Book Reviews

A FRAGILE UNITY. Anti-ritualism and the Division of Anglican Evangelicalism in the Nineteenth Century James C. Whisenant Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003 530pp £ 29.99pb ISBN: 1-84227-105-9

Paternoster Press has broken new ground with its series "Studies in Evangelical History and Thought" which now has about ten titles in print. Besides reprinting some well-worn classics of Evangelical history, the series also aims to include fresh work, and is not afraid to produce doctoral theses when these can be edited and recycled for a general audience. Such is the case with Dr. Whisenant's remarkable volume, which is a must-read for every serious and concerned Evangelical in the Church of England today. The book is about the anti-ritualist controversies of the late nineteenth century, when Evangelicals battled long and hard to prevent the introduction of Romish practices into the church. What counted as 'Romish' at that time would surprise many people today—the wearing of the surplice, for example, was objected to, as was the introduction of robed choirs. There was a general confusion among Evangelicals between what was regarded as little more than aesthetically pleasing and what had to be condemned as doctrinally unsound, and the existence of a large grey area between the two often made it difficult for them to unite in opposition to what they saw as more serious attacks on the Protestant constitution of the national church.

But important as these matters were to many, the nub of the issue was disciplinary. To what extent could a clergyman depart from the generally understood Anglican consensus in liturgical matters, and who could pass judgement on those who had gone too far? A wide range of church opinion in the 1860s and 1870s was convinced that the ritualists, who were still relatively few in number, had stepped outside the pale of Anglican legitimacy and were trying to impose practices on their congregations which had been unknown since the reformation. Auricular confession to a priest was by far the most contentious of these, but the use of liturgical vestments, incense and the eastward position at holy communion also attracted widespread opposition.

Evangelicals in the church were at the forefront of the campaign to control, and ultimately to suppress, this trend within the church, and initially they attracted widespread support for their position. Very few people, outside the

ranks of committed ritualists, were prepared to argue for the legality of their practices, and whatever the uncommitted may have thought of them, they generally believed that clergy of the established church ought to obey the law. Thus it was that when Evangelicals were led to take recalcitrant ritualists to court, and even to see some of the most extreme ones imprisoned, there was widespread agreement that the ritualists had brought this situation on themselves, and the Evangelicals were vindicated, even when there were reservations about some of their attitudes and techniques. Yet by 1890 the Evangelical wing of the church had lost the battle against ritualism and had fragmented into warring groups which caused a rapid decline in their importance within the church. Somewhat oddly, their anti-ritualistic campaigns had lost them the support of a generally anti-ritualist public, and all but an extreme minority had given up the fight. How did this happen?

Dr. Whisenant traces this development in painstaking—and painful—detail, showing how, all too often, Evangelicals knew what they were against but were less clear about what they were for, how they persistently boycotted the synods and assemblies of the church because they were dominated by men of a different school of thought (though not necessarily by ritualists), and how they turned on one another when some of their number showed signs of moderation or of what they considered to be extremism. Men like Dean Close of Carlisle and Bishop Ryle of Liverpool appear in different guises as the story unfolds—conservative one minute, moderate the next. In reality, neither man changed his basic views very much; the arguments were mainly about the tactics which should be adopted—or avoided—in the struggle. To be fair to the evangelicals, they were up against a threat which the Church of England had never before encountered and which it was ill-equipped to deal with. Once a man had been instituted to a living it was extremely difficult to get rid of him, and deprivation was not a practical option most of the time. This created a situation in which ritualist extremists could ignore the rulings of bishops and synods and get away with it, which is the tactic most of them adopted. There is no doubt that they were in the wrong, both on moral and on legal grounds, but the bishops (as so often) were unable or unwilling to act against them, even when they strongly disapproved of their actions. In the end, the Church of England had no real alternative—it was forced to accommodate an uncongenial minority, even though it was living in open defiance of the law.

After more than a century, we can see that ritualism had its limits in the church, even though it became quite influential in the first half of the twentieth century. Some of the more purely aesthetic elements worked their way into the generality of Anglicanism, but the more extreme practices are still the preserve of a minority, which now seems to be old-fashioned and largely irrelevant to the present generation. On the other hand, the belief that a determined minority can impose acceptance of its views by illegal means has been reinforced by more recent events, often sparked off by descendants of the nineteenth-century ritualists. On page after page of Dr. Whisenant's book, one has only to substitute the word 'homosexual' for 'ritualist' to see just how contemporary this phenomenon still is. The techniques have hardly changed, and the main opposition, now as then, comes from the Evangelical wing of the church, which is once more almost as powerful as it was in the mid-nineteenth century.

But unfortunately, the parallels between the past and the present do not end there. Modern Evangelicals are just as divided as their forbears were, and on surprisingly similar lines. Some will take their opposition to any length, regardless of the consequences, whilst others will trim their sails according to the prevailing wind and adopt a 'live and let live' approach. They will go on disapproving of homosexual practice and refuse to admit it within their own circles, but they will tolerate it in the wider church in the name of peace and unity. Such Evangelicals will end up being more hostile to their Evangelical brethren of a more conservative hue than to anyone else—a scenario which we can already see developing. This is why this book is essential reading for Evangelicals today, particularly for those who want to hold the line against creeping innovation. The tactics of the other side are already visible—stealth and illegality wherever possible, relying on the do-nothing stance of the episcopate and the sympathy (or indifference) of the general public to buttress their case. Meanwhile, they can expect Evangelicals to fall out over strategy, to retreat into a spiritual ghetto and finally conclude that the fight is not worth it—better to carry on evangelising than to waste time and money trying to root out clergy with an unacceptable lifestyle. Dr. Whisenant has seen it all before, and brings it to life for our generation.

History does not have to repeat itself, but if the lessons which he draws from his book are not heeded, it surely will. Get the book today and take its lessons to heart.

GERALD BRAY
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ADVENTURE OF FAITH

Reflections on Fifty Years of Christian Service **Michael Green**
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001 414pp £14.99pb ISBN 0-00-710541-X

When is an autobiography not an autobiography? When it is written by Michael Green. In the introduction he tells us that he did not intend this book to be an autobiography but 'some reflections on things you've seen as significant'. It is nevertheless autobiographical, starting with birth, moving through childhood in an Oxfordshire rectory, education at Clifton and Oxford, conversion through Iwerne and the legendary 'Bash', pastorates in Eastbourne and Oxford, academic posts in Nottingham and Vancouver, and finally to a world-wide ministry as an evangelist and writer, not least in SE Asia, for which Green clearly has a great love. In the process we gain a unique insight into a remarkable man—although his avoidance of 'autobiography' leaves one wishing for more. The most moving part of this is his painful honesty regarding the problems in his marriage, and the way in which God graciously healed it. These pages would surely give hope to Christians facing a similar situation.

The 'reflections' on significant things are no less valuable, the fruit of over forty years experience as an evangelist. Historically, they are important as an insight into the thinking of a father of 'open' evangelicalism. For a young minister like myself it is immensely encouraging to see a man in his seventies who still has such energy and enthusiasm for spreading the gospel in innovative ways. I found his musings on post-modernism particularly helpful; he delineates the changed context for evangelism and apologetics, whilst correctly noting that modernism is still alive and well. Any pastor or evangelist will find food for thought and some good ideas here. They may not imitate the youth club where the young curate taught boxing and 'lovingly' split a member's lip, but hopefully they will catch some of his infectious enthusiasm! Michael Green emerges as a man of humour and compassion, with a deep love for the lost and a deep love for his Lord. For Classical Evangelicals like myself, it is a reminder that 'Opens' can be faithful and dedicated servants of God.

The picture of late twentieth century evangelicalism is an upbeat one. Green subscribes to the familiar aetiological myth: Evangelicals were irrelevant, anti-academic, and socially withdrawn fundamentalists until the 1960s. Then came Keele and the charismatic movement, and suddenly there was light! Indeed,

Green seems to ascribe almost every positive development of the last forty years to the charismatic movement; the existence of non-charismatic evangelicals is barely noted. What he does not deal with is the downgrade of Evangelical faith and theology during his lifetime. Arguably, Green has played a considerable part in this, not least as Principal of St. John's Nottingham, where his associates included such 'evangelicals' as George Carey. It is alarming to find a former theological college principal doubting the value of theological colleges, and recommending sandwich courses; this can only harm biblical knowledge and preaching. The extent of the downgrade can be seen in the spectacle of Green's spiritual children enthusiastically welcoming a new Archbishop who is the antithesis of everything Green has stood for.

Green's own theological role emerges regarding two significant issues in *Adventure of Faith*: biblical authority and the atonement. He tells us that he is unhappy not only with the word 'inerrancy' but also with 'infallibility'. Yet he gives no hint of having interacted with those who defend these positions, (including his colleague at Vancouver, J. I. Packer), and who have answered all the criticisms he raises; indeed he misrepresents them. He even makes the extraordinary comment that the reformers did not assert infallibility! His own position seems unintelligible; I think that it amounts to saying that the Bible is completely reliable except when it isn't. The problem here seems to be the Open 'Evangelical' distaste for being tied down to definite confessional statements, in favour of vague attitudes. This bears fruit when he comes to the issue of women's' ordination; all the exegetical arguments he brings forward have been refuted, yet Green appears unaware of this. The desirability of prophetic 'words', and glossolalia is assumed without any hint of theological questions; cessationism is dismissed in one sentence. In fairness though, it should be noted that Green is one of the sanest of charismatic leaders, and has consistently opposed 'second blessing' theology.

Regarding the atonement, Green affirms satisfaction and clearly believes something like penal substitution. Yet he will not affirm the latter, because the New Testament never uses the word 'punishment' of the cross; one hopes that he does not apply the same logic to the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not enough to say that substitution is 'the most helpful aspect to emphasize to people who are aware of their guilt before God'. This subordinates the gospel to felt human needs; if people are unaware of their guilt, then the message of penal

substitution is even more vital! Not surprisingly, St. John's has been at the forefront of 'evangelical' denials of penal substitution and retributive justice.

This downgrade is perhaps reflected in Green's ambivalent attitude to theological liberalism. On the one hand he is scathing about ECUSA and the devastation liberalism has wrought upon evangelism; he is outspoken in his support of the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA). On the other hand, he commends Leslie Newbiggin for binding together conservative and liberal 'believers', and George Carey for combining the 'best' of the Evangelical, Catholic, and Liberal 'strands' in Anglicanism. He regards the demise of the SCM as sad, and suggests that it would have been best if they and UCCF could have combined their insights. His picture of the Church of England is astonishingly rosy—he believes that it is now rare to hear much of tactile apostolic succession or the belief that clergy are a mediatorial priesthood. Likewise, he assumes the desirability of co-operating with Roman Catholics in evangelism, without giving any hint that there might be theological questions about this. Here we surely see the tension within Open 'Evangelicalism', where a vague Arminianism is substituted for rigorous theology.

I finished *Adventure of Faith* with very mixed feelings. On the one hand I was disturbed at the message Michael Green now preaches, and the direction in which he has lead evangelicalism; on the other hand I was warmed and encouraged by the faith, enthusiasm and experience of this servant of God.

One last note: it is doubtless the business of publishers to praise the author on the dust jacket. But to describe someone as 'Apostle Paul for our own age' is tasteless, and dangerously close to hubris.

STEPHEN WALTON
Thurnby

THE GOSPEL AND HENRY VIII
Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation **Alec Ryrie**
Cambridge: CUP, 2003 306 pp £45hb ISBN: 0-521-82343-9

This book, most of which began life as a doctoral dissertation supervised by Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch of Oxford, is a study of the 'evangelical'

movement in the Church of England as it developed between Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1534 and his death nearly thirteen years later. The period is often seen as one of reaction, when the king and the more conservative bishops combined to stifle anything which might be called 'protestantism' in a doctrinal sense, yet it is universally admitted that when Henry VIII died, there was a sudden swing in the opposite direction, and a reformation far more radical than anything the old king had contemplated was introduced in the space of two or three years. How was such a volte-face possible? Dr. Ryrie sets out to resolve this apparent mystery by sketching in the last years of Henry VIII's reign and bringing out the complex interplay of competing forces which were at work during that time. He shows that the word 'evangelical', which was generally used of the Reformers, had an imprecise meaning which was capable of a great degree of flexibility. This was just as well, because it helped to keep the reforming elements together through a difficult period, when disunity in their ranks could easily have spelt defeat for their cause.

Broadly speaking, the 'evangelicals' moved from a Lutheran theology to a more reformed one during the 1540s, but without hardening their distinctive positions to the point where they were unable to accommodate the views of the King. Henry VIII was less conservative in his opinions than he has generally been understood to have been, but even so it was wise to err on the conservative side and be prepared for sudden changes of direction. This the evangelicals (by and large) succeeded in doing, and by 1547 they were the dominant group at court, in the universities and increasingly in the church hierarchy, although there were still important centres of opposition to their cause which would lead to problems in the future—for both sides.

Along the way, Dr. Ryrie dissects the writings of John Foxe, which he shows are curiously inaccurate in important details (such as the chronology of the years 1539-40), and he takes issue with many of the leading revisionist historians of the present time, who portray the years following the passing of the infamous act of six articles as ones of unrelieved reaction (1539-47). Rather, it seems that the act was designed mainly to counter suggestions being put forward by Henry's German allies, that he should adopt a more clearly protestant policy of church reform, and had little immediate effect in England itself. However, it was there to be used when necessary, and towards the end

of the reign it was occasionally produced as grounds for condemning some of the more advanced 'evangelicals' of the time.

As Dr. Ryrie himself points out more than once, his book is a good complement to the outstanding work done on Henry VIII's religious policies by Rory McEntegart, and recently published by Boydell and Brewer. Inevitably, there are some questionable judgements on points of detail, and much of what Dr. Ryrie has written will doubtless be refined and modified by further research as time goes on, but there is no doubt that he has presented a fresh perspective on a surprisingly little-known period in reformation history which will have to be taken into account by everyone working in the field or teaching the subject at undergraduate level.

GERALD BRAY
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AFTER AQUINAS: Versions of Thomism **Fergus Kerr**
Oxford: Blackwell, 2002 262 pp £15.99pb ISBN 0-631-21313-9

Fergus Kerr explores the relationship between twentieth century theology and the thought of Thomas Aquinas in this stimulating study that ranges from topics like epistemology and natural theology to ethics, divine-human cooperation and creaturely deification. Kerr engages with a wide range of Catholic and Protestant theologians, including Balthasar, Rahner, de Lubac, Pannenberg, Gunton, Torrance, Jenson, and above all Karl Barth, whose theology, Kerr argues, exhibits deep affinities with that of Thomas.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of Kerr's study is his attempt to correct the popular account of Thomas's doctrine of God. Against the oft-repeated charge that Thomas damages the doctrine of God by considering the divine unity in abstraction from its triunity, so that his God is essentially non-Trinitarian, Kerr reminds us that, in spite of its metaphysical language, Thomas's account of the one God has to do with 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who will send Christ, not the god of Aristotle's Physics' (p. 184).

Thomas's doctrine of God is, further, frequently invoked as an example of classical theism's static, metaphysical deity. But against this reading, Kerr shows that, for Thomas, God is 'more like an event than an entity' (p. 190). Thomas's

God is not a static substance, nor even an agent with the capacity to act, but rather 'nothing other than ceaseless and total actualisations of being, knowing, and loving—utter bliss' (p. 192). Thomas's view of God is, in fact, so actualistic that 'the risk for Thomas is not to reify God as a static and motionless entity, but rather, just the opposite, to make so much of the divine essence as activity...that God becomes sheer process, perpetuum mobile' (p. 190). Even in designating God as 'first cause', Thomas is not thinking of any 'non-personal object' or 'static entity', but only of God as an active, personal agent, as 'freely self-communicating goodness' (p. 50). In Thomas's view then, there can be no ultimate dialectic between divine being and act—for God's being is his act.

Kerr does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of Thomas's theology or a full history of its reception. But by focusing on the relationship between Thomas's thought and some of the distinctive issues of modern theology, he is able both to correct widespread misreadings of Thomas, and to show the ongoing power and ecumenical relevance of his theology.

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DEUTERONOMY **J. G. McConville**
Leicester: IVP (Apollos), 2002 544pp. £21.99 hb ISBN 0-85111-779-1

This is a fresh and perceptive technical commentary in the Apollos Old Testament Commentary series. McConville subscribes neither to the common view of Deuteronomy that associates it with the reforms of King Josiah in the 7th century BC, nor to the more radical view that considers it to be the product of exilic utopianism. Both of these views in their different ways portray Deuteronomy as a work of historical fiction aimed at conveying a theological platform as to what Israel ought to be.

McConville, by contrast, views it (or at least an earlier form of it) as 'the document of a real political and religious constitution of Israel from the pre-monarchical period' (p. 34). In some ways he is more interested in its theology than its history, making no attempt to defend Mosaic authorship nor to date it. While this will disappoint those seeking a more traditional conservative commentary, it is worth noting the great strength of this commentary which is

its robust theological reading of the book. McConville treats Deuteronomy as a thoroughly coherent theological unity (as against the common view that it is a law code set in a fictional historical dress that is quite alien to it).

Germane to McConville's reading is his theory (developed in previous published works) that the 'place Yahweh chooses' (12:5ff) is neither (necessarily) Jerusalem (as required by the Josianic reading) nor a whole variety of different places simultaneously, but rather a deliberately indeterminate 'place' which "is to be understood in the context of a succession of 'places' of encounter with Yahweh" (p. 35). The key point is that Yahweh chooses it and it may be different at different periods. Therefore Deuteronomy is a present tense book of 'urgent existential encounter' with Yahweh. It challenges its readers of every age to be faithful to the covenant here and now.

The Introduction has a useful section on how the theology of Deuteronomy interacts with other parts of the total biblical witness, including the so-called 'Priestly' writings, the Davidic 'Zion' theology, attitudes to 'the nations', and—refreshingly—the New Testament.

The commentary itself is clear and readable but with an impressive depth of scholarly background. Longer and fuller than the excellent commentary of C. J. H. Wright (1996), more theological (and recent) than the traditionally conservative commentary of Craigie (1976), this thoughtful treatment is spiced with comments pregnant with application to preaching. It will be a useful addition to a preacher's bookshelves.

CHRISTOPHER ASH
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PAUL AND THE COMPETING MISSIONS IN CORINTH
Michael D. Goulder
Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001 303pp pb ISBN 1-56563-79-2

Goulder has written a technical book to back up his popular volume *St. Paul versus St Peter: A Tale of Two Missions*. In these he revives Baur's thesis that competing Pauline and Petrine factions drove the earliest church, and he deploys a wide range of arguments to support his case. The thesis is modified

in the light of Baur's major critics (especially Lütgert) and reaches its climax in "A Scenario of the Corinthian Church 50-56 CE".

One strength of Goulder's position is that it is simple. A single divide between just two factions underlies all of the various problems at Corinth and indeed elsewhere in the New Testament. This is consistent with his proposal to translate *metaschematisa* in 1 Cor 4:6a as 'transform' because the issue Paul addresses is not rivalry in general, but rivalry between just two parties. Paul has 'transformed' the actual two-way split between his party and his opponents into a notional multi-directional split for illustration.

The opponents in Corinth are not Nomists as in the Galatian letter, nor are they Gnosticizing libertines. They are Jewish. With the support of parallel passages in the New Testament and in Philo, Goulder reads 'wisdom' (*sophia*) as meaning torah in the broadest sense, *logoi* as words of pronouncements by Rabbis, and 'knowledge' (*gnosis*) as the claim to private revelations. The injunction in 1 Corinthians 4:6b not to go 'beyond what is written' therefore prohibits 'rulings of wisdom in the Jewish tradition', that is rabbinic pronouncements.

Women are more prominent in the argument than is often thought. It appears they have been leaving their husbands in order to pursue spiritual celibacy. The sexual asceticism of Paul's opponents is a deviation from normal Judaism and may be related to visionary techniques. Nevertheless, Jewish women in Corinth were grasping their new spiritual opportunities with both hands as the Petrine teaching took root. Paul therefore takes a firm line against these women: not because he is anti-women, but because he must oppose them in order to oppose the Petrine mission. This argument is somewhat confused, depends on questionable exegesis of God's Image, and requires the Peter/Paul conflict to be read into the Pastorals to provide supporting texts.

Other questions arising in the letters also issue from Peter–Paul conflicts: the refusal to eat idol meats was considered to be 'social suicide' (p. 176), and it is the strength of Petrine opposition which evokes Paul's stronger response in 2 Corinthians. Problems over the resurrection come about because the Petrines follow Philo in separating the creation of physical man (Gen. 1) from spiritual man (Gen. 2). This opens the door to the resurrection of the spiritual man in

this age, explaining their over-realised eschatology. Goulder's argument that the Petrines' christology was Ebionite is typical: Paul's opponents were Ebionitic; his opponents were Petrine; therefore Petrine christology was Ebionitic. One really wonders at this point whether a 'one size fits all' approach can do justice to both the variety and the unity evident in the New Testament.

The final chapter pulls these ideas together to form a 'scenario' which narrates his reconstruction. There are five appendices dealing with the integrity of 2 Corinthians (which Goulder defends), apostolic acts of power (which amount to Paul's endurance), 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 and 5:14-15, and socio-historical and rhetorical approaches (which Goulder dismisses). Bibliography and the usual indices follow. Greek and Hebrew are left untranslated and untransliterated. The work is at least stimulating if not ultimately convincing.

ED MOLL
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GOD'S ORDER AND NATURAL LAW:
The Works of the Laudian Divines **Iain M. MacKenzie**
Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002 x + 197 pp £15.99pb ISBN 0-7546-0843-3

The seventeenth-century Laudian divines are famous for their opposition to Puritanism, their doctrine of divine right of kings, and their strict imposition of liturgical uniformity on the English Church. While most studies of these divines have been undertaken from an exclusively political outlook, Iain MacKenzie argues that the Laudians are first and foremost theological figures, and he thus seeks to offer a full theological account of their thought.

MacKenzie identifies the concept of 'order' as the underlying theological concern of the Laudian divines, and he argues that this was essentially a theological, rather than a political, idea. For the Laudians, all things bear 'the stamp of the eternal order of the Triune God' (p. 15), and the creaturely sphere is characterised by what MacKenzie describes as 'double contingency': it is contingent both to and from God. Its contingency to God means that 'it utterly depends on Him for its existence', while its contingency from God means that 'it is created distinct from Him...and has the quality of its own identity' (p. 38). In light of this double contingency, the Laudians conceived of a natural

theology in which the rationality of the created order points beyond itself to the eternal rationality of God (p. 48).

MacKenzie's focus on order allows him to offer an interesting, even if not quite convincing, defence of William Laud's liturgical reforms. He argues that Laud was not concerned with the imposition of a strict uniformity as such, but only with a liturgical reflection of the divine order for, according to Laud, '[t]rue theology is expressed in decency of worship' (p. 101). Instead of being 'a hard and fast set of rules', the concept of order thus constituted 'a guiding principle, corresponding to the rationality which God is eternally in Himself' (p. 173).

Although MacKenzie's theological focus sometimes leads him to underestimate the important social and political dimensions of seventeenth-century religion, this book nevertheless provides a helpful balance to the predominantly political interpretations of the period. Both historically and theologically, the book's account of divine and created order is of considerable interest.

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THE NON-VIOLENT ATONEMENT **J. Denny Weaver**
Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001 246pp $22 pb
ISBN 080284908-3

This will, I suspect, be a very influential book, written with clarity and passion. I have already seen it quoted favourably by an 'Evangelical'. The author is a Mennonite, committed to pacifism. He attacks atonement doctrines that see Jesus' death as a satisfaction made to the Father. Weaver believes that such doctrines arose in the post-Constantinian church, and have served to legitimate violence and oppression. His chief target is Anselm, although he is aware that penal substitution differs from Anselm in significant respects. Weaver rightly believes that a theory of retributive justice is intrinsic to satisfactory atonement; this he rejects as incompatible with pacifism. The assumption of a pacifist position is therefore the bedrock of the book. It may be that philosophical pacifism logically leads to a rejection of penal substitution; many of us will then regard this as a reason for rejecting pacifism. Weaver's ideas are developed in conversation with black, feminist, and 'womanist' (black

feminist) theologians, and with some defenders of Anselm (but not with any of the classic exponents of penal substitution). Here he agrees with the accusation that satisfactory atonement is a form of child abuse, and also with the sidelining of Nicene-Chalcedonian Christology.

Weaver's alternative is 'Narrative Christus Victor'. This means that sin is 'bondage to the forces of evil', and salvation is 'to begin to be free from those evil forces, and to be transformed by the reign of God and to take on a life shaped- marked- by the story of Jesus, whose mission was to make visible the reign of God in our history' (p. 44). Fundamental to Jesus' mission was his practice of non-violence. Jesus' resurrection demonstrated that God's kingdom wins by non-violent means, a truth Weaver believes is taught in 'apocalyptic' terms by Revelation. Crucial to this argument is that Jesus' death was not the will of God, and was not part of the mission God gave him; it was therefore not necessary for salvation, and was not a demonstration of God's love.

Weaver's criticism of satisfactory atonement has one great flaw: the fact that Jesus forbade his followers to take up the sword does not mean, logically, that he thought it wrong for God to kill in retribution (cf. Romans 12:19). Weaver fails to deal at all with anyone who would dissent from his exegesis. Satisfactory atonement is taken out of context; thus we are told that it is an a-historical legal transaction, which does not transform the recipient's life, and cannot form a basis for ethics. However, for the Reformers penal substitution was only effective for those in union with Christ, the basis of a changed life. Little proof is offered for the accusation that satisfactory atonement has legitimated violence and oppression, other than the fact that it is not pacifist. To jump from the fact that the Father willed the Son's death, to 'child abuse' is a gross caricature.

Weaver's attempts at 'exegesis' are one of the most bizarre exercises in special pleading I have ever seen. He proceeds by systematically ignoring any text that cannot be twisted to fit into his thesis that God did not will Jesus' death. Thus there is no mention of Mark 10:45, Acts 4:28, Romans 3:25, 1 John 4:10, or the entire Gospel of John. The Exodus is referred to as 'the paradigmatic event of God's rule on behalf of God's people', with no mention of the Passover. In three pages, with no detailed exegesis, he attempts to show that the Old Testament sacrifices did not involve substitution or punishment. However, divine retributive justice is assumed on almost every page of the Bible; for example, Weaver has to

ignore the divine warrior theme. What Weaver fails to see is that if he is right, then the whole Bible is wrong about the character and purposes of God, and wrong on a massive scale. Indeed, Jesus himself was wrong when he interpreted his death through Isaiah 53, a text upon which Weaver is curiously silent. If the Bible and Jesus are this unreliable as guides to God, why should we pay attention to the scraps that Weaver has managed to salvage?

One of Weaver's key criticisms of satisfactory atonement is that the recipient is 'passive'. At this point a suspicion forms that his real objection is to salvation by grace alone. This grows stronger when we ask how Jesus' resurrection benefits us. We are told that Jesus' victory is an 'invitation to salvation...to enter a new life', and to participate in God's victory and Jesus' saving work. Christians have changed their allegiances, and demonstrate their freedom from the powers by leading a new, non-violent life. Although Weaver states that we cannot earn God's favour, this seems to be a Semi-Pelagian system in which we save ourselves by submitting to, and participating in, God's rule. I was left asking how exactly God will rescue the oppressed and deal with inveterate evil, if not through an act of judgement.

There are questions that have to be asked concerning Western Christianity's legitimisation of violence. But they cannot be answered by disregarding the biblical view that God loved us so much he took on the form of a slave and suffered his own just violence, rather than inflict it on others.

STEPHEN WALTON
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AUGUSTINE'S COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS

Introduction, text, translation and notes **Eric Plumer**

Oxford: OUP, 2003 294pp £50 h/b ISBN: 0-19-9244391

Few people realize it, but Augustine, who was by far the most prolific ancient Christian writer and one of antiquity's most significant theorists of the art of biblical interpretation, wrote only one complete commentary himself—on Galatians. As it turns out, this is the only book of the Bible which every major Latin commentator of the fourth and fifth centuries wrote on, and so Dr. Plumer has been able to compare Augustine's achievement with that of his

peers and contemporaries. The Latin text he uses is essentially that of the *Corpus Christianorum*, but the translation is entirely new as, of course, are the notes and the lengthy introduction. This edition will be of obvious importance to students of Augustine, but it also has something significant to say to biblical scholars, and especially to those interested in the history of interpretation. We find that although the commentary was written early in his career and Galatians often lends itself to anti-Manichaean polemic, Augustine uses it for that purpose much less often than we might think. There is a real debt to Marius Victorinus and a probable link to Ambrosiaster, while it is well-known that he disagreed with Jerome on some key issues—especially the rebuke which Paul administered to Peter. Jerome played this down out of deference to the great apostle, but Augustine was not afraid to say that Peter had been wrong, because his willingness to accept correction made him an even greater man than he already was!

Augustine always put Christian discipleship ahead of scholarly pedantry, which helps to explain why he was occasionally inattentive to the details of exegesis. His knowledge (or ignorance) of Greek is another question which his commentary raises, though Dr. Plumer believes that Augustine could manage the Greek text when he had to, and did so. The notes are full and helpful, and Dr. Plumer has gone out of his way to point out every allusion to, or quotation from, Scripture that he can find in the text. The result is a most serviceable edition which will remain the standard work on the subject for decades to come.

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THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL OF JESUS — Geza Vermes

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What shall we do with our scholars? After a lifetime of study and four previous books on the same topic, one of Britain's leading theological writers has come up with three 'irreconcilable variations' and 'flat contradictions' (p. 370) that mean the Gospels are a confused mixture of sayings of Jesus, elaborations by the early church, and cack-handed cover-ups by later editors in the face of unfulfilled prophesies.

The first problem is that Jesus said he had come for the lost sheep of Israel yet also commissioned disciples to evangelise the world. The second is that he thought the Kingdom of God would arrive in his lifetime and it didn't. The third is that he prophesied his arrest and execution yet also seems to be taken by surprise by them.

The real problem is that, although such apparent differences are reconcilable, Professor Vermes does not wish to do so. On the first point, Jesus simply sets out different remits for work. On the second, the kingdom comes in two stages. On the third, the cry of dereliction (Matt. 27:46) was a necessary expression of bearing our sins.

Vermes is Professor Emeritus of Jewish Studies at Oxford University. Born in Hungary in 1924, his mother was a Roman Catholic convert from Judaism. He became a Roman Catholic priest and an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls but now is 'a laicised proponent of a mild form of liberal Judaism' (A. N. Wilson, review in The Spectator, 23 Dec., 2003). The previous works are Jesus the Jew (1973), Jesus and the World of Judaism (1983), The Religion of Jesus the Jew (1993) and The Changing Faces of Jesus (2000).

Authentic Gospel gathers and analyses sayings attributed to Christ (excluding John's Gospel but including the non-Canonical Gospel of Thomas). The author's judgements are bold. So various parables are 'confused' (p. 135), 'a shambles' (p. 139) and 'unlikely to be his' (p. 162); meanwhile, the dialogue in the temptations is 'purely fictional and midrashic' (p. 174). In addition, since the term 'Son of Man' in Acts is about a third person (Jesus) but in the Gospels refers to the speaker (Jesus) so this is a 'total contradiction' (p. 265).

The real gospel of Jesus is identified as faith, prayer, the fatherhood of God, childlikeness, kingdom, healing and verbal twists (pp. 390-96). But this minimalist version is the Gospel of Vermes and should not be confused with the real thing.

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