

## Book Reviews

### **MARRIAGE: SEX IN THE SERVICE OF GOD**

Christopher Ash

Leicester: IVP, 2003      394 pp      £14.99pb      ISBN 0-85111-994-8

This is a substantial book because sex and marriage can only be understood as part of the great story of men, women and God. The author argues that marriage is part of the creation's moral order, and must be understood in relation to the creator's purpose. The current volume builds a theological framework for marriage; another is promised to deal with divorce and singleness.

Because there is order in God's creation, the task of Christian ethics is not so much the imposition of order on the world as the exposition of the moral order inherent in it. Marriage is a fundamental part of this moral structure. There is therefore no room for voluntarism in marriage, as if the Church may choose to pursue 'Christian marriage' and the world may choose otherwise. Indeed, because the very structure of marriage is rooted in creation, it is normative and applies to all humankind. Biblical theology shows how this creation structure develops despite the dislocations of the Fall, and how redemption in Christ modifies its application.

The Creator's purpose is expounded from the Bible and the heart of Ash's exposition takes him to Genesis 2:18—'It is not good for the man to be alone'. The statement is made in the shadow of the given task to care for and tend the Garden. It is not good for the man to be alone because he cannot fulfil the task alone. Marriage is therefore part of the ethic of task and responsibility; men and women are created as such for the task, and a natural part of marriage is the raising of more workers to be partners in the task. While we await the return of Jesus, we are to read the Creation Mandate in the light of the Great Commission, and seek to multiply willing workers rather than enemies of God, Christian disciples rather than mere babies. The insight that marriage is for the service of God challenges those who conceive of marriage primarily in terms of intimacy or companionship.

The final section expounds line by line the definition of marriage as the 'voluntary sexual and public union of one man and one woman from different families. This union is patterned upon the union of God with his people his

bride, the Christ with his church. Intrinsic to this union is God's calling to lifelong exclusive sexual faithfulness'. This follows from the exposition of purpose, and illuminates why for instance cohabitation, polygamy and incest are culpable deviations from the Creator's pattern.

This superb book will be a valuable resource for pastors and teachers. The argument is at once profound, deeply simple, and ultimately persuasive. Many suggestive insights are offered along the way—what a shame no subject index is provided to retrieve such nuggets conveniently. Bibliography (17 pp.) and Scripture index bring up the rear.

ED MOLL  
Basingstoke

### **THE ONLY HOPE, JESUS YESTERDAY, TODAY, FOREVER**

**M. Elliott and J. L. McPake (eds.)**

**Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor/Rutherford House 2002 224pp £11.99pb  
ISBN 1 85792 717 6**

The Christian faith is, very obviously, belief centred in the person of Jesus the Christ. He is the object of faith, to whom faith looks, and in whom faith is anchored. It need hardly be added, therefore, that to be wrong on the question of who Jesus is, is to be wrong on the whole matter of faith, its benefits, and its saving nature.

The history of the Christian church has often been the history of the attempt to define the person of Christ, his nature, character, and so forth. This symposium of papers takes as its starting point, the Chalcedonian formula, and looks at Chalcedon in its historical context, including why there was a Council of Chalcedon, and how the formula affected subsequent christology. The span covered by the material goes right up to the present day, via such men as Edward Irving and T. F. Torrence, and looks at the Asian theological scene, as well as Western theology. The result is a most stimulating series of papers by informed and able writers, that deal honestly with the strengths and weaknesses of the various attempts to answer the question that different people have made in different times and places. The final paper by Richard Bauckham rounds off the series well, by showing how Jesus is himself the future, through the Second advent.

Perhaps the idea that has been most helpful to this reviewer is the concept of 'Christology from below and from above'. Where we begin in our christology will have far-reaching implications for the direction we take, and even for the conclusions we shall reach. A Christology that begins below, with the man Christ Jesus, may never truly arrive at the Word who was with God and who is God. While it is true that the New Testament teaches the divinity of Jesus explicitly in only two major passages (John 1 and Heb. 1), the concept of divinity is, of course, present in many places. It is necessary to begin where the Bible begins, with the incarnate Logos, and work down from there to the man who walked this earth. Those who begin above will get to the man; those who begin with the man may well not get to God. The implications of error here are far-reaching, and potentially ruinous, not only to a person's theology, but, ultimately, to their eternal happiness.

One thing that does become clear from this symposium is that the last word on christology has yet to be written. There have been many useful contributions over the centuries, and it is to be expected that there will be many more to come. The book would have been improved by a greater attention to detail on the part of the publisher. Among the errors noticed was one glaring one Abraham was most definitely NOT sacrificed on Mt. Moriah (p. 93)!

EDWARD MALCOLM  
Reading

## **KNOW THE BIBLE**

**Michael Eaton**

**London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002 460pp £9.99pb**

**ISBN0-340-78728-7**

Is it enough to read the Bible or do we need a teacher? In the style of 'Search the Scriptures', Mr. Eaton (drawing on his own previous writings) has written a very helpful book to assist in the daily study of God's word. He leads the reader through the Bible one book at a time and, with daily use, Scripture is studied completely in two years.

We start with Matthew, finish with Revelation, and the other New Testament books appear after every two or three Old Testament books (for which the Psalms are separated into seventeen parts). Readings are shorter in the New

Testament. So, for example, Ruth's four chapters are studied in one sitting but Mark's sixteen chapters take thirty-one. Most studies have three questions, or sets of questions. These include: What do Christians 'dispossess'? (Deuteronomy); Are there versions of the gospel that do not glory in the cross? (Galatians); Did Diotrephes have a personality disorder? (3 John).

The notes are conservative and helpful, not least in explaining the slaughter of the Canaanites (Reading 70, Year One), apparent vindictiveness in the Psalms (215—One), the unity of Isaiah and male leadership in 1 Timothy. The daily diet varies in length from three one-line questions (with no notes) for part of John 9 (151—One) to three and a half pages (mostly notes) for parts of Revelation 19 and 20 (362—Two).

Every believer should read the Bible at least once and every minister of the word benefits greatly if he reads it through each year. So we must thank Mr. Eaton for his efforts. He has undertaken an enormous task and completed it with distinction. However, it is clear from his notes, occasional leading questions and reference to books for further reading, that, just as the Ethiopian eunuch needed Philip to help him understand Isaiah, so Scripture needs a teacher. This being the case, one wonders whether a book of questions is really what we need if we are to 'present everyone perfect in Christ' (Col. 1:28).

I trust that many people will benefit from this book. Much work has gone into it and it deserves to be found on church bookstalls. But, for those who want to be stimulated by answers more than questions, the two-year cycle of meditations by D. A. Carson on the McCheyne Lectionary, *For The Love Of God* (2 vols.) may prove more instructive.

JONATHAN FRAIS  
Ukraine

**THE HOLY BLOOD** King Henry III and the Westminster blood relic  
Nicholas Vincent

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

In October 1247 King Henry III (1216-72) took delivery of a vial of blood which claimed to be that of Christ, shed on the cross more than twelve

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

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

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

At the heart of this debate was the nature of the incarnation, and consequently the nature of the resurrection body of Christ also. The inconvenient truth is that those who argued for the possibility of Christ's blood continuing to exist on earth were right in theological terms, although to admit that in the middle ages was tantamount to endorsing the cult of the holy blood, which few theologians wanted to do. They believed, as we also do, that the blood of Christ shed on the cross has not survived, and that even if it had, it would be

of no theological value in itself. But such a view, though theologically correct, is very difficult to put across to the ordinary worshipper who has been taught that he is saved by the blood of Christ. What exactly does that mean? It is all very well for sophisticated theologians to laugh at the simplicity of those who think that there is something special about what flowed from Christ's body on the cross, but how does one explain that there is power in the blood, but not in the real, historical liquid which that blood was?

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

GERALD BRAY  
Cambridge

## THE IMAGINATIVE WORLD OF THE REFORMATION

**Peter Matheson**

**Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2001 154+xivpp \$15pb ISBN: 0-8006-3296-5**

This book consists of the Gunning Lectures, delivered at New College, Edinburgh, in 1998 by the principal of the theological college of the Uniting Church of Australia. Dr. Matheson is clearly perplexed by the bad press which the Reformation has received in recent years from those who believe that it was basically an iconoclastic movement which attempted to destroy the beautiful culture which had been the glory of Western Europe when it was under the sway of medieval Catholicism. It is obviously impossible to deny that Protestantism had its iconoclastic side, and Dr. Matheson is quite willing to accept that much of the medieval inheritance was indeed swept away in the sixteenth century. He concentrates almost entirely on Germany, but one only has to visit the ruins of the great abbeys which dot the Yorkshire dales to appreciate that the destruction often went beyond what was necessary to achieve a reform of the church, and that we are all the poorer as a result.

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

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

Reformation spirituality was a message of personal freedom, even if that notion was rather different from what it generally means today. Farmers, woodcutters and ordinary people of all kinds came to understand that they were valuable in the sight of God, and that their lives could be as rich and fulfilling as those of the aristocracy. Indeed, they often came to see the extent to which the ruling classes had been corrupted by their wealth and power, and began to realise that true beauty lay not in gold and silver but in the right use of the common things of everyday life. Dr. Matheson draws this out by referring to the correspondence of one Argula von Grumbach, a laywoman and early follower of Luther, who put these principles into practice in her own life.

As the mother of four potentially unruly sons, only one of whom survived her, Argula had to work out what it meant for her and for them to be Christians in a hostile world. She was far removed from the theological debates of her time, but she understood clearly that true spirituality must be incarnated in daily life, and her letters reveal her hopes and fears for her sons. What Dr. Matheson has captured is the first stage in the growth of the Protestant nuclear family, in which parents taught their children the essence of their faith, and the home (rather than the monastery) became the main pillar of the church community.

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

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

GERALD BRAY  
Cambridge

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE CHURCH

**Context, growth, leadership & worship**

**Arthur G. Patzia**

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

Dr. Patzia teaches New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary in California and it would appear that this book is a spin-off of his courses there. The style is extremely clear and didactic, replete with references to the biblical text which help to anchor Dr. Patzia's assertions in the available evidence. The first chapter in fact is basically an explanation of terms, with paragraphs devoted to subjects like the Sadducees, the Temple and the Greco-Roman world. There

was a time when most writers would have assumed that these things belonged to a student's general knowledge, but years of teaching will have persuaded Dr. Patzia otherwise and he is probably right not to expect anything from beginners in the discipline.

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

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

More adventurous are the chapters devoted to the ministry and worship of the first Christian communities. The history of Protestantism shows (or ought to show) that the New Testament does not provide a complete ecclesiology, and that attempts to build one on the basis of the fragmentary and occasional references which we have are almost bound to lead to opposing conclusions. Baptism is an obvious example of this, but rather than exercise caution, Dr. Patzia concludes, rather too hastily, that there was no such thing as infant baptism in the early church! Of course it is never mentioned in the New Testament, but if the practice was forbidden, one might expect some discussion

of the matter, if only to instruct Christian parents how and when they should baptize their offspring. That question never arises either, and so it is impossible to say for sure what was the practice of the first Christian communities.

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

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

GERALD BRAY  
Cambridge

## **AFTER DEATH? PAST BELIEFS AND REAL POSSIBILITIES**

**David L. Edwards**

**London & New York: Continuum 1999 (reissued 2001) £9.99pb  
176 pp ISBN 0-8264-4975-1**

What happens after death is a question we must all face. Belief in an afterlife has been the traditional preserve of religion and remains attractive, but Edwards asserts that in the light of modern knowledge such things become hard to believe. He goes on in the conviction that, despite the inability of

modern scientific knowledge to affirm anything about what lies beyond death, some possibilities must exist. Furthermore he feels that a new exploration of the question is also warranted because contemporary Christians should not be expected to believe incredible and inconceivable ideas.

There is no firm basis for a belief in life after death, according to Edwards. Funeral practices, philosophy, and research into the paranormal confirm only that some people believe in an afterlife; they say nothing about the content of that belief. The author limits the contribution of historic Christian belief to the Funeral Service in the Book of Common Prayer and to the relevant sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. His caricature of Prayer Book Calvinism speaks of doom and gloom, of a heavenly Father who finds it hard to forgive, and of improbable predestination in a world whose future cannot be known. Conservative Roman Catholicism is described in more measured tones, but its teaching that the soul separates from the body at death remains a problem in the light of what most people know [sic] about the physical basis of personality. The author asserts that it is also beyond the bounds of the believable to ask for the wonder of life to be repeated and surpassed by a 'resurrection of the flesh' when our time and space are no more.

Edwards then proposes that, instead of taking the Apostles Creed literally when it speaks of the resurrection of the body, we should think in terms of going to a new existence 'in God' when we die. In this life the soul depends on the body for its existence; after death its basis will be in God. This is not immortality of a disembodied soul (which would in any case lead only to boredom); nor a re-assembly of flesh and bone (which would require the reversal of the laws of nature); nor our absorption into God (which would obliterate individuality). This is a new life, rooted in God. The gift of this new life is open to all, but may ultimately be refused. That last, free, self-destructive choice is perceived to be the one profound truth behind the awful Christian imagery for hell. With the support of some biblical and other texts, Edwards tries to show that such a future existence is indicated by Jesus' unique resurrection.

The first weakness of Edwards' position is his commitment only to that which is credible in the modern mind. The Fall, by which sin and death came into the world through one man, is excluded because it cannot be substantiated by

scientific enquiry. By the same token, it is unthinkable that a perfect creation, free of sin and death, could ever have existed. A future new creation, physical and perfect, is also utterly inconceivable in this way of thinking. It would follow that Jesus' own resurrection is less substantial than traditional Christian doctrine has held. The promised 'new exploration' is hobbled at the outset by the convictions of the modern mind-set.

A second major question is whether traditional Christian thinking on death and its aftermath is quite as shallow as Edwards makes out. His long-held indignation at certain historical positions has perhaps blinded that author to certain theological currents. Edwards is clearly able accurately to summarise a wide range of religious and scientific beliefs, yet this ability appears to desert him whenever he turns to those of orthodox Protestantism. This weakens his critique of Christian attitudes to death and impoverishes his survey of beliefs in general. *After Death?* is a brief exploration of attitudes to death from a modern scientific point of view. The conclusions therefore remain uncertain, as the question mark in the book's title so eloquently suggests.

ED MOLL  
Basingstoke

## SOUL SURVIVOR

London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2001    307pp    £9.50pb  
ISBN0-340-78600-0

Philip Yancey

As some may have discerned from his earlier writings, the young Philip Yancey's experience of 'church' was not entirely the best. In this book Yancey takes the reader to meet the people who affected him during the period when he was sorting out how to square his faith with his experience of a church in which he had seen, amongst other things, racism and a serious lack of integrity. Thus the twelve chapter-long biographies are inter-twined with Yancey's own story and are largely written in his familiar engaging style.

As to his choice of subjects (some are better known than others), these are diverse, but if these are the twelve that most influenced him, then so be it. Helpfully each chapter concludes with pointers for 'Getting started with.....' and I was prompted to pursue these in a couple of cases.

The inference is that meeting, or learning about, these individuals began to restore Yancey's faith, and provoked him to re-assess his stand on 'church'. In this volume he does not address areas where, presumably, his position would now differ from his subjects as regards theology and churchmanship (or religion—Mahatma Ghandi is one of the twelve), nor does it really have a satisfactory conclusion as to where Yancey's journey ends (or has brought him to date).

Although stimulating in parts along the way, ultimately this book left me disappointed and wanting to say to Yancey, 'Yes, and....?' No clear answer is given to his original disillusionment. I'll admit to a slight bafflement that it should have been awarded the accolade, 'CBC Book of the Year 2002'. Yet there is a sting in the tale. Scores of people will have bought and read this book not because of this accolade, but because it is by Philip Yancey. I wasn't convinced it deserves its glory (I read better Christian books in 2002 and suspect that many of you will have done so too), and would be concerned that its lack of careful comment on the characters could be unhelpful to some. The idea of a volume of short biographies designed to whet the appetite seems, however, a good one.

DEBORAH KELLY  
Harold Wood, Essex

## THE LIFE AND WORK OF HENRY PARRY LIDDON

Michael Chandler

Leominster: Gracewing, 2000 250pp £12.99pb ISBN 0-85244-494-x

If one were asked to name a man who often preached to over 6,000 people in London at the same time as Spurgeon was speaking down the road, and if this man were to be called an Anglican of Anglicans with an unwavering loyalty to the Church of England, and if he were to be shown to be a man who feared the liberalism of *Lux Mundi* and stood firm for the integrity of Scripture, and if we were told that he was an acknowledged leader in the church, a deep man of prayer and a well known pastor, it might be that the name of Henry Parry Liddon would not spring to mind. This would be because he was always under the shadow of Pusey whose biography he failed to complete when he died at a comparatively early age.

Liddon was a Canon of St. Paul's and worked with another Canon and with Dean Church to make that place the centre of a restrained and dignified Anglo-Catholicism, making very significant changes in the ritual as well as in the decoration of that great church, changes which in other forms still abide today and which at the time were rigorously opposed by the Church Association (one of the precursors of Church Society).

From an evangelical background he preached ever and always with personal passion of belief, Jesus Christ and him crucified. He believed that prayer is 'in its broadcast sense an act by which man in seeking God seeks his true home and resting place'. He longed that people might become holy. There was a sense that all life must be consecrated to God and offered for his glory.

Staff member at Cuddesdon, Professor at Oxford, Brampton lecturer (over 25,000 copies in print), Canon of St. Paul's, controversialist and yet also a very holy man is how one might summarise the life of this remarkable and humble man. To read his life by Michael Chandler is to understand why the Oxford Movement captured the minds of so many in the Church of England—people who may have had little sympathy with the excesses of the sub-Tractarians but who embraced with relief an alternative to the evangelical movement which had recently swept England.

We live in the legacy of Liddon—for good or for ill—and many evangelicals simply have no idea of the way in which their church was drastically changed for the worse by men of great distinction like Liddon. If we did so understand we might be longing for a new reformation in our day.

JOHN PEARCE  
Bury St. Edmunds

**AT THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP**      Larry Hurtado  
Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999 138pp. £9.99pb ISBN 0 85364-992-8

Larry Hurtado, a Canadian scholar, has moved to the chair of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at the University of Edinburgh. This book contains the lightly edited text of four lectures delivered as the 1999 Didsbury Lectures at the Nazarene College in Manchester, together with an introduction,

footnotes and twenty pages of bibliography. This last addition demonstrates the breadth of reading and depth of scholarship to be found in these pages.

In the words of the author, he is attempting in this work to offer ‘reflections on a selection of points that have to do with how Christians might regard their worship today and seek to inform it by the emphases and character of Christian worship in its foundational period’ (p. 6). In this successful attempt he is providing valuable material for those who might find themselves called on to defend the Christian position against Jews or Moslems who hold that they are the only true monotheists, because of Christian worship being directed both to the Father and the Son.

In a stimulating chapter Hurtado argues that ‘in their devotional practices, as in their belief, earliest Christians espoused a binitarian form of monotheism’(p. 101). Their worship was directed to God through and with the ascended Christ. In a chapter entitled ‘The Binitarian Shape of Early Christian Worship’ he points out that ‘in the New Testament, worship is offered in the Holy Spirit, but it is not so clear that the Spirit is seen as the recipient of worship’(p. 64), and this raises interesting questions concerning contemporary praxis. It is not only charismatics who would sing ‘Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me...’, but are we right to address such a request to the third person of the Trinity rather than making it in the Spirit through the Son to the Father?

The issues raised in this work are thought-provoking and relevant in today’s climate of constant liturgical revision. There are not a few who query the wording of the eucharistic prayers A and G of Order One of Common Worship which conclude with ‘Through him and with him and in him, in the unity (the ASB had ‘by the power’) of the Holy Spirit, with all who stand before You in earth and heaven we worship You, Father almighty, in songs of everlasting praise...’. We certainly worship through and in Christ, but do we really worship the Father with Him? While on earth Jesus acknowledged His subordination to the Father (John 14:28), but the New Testament portrays the ascended and glorified Lord as the recipient of worship alongside the Father, and not as giving it to the Father (e.g., Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5).

The emphasis of prayers B, C, E and F would appear to be more in line with Biblical teaching with their conclusion ‘...through Jesus Christ our Lord, by

whom and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory be Yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever. Amen’.

These are the kind of issues which are stimulated by reading this book, and the final chapter on ‘Reflections for Christian Worship Today’ raises further questions for the contemporary scene. In a church where many find the heart of their faith in the Incarnation rather than the Cross it is heartening to be reminded that ‘unless we understand the New Testament appraisal of the human predicament, which amounts to a moral and spiritual alienation from the one true God, we will not appreciate the significance of Jesus as God’s unique Son sent to offer reconciliation and adoption into a filial relationship with God’. This could have been made even more explicit by alluding to the fact that the Son not only came to offer that reconciliation but to make it possible by His death on the Cross. This is an important point to be taken into consideration not only in inter-faith dialogue, but in conversations within the Christian community.

Similarly, in the face of pressure for feminist inclusiveness Hurtado states that we do not approach God as Our Father ‘as an expression of some ill-founded sentimentality about God’s “daddy-hood”’. ‘Christians,’ he says (p. 108), ‘properly call God “Father” neither to make God “sire” of the world or of us, nor because we want to deify fatherhood and maleness, but instead precisely because we enter into Jesus’ relationship to God as Father. We are to consider ourselves as enfranchised into Jesus’ sonship with God.’ Again, ‘the heavenly “Father” should be worshipped, not as an extension of ourselves, as justifying patriarchy, but worshipped truly as the one God who is categorically transcendent over the creature...This God transcends creation and thereby reveals and judges its inadequacy in representing God, as well as our abuse of our creaturely features such as gender’ (p. 111).

These quotations will demonstrate how much food for thought there is for the reader even in 118 pages of text. It is well worth buying for the seminal thoughts in the last chapter from which we have quoted above, but they cannot be divorced from the thesis maintained throughout this work.

DAVID WHEATON  
Chesham

**WHY I AM A CHRISTIAN****Leicester: IVP, 2003 141pp £7.99p****John Stott****ISBN 0-85111-407-5**

Now into his eighty-third year, Mr. Stott continues the clear, precise and faithful writing ministry that has been such a great blessing to evangelicals worldwide. He says that he became a believer more by being found by God than by searching for him. In this respect he likens himself to St. Paul whom God pursued 'hurting him only to heal him' (p. 21). The result in both cases was 'a firm resolve to spend time and eternity in his loving service' (p. 29).

Then the author gives five reasons why he remains a follower of Jesus Christ (devoting a chapter to explaining each point). They are that the claims of Jesus are true, that he who claimed to be his disciples' Lord humbled himself to be their servant, that the cross gives God credibility, that it explains who I am, and that it is the key to freedom (and the fulfilment of our human aspirations). In the final chapter the writer expounds Matthew 11:25-30 as an appeal to believe.

In an age when many Christian books pursue a cult of personality, are more memorable for their illustrations than their teaching, and reveal little interest in serious Bible study, Stott still preaches Christ. He is Lord: 'If Jesus claimed authority to forgive the penitent, he also claimed authority to judge the impenitent' (p. 43). He is Judge, but the 'wrath of God has never meant that he is malicious, bad-tempered or vindictive, but rather that he hates evil and refuses to compromise with it' (p. 88). He is our Saviour, dying on the cross to atone for our sins, to reveal the character of God and to conquer the power of evil. 'Overcome there, he was himself overcoming' (p. 61) for 'he refused to disobey God, to hate his enemies or to imitate the world's use of power' (p. 62).

Judging by the explanation of how the book responds to Bertrand Russell's speech in 1927 entitled 'Why I am not a Christian', by the recent photograph of Mr. Stott on the cover, by the heartfelt dedication to the late Miles Thomson, and by the price, the book is aimed primarily at refreshing the faith of the author's contemporaries. Perhaps a future edition may be made more accessible as an evangelistic book for other generations.

**JONATHAN FRAIS**

Ukraine

## THE LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS

Gene L. Green

Leicester: Apollos, 2002 400pp £28.99 hb ISBN 0-85111-781-3

This is another fine addition to the Pillar series of commentaries from Apollos. Gene L. Green has already written two well-regarded commentaries on the Thessalonian correspondence in Spanish and now brings his careful and even-handed scholarship to bear on the letters for an English audience. The influence of Bruce Winter and the social-historical approach to the New Testament popular at Tyndale House in Cambridge will quickly be seen here. There is a long introductory section full of historical details about Thessalonica, only some of which is directly relevant to the interpretation of the letters but which may be interesting to some readers nevertheless.

Green is very concerned with the rhetorical background (Malherbe's *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* is well used throughout). This can be somewhat tiring: pages 134-5 are not untypical in mentioning Plutarch, Aristotle, Philo of Alexandria, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Socrates, Dio Chrysostom, Epictetus, and the Maccabean literature. Some of this is most illuminating; Green is especially good at bringing out how the 'royal theology' (talking about God's kingdom and glory, and Christ's parousia) of the letters resonates with the 'monarchal longings of the Thessalonian people' spoken of in the historical introduction, for instance.

It would be nice to have more 'theology' (p. 92 for instance, on the doctrine of election) but that is a common complaint with commentaries that are strong on exegesis. Green is always interacting with the NIV but the exposition itself is firmly based on the Greek text. (It is certainly not overused, but the author is familiar with modern aspectual analysis of NT Greek). Will future commentaries in this series interact with the ESV instead, one wonders?

There is a very good discussion of the debate over 1 Thessalonians 4:4 and whether one is to 'acquire a "vessel"' or control one's body. On sexual immorality in that passage it says, 'What many would view in our day as a strictly "personal" issue is understood by the apostle as a community issue that has eternal consequences' (p. 197). It also brings out very clearly how 1 Thessalonians 4:8 would be a stinging rebuke to those who dismiss such

teaching on sexuality as ‘just old Paul and his ancient hang-ups’—a possible background in first-century Thessalonica and a definite issue in many churches and denominations today.

Green is helpful on the explicitly eschatological passages. The issue in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, for instance, is not that Paul forgot to tell them about the second coming, or ran out of time before he was chased out of town by ‘lewd fellows of the baser sort’ (as the KJV translates Acts 17:5). Rather, ‘at the moment of confronting the reality of death, the Thessalonians did not allow their confession to inform their reaction to this human tragedy’ (p. 215). Green is clearly not an annihilationist (2 Thess. 1), and he rightly puts the case bluntly when he says, ‘Eternal destiny is bound inextricably with one’s response to the gospel of Christ.’ (p. 295). There is a good discussion of the ‘man of lawlessness’ texts, but this will require careful thought—there are no ready-made answers on a plate!

There is some good application here too as he dismisses the kind of fictional nonsense about the ‘rapture’ propagated in popular Christian novels (read not just by Americans) and also says a little on ‘the current trend toward speculation based on counting toes in Daniel or horns in Revelation and relating them to current events....What happens in Israel or the Middle-East’, he continues, ‘is, for us, beside the point’ (p. 246). The rest of the commentary is not always so helpful when it comes to contemporary application, but again that is a common complaint with this kind of commentary.

There are quite a few typographical errors in the review copy (including two different spellings of judgment/judgement in contiguous sentences; a missing ‘is’ (p. 148); and several mentions of ‘the Paul’ rather than just ‘Paul’). Believers ‘do now know’ when Christ is coming again according to page 232 (surely the ‘now’ should be ‘not?’)! This is a minor annoyance which, it is hoped, will be rectified by future well-deserved re-printings of this fine commentary which deserves to be consulted even before those of Wanamaker (NIGTC), Morris (NICNT), and Bruce (WBC).

LEE GATISS  
Barton Seagrave

**ROWAN WILLIAMS** *An introduction***Rupert Shortt**

London: Darton, Longman &amp; Todd, 2003

125pp

£7.95pb

ISBN 0-232-52490-4

'Even if people found his adult sermons hard to understand, it didn't matter. They knew he was a holy man' (p. 39). So said a vicar twenty years ago. But can we understand him any better? Thanks to Mr. Shortt, Editor of *The Times Literary Supplement* and a former student of Dr. Williams, we can. He describes his subject as a philosopher, poet and theologian, and a radical traditionalist who is outspoken politically but can be abstract in thought.

The book is the story of a non-evangelical in a non-evangelical world. There is no comment about personal commitment to Christ, routines of personal Bible study or desire to speak to friends about Jesus. And when he criticises arguments against the ordination of women, he does not mention male headship (pp. 36-37).

Dr. Williams believes that 'faith has less to do with once-for-all answers than with a readiness to engage with further questioning' (p. 19). And Scripture is not definitive. Indeed, the subject matter of theology is 'by definition indescribable' and so theology 'must be in some way self-subverting' (p. 3). It is not clear to what extent he applies this to his own views.

Regarding salvation, he finds 1 John 2:2 unpersuasive: 'the 'price' paid through the crucifixion is not to do with placating God's wrath, but with the way in which 'the bearer of God's life bears the consequence of human self-hatred, the cost of human fear' (p. 86). And his view of church is pragmatic: 'Anglicanism is a Church that has tried to find its unity less in a single structural pattern, or even a confession of faith, than in a pattern of preaching and ministering the sacramental action' (p. 27).

On ethics, he believes that the Bible only 'condemns heterosexuals who engage in homosexual acts for gratification' (p. 50). And a change in the church's view on sexuality 'would not be different from the kind of flexibility now being shown to divorcees who wish to remarry' or to changing views on usury, slavery and hell (p. 51). This places him in an awkward position because he assured his fellow primates in August 2002 that he would uphold the 1998

Lambeth Conference resolution maintaining traditional norms.

Dr. Williams reads history as the development of doctrine (as opposed to its clarification) and he laments 'the impatience that we have these days with process' (p. 98). We know enough about this holy man to be concerned.

JONATHAN FRAIS  
Ukraine

**CREATION AND CHANGE; GENESIS 1:1-2:4 IN THE LIGHT OF CHANGING SCIENTIFIC PARADIGMS** Douglas F. Kelly  
Mentor (Christian Focus), 1997 (reprinted 2002) £10.99pb 272 pp  
ISBN 1 85792 283 2

Kelly describes this excellent book as a theologian's attempt to understand the first two chapters of Genesis, and remarks that he understands what a perilous undertaking that is. He explains that though he may be wrong in many of his scientific arguments given in the text, he believes he is absolutely right to have raised questions about the naturalistic explanations of origins, and the scientific paradigm that currently prevails. He argues that the early books of Genesis are indeed to be interpreted literally, and uses various sources to cement his argument.

Kelly explains why this has some importance: What is the relationship between sin and death if there were millions of years of death and suffering before Adam? Why do the New Testament writers appear to take it literally? If God used a process like evolution over long periods of time, why did he actively describe something totally different from that? Kelly quotes from James Barr, Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, who though not personally holding a high view of Scripture, made it clear that as far as he knew all the leading Hebrew and Old Testament professors at world-class universities agreed that the writer of Genesis intended a literal interpretation. In addition he points out the irony that today it is the liberal scholars who frequently admit that the text is meant to be taken literally, though they deny its claim to speak accurately, whereas it is often the conservative evangelical scholars who refuse to interpret it in this literal way! He states that as well as the Hebrew meaning of the text itself, if a day didn't mean a literal day in Genesis 1, verses like Exodus 20:11 become meaningless.

Kelly systematically rejects the various interpretations and theories that exist. For example, in his dismissal of the view that early chapters of Genesis represent poetry, he explains that though there are indeed parallelisms, it is not Hebrew poetry, and even quotes a Hebrew authority as stating: “The man who says, “I believe that Genesis purports to be a historical account, but I do not believe that account” is a far better interpreter of the Bible than the man who says, “I believe that Genesis is profoundly true, but it is poetry.””

Other concepts such as the Gap Theory, the Framework Hypothesis, the Documentary Hypothesis, and whether there is a conflicting creation account in Genesis 2 are all discussed, though often too briefly. Kelly explains how the established view of almost every evangelical theologian prior to the nineteenth century was to believe that all of Genesis was written as Hebrew historical narrative including, for example, that the earth was relatively young and created in six literal days. It was the attempt to harmonise Scripture with the then new scientific paradigm that changed the minds of theologians into accepting that Genesis 1–11 is somehow allegorical. He discusses how nearly all of the alternative interpretations were devised to avoid the conflict that otherwise existed between the text and evolutionary assumptions.

As Kelly is a Professor of Theology, it is perhaps not surprising that the strength of the book really lies in the theological arguments he presents. However I often found that with these I wanted more explanation. Indeed the book might have been better to concentrate on just this aspect, and leave the scientific explanations for others. There are many other books that address the scientific case more clearly and accurately. However that does not change the fact that the scientific issues Kelly does raise are indeed the ones that need to be addressed.

Though this book is written in a technical style, it is thoroughly recommended, regardless of whether the reader happens to accept the case for a literal interpretation of Genesis or not. Those readers who do accept that interpretation will find it reassuring; but for those who do not, this book is still well worth a read as it has many interesting insights into Genesis which would certainly enrich a personal study of this, the first book of the Bible.

RICHARD JEFFERISS-JONES  
Wimbledon

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