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Book Reviews

CHURCH, STATE AND ESTABLISHMENT

Paul Avis

London: SPCK 2001 100pp £8.99 pb ISBN 0-281-05404-5

The interpenetration of church and state known as establishment has been under assault for over a century. Assent to the assumption underlying Christendom, that both are complementary divine instruments for the purposes of God's glory, was demolished by the Enlightenment. If religion was now tolerated at all in the 'public square', it was to be for its contribution to social morality rather than its proclamation of a universal gospel, an attitude typified in Clement Attlee's assessment of Christianity: 'Believe in the ethics....Can't believe the mumbo-jumbo.' More recently, popular pluralism's relativising of all other truth claims has further undermined support for Christianity's historic national position. The Prime Minister is reportedly in favour of disestablishment. In such a milieu, and with an active membership of less than one million, is the Church of England's position defensible or meaningful?

Paul Avis's answer is a strong, though qualified, 'yes' on both counts. Most of his book is a diagnosis of the origins and character of the establishment of the church in England. This provides the foundation for his concluding prescriptions. Here, he contends for a broader concept of a national church, still recognised by the state, but strengthened by embracing other denominations. Such a reassertion of the establishment of Christianity would bring five benefits. First, a Christian religious basis for national life would be upheld. Second, the church would retain a secure voice in national political debate. Third, its commitment to a 'mission' which is comprehensively national would be reinforced and underpinned by legal obligations. Fourth, it would embody what Avis calls the church's 'valuation of the broader communities' of society, and preserve it from 'sectarian tendencies'. Finally, it would associate Nonconformist churches, and even in some degree the Roman Catholic Church, with 'the national mission' of the church.

Avis is General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity. His description of the evolution of establishment, the ambiguity of the term, and its different historic forms in Britain and beyond is illuminating, readable and stimulating. The book helps to recover what he rightly calls the 'lost language of church

and state' by outlining the biblical, medieval, and Reformation inheritance, and summarising the thought of Hooker, Burke, Coleridge, Gladstone and Maurice, among others. Little of this is contentious, though the Protestant character of establishment is consistently downplayed.

There is, however, much which evangelical readers will dispute. For example, neither the parish nor the local congregation are, for Avis, the 'normative unit' of the church; the church and its mission are more fully found in their diocesan and national manifestations. Mission is described as offering pastoral ministry and taking responsibility for the nation's spiritual welfare; the urgency of apostolic proclamation of Christ to a fallen world contributes little to this model. Nor does Avis answer many of the real questions which would face the reconstruction of establishment. Political acceptance of the need for agreed 'values', for example, is still accompanied by aversion to the idea that these should be identified as Christian.

Intimate historic involvement with society brings an established church many opportunities to proclaim Christ, if it is bold enough to seize them. Despite the disadvantages of establishment – scarcely mentioned by Avis, but not insignificant – the total separation of church and state would be symbolically and practically a loss. The prescriptions of this book rest on inadequate foundations. Anglican evangelicals need to continue to articulate a theologically robust alternative.

PETER ACKROYD

LIFE TOGETHER: FAMILY, SEXUALITY AND COMMUNITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND TODAY

Stephen C. Barton

Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001 250pp. pb £16.95 ISBN 0 567 08772 7

Stephen Barton lectures in New Testament at Durham University. This book is a collection of twelve essays, all previously published in scholarly journals or books between 1991 and 2000. The subject matter is only very loosely linked. The first five are about family and sexuality, the next six about the nature of Christian community, and the last about the interpretation of the New Testament. As a professional biblical scholar, Barton is fully conversant with his scholarly fields, although he quotes more from Rowan Williams, Adrian Thatcher (in his earlier work *Liberating*

Sex), Stanley Hauerwas and Nicholas Lash, than from those of a reformed or evangelical persuasion. His tone is mostly careful and guarded, almost as if he senses the critical eye of the guild of biblical scholars looking over his shoulder as he writes. In fact the essays have a very ‘preliminary’ feel, exploring Barton’s ideas of how the Bible ought to be read rather than giving much feel for his own conclusions in areas such as sexual ethics. It might be better entitled, ‘Reflections on biblical hermeneutics as they might begin to be applied to family, sexuality and Christian community’. Barton makes much of Nicholas Lash’s thesis that Scripture is there to be ‘performed’, rather as an orchestral work; but he gives us little hint of what he thinks such ‘performance’ might mean in practice. I suspect much of this is to be found in the Church of England Board for Social Responsibility Working Party paper “Something to Celebrate: Valuing Families in Church and Society” in which Barton’s theology is evident.

In chapter five he does make two theological proposals about sexual ethics. The first (which is now almost a commonplace in some circles) is that human sexuality (indeed all human desire for union) is primarily to be understood in terms of the relations of loving mutuality within the Holy Trinity; the second, that sexual behaviour is to be understood ‘not as a form of domination or coercion, but as an expression of a theology of play grounded on grace’ (p. 79); what this latter seems to mean is that sin in the sexual sphere is confined to the abuse of power, that sexual behaviour is sinful only insofar as it partakes (even partially) of the character of rape. It is hard to know where in the biblical testimony either of these assertions may be firmly supported; for instead of the former, speculative and uncontrolled theological proposal, we have the clear (and scandalously asymmetrical) biblical motif in which the LORD is the husband or bridegroom of his people who are his bride or wife; and the latter by-passes the massive biblical theme of the sexual faithfulness of one man for one woman, one woman for one man.

However, although neither Barton’s understanding of biblical authority nor his ethical conclusions (insofar as they can be discerned) are evangelical, he is also incisively and refreshingly critical of a variety of writers of a more liberal bent. I particularly appreciated his essay in chapter eleven, ‘Paul and the Limits of Tolerance’, which argues that to accuse the apostle of intolerance is to import into the debate categories utterly alien to his own time, categories indeed that only appear in contemporary debate because ‘tolerance’ has been

raised to a virtue in its own right. Chapter seven is a stimulating and balanced critique of the wide consensus that early Christianity may be spoken of in the language of sectarianism.

CHRISTOPHER ASH

CHRISTIANITY AND THE MAKING OF THE MODERN FAMILY

Rosemary Radford Ruether

London: SCM Press, 2001. 294pp. pb £15.95 ISBN 0 334 02840 X

This book makes no pretence at balance or scholarly reserve in its judgements. From the first page the author, a well-known feminist writer, makes it clear she is enlisting (selective) Scripture and history in support of a tirade against the North American 'Christian Right', as a strongly polemical contribution to the 'family values' debate. According to Ruether the 'Christian Right' claims that the 'order of Creation (divinely) mandates patriarchal hierarchy of men over women, Christians over non-Christians, rich over poor' (p. 206). (I do not claim to understand the other side of the Atlantic, but the supposed 'divine' grounds for the latter two hierarchies in any form intrigue me.)

As may be expected, her primary concern is not children or fathers, but wives. She writes, 'I intend to show that shifting ideologies involving the family and "family values" are generally coded messages about women and how they should behave in relation to men' (p. 5). A kind of male chauvinist conspiracy theory pervades the work.

Such biblical material as there is appears within chapter one. The way the Bible is handled does not inspire confidence. Take the claim that 'Luke says that those accounted worthy to attain to this future age (sc. the resurrection) will not marry in the present age' (Luke 20:35; p. 26). The proper place for this reading is in the exegetical curiosity cabinet; yet it appears with no endnote or qualification. Or on 1 Thessalonians 4:4f, which (apparently) teaches the men to have sex 'abstemiously without seeking sensual pleasure' (p. 30). Does it? It is highly unlikely that *en pathei epithumias* includes marital desire and delight within its scope of condemnation; or on 1 Corinthians 7:29, where (apparently) 'those who have wives should act as if they had none – meaning, they should practise sexual abstinence' (p. 31), a reading which makes Paul contradict vv. 2-5 of the same chapter. And, as usual in such works, it is necessary to read with emphasis the so-called 'anti-

family' teachings of Jesus and the genuine (*i.e.*, eschatologically expectant) Paul, and to assign (where possible) texts that reaffirm 'the family' to post-Pauline writers ('the deutero-Pauline strata that tried to reinstate the family of patriarchal slavocracy [*sic*]' p. 225). 'Pro-family' texts in the gospels (such as the Corban controversy) are ignored.

The history that follows is in places interesting, as a feminist's view of the development of North American culture. I was intrigued, for example, by portrait of the 'flapper co-ed' of the mid-1920s with her sexual liberation masking a real desire to find 'the right man' and settle down in marriage. But my problem is that after such tendentious handling of Scripture at the start, I can read the history only with the gravest suspicion. There is an unsupported dogmatism about Ruether's writing that rivals the most dyed-in-the-wool fundamentalist. This is especially true in the concluding chapter with its relentless litany of demands for the church blessing of same sex unions, pre-marital sex (through 'sexual friendship covenants' [pp. 215-7], with temporary vows and mandatory contraception – hardly a recipe for fear-free sex) and divorce.

There is a need for an informed biblical critique to be offered of the 'Christian Right' focussing on idolatry of the nuclear family. I suspect some of it is found in the writings of Stanley Hauerwas (for example, *A Community of Character*) and Rodney Clapp (*Families at the Crossroads*). It is not to be found in this book. There is also much to affirm in the feminist movement; but not much in this book. I cannot recommend it.

The book has also not been well edited (*e.g.*, 'transcendence', p. 40; 'Dade Country' for 'Dade County' p. 171; 'choice to being with' for 'choice to begin with' p. 186; 'ecojustice feminist' for 'ecofeminist justice', p. 207, I assume; 'middle' p. 209; 'demominations' p. 224; above all, p. 19, the destruction of the Temple in AD 76!).

CHRISTOPHER ASH

A BRIEF GUIDE TO BELIEFS

Linda Edwards

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001

xiv + 578pp pb

ISBN 0-664-22259-5

This book serves as a sort of 'Enquire Within Upon Everything' in the field of

ideas, theologies, mysteries and movements. It begins with a series of short chapters dealing with such matters as Post modernism and the Challenge to Religion, Science and Religion, and the Problem of Evil and Suffering. Eight key aspects of religion are examined. Twelve major religions are dealt with in depth. The treatment of Islam is silent about Mohamed's cruelty, and about the politically convenient nature of many of the Qu'ranic revelations. The section on Christianity shows the influence of feminist theology and of general liberalism. Seven 'alternative and indigenous' religions are covered, before we are treated to a lengthy section which supplies a brief history of Christianity. Apparently John Knox was chaplain to Edward IV (p. 356)! The section on Protestantism concentrates on Arminianism. The remaining sections deal with alternative Christian movements (the cults), the occult, and humanism. There is a lengthy bibliography, a helpful glossary, and a very full index.

It is inevitable in a book of this nature that the author will fail to please all of the people all of the time. Doubtless there will be many who will wish to correct various short-comings. However, it is very unlikely that anyone will fail to be impressed by the extent of Mrs. Edwards' knowledge, nor by the fact that she can communicate complex thought developments in a straightforward manner. The fact that she has already written a book on philosophy is undoubtedly a help in this. Anyone who needs to have access to facts about a whole host of religions and movements will find this a valuable resource. Anyone who wants to make a study of a particular religion will find this book a good starting-point. The book is available directly from the publishers at www.wjkbooks.com for \$19.95 plus postage.

EDWARD J. MALCOLM

ISAIAH – A COMMENTARY

Brevard S. Childs

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001 xx + 555pp £35 hb

ISBN 0-664-22143-2

This new commentary on Isaiah is part of the Old Testament Library. The other titles cover almost every Old Testament book, a few more than once. Isaiah is already dealt with in a three volume set by two different authors. Names such as von Rad, Kaiser, Westermann and Eichrodt demonstrate the generally liberal nature of the series.

Childs offers a critical commentary, taking note of recent developments in Isaianic studies, and not always agreeing with them. While he holds to the three-fold division of the book he is not simplistic in his understanding of how those divisions are said to have come about. All the while, his interest is in preserving the unity of the book as a literary whole, rather than in seeing it fragmented and devalued by redaction criticism. His reason for so doing is theological. He says, ‘...as a Christian interpreter, I confess with the church that the Old and New Testaments, in their distinct canonical forms, together form a theological whole’ (p. 4f). He acknowledges the impossibility of adequately dealing with the New Testament in this volume, but notes that it needs to be done.

Isaiah is broken up into its three critical sections, and each section is further subdivided. These smaller divisions are then treated in sections of varying length. The pattern is to begin by providing Child’s own translation of the Hebrew of the relevant section, with necessary comment upon that translation as appropriate. A select bibliography then follows. He deals with form, structure, dating and content under one heading, then exposition under another. Other sections may be added as required. The exposition divides the section further, and deals mainly with themes, while only occasionally looking closely at individual verses, sentences, and clauses.

The messianic element is given reasonable prominence, though not always, perhaps, as much prominence as the large number of New Testament allusions would require. The oracle concerning the birth of Immanuel (7:10-17), is treated as messianic and, since this alone can be stated with certainty, questions over the identity of the mother, and the exact role this sign is to play in the life of the nation, are to be set aside as idle speculation. His treatment of the Servant Song of 52:13-53:12 is very good. He begins by saying that the language demands that this refers to an actual, historical person, but then shows that the emphasis on the rejection of this person by the nation points to something far bigger, for it is closer to the innocent sufferer revealed in the Psalter (Pss. 22:6-7, 88:8). Thus the glory of Isaiah is never lost sight of, in spite of the continual interaction with critical opinion and exegetical difficulties.

As with all critical works, there is bound to be a certain amount of disappointment by users of this book. No modern commentary can hope to

win critical acclaim and satisfy the concerns of conservative Christians. Childs' treatment of recent, liberal scholarship means that he is unlikely to be accepted fully there, either. All the while there is a tension within a work that seeks to be faithful to the text, and to the general run of historical interpretation, while also acknowledging the veracity of much critical opinion that is now widely accepted as fact. The concluding paragraph is worth noting as a good summary of the flavour of this work.

The promise of God's salvation is to all, but it is received by the household of faith. For this reason, the early Christian church, some five hundred years later, saw itself also addressed with the same promises once directed to Israel in the book of Isaiah. The same pattern by which the prophetic editors shaped their message continues to operate for the New Testament's community of faith. The concrete sign of the promise was given in the Eucharist, the pledge today of its fulfilment tomorrow. Christ has come in power, but we await the new heavens and earth. Therefore, we still pray with the saints of every generation: "Maranatha, come quickly Lord Jesus".

This is not a commentary that could replace all other works on Isaiah, nor is it essential reading for all who wish a better understanding of the message of Isaiah. However, for those who have to deal with liberal scholarship, this volume will assist in answering some of the more extreme opinions around today. Probably its greatest strength is the far higher than average view the author has of the integrity of the text. Thus his exegesis is more trustworthy than his language might always indicate. On the matter of language, it needs to be mentioned that Childs' written style is not as fluent as one might wish, but this should not be allowed to detract from the overall value of the book.

EDWARD J. MALCOLM

'GET WISDOM, GET INSIGHT' – An Introduction to Israel's Wisdom Literature

Katharine Dell

London, 2000. Darton, Longman and Todd Limited xi + 203pp pb £12.95.

ISBN 0-232-52266-9

Katharine Dell, a Divinity lecturer at Cambridge University, has produced a well-

written and highly informative introduction to the whole 'wisdom' genre in Israelite literature. She includes the Old Testament wisdom books, the apocryphal ones, the Qumran writings, and the influence of wisdom found in the Gospels. The whole genre is set in the context of the Middle Eastern wisdom tradition. After a short general introduction, where questions of definition, scope and influence are considered, each Old Testament book is considered in its own chapter. Since this is an introduction to the subject, no specialist knowledge is required by readers, as Dell helpfully explains herself as she goes along.

The conclusions Dell offers are unlikely to be received by those who hold to traditional interpretations of these books. Apparently Solomon's court was too underdeveloped to have produced Proverbs, Job is a parody on various biblical literary genres, and Ecclesiastes is a mixture of cynicism and pragmatism.

Placing Israel's wisdom literature in the context of ancient Middle Eastern wisdom may be of academic interest, but holds little of practical value to preachers. Dell's conclusion that 'the quest for parallels is a difficult issue and caution against overusing parallels is timely' perhaps needs to be better noted. Equally, the examination of the Apocryphal material will only excite its students. The same can be said of the Qumran collections.

Dell includes a chapter on Jesus' use of wisdom. However, since her paradigm is a liberal one which takes no account of his divinity, and which is prepared to allow that any wisdom sayings have been introduced through redaction, and that the most likely source of influence would have been Qumran, her conclusions are of limited value. To be sure, she recognises him as a wise man who was concerned to present his understanding of the coming kingdom, but this will be of small comfort to those who see him as the daysman of Job 9:33, a key verse which Dell ignores completely.

While it would be unfair to say that critical opinion goes round in circles, it would be fair to say that old ground is revisited with regularity. This is often caused, it seems, by the refusal to place the wisdom literature in the context of the divine revelation. What the writers were trying to teach about God through such writings is almost never brought alongside other, more accessible writings. To be sure, they are placed in an historical context, but not a theological one. This means that insufficient data is brought to bear on questions of date and authorship. As a result, critics of the wisdom books

seem to handicap themselves unnecessarily and unhelpfully. After all, nobody would attempt a critical examination of, say Hamlet's great soliloquy, without placing it in the context of the whole play. Yet such an approach is deemed permissible in the field of biblical studies. A case in point is Dell's assertion that the understanding of retribution as taught in Job must necessarily be post-exilic, for the Exile alone provides the necessary historical framework in which such a doctrine could develop. However, anyone who has read Judges will know that the whole of that period was marked by God's retributive acts towards the nation's sin. It was national not personal sin that caused the Exile, so why wait until then for the appearance of the doctrine? In fact, the emphasis in Job on the personal aspect of sin and punishment is surely in line with the patriarchal period, not the national one. This is less true of the treatment of Ecclesiastes, where the influence of other biblical books is considered seriously. What Dell does is to examine the influence of wisdom on other parts of the Bible, not always convincingly. The result is to make the whole Bible a man-centred, not a God-centred, book.

Students of wisdom literature will find this book a useful survey of recent critical thought, and it will certainly be of help in coming to grips with such literary devices as form and theme. However, it is highly unlikely that any sermons will be inspired by this book, though in fairness this was never the author's intention.

EDWARD J. MALCOLM

THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS: Wisdom Unsearchable, Love Indestructible
Derek Tidball

Bible Society; Leicester: IVP, 2001 £9.99 pb 319 pp + Study Guide
 ISBN 0-85111-543-8

The Bible Speaks Today series of biblical expositions has been enormously helpful for Christians throughout the English speaking world. Now a third sub-series has been added which explores important biblical themes. Derek Tidball is the editor of this sub-series and his own contribution is this collection of eighteen expositions on the most wonderful biblical theme of all.

The expositions which make up the book are characterised by attention to the text of each passage and consideration of how it contributes to the message of the Bible as a whole. Perhaps the commentators consulted are too intrusive in

some of the expositions: one soon tires of the ‘as x says’ formula which is overused. Nevertheless, every one of them is highly readable. There are plenty of apt illustrations and the relevance of the text for the life of the Christian today is carefully and helpfully emphasised. What is more, Tidball is not afraid to move from exposition to doxology, recognising that these are truths to be embraced with our whole lives and not just acknowledged as part of a theological system.

Tidball has selected the most significant passages dealing with the cross in the Old and New Testaments. He does not claim to have dealt with every passage but with ‘the major passages’. The arrangement of the expositions into four parts is somewhat artificial (*e.g.*, surely the Gospels give us explanation and application as well as the experience of the cross) but generally serves his purpose. No Christian reader could fail to be edified by the way God’s eternal plan is unfolded in these pages. The inclusion of a study guide is certainly a bonus.

The weakest part of the book is, in my view, the introduction, heavily dependent as it is at points on the work of James Gordon and Tom Smail. Too much space is given to the critics of penal substitution with little appreciation (or at least little space given) to how their criticisms have been comprehensively answered. The nineteenth century liberal distinction between the fact of the atonement and theories of atonement is taken for granted and only passing reference is given (without the necessary explanation) to the evangelical conviction that Scripture provides us with an integrated explanation of the atonement in which the wondrous variety of aspects find their centre in the notion of Christ’s death in our place to bear the penalty for our sins. This is not to say that Tidball wants to deny the truthfulness of penal substitution. Not at all. It is simply that here, as elsewhere in the book, he wishes to make room for a plurality of interpretations, a move that invariably involves displacing this critical part of the Bible’s teaching from the centre. This lack of nerve would be overcome, one suspects, by careful study of *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* (ed. by David Peterson; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000).

Taken as a whole, this book will inform the mind, feed the soul and warm the heart of all who read it. Pastors will find it a helpful resource as they strive to keep the cross at the forefront of their ministries. It needs deeper theological anchors at points, as suggested above, but it is undoubtedly a worthwhile book to be welcomed by all who cherish God’s wonderful work to redeem his people.

MARK D. THOMPSON

AN ANGLICAN CATECHISM

Edward Norman

London: Continuum, 2001 hb 153 pp £10.99 ISBN 0-8264-5451-8

This attempt to provide 'an accessible guide to what the mind of the Church of England has, in the perspective of centuries, considered the essentials of the teaching of Christ is a profound disappointment from beginning to end. The format is less than desirable as a catechism, the theology is deeply flawed at points, and the contemporary application, especially in the ethical sphere, surrenders to dubious modern commitments rather than robustly defending the teaching of the word of God.

On the issue of format, while the text is divided into three main sections (Doctrine and Order, Morality and Applications, The Christian Life) and while there are smaller headings every couple of pages or so, there are no summaries or outlines of what is being said which might help the new Christian comprehend the parts in terms of the whole. The large print and very small margins will not help those who wish to annotate the text in an attempt to understand the contents. It is all very well to dismiss the catechism in the Prayer Book as 'a brief inquisitorial text, plainly intended for use in a pre-literate age', but at least it was easily understood and learnt by young Christians.

In terms of theology, ambiguity and outright error abound. For example, we read of the infinite number of ways in which God could disclose himself (p. 3), – and, as a person who may be known by persons he chose three, before time began, to establish a relationship with his creatures. The rest of the paragraph introduces the Trinity and so raises the question of whether God's triune nature is an eternal reality or a revelatory choice.

The section on the authority of Scripture (pp. 49-54) is dire. We are told 'it was therefore the Church itself which produced the Scriptures', that the New Testament is 'an account of faith and not of history, though cast in the form of a sequence of events', and that 'the crucial work of separating those things which related to a dead culture from those which convey the core message remains fraught with difficulty'. In short, all we are given here is a rehash of outdated and discredited liberal views of the Bible from two centuries ago. Recent recovery of the truth that the genuine humanity of the Scriptures need not compromise their divine inspiration (*i.e.*, they are more than just

inspiring) nor their utter truthfulness is conveniently ignored.

When treating ‘ministry in the church’ (pp. 67-72) we are told ‘one of the sacraments, the Holy Communion, may only be celebrated by a person in priest’s orders, and this is a recognition that a distinctive mediatorial function attaches to those who are called to stand in the priestly line’. Such an assertion is bound to provide further support for the argument that the current call for lay administration of the Lord’s Supper is necessary and urgent. The truth of 1 Timothy 2:5 would seem to be at stake.

Just as disturbing is the lack of nerve displayed in the section on morality. The most obvious example is the comment on human sexuality (p. 111) – ‘The Church of England believes that human sexuality is most properly expressed within heterosexual married life. Other forms of sexual practice, though not necessarily sinful, are regarded as impaired or falling short of the Christian ideal.’ A few lines later, heterosexual marriage is described as ‘the form of sexual expression which most regularly discloses God’s will for humanity’. It is no surprise then that the author opines ‘homosexuality is not in general chosen’ and ‘may not be a condition to be regretted but to have divinely ordered and positive qualities’. The conclusion on this matter is a curious blend of pastoral concern and ethical nonsense: ‘homosexual believers should be assured of the full integrity of their membership of the Church, and encouraged to find in their sexual preferences such elements of moral beauty as may enhance their general understanding of Christ’s calling’.

Overall while the author has worked hard to make this book accessible, its shortcomings are all too obvious and it cannot be recommended as a statement of the Christian faith.

MARK D. THOMPSON

BUILDING THE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Arthur F. Holmes

Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001 119 pp + index pb \$12.00

ISBN 0-8028-4744-7

This little book by the Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Wheaton College is a sustained defence of a liberal arts education at a time when its utility is increasingly questioned. But it is more than that. It argues that theology is an

indispensable part of such an education, enabling the student to integrate the knowledge gained from different disciplines and recognise the profundity of the well-worn adage ‘all truth is God’s truth’. The Christian academy has a critical part to play in arresting and even reversing a number of alarming trends in education worldwide such as premature specialisation, fragmented learning, and reductionist explanations in many disciplines.

Holmes surveys what he considers ‘seven formative episodes’ in the history of higher education and concludes that there are four recurring emphases which represent ‘the heart and soul of the Christian academy’. He examines Classical Greek education and its embrace by the Alexandrian catechetical school, the influential contribution of Augustine of Hippo, the rise of monastic education, the scholastic education of the medieval universities, the educational insights of the reformers Luther and Calvin, Francis Bacon’s more utilitarian approach and the search for new knowledge, and John Henry Newman’s *The Idea of a University*. The recurring themes he identifies are the usefulness of the liberal arts as preparation for service to both church and society, the unity of truth, the doxological dimension of learning, and moral/spiritual formation. The final chapter insists ‘we need multidisciplinary Christian reflection on crucial issues that confront us in the twenty-first century’ and concludes that such reflection requires a new priority to the Christian academy.

The book is short and so the treatment of each ‘formative episode’ is sometimes infuriatingly brief. More could certainly be said, for instance, about the Reformers’ attitude, especially given that the Wittenberg reformation was initially the reform of a university curriculum. Some comments about the reorganisation of the German universities at the beginning of the nineteenth century and its impact on the place of theology in a liberal arts education might also have been helpful. However, what we are given is a lucid and stimulating account which certainly secures Holmes’ argument.

One highlight for this reviewer was the chapter on John Henry Newman. Newman’s insights into education are often less known than his involvement in the Oxford Movement, which is certainly our contemporary loss. Newman’s concern to develop the whole person, and consequently his commitment to a broad based education and to the practice of mentoring in the context of an academic community, should receive much more attention.

Christians involved in education will want to read this book. So too will those who are concerned for the intellectual climate in which our children and grandchildren will grow up. This slim volume highlights valuable lessons we need to learn all over again.

MARK D. THOMPSON

HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE?

Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey

London Marshall Pickering 2000 574pp £10.99 pb ISBN 0-551-03258-8

Many readers will remember the Watergate affair which led to the resignation of President Nixon. Charles Colson who had served as special counsel to the President pleaded guilty to charges related to Watergate and served seven months in prison though bugging a political enemy's headquarters had been widely practised before on both sides and still is. Before he went to prison Colson was converted to Christ and since then has done an astonishing work in founding Prison Fellowship Ministries. This is active in eighty-three countries, manages 50,000 active volunteers in the USA alone providing Bible studies in over 1000 prisons, and has other notable evangelistic outlets as well. This book is a most absorbing account of this wide-ranging work; it is hard to put it down once it is started. It has a flavour all its own.

Professor Don Carson in one of his addresses quotes an old Mennonite who complained that when a great man (like William Wilberforce) is soundly converted by the gospel this often results in his founding a movement against some great national evil: in Wilberforce's case it was the slave trade. The next generation after him takes the gospel for granted but carries on the social work; the third forgets the gospel but the social work continues. So a situation comes about in which social work keeps its outward form, but loses its spiritual and Christ-centred motives. How often we hear these days of children being ill-treated in child-care institutions poles apart from those founded by George Muller. This is the sort of thing that Charles Colson feels so deeply and is working so hard to reverse in the US. The work he has founded involves positive evangelism but looks beyond it, as indeed the New Testament does (Matt. 25:31-46); for evangelism needs to make not merely converts, but disciples – men and women and boys and girls whose whole lives are possessed by Jesus Christ and who know and love their Bibles. Some may be called to major on teaching, preaching or writing, but all are called to

do good works among their fellows.

The book is in five parts. First, Worldview: why it matters; second, Creation: where did we come from and who are we?; third, The Fall: what has gone wrong with the world?; fourth, Redemption: what can we do to fix it?; fifth, Restoration: how now shall we live? Within these sections the treatment is very wide and varied, full of principles, stories and case-histories. Secular solutions are discussed and their powerlessness shown up.

The treatment is not strong on theology: the God-giveness of the Bible is implied, and the significance of the Cross is not enlarged on though there is an emphasis on its power. It is rare to get everything in a single volume! Nancy Pearcey happily contributes a good chapter on Darwinian evolution, for this constitutes a profound challenge to the whole Christian position, especially to those not biblically well-instructed. There is a very large selection of recommended books – nearly fifteen full pages. It would have been a good idea to have made recommendations among these for those whose interest is high, but whose spare time is low!

DOUGLAS C. SPANNER

ON ILLUSTRIOUS MEN – Jerome. Translated by Thomas P. Halton

Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999 211 pp
\$34.95 hb ISBN 0-8132-0100-4

For many centuries, Saint Jerome's *De viris illustribus* was an authoritative source of information on Christian authors of the first four centuries and their writings. In its time it was the standard patrology. Even today, through this 1999 translation, it continues to contribute greatly to the reader's knowledge of Christian biography and literature for that period.

Composed during the closing years of the fourth century, Jerome's book is still valuable to lay persons and parish pastors as a source of information on the lives and writings of one hundred and thirty-five persons – illustrative of Christianity prior to Saint Augustine of Hippo. For instance, it includes details such as the Apostle Peter's being crucified upside-down, the date of his death, and about the many writings attributed to him – complete with an indication of the antiquity of the debate which continues into our own day over whether he was the author of the 'Second Epistle of Peter' found in the

New Testament. The biographees are mostly Christian but some are prominent pagans who mentioned Christianity in their writings. The information for each entry is concise and complete and easy to reference, unlike the classic Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius (early fourth century A.D.) which obliges the reader to pick piecemeal through long stretches of text to obtain similar information.

The modern translator/editor (Professor Thomas Patrick Halton of the Catholic University of America) has spared no effort in enhancing the value of *De viris illustribus* for a modern-day readership. He provides a chronological framework, a list of the one hundred and thirty-five authors alphabetically arranged (the original was in a roughly chronological order), and bibliographies of the more prolific biographees, complete with cross-references to where both their extant works and translations of them can be located in published collections readily available to persons such as *Churchman's* readers. Dr. Halton has been assiduous and painstaking in providing footnote references to other information about the biographees, their works, the issues and to relevant monographs and periodical and encyclopaedia articles. He also indicates which of the works listed by Jerome have survived, instead of allowing the in depth student to look elsewhere in vain for lost works. Halton also greatly increases Jerome's intelligibility to modern readers by providing dates in the Gregorian calendar where the original gives them only in terms of regnal years of Roman emperors.

There are only two drawbacks to the work. The first is the omission of Gnostic authors and of Marcion (the man who compiled the first known New Testament), although Jerome did include a few heretical and non-Christian writers. On the other hand, the Gnostics were prolific writers with the result that there is currently a large multitude of books for all levels of interest containing translations and/or commentaries on their works. Except for quotations in the works of later authors, all Marcion's writings had disappeared before the twentieth century. The second drawback is that the translated edition is not published in paperback to make it more financially accessible to lay people and parish workers. However, Dr. Halton's contribution was written for the 'Fathers of the Church' series, a scholarly collection of translations of ancient Christian writers, so that his thorough scholarship was not originally intended for the popular market.

DAVID W. T. BRATTSTON

HOW BLIND IS THE WATCHMAKER? Nature's Design and the Limits of Naturalistic Science

Neil Broom

Leicester: IVP 2001 224 pp £9.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-554-3

Neil Broom is an Assistant Professor in Auckland, New Zealand, and since 1975 has been working on biomechanics for the Health Research Council of New Zealand. He is thus familiar with both mechanical and biological matters. This is the second edition of an earlier book, 'thoroughly revised and updated', and it may be regarded as an answer to Richard Dawkins' *The Blind Watchmaker*, 1986 which was critically reviewed by David Watson in *Churchman*, Vol. 101, 1987, pp. 366-73. This treatment follows a different pattern from the (much shorter) review just mentioned however; it concentrates on the scientific evidence for 'intelligent design', an important approach that has come into prominence recently through such writers as Dembeki (who writes the foreword). This approach aims to examine living things and find evidence of structures and metabolic patterns which can only reasonably be thought of as having been planned as 'completed wholes'. This is certainly a line of attack on the position neo-Darwinism decidedly takes: Dawkins in *The Blind Watchmaker* had earlier ably tried to defend the view that such a wonderful organ as the human eye could have developed to its exquisite complex structure by natural selection acting progressively on small continuous changes generation by generation. Well, here is the contrary position maintained by an equally able and knowledgeable writer. It is well worth reading.

In this short review it is impossible to do justice to the many interesting topics raised, but it is good to see the biblical account of origins supported even if only indirectly. The book is illustrated with relevant portraits, photographs and numerous drawings in different styles. Some of the latter are quite comically cartoonist, but they all help to hold the reader's attention when the going becomes technical or otherwise demanding. The literary style is good, and most well-educated readers will find it pleasing to read and follow, even when the author explains such technicalities as the chromosome mechanism, the structure and function of DNA and RNA, mutation and so on; here the author is a good and reliable guide. The book is well-produced; old eyes would have preferred the print to be a little stronger.

DOUGLAS C. SPANNER

THAT MAN OF GRANITE WITH THE HEART OF A CHILD – J.C. RYLE**Eric Russell**

Fearn: Christian Focus, 2001 hb £9.99 247 pp ISBN 1085792 6315

This new biography of Bishop Ryle is endorsed by J.I. Packer but it can be warmly welcomed by us all as, in my view, this is the first satisfactory account of the life of the first Bishop of Liverpool. Although only 211 pages long (but with extensive notes and a good index as well), this book explains many things which have often been difficult to understand.

The most important characteristic of this volume is that it gives adequate treatment to Ryle's thirty-six years as a country parson. Further, we are reminded that almost all his significant writings were penned from Suffolk villages.

We are shown that Mr. Ryle was a very faithful pastor as well as an outstanding preacher. He saw his work as vicar of Stradbroke as very demanding. A large village was, for him, enough to absorb the energies of a man of great vitality because he believed that his work was to 'know his sheep' and to listen to them.

The other most significant fact which emerges from these pages is the way in which Ryle constantly honed his pulpit technique so that he could be understood by any and all of his parishioners – a virtue in which so many evangelical preachers fail today. There is still a great deal to be learned from the preaching methods of Ryle, as of Spurgeon, today.

The coverage of Liverpool is most helpful and presents the Bishop 'warts and all' but also demonstrates that he was not the bigot which so many called him. It is very moving to discover that the Anglo-Catholic incumbent who went to prison during Ryle's tenure of the See would raise his hat to Bishop Ryle as he passed his residence – and that, even though J.C.R. had resigned.

We are shown also how Ryle took part in the church congresses of his day even though he had to sit with men of very disparate views. He sought always a platform for the gospel. This is a book well worth reading.

JOHN PEARCE

THE HOLY BLOOD. King Henry III and the Westminster blood relic.

Nicholas Vincent

Cambridge: CUP 2001 254+xiv pp £30 hb ISBN: 0-521-57128-6

In October 1247 King Henry III (1216-72) took delivery of a vial of blood which claimed to be that of Christ, shed on the cross more than twelve centuries previously. The king apparently intended it to form part of a relic collection which would be the glory of Westminster Abbey, a church conveniently close to his own palace and even more conveniently, founded by one of his royal predecessors, Edward the Confessor, on whom the more pious monarchs of the middle ages liked to model themselves. Interestingly, the relic never became the focus of any important devotion, and its authenticity was questioned by more than one theologian at the time. Henry had to enlist the services of Robert Grosseteste in defence of the relic, but even that failed to carry conviction with the majority, and Westminster Abbey's vial never acquired the following which other portions of the holy blood, scattered across Europe and present even in England, managed to do.

The modern reader has an easy answer to this, of course – the blood was not genuine. It had come from Palestine, but it was clearly linked to the need which the crusaders had for military support from the West, and a vial of blood was a cheap way of raising an army. Just as significantly, there were by then so many other vials of Christ's blood in existence that it would have been impossible to believe that they were all genuine, and so a latecomer was almost bound to lose out.

What is really fascinating about Dr. Vincent's account though is the way in which the vial of 1247 provoked strenuous theological arguments, not about it, but about the possibility of having a portion of Christ's blood here on earth. Ranged on the one side were those who believed that when he rose and ascended into heaven, Christ took his earthly body with him, and so no relics of that body survived on earth. On the other side were those who argued that, on the cross, Christ's blood had flowed copiously from his side, and that this blood was not reattached to him in the resurrection. Therefore it was perfectly possible for some of his blood to have survived on earth, just as it would have been possible for locks of his hair, or portions of his toenails, to have survived as well.

At the heart of this debate was the nature of the incarnation, and consequently the nature of the resurrection body of Christ also. The inconvenient truth is that those who argued for the possibility of Christ's blood continuing to exist on earth were right in theological terms, although to admit that in the middle ages was tantamount to endorsing the cult of the holy blood, which few theologians wanted to do. They believed, as we also do, that the blood of Christ shed on the cross has not survived, and that even if it had, it would be of no theological value in itself. But such a view, though theologically correct, is very difficult to put across to the ordinary worshipper who has been taught that he is saved by the blood of Christ. What exactly does that mean? It is all very well for sophisticated theologians to laugh at the simplicity of those who think that there is something special about what flowed from Christ's body on the cross, but how does one explain that there is power in the blood, but not in the real, historical liquid which that blood was?

The events of October 1247 are distant from us now, but the implications of the metaphorical language which we use (often without thinking) in our theology are with us still. It is here that we can connect with the polemicists on either side of this debate, and where Dr. Vincent's careful and detailed exposition is most illuminating today. It makes us think about what we say, and work out more carefully than most of us have ever bothered to do, what exactly the significance of the crucifixion is for our faith.

GERALD BRAY

THE IMAGINATIVE WORLD OF THE REFORMATION

Peter Matheson

Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2001 154 + xiv pp \$15 pb
ISBN: 0-8006-3296-5.

This book consists of the Gunning Lectures, delivered at New College, Edinburgh, in 1998 by the principal of the theological college of the Uniting Church of Australia. Dr. Matheson is clearly perplexed by the bad press which the Reformation has received in recent years from those who believe that it was basically an iconoclastic movement which attempted to destroy the beautiful culture which had been the glory of Western Europe when it was under the sway of medieval Catholicism. It is obviously impossible to deny that Protestantism had its iconoclastic side, and Dr. Matheson is quite willing to accept that much of the medieval inheritance was indeed swept away in the

sixteenth century. He concentrates almost entirely on Germany, but one only has to visit the ruins of the great abbeys which dot the Yorkshire dales to appreciate that the destruction often went beyond what was necessary to achieve a reform of the church, and that we are all the poorer as a result.

However, whilst Dr. Matheson allows for this, he does not stop there. As he sees it, Protestant iconoclasm was not so much destructive as transformative. The medieval church had fallen into a spiritual trap, in which it idealised the Christian life in a way which removed it from the experience of ordinary people. Saints were superhuman, and therefore artificial, which made the values which they represented seem remote and impractical. The hierarchy lived in a way which made a complete mockery of their profession, but there was nobody who could call them to account. The Renaissance was bringing new learning and new wealth to a growing middle class, and the danger was that these people would be alienated not merely from the institutional church, but from the faith which that church was supposed to represent. In particular, there was a very real danger that the invention of printing would work to the advantage of a neo-pagan classicism rather than to that of the Christian gospel, since it was generally easier to publish the works of Plato than translations of the Scriptures, which were subject to ecclesiastical censorship.

In these lectures, Dr. Matheson shows how the imaginative sensibility of the sixteenth century was transformed by the preaching of the gospel, and how that transformation worked itself out in art and literature. Plaster saints disappeared, to be replaced by realistic portraits ‘warts and all’ of ordinary people. This was the expression on canvas of the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, who are all called to be saints. Christ was no longer portrayed as a babe in his all-powerful mother’s arms, nor was he visualised as a stern judge seated on his heavenly throne. Instead, he became a man among men, crucified in the flesh which we also bear so that we might become the children of God.

Reformation spirituality was a message of personal freedom, even if that notion was rather different from what it generally means today. Farmers, woodcutters and ordinary people of all kinds came to understand that they were valuable in the sight of God, and that their lives could be as rich and fulfilling as those of the aristocracy. Indeed, they often came to see the extent to which the ruling classes had been corrupted by their wealth and power,

and began to realise that true beauty lay not in gold and silver but in the right use of the common things of everyday life. Dr. Matheson draws this out by referring to the correspondence of one Argula von Grumbach, a laywoman and early follower of Luther, who put these principles into practice in her own life. As the mother of four potentially unruly sons, only one of whom survived her, Argula had to work out what it meant for her and for them to be Christians in a hostile world. She was far removed from the theological debates of her time, but she understood clearly that true spirituality must be incarnated in daily life, and her letters reveal her hopes and fears for her sons on this score. What Dr. Matheson has captured is the first stage in the growth of the Protestant nuclear family, in which parents taught their children the essence of their faith, and the home (rather than the monastery) became the main pillar of the church community.

Dr. Matheson also brings out the importance of preaching, which in the sixteenth century was a means of firing the imagination every bit as powerful as any painting could be. The heralds of Lutheranism inhabited a world of monsters and evil beasts on the prowl, which would not hesitate to devour the unwary. These beasts might be Roman priests, but more often they were spiritual sins which could attack in the secret place of the heart. In fact, what these preachers were doing was giving a whole new iconography to the inner life of the spirit, preparing the way for what would eventually follow in works like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

A short book like this can be no more than a taster for a theme which is vast and greatly underexplored. It is to be hoped that Dr. Matheson's book may inspire others to study his theme in greater depth, and help us to rework our understanding of this vitally important period in the life of the Christian church.

GERALD BRAY

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CHURCH: Context, growth, leadership and worship.

Arthur G. Patzia

Leicester: Apollos (IVP) 2001 272pp £12.99 pb ISBN: 0-85111-483-0

Dr. Patzia teaches New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary in California and it would appear that this book is a spin-off of his courses

there. The style is extremely clear and didactic, replete with references to the biblical text which help to anchor Dr. Patzia's assertions in the available evidence. The first chapter, in fact, is basically an explanation of terms, with paragraphs devoted to subjects like the Sadducees, the Temple and the Greco-Roman world. There was a time when most writers would have assumed that these things belonged to a student's general knowledge, but years of teaching will have persuaded Dr. Patzia otherwise and he is probably right not to expect anything from beginners in the discipline.

The rest of his text is a careful explanation of how the church developed from its Palestinian roots to the emerging worldwide organisation which appears at the end of the first century. He seldom strays from the New Testament itself, and allows its later books to set the cut-off point for his study. He is especially careful to illustrate his points with very helpful diagrams which show us, for example, the mileage covered by the apostles as they went from Jerusalem to Caesarea, or from Antioch to Rome. This is one of those things which is 'obvious' in a way but which is seldom considered seriously, and it is very useful to have the reminders which Dr. Patzia gives us of the logistics involved in New Testament evangelism.

Most of what he says about the establishment of the first Christian communities is uncontroversial, and his debt to the scholarly work of Dr. N.T. Wright, Professor James Dunn and the late Professor Raymond Brown is obvious throughout. Of particular significance is his quotation from the last of these (a Roman Catholic) to the effect that the apostle Peter had nothing to do with the founding of the Roman church and may never have exercised any ministry in the capital city at all, even though it is fairly certain that he was martyred there. Dr. Patzia is also very careful about the way in which he explains the role of women in the early church. He recognises that they had important ministries, but stops short of claiming that they were apostles or preachers on a par with men since the evidence clearly does not support such a conclusion.

More adventurous are the chapters devoted to the ministry and worship of the first Christian communities. The history of Protestantism shows (or ought to show) that the New Testament does not provide a complete ecclesiology, and that attempts to build one on the basis of the fragmentary and occasional references which we have are almost bound to lead to opposing conclusions.

Baptism is an obvious example of this, but rather than exercise caution, Dr. Patzia concludes, rather too hastily, that there was no such thing as infant baptism in the early church! Of course it is never mentioned in the New Testament, but if the practice was forbidden, one might expect some discussion of the matter, if only to instruct Christian parents how and when they should baptize their offspring. That question never arises either, and so it is impossible to say for sure what the practice of the first Christian communities actually was.

Dr. Patzia follows the current line of New Testament scholarship in emphasizing the ‘diversity’ of the early church, but this turns out to be much less than what one might expect. There was an obvious difference between Jewish and Gentile Christians, but whether this should be characterized as ‘diversity’ is somewhat questionable. After all, the differences had to do with their respective pasts, not with their common future, and there is no reason to suppose that the apostle Paul thought that they would last indefinitely. Certainly it has to be remembered that Paul did not hesitate to go to churches which he had not founded, and he was perfectly prepared to criticize Peter when he disagreed with him – there was no talk of ‘diversity’ then! Dr. Patzia recognises all this of course, which is why it would have been helpful if he had said less about ‘diversity’ and more about the fundamental unity of the early church, where it was assumed that an individual Christian could go anywhere in the Roman world and find a ready welcome from the local believers.

This book will be a very helpful introduction for students of the New Testament period, and will also provide some useful background for church members who know little about the subject. It could serve as an excellent textbook for an adult Sunday School class, and would also be a useful resource for sixth-form RE pupils and the like.

GERALD BRAY