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Book Reviews

THE MESSAGE OF EXODUS: THE DAYS OF OUR PILGRIMAGE

Alec Motyer

Leicester: IVP, 2005 336 pp £9.99pb ISBN 0-85111-296-X

This exposition of Exodus has been Motyer's companion for over three decades, and the author's familiarity with this biblical text is displayed in the confidence with which he leads the reader through the text in leaps and bounds; pausing here to examine in detail the structure and vocabulary of a short passage, speeding there over several chapters at a time to gain an overview; dwelling here on the function of a passage within Exodus, ranging there to trace a theme through the whole Bible. The sheer influence of Exodus on all Scripture mandates such a multi-layered approach and the reader is well served by it here.

Each chapter generally has footnotes and additional notes to accompany the exposition. The main text traces the contours of Exodus and usually includes something on the structure of each passage. Chiasms plausibly abound. Motyer gives a clearly Christian exposition of Exodus, couched in his characteristically vivid and didactic turn of phrase. Frequent reference is made to the line of the biblical promise and to cross-references in the New Testament so that application generally feels sure-footed. There is some helpful psychological analysis of Moses in the early chapters. Theologically the emphasis remains throughout on the sufficiency and sovereignty of God, on his free grace, and on the cross of Christ. Hebrew words are picked out for comment, usually in the footnotes, alongside the more usual references to commentaries and other secondary literature. We also find an occasional 'sidelong glance' at the documentary theory (JEDP and friends). Additional notes pick up any special issues of structure and detail not covered earlier. The treatment of chapters 27-31 is a little untidy, as the exposition (p. 278ff.) appears to restate much of the material found in the relevant additional notes (p. 258ff). The material bears repetition, but it does not make for a tight finish.

Biblical Christian expositions of Exodus like this one are hard to come by. Either commentaries pore over the detail of the biblical text but fail to give an overview of the book as a whole, or they apply the stories by analogy to New Testament teaching. Even fewer attempt to follow the line of the biblical

promise and place Exodus within the canon of Scripture. Motyer's volume on Exodus hits the spot.

ED MOLL
Basingstoke

SECOND CENTURY CHRISTIANITY: A COLLECTION OF FRAGMENTS (2nd edn.)

Robert M. Grant

Louisville, KY/London Westminster John Knox Press 2003 vi+111pp
US\$19.95pb ISBN: 0-664-22638-8

This handy paperback is a collection of translated fragments and short works by second-century Christians and pagans who wrote about Christianity. Because of the brevity of these remains, they are nowhere published as a monograph, with the result that translations can be found only in collections, of which Grant's is the most recent and affordable. This is not a mere re-issue of the first (1946) edition with a few notes added, but it is a complete re-vamping, re-arranging and re-editing of the material with some documents added and a few deleted. In some cases there are fresh translations, and a completely updated bibliography.

Unlike the first edition, this work contains an index of names, which makes it easier to use. There are two stylistic improvements in the 2003 edition which other publishers should copy. First, Grant's notes, comments and paraphrased summaries are in a typeface different from that of the translated text, which enables the reader to distinguish at a glance the original material from the twenty-first century additions. Second, there is only one sequence of endnote numbering for the whole book, which relieves the reader of much flipping back and forth to find the note relating to the endnote number. This annoyance which Grant's book avoids, is particularly worse when only the name, not the number, of a chapter appears at the top of the page of the main text while only the chapter number, not the name, appears in the endnote section.

However, there are short-comings. First, the material on the Gnostics is not from their own writings but consists of writings from their opponents who were trying to refute them. Although the unsafe method of relying on the Gnostics' enemies was an unavoidable necessity before the Nag Hammadi

finds were made available after 1955, one would hope that a twenty-first century compiler would employ more primary material. No longer in *Second Century Christianity* are there quotations and extracts on Marcion and his school. Also missing since the first edition is the Muratorian Fragment, the mid-second-century document that was the first known canon of the New Testament. On the other hand, it may have been omitted because of strong doubts recently raised by scholars who believe it to be much later than the A.D. 100s. Especially for quotations from pagan authors, this collection of translated early sources is an excellent sourcebook for the beginner, whether on his or her own or in introductory seminary classes.

DAVID W. BRATTSTON
Nova Scotia

HOW THE BIBLE BECAME A BOOK William M. Schniedewind
Cambridge University Press, 2004 257pp. £25hb ISBN:0-521-82946-1

At last, an affordable hardback from a university press! This is a double blessing in this case, because Professor Schniedewind's thesis is one which will overturn most recent Old Testament scholarship and restore faith in a conservative dating of the ancient Hebrew texts. As he points out, many scholars today assume that the Old Testament was committed to writing at a very late date—certainly not before the exile, probably in the Persian period and possibly even later. By undertaking a careful study of writing and book production in ancient Palestine, Schniedewind has managed to disprove all this, and in the process has created an entirely different picture of how we got our Old Testament.

On the basis of archaeological discoveries, he has been able to show that writing became common in Palestine during the reign of Hezekiah, and a century or so later, under his great-grandson Josiah, it had become normal in many different classes of society. After that, it remained in general use, but the poverty of the post-exilic period and the gradual advance of Aramaic as the spoken vernacular precluded a renaissance of Hebrew literature at that time. Furthermore, in purely linguistic terms, most of the Old Testament is written in classical, pre-exilic Hebrew, which can be clearly distinguished from the later variety, and which would have been as difficult for Ezra and Nehemiah

to imitate as it would be for us to write like Shakespeare. The conclusion must be that the Torah and the Deuteronomic history (at least) are pre-exilic for the most part, with perhaps only a few editorial additions from a later period.

The first four books of the Pentateuch show clear signs of having originated in an oral culture, whereas Deuteronomy belongs to the written world of later times. This means that Genesis–Numbers were fashioned out of traditions passed on by word of mouth over many centuries, a view which basically blows the documentary hypothesis to pieces. As Schniedewind points out, the oral background to these books means that E, J and P never existed as documents! According to him, it was Hezekiah who first ordered things to be written down, and the texts therefore reflect the social and political priorities of his time, not least his desire to reunite north and south in Israel after the destruction of the Samarian kingdom in 722 B.C. Schniedewind maintains, for example, that the book of Joshua has a northern slant precisely because Hezekiah wanted to emphasize his claim to the whole of the promised land. Deuteronomy was put together under Josiah, but not (as some have imagined) by Jeremiah, who was an opponent of the new trend towards writing instead of oral preaching.

Some of Schniedewind's conclusions will certainly be challenged. Jeremiah was not afraid of writing when it suited him, and to interpret him as a traditionalist defender of oral prophecy will seem a bit far-fetched to many. Likewise, some of the other 'allusions' detected by Schniedewind to events in the time of Hezekiah or Josiah (in writings supposedly much older) may have other explanations which would make them even older. Nevertheless, we must remember what he is fighting against and applaud him for his courage and his careful scholarship. Many of the assumptions taken for granted by mainstream Old Testament scholars in recent years will now have to be reconsidered, and if this book is basically right, they will have to be abandoned for a much more conservative approach. Archaeology, which has so often been challenged and discounted of late, has come back with a vengeance, offering a persuasive case for the theses which Professor Schniedewind is trying to present.

What is most commendable about this book is that it is not written in scholarly jargon, inaccessible to the general public. On the contrary, anyone reasonably familiar with the Bible ought to be able to follow it, although Schniedewind has in no way sacrificed the high standards of scholarship which he is known

to maintain. This book is a must for all serious students of the Old Testament which it brings to life in an unusual setting and helps us to understand the true origins of Israel's written culture. A final concluding postscript applies the lessons of oral tradition versus written record to the New Testament, with basically similar results, though the time period involved is obviously much shorter. God's Word is first and foremost an oral medium, a personal encounter with him, and only after that does it crystallise in written form, so that it can be preserved for future generations. More work will certainly need to be done on this process, but Professor Schniedewind has pointed the way to what promises to become an exciting new phase in biblical studies.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

HISTORY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION William Yarchin
Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004 444pp. \$34.95hb
ISBN: 1-56563-720-8

In this book Professor Yarchin has provided the university world with a much needed textbook in the history of biblical interpretation. His approach complements that of other scholars in the field, which is now becoming increasingly well-populated with valuable reference works. What he does is take selections from the writings of prominent biblical interpreters of the past, which he introduces with enough background information to guide the reader through each one. Particularly important is the fact that he starts at the beginning, in ancient times, and gives a good deal of weight both to the church fathers and to the rabbinic tradition, both of which are too often overlooked in Christian circles today. Some of the texts he uses have never been translated into English before, and are therefore doubly valuable to students, whilst others are not particularly easy to find. On the whole his selections are judicious and give a fair picture not only of the writers he represents but of their period too.

When we look at the church fathers, for example, there are passages from Origen and Augustine, but also from lesser-known figures like Tyconius and Theodore of Mopsuestia (whom Yarchin misleadingly identifies as 'Syrian'). Others could certainly have been added—Irenaeus and Chrysostom perhaps,

or Jerome—but there is only so much that can be included, and the breadth of coverage is a fair picture of the early church’s understanding of its sacred Scriptures. The rabbinic selections will be entirely unknown to most Christians, and their inclusion makes a most welcome addition to the book, as do the pre-Christian texts from Aristeas and Philo.

It is only when we come to the modern period that questions inevitably arise. That Calvin will be included goes without saying, but why is there no Luther? There was also some interesting work being done by Roman Catholic scholars in the sixteenth century, but they have been ignored completely, and we cannot follow the debates which raged between the two major branches of the Western church at the time of the parting of the ways. Instead, we are given a steady diet of post-Enlightenment liberals, some of whom are extremely uninteresting and will probably be forgotten in a generation or two. To be fair, Yarchin has included some modern conservative writers (Childs, Steinmetz) but not nearly enough. It would have been nice to see C. S. Lewis’ “Fern seed and elephants” included, not least as an antidote to Bultmann, but no such luck, and of course there is nothing to represent Warfield and the ‘old Princeton’ school.

In Dr. Yarchin’s defence, we must admit that the modern period is certainly very difficult, because we do not have the same perspective on our own time as we have on earlier ages. Justin Martyr, for example, may be a fairly minor figure, but he has an established place in the tradition to which Walter Wink or Phyllis Tribble can only aspire. The dilemma for the historical anthologist is that classical writers are liable to get squeezed out by the need to represent current, more trendy ones whose long-term significance is unpredictable. It may be true that we have to engage with our contemporaries in a way that we do not have to do with someone like Gregory the Great, but students need to know that Gregory will still be read when at least some of the later contributors will have been completely forgotten.

At the same time, there is no doubt that scholars like W. F. Albright and Brevard Childs have broken genuinely new ground and it seems likely that they will remain major figures in a hundred years’ time, so it is good to see that they have been included in this collection. Dr. Yarchin has taken on a difficult task and, generally speaking, he has performed it well. He has concentrated on

theoretical writings about the Bible, rather than on actual commentaries, but that dimension can be supplemented from elsewhere. What we have here is a very serviceable introduction to one important aspect of the question. Readers interested in the subject will want to study Dr. Yarchin's choices carefully and absorb what he has to say about them along the way. There are other collections to choose from and no doubt more will be forthcoming, but this is a particularly useful one, especially for the pre-modern period, and its accessible style means that it deserves to be influential among lay people as well as pastors, teachers and students of the discipline of biblical hermeneutics.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

MISSION-SHAPED CHURCH G. Cray (ed.)
London: Church House Publishing, 2004 175pp £10.95pb
ISBN:0-7151-4013-2

This is a Church of England report that has proved a best seller in the circles for which it was written. It follows up a report of a decade earlier entitled 'Breaking New Ground' that was intended to establish good practice for church planting initiatives. The work of Graham Cray and his colleagues has been eagerly seized upon by those who are realistic about the Church of England's failings in mission. Some of its recommendations are already having a considerable influence.

But how should we assess this report? In many ways there is much to be welcomed. It is hard for reports to be really radical but this one does at least get to grips with realities about English society that need to be recognised if outreach with the Christian message is to work better. Its basic thesis is that the parish system of the Church of England should be retained, but that the existence of social networks in the Western world must lead to fresh expressions of church. The idea is that Anglicans should be with people 'how' they are and not merely 'where' they are (p. 12). This is a key point and the report gives a number of examples which demonstrates what this means. It is this which lies behind one of its vital recommendations, namely that the canonical right of an incumbent to exclude the presence of further Anglican churches in his parish should be abolished (pp. 141-2).

However it would be wrong to think that this is anything close to the solution to the Church of England's problems in this area. Perhaps a church report cannot do much better than this, but its theology is very weak. Chapter 5 is entitled 'theology for a missionary church' but the key section within it on Anglican ecclesiology (pp. 99-102) betrays the way in which the institution is seen as the key to mission rather than the gospel. Being Anglican (which should be the same as 'being Christian') is identified as being in communion with the See of Canterbury, and we are told that a 'proper relationship with the bishop of the diocese becomes crucial' (p. 101). Developing events within the Anglican Communion are demonstrating the absurdity of such statements. The reality is that effective mission depends on the identification of the apostolic gospel as of supreme importance, with church organisation and officers as the means of supporting its effective proclamation.

In conclusion we may say that it is worth reading this report for the significant steps which it does take. Nevertheless if we are to be delivered from mere pragmatism (which will ultimately fail) then far more attention must be paid to the way in which the Scriptures provide the key to mission and catholicity.

MARK BURKILL

Leytonstone

GOSPEL WOMEN: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels

Richard Bauckham

London: T & T Clark, 2002 343pp pb ISBN: 0-567-08870-7

Richard Bauckham is an extremely well informed writer, who writes creditably on a wide variety of subjects. He has a positive attitude to the Bible, and takes its statements very seriously. He also has strong feminist sympathies, though he does not allow these to lead him into either absurdity or heresy. Altogether there is much to learn from his book.

Some of the 'named women in the Gospels' are the subjects of chapters, whereas others are just mentioned in passing. Early patristic evidence and rabbinical evidence of various periods is drawn upon in illustrating the Bible account.

Chapter 7 is largely devoted to the reference to Salome in the alleged Secret

Gospel of Mark, quoted in the alleged letter of Clement of Alexandria to Theodorus. This letter was first published by the eccentric American scholar Morton Smith, who was unable to direct people to the original document from which he claimed to have copied it, and is suspected by many of having invented it himself. The late Professor Edward Hardy, who knew Smith, told the reviewer that he believed him capable of such a fraud. Probably in time, the 'Secret Gospel of Mark' will be ranked with the Pfaffian fragments of Irenaeus and the Piltdown skull, as a clever man's perverse attempt to deceive the world by fabricating evidence for a favourite theory (in this case, a very unpleasant one).

Chapter 5, 'Joanna the Apostle', has gained some notoriety even in advance of the publication of the book containing it. The author goes to great lengths to establish that, in the very ambiguous verse, Romans 16:7, Junia is probably a female name, and that she and Andronicus are not improbably called apostles (meaning missionaries). He then resorts to pure guesswork, and contends that Junia is the same as Joanna of Luke 8:3, because the names sound somewhat similar, and that Andronicus is a new name adopted by her husband Chuza, Herod's steward! Incidentally 'the apostles' (with the article) is a New Testament expression which almost invariably means the Twelve, or the Twelve with Paul: the author apparently thinks that there was a definite body of missionaries which could be given the same title, but there is no evidence of this. Since Andronicus and Junia were 'in Christ before' Paul, it seems much more likely that in the early days of the Jerusalem church they were of note in the apostolic circle, but as 'elder brethren' (Acts 15:23), not as apostles.

ROGER BECKWITH
Oxford

HOLY SCRIPTURE A Dogmatic Sketch

John Webster

Cambridge: University Press, 2003 144pp £32.50hb/£12.95pb
ISBN: 0-521-53846-7

One of the more intriguing aspects of recent theology is the renewed interest which there seems to be in the Bible as the fundamental source of Christian doctrine. Within the past two or three years there have been at least three major studies of this question, all of them by evangelical Anglicans—Peter Jensen, Timothy Ward and now John Webster. Far from developing a single

line of thought, the three authors approach their common subject in very different ways. Archbishop Jensen (*The Doctrine of Revelation*) begins with the gospel, Timothy Ward (*Word and Supplement*) concentrates on literary critical theories and John Webster focuses mainly on the philosophical problems associated with the concept of revelation.

How is it possible for a human text to be the Word of God? The history of Christianity, and more particularly the history of reformed theology, is full of answers to that question and Webster brings his own, fresh approach to this perennial discussion. He steers clear of the inspiration theories current in much of modern American evangelicalism, and the word ‘inerrancy’ never once appears in his book. He objects to this kind of approach mainly because it takes the Bible out of the world, turning it into a supernatural artefact divorced from the life of the church. This was not the way of the incarnate Christ, nor can it be an adequate description of God’s self-revelation to us. Instead, Webster tackles the question from the standpoint of God’s holiness. As he explains it, the holiness of Scripture derives from the fact that God has taken human writings and claimed them for himself, as vehicles by which he speaks to his people. According to Webster, this way of explaining the matter accommodates all the various discoveries of modern biblical criticism, and protects Scripture from attacks on its historical accuracy and the like. To say that God has adopted (fallible) human texts is not the same as saying that he gave certain (infallible) words to particular authors, and so the Bible is just like the apostles, or indeed all Christians—an imperfect instrument of divine grace.

But if it is true that we hold God’s treasure in earthen vessels, that does not mean that the treasure is not there. Webster shows us how God shaped the canon of Scripture over time within the context of his covenant people, who have been drawn to worship him by the proclamation of the message which that canon contains. The church has not stood over Scripture in judgement but under it; its own existence has been constituted by sustained obedience to the Word which that Scripture contains. The health of the believing community is therefore to be measured by the degree to which it is broken by the proclamation of the Word and reconstituted by its saving message. The Bible is the canon by which the quality of our obedience to Christ is assessed; if we depart from its teaching, then we depart from the Saviour and lose the grace which he gives to those who submit to his will.

There is room for argument about the precise nature of biblical inspiration, and not everyone will be persuaded that Webster has found the best way of describing it. But no faithful believer can quarrel with what he has to say about the importance of obedience to the Bible, and it is painfully obvious from the troubles in which the church now finds itself that it is here that we have fallen down. This is a short but a very demanding book; Webster makes no concessions to those unfamiliar with philosophical theology, and he frequently refers to Protestant divines of the seventeenth century, of whom few people today have ever heard.

The non-specialist will have to take time and ponder his arguments very carefully, and it must be said that this study is well over the heads of the average church congregation. But having said that, it makes important points in a new and challenging way. Webster has engaged with the modern world and offered it a thesis which it must respect, whether it is finally persuaded by it or not. Evangelical readers will rejoice that this is so, even if they feel that Professor Webster has shortchanged traditional theories of biblical inspiration. If this book succeeds in stirring up further debate it will have served its purpose well, and there can be no doubt that it grasps the heart of the matter—obedience—with a clarity seldom seen in theological works of any kind today.

GERALD BRAY

Cambridge

THE CALL FOR WOMEN BISHOPS

Harriet Harris and Jane Shaw (eds.)

London: SPCK, 2004 160 pp £12.99 pb ISBN: 0281056218

This book grew out of a short booklet *Women and Episcopacy* (2002) written while the Rochester Report *Women Bishops in the Church of England?* (2004) was in preparation. That many of the cogent arguments found their way into the Report may be a testimony to the original booklet.

The twenty-three contributions vary in length from a single page to substantial essays and are grouped under four headings: 'The Call for Change', 'Tradition', 'Authority', 'The Church and the World'. Nine are by bishops, and four of those by women.

Together these chapters represent a joint effort written from a very wide range of theological perspectives. Some state their outlook with startling candour: for instance a Roman Catholic advocates that ‘new possibilities present themselves if one sets aside claims to textual authority’ (p. 78), a denial of Scriptural authority; on the need for the church to be in tune with the surrounding culture’s aims, an Anglican writes that ‘The Anglican Church in England...is unable to make her full social contribution because she is perceived as institutionally sexist and not in harmony with the key goals of the wider national and international communities’ (p. 179), a denial of the church’s distinctive message; on the Bible’s culture: an academic who provides the Afterword states that ‘Misogyny is a sin....The cultures of the Bible participate in it...we cannot take the human authors’ claims to divine authorisation (e.g. of the genocides in Joshua and Judges and the holiness code of Leviticus) at face value’ (pp. 193-4), a denial of the inspiration of Scripture.

The persuasive appeal of the arguments taken as a whole is bound to be reduced by their theological diversity. Contributors’ attempts to take account of their opponents’ views also vary considerably: John Barton mischievously caricatures the arguments he tries to refute. He also takes the curious view that because a woman bishop is not in authority, evangelical arguments about authority are therefore unfounded. Rosy Ashley, in an otherwise cogent essay, follows him and writes, ‘To imply that Bishops have headship is at odds with the dictates of the gospel and is anyway not borne out by experience’ (p. 107). Her essay is notable for setting out to respond on evangelical terms to evangelical arguments, having taken pains to try to grasp her opponents’ conservative views. Most of the arguments and misunderstandings in other chapters simply rehearse entrenched debates.

Now that the Rochester Report has been published and summarises the main arguments on both sides with clarity and brevity, one might ask what, if anything, is added by the volume under review. We may answer that the Rochester report does not major on human interest stories. Three senior female clerics (one each from Anglican, Methodist and Baptist denominations) tell their stories in the present volume and while the argument from experience is unlikely to convince everyone, personal accounts are sometimes fairly interesting. A different kind of ‘story’ is told by Archbishop Peter Carnley who explains why formal legislation for extended episcopal oversight was necessary

on pragmatic grounds before permission for women bishops could be sought in Australia. Finally, there is an honest, shrewd, and often wise reflection by Penny Jamieson, Bishop of Dunedin, on 'Authority'. Although she writes from a theologically liberal point of view, she does so with good observation and the reader can empathise with her world as it is seen from the inside. This book may not shed much light on the debate about women Bishops but, at its best, it throws a little warmth into the arena.

ED MOLL
Basingstoke

HOW DID YOU GET IN THERE?

Being the memoirs of the Reverend Alexander Lord

Llanwrst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2003 191pp £7.50pb

ISBN: 0-86381-835-8

The name of Alexander Lord will not be widely known in Church of England circles today, but it will be remembered with real affection and great gratitude by those whom he helped to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and encouraged in their discipleship during his more than seventy years of ministry as a Church Army evangelist and then as an ordained minister.

Younger readers (who would do well to be introduced to this book) will meet with a very different church from that of today. Those were the days of the Church Army treks sharing the Gospel en route, and of their vans touring the villages, towns and cities of the country to conduct missions in parishes that were sympathetic to the Gospel. In these days of ecumenism, it is salutary to read of an incumbent being reprimanded by his bishop for arranging an ecumenical service of Holy Communion at which, while he presided, Free Church ministers would minister the Word (p. 145)!

Alex's ministry took him on a north-south progression from curacies at St. Mary's, Wakefield, and Thornham in Blackburn Diocese to incumbencies at St. James, Clitheroe, Lancashire, Madeley in Shropshire and St. Illogan in Cornwall. There are illuminating anecdotes which reflect the ministry of one who could preach the gospel in season and out of season. In retirement he has developed a flair for line drawing, so the book is well-illustrated with drawings of his various

churches and parsonages together with family and other photographs.

It is a pity that the author does not appear to have had a careful proof reader or editor, for the text is in places repetitive, and would benefit from a family tree and map of the area in which he grew up. Archbishop Moule (p. 72) should be Mowll, and Dr. Gilbert, Principal of the London College of Divinity, did not spell his name with a ‘u’, to mention two more outstanding mistakes. There is also rather a patronising touch when the author describes a visit to a mining village. Having remarked that the miners did not know how to manage their money, spending much of it on gambling and drink, he comments ‘many of the men were quite intelligent and one of them was ordained and became the Principal of Wycliffe Hall College, Oxford’. He had obviously forgotten that Geoffrey Shaw was a ‘Bevin boy’.

These memoirs serve as a reminder of that significant number of men who, through generations, with little formal educational background, yet with a clear sense of God’s calling and a heart for people and the gospel, have served faithfully and fruitfully in the unsung corners of God’s vineyard. Recently widowed, Alex pays frequent tribute to his wife of fifty-four years with whom he shared what was obviously a real partnership in the gospel. The title of the book is not meant to question how he came to be in the ordained ministry, but was put to him by a child in a sweet shop in his first living. She could not understand how he got into his dog-collar, and had to be shown the stud at the back of his shirt!

DAVID WHEATON

Chesham

UNPACKING THE GIFT. Anglican Resources for Theological Reflection on *The Gift of Authority* Peter Fisher (ed)

London: Church House Publishing, 2002 122pp. £8.95pb

ISBN: 0-7151-5767-1

For those who may have forgotten, *The Gift of Authority* is the latest product of the Anglican–Roman Catholic dialogue which has been going, off and on, since 1960. By touching on the question of the papacy, the agreed statement entered a highly sensitive area which, in many ways, is the make-or-break issue for the future of inter-church relations. Friendliness is all very well, but if there

is ever to be any real progress towards church unity, then a common approach to church government is essential and, in the case of Rome, that means accommodating the holy see and all that it stands for.

Unpacking the Gift is a response to this agreed statement written by a group of Anglicans who in principle support the aims of ecumenical dialogue and are in no sense anti-Roman. That makes it all the more remarkable to observe the general consensus among them—that the papacy and the doctrine of the church which lies behind it, is an obstacle to church union which is all but insurmountable.

The fact is that there can be no union with Rome except on Rome's terms. The whole gist of 'dialogue' with other churches moves in that direction. How far can Anglicans accept Roman teachings? To what extent can Anglicanism absorb a Roman ecclesiology? How can the Anglican Communion take on board the papal office, or 'Petrine ministry' as it is now known in ecumenical circles? The discussion never goes the other way, as Martyn Percy (one of the contributors) has the audacity to point out. Rome is not interested in absorbing the insights of Anglicanism (whatever they might be) for the simple reason that since it is already the church in its fullness, there is nothing left for it to absorb!

In another paper, Martin Davie points out that the whole dialogue takes for granted a number of assumptions which cannot be proved. For example, it assumes that bishops are the guardians of the church's faith and are therefore uniquely qualified to interpret what that should be—clergy and laity do not count. It also assumes that Peter was the privileged successor of Jesus, that he was the first bishop of Rome, and that he passed on his unique authority to his successors. All these propositions are highly debatable (to put it mildly) but they are never properly discussed.

Other issues which come into play are things like the *consensus fidelium*, or universal agreement of the church, which is supposed to be the guarantee of truth. But there have been many times in church history when the truth has been hidden, only to be rediscovered by a single individual, who then had to fight the entire establishment to get his message accepted. Athanasius, Martin Luther—how do people like that fit into a church governed in the way that Rome now is? Fortunately, the papers were written before the recent scandals over paedophilia broke out in the Roman church, because if they had been taken

into consideration, the negative comments might have been more barbed than they are. It is ironic that just when leading Roman Catholics are demanding an end to clericalism in their own church, Protestant divines should be falling for it as an essential ingredient in the progress of ecumenism!

An interesting thing about this book is the way in which its authors are prepared to criticise the Church of England, not least a pattern of synodical government creating an adversarial, ‘winner/loser’ situation. Those who ‘lost’ the argument over women’s ordination know only too well how this can harm the church; it would be interesting to know how far the writers concerned would be prepared to go to restore the kind of consensual harmony which they so much desire. As ecumenical documents go, this one reaches a level of plain speaking and honesty which is all too rare, and the church of England is to be commended for sponsoring its publication. It is time that ecumenical dialogue ceased to be a polite exchange of pleasantries and became a real discussion of genuine differences. If this book helps that process along, then it will have done us all a great service.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CATHOLIC-PROTESTANT DIALOGUE. AN EVANGELICAL ASSESSMENT

Anthony A. S. Lane

Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002 272pp £18.95pb ISBN:0-567-08822-7

This book is written for those who have been a bit bewildered by the flood of recent ecumenical discussions about justification by faith. Tony Lane sets out what he conceives the traditional Protestant doctrine on this subject to be, exemplifying it mainly from the writings of John Calvin. He then resumé’s the stance taken by the Roman Catholic council of Trent, before going on to look at eight recent statements which in their different ways try to overcome traditional misperceptions and differences of approach.

Lane recognises that in some respects this form of proceeding will appear unsatisfactory, because it tends to ignore the subtle differences which exist between Protestants, and especially between Lutherans and Reformed

(Calvinists). The fact that most of the modern discussion of the subject has taken the Lutheran standpoint as normative, whereas in some respects the Reformed position is closer to that of traditional Catholicism, makes this approach somewhat awkward at times. On the other hand, there is no doubt that he is correct when he says that Protestants are generally far more united on this subject than on many others, and that intra-Protestant differences should not be exaggerated. The main issue, of course, is how justification is to be related to sanctification, and it is generally agreed that the Reformed approach is more explicit in the importance it gives to the latter—a fact which brings it closer to traditional Catholic concerns.

One of the great strengths of this book is that it prints most of the standard doctrinal statements on the subject in full. This may be difficult for some readers who are not used to the tight language which such documents normally employ, but it will be invaluable for serious students, who often do not know where to go to find this material. Lane begins with Hans Küng's famous thesis, published as the book *Justification*, in which he argues that Karl Barth's doctrine is fundamentally compatible with that of the council of Trent. This came as a big surprise to Barth himself, though he acknowledged that Küng had understood him correctly. The real question is whether Küng had understood Trent, which Barth doubted, though Rome never repudiated his thesis. The conclusion therefore seems to be that Barth's doctrine is at least one possible interpretation of Catholic teaching, even if other interpretations remain equally valid.

From there Lane goes on to discuss the fruits of more recent ecumenical dialogues, some of them in particular denominational contexts (Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran) and others of a more general nature. It is unfortunate, given the author's exposition of a classical Reformed view, that no Reformed–Catholic dialogue is discussed in detail, but perhaps there has so far been none of the stature and depth of the ones represented here.

The last part of the book outlines the key theological issues at stake, and Lane very judiciously points out that, although there has been a remarkable degree of convergence between Protestants and Catholics in recent years, very real differences still remain. This is an important reminder, particularly as so many ecumenical statements seem allergic to the bad news that there are still some

apparently insurmountable barriers preventing reconciliation between the great strands of Western Christendom.

In sum, this book is a valuable resource for those who want guidance in this area, and it will be particularly valuable to students needing a framework for writing an essay on the subject.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

LEVITICUS

Jacob Milgrom

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004 388pp £18.99hb
ISBN:0800695143

Busy preachers who were somewhat overawed by the scale and cost of Jacob Milgrom's mammoth 3 volume commentary on Leviticus in the Anchor Bible series may be glad to see that he has recently published this more accessible volume. This new commentary is Milgrom's attempt to open up the underlying ethical values of a book which seems predominantly concerned only with ritual.

Milgrom interprets the priestly section of Leviticus (chs. 1–16) as exemplifying the values of life and death through the rituals and laws it describes. He memorably describes the sanctuary as a 'Priestly Picture of Dorian Gray', showing the scars of the people's sins and thus requiring regular purification. In the Holiness code (chs. 17-27), a similar pattern obtains, but the focus has shifted from ritual to ethical purity and the domain of the sacred has been expanded from the sanctuary to cover the entire land.

Rather than providing a verse by verse commentary, Milgrom offers a discussion of one or more selected themes from each chapter with additional notes on selected texts. This allows him to give a more detailed treatment of these, but inevitably the reader will find himself frequently frustrated by the lack of comment on difficult and important verses. Although Milgrom's aim is to expose the underlying values of Leviticus, there is little discussion of the ethical implications of these values. This makes for a tantalising read which raises many more questions than it ever attempts to answer.

For a short commentary, with a declared focus on values rather than rituals, there is an unexpectedly large amount of tedious technical detail describing the finer points of animal anatomy, skin diseases and the like. There is also a significant emphasis on the comparison with other ancient Near East practices. This does offer some illuminating insights into Israelite religion but again, it is somewhat overplayed.

Milgrom's previous work on Leviticus has shown that his strengths lie in his scholarly discussions of critical issues. Unfortunately, the format of this commentary means that it lacks the precision and careful evaluation that is typical of his other work. He frequently makes claims and draws inferences without sufficient discussion to enable the reader to assess their validity. At times this can be actually misleading. For example, on p. 17, Milgrom makes a point about the nature of sacrifice based on the root of the Hebrew word for sacrifice. Because he does not identify the word, unless the reader has a good knowledge of Hebrew, it would be impossible to work out that he is talking about the word usually rendered 'offering' and not the one translated 'sacrifice' in most English versions.

Disappointingly, then, it seems that in order to benefit from Milgrom's undoubted expertise, I shall have to continue saving up for his earlier commentary.

ROS CLARKE
London

GOD'S LAST WORDS Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism **David S. Katz**

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004 397pp £25hb
ISBN: 0-300-10115-5

Professor Katz is a Jewish scholar who teaches at the University of Tel-Aviv, which gives him a unique perspective on the way in which the Bible has been read in the English-speaking world during the centuries of Protestantism. So unique in fact, that to be honest, it is extremely difficult to say precisely what this book is. It is not a history of the translation of the Bible into English, though that certainly comes into the picture, especially in the opening chapters. Nor is it really a study of biblical criticism, at least not as a scholarly discipline,

though inevitably that too is a recurring theme. It is certainly not a study of the way in which the Bible has influenced English culture more generally, nor does it have much to say about what is now usually called ‘spirituality’. It is perhaps best described as a series of reflections on significant figures from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, most of whom would nowadays be classified as amateurs in the study of the Bible.

Professor Katz is at his best when he is recounting anecdotes, and he has a remarkable ability to come up with obscure facts about otherwise well-known people like Sir Isaac Newton and Samuel Johnson. The eighteenth is clearly his favourite century, because it was then that modern science was developing in the hands of people who were in most respects gifted amateurs. Almost all of them approached the Bible as a book of sacred truth, even if their methods of discerning that truth sometimes bordered on the fantastic. What is especially interesting is the degree to which Christian thinkers were influenced by their Jewish contacts, an aspect of biblical studies which Gentile writers tend to gloss over, but which is obviously of great significance to Professor Katz.

The author of this book loves a good story, and it is his ability to recount the eccentricities of great minds which makes this such a readable and fascinating book. At the same time, it has to be said that Professor Katz does not necessarily let truth stand in the way of the narrative, nor does he confine himself to his immediate topic if a particularly exciting tangent pops up along the way. Some stories are so good that he tells them twice, such as the fact that Erasmus re-translated the last few verses of the New Testament into Greek for his famous edition of 1516, because the manuscript which he was using lacked its final folio. The result is that from a scholarly point of view, this book is eclectic and at times infuriating, particularly at the end when he characterises American evangelicalism as ‘fundamentalism’ and then cites Hal Lindsey as its most prominent representative. No serious scholar would do that, but Lindsey is just the kind of off-beat personality whom Professor Katz cannot resist.

To sum up, this book is not a very reliable guide to the history of the Bible in the English-speaking world, but it does provide us with a vast amount of anecdotal information about the subject which one would not easily find elsewhere. It is perhaps best described as a series of after-dinner speeches which have been collected and reduced to writing. Those who already know

something about the subject will be both entertained and informed by Professor Katz' approach, but anyone looking for a good introduction to the question will be misled by the eccentricities and misconceptions which he brings to his subject and relates as if they were undisputed fact. Finally, the book is extremely useful as a pointer to the Jewish dimension of Bible reading, which goes right back to the fifteenth century and even earlier. This has been neglected for far too long, and Professor Katz has done us all a great service by reminding us of just how significant the Jewish input into an ostensibly Christian hermeneutical enterprise actually was. For that alone, this book deserves to be read and studied, and some at least of its conclusions might well find their way into university courses and guidebooks to the subject of biblical interpretation and its relationship to the modern world.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

FAITH, SCIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

John Polkinghorne

London: SPCK, 2000 xvi+208pp £11.99hb ISBN: 0-281-05263-8

This book is by the well known mathematical physicist who retired from his chair in Cambridge to be ordained and became Canon Theologian at Liverpool. His masterly style shows his wide grasp of his subject. It is by no means an elementary introduction; it assumes considerable intellectual ability in the reader. Whether one agrees with its point of view or not, it is well worth the effort of reading.

It comprises nine chapters, the majority representing papers or lectures. The first section is on issues and (quoting from his Preface), 'its basic conviction is that science and theology each have things of value to say to each other because both, in their differing domains of experience, are concerned with the search for truth attained by the formation and evaluation of motivated beliefs'. Science's task meets 'an inescapable degree of precariousness present in all forms of human search for knowledge', and a similar situation holds in theology, where 'theology's appeal to revelation' he sees as 'recourse to illuminating experience, analogous to science's recourse to observation and experiment, and not to an appeal to some ineffable and unquestionable

authority'. 'Scripture is the record of remarkable individual encounters with the divine, but it is neither uniform in its character nor immune from critical evaluation' (would he commend 'Thomas called Didymus' then?)

All this, I am afraid, leaves your reviewer rather puzzled; does he mean that in 'encounters with the divine' God is always either unable or unwilling to make himself perfectly clear, so that the one he encounters can only pass on to others what is in part an 'inescapably precarious' account of what was given him? and that he (with his hearers) has therefore to exercise a 'critical evaluation' of it? I do not doubt that the author could answer these objections, but I am not sure his reply could do justice to the nature of biblical revelation as all in the main churches have historically held it. For if this 'revelation' is not unambiguously expressed in the first place, it can hardly be used as a standard for judging its recipients later (Deut. 30:11ff).

The author stresses his belief in the *kenotic* nature of God's creatorship, that he has stepped aside to allow the natural order to engage in self-creation, but this left me wondering quite how he would interpret such verses as Matthew 6:30 or Mark 4:39f without emptying them of power to lift the sorely tried? Have our scientist-theologians taken sufficiently to heart the moving words of Jesus in Matthew 11:25f?

This reviewer finished the book with too much of a sense of God as something to theologize about, rather than as someone to obey. For the latter to receive its right emphasis there must inevitably be more reference to Scripture (Matt. 4:1-11). But I certainly found this book interesting and informative, and am grateful for the opportunity of reading it.

DOUGLAS SPANNER
Wantage