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The New Moses: A Matthean Typology

Dale C. Allison, Jr

Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1994; 396pp., \$25; ISBN 0 8006 2699 0

Allison opens his study with a response to the 'new criticism' on the interpretation of texts. He defends the interpreter's attempt to find an author's intent behind a work, and thereby lays the groundwork for his chosen approach to Matthew – the historical-critical method, with an emphasis on redaction criticism. Through this approach, he hopes to find texts which influenced the First Evangelist's presentation of Jesus resembling Moses.

Allison divides his study into two parts. Part I comprises twenty-six studies on Jewish and Christian figures who are at times endowed with a Moses typology. The reader may be surprised to find such characters as David, Jeremiah and the Suffering Servant included among those who more readily resemble the law-giver, such as Joshua and Elijah. Allison's examination of ten Christian figures naturally commences with Jesus, with passages in John and Acts highlighted among others. After Christ, he finds numerous Christians donning the mantle of Moses – from Peter and Paul to Gregory Thaumaturgus, Benedict of Nursia and even Constantine. This survey into Judaism and Christianity leaves the reader impressed with the vitality of Moses typologies, and hence clearly demonstrates that Moses comparisons were alive and well during Matthew's time. One of Allison's conclusions which has special significance for what follows is the dissimilarity between the Jewish and Christian texts: 'the Jewish typologies tend to be more subtle, less explicit than those in the Christian tradition'.

In Part II, Allison weighs the evidence in several passages in search of a new Moses motif in the First Gospel. Although some passages are found wanting, as in the miracles of chh. 8-9, the missionary discourse in ch. 10 and the woes of ch. 23, Allison discovers seven other texts where a Moses typology is definitely present. They are as follows: the infancy narrative (particularly 2:1-12); the temptation narrative; the opening to the Sermon on the Mount; Jesus' relationship to the Law as a new lawgiver (5:17-48); the great thanksgiving (11:25-30); the transfiguration; and the Gospel's conclusion. Perhaps the greatest surprise here is that Allison argues forcefully for a Moses typology in the temptation narrative when, in his and W.D. Davies' recent ICC Matthew commentary, the issue is hardly discussed.

Allison ends his study with seven appendices dedicated to tempering or rebutting other assessments of Matthew's Moses typology. This section is among the most fascinating of the book, for not only does he comment on influential works by the likes of W.D. Davies, J.D. Kingsbury and

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T.L. Donaldson, but also articulates a cogent method which is not always recognized. For instance, he points out that two (or more) Christologies can exist side by side in a text, without one being subordinated to or cancelling out the other. This issue raises its head in the transfiguration narrative, where Jesus is identified as the Son of God and a new Moses. Allison also rejects the assumption that unless a typology is explicit (as with Jonah in Matthew 12:40), it is either insignificant or nonexistent. He correctly emphasizes that the First Evangelist and his readers were so steeped in Judaism that explicitness was unnecessary.

Allison's *The New Moses* is an elegantly written work by an able scholar. His arguments are careful, cogent and, to this reviewer, generally convincing. The extensive bibliography and indexes (on names, subjects and passages) make this work a valuable resource. The most manifest contribution of his study is to place the new Moses motif within a historical perspective. The consistent comparisons through the centuries of Jewish and Christian heroes to Moses are impressive, and this trend buttresses Allison's argument concerning Matthew.

There are, however, a few shortcomings. With regard to Matthew 28:16-20, Allison asserts that a Moses motif exists in the themes of keeping 'all that I have commanded you' and of commissioning with 'I am with you', but nearly every Jewish text that he discusses concerns all that God has commanded and the presence which God has promised. Hence, the Moses-Jesus motif seems to be secondary and a God-Jesus one primary. Other shortcomings of a more minor nature include some twenty misspellings. Yes these points must be considered in their proper perspective, for the excellence of Allison's research is what stands out. This work is highly recommended for those seeking to understand the Christology of the First Gospel.

N.N. Hingle, University of Aberdeen

New Directions in Mission and Evangelization, No.2: Theological Foundations

Edited by James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1994; 215pp., \$18.95; ISBN 0 88344 953 6

Twenty years ago the first volume in a series of studies entitled *Mission Trends* appeared. Those books (eventually numbering five volumes) provided an immensely valuable resource for students of mission, pulling together key statements on the Christian mission from conciliar, evangelical, Roman Catholic and Orthodox sources, and dealing with a whole range of pressing missiological issues. In their introduction to this book, the editors indicate that the 'New Directions' series is designed to continue the pattern of the earlier *Mission Trends* by making available

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significant recent missiological literature 'in an accessible and relatively economical form'.

The first volume focussed on 'Basic Statements', including evangelical declarations at Lausanne and Pattaya, an Orthodox statement on mission made in Bucharest, key passages from the Second Vatican Council and various recent documents on mission from the World Council of Churches. This present book, as the subtitle suggests, is concerned with the theology of mission. The extracts included discuss the nature of mission, historical developments in the understanding of mission within the various traditions mentioned above, and missionary praxis. Toward the end of the volume there is an interesting chapter on missiology as a discipline.

There is much that is of great value here: Orlando Costas on mission in the Americas, Lesslie Newbigin on the 'Logic of Mission', a very fine treatment of 'The Exclusiveness of Jesus Christ' by George Brunk, and a moving chapter by the late David Bosch on 'The Vulnerability of Mission', which provides a poignant reminder of the extent of the loss suffered by the whole Christian community through this author's tragic death.

Readers of this *Bulletin* may be particularly interested in the assessment of recent changes in evangelical missiology offered by a Nigerian contributor, Efiog Utuk. Citing statements from Wheaton in 1966 to Lausanne in 1974, Utuk argues that evangelical views on the nature and practice of missions have increasingly converged with positions long taken for granted within the ecumenical movement. The problem with this chapter (and this may be said to be a weakness in the book as a whole), is that it discusses evangelical missiology in relation to a Congress which, while undoubtedly hugely significant, occurred twenty years ago. It is certainly arguable that the evangelical movement has become more diverse, more fragmented, more difficult to define than was the case in 1974, and it is not at all clear that the consensus achieved at Lausanne would be possible now. Making Lausanne the cut-off point for the discussion of evangelical approaches to mission involves ignoring the recent emergence of activist missionary movements which operate on the assumption that evangelism is the central, if not the exclusive, task of Christian mission. People involved in such initiatives tend to have rather shallow theological foundations, which may explain the absence of DAWN from the index of this book. Nonetheless, the fact remains that such movements have considerable influence on the many young people who offer themselves for service cross-culturally. Ignoring such groups can only perpetuate a situation in which their need for serious theological reflection goes unmet and, at the same time, scholars who are involved in the academic study of mission remain inoculated from the challenge of activists who insist on asking the nagging question of William Carey, 'What is to *be done*?'

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A final comment. I have no doubt that this new series will become an indispensable resource for the study and teaching of mission and I warmly commend the current volume to colleagues. However, at a time when one of the most important 'new directions' in mission concerns the globalization of Christianity and the shift of the centre of missionary expansion from the West to the South, it is curious that eleven of the fourteen contributors to this book are Europeans or Americans. It is to be hoped that future volumes in the series will redress this imbalance.

David Smith, Northumbria Bible College

Home is Where the Hurt is. Domestic Violence and the Church's Response

Rosie Nixon

Grove Books, Bramcote, Nottingham, 1994; 24pp., £1.95; ISBN 1 85174 269 6

Rosie Nixon makes no bones about the fact that domestic abuse is as likely to happen in Christian families as elsewhere, and cites graphic descriptions of some women's lives. She points to the fact that much of the blame can be laid on the teaching of the church, but that it is only enlightened church leaders and members who will take this fact on board. We are given a brief history of how domestic violence has been condoned down the centuries from the Council of Toledo in A.D. 400 (which declared 'A husband is bound to chastise his wife moderately, unless he be a cleric in which case he may chastise her harder') to present times. She then looks at contemporary approaches and the causes for abuse, reproducing the diagram from the Domestic Abuse Intervention project in Duluth, Minnesota, which shows the power and control that a man can use to abuse a woman and then the opposite where there is non-violence and equality between a couple. She shows that more people are becoming aware of the need to help men, but that, despite the fact that this is quite advanced in the United States and Canada, Britain is lagging behind. She feels that the church in Britain, empowered by the Holy Spirit, could be doing far more to help men who acknowledge their problem and want to change. Finally she gives us a list of twelve points garnered from overseas churches which I feel should be in the hands of every church worker whether clergy or laity. This little booklet for me has been one of the most definitive works I have found on domestic abuse.

Janet L. Watson, Glasgow Bible College

New Face of the Church in Latin America: Between Tradition and Change

Edited by Guillermo Cook

Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1994; xiv + 289pp., £14.99; ISBN 0 88344 937 4

My experience in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s was of evangelical churches growing like wildfire. Consequently, it has been fascinating to read *New Face of the Church in Latin America*, which quotes more than once that 'In Brazil on any given Sunday, more Christians attend (Protestant) worship than attend worship at Roman Catholic churches.' The book celebrates 500 years of Christianity in Latin America and consists of an assortment of articles reprinted from journals or books, papers given at conferences and a very few chapters written specially, all of 1992-3 vintage. Twenty contributors from some ten nations, men and women, Catholic and Protestant (ecumenical, evangelical and pentecostal), present a mosaic of the 'largest Christian continent', where the evangelical churches have grown unbelievably this century.

At first I found the book rather disconcerting. The articles are grouped into five parts: 1492-1992: Change and Continuity; the Dynamics of Change; Popular Religion; Tradition and Change; Area Studies: the Future of the Latin American Church. Yet because each one has been written for a different context and from a different background, I constantly felt the need to change gear as I moved to a new chapter, and get myself into a fresh way of thinking. Yet what I perceived initially as a weakness is really the book's strength. When a Catholic writing of the Base Ecclesial Communities in Brazil asks what they can learn from Pentecostals, when a Baptist appreciates the Nicaraguan Evangelicals' unusual participation in national politics along with Catholics, when Catholic and Protestant each expose their grief at instances of the unjust suffering of the oppressed and the experiences of suffering with them, one can really begin to feel one's way into the diverse Christian life of Latin America.

Perhaps the chapter that moved me most was the one by a Quicha pastor, saddened at the way in which 'European' Christians (*i.e.* non-Andean Peruvians) failed to appreciate that Andean culture can sometimes express the Good News more biblically than the 'European'. And then liberationists, mourning the collapse of Marxism, ask not what will happen to liberation theology, but what will happen to the lives of the poor. An Evangelical deplors the fact that Protestants, 'the people of the Book', sometimes do not know the Bible and are losing sight of it. This is not a collection of learned theses; its contributors write from the heart.

This book is not bed-time reading, though a few chapters are more easily digested. Each chapter begins with a brief summary and closes with the notes to which references have been made. There is a very

comprehensive bibliography, but no index. There is much here that churches in the Old World can learn. Its final chapter throws out the hope that the Latin American church with its new face may take the lead in world mission in the next century – and the salutary reminder that the realisation of such a dream depends on its maintaining its openness to the Holy Spirit through the Bible.

Cliff Barnard, Northumbria Bible College

An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics

Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1994; 298pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 310 53090 3

This attractively produced volume is the latest in a stream of volumes dealing with the principles of biblical interpretation at various levels of accessibility. Its distinctiveness, so the authors claim, lies first in that it is intended to be accessible and useful to both those who have been theologically trained and those who have not; and secondly in that the co-authors are not presenting a single 'party line' but write with quite different perspectives within the boundaries of evangelical convictions on the authority of the Bible.

Both authors are well known as highly competent interpreters of the biblical text, yet they do not generally intimidate the fledgling student with technicalities. On the contrary, they provide a very clear, accessible introduction to interpretative matters, encouraging engagement with the biblical text throughout by means of helpful examples. Particularly helpful for beginning students is the general treatment of the various genres of biblical literature. (The specific encouragement from Silva to treat the New Testament letters as real *letters* that should be read through, rather than a few verses at a time, should be well taken by many Evangelicals.) While the voluminous secondary literature is not extensively discussed, there is a helpful guide to further reading for those who want to pursue their studies further.

The difficulty of the task of writing for both a trained and an untrained readership is sometimes evident. Several chapters are hard work, requiring the reader to become familiar with technical terms (*e.g.* 'metonymy', 'synecdoche', 'zeugma') or with philosophical discussion, while others are almost homiletic in their style. Whatever the difficulties, however, it is surely healthy that the positive results of biblical scholarship are integrated into the teaching of the church so that no distinction between scholars and 'ordinary Christians' is allowed; scholars and Christians with other callings must minister to and learn from each other. It is good to see discussions of the devotional use and the practical application (with particular reference to differing cultures) of Scripture following the more academic discussion of genres.

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A useful historical perspective is given by Kaiser's history of interpretation, running from the 'pesher' interpretation of the Qumran separatists through to the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher. Silva then takes up the story with a discussion of twentieth-century trends. Both of these essays, though clearly written, are more demanding and supply more detailed documentation for the sake of students. The different perspectives of the two authors do not interfere with the main thrust of the book. It does not have the disjointed feel one might fear. The main differences between them become evident only in the later chapters where, for example, Kaiser argues that the 'meaning' of a biblical text be associated with the author's intention as expressed in what he wrote, while Silva is prepared to see meaning in the text *beyond* that grasped by the human author on the basis that the omniscient God is the ultimate author. Silva also argues a case for distinctively 'Calvinistic hermeneutics', which briefly involves him in disagreement with Kaiser over apostolic exegesis.

This book is a very useful and dependable introduction to a vital subject about which every Christian should have some understanding.

Alistair Wilson, Highland Theological Institute, Elgin

God's People in God's Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament

Christopher J.H. Wright

Paternoster, Carlisle, 1990; xx+284pp., £11.99; ISBN 0 85364 396 2

Old Testament ethics is an area in which little had been written when Wright began his research. Thus it is a pleasure to welcome this contribution to the field. Wright's earlier *Living as the People of God* represented a popularisation of his 1977 Cambridge Ph.D thesis. This now is the substance of that thesis, revised and updated. The work makes a distinctive contribution and touches upon themes which have become even more significant in the intervening thirteen years.

In the first part, Wright establishes the importance of the land inheritance theme as integral to the Exodus, Sinai, Wilderness and Conquest themes of the Old Testament and as part of the earliest traditions of Israel, as demonstrated especially by its presence in the Pentateuch and in the early poetry of the Bible. The concepts of kinship in the 'father's house' and in the more extended family are treated as integral elements to Israel's faith. Although aware of Gottwald's emphasis on these building blocks of Israelite society, Wright is wise in not rendering these distinctions as rigidly as Gottwald supposed, especially given recent critiques of his assumptions by Lemche and others. The archaeological evidence collected by Stager in his 1985 *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* article would

supplement Wright's case, demonstrating that the Old Testament portrayal of the family as that unit headed by the eldest male was not merely an ideal, but at least an occasional reality. Wright relates his discussion of the family to its inheritance in the form of the land, something preserved from generation to generation. Although divinely owned, it was not liable to permanent transfer away from the family to which it was originally given. The stability of this arrangement was exemplified by both the land, which served as the permanent burial ground for the family, and by the leader of each family who exercised military, judicial and didactic functions in the community. Wright's applications of these conclusions to the New Testament leads him to argue that the 'fellowship' of Christians forms their inheritance instead of the land. Thus the sharing of needs and of abundance, as well as the love and unity of Christians, provide evidence of their claim to possess a share in the inheritance of the people of God.

In his second part, Wright examines the ways in which the property owners keep their land. He argues that each family held the land as an inalienable gift from Yahweh. Even if the land was sold or lent, it reverted back to the original owner on the year of Jubilee. This custom, practised twice a century, exhibited concern for the welfare of the family rather than an individual. This was because the one who lent the land would probably no longer be alive by the time of the year of Jubilee. However, the heir in the family would receive back the land. Land was protected by law from theft (*e.g.* moving the boundary marker) and from legal but greedy snatching of it (*e.g.* the tenth commandment). Slaves, labourers and animals were to be well treated on the land. The stoning of the goring ox and its owner had its origins in divine ownership of the land. The seven-year cycle of return of the land (Deuteronomy 15:1-2) is best understood as a return of the usufruct of the land to the original owners, rather than as a return of the ownership of the land itself.

Wright allows for a family cultus in Israel in which food offerings and teraphim could be involved without the worshipping of dead ancestors. He suggests that, as long as no other deities than Yahweh were involved, such veneration was not incompatible with biblical faith. This view, if accepted, would help to explain the widespread attestation of food offerings and other objects in all excavated tombs of ancient Israel and Judah. However, its ramifications for cross-cultural missions are not addressed by Wright.

Wright argues that women were not treated as property by husbands. Instead, he finds the relevant laws to define the ownership as one of sexuality on the part of the husband. Capital punishment for adultery was because it was an offence against God and his relationship with his community. This was not exacted for matters of sexual assault which demanded compensation in the law, just as in other property rights. Wright observes examples of co-authority exerted by both husband and

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wife in matters concerning their children, as in Deuteronomy 21:18ff. and 22:15ff. Like wives, children could not be treated merely as property. Even in the case of Deuteronomy 21:18-21, where a rebellious child could be put to death, this was allowed only after a trial by the elders. After cataloguing various limitations on how slave owners could treat their slaves, Wright studies the six-year release of Exodus 21:1-6 and Deuteronomy 15: 12-18 and compares it with the release on the fiftieth year in Leviticus 25:39-43. He argues that the 'Hebrew slave' in the Exodus and Deuteronomy texts refers to the social class of 'Hebrew' *i.e.* those who are landless and sell themselves into servitude as labourers. On the other hand, the slaves in Deuteronomy 15:12-18 are property owners who receive their freedom and that of their land after the fiftieth year.

As a contribution to an important field of study, this work will serve the interest of all those concerned about the ethical implications of the Old Testament.

Richard Hess, Roehampton Institute of Higher Education

The Bible and Counselling: An Introduction to the Relationship between the Bible and Christian Counselling

Roger Hurding

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1992; 244pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 340 51742 5

Many come into counselling by virtue of their professional role in life. A sizeable proportion of these are guided by mainly humanistic attitudes and ideals sometimes moulded by one or other of the schools of psychology. A few wish for a more biblical and Christian approach and sincerely desire to see those counselled helped along a Christian paradigm to find fulfilment eventually in the all-satisfying and providing Christ, the living Son of the living and loving God. This book will help such. It is a book for the serious counsellor who feels called by God to serve the church in this particular way. It is principally for Christian counsellors who practise within a Christian community.

Roger Hurding's treatment of the subject reflects his own professional background as a doctor and psychotherapist, and is enriched by his own experience of life and its problems – sometimes with ill health, handicap and setbacks. He uses abundant references to other writings – psychological (washing over many heads, I fear), religious and scriptural (the latter being most helpful and pertinent) – to substantiate his conclusions. His sections on questions for discussion and personal reflection underline the importance of sharing one's experiences and being willing to learn to develop one's own techniques, both in the arena of open discussion and individual study. There is an excellent section of

notes on the individual chapters and a good balanced bibliography giving a wider scope of the subject.

This is not a text-book or even a handbook. It is designed to stimulate a wider appreciation of biblical principles, the while attempting to marry proven psychological techniques with scriptural teaching, all of which Hurding does very well. It is an excellent book. Do not expect a breakdown of the human situations which come the way of the counsellor or even guidance as to how to face individual problems. Much of the substance of this book is background illumination and preparation for the Christian engaged in this type of service. It fills a valuable corner in the counsellor's armamentarium and is to be strongly recommended.

William W. Baird, Paisley

What is an Evangelical?

D.M. Lloyd-Jones

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1992; 91pp., £1.50; ISBN 0 85151 626 2

This book contains three addresses given by Dr Lloyd-Jones to an International Fellowship of Evangelical Students conference in 1971. It was originally published in 1989 as part of a longer collection entitled *Knowing the Times*. In characteristic style, Dr Lloyd-Jones offers a clear and succinct analysis of the problems created by theological trends with Evangelicalism. Despite the fact that these addresses were given over twenty years ago, the analysis is prophetically appropriate to our own day. He says that the word 'Evangelical' needs to be defined and clarified so that its meaning remains the same. He notes the significant changes which have taken place in some churches and Christian bodies such that they no longer hold to the truths which they once did. He does make it clear, however, that he is not interested in division or separation for their own sake, but rather in highlighting the essential truths of the Christian faith. He notes that those who are extreme separatists are almost as bad as those who are interested in ecumenism to the detriment of evangelical truth.

Lloyd-Jones lays out four guiding principles in his attempt to answer the question of the title: 1. The preservation of the gospel; 2. Learning from history; 3. Maintaining negatives; 4. No subtractions or additions. He spends many pages dealing with the general characteristics of an Evangelical. Many of these are expected: subservience to Scripture; emphasis on the new birth; concern for evangelism, and so on. But he also goes into more controversial areas, contending, for example, that an Evangelical must be distrustful of reason, philosophy and scholarship, especially as these have been used in modern theology. This is a most helpful section and needs to be heard loudly and clearly in theological colleges today, where Enlightenment principles and values (rather than

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biblical ones) are often in control. In the closing lecture, he highlights a number of truths which he regards as fundamental, and others which he regards as secondary. The former includes the doctrines of Scripture, justification by faith and the atonement (penal and substitutionary). In the latter category he includes the differences between Christians on such doctrines as election, the last things and baptism.

This must surely be one of the most useful books ever to come from Lloyd-Jones. The word 'Evangelical' has become so elastic today as to defy definition at all. How good it is to be called back to the basics. This is not to say that the present reviewer accepts all that the author puts forward. For example, the statement that an Evangelical is someone who does not believe in a state church does not easily persuade someone who values Knox and the Covenanters! Nevertheless, this is a challenging book and one which should be read by everyone who would lay claim to the name 'Evangelical'. One suspects that fewer (if they were honest) would lay claim to the title afterwards....

A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theological Institute, Elgin

Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734-1984

Kenneth Hylson Smith

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1988; 424pp., £16.95; ISBN 0 567 29161 8

This is a scholarly, extremely well-documented yet easily readable account of the progress of Anglican Evangelicalism in the post-Wesley era almost to the present day. It can justifiably be regarded both as a textbook to introduce the student new to this particular aspect of church history and, on account of an abundance of footnotes together with its bibliography and indices, as a helpful guide for those who wish to research more deeply into the period. Or it may be treated simply as an informative and fascinatingly interesting book for those who want to know what goes on in the evangelical world, especially in the Church of England.

So many facets of Evangelicalism are examined that it is quite impossible to give any adequate account of the book in a short review. Hylson Smith pursues a track very well-worn by readers of G.R. Balleine's classic published in 1908, *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England*, which hitherto has been a 'must' for evangelical ordinands, but the assessments which this more modern account offers have all the benefits of an abundance of recent research. It provides us, moreover, with a further seventy years of evangelical history. The epilogue predicting 'the other side of 1984' clearly needs revision in the light of what has actually happened in this last decade.

Hylson Smith retells the story of the continuous struggle over nearly three centuries of Evangelicalism – reborn through Wesley's revival and initially to be found in a few scattered parishes, albeit experiencing quite

remarkable ministries – to expand into the wider Anglican church. Despite almost as many setbacks as advances, it has become one of the most powerful forces affecting the course of the present-day Church of England. We see divine providence at work, when Evangelicalism manages to break out of the parishes and gain access to the episcopal bench, very much because of Palmerston's ignorance of ecclesiastical affairs, which forced him to rely on the advice of Lord Shaftesbury!

We witness the birth of the great evangelical societies influencing the church at home and abroad for over a century and a half, among them the Church Pastoral Aid Society and the Church Missionary Society. We learn that Shaftesbury the social reformer was a high Tory afraid of power falling into the hands of the working classes. We discover that J.C. Ryle, the darling of so many modern conservative Evangelicals, was both unsympathetic towards the Keswick Movement and regarded as a neo-Evangelical in his day. We witness the struggle between Evangelicalism and ritualism in the last century and liberalism in this. The contributions of John Stott and J.I. Packer are evaluated, especially for the parts they played in the post-War controversies, over *Honest to God*, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, and fundamentalism. Prayer book revision, the charismatic movement and the revolution in church music are given due consideration.

Hylson Smith commands our attention as he bears us through the years, mixing anecdotes with statistics, mini-biographies with theological adjudication. He surely is a worthy successor to Balleine, not only in assessing familiarly trodden ground, but in filling the gap left by the absence of any similar work covering the progress of Anglican Evangelicalism during the greater part of the twentieth century.

Peter Cook, St Andrew's Church, Cheadle Hulme

W.M.L. de Wette: Founder of Modern Biblical Criticism. An Intellectual Biography

John W. Rogerson

JSOT Press, Sheffield, 1992; 313pp., £35; ISBN 1 87075 330 X

Most people have probably not heard of Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette. Of Dutch ancestry, de Wette was born in 1780 in the small village of Ulla (on the road between Erfurt and Weimar), the son of a Lutheran pastor. Rogerson aims to present his life and work with particular reference to his theological development. The book, which is meticulously researched and written in a simple and engaging style, traces de Wette's career from his student days in Jena through chairs in Heidelberg, Berlin and Basel.

De Wette was, according to Rogerson, 'a full and rounded human being', with keen interest not only in theology but in music, art, politics

and literature. In fact, important sources for the book are two of de Wette's semi-autobiographical novels. His marriage to Eberhardine Boye in 1805 lasted only ten months, when Eberhardine died in childbirth, a tragedy from which de Wette never really recovered. Another low point in his life was his dismissal from the University of Berlin on political grounds. One of his students assassinated a suspected Russian agent and traitor and was subsequently executed. De Wette wrote a letter of sympathy to the student's mother which came to the attention of the police.

Although not without human interest Rogerson's book is primarily an intellectual biography. It is full of discussions of the major influences on de Wette's thought, including Kant, Schleiermacher, Schelling, Jacobi and especially the philosopher Fries. Also, there is a full and often fascinating description of de Wette's major works, which included translations of the Old Testament, commentaries on the Psalms and the whole New Testament and numerous theological works. Other points of interest include the theological curriculum that de Wette instituted in Basel, which treated in four successive years exegetical, historical, systematic and practical theology. De Wette struggled with what is described as the contradiction between rationalism and orthodoxy, scepticism and conservatism. In this way the author regards him as the 'Founder of Modern Biblical Criticism'. Although de Wette is today overshadowed by Wellhausen, Strauss and Schleiermacher, in many ways his work anticipated discussions that are still with us. These include the relationship between theology and philosophy, the relation of biblical criticism to Christian belief, the problem of religious pluralism, and the application of literary theory to biblical interpretation.

Rogerson aptly sums up the value of pondering de Wette's life as follows: 'Although I cannot accept many of his views, I have been challenged by his honesty, moved by his personal tragedies and greatly enlightened by his works'. The book is recommended for those interested in understanding the roots and current state of modern biblical criticism.

Brian S. Rosner, University of Aberdeen

Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians

Ben Witherington, III

Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, PA, 1994; 180pp., £11.50; ISBN 1 56338 102 8

This volume by a prolific scholar (with a flair for arresting titles) is included in a series entitled 'The New Testament in Context', and is a further reminder of the need to be aware of the historical nature of the biblical documents. There are several excellent commentaries on Philippians already, so why another? Witherington describes the work as

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a 'socio-rhetorical' commentary which seeks to bridge the gap between traditional grammatico-historical exegesis and the newer sociological and literary techniques by taking account of the well-documented methods of rhetoric which were valued so highly in the ancient world. It is probably as a useful introduction to the discipline of rhetorical criticism along with an example of how the discipline works in practice that this book will find its niche.

Witherington provides a twenty-nine page introduction dealing primarily with the educational background of Paul which led to his exposure to Graeco-Roman rhetoric, followed by a discussion of the various types of rhetoric (forensic, deliberative and epideictic) and the component parts of a letter formed using rhetorical techniques (*exordium, narratio, etc*). For those unfamiliar with the technical terms of rhetoric, Witherington provides clear and concise definitions. The explanation of rhetoric as the art of persuasion is illuminating for an appreciation of Paul's approach, as he generally seeks to persuade rather than command. There is also some brief discussion of the more typical introductory matters of authorship, provenance, date.

The main body of the commentary is divided according to the rhetorical elements and, although issues raised in other commentaries are discussed, there is a particular focus on the rhetorical purpose of particular sections of the letter and on the way in which themes are introduced and then taken up at later stages of the letter. This means that this commentary will not duplicate typical exegetical commentaries but will instead augment them. Ministers may find that it has the added attraction of being a fraction of the length of some recent exegetical commentaries, while retaining a commitment to solid exegesis.

As is typical of Witherington, there is frequent interaction with up-to-date secondary literature combined with independent judgement. Students and ministers will no doubt find that they are exposed to these newer approaches to the New Testament whether through lectures or commentaries. They may not find all resources as clear and helpful as this one.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological Institute, Elgin

The Art of Biblical History (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, Vol 5)

V. Philips Long

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1994; 247pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 310 43180 8

This is the latest addition to the series edited by Moisés Silva of Westminster Theological Seminary in which volumes (according to the blurb on the back cover) 'discuss the impact of a specific academic

discipline on the interpretation of the Bible'. This one comes from the pen of the Associate Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary.

The book is written with style. From the Introduction to the Epilogue the prose is clear and engaging, even when Long has to deal with the complexities of contemporary academic debate. Long certainly shows himself to be well acquainted with much of the vast amount of secondary literature which faces any student venturing into the field of hermeneutics. The title of his book deliberately alludes to the work of Robert Alter and indicates Long's conviction that the newer literary approaches to the biblical text have much to offer the interpreter of Scripture. Yet neither literary criticism nor any other approach to Scripture is accepted wholesale or uncritically, as the review of contemporary scholarship in chapter four demonstrates. Instead, Long guides the readers through the maze of literature, alerting them to any problems of methodology but also appropriating the more positive results so that the end result is a nuanced approach to history.

Long's fundamental thesis is that to treat the Bible as a history book is simplistic and does not do justice to the nature of the Bible. This is not, however, to say that the Bible is uninterested in history. The way forward is to understand the Bible in terms of being true because it is God's Word, 'true' being understood to mean that what the biblical texts claim to teach or to do corresponds, in fact, to reality. This allows us to integrate a proper understanding of the various genres of Scripture into our interpretative method. Thus we will not require that a parable is an account of an historical event since Scripture never makes that claim for itself and indeed indicates by the form of the text itself that such an approach is to misread the parable. The discussions of genre criticism and of biblical poetics are particularly useful.

Long argues that the Bible does not contain 'bare facts' but that the accounts of actual events (he is careful to point out that the historicity of the events is vital) are interpretations which are so powerful because of the literary artistry of the authors. Thus literary techniques such as simplification, selectivity and suggestive detail can co-exist with responsible reporting of history.

The final chapter is an extended worked-example of the principles previously discussed based on the account of the rise of Saul found in 1 Samuel, and it is followed by an Epilogue which briefly maps out the flow of the book and offers encouragement to pursue matters further. Long provides a helpful list of books for further reading ranging from the introductory to the taxing. There are also helpful indices of modern authors and works, Scripture passages and subjects.

Long has supplied students with an admirable resource for studying the historical aspect of Scripture. Neither defensive nor inflammatory, it

displays both evangelical conviction and a sophisticated appreciation of the best insights of contemporary scholarship. It deserves widespread use.

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological Institute, Elgin

Poles Part: The Gospel in Creative Tension

D.S. Russell

St Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1990; 171pp., £6.50; ISBN 0 7152 0646 X

The author of this book is well known to biblical scholars for his valuable studies of apocalyptic literature and inter-testamental Judaism. Baptists are familiar with David Russell both as Principal of Rawdon Baptist College and General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. However, while this volume reflects the author's careful scholarship and his denominational convictions, it is shaped above all by yet another of Russell's lifelong concerns – his commitment to ecumenical dialogue and the quest for Christian unity.

In ten chapters the book discusses pairs of 'polar opposites' which, Russell argues, are in reality 'complementary and not contradictory'. A sample of headings will suggest the author's concerns: 'Scripture and Tradition', 'Creeds and Credibility', 'The Church and the Churches', 'Male and Female'. The discussions are generally informative and stimulating and succeed in showing lines of convergence in areas of belief and practice previously characterised by controversy and division. Here and there one notices irritating mistakes; for example, a quotation from the Council of Trent is followed by the statement that the 'scene was being set for the conflict that eventually emerged at the time of the Reformation'. However, Russell's writing is clear and helpful and he offers the reader some memorable quotations, of Barth, for instance, asking 'Who dares, who can, preach, knowing what preaching is?', and of Kierkegaard claiming, 'To be a professor of theology is to have crucified Christ'!

Although *Poles Part* contains helpful and illuminating passages it has two weaknesses. First, the attempt to cover such a range of big issues in a slim volume involves a serious risk of offering generalizations which paper over cracks. In the chapter on 'Male and Female', for example, Russell bravely deals with the issue of homosexuality. Yet the discussion is so limited that it results in little more than an expression of 'personal opinion'. The author also claims that 'lesbianism has to do with "politics" every bit as much as with sex' since many women are simply expressing their protest against a male-dominated society. Well maybe, but the appalling violence they have suffered at the hands of men may have something to do with it as well.

Second, while valuable as a treatment of areas of tension within Western theology, these discussions seem somehow dated. Russell's

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chapters address issues which have historically divided the churches of the West at a time when the really exciting developments are occurring in a missiological context as new and younger churches question the entire Western approach to theology. The only reference I found in this book to Third World theology mistakenly credited Kosuke Koyama with developing 'buffalo theology'. The Western churches will surely need to become far more familiar with the contextualized theologies emerging from the South if they are to benefit from the creative tensions which matter today.

David Smith, Northumbria Bible College

God Delivers: Isaiah Simply Explained

Derek Thomas

Evangelical Press, Darlington, 1991; 415pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 85234 290 X

The Message of Job

David Atkinson

IVP, Leicester, 1991; 188pp., £6.50; ISBN 0 85110 956 X

Biblical students are used to the concept of literary genre. It is hermeneutically important and its importance has grown under the influence both of form and of literary criticism. What though of the concept of literary genre as applied to post-biblical Christian literature? Without doubt one of the most important and certainly the most long-lasting is the commentary. It can be traced back as far as the expository sermons of John Chrysostom, and a visit to any Christian bookshop today will show that it is still going strong. It is not, however, an unvarying literary type. We all recognise that commentaries are not all of the same kind. Some are exegetical and others are expository, some give attention to critical and others to theological issues, while still others are homiletical or devotional. The most recent tendency is for simple, clear explanation of the biblical text, usually taking fairly large sections (a chapter or more) at a time, with plenty of contemporary illustration and application.

The 'Bible Speaks Today' series, to which David Atkinson's book on Job belongs, is a front-runner of this type of volume. The publisher's blurb on the back cover describes this particular volume as a 'compelling exposition', and the reviewer would concur with this judgement. What gives it this quality? There are a number of factors.

For one thing, the Book of Job itself is compelling, at least for the person who is prepared to settle down to read it through with serious intent. It deals with a very deep and yet far from uncommon problem, the agony that comes to a godly man because of suffering that makes him question, not God's existence, but his goodness and justice. Then, from

its beginning, David Atkinson's book constantly keeps the needs of pastoral counselling in mind. The book is intended to help those involved in this demanding ministry, and this gives it special interest.

It is full of stimulating insights. Job's wife is usually dismissed rather summarily by commentators, but this volume deals with her in an unusually sympathetic way. The author also comments helpfully, not only on the similarity of the three friends, but also on their differences, which are not often appreciated so fully. Of the references to mining in Job 28, he says, 'Perhaps there is more than a hint here that even the darkness of Job's life may yet yield its treasures.' There are a number of well-chosen quotations from modern literature, and a useful closing section drawing together the main values of the Book of Job.

The commentary on Isaiah by Derek Thomas is in the Welwyn Commentary Series. It will be useful to consider the stated aims of the book and to ask how far they have been fulfilled. The author says, 'I have tried ... to keep three boundaries in mind: firstly, the need to sustain an interest in the *whole* of Isaiah, and not just its well-known parts; secondly, to be helpful by way of illustrating the text of Isaiah, thus providing a few windows to let in light; and thirdly, to keep to the publisher's request that the result be of moderate length, contained in one volume.' The third has been fulfilled but what about the other two?

Isaiah is a large book and it would have been valuable to give an overview of it, showing how its somewhat diverse material forms a well-patterned unity. Derek Thomas does, however, refer often to earlier and later chapters, and this helps us to see how the book is bound together thematically. The brief introduction does not deal with issues of criticism. The unity of the Book of Isaiah can, in fact, be much better supported than is often recognised. The author would therefore have done his readers a service by addressing the arguments of critics against that unity, as this could have been a means of demonstrating its wholeness and integrity.

There are plenty of good illustrations, many taken from the writer's own experience. His interpretative stance is amillennial. He relates the eschatology of the book very much to the gospel era, and he also uses the word 'church' of the people of God within Israel in Old Testament days. Nevertheless, he sets his face against excessive spiritualisation.

Both volumes are based on the NIV text and it is worth noting that each author prepared for writing his volume by preaching on the Old Testament book beforehand. It is not surprising therefore that a strength of each volume is its contemporary application. Both are well written and useful, but David Atkinson's book is particularly to be commended for its value to the pastoral counsellor.

Geoffrey W. Grogan, Glasgow

John Wesley and the Anglican Evangelicals of the Eighteenth Century

A. Brown-Lawson

Pentland Press, Durham, 1994; 410pp., n.p.; ISBN 1 85821 095 X

This work is a study of the often turbulent relationship that existed between John Wesley and various leading Anglican Evangelicals. The work focuses primarily upon the so-called Calvinistic controversies over election and justification, but also includes material on the problem of ordinations and on Wesley's distinctive views of perfection. The book falls into two parts, the first dealing with the historical dimensions of the topic, the second with the theological issues at stake. There is plenty of interesting material here, not least in the extensive quotations from primary sources which Dr. Brown-Lawson provides.

The book is an enjoyable read, and highly informative, and so the criticisms which it is necessary to make should be seen against this background. The primary problem is the clear pro-Wesley tone of the work. This pervades the whole book, but is especially evident in the treatment of Whitefield and the first Calvinistic controversy. It is significant that the author is dependent upon Tyerman's Wesleyan life of Whitefield for many of his comments on the latter and, while Dallimore's book on Whitefield is scarcely more objective than Tyerman, he could have been used to redress some of the imbalance.

The author also has a clear lack of sympathy with the Calvinist position, but many of his comments in this area seem to imply that he does not actually understand how Calvinist theology works or how Calvinists of the eighteenth, or any other, century thought. We are told that Calvin's system was one great logical deduction from a single premise, the sovereignty of God. Then, we are told that 'the Calvinistic system will be seen to be the result of stark and relentless logic, allowing no exceptions to any finding'. This sets the tone for the treatment of Calvinism which follows. The reader is left in no doubt that Calvinism is logic gone mad, while Wesley's view represents judicious biblical theology. Many readers will also be surprised by the claim that 'it is doubtful whether [Jonathan] Edwards or Whitefield ever fully understood the tenets they so stoutly defended'. While one may not agree with Edwards, it is difficult when reading him not to concede that he does have a very profound grasp of what is at stake in many of the issues with which he deals, especially those areas often regarded as Calvinist distinctives.

What is needed here is a greater separation of historical exposition from doctrinal criticism. No-one can seriously doubt either the sincerity of both Whitefield and Wesley in their beliefs or their commitment to evangelism; though this commitment arose from radically opposed views

of election. Both cannot have been right, but each deserves to be taken seriously and not dismissed on the basis of individual scholars' doctrinal presuppositions of whatever shade. The reader of this book is left with the impression of Whitefield as a hopelessly confused theological half-wit, and of Wesley as a great theologian, neither of which portrays, I would argue, a wholly accurate picture.

The book ends on a positive note, recounting the irenic conversation between Wesley and Simeon. The author then states that, as both Calvinists and Arminians agree on the sovereignty of God, some way through the impasse might be found here. However, this could only come about if Calvinists reformulate their understanding of predestination to coincide with Arminian notions of foreknowledge – but surely it was just that which was the problem in the first place?

In a day when Evangelicals, both Calvinist and Arminian, are united by their opposition to much more fundamental errors, the Wesleyan-Calvinist conflicts of the eighteenth century can seem somewhat irrelevant to contemporary church-life, a luxury we can scarce afford; and yet, as Brown-Lawson's book does make clear, what was at stake in these struggles was nothing less than the character of God and of his dealings with us. While I am not in sympathy with the book's methodology or its portrait of Calvinism, it serves as a timely reminder that evangelical theology has historically been concerned with more than adherence to a bare Trinitarianism and equivocal lip-service to the principle of 'Scripture alone'.

Carl R. Trueman, University of Nottingham

Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World

Edited by D.A. Carson

Paternoster Press, Carlisle and Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992; 309pp., £14.99; ISBN 0 85364 516 7

This volume is the fruit of a consultation of evangelical leaders from around the world held at Tyndale House, Cambridge in November 1988. In his introduction, D.A. Carson intones the theme of the book and its importance: 'Both for his glory and our good, the most important thing we can pursue is being rightly related to God.'

Edmund P. Clowney's admirable survey ranges widely, but not superficially, over the broad biblical foundation for Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. He explores in the Old Testament the justice of God and his promises, the covenant relationship and its basis in the blood of the covenant, God's righteousness as promise to be received by faith, and the response of covenant devotion, before considering the New Testament revelation of God's saving grace in Christ.

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Brian Wintle, by a careful marshalling of texts and patient exegesis, describes Paul's view of justification over against Jewish thinking concerning righteousness and the law, the Gentiles and the cross. Despite being slightly dated by the production delay, P.T. O'Brien's excellent survey charts the 'new insights' and 'genuine advances' in the understanding of this theme made in the previous two decades. He guides the reader skilfully through discussions of Käsemann's endeavour to open up new perspectives, the centrality of justification in Paul, E.P. Sanders' claim that Paul's difference with Judaism was not over 'grace' but simply 'salvation-history', and the debate over 'justification by faith, judgement according to works'.

Four other biblically-focussed essays deal competently with the theme of righteousness in Matthew; central, controlling themes in Luke-Acts and their bearing on justification; the use of the *dikaio*-word group in the Gospel of John; and James 2: 14-26 in relation to the rest of the letter and to Paul. Two essays relate justification to Christian practice. Russell Shedd explores the vital, biblical relationship between justification and sanctification, and Guillermo W. Mendez brings a challenging, Third-World perspective on the relevance of the doctrine to a biblical discussion of social justice. Klaas Runia traces thinking on the subject in Roman Catholic circles and in recent bilateral ecumenical talks. Despite acknowledging some genuine advances, Runia remains cautious. 'There remain deep-seated differences. They are not related to the starting-point of salvation in grace, but to the *application* of this grace in the concrete lives of believers. At this point there is still a wide and deep gap, in spite of all theological *rapprochement*.'

The final three essays, by Sunand Sumithra, Chris Marantika and Masao Uenuma, examine the relevance of justification by faith to the presentation of the gospel in Hindu, Islamic and Buddhist contexts respectively. They serve as a timely reminder that the gospel, at the heart of which lies this doctrine, is for the world and must be made known faithfully and sensitively in all the world. This volume will inform, warm, stimulate and challenge.

Eryl Rowlands, Northumbria Bible College, Berwick upon Tweed

Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture

William C. Placher

Westminster / John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1994;
188pp., \$14.99; ISBN 0 664 25534 5

While the world defies power, the gospel depicts a God vulnerable in love. Placher's study sketches the potential and problematic arising from this counter-cultural concept of Deity. He argues (following Frei) that the identity of God is reliably communicated by the shape of the biblical

narratives. The Gospel stories of Jesus show God as defined by a love unendingly willing to risk and bear suffering. Such love is weak in terms of conventional power, for it cannot coerce, but strong and reliable precisely in its limitless capacity to risk a vulnerability in relationship which conventional 'power' cannot admit.

There are repercussions for philosophical theology. Placher shapes (via Boethius, Barth and John's Gospel) an interpretation of divine eternity which permits God's freely loving engagement with the world while preserving God's constancy. The self-revelation in Jesus Christ of a vulnerable God allows us to know God as triune, not in the form of a hierarchy of power, but as a community of equals co-inhering in mutual love, so that the sending of the Son and Spirit is divine self-outpouring in vulnerable love.

Turning to biblical interpretation, Placher finds virtue, and correspondence with a vulnerable God, in the diversity of the Gospel narratives: readers are not coerced by the imposition of a single 'master-narrative'. It is in wrestling with the ambiguities of the texts that readers best find the relation between text and world. The challenge to such interconnection is actively issued by the narrative strategies employed: in this regard, Placher offers an interesting analysis of the diverse endings of the Gospels.

Tenable relationship between the text and contemporary reality may not easily be achieved. The difficulty of claiming to identify from patriarchal texts a God who is supremely in solidarity with the oppressed is sensitively treated, and the danger of promoting suffering and victimage acknowledged. While accepting biblical authority, Placher is at pains to give a nuanced, suitably non-exclusive account of the relation of the Christian revelation to other faiths.

Christian practice is Placher's passionate concern. Our Christian 'birthright' – 'God weak in power but strong in love' (Boff) – is to be made incarnate in solidarity with the vulnerable and outsiders of our societies, and in tackling injustice. The organisation of Christian community, the practice of the eucharist, and theological work within the academy and society must all reflect the God vulnerable in love.

Placher's style is lively, and much of the book would be accessible to the lay reader, despite some lapses into unexplained technical terminology. He indicates with some panache the extensive and various horizons of his theme. Suggestive and stimulating as the result is, however, this is too ambitious a project for so slim a volume. It may be felt to suffer not only from the sketchiness which the author acknowledges and permits in order to tour the horizons, but also from some disproportion in the level of treatment of issues. In particular, and fundamentally, the initial exegesis on which the proposal stands might profitably have been more rigorous: motifs portraying God's power in

other than vulnerable mode may not be as easily removed to the periphery of attention as we might like.

Denise Francis, University of Glasgow

The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence

Davis A. Young

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, and Paternoster, Carlisle, 1995; 327pp., \$19.99; ISBN 0 85364 678 3

A book about the flood, written by a professor of geology at Calvin College, is bound to have the ingredients of an interesting study. And so it does. Perplexed by the reluctance of Christians to take information from science seriously, and experiencing frequent comments that Christians 'must' hold a literalistic view of the flood, Young calls us to re-examine our doctrine of general revelation. In a seven-point epilogue, he rests his case with the assertion that the church 'desperately needs to develop an attitude and a hermeneutic that eagerly embrace the discoveries that are made in God's world'.

The book is as much a history of the flood in religious and scientific thought, as it is an exploration of the issues which it raises. We are treated to a comprehensive overview of the subject in biblical and extrabiblical texts, other ancient flood-legends, and in the thought and writings of Christians and scientists down the ages. This includes summaries of theories of the flood, and of recent ideas in commentators and other biblical writers. There is also a useful and interesting appendix on the search for Noah's ark (entitled 'arkeology'!), concluding that 'no one has provided compelling evidence for the existence of Noah's ark anywhere'.

One central issue which is not squarely faced is the question of the literary *genre* of the flood narrative. And that – along with the rest of the information in the book – opens all sorts of doors on issues of Scripture. But Young has given us a detailed and readable account, and made a good case for the position which he holds, as a scientist and a Christian. A localised flood in Mesopotamia is the only conclusion which he believes does justice both to Scripture and to the other evidence; no-one has produced any credible evidence for a world-wide flood.

Young's criticism, that Christian apologetics often uses ideas and information which are outdated or discredited, needs to be heard. So too does his assertion that if we are to witness effectively to the scientific community and a society with a scientific world-view, then we must take science seriously. I was reminded, when reading this, of Ian Barbour's lament that so few preachers ever tackle scientific issues from the pulpit. Perhaps it is time that we did. Maybe, after all, the old model of training ministers by arts then divinity (M.A., B.D.) is not the best one for today's world.

REVIEWS

Young has provided us with a very useful resource book with many footnotes to other material (publishers please note, however, that a bibliography is essential! I detest looking through pages of footnotes to find a reference). This is a fascinating and well-argued account, and does much to reconcile the sometimes entrenched views of scientists and Christians.

Review Editor

The Darwin Legend: Are Reports of his Deathbed Conversion True?

James Moore

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1994; 158pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 340 64243 2

From one of the co-authors of the definitive biography of Charles Darwin, there now comes a short account of an evangelical *cause célèbre*, the story of his last-minute conversion back to the Christianity which he had abandoned some years earlier. James Moore, an historian of science (and religion) at the Open University, presents an intriguing piece of detective work, concluding that although the story is not wholly a piece of pious fiction, yet neither is it factual.

Apart from being an invaluable account of this particular story, the book draws on Moore's extensive knowledge and research on Darwin, and is equally useful as a brief introduction to his life and the controversy he spawned. The worlds of Victorian science and religion are vividly portrayed, giving the reader an overview of Darwin's religious pilgrimage, his public and private image, the support as well as opposition which his ideas received from the church, and why he delayed publishing *The Origin of the Species* for so long.

So how did this 'deathbed conversion' story originate and circulate? I will not spoil the reader's enjoyment by giving the answer, except to say that it involves the evangelical revivals of Moody and Sankey (whom Moore compares to Gilbert and Sullivan!), and well-intentioned individuals whose imagination and zeal for the Lord exceeded common sense. It is a 'good read', marvellously well-documented (12 pages of notes, 18 pages of bibliography, and extensive appendices documenting every known source of the legend), and a salutary lesson for zealous preachers and evangelists of every generation.

Review Editor

Literary Forms in the New Testament

James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek

SPCK, London, 1992; 219pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 281 04629 8

Two Professors of New Testament in Dubuque, Iowa, have collaborated to produce a helpful and readable introduction to NT literary forms. This succinct yet comprehensive survey treats thirty-one forms under three main headings: the Pauline tradition, the Gospel and Acts, and other NT writings.

The author's 'rather inclusive' working definition for literary form is a 'structure[d], conventional form'. They consider longer literary forms, frequently thought of as genres (*e.g.* letter, gospel and apocalypse), as well as shorter rhetorical structures (*e.g.* chiasmus, diatribe, midrash, parable and topos). A solid understanding of historical, literary, and rhetorical analysis undergirds the authors' definition and discussion of each form. They give multiple examples of each form considered in an attempt to explain how it functions in its given literary context. They also discuss important interpretative implications for each literary form. For the most part, technical language is avoided, and whatever jargon is used is adequately explained.

The proposed purpose of *Literary Forms in the New Testament* is to fill a void in published materials by providing 'a reference tool for those engaged in biblical interpretation'. In the mind of this reviewer, the project has largely been a success. The authors show considerable skill in handling both the biblical texts and the secondary sources. On the whole, each literary form is clearly presented and adequately explained. The comprehensive nature and the exegetical emphasis of this work is particularly beneficial for the beginning student, the busy pastor, and the interested lay person. This work is also of value for teachers, especially for classroom purposes.

Yet this book is not without weaknesses. First, it tends to be too repetitive in its treatment of the forms of argumentation, midrash, and topoi. Even though these forms are treated under different headings, less rehashing would have been welcomed. Another drawback is that Acts is discussed alongside the Gospel and is therefore not treated as carefully as it might have been. The General Epistles are also glided over too quickly. These flaws are basically aesthetic and do not detract greatly from the work.

However, in our view some of the authors' working presuppositions and gross generalizations do serve as a liability. For example, it is simply assumed that the Pastorals, James, 1 and 2 Peter and Jude are pseudonymous. It is also argued that the household codes found in the Pastorals are inferior to those in Ephesians, Colossians and 1 Peter, because 'they appear to accept uncritically the Hellenistic worldview'. Another suggestion given without support is that 1 Peter 1:2-4:11 is a

baptismal sermon. Certainly the authors were hindered by space limitations, but some of the views they espouse require additional explanation.

Even though I beg to differ at certain points, I still highly recommend this book for its intended purpose: a reference tool of the literary forms present in the NT. This work is an important collection of information which will enhance one's knowledge of literary forms and will be of assistance in the interpretative task. Given the introductory nature of the book there is of course limited documentation. However, the authors do give suggestions for further reading at the conclusion of each short section. In addition, the reader is aided by an index of Scripture references. Fortunately, the absence of subject and author index is of little consequence given the layout of the text.

Todd D. Still, University of Glasgow

Renaissance and Reformation and the Rise of Science

Harold P. Nebelsick

T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1992; xxi+320pp., £14.95; ISBN 0 567 09604 1

This book is the third volume of a trilogy, following *Theology and Science in Mutual Modification* and *Circles of God: Theology and Science from the Greeks to Copernicus*. It examines the interaction of key concepts between theology and science since classical times. Nebelsick died on Easter Sunday 1989 with the work unfinished, and it was subsequently prepared for publication by Paul Matheny and Mary Nebelsick. The thrust of Nebelsick's argument is stated in the 'Introduction' where we read that, despite the ambivalence of the church towards science, science 'arose on the basis of the very message which the church proclaimed, the faith it propagated and the doctrines it taught'.

There are three main chapters. The first is 'The Christian Critique of Aristotle' – whose spell on thought had to be broken for the establishment of experimental science. It examines in detail how Aristotelian thought began to crack under the investigation of men like Philoponos, Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, Ockham and Buridan. Central to the 'disenchantment' with Aristotle lay the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, which 'entailed the unity of all creation'.

The second chapter considers 'The Renaissance Mind'. Nebelsick sees the Renaissance as a positive factor in the rise of modern science but concludes the section with this paragraph: 'Before that (sc. the rise of modern science) could happen, however, it was necessary that its wild, uncontrollable and uncontrolled flights of imagination be tamed and brought back to earth. Its insights needed to be threshed and winnowed by the teachings of the Christian faith as understood and propagated during

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the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.' This comment highlights Nebelsick's thesis that the Reformation had a positive and creative contribution to make in the establishment and development of modern science. He is concerned to show the positive bond between science and theology, over against those who would, following the Enlightenment, seek to drive a wedge between the two.

In an age when our culture often assumes the divorce of science and faith this book is a valuable contribution to setting the record straight. All of reality is God's reality and there is no fundamental dichotomy between the realm of science and that of faith. Nebelsick helps us to clarify some of the tangled connections between theology and natural science. The work of Nebelsick is much appreciated by Professor Thomas F. Torrance who is presumably the author of the Epilogue, which is a personal appreciation of the life and work of Nebelsick. It is rather irritating that nowhere is there any clear indication of who is its author. Other minor irritations are the poor quality of proof-reading which have allowed some glaring errors to creep in – including two prominent ones in the Preface!

John C. Sharp, East Kilbride

A Call to Spiritual Reformation. Priorities from Paul and His Prayers

Donald Carson

IVP, Leicester, 1992; 230pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 85110 976 4

Perhaps the most intriguing point to be made about this book is its title: it addresses the reader where perhaps the itch is most obvious, namely, the need for 'spiritual reformation'. And there's the rub: it is a book on prayer! There is little doubt that were the main emphasis of the title on prayer it would warrant less our immediate attention. Such is the state of (spiritual) affairs! Yet this is a book on prayer, and an extremely readable and stimulating one at that, for here Carson is at his pastoral best in weaving together the theological and pastoral in a series of sermons first delivered in their entirety in Australia in 1990. His aim is brief and to the point: 'to work through several of Paul's prayers in such a way that we hear God speak to us today, and to find strength and direction to improve our praying, both for God's glory and for our good.'

The content is straightforward: there is a warm introduction to the whole subject of personal prayer in which the author abstains from giving rules and regulations, opting rather for ideas which encourage the individual to conform to that which is common in prayer as well as allow the peculiarities of the individual to come through in his or her prayer life. There then follows a series of chapters which deal with the following subjects: 'A Passion for People' (1 Thes. 3:9-13); 'The Content of a Challenging Prayer' (Col. 1:9-14); 'Overcoming the Hurdles' (Phil. 1:9-

11); 'Praying to the Sovereign God' (Eph. 1:15-23); 'Praying for Power' (Eph. 3:14-21); 'Prayer for Ministry' (Rom. 15:14-33). At the end of each chapter is a helpful set of questions for personal or group reflection and discussion.

Lest the reader think this is simply another book on prayer, it should be stressed that the genius of this book lies in its ability to scratch several itches at the one time. Most minimally, it will provide the jaded preacher with several excellent sermon outlines. At best, it serves a double challenge. On the one hand it challenges the reader on the personal level of practice: in what kind of praying is one engaged? Carson suggests several avenues of development given that prayer is a personal activity which reflects our own space-time contingencies. However, there is also a theological challenge: the reader is confronted with the much deeper theological issues that underlie the art of proper and meaningful spiritual exercise. Paul serves to reveal the necessity of adequate knowledge if one is to pray with power, precision and passion. Spiritual reformation is the result of sustained and informed reflection on the character of God, as revealed through Scripture, and in this case, through the prayers of Paul.

This, then, is not only a stimulating and helpful book on the subject of prayer and on the deeper realities underlying apostolic and contemporary prayer but also a must for preachers who are perhaps on the look-out for sermon and home-group ideas.

Graham McFarlane, London Bible College

Limits of Interpretation

Umberto Eco

Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1990; 304pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 253 20869 6

Umberto Eco enjoys a celebrated career. Since his first novel (*The Name of the Rose*) landed on popular bookstore shelves back in 1986, and subsequently was turned into a motion picture, he has enjoyed a renown beyond the limited circles of academia, where he first gained his respect, and where he still makes his living. One now can see his name under lists of fiction and on newspaper editorial pages, just as much as one can see it on lecture circuits, on editorial advisory boards, and, of course, on numerous scholarly publications, whether journals or his own books. But with his *Limits of Interpretation* (1990), we are reminded again of Eco's stock-in-trade, for here we have a collection of essays which, though they possess all the verve and imagination of his more public works, show that he is, at heart, a semiotician whose motivating concerns are, for all their innovative descriptions, theoretical.

The fifteen essays that make up this collection were first published from 1977 to 1989, though the majority are from the latter half of the 1980's. They are, then, virtually all from a period following his earlier

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books (*A Theory of Semiotics, The Role of the Reader, and Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*). This fact, as Eco himself points out, is not insignificant, for since the previous works 'elaborated upon the Piercean idea of *unlimited semiosis*', these essays all attempt to 'make clear that the notion of unlimited semiosis does not lead to the conclusion that interpretation has no criteria'. Fully aware of the flourishing theories in certain contemporary philosophical circles and literary criticism whereby interpretations can have free rein, and thus no reign, Eco, with these essays, hopes to draw the limits of any interpretive strategy, and show that not 'every act of interpretation can have a happy ending'. A text *does* impose limits. Though he will acknowledge that the limits are often difficult to define, and are more slippery than perhaps we desire, Eco suggests in this, his later thinking, that any reader must give as much deference to the constraints of a text as to its free play.

Texts, then, are naturally what we get in the working out of these interpretive curbs. Whether steering us through Aristotle, Augustine, Pliny the Younger, Aquinas, Bacon, Pirandello, Joyce, Borges, or C.S. Pierce himself, Eco always seems to delight in the reading and in the semiotic negotiating of a text. He is never short of diagrams, of syllogisms, of those formulaic and algebraic descriptions typical to philosophers of language, of analogies and metaphors, of intertextual connections and references, and of that blend of high-minded rigour with easy levity which makes the majority of his explorations more readable than most in his field. *His* texts, then, as they deal with *other* texts, shed a colourful light on how we might approach *any* text, whether they be within his purview or outside it.

But Eco's own texts are explorations; they are not definitive conclusions. As he has moved from his earlier recognition of a text as 'a playground for implementing unlimited semiosis', where the rights of the interpreter tended to supersede the rights of the written words, he has come to a more compromising position, where interpreter and text meet more at a half-way point. The extreme at either side of this point, he says in the first essay when comparing Christian symbolism with (post) modern symbolism, is 'a form of "fundamentalism"': on one side, 'every text speaks of the rational and univocal discourse of God', while on the other, 'every text speaks of the irrational and ambiguous discourse of Hermes'. Eco himself seems caught between these two 'fundamental' paradigms. A continual refrain that appears throughout these essays is summed up later in the chapter on Joyce, and in turn sums up Eco's middle position well: 'It is impossible to say what is the best interpretation of a text, but it is possible to say which ones are wrong.' No interpretation can claim ultimate authority. But it is possible to judge a reading incorrect because there is an 'internal textual coherence' which controls the reading and can be contravened. This internal coherence is what most (though not all) of these essays are seeking to explore in one

way or another – ‘rules of connection’ made by grammar, logic, semiosis, pragmatics, cultural history, or an interlocking web of all of these together. One will have to look hard to find common strands in the web that spell out these ‘rules of connection’, these ‘limitations’, neatly. But in each essay on its own, one can get a partial, if only suggestive, glimpse.

One area in which Eco cannot be accused in any way of being merely suggestive or compromising is his acknowledgement of the difficulty facing all modern readers, of confronting today’s hermeneutical circle, ever-accelerating and ever-widening in its spin by the ever-deepening questioning of language’s ability to hold firm our systems of belief. Where we seek in our texts the ‘rational and univocal discourse of God’ we find more and more the ‘irrational and ambiguous discourse of Hermes’. As a semiotician, Eco offers no immediate answers to what is, essentially, a theological problem. And concerned chiefly with ‘signification systems and processes’, his academic work tends to lack the philosophical reach which the (post) modern hermeneutical problem opens up. But Eco, for all his theorizing, is not limited to abstract semiotics alone. He is a creative text-maker as well. And just as his novels are empowered by his immense learning and seasoned scholarship, so these essays are invigorated by his inventive and imaginative insights, which, within their own limits, help us to understand, and to negotiate creatively through, this challenging and all-embracing circle of interpretation.

Andrew W. Hass, University of Glasgow

A Theological Introduction to the New Testament

Eduard Schweizer

SPCK, London, 1991; 191pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 281 04602 6

The author, a distinguished New Testament scholar, here offers a critical introduction to the New Testament which attempts to bridge the gap between the established genres of ‘Introduction’ and ‘Theology’. The format is essentially that of a standard introduction, but the focus is on the theological value of the New Testament books rather than the usual introductory issues of author, place, date *etc.*, which are dealt with only summarily.

The individual writings of the New Testament are examined in chronological sequence, instead of the order as given in the canon. Schweizer deals in turn with the letters of Paul, the letters of Paul’s disciples (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians and the Pastorals), the General Epistles, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, the literature of the Johannine circle and Revelation. Issues relating to the preliterary period and the formation of first written documents are dealt with in the opening section. In an ‘afterword’, the author looks at the formation of the canon,

and very briefly discusses the issue of the authority of the canon for today.

By adopting a chronological approach to the New Testament, Schweizer aims at the presentation of an 'historical process'. In describing this process, however, he resists the notion of a single, coherent development, but speaks rather of 'new beginnings, alternative solutions, and corrections as well, which from the outside seem to be accidental'.

While we welcome the author's focus on individual books in his approach to the theology of the New Testament, as opposed to the traditional 'loci' method of presentation (now out of favour anyway), he makes very little attempt to show how the various *theologies* found within the New Testament might be viewed as integrative. This deficiency is particularly glaring in his treatment of Paul. We might at least have expected an introductory piece on the major theological impulses behind Paul's writings, before being launched into the epistles themselves, or even, having emerged from them, a concluding discussion of 'coherence and contingency' (to borrow J.C. Beker's well-worn phrase) in Paul's letters, but all we are given is a couple of short paragraphs on the Apostle's 'Faith in Jesus'.

Essentially, this book is a survey or guidebook. It adds little to scholarly exchange on any of the issues it discusses. In my view, it is too wide-ranging in its scope, too brief in its treatment of the matters addressed, and at too many points not up-to-date enough, to be of much value for college- or university-level study of the New Testament. There is no general bibliography, and except in the endnotes, which are hardly extensive (and which rely heavily, as one might expect, on German literature), there are no recommendations for further reading.

Nevertheless, it does offer the reader, whether pastor or student, a concise overview of the New Testament from a critical perspective, with emphasis on the content of each book. Schweizer is good at identifying the key issues and explaining them succinctly, though most Evangelicals would want to disagree with many of his conclusions. While very readable, the work best serves those with some prior knowledge of critical study of the New Testament. The closing chapter on the canon and its meaning for today raises important questions which need to be addressed, and provides a useful discussion starter.

Edward Adams, King's College, London

Calvin's Preaching

T.H.L. Parker

Westminster / John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, and T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1992; xi+202pp., £16.95; ISBN 0 567 09605 X

To many Calvin is known only as the theologian of the *Institutes*, to a smaller number as a biblical commentator, to fewer still as a preacher. For decades English readers have been introduced to Calvin's preaching by Dr Parker's *The Oracles of God* (1947). Now the highly-regarded doyen of British Calvin scholars, he has incorporated the fruit of extended research and mature reflection, not least in editing the sermons on Isaiah 30-41 for the *Supplementa Calviniana*, in a book that immediately becomes the best guide to Calvin's preaching in any language. No serious student of Calvin or the Genevan reform will be able to do without *Calvin's Preaching*.

The twenty pages of bibliographies – of manuscripts, editions and translations – show that English translations, especially in the 1570s and 1580s, heavily outweighed versions into other languages. The appendices present first, translations of earlier catalogues of the sermons, including the one kept from 1557 by Denis Raguénier, whose achievement it was from 1549 to 1560/1 to transcribe Calvin's sermons in shorthand as he preached them; secondly, a mass of chronological information dating precisely several series of sermons; and thirdly, an argued case for believing that, as in his lectures, Calvin preached direct from the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Testaments, notwithstanding apparent evidence to the contrary.

The thirteen chapters cover everything from form – 'determined by the movement of the text' – and style – personal, homely, diffuse, accommodated to the limitations of the congregation – to exegesis and application, the sermon's transmission, survival and recovery (a story remarkable in several respects), and first and foremost what Calvin believed about preaching. Departing from the order of material in *the Oracles of God*, Parker of set purpose begins with 'The Theological Impulsion' that drove Calvin to devote so much time and energy to preaching. In his view, these early chapters carry their own self-evident message for today; any minister who can read them 'without a blush of shame and a prayer for time for amendment of life must be either above praise or beyond hope'.

This is a first-class book, ranking with the author's *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* in the fresh illumination it casts on a comparatively neglected yet quite central part of Calvin's Genevan ministry, and opening up numerous avenues for further investigation.

D.F. Wright, New College, University of Edinburgh

The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church

Edited by J.L. Houlden

SCM, London, 1995; 163pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 334 02589 3

Professor Howard Marshall reviewed the original edition of this document, which was published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, in volume 13 of *SBET*. As a footnote, the editor noted the publication of this new edition, which also contains responses to the document. Having recently participated in a seminar discussing the document, at which one of the respondents was present, and now having a copy of the new edition, I offer the following comments in addition to Professor Marshall's original review in the light of that. These will mainly concern the responses themselves, rather than the content of the document, which Professor Marshall ably dealt with.

The SCM edition has a brief introduction by Leslie Houlden. It does not, unfortunately, contain the Pope's address from the original edition. However, that address has much in common with Cardinal Ratzinger's preface, which is printed in both editions (who copied whom?!), so although the text is omitted, its sentiments are not.

The main value of the new edition lies in the seven essays responding to the document, printed after the text itself. These present a wide range of opinions, from the positive and welcoming to the critical verging on hostile, and from a number of perspectives: European, American, Catholic, Anglican and Robert Carroll of Glasgow (who defies categories!). I will have to be selective in commenting on them.

Peter Hebblethwaite's response comes first in the list (the book is dedicated to his memory). He discusses the question of the Bible in the Church, since the Pontifical document is unashamedly a Church document. Incidentally, I find the title of the SCM edition misleading at this point. The Pontifical Commission may well want to talk about 'the Church', but the later edition, presumably designed for a wider readership, should make it clear in the title or by a sub-title, that 'the Church' refers to the Roman Catholic Church only. Hebblethwaite's contribution is a brief description of the contents of the Commission's text.

Leslie Houlden, providing 'an Anglican reaction', describes the document as 'splendid', but has two critical comments to add: he is suspicious of the power of the magisterium to control meaning, and finds the document bland in areas where Church doctrine might turn out to be based on erroneous exegesis. This, says Houlden, is a time-bomb, a nettle in the undergrowth waiting to be grasped. In fact, this latter point is made by several of the respondents, who see tensions between the Commission's 'pontificating', and their statements about the importance of the laity and of minorities in interpreting the Bible. In fact, statements such as this from the Commission have no official or doctrinal status, and although this document is published to coincide with the centenary of

Providentissimus Deus, yet with what is tantamount to a papal *imprimatur* (at least, in its original edition), it is likely to carry much more weight than it officially has.

The most pungent and incisive response comes from Robert Carroll, who detects 'cracks in the soul of theology'. He compares the document to the wily Jacob, dressing up as his brother in order to deceive: things are not as they seem! The writers of the document, Carroll thinks, have not taken the insights of the Enlightenment seriously. He is particularly scathing about the document's statements about power and service, and suspicious of such statements coming from a Church with such a poor record of practising service, and such a good (bad?) one of exercising power.

One advantage of this edition is that the names of the members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission are printed, thus giving us an insight into who drafted the text. They are all clerical, all male, and almost all European. Although three American responses are included, would that this document had broken the mould by allowing other voices to speak, especially when the document itself speaks so eloquently about women, and the laity, and the marginalised, and their importance in interpreting and teaching the Scriptures! The only place where dissent is recorded in the Commission is over the last paragraph on 'the feminist approach' (eleven in favour, four against, four abstentions). This is regarded by Houlden as 'a nice sign of life', but by Carroll as the Vatican's unease with statements about 'power as service'. But was there dissent because the text is too radical, or not radical enough?¹

There is a common thread in many of the responses: it pertains to the question of *who* interprets the Scriptures. Is it the domain of the Church, or its councils? Ultimately, who decides? Carroll is critical of the way in which the small preserve of the (male) Pontifical Biblical Institute controls interpretation for others, especially in the area of feminist interpretation. What right has it to so do? Perhaps this points up a problem faced by many churches with regard to their practice. The Church of Scotland, after all, retains the right to 'frame and adopt its subordinate standards, to declare the sense in which it understands its Confession of Faith, to modify the forms of expression therein, or to formulate the doctrinal statements, and to define the relation thereto of its office-bearers and members, but always in agreement with the Word of God and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained in the said

¹ The disputed paragraph states that 'Feminist exegesis often raises questions of power within the church, questions which, as is obvious, are matters of discussion and even of confrontation. In this area, feminist exegesis can be useful to the church only to the degree that it does not fall into the very traps it denounces and that it does not lose sight of the evangelical teaching concerning power as service, a teaching addressed by Jesus to all disciples, men and women.'

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Confession, of which agreement the Church shall be sole judge'. What is meant by 'the Church' in this statement from the Declaratory Articles, what is the relationship between this and the Bible, and what is the place of the individual's interpretation guided by the Spirit? These are questions with which every church has to grapple.

This is just a selection of the reactions. The responses contain some repetition, as is the nature of the case with such collections. The document has already produced a lot of reaction, and it is likely to continue to do so for a long time to come, apparently embracing critical methods as wholeheartedly as it seems to do. I did wonder about the choice of respondents. It seems, from Leslie Houlden's preface, that it was a case of using the only ones available! Three were specially commissioned, however: John Muddiman, with experience of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue, Kenneth Stevenson who gives a liturgist's response, and Robert Carroll, mentioned above. This may not be a comprehensive set of responses (as Houlden recognises), but it is a broad selection of 'discussion starters'. I have found the document useful, not only for its insights into how Roman Catholic scholarship is moving, but also for raising many of the issues which every church has to face in scriptural interpretation.

Review Editor

Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries Calvin's New Testament Commentaries

T.H.L. Parker

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993; 239pp., n.p. 257pp., n.p.;
ISBN 0 567 29242 8, 0 567 29241 X

In his introduction to the first of these books, the author highlights the difference between the two: '*Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* is concerned more with textual and technical matters and has less room for the substance of his exposition', while *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* 'is... intended as an introduction, to portray these Old Testament expositions and perhaps whet the reader's appetite to read some of them for himself'. The contrast between them need not be laboured, since the author makes such explicit reference to it, and *COTC*, in which Calvin has been 'quoted liberally... to bring (the reader) into direct contact with his writings', is, for the most part, more interesting for the general reader.

Dipping into Calvin's commentaries again has recalled to mind my first impressions – as a twenty-year-old preparing to lead a student Bible study – of Calvin as an extremely concise, readable and relevant commentator. Here I would heartily concur with Parker's comment: 'no man ever kept as faithfully and consistently to the point' (quoted from his very interesting chapter, 'Prolegomena to Exegesis', in *CNCT*).

Acquiring plenty of modern commentaries over the years, I have not read as much of Calvin as I might have. Since finishing these books, I must confess that I have not rushed to my shelves for his commentaries. Nevertheless, I think these volumes have exerted some influence on my present course of ministry. The sense of progression in the Old Testament Scriptures, brought out well in *COTC*, has led me to a series of studies giving an overview of God's ongoing purpose of salvation in the Old Testament history. One of Parker's comments in *CNTC* has sparked off a series on Romans: 'a commentary on Romans will lay a solid foundation for the understanding of the genuine meaning of the rest of the New Testament'. Calvin's own words concerning Romans are well worth pondering: 'if anyone acquires a true understanding of it, he will have doors open into all the most secret treasures of Scripture'.

One final point at which we can learn from Calvin, even if neither keen students of history nor avid readers of his commentaries: 'He continued throughout his career to study the Bible, to read the text as a student who wanted to learn its meaning, to read commentaries on the text with an open mind.' That is just the attitude we need today if our ministries are to be both faithful and fruitful.

*Charles M. Cameron, Minister, Burnside Presbyterian Church,
Portstewart*

Hard Sayings of the Old Testament

Walter C. Kaiser Jr.

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1991; 259pp., £7.99; ISBN
0 340 54617 4

Any book which encourages people to read and helps them to understand the Old Testament is to be warmly welcomed, and Walter Kaiser has again put us in his debt. He has taken seventy-three of the 'hard sayings' of the Old Testament and applied his formidable scholarship and extensive teaching and preaching experience to their elucidation. Here we will find concise and penetrating essays on many difficult passages. Readers hoping for help on such sayings and incidents as 'you will surely die' (Gen. 2:17); 'sacrifice your son as a burnt offering' (Gen. 22:2), Uzzah's touching the ark (2 Sam. 6), Elisha and the she-bears (2 Kings 2), Babylonian babies (Ps. 137), or Ezra's sending away of foreign wives (Ezra 10) will not be disappointed. Kaiser writes on these and many other matters with skill, erudition and pastoral insight.

How useful is this book? One point that Kaiser himself deals with in his foreword is that to some extent the selection is arbitrary. All readers will have their own selection of 'hard sayings' and will be surprised at some omissions. This is not a serious criticism and Kaiser himself has spoken of the possibility of further books on this issue. A more substantial question, at least for this reviewer, is whether this is the best

way to deal with these problems. A book like this, for all its merits, is in some danger of giving the idea that solving this or that difficulty is the way to do biblical theology. For example, chapter 38 which deals with Esther 8:11 and the king's edict permitting the Jews to destroy the opposition deals crisply with the issue but fails to examine the book as a whole and its place in the canon. Similarly, the famous crux in Isaiah 45:7 is competently handled but more is needed on the doctrines of creation and providence and the existence of evil. Evangelicals need to produce more biblical theology which will indeed pick up these problems en route but will integrate them more closely into a systematic treatment of canonical, literary, and hermeneutical issues.

Bob Fyall, St John's College, Durham

Prophets of the Lord

Mary Evans

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1992; 267pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 85364 483 7

A vast amount of scholarly study has been devoted to the prophetic literature as well as to individual prophets, and this sure-footed guide by Mary Evans is to be welcomed. She begins with an analysis of who the prophets were and their historical circumstances, and the non-writing prophets. Each of the prophetic books is then considered in detail, their message analysed, useful questions set and further reading recommended. This all adds up to a thorough and helpful book which will be of great use to students, ministers and others. What are the book's merits? It is written in a clear and non-technical style and gives a full treatment of the subject. It is concerned with the relevance of the prophets for today's living. This is particularly clearly seen in the studies of Amos and Isaiah 1-39. It moves easily and skilfully through a mass of often bewildering material and encourages the reader to think.

The book is certainly worth buying and would be helpful for reference. One or two points I am less happy with. In recent years there has been a lot of radical rethinking on prophecy by writers such as A.G. Auld and R.P. Carroll. This needs to be interacted with. It is a pity that Mary Evans has not taken the opportunity to do so. Similarly more needs to be said on the literary nature of prophecy. Why is so much of prophecy in poetry? What is there about this medium which makes it so suitable to be the 'Word of Yahweh'? The other great omission is a consideration of the role of Moses. If Moses is the archetypal prophet and 'man of God', some consideration of his place in the developing tradition would have given a longer perspective. Similarly, at the other end, some remarks on how New Testament prophecy relates to Old would have been welcome. Read the book, then, you will learn much, but also cast your net more widely.

Bob Fyall, St John's College, Durham

1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)

Donald J. Wiseman

IVP, Leicester, 1993; 318pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 85111 846 1

The books of Kings are still not especially well served with commentaries, so it is a particular pleasure to welcome this fine contribution to the Tyndale series. Professor Emeritus Wiseman draws from his vast and meticulous scholarship and no more knowledgeable and sure-footed guide could be imagined.

Following the normal format of the series there is a concise but thorough introduction. The sections on chronology and archaeology are particularly helpful and enlightening. There are also a number of illuminating additional notes on such subjects as 'High Places' and 'The Man of God'. The commentary proper, within the constraints of space, covers the ground fairly fully. I would mention the section on Solomon as particularly effective. I have not read such a lucid exposition of Solomon's building activities. Indeed the book is worth having for that alone. The Elijah / Elisha stories are also well covered, although more on miracle and judgement would have been welcome. As we would expect, the Assyrian background of the later monarchy is given magisterial treatment. The chapters on Hezekiah show a particularly effective use of archaeology to illuminate the text.

All in all this is a fine commentary. This reviewer, however, has two reservations. The first is that while this commentary will prove invaluable to the preacher (it was my regular companion in a recent series I preached on 1 and 2 Kings), there is insufficient attention to the thorny theological issues such as those already mentioned. In what sense is biblical history normative? How do we deal with the activities of Jehoshaphat and Ahaz in a way that is faithful to the ancient text and relevant to modern living? The other issue is that of literary genre. What kind of books are 1 and 2 Kings? How are narrative techniques used to create a world and how does the prophetic historian select his material? All these are issues relevant to the books' present impact. So buy the book and use it, but badger publishers to commission commentaries that also address preaching and literary issues.

Bob Fyall, St John's College, Durham

The Message of Deuteronomy: Not by Bread Alone (The Bible Speaks Today)

Raymond Brown

IVP, Leicester, 1993; 331pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 85110 979 9

Raymond Brown, formerly Principal of Spurgeon's College, has given us a most readable and thorough exposition of Deuteronomy and very

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worthily fulfilled the aim of the series 'to expound the biblical text with accuracy, to relate it to contemporary life and to be readable'. The author tells us in his preface that much of this material was first expounded at various meetings and conferences, and this strong homiletic note is one of the prominent and useful features of the book. The introduction deals with the value of the book, its dating and some of the leading theological ideas. The commentary proper takes covenant as the unifying theme of Deuteronomy and analyses the book as the covenant introduced, expounded, applied, confirmed and shared. The section called 'Expounding the Covenant' is a very useful analysis of the Decalogue and its relevance. The final section has a fine treatment of Moses which also sums up much of the thrust of the exposition.

In the absence of many good commentaries on Deuteronomy this book can certainly be recommended. Preachers, however, should not use this book and similar ones in this series to do their work for them. Brown has given us a series of fine sermons on Deuteronomy, but not always shown us how he arrives at his conclusions. For example, his comments on the date of the book will persuade few who are doubtful of Mosaic authorship. He may be right (this reviewer believes he is), but he does not sufficiently wrestle with the issues involved – *e.g.* the lack of mention of covenant in the eighth-century prophets. Also, some thorny issues need more attention. Questions of extermination of the Canaanites are not sufficiently addressed. How does this differ from 'ethnic cleansing'?

The book is a worthy contribution to the series, but we need commentaries on books like Deuteronomy which give us both academic rigour and homiletic passion.

Bob Fyall, St John's College, Durham