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Book Reviews

...SO SEND I YOU A Study Guide to Mission **Roger Bowen**
London: SPCK 1996 248pp No Price ISBN 0-281-04939

Roger Bowen, the current Director of *Crosslinks* has produced a fascinating and thoroughly readable book examining the whole notion of mission. In his impressive handling of a wide range of source material, the author gently guides the reader through practically every contemporary issue facing Christians who desire to be faithful to the Great Commission. The book is equally divided into three parts.

The foundations of Christian mission are laid at the beginning of the book; historically, in terms of the *serial* expansion of the Christian faith throughout the globe, adapting to new and unpromising situations, and theologically, in terms of the nature of the Trinity, with God himself as a God of Mission, the Father *sending* the Son and the Spirit being *sent* by the Father and the Son. As God's people we too are caught up in this great movement. There then follows a biblical survey which considers the mission of God in the Old Testament and how Jesus saw his own work as presented in the writings of Mark and Luke. How mission is related to the eucharist and the kingdom of God are the subjects of two further chapters which bring the first section to a close.

Part two examines the relationship between mission and culture with some interesting historical and situational material which sheds valuable light on the problems and opportunities afforded by cultural diversity. Attention is also drawn to some of the pitfalls into which Christians have fallen in the past and which need to be carefully avoided in the future.The insights and limitations afforded by the church growth movement are also critically examined.

The third and final section of the book considers movements in mission today. There are sympathetic but by no means uncritical evaluations of both the 'Signs and Wonders' movement and 'Liberation Theology'. There is a thoughtful and creative consideration of urban mission and a careful weighing of what must be one of the most demanding issues of today: inter-faith relations. Each chapter is clearly and attractively set out and the text helpfully illustrated with photographs and diagrams. At the end of every chapter there are suggestions for further study.

To describe this volume as 'fascinating' is not without significance. What is particularly disturbing is the fact that beliefs which even ten years ago would have been more commonly associated with theological

liberalism are now being espoused by the director of what was *the* Anglican conservative evangelical missionary agency. Such a charge is a serious one and therefore must be substantiated. There are three particular areas which exhibit a serious theological drift in an unevangelical direction; the nature of the Gospel, the nature of the eucharist and the nature of salvation.

Firstly it is astonishing to find a book on mission omitting any definition of the Gospel that refers to Jesus as the sin-bearing substitute for sinners, whose gift of righteousness is received by faith. Instead we have evidence of 'existential contextualisation', that is, not only is the *form* in which the Good News is presented determined by the social context of the recipient, but so is the *content.* So Roger Bowen writes:

> Because of differences in culture and circumstances, people perceive the Gospel differently. A London student may see the good news as bringing peace in his heart and a purpose in life. An Indian Dalit (untouchable) will probably see the good news more as Justice and equality for him and his family (p 46).

He is even more explicit when speaking of Jesus' ministry:

> He (Jesus) did not limit His ministry or set priorities in it. Guided by the Spirit of God, He mixed up His ministry in ways which we must admit were very untidy... and His missionaries did the same. 'What is the connection between the Gospel and giving food to the hungry?' someone asked. The only answer to this question must be, 'If you are hungry, food *is* the Gospel, the Good News'. ...In other words, it must be *contextual.* The Gospel cannot be good news to the Dalits of India unless it offers them a way out of the social discrimination they suffer. The Gospel cannot be good news to an orphaned girl unless it offers love and a place to belong. The Gospel cannot be good news to black people unless it is also working for racial equality (p 64).

Several points need to be made in response. A distinction has to be observed between what people *perceive* the Gospel to be and what it actually is. It is assumed here that the key controlling factor is the perception of the people rather than the objective divine-given content which we find in Scripture. So while the way we present the Gospel to a London student would be different to the way it is presented to a Dalit, both must correspond in substance with the Gospel message as presented in Scripture if it is to be orthodox Christianity. As John Stott so rightly remarked at NEAC 2, 'The Gospel has not changed with the centuries... although its presentation may vary, its substance is the same.' It is difficult

to see how Roger Bowen could agree with that, especially when he says that to the hungry, food 'is the Good News' (note the use of the definite article).

The claim of Roger Bowen that Jesus did not set priorities in his ministry must be questioned. In response to Peter's implicit rebuke that Jesus should be healing, Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so that I can preach there also, That is why I have come' (Mark 1:38).

Roger Bowen's extravagant assertion that the Gospel offers 'ways out' of social discrimination or 'works for' racial equality also leads one to conclude that the apostles got it wrong. One is hard pressed to find in the New Testament any call for slaves to be released as a prerequisite to proclaiming the Gospel of 'Christ crucified'. This does not mean that there are not certain entailments of the Gospel which need to be worked out, but these are not the essential components. A distinction can be made between redemption *from* circumstances and redemption *in* circumstances. Roger Bowen collapses the latter into the former.

In the author's treatment of the eucharist we see a further drift away from biblical moorings. Not only is there an approval of eucharistic liturgies which speak of social and political justice and care of the environment (p 54) which is far removed from the Lord's words of institution to 'do this in rememberance of me', but there is also the embracing of the Catholic notion that at the eucharist the church participates in Christ's own self-offering to the Father:

> Because Christ's death is also our death (Rom 6:4,5), and we are united to Him by His Spirit, therefore when Christ consecrates and offers Himself to the Father, we who belong to Him, share in that action. Thus the whole Church takes part in the self-offering of Christ to the Father (p 50).

This ignores the fact that the writers of the New Testament *never* countenance the idea of our offering of thanksgiving as being united with Christ's offering on the cross. Our lives may be lovingly and obediently offered *like* Christ (Eph 5:2), *through* Christ (1 Pet 2:5) or *for* Christ (2 Cor 5:14ff) but never *in* or *with* Christ for the simple reason that his offering on our behalf is qualitatively different from ours. The use of such language is misleading and dangerous. For such is our fallen nature that to speak of our offering with Christ invariably leads to seeing our action as being in some way meritorious. Synergism is never far away. Roger Bowen himself recognizes this danger, but does not draw the obvious inference that such participatory language should be avoided altogether.

In turning to the nature of salvation and other religions, Roger Bowen is clearly an inclusivist. He attempts to draw a direct line from those in the Bible like Abraham and the Wise Men who 'had a partial understanding of Christ' (p 212), to those in other religions who might be described as 'informationally BC'. So he writes:

> He (Abraham) lived BC, and believed the special revelation that God had given him without the help of Jesus. Abraham's faith was not very different from the faith of anyone who has responded to a special message from God. Some of the people who respond may never have heard of Christ at all... Such people are BC like Abraham, and their faith may be as authentic as his (p 222).

He thus allows that there is special revelation outside the Christian faith:

> We need permission *from ourselves* that we really can be faithful to Christ as the only Saviour and Lord, at the same time as we are open to receive revelations of God in places where Christ is confessed in different ways, or not confessed at all (p 216).

The precarious nature of this inclusivist position is exhibited in the confused contradictions which we see when we place the following two statements side by side:

> Christ is the only means of redemption. God did not pass over the sins of past believers like Abraham because he had forgotten to be just but because He would deal with them in Justice in the death of His Son (Rom 3:25). The same must be true of other believers, although they are ignorant of Christ (p 222)

and, 'As far as we know, no one can recognize and respond to God's love except through hearing about Jesus' (p 224). But it must be protested that the Bible is not simply concerned with people having 'faith' or being 'believers' in some ill-defined sense of believing in 'God' or some 'Other', it is the object of their faith that matters and what they believe in. Thus there must be conceptual content to that faith. People cannot be designated 'believers' if they are 'ignorant of Christ', they only *become* believers when they respond to the message which has the person and work of Christ as its content. This is clearly seen in the case of Cornelius which the author takes as an example of God accepting people who do not have explicit faith in Christ (p 228). Simply to refer to Acts 10:34 as indicating God's saving acceptance of those outside the Christian faith is most misleading if it is not placed in its proper context. The point of Peter's comment in context is that in principle people from outside the Jewish race are acceptable to God. In the light of his threefold vision of the sheet, Peter

not only has *permission* to preach the Gospel to folk other than Jews he has an *obligation* to do so – that is why he was there. It is as he is articulating the Gospel that the Holy Spirit falls upon the hearers and their conversion is then recognized in baptism. There is no suggestion at all that Cornelius was a '*saved believer*' while not being a '*Christian believer*' before he heard the Gospel.

Roger Bowen also falls into the inclusivist trap of assuming that whenever the term 'god' is employed it is used univocally:

> Some Christians and Muslims say that Allah is quite different from the God of the Bible, but they do not offer any evidence for this statement. How can this be so?... Even though there are differences in understanding, most of the 99 beautiful names of Allah in Islam can be accepted by Christians (p 229).

But it is precisely the differences that matter. Those '99 beautiful names' do not stand in isolation. They are an integral part of a whole nexus of concepts, affirmations and denials relating to the nature of God and the nature and conditions of salvation which constitute different belief systems. Despite the commonalities, when the names are related to these belief systems the differences are so significant that one cannot help but conclude that they refer to rival understandings of God. Consider what would have happened in the time of Elijah had the name Baal (Lord) been used of Yahweh (LORD).

Given the above, we may be distressed but perhaps not so surprised to find an incipient universalism in this book. Speaking of Christians we read:

> We already enjoy the blessing of liberation from bondage (Rom 8:19-23) and in due time we shall bring this blessing to the whole creation of which we are a part – the first fruits. If this is true of creation, could it be equally true of all human beings? Mercy is God's chief characteristic, and if He has shown mercy to some, both Jews and Gentiles, the visible first fruits, must he not intend eventually to show the same mercy to all (Rom 11:28-32, James 1:18)? But if God shows mercy, he does *not* show it because people are *religious* but because they are *human*. This is the basis on which we ought to meet people of other faiths. It is also the basis of our hope that they too are not outside the scope of God's mercy for ever (p 225).

Here we not only have a flagrant disregard of those Scriptures which speak of judgment and final separation, but a mischievous extension of texts such as Romans 11, to imply something the wider context forbids.

One therefore wonders whether this can legitimately be considered *evangelical* methodology at all.

The evangelist John Chapman said:

> If the Bible is sufficient, is it true? Does it speak to our age? Or does it only speak to another age and obliquely today? If you arrive by a new method at what twenty years ago was pure liberalism, then I'm saying you are a liberal. That's exactly what you are. It's just that you've done it by a clever route.

That would be a most apposite comment on this entire volume. This is not to deny that there is much in it that is good and useful, it is simply that the net effect is to take us away from the Bible's own testimony.

MELVIN TINKER

THE NEW WOMEN INCLUDED: A Book of Services and Prayers
The St Hilda Community
London: SPCK 1996 96pp £10.99 pb ISBN 0 281 04950 5

Writing at the close of the sixteenth century Richard Hooker in his *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* (5.62.2) approvingly quotes Clement who argues that female priesthood 'is a part of the Grecians' impiety, which for the service of women goddesses have women priests'. This connection between a female priesthood and the radical pagan theology that both underpins and drives it is strikingly illustrated by this revised and updated version of the 1991 edition *Women Included.* Although many have been unable to see the correlation between female presbyteral ministry and the reshaping of the Christian faith that would follow, it is to be hoped that many would buy this book if only to see this close relationship vividly displayed. One does not have to go beyond the initial first section of opening prayers to read of a pregnant God giving birth 'out of the womb of fertile divinity' to 'our mother the earth' who is then, along with her 'sister' the sea, praised for 'giving birth, energy, reaching out, touching me lovingly'. That creation and 'god' are so identified as to become indistinguishable is the inevitable outcome of a theology that intimately ties 'god' into the birthing of creation. The biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is here conveniently forgotten with disastrous results.

This is only one of the many theological oddities that litter this book. Apart from a ravaged doctrine of creation there seems to be little understanding of the atonement. Jesus figures not so much as our Saviour from sin, death and destruction but as one in whose incarnation time and eternity met, so making him able to teach us 'to take joy in the earth and

the heavens' so that we might be free to 'rejoice in our mortality and its loves, and sing aloud when our soul reaches out for the stars, for by both we prove we are God's children'. According to the St Hilda Community, Christian assurance rests not on the Word of God in Scripture pointing to the Cross but on our soul's own ability to transcend itself.

I could go on. Suffice it to say that this is an important book and deserves to be read if only because it should awaken the complacent and indifferent to the radical nature of the feminist theology that relentlessly drove the Church of England towards November 11, 1992.

NIGEL ATKINSON

STRAIGHT AND NARROW? **Thomas E Schmidt**
Leicester: IVP 1995 240pp £8.00 pb ISBN 0-85111-157-2

This book by an American New Testament scholar is a major contribution to the homosexuality debate. The sensitive nature of this subject and the powerful forces promoting gay issues often make it difficult to rescue this debate out of the realm of emotive language and mutual accusation. Schmidt, however, is gracious and compassionate throughout, never losing sight of the human struggles behind the controversy. He opens with reflection on homosexual people he has known and cared for; he returns several times to his own heterosexual fallenness; he closes the book with a pastoral letter to an imaginary homosexual friend. At the same time, his moral reasoning argues incisively against the view that on this issue the Bible is either wrong, culturally outdated, or misunderstood.

The Gay Celebration of November 1996 in Southwark Cathedral, with its assumptions about the naturalness and rightness of gay sex, when brought to the bar of Schmidt's evidence, is found to be at best sub-Christian. Schmidt exposes the fact that the real factors in the debate are cultural. The values of our culture now rest on tolerance more than on truth; homosexuality is no longer seen as a moral issue but as a civil rights one; individual taste and preference have become the chief arbiters of personal morality. In order to put things on a more objective footing, Schmidt demonstrates the rationality, consistency and compassion of the biblical position, as traditionally understood, promoting a healthy lifestyle and a stable society which are both undermined by the revisionist agenda.

His exegesis of the biblical material is thorough and scholarly. He roots it all in the Genesis basis for heterosexual marriage. He argues, unfashionably but convincingly, that all the texts, including the Sodom passages and the Levitical legislation, are relevant to the formation of a genuinely Christian ethic today. Schmidt's re-examination of the biblical

material is worth reading whatever views one may espouse personally. He acknowledges that our reason and experience affect our understanding but asserts that the dialogue between human perception and divine revelation is not a conversation between equals. He has read the medical and psychological literature, which he summarizes briefly (with extensive footnotes). He catalogues the health risks (not just AIDS/HIV/STD) which attach to homosexual acts. This offers a powerful, natural law argument for the traditional Christian position. His chapter, 'The Price of Love' is certainly not for the squeamish.

Schmidt enters the nature/nurture debate, showing how vested interests and premature conclusions have fogged the discussion and misled public perception. He reserves an open and optimistic view of possible changes in sexual orientation.

Two minor complaints: the American text has not been adapted for the British scene, in which, for example, research among the San Francisco gay community may appear less relevant; and the book may fall between the two stools of not being thorough as an academic volume (despite extensive footnotes) and of not being written at a sufficiently accessible level for much of the popular market. It is demanding reading. These, however, are quibbles compared with the overall contribution Schmidt has brought to the subject. Indeed, his carefully worked volume is going to be an indispensable resource for all caught up in the continuing discussion.

STEVE WILCOCKSON

JESUS OF THE APOCALYPSE: The Life of Jesus after the Crucifixion Barbara Thiering
London: Doubleday 1996 462pp £16.99 hb ISBN 0385 405596

This book by Barbara Thiering clearly belongs in the 'conspiracy theory' school of writing. For Thiering, 'the truth is out there', obscured by ignorance and cover-ups, and its recovery (by her) 'is the result of the application of a newly discovered technique, suggested by the Dead Sea Scrolls, that may be called the pesher technique' (p ix). The result, however, is more *X-files* than exegesis.

Part One gives 'The History' of the Christian movement according to Thiering. Part Two (revealingly) is headed 'The Insider's Knowledge'. Part Three contains first 'The Lexicon' which explains the hidden meaning of the vocabulary of Revelation. The word 'teeth', for example, Thiering renders as 'Gentile ministers' – and this is one of the less surprising suggestions. The second section of Part Three is 'The Pesher' where Thiering gives her translation of the text of Revelation and then its true

meaning. The flavour of this may be gained from her rendering of Rev 1:1 as follows:

> *A revealing of Jesus Christ, which gave to him the God, to show to the slaves of him (God) the things which must come about shortly. And he (God) has given a sign, having sent from through the angel of him (God) to the slave of him (God), John.*

The 'pesher' is then given as:

> A public appearance of Jesus Christ, by special permission of Matthew Annas, to inform Agrippa of the new calendar with its primary feast at Pentecost. Matthew has granted a promotion, sending his chief celibate to appoint the Herodian Gentile missionary John as seer in the Ephesus congregation.

In order to understand this, it is important to realize that when Thiering refers to 'a public appearance of Jesus' she means the human Jesus who, having been crucified, was revived by Simon Magus (who had been crucified alongside him), subsequently went on to divorce Mary Magdalene and marry the Lydia of Acts 16, and 'probably died in Rome' (a rare admission of uncertainty by Thiering) in 70 AD. Thiering has reconstructed the history of Christianity as a Jewish revival movement started by Herod the Great and subsequently powered by secret groups and individuals. Revelation, for her, is simply a coded but phenomenally precise description of key events in that movement, compiled by four different authors between 44 and 114 AD. (Her subtitle, however, is misleading – her version of Revelation primarily concerns the life of the church, two parts of it having been written after Jesus' actual death.)

A detailed critique of this hypothesis is beyond the scope of this reviewer since it would require a close reading of her text and a familiarity with the history of the period similar to that clearly possessed by Thiering herself. Nevertheless, it is still possible to justify a critical response. First, I find myself asking what motivated Thiering's book. It is clearly not aimed at the scholarly community. The quotes on the cover 'blurb' significantly all come from magazines or newspapers: *The Times*, *Gisborne Herald*, etc. *The Australian Magazine* is quoted saying, 'This massive work of courage and conviction throws much of what the Church teaches out the stained-glass window' – which is, of course, what many people want to do. The book thus seems to fit into the 'popular de-bunking' category, aimed at the mass market.

Nor is the book presented in a scholarly fashion. The footnotes are not substantial and, apart from ancient texts, the bibliography lists precisely

sixteen books, one of which is Thiering's own and only three of which are post-1980. Moreover, Thiering's presentation of evidence is, at least in some places, 'nuanced'. The description of the *Nag Hammadi* Gospel of Philip, known since 1945, as 'newly discovered' seems to owe more to the desire to sound radical than to careful expression. Similarly, she blithely describes the Damascus Document of the Dead Sea Scrolls as written just after 50 AD (p 283), whereas Geza Verrnes' *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1987), to which she refers in the bibliography, gives the date as 'about 100 BC' (p 81). Of course, Thiering may have reasons for her assertion, but the fact that she makes no reference to this substantial difference of opinion with one of her own sources lessens the sense that she is arguing a case and heightens the lack of confidence one feels overall.

Readers will begin to appreciate the difficulty of assessing Thiering's work. Certainly there is nothing here for the preacher or the Christian student of the Bible. Finally, however, it suffers the weakness of so many conspiracy theories – the depth of conspiracy it presumes belies the ease with which the plot is apparently uncovered. If Thiering is right then the real 'unexplained mystery' – as her bibliography reveals – is why no one else suspected the truth.

JOHN RICHARDSON

PRACTISING COMMUNITY: The Task of the Local Church
Robin Greenwood
London: SPCK 1996 124pp £8.99 pb ISBN 0 281 04916 5

Robin Greenwood is the author of *Transforming Priesthood: A New Theology of Mission and Ministry* (London: SPCK 1994) which is a 'set text' in the diocese of Chelmsford where he is the Ministerial Development Officer. His latest book is also concerned with the 'new' – new strategies for ministry and a new ecclesiology to underpin them. Certainly Greenwood is asking the right questions. If we are honest, we will admit that our ecclesiology is, in the words of the Puritans, 'but halfly reformed'. However, though we may applaud Greenwood's efforts, there is much about his present analysis (the new is always open to revision) which the evangelical reader will find frustrating.

At the heart of Greenwood's proposals for ministry strategy is 'Local Ministry' which he introduces with the promise that 'precisely what I mean by this ... I will discuss as the argument unfolds'. Unfortunately, by the end of the book I am not sure this has been fulfilled, though he seems to have in mind a locally selected team of clergy and laity related to a supra-parochial area.

His other key concept is an 'eschatological-trinitarian ecclesiology', where the church and its structures are defined with reference to God's future for the world and the inner relationships of the Trinity. It is interesting to see how the Trinity has been (to use Greenwood's own term) 'rediscovered' by everyone today. Those who have never lost it may feel a certain cynicism in seeing a doctrine that was once reviled for obscurantism being treated as a fashion accessory in some quarters, though in fairness Greenwood does not fall into that category. His Trinitarianism is rooted in the Cappadocian Fathers and rightly stresses *perichoresis* as the model for relational structures in the church (though his definition of that term seems to have modified slightly since his earlier work). Nevertheless, I am not sure that he holds to an equally rigorous incarnational theology which would imply the absolute uniqueness and revelatory finality of Christ.

Regrettably, Greenwood's eschatology is less well-defined than his Trinitarianism. I know from personal conversation, and it comes through in this book, that Greenwood has an uncertain grasp of exactly when and how God's purposes for the world will be achieved and how this relates to, for example, the entropic end of the Universe. His concept of the Kingdom of God seems to be more of a gradual improvement into an indefinite future than a sudden inauguration into a new creation. But does the world 'become' the Kingdom of God and then merely peter out as a result of physical processes? And if so, is there anything to follow?

It is my observation that missiology follows eschatology, and a 'weak' eschatology seems, in Greenwood's case, to have led to a weak doctrine of mission. The role of the church is more one of modelling the new relationships of the Kingdom than declaring a message which saves from the coming wrath. And as with many similar analyses, in Greenwood's presentation God's mission in the world is somewhat detached from the function of the church as the means of that mission. This contrasts badly with, for example, the view expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 of the church's ambassadorial ministry to the world.

In the light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that though Greenwood makes frequent references to 'the word', the core of his practical ecclesiology is the eucharist, with the priest as the focal person in it, as an event which creates the community referred to in his title. In this respect, I found his book peculiarly conservative in all the wrong places. He rightly questions many of the present power structures in the church, and especially the tendency of the new incumbent to overthrow the existing ethos of a parish church. I also agreed with his insistence that the local congregation is a manifestation of the *whole* church rather than just being *part* of the whole. Nevertheless, one has the impression that his new

'eschatological-trinitarian' community will be as liturgically centred as the old one. Moreover, his emphasis on the eucharist overlooks the Ordinal's stress on Scripture as the means of building that community.

In the same vein, I am also uneasy about Greenwood's tendency to detach the work of the Spirit from the word of Scripture. For Greenwood, the Spirit is essentially the one leading us into what is new, on the basis of a common but doubtful appeal to John 16:13 (p 45). How the Spirit does this, however, is never fully treated and in this sense, I feel that Greenwood is ultimately a Charismatic. Certainly his book betrays an underlying nervousness about Evangelicals. Comments about churches which are congregationalist, inward looking, isolated and overly concerned with 'purity of doctrine' abound and, though I would insist the hat does not fit, I am sure where it is aimed.

Perhaps Greenwood's final difficulty, however, as with many documents coming from the Anglican 'centre', is his commitment to Anglicanism as a *confessional* stance. As a result, his attempt to break the mould does not quite succeed. It is a point often overlooked, and one which Evangelicals would do well to challenge, that the Church of England increasingly defines itself historically rather than theologically. Thus Greenwood is only half right when he says 'to resist lay presidency is about an Anglican theology of church' (p 107). Actually, it is more about an Anglican history of theology. Hence those who advocate lay presidency are accused not of heresy but of being 'un-Anglican', and their opponents show them not the faggots but the door – as if lay celebration would be right if you just changed denominations. However, it is exactly *this* outlook which is stifling our ecclesiological development.

Greenwood's book is a bold attempt – or at least an attempt to be bold. It is by no means all bad, and it is at its best and boldest when closest to orthodox theology or furthest from Anglican tradition. I must say, however, that at almost £9 it is somewhat expensive for the reader whose analysis already begins from an orthodox and non-traditional viewpoint.

JOHN RICHARDSON

ARCHETYPAL HERESY: Arianism through the Centuries
Maurice Wiles
Oxford: Clarendon (University) Press 1996 204pp £30 hb
ISBN 0198269277

This is a curious book from the Regius Professor of Divinity Emeritus at Oxford. Those with long memories will recall that Professor Wiles gained some notoriety in the 1970s for his unorthodox views, and so it will come

as no surprise to discover that he has a certain affinity for Arianism. The book itself owes its origin, not to Arius, but to his curiosity about those eighteenth-century English scholars and divines who doubted or denied Trinitarianism. Isaac Newton is certainly the best-known of these, but there were others like William Whiston and Samuel Clarke who have faded into obscurity. Professor Wiles does a good job of uncovering their forgotten careers and writings, and in placing them in relation to Socinianism, which many people, then as now, have imagined is the same thing. But, as Professor Wiles points out, the Socinians believed that there could be only one supreme being and that Jesus was a man, whereas the Arians believed that although there was only one God (the Father), the Son was a divine being entitled to be worshipped as Lord. It is this position which we find in the eighteenth century, alongside Socinianism of course, and which Professor Wiles elucidates for us.

All of this is in the fourth chapter, which takes up more than half the book and must be regarded as its core. The earlier chapters deal with classical Arianism, putting special emphasis on its demise. Professor Wiles notes how difficult it is to define Arianism with any accuracy, and this first chapter is an important warning to anyone who is inclined to adopt doctrinal labels too readily. It was obviously a designation invented by its opponents, and is therefore subject to inaccuracy, as the author does not fail to point out. Athanasius, in particular, was not overly inclined to be fair in his attacks, and it is easy to forget just how 'mainstream' Arius and his immediate entourage must have appeared to their contemporaries.

The two chapters which deal with the death of ancient Arianism are less satisfactory. First of all, it is not clear what we are talking about. As a theological position, Arianism was condemned at the first council of Constantinople in 381 and it never re-emerged as a serious contender at that level. Politically however, it had already been adopted by the barbarian Goths who subsequently invaded the western half of the Roman Empire. There, it was not really overcome until the submission of the Visigoths to catholic Christianity at the third council of Toledo (in 589). Were there Arians after that? Professor Wiles believes that there were, and he may be right in a sense, but it hardly matters. To take a modern example, the Muggletonians were a seventeenth-century sect which had lost all importance by 1660 at the latest, although the last Muggletonian died as recently as 1979. Does this mean that Muggletonianism deserves a place in nineteenth or twentieth-century Church history? Obviously not. It is the same with Arianism. Turning up the odd one in Italy or Transylvania during the Middle Ages makes no difference to the overall picture; classical Arianism was dead and buried by 600 at the latest, and there was no continuity between it and what happened after the Reformation.

The third chapter deals with the very dated beliefs of Louis Maimbourg, a seventeenth-century Jesuit who can best be described as an unreliable Church historian. What he has to do with anything in this book is hard to see, other than that Professor Wiles has obviously read him and regards him as an easy target (which he is). The last chapter is an evaluation of four 'modern' British students of classical Arianism, two from the last century and two from this one. The first, of course, is John Henry Newman, whose views on Arianism are predictable and usually quite misguided. The fact that Newman believed that Protestants were Arians, Anglicans were semi-Arians and Roman Catholics were the only 'orthodox' (in the Athanasian sense) ought to persuade us that Newman is best returned to the shelf without further ado. H M Gwatkin, who refuted much of Newman, was infinitely more satisfactory. He combined scrupulous scholarship with genuine orthodox faith in the best Anglican tradition and it is not surprising that his work remained the standard treatment in English for more than a century.

More recently, the subject has been tackled by Rowan Williams and the late R P C Hanson, and Professor Wiles shares his thoughts on their work. It is still too early to say whether they will last, but it is clear that they are products of their time as much as Newman and Gwatkin were. Rowan Williams, in particular, is portrayed as a man trying to hold together the academic and the ecclesiastical, and he interprets the Arian controversy accordingly. Arius was the academic and Athanasius was the cleric! This seems a little too neat to be acceptable, and perhaps Bishop Williams (as he now is) will offer a reply to this thesis about him.

In conclusion therefore, this book is to be read for its first and fourth chapters, which are truly illuminating, and which take up about three-quarters of the entire book. The rest may be regarded as filler of varying quality which could have been omitted without serious loss to the overall presentation.

GERALD BRAY

SCIENCE AND THE NEW AGE CHALLENGE **Ernest Lucas**
Leicester: IVP (Apollos) 1996 190pp £10.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-440-7

The New Age movement, like several other ingredients of the contemporary outlook, is very mixed-up in its loyalties. On the one hand it challenges the idea that 'science is the defining model of truth'; on the other hand some of its sympathizers are only too ready to enlist the support of science's more prestigious recent insights to bolster their own case. In this well-argued book Dr Ernest Lucas deals comprehensively and fairly with both sides of the matter. He is well-qualified to do so, having been a research chemist before he turned to biblical studies. He notes in

his brief Introduction that when he began working at The Institute for Contemporary Christianity in London in 1986 the term 'New Age' was virtually unknown over here; but in the last five years he has noticed the theology sections in three large academic bookshops he frequents shrinking and being overtaken by New Age shelves. It is therefore a teaching the biblical conservative needs to take seriously .

Dr Lucas has researched his subject well, and presents his conclusions in as user-friendly a way as he can. He first gives a general account of what the Movement is all about. It is a 'melting-pot' of new and old ideas from both East and West, driven by a sense of the 'spiritual aridity' of western secularism. It sets little store by rational logic, much more by intuition and feeling. A few physicists, struck by the strangeness of the world of Einstein and Heisenberg, have tried to link this with the mysticism of the Far East: Fritjof Capra (*The Tao of Physics*) and Gary Zukev (*The Dancing Wu Li Masters*) are two examples familiar to many. Most physicists would strongly reject any connection, and the author quotes a number of authorities to this end. (It seems to your reviewer that a far better case could be made out for a link with biblical doctrine – for instance with Deut 29:29; Eccles 3:11; 8:17; Rom 11:33) . Dr Lucas then turns to Teilhard de Chardin's thought and critically discusses his major work, *The Phenomenon of Man*. This does not exhaust the contribution of biology to the New Age ethos however: biologists Rupert Sheldrake and James Lovelock have started other trains of thought that the Movement has found useful. 'Morphogenesis' is the subject of one. It is a great mystery how cells in the developing embryo know exactly in what direction they are to differentiate, what organ they are to form part of – the liver, the connective tissue, or something quite different. Sheldrake postulates mysterious pre-existing things called 'morphogenetic fields' which function to convey the necessary information for them to know this; but very few biologists (or physicists!) believe in them. It is of course again their very *mystery* that attracts New Agers. Lovelock in his turn has put forward the idea that the whole planet Earth should itself be regarded as a living organism, even in a sense an intelligent one. This is the *Gaia Hypothesis* (the name being chosen from Greek mythology as Gaia was the earth consort of Uranus, the sky god). Again, all this fits in well with New Age ethos; but it can hardly be taken justifiably to mean that science lends it conspicuous support.

On a rather different tack Lucas refers to the influential paper of 1967 by Lynn White in which he laid the blame for our ecological crisis on the Judeo-Christian faith, ie on Gen 1:26. (Although I have not read this paper I suspect that it is one more example of the haste with which superficial study of the Bible has led to entirely unwarranted conclusions.) The whole matter is well discussed in a chapter *Ecology and New Age Spirituality*,

followed by one on *Green Christianity*. There is a final chapter on *Conclusions* – about Science, God, Process Thought and Trinitarian Theology.

Altogether this is a very welcome treatment of an important contemporary concern. It is judicious, temperate, comprehensive, informative and well-referenced. It is a book to be recommended to thoughtful and well-educated sympathizers. There are fourteen pages of Notes; a Bibliography of five; and a general Index of five.

DOUGLAS C SPANNER

NEW BIBLE DICTIONARY
I H Marshall A R Millard J I Packer D J Wiseman edd
Leicester: IVP 1996 1298pp £34.99 hb ISBN 0-85110-659-5

This is the third edition of a highly esteemed product. Most readers will be familiar with the earlier versions, yet need to know that fifteen years after the second edition a new one has appeared. Comparing the latest one with the very first we find that many articles remain the same (eg 'Bible', 'Atonement'), yet where subjects have assumed greater importance with the passing of the years new entries have been commissioned (eg 'Woman'). There has also been extensive revision of the bibliographies. The layout is in general more useful and pleasing to the eye. The publisher and editors are to be congratulated on their continued achievement in this fine reference work.

MARK BURKILL

PEOPLES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WORLD
A J Hoerth G L Mattingley E M Yamauchi edd
Cambridge: Lutterworth Press 1996 400pp £22.50 hb ISBN 0 7188 2953 0

This book is a new version of an earlier idea. In 1973 D J Wiseman edited *Peoples of Old Testament Times* in which he surveyed what was known of the history and culture of the societies that interacted with ancient Israel. Inevitably there have been developments in our understanding of these peoples since then which give scope for this present volume.

There are thirteen peoples covered in the book. They are the obvious ones about which a reader of the Bible would wish to know. The only people group not mentioned in the Bible is that of the Sumerians. However the author of that chapter points out that their influence on ancient Israel as well as on the Near East in general is fundamental. Presumably the Greeks have been left out because it was felt that information on them was readily available elsewhere.

In each chapter the history and cultural remains of the particular people group are assessed and presented in a comprehensible form. Particular attention is paid to information about religious beliefs and practices. Every chapter concludes with a bibliography and guidance for further reading. The editors have done a good job of balancing the contributions to make a consistent whole. This is not an easy task since the wealth of information available on the Egyptians is in stark contrast to that on the elusive Edomites.

Some of the authors do not appear to believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, but they are certainly conservative in their general attitude to the reliability of the biblical text. The end result is a work which can be highly recommended to anyone who seeks an introductory survey of the background to the Old Testament.

MARK BURKILL

THE GOULBURN NORWICH DIARIES **Noel Henderson ed**
Norwich: Canterbury Press 1996 432pp £11.95 pb ISBN 1-85311-125-2

E M Goulburn (1818-1897), dean of Norwich, was an old-fashioned High Churchman in the period when the High Church party was being swallowed up by Tractarianism. He still cherished the Caroline blend of moderate Protestant doctrine and strict Anglican practice at a time when it was becoming unfashionable, and, being a scholar and a writer, his convictions were often expressed in print. He was the friend and biographer of a still more eminent scholar and writer of the same school, J W Burgon (1813-1888), dean of Chichester. In their latter years they were often taken to be Evangelicals, but they declined the appellation, similar though their views were, on many matters, to Evangelical views.

Apart from works directly linked with Norwich, Goulburn wrote important treatises on eschatology, helpful books on the devotional life and useful commentaries on the Collects, the Gospels and other parts of the Prayer Book. He also edited one of the volumes written in reply to *Essays and Reviews* (1860), the manifesto of destructive biblical criticism in the Church of England.

Goulburn's life was written, fairly briefly, by his friend Berdmore Compton in 1899. But, during his twenty-three years as dean of Norwich, he kept a very ample manuscript diary, fourteen volumes of which still survive in the cathedral library, though other volumes have been lost. The present work is an edited text based on the surviving fourteen volumes. It has obviously been a labour of love to edit it, and the annotations and other illustrative matter are full and informative. The book throws a fascinating light not only on the dean and his family but

on the activities of the cathedral and on life in Victorian England generally. Prefixed are a brief biography and a list identifying the cathedral personnel mentioned, and among the appendices are a list of all Goulburn's writings, a family tree and an interesting note on contemporary costs and prices.

ROGER BECKWITH

MODELS FOR SCRIPTURE **John Goldingay**
Carlisle: Paternoster 1995 420pp £15.99 pb ISBN 0 85364 638 4

MODELS FOR INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE
Carlisle: Paternoster 1995 328pp £15.99 pb ISBN 0 85364 643 0

John Goldingay might be described as a reluctant conservative Evangelical. He has little good to say of those who share his convictions. He much prefers to quote liberal writers. He makes all the concessions to liberal views that he thinks he consistently can; and, not being a very rigorous thinker, these concessions are fairly far-reaching, especially on the matters of the date and authorship of the biblical books, and their factual accuracy. And yet, when all is done and said, he feels committed to what the biblical books teach.

These two volumes, as their titles suggest, are a pair. The shorter one depends on the longer, and interprets the Bible according to the categories mapped out in the other. Helpful, therefore, though many of the discussions in the shorter book can be, its overall validity and usefulness depends on the rightness or wrongness of what is argued in the longer book. And this is open to a good deal of doubt.

According to Goldingay, the conservative approach to biblical authority is vitiated by a failure to take seriously the different kinds of literature which the Bible contains. He analyses these kinds as four: witnessing tradition (found in narrative), authoritative canon (found in law), inspired word (found in prophecy) and experienced revelation (found in apocalypses, poetic books and epistles). The four kinds can be extended to the books of the other kinds, but only by 'stretching' them. Consequently, to argue that inspiration guarantees the accuracy of narrative is to 'stretch' what may be true of prophecy and to apply it to witnessing tradition, as if it were the same thing.

As Goldingay seems, by what he says on the canon of Scripture, to be generally convinced by the reviewer's book on the Old Testament canon, it may appear ungrateful to be critical of his own books. But they do seem to lay themselves open to the following queries:

(i) Since the author rejects scepticism about the content of the biblical books, is he consistent in being sceptical himself about their date and authorship?

(ii) Is not the fourth of his categories of biblical literature far too miscellaneous? 'Experienced revelation' is taken to embrace works as diverse as apocalypses, psalms, wisdom books and epistles. He might have done well to ponder the chapter on 'The Forms of Inspiration' in Kuyper's *Principles of Sacred Theology*, where some useful further distinctions are made.

(iii) As he admits, his categories of literature are 'stretched' in the Bible itself (and without any indication there that stretching is needed). Is it not by being excessively narrow in his definitions that he is driven to this idea of stretching? After all, there is a great deal of overlap between his types of literature, as found in the Bible, and if stretching is not needed, his main contention falls to the ground.

(iv) His discussion of inerrancy in chapter nineteen makes a number of useful observations, but ends up in agnosticism. While tending to deny historical and factual inerrancy, he makes the point himself that the historical and factual is intertwined in Scripture with the theological and moral, so they cannot be considered independently (p 272f).

(v) In the same chapter, the fact that many Christian writers over the centuries were able to combine the recognition of trivial factual mistakes in Scripture with assertions of Scripture's full authority is rather implausibly explained as evidence that they had not thought the matter through (p 265). More probably, such writers adopted the view that what is stated in general terms, or is mentioned in passing (without actually being affirmed), need not be treated as inerrant. Other explanations are possible, but this seems the most defensible. As the author himself notes, minute error is a preoccupation of the modern scientific age, but the biblical authors wrote in a different context.

ROGER BECKWITH

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER: An Evangelical Reassessment
Georg Huntemann
Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1996 342pp $16.99 pb
ISBN 0-8010-2070-0

All too often a book by one theologian about another goes to the bottom of the reading list and we decide to re-read the original. While we may frequently return to Bonhoeffer himself, this book is not one for the bottom shelf. It is a fascinating and most able study by someone who has

entered in depth into the thinking of that great German whom Hitler put to death. It is a remarkable summing up of the thought of a man who has been very controversial in evangelical circles. This is partly due to 'cheap grace' and partly because of John Robinson's populist work which has, in my view and in the view of Huntemann, grievously harmed the reputation of Bonhoeffer at least in the English speaking world.

It is of course perfectly true that an assessment of a writer is fraught with difficulties, not least because any writer may develop and change his views over the years. For this reason it has been fashionable to dismiss with faint praise *Life Together* and *The Cost of Discipleship* with the assertion that the *Ethics* (which in any case was never completed) and the *Letters and Papers from Prison* are the writer's more mature thoughts. Against this it has to be remembered that Bonhoeffer himself at the end of his life insisted that he did not repudiate any of *The Cost of Discipleship*. Further it is to be remembered that the *Letters* are really fragments of his thought and, in a large part, letters to a friend. We must also take into account the fact that in the theological milieu of his early years he was exposed almost entirely to the German school of theology which was dominated by men like Bultmann. Having said that, we have to recognize that Bultmann, the *bête noire* of many conservative theologians expressed the doctrine of justification by faith in a way as exciting as anyone has ever succeeded in doing. But Bonhoeffer went beyond those writers and was in fact far more radical in the correct sense of the word. It is significant that he was deeply affected by a great American 'fundamentalist' preacher, Dr McComb.

Gradually Bonhoeffer moved: 'Lutheran critics of his theology were right when they accused him of making a transition to a Reformed, Calvinistic type of Christianity'. But if we admit that he moved it must needs be that we cannot fit his work into a perfect consistency. In some ways I feel that this is the only fault in this excellent volume. Bonhoeffer states that 'religionless Christianity never means secularized Christianity'. In this he is calling us away from religion to the faith of the New Testament. 'Bonhoeffer took the Sermon on the Mount quite literally without any ifs, ands or buts', says Huntemann. That is why *The Cost of Discipleship* has such power. Attacks on that book because of what he writes about cheap grace forget that his main concern was to attack antinomianism.

This is a most interesting and important book. It reminds us that *Life Together* may be the best thing written on community living and that *The Cost of Discipleship* will probably be one of the most enduring legacies of our time.

JOHN PEARCE

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