerned to anchor Trinitarian theories in concrete realities, and nowhere more so than in his insistence that the Persons of the Godhead establish their identity in relation to each other in a definite and clearly graspable form of self-affirmation. Nevertheless, he is keen to preserve the complementary emphasis on the divine Unity, and this also receives a full airing in this chapter.

The sixth and longest chapter so far discusses the divine Unity in relation to the attributes of God, concluding with a magnificent statement of God's love, which naturally brings him straight back to the Trinity. As with the other chapters, the primary emphasis is philosophical, particularly when it comes to the problems connected with divine action in the world.

This book displays immense erudition and a willingness to learn from many different strands of Christianity. There is a surprising amount of indebtedness to the Orthodox Protestant theologians of the seventeenth century, to the mediaeval Scholastics and their predecessors, and to the Eastern Orthodox. Anglo-Saxon theology also figures more than is usual in German works, though most of the writers cited are contemporary Biblical and philosophical theologians. The rich heritage of Anglican and (British) Reformed theology which dates from the sixteenth century is passed over in silence—another reminder of how parochial the tradition of our so-called ‘bridge church’ can appear to be!

The translation is excellently done, and there are copious notes for those who wish to follow up particular themes. The text reads extremely well, though perhaps one could have wished for a more schematic approach, with frequent subheadings and so on. A book which is easy to read is not always easy to consult, and many theologians are liable to want to locate particular themes quickly. Nevertheless this is a minor point when set against the merits of the book as a whole. It would obviously be too much to hope that Pannenberg’s views will command general assent, but he has certainly provided his readers with a stimulating introduction to theology from a basically philosophical perspective. As such students in particular should find it both challenging and useful as they seek to get to grips with the main issues in modern theological discourse.

Tyndale House, Cambridge

GERALD BRAY

THE NATURE AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE **Raymond Abba**
James Clarke, Cambridge 1992 392pp. £12.95 ISBN 0 227 67912 1

This is a new updated edition of a classic work of Biblical Theology which first appeared in 1958. In those days it was increasingly common to find scholars who were questioning the basic assumptions of turn-of-the-century liberalism, and who were inclined to give a much higher value to both the historical and the spiritual aspects of the Bible. Archaeology was often their preferred discipline, and it seemed to show that many parts of the Old Testament, in particular, were historically-based accounts of folk migrations, which had been preserved in later Israelite tradition. The so-called ‘primitive’ character of Old Testament religion was therefore wrong, and a much higher value could be placed on the earliest parts of the Scriptural record.

With that view there went a friendly but distant approach to fundamentalist conservatism. Abba recognized that fundamentalists had preserved a spiritual emphasis which the liberals had lost, and he praised them for it, but he was strongly opposed to the doctrine of verbal inspiration (which he regarded as an innovation rather than as traditional Christian belief).

Today the climate in Biblical Studies has changed to the point where Biblical Theology of the type advocated here seems to have largely disappeared. Its positive insights have been taken up by what was previously the ‘fundamentalist’ conservative camp, but a radical liberalism which rejects the *importance* of history, and not merely the presence of history in the Biblical text, has returned with a vengeance. Modern liberalism, buttressed by such seemingly attractive notions as ‘cultural conditioning’ has made inroads into Church life of which the earlier liberals could only dream.

Because of this, the reprinting of this volume comes at an important moment. It is a reminder to us of where Biblical Studies have been in the recent past. It insists yet again on the fundamental unity of the two Testaments, whilst admitting their great diversity. It attempts to advocate the primacy of the religious and theological principles which the Bible contains over the merely historical and cultural phenomena in which these principles are embedded. Because of this, its message is one which still needs to be heard in the Church today, and the publishers are to be congratulated on having made it available once more to a new generation of students and scholars.

Tyndale House, Cambridge

GERALD BRAY

DICTIONARY OF JESUS AND THE GOSPELS: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship Edd. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall

Inter Varsity Press, Leicester 1992 934pp. £25.95 ISBN 0 85110 646 3

It is a tribute to the way in which Biblical scholarship has mushroomed in the last generation that it is now possible, even necessary, to publish a full-length dictionary as a guide to the current state of research. Furthermore, it must be noted that the purpose of this book is primarily to provide a guide to *Evangelical* research, which is even more remarkable.

The contributors are drawn from a wide range of (mainly) Anglo-Saxon scholarship, and represent established writers as well as younger graduates. The level of expertise is immediately apparent as one theme after another in the Gospels and the life of Jesus are expounded. Great attention is paid to the textual evidence, to parallel references, to background information and to the theological purpose(s) of each theme. There is always a full exposition of scholarly opinion, whether it agrees with the main thrust of the dictionary or not, so that the reader feels he is abreast of current research wherever he opens the book.

Particularly useful is the fact that each article is accompanied by an extensive bibliography, giving journal articles as well as books. The index section takes up nearly forty pages and covers references to the Gospel texts (though curiously, not to other parts of the bible!), as well as an extremely full subject index. On the last page there is a handy listing of the articles themselves. These are relatively few in number—only one hundred and seventy six in all—but this allows for an average of five pages (or about six thousand words) per article, which gives some idea of the depth at which the topics are treated.

All in all this book is a magnificent tribute to the current state of Evangelical Gospel scholarship, and it will be indispensable for students, scholars and clergy alike.

Tyndale House, Cambridge

GERALD BRAY

THE UNAUTHORIZED VERSION Truth and Fiction in the Bible Robin Lane Fox

Viking (Penguin Books Ltd), London 1991 478pp. £20hb.

ISBN 0 670 82412 7

'*The Unauthorized Version* is a historian's view of the Bible. It is a book about evidence and historical truth, not about faith'; so the author opens his Preface. Dr. Fox, University Reader in Ancient History, is a distinguished historian of the ancient world, and two of his previous books, *Pagans and Christians* and *Alexander the Great* have won the highest acclaim. He is a self-confessed atheist, and his opinions here are naturally highly antagonistic to what conservative Christians believe; nevertheless, as he himself points out, 'there are Christian and Jewish scholars whose versions would be far more radical than mine', though his own conclusions are completely destructive of any claim that the Bible has divine authority. As interesting examples of where he differs from the 'more radical' critics might be cited the following:

Israelite piety in the age of Solomon, an unnamed Jewish author in the mid sixth century BC (the Deuteronomist) and Jesus's 'beloved disciple'. Others believe that we know next to nothing about the first of them, nothing about the second, . . . and that the third is not the author of a Gospel. I have weighed the contrary arguments and I disagree.

This is an interesting statement, for it indicates that while the author pays great deference to such eminent critical authorities as Wellhausen, Schuerer, Bickerman and Barr, he nevertheless forms his own historical judgments. Broadly, what are they?

As a sample, this early part of the Old Testament is stripped of all historical credibility. Later,

When the exiles headed east [to Babylon] they had a collection of old and unreconciled laws which covered anything from the problems of stampeding oxen to the damage done by hitting a slave; they had a tradition of Ten Commandments; they had sayings of various prophets and a book of the law from Moses which often contradicted the older laws . . .; they also had their psalms . . . When the exiles left, very little which is now in our Bible existed. In the span of one long lifetime [that of the Deuteronomist] much of what we now read . . . was to be composed.

But the returning exiles insisted on interpreting events 'in defiance of the facts'. Their disasters were not due to their God being weaker than others (this would have been a realistic response to the fall of Jerusalem), but to their nation's sins. The minority who shared these views imposed them on the textual salvage that had followed them into captivity, and this provoked one valiant author to compose a long narrative propelled by the law book's understanding of things. 'This astounding effort is still the backbone of six books of our Bible's narrative (from Joshua to 2 Kings)'. Thus arose what is

unparalleled in antiquity . . . that constantly recurrent national apostasy should be made the leitmotif of an entire literature. . . . This explanation allowed some of the losers to keep their self-respect. It also left open the chance of repentance and a future good from Yahweh.

Thus the author evacuates Old Testament 'salvation history' of any revelatory character, and in his hands the New Testament fares no better.

Now I cannot confront the author's obviously immense historical erudition with my own paltry one but there are some important points his conclusions do raise. The first is the realization of how completely we are the prisoners of our own fundamental presuppositions. Dr. Fox realizes I think, what is a commonplace science, that facts are never 'bare', they are always theory laden (I think he might prefer to say 'interpreted'). Still more significantly, they are presupposition-laden. But he seems nowhere near to giving this truth the weight it demands. What are his fundamental presuppositions? I would name two, based as they must be, on his world-view. First, that there is no overall meaning in history; it is as pointless as the progress of a driverless bus careering out of control, and like the latter is quite unpredictable (this rules out *a priori*, predictive prophecy). 'Meaning' only puts in local and transient appearances, mostly at cross-purposes, in the minds of creatures thrown up by chance evolutionary processes and doomed eventually to disappear without trace. Second, the only way we have to find out the truth about things is by the scientific method, the rational examination of 'evidence'. However we can adapt here a comment of his own about the Bible. This evidence comes in the form of 'such a marvellous tangle, there is no coherence which is enough to support a theory of the truth' of whatever may be our findings. For the evidence available to rational examination on his premises consists of physical data from the senses; the phenomena of psychology, of sociology, and of religion; and of such universal human experiences as the moral imperative, joy, suffering and pain. How on earth can these diverse elements be said to possess 'coherence' of the sort he would demand of the Biblical testimony? As opposed to his world-view with its presuppositions the Bible gives another. God is the sovereign Lord not only of creation, but also of history, which is the outworking of His purposes. He teaches His creature man—but not exclusively by evidence of a sort accessible to public, scientific, scrutiny (any more than human beings communicate exclusively by such a method). Matthew 16:17 is an indication of this. What this complete divergence of outlook means is that since we are prisoners of our presuppositions it is vital to examine them carefully before we commit ourselves to them, for it is only those presuppositions which correspond to Reality that leave us, paradoxically, free. I think Dr. Fox does not give all this due consideration; he assumes his presuppositions too lightly. For if the Biblical presuppositions are true *his whole position is undermined*, and this result will hold even if all his historical conclusions should one day be proved correct, something which seems unlikely. The Bible after all does not overlook the proximate causes of things; it rather looks beyond them (*cf.* Exodus 14:21). Dr. Fox however admits no 'beyond'.

The book raises some other smaller but still interesting points. Take for instance the author's remark 'pupils . . . see masters differently (Socrates taught both Plato and Xenophon, but their books about him are remarkably different)'. What light does that throw on the oft-repeated claim (it is here too) that the Jesus of John's Gospel differs greatly from the Jesus of the Synoptics? Again, the name 'father of history' is usually given to the Greek historian Herodotus; but 'Long before Herodotus, . . . we must reckon with the world's first historian, who told a tale of court politics and family warring'; Dr. Fox is here referring to the biblical record from 2 Samuel 9 to 1 Kings 2. On the attribution of the first Gospel to Matthew ('perhaps a deliberate deceit') he has an interesting comment.

'The suggestion of deliberate pseudonymity on the part of the evangelist need not cause qualms' a great scholar of this Gospel's origin has tried to reassure us; 'the ancient feelings and conventions about the practice were different from ours'. The truth is exactly the opposite, as Paul's experience shows.

He illustrates his point by historical examples. But I must say I find it very difficult to reconcile Dr. Fox's damning of pseudonymity here with his attribution of it to such wonderful letters as Ephesians, 1&2 Timothy and 1&2 Peter.

The author's style makes for easy and pleasant reading, and the book is beautifully printed. The sometimes scoffing tone and unscholarly language often grates (why does he have to refer repeatedly to Israel's 'Number One and his four-letter name'?); and he is guilty all too often of what the Greeks call *hubris*. There are fifty-two pages of Notes (arranged very helpfully at the end, but without numerical superscripts to distract the reader), and a very full Index of eight pages.

Ivy Cottage, Grove, Wantage, Oxon.

DOUGLAS SPANNER

DIAKONIA: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources J.N. Collins
Oxford University Press, Oxford 1990 368pp. £35

ISBN 0 19 506067 9

This is a weighty book. The author is a laicized Roman Catholic priest, now a schoolteacher in Australia, and his book is the re-working of a thesis he submitted in 1976 on the use of the important New Testament word-group *diakonos*, *diakonein*, *diakonia*, as illustrated by Greek usage outside the New Testament.

New Testament word-study since the War has been so dominated by Kittel's pioneering *Wörterbuch* that the methods and conclusions of that work have been the subject of continuous scrutiny, and Collins makes his own contributions to the process. The relevant article in Kittel by H.W. Beyer, and the dissertation by Wilhelm Brandt on which it depends, have popularized in ecclesiastical and ecumenical circles conclusions which Collins judges to be entirely misleading. Influenced by the Lutheran deaconess movement (which itself, one may add, was influenced by the old idea that Stephen and the Seven were the first deacons), Beyer and Brandt held that the fundamental conception is 'active Christian love of the neighbour'. Following in their footsteps, Eduard Schweizer, in his influential *Church Order in the New Testament*, maintains that the basic meaning is 'to serve at table'.

All this Collins denies. The primary object of service expressed by these words in the New Testament, as the constructions used show, is not one's neighbour but God or Christ. Table-service is only incidental, and the main context in which they are used is not social action but the ministry of the word. Indeed, the rendering 'ministry' rather than 'service' is often almost forced upon the translator, and there is nothing surprising in this when one looks at Greek usage elsewhere. For the *diakonos* often serves his principal as his messenger or agent, and it is in this way that Paul serves God or Christ. When *diakonos* is used of an order of ministry (deacon), it is used in close connexion with *episkopos*, and the deacon serves the presbyter-bishop (rather than the people) as *his* assistant and agent. He does this, however, not so much in the ministry of the word, which is not the deacon's sphere of operation, as in other matters.

Latimer House, 131 Banbury Road, Oxford

ROGER BECKWITH

JEWISH CIVILIZATION IN THE HELLENISTIC-ROMAN PERIOD Ed. Shemaryahu Talmon

J.S.O.T. Press, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1991 269pp. £30
ISBN 1 85075 320 2

This book boasts a very impressive array of scholars, specialists in the fields of Qumran studies, Septuagint studies, the Pseudepigrapha and the history of the second commonwealth. There are fourteen of them, both Jewish and Christian, all but one of these men and women working in Israel or the U.S.A. Talmon himself is the J.L. Magnes Professor of the Bible, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The essays here were all originally prepared for workshops in 1986 and 1987 sponsored by the Continuing Workshop on Teaching Jewish Civilization in Universities and Institutions of Higher Learning. In other words, each author is a teacher, and each is concerned with the clear dissemination of research to students of this historical period. The book is therefore not too technical for the reader who is not a specialist in linguistic or archaeological research. An interdisciplinary approach is evident throughout the book. It is therefore a pleasure to recommend it to *Churchman* readers generally.

Part One deals with issues relating to the history, society and literature of the Judaism of the period, including the war with Rome, early rabbinic writings, biblical interpretation and the variety of expressions of Judaism which were to be found. Part Two specifically focuses on the light shed by the Qumran texts on this period of Jewish religious thought, including a progress report on the publication of the scrolls and fragments, their effect on textual criticism, their importance for rabbinic *halakhah* and their relationship to the emergence of nascent Christianity. This is all vital material not only for those interested in Second Temple Jewish life and its rôle in the development of Judaism, but also for our knowledge of Christian origins, and for the context of the formative period of Jewish-Christian relations. There can be no doubt about the timeliness and usefulness of such a book as this. In the review I will concentrate on those essays which will have the widest appeal among concerned Christians.

John Strugnell of Harvard (until recently the chief editor of the Dead Sea Scrolls project) contributes an essay about the scrolls entitled, 'A Report On Work In Progress'. As one might expect from the incumbent leader of the project, he rationalizes and justifies the notoriously slow rate of publication, and the restriction of access to the Scrolls, and in fact he takes the offensive by issuing a challenge: 'Instead of complaining about our slowness, I would suggest that scholars devote themselves to a careful reading of the books that have already been published' (p. 105). The politics of scholarship can be read between the lines throughout his piece.

Talmon provides an extremely helpful survey of 'The Internal Diversification of Judaism In The Early Second Temple Period'. He presents an overview of scholarship on the First Temple Period, concluding that before the Exile the religious life of Israel was generally characterized by homogeneity and uniformity. However, he insists, the situation changed completely after the Exile. By the time of the Hellenistic-Roman period, heterogeneity and religious diversity had become the order of the day. There was no such thing, he claims, as normative Judaism; further, he states that this multiform Jewish scene was still the context at the time of Jesus and the nascent church. Devorah Dimant, who teaches Bible in Haifa, concurs entirely in her piece on 'Literary Typologies and Biblical Interpretation/.

Those early generations of Jewish followers of Jesus were therefore *not* flying in the face of what became the later Orthodoxy of the rabbis. Surely we must now see the end of that sloppy, but persistent, teaching that 'Christianity is the daughter of Judaism'. As yet another Jewish scholar, Laurence H. Schiffman of New York University, says, 'We must now present Christianity and rabbinic Judaism as two different streams in the interpretation of the biblical traditions' (p. 146).

Let me mention, finally, the excellent contribution of James H. Charlesworth, the Professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary. His paper is entitled, 'Qumran In Relation To The Apocrypha, Rabbinic Judaism, And Nascent Christianity'. Charlesworth, in his usual rhetorical style, shows his dismay at the teaching institutions and textbooks which have as yet to catch up with, or take seriously, the results of Qumran research. He criticizes those Jewish theologians who still 'tend to present modern Judaism as if it were virtually identical with pre-70 Palestinian Judaism' (p. 177). He also insists on the fact that Qumran has laid to rest the notion of a normative Judaism in the days of Jesus and Paul. But I will close with two quotes which should provide enough bait for a wide Christian readership:

It was assumed that Christianity did not develop in Palestine. Under the influence of Paul, it was shaped by Greek norms and ideas . . . Christianity was judged by numerous experts to have been shaped by the mystery religions . . . Judaism and Christianity, it was claimed or assumed, had different origins . . . The posited 'vast difference' between Judaism and Christianity is no longer stressed . . . The origin of the Gospel of John, for example, was sought in Greek philosophical systems . . . With the discovery of the Qumran scrolls, the Gospel of John was seen in a new light . . . What was once hailed as the Gospel of the Greeks is now widely [sic] recognized to be one of the most Jewish of the Gospels. (pp. 172, 176f.)

All Nations' Christian College, Ware, Hertfordshire

WALTER RIGGANS

THE SEVEN PILLORIES OF WISDOM David R. Hall

Mercer University Press, Macon, Georgia 1990 137pp. \$18.95

ISBN 0 86554 369 0

This gem of a book—small but scintillating—should be required reading for every theological student. Upon David Hall has fallen the mantle of G.K. Chesterton, Dorothy Sayers and C.S. Lewis—writers whose wide-ranging familiarity with all sorts of literature pierced the facade of New Testament criticism in their day, and exposed the fallacies of that monstrous tribe—the Sceptical Scholars. The blurb claims that ' . . . his appendix parody of Bultmann is alone worth the price of the book . . .', and I heartily concur.

Hall's 'seven pillories' are: the Arguments from Up-to-Dateness, from Probable Certainty, from Primitive Culture, from Silence, from Creative Background, from Consistency, and from Specialization. Each of these is carefully analyzed, and demolished—with a smile. Every chapter teems with quotations from some two hundred authors, Agatha Christie to P.G. Wodehouse. Much of his material is taken from Stephen Neill's *Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1961*, but he goes further than Neill in showing that the *whole* structure of 'form criticism' is built on sand. D.E. Nineham comes in for some well-aimed shots, as do the pioneer

critics Strauss and Wrede: Hall's chief weapon is common sense. 'These historical facts can never be proved . . . but neither can most of the things we believe and rely on, railway timetables, newspapers, etc . . .'

To my mind this is the most readable 'apologia' for traditional Christianity since *The Screwtape Letters*. It is also a work of real scholarship, debunking those Enlightenment theories which for two hundred years have undermined the authority of Scripture and reduced the Church to its present state of chaotic impotence. Though almost nothing is said about inspiration or the Early Church, Hall demonstrates that our forefathers were right to receive the New Testament books as authentic, accurate, and (especially) the words of Jesus as *ipsissima verba* of the Master.

31 Harold Heading Close, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire

DAVID WATSON

CLASH OF WORLDS David Burnett

Monarch Publications Ltd., Eastbourne 1990 255pp. £12.99

ISBN 1 85424 107 9

This book is a unique and timely contribution to an understanding of the diversity of nations in what is now known as 'The Global Village'. Its author has made an outstanding contribution to a subject much in the minds of many people, but of which little has appeared in print for the ordinary man. He is well-qualified to do so as a Fellow of the Anthropological Society, Principal of a missionary orientation centre, and an ex-missionary in India. He distinguishes between culture and world view, the former being that in which a person is born, the latter that in which he unconsciously learns. A world view thus becomes the motives, values and culture that a nation has in common but may be of diverse character due to different races within it. From that ground he raises searching questions on a nation's fears, wisdom, arts and the function of its world view. Marxism is incisively analyzed as a pattern of a materialistic world view supported by western technology and the worth of the individual. He considers five world views concluding with that of Christianity. For him a primal world view is rooted in a belief in a creator God, and the self as a corporate entity influenced by outside forces. The individual is thus part of a continuing community in which time is a present reality and its values those of its peoples. Chinese, Hindu, and Islamic world views are closely examined. He has much to say of changes in a world view due to the rise of new religious movements and contact with other societies, particular attention being given to the New Age Movement with its rejection of secularism and paganism. Neopaganism and witchcraft receive admirable treatment, as does his concept of St. Paul's ministry, as an example, of the Christian world view communicating itself to other world views.

This is a book that could be of inestimable value to missionaries, clergy, theological students, and evangelists, particularly in a multi-cultural society. All who are concerned with the apparent decline of Christianity in the west, the rise of new religious movements, and the increasing influence of pagan religions elsewhere would do well to read and ponder over Burnett's majestic insights.

5 Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford

ARTHUR BENNETT

**STEWARDS OF CREATION: Environmentalism in the light of
Biblical Teaching Lawrence Osborn**

Latimer House, Oxford 1990 60pp. £1.75

ISBN 946307 33 4

What happens to the environment affects us all, therefore the subject should concern us all. Many books have been written on this issue, so is there room for yet another one? Well, in my opinion there is. Lawrence Osborn gives us something extra in his contribution to the Christian debate in *Stewards of Creation*.

In his own words, he attempts to 'set out a theological basis for Christian Environmentalism' (p. 52). This he does expertly in a remarkably short volume given the size of the subject matter.

His book is divided into four chapters plus an appendix and an index. Each chapter is subdivided into bite-sized sections labelled alphabetically and appropriately entitled. In spite of the digestible size of each section, I found I needed to think really hard theologically and philosophically in order to understand the writer's train of thought, especially in one of the chapters. I also found it necessary to keep an appropriate dictionary to hand, if this book is to be accessible to ordinary Christians. They will not readily understand such words and phrases as 'Ontological', 'Soteriological', nor even 'Hypostatic Union'. However, not all the book is like that, and sometimes such words are necessary to convey what the writer wants to say adequately.

Chapter One presents 'The Religious Challenge of the Environmental Crisis'. Here Osborn explains how public environmental concerns have evolved and describes the impact of human civilization. He also defends Christians from the charge that we are solely to blame for the crisis that the world faces.

Chapter Two is very helpful in exposing the weaknesses and flaws in various spiritual and secular approaches to the environment. Especially topical is his treatment of 'New Age' thinking and influence. 'Interconnectedness' is a recurrent theme in all these approaches to green issues.

Chapter Three is a concise, but I feel, hardly adequate summary of Old and New Testament perspectives on the environment. These include 'the creation narratives'; 'Nature in Jesus' Teaching'; plus Pauline and Johannine positions. Osborn would have been even more helpful if he had spent a little more time on this chapter.

Chapter Four deals with 'The Environment and Christian Theology'. This is good, but difficult to follow in places. You definitely need the right kind of education to grapple with these tightly argued sections. However he does make his point and achieve his aim.

Being practically minded where theology is concerned, I enjoyed the Appendix most of all. For here, again in his own words, he 'translates his theological approval of environmentalism into action' (p. 52).

We can all do better in the way we treat our environment, but I think the author really argues that true Christians should do better than anyone else, because of the way God, the 'Triune God' himself regards the environment—what he has made!

Even our worship of the Almighty, suggests the author, can be greatly enhanced and enriched, when we articulate the ways in which creation itself brings glory to God by its very existence. He asks, why should such expressions of glory be confined to Harvest Thanksgiving services?

We have been granted 'dominion' and 'stewardship' of creation, let us use our power responsibly, argues Osborn, and rightly so!

The attitudes and actions suggested by the author can only do good; what he says makes sense. Therefore I recommend this little book to all who are concerned with having a sound and balanced Christian view of environmental issues, but perhaps even more so to those who are not! Those who wish to do something about their attitudes and behaviour in this regard, will find much food for thought here. A worthy addition to the 'Latimer Studies' series.

The Rectory, Northiam, East Sussex

PAUL O'GORMAN

HOW TO PLAY THEOLOGICAL PING-PONG Collected Essays on
Faith and Reason Basil Mitchell

Hodder and Stoughton, London 1990 218pp. £8.99pb.

ISBN 0 340 51383 7

This book, edited by William J. Abraham and Robert W. Prevost, is from the C.S. Lewis Centre. Basil Mitchell was for many years Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford, and he has written widely on the philosophy of religion from a broadly traditional and conservative standpoint. These essays make good reading: the style is very pleasant, the logic easy to follow, and the general thrust welcome. The volume takes its title from a witty and telling critique of much theological writing. Its argument is on the following lines. A concept (it is being maintained) can only have one of two meanings; call them Ping (my meaning) and Pong (yours). I argue that the meaning cannot possibly be Pong, so it must be Ping. That is the simplest form of the game. But there are more advanced forms; for instance, the transcending form: the meaning is neither Ping nor Pong, but transcends them both. Or the dialectical tension form (the reader can guess what it is) and Kierkegaard's variant of this, that Ping *is* Pong. All this is worked out admirably with examples from top theologians—Tillich, Niebuhr, Bultmann and so on. The essay ends with some judicious advice to novice players based on the idea that the object is to put your opponent in the wrong *in a socially acceptable manner*; and with a reminder that not all theological writers are inveterate players!

Some of the other essays I also greatly enjoyed: The Layman's Predicament, Contemporary Challenges to Christian Apologetics, 'Indoctrination', Neutrality and Commitment, Faith and Reason: a False Antithesis?, Philosophy and Theology, and The Place of Symbols in Christianity are a few examples. I must be satisfied to end with a quotation from the first of the essays just noted.

Austin Farrer scarcely exaggerates in his verdict upon much New Testament criticism: 'Great systems of organized folly take the field and establish themselves as the academic orthodoxy of the day. To the detached observer the theological and the philosophical bias animating much of this work is obvious'.

The author says he is tempted to add to this his own impression of the 'nonsense' tackled by structuralists or deconstructionists, but he refrains. It can scarcely be denied however (he says) that the layman can often catch the expert out in palpable errors. I would certainly agree.

Perhaps I might add just one other quotation from a philosophical colleague of the author's: 'The trouble with Christianity as presented in so much modern theol-

ogy is that it isn't worth disbelieving!

An excellent book for anyone seriously interested in apologetics. There are seven pages of notes but no index.

Ivy Cottage, Grove, Wantage, Oxon.

DOUGLAS SPANNER

DAVID WATSON, A Biography **Teddy Saunders and Hugh Sanson**

Hodder & Stoughton, London 1992 £14.95hb., £7.99pb.

ISBN 0 340 57410 0

David Watson was undoubtedly the one Englishman, whose fame as a charismatic was nationally recognized and the authors, both of whom could claim a close relationship, have set out to show the significance of the contribution that he made both to the Charismatic Movement and the Church of England. In the latter he was recognized by being made a canon of York Cathedral. In the former his preaching in many parts of the world undoubtedly made an impact on thousands.

Time alone will tell of the real significance of the Charismatic Movement upon Christian history, but there is no doubt of the important part David played during his lifetime. Unfortunately to many, his aligning with John Wimber and the Kansas City Prophets has clouded a true assessment of his ministry. Maybe this biography will help to redress the balance in some way.

Converted under E.J.H. Nash's influence, he was one of the young men whose entry into the Church of England's ministry was to prove formative in the post war period. Like many he went to a public school (Wellington), from which he was sent into the army following a family tradition, yet he did not have an easy childhood as eventually his parents divorced. His father fell in love with a married woman of Christian Science belief, which views he held himself and was to lead to his death through rejection of medical care. His death was, however, to mean that David could benefit from a Foundation Scholarship. Before he left he gained the Queen's Medal for upholding the 'great qualities of the Hero and Statesman in whose name and to whose memory the college has been instituted'. His life in National Service was difficult but he was soon esteemed for what he was and for what he did.

Cambridge was, however, the turning point in his life attracted by the then curate of All Souls, Langham Place, and after reading *Becoming a Christian* by John Stott, he gave his life to Christ. Despite his philosophical training he began to see 'that the Christian religion is not a series of propositions but a living relationship'. As he came to terms with philosophical questioning he still maintained how important was this relationship. A fact that was to animate his ministry throughout his life.

It was in his first curacy that he came under influences which were to lead into his charismatic emphasis. Although not charismatic in the generally accepted use of the term, those linked with the East African revival, opened up to him the need for holiness and openness in Christian living. A visit from the late Corrie Ten Boom introduced to him 'prophecy' and 'speaking in tongues'. This kind of approach was not appreciated by the next vicar he served under at the Round Church, Cambridge, Canon Mark Ruston. It was, however, a remark from Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones, as a result of an enquiry from four young Anglicans that was

to be an essential factor in their advocating what is now termed the Charismatic Movement. Having given their testimony to a remarkable experience in their lives, the Doctor pronounced 'Gentlemen I believe you have been baptized by the Holy Spirit'. Not only did this endorse the ministry of John Collins, David MacInnes and David Watson, but led to the foundation of the 'Foundation Trust' under Michael Harper. But it also led to controversy, a subject which is ably dealt with in Chapter Nine. It led to a mild comment by 'Bash' while David was at camp, but he was so distressed that it gave rise to asthma, which was to dog him for the rest of his life. When marriage came it was to someone, Anne, who not only supported him in this new emphasis, but was despite many vicissitudes to exercise a ministry in some ways independently, which she still pursues.

By his preaching and pastoral care he was used to exercise a profound ministry in a run-down church. It was this that was to bring him to the nation's attention. It was also this, however, that was to raise questions in a number of people's minds, and often it is on the closing events of his life that he has been assessed. Undoubtedly he was mightily used of God and sought to retain a balance in his Charismatic approach. He had an international ministry both evangelistically and didactically. It is probably through his acceptance of the teachings of John Wimber that the greatest questions have been asked about his subsequent ministry.

In all this is a book worth reading. It gives very valuable insights into parochial ministry. It highlights the pilgrimage of a man from what might be called 'classical' evangelicalism into 'charismatic' evangelicalism. It reveals the vulnerability of someone who suffers physically as well as emotionally. It also shows how easily 'charismatics' can accept doctrines ultimately foreign to God's Word, because experience replaces sound judgment.

14 Cambridge Road, Stamford, Lincolnshire

JOHN BOURNON

THE GATE OF GLORY George Carey Archbishop of Canterbury
Hodder & Stoughton, London 1992 Second edition 244pp. £6.99

ISBN 0 340 37637 5

In this book Dr. Carey expresses his fundamental belief that the cross of Jesus is the basic Christian doctrine which all others must subserve. Written before he became Archbishop, he has allowed it to be re-issued after further treatment because in his view the Western Church has lost the centrality of the cross in its theology and preaching. This apologetic thesis roots the cross in the Old Testament themes of a crucified Messiah and in early Christian proclamation. He accepts that the Church developed from the message of Christ crucified in spite of the offence it caused. It is his belief that Christianity starts from Christ's death as the answer to man's voluntary and involuntary sins and not from a stress on sin itself. To him, the cross is to be understood as God's answer to man's fallen sinful nature as the cancer within the soul. Hence, in his view, mankind suffers from universal guilt that alienates all people from their Maker. In accepting the belief that the cross was a voluntary sacrifice presaged by the Old Testament animal offerings with their atoning sacrifice he stresses the need of Christ's blood-shedding to satisfy God's will and achieve reconciliation with God. Carey devotes much attention to St. Paul's thought of how the cross enlarged the apostle's belief in a personal God,

and changed his understanding of the nature and pain of sin, and the need of salvation.

Of much value is the author's view that the cross covers the social and cultural order, and its centrality in the Church's life and sacraments. To him it is the touchstone of all religious beliefs and offshoots such as ecumenicity, other faiths, and missionary work. Short shrift is made of liberation theology with its Marxist trends, as also the growth of liberalism in the modern church. In this, Carey reveals his evangelical background. He is fearless in describing the cross as propitiation and Jesus as the penal substitute for sinful man. In this sense the glory of God for Carey lies in God's identification with mankind and the channel of his loving grace. He sees it as a jewel of many colours, each having value in its attraction, the divinity of Christ within it answering mankind's sin. Towards the close of the book Carey gives attention to the Holy Spirit, and honestly admits the influence of the Charismatic Movement upon his own life, but laments that in many centres it gives little place to the cross. Sadly, there is little reference to any divine covenant for man's redemption made by the three Persons of the Trinity, and their presence at Calvary's cross. Nevertheless, its author is a scholar of much distinction and widely read in early Christian literature and past literature of man's salvation through Christ's death. This book will be of much service to clergy in their devotional reading and in search for subjects for Lenten addresses. Theological students wrestling with biblical and Christian concepts of salvation will find the book of inestimable value. Carey writes as an outstanding scholar who experiences the cross in his personal life. Although in parts a trifle sermonic, it is a moving and deeply spiritual work that will help many a stumbling Christian to continue on his pilgrimage with Christ.

5 Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford

ARTHUR BENNETT

ARCHBISHOP—A PORTRAIT OF ROBERT RUNCIE Jonathan
Mantle

Fount Paperbacks, London 1992 360pp. £7.99 ISBN 0 00627622 9

As I picked up this book I wondered why there had to be a third book on Archbishop Runcie, and two of them from the same publishing house. Although I have not fully read the other volumes, it would appear that they have different approaches. One concentrates on his term of office as Archbishop in a way that the one under review does not, despite the title. The other is a compilation of essays. Anyone wanting a factual survey of Robert Runcie's life to augment an original biography by Margaret Duggan should obtain this book.

It is well researched and, unlike the last mentioned, is not euphoric for the sake of being so. It sets the Archbishop in the midst of his companions, particularly those belonging to the Cell. It reveals how Cuddesdon has always been considered a centre for creating bishops, and how many of his colleagues have been appointed to that office. Yet there comes through by frequent reference the disappointment of the late Dr. Gareth Bennett, one of the circle who for some reason was passed over. Friends were always rightly ready for advice, yet the author seems to imply that one stands out above all others, and that is Canon Eric James who does not hold any episcopal office.

This is an interesting book for it not only gives a picture of Robert Runcie but also relates events which not only influenced his personal ministry, but which affected the Church of England as a whole.

14 Cambridge Road, Stamford, Lincolnshire

JOHN BOURNON

FREE TO BELIEVE David Jenkins and Rebecca Jenkins

B.B.C. Books, London 1991 200pp, £5.99

ISBN 0 563 20914 3

Rebecca Jenkins, who is her father's Research Assistant and Press Officer, has written this book, but in close collaboration with her father. The result has been vetted by him as 'correctly written with himself as first person'. This seems to reveal an enviably close relation between father and daughter, and no doubt it is such. The Bishop comes over as a sensitive, warm-hearted man, caring and compassionate—and passionate too in the belligerence with which he holds his convictions. What can be said of those convictions? But first, what have the two written about? The opening chapter is a potted biography up to the time at which he was appointed bishop. Then follow accounts of the well-known controversies sparked-off by the irresponsible tabloid press: 'the unbelieving Bishop', the 'laser beam God', 'Interfering in politics', and 'conjuring tricks with bones' are phrases which bring back memories of it all. In the course of this there are positive statements which seem to make clear what the Bishop really believes. There is a strong and vigorous attack on the way we are ruining our planet, and on our need to develop a new politics altogether. Although he emphasizes over and over again that God 'took risks' in creating man—He did everything in 'hope, love, risk and experiment'; He must have 'foregone certainty' and must now even 'live with uncertainty on an eternal scale'—the Bishop nevertheless hopes that God will somehow manage to pull it off and show that it has all been worthwhile (though he admits that he sometimes has doubts about this). 'God as He is in Jesus' (a key expression of his which occurs with great frequency) provides the certainty [sic] that disaster *need not* happen (my italics); but 'quite possibly there is no future'. In all this the Bishop tells us he is 'going back to the Scriptures and regaining biblical faith'. He is simply 're-reading them in the light of where we are now'. In any case (should anyone challenge him), 'the biblical texts are rich enough to allow anyone to read almost anything into them'. If this is so, what value has the Bible for him? Almost none, we might conclude; but we would be wrong. He believes in the biblical Trinity, for instance.

When I say that there are three persons but one God, 'person' does not mean 'person' but there are three equally real things about the one God. Now I hope that is simple and clear, . . .

What are we to make of all this? It all depends on your temperament. You may laugh, cry, or tear your hair out! There is virtually no serious exegesis here, and what there is is slapdash. There are glaring inconsistencies in the Bishop's whole approach. At one level, for a controversialist who (with reason no doubt) objects to the treatment he has received from the media, his own representation of the views of those who disagree with him is unpardonable. Over and over again he brutally

caricatures them in extreme terms as if *that* was the only logical alternative to agreeing with himself (see for example p. 86—where he relies on media reports!). Careful and reasoned argument is almost non-existent. At another level his tirade against the idea of a God who could take the physical option of ‘precise and overwhelming intervention’ demanded by the orthodox understanding of the Resurrection and the Incarnation, and yet was not prepared to use such methods to prevent Nazi death camps or to overcome famine is well-known. No one would deny that these things raise problems for the believer; but to maintain that ‘It is a good thing that this is not the God pointed to in the Bible’ passes rational comprehension. What does he make of Luke 4:25–27, to mention only one of a thousand passages that belie his contention? God could not stop what happened in Auschwitz, or He would have done so; that’s the sum total of his logic! His claim to be returning to biblical faith is surely the emptiest of rhetoric. What about the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Red Sea, Habakkuk 1, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum?

The political priorities of Dr. Jenkins are no less unsatisfactory. He obviously wants a new politics to bring society nearer to the ideals of the kingdom of God. He thinks such a politics is a practicality. But he seems to forget (or he rejects as non-dominical) that ‘unless a man is born again, he cannot’ even ‘see the kingdom of God’. That men and women need a fundamental rebirth from above never enters this manifesto, even wraith-like. Men and women need to be *radically changed*, and this is an absolute New Testament priority. Only the church has the message that will do this, and it is this message, the Gospel, which she is charged to proclaim. Why is it that Dr. Jenkins, boldly entering the field of politics with his persistent emphasis that ‘God is as He is in Jesus’, has to fall back on the Old Testament (much of the major thrusts of which he repudiates) to find his political message? The answer is clear: our Lord said very little about the organization of society. What He did say fits ill with the fashionable concerns of today: ‘Labour not for the bread that perishes’; ‘lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth’; and to a man materially wronged, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness’. The New Testament nowhere promises economic advantage; rather it calls to self-sacrifice and even ultimate earthly loss. Again, another favourite phrase of Dr. Jenkins is ‘the down-to-earth God’. But this does not mean that He is down-to-earth enough to raise the *body* of Jesus; for him, the Resurrection apparently has nothing to do with that earthly side of human wholeness! It had of course for Paul, whose account in 1 Cor. 15 Dr. Jenkins attempts quite unsuccessfully to use for himself. He overlooks what Paul implies, that the old seed-body giving way to the new, *disappears* in the process! The participation of the mortal body is in fact integral to Paul’s thought in other places; witness Rom. 8:11 and 1 Cor. 6:13–15. What Dr. Jenkins still continues misguidedly to insist on, Humpty Dumpty-like, is that a word which had well-established reference to the body (see both the Apostles’ and the Athanasian creeds, as well as such ancient references as Isaiah 26:19) shall now mean just what he wants, no more and no less. It really is not good enough! He apparently believes in some sort of future life ‘in a realm which is God’s’ for those who move in the right direction (or annihilation at death for those who do not); but this vast, even infinite, prospect seems to have very little impact on his message as Bishop. ‘We are part of a much bigger plan than just this brief existence’ he writes; but it is all so hazy and unattractive that we had better keep rather quiet about it. And the hope which nerved the New Testament church to count all earthly things but loss seems to count for little in his published utterances. No

wonder such liberalism has no power; all becomes earth-bound politics!

As I put down this book two images remained with me. One is of Turner's notable picture entitled 'Steamer in a Snowstorm'. All is swirling snowflakes; there are few clear lines of delineation anywhere. The picture only needs to be moving cinematography and it would represent this liberal theological outlook admirably! The other is of the Charge of the Light Brigade—magnificent, brave, but disastrously mistaken. Someone had blundered!

There is an Index of four pages.

Ivy Cottage, Grove, Wantage, Oxon.

DOUGLAS SPANNER

UNITY IN TRUTH D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Evangelical Press, Darlington 1991 203pp. £6.95

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Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones's thought-forms need little commendation. Having filled Westminster Chapel in London with large congregations for almost thirty years to hear his sermons it is good to have Hywel Rees Jones's editing of some in print. Given at meetings of the British Evangelical Council they set forth the Doctor's hope for Church unity amongst Christian evangelicals. Taking his stand from Luther's ninety five theses nailed to the Wittenberg Church door in 1517, and the events that followed, he builds up a strong case for Christians holding protestant truths to unite in one body, and to find a formula to that end. He sees the sixteenth century Reformation resulting from the definition of 'What is a Christian?'. The author develops this opening gambit with addresses on the nature of the Church as being the embodiment of the living Christ and not a collection of people bound together by a written confession of faith. In his view this only leads to confusion and a dead orthodoxy. For him the Church is an organic unity arising from objective Biblical truth experienced by members of it. Where this is lacking an alarm must be sounded against all attempts to identify the Church as a denomination or a World Council.

He here touches the depths of pessimism in judging the present Church's reflecting the world's confusion in regard to Christian truths and lack of a united voice as it confronts mankind with the gospel. He holds that without a clear conception of the Church's nature there can be no true evangelism. His address on the Mayflower Pilgrims sets forth the Church as a theological unit and not a political people. To that end he pleads that the Church must stand firm on the Scriptures, the doctrine of man as a fallen creature, the redeeming act of Christ, and the need of its members to experience personal salvation.

Of particular importance is his address on the state of the nation as it is, in his view, having its intellectual and moral, and religious life infected with the poison of greed and worldliness. But he has a balanced view of the need for Christians to develop a social concern and to fulfil their obligations to the State.

This book is for Christians concerned with the divisions in the Church and the need of accepting basic Christian truths with which to confront mankind. Every chapter demands careful study. In particular, Evangelical Christians should take to heart the author's analysis of the Church and nation. The book should be read carefully by all Christian leaders who hold positions of authority in Christian denomi-

nations, Societies and local churches. It challenges the individual reader and could lead him into avenues of fruitful thought and action.

5 Green Lane, Clapham, Bedford

ARTHUR BENNETT

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We are quite often approached by readers wishing to acquire past issues of *Churchman* and we are usually able to provide what they want from our own stocks. However there have been times when we have had no spare copies of particular issues. It would be of great assistance, therefore, if any readers ever become aware of any private collections of *Churchman* being disposed of in the future if they would kindly let the office know in time for them to be preserved for the benefit of future readers. Please write or telephone (tel. (0923) 235111) if you are ever able to help. Thank you.

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