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Book Reviews

THE LETTERS OF JOHN

Colin G. Kruse

Leicester, Apollos 2000 256pp £14.99 hb ISBN 0-85111-776-7

This commentary belongs to the Pillar series, and the series preface provides a good description of the balance of Kruse's commentary: interacting with contemporary debate from the perspective of hearing God's word, and responding to it in obedience.

The Introduction covers matters relating to all three letters, and then matters relating to each letter in turn, examining authorship, addressees, opponents, purpose, literary questions and major themes. Kruse begins by presenting a *scenario* for the interpretation of these letters. He details a number of the assumptions he makes that leads to a reconstruction of the context for the three letters, the emergence of secessionists. He characterises 1 John as a circular letter, explaining the criteria for evaluating the secessionists, 2 John as a letter written to a single church, saying that false teachers should not be given hospitality, and 3 John as a personal letter to Gaius, concerned with giving hospitality to true teachers. This *scenario* is further explored throughout the text.

Kruse interacts with contemporary scholarship, although he deliberately avoids exploring some questions. For example, on authorship, he lists the views of various scholars and then gives weight to the internal evidence arguing for affinities between the author of 1 John and the fourth gospel, and between the author of 1 John and the elder in 2 and 3 John. This internal evidence is then tied to the testimony of the ancient church, quoted in full. Kruse argues for the apostle John as the author of these letters; however he continues to refer to 'the author', 'the elder' and the fourth gospel throughout the commentary, examples of his generally cautious approach.

Kruse does not follow a tight structure; his structure is descriptive. He generally interacts with the NIV in translating the Greek (which is transliterated), and there is a good balance of syntactical, literary, historical and theological comments throughout the text. Repetition is highlighted, as are unique, unusual or debateable uses of words. The affinities between these

letters and the fourth gospel are frequently noted, with John's gospel used as an aid to interpretation. Very helpfully, there are extensive 'notes' throughout the commentary, dealing with wider issues such as the teaching authority of the church, sinless perfectionism, the Son's pre-existence or the bases of assurance. These notes, generally a couple of pages in length, helpfully draw together the teaching of the letters, and the Bible, on particular topics, and make the commentary easier to use.

Overall, this commentary fulfils the criteria of the Pillar series very well. It is clear, readable, and demonstrates genuine warmth for these letters and their application.

JAMES HUGHES

PSALMS. NEW INTERNATIONAL BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Craig C. Broyles

Peabody MA/Carlisle: Hendrickson/Paternoster, 1999 xvi + 539pp £8.99
ISBN 0-85364-732-1

Why are evangelical Old Testament scholars so reluctant to expound Christ from the Hebrew scriptures? Here is yet another commentary on the Psalms, fine in its way and with many insightful observations, that nevertheless fails to take its cue from the New Testament's extensive dependence on the Psalms to explain the Christian gospel. So Broyles' treatment of even such obvious candidates as Psalms 2, 8, 22, 45, 69 and 110 by and large relegates Christological discussion to the odd footnote. Worse, in his microscopic commentary on Psalm 16 (a mere two pages compared with, for example, six on the surely less significant Ps. 26), the author makes the surprising suggestion that 'the overall function of Psalm 16 is hard to determine'. Try starting with Acts 2 and 13, where the Psalm is seen by the apostles as key to explaining the resurrection of Jesus! Indeed, nearly all the New Testament citations of the Psalms encourage the student to read the entire Psalter, as it were, through messianic spectacles. This approach is supported by many other factors too, including the common Davidic superscriptions, and the observations of Wilson and others concerning the structure of the Psalter as a whole and how this has a Davidic/messianic shape. (Wilson appears in Broyles' bibliography, but his influence seems negligible.)

Of course, a Christological reading of the Psalter does not rule out the

complementarily of other approaches. Indeed one can agree with Broyles (commenting on Ps. 22) that ‘God’s word is often multi-dimensional and multi-level’. His own approach, focusing ‘on the Psalms’ original use as liturgies’ (p. 8) is fruitful. Frequently Broyles argues for the unity and coherence of a Psalm in its (albeit speculative) ‘original’ liturgical context – see especially Psalm 68, which in the hands of less circumspect commentators is sometimes relegated to little more than an incoherent mishmash. In general, Broyles prefers to reconstruct a possible liturgical setting rather than speculate too much about the alleged literary history of a Psalm (though he seems to fall into this trap in his discussion of Ps. 22).

Other strengths of Broyles’ commentary include illuminating comments on the following: the ‘enemies’ (Ps. 5); righteousness in Psalm 24; the ‘Zion’ Psalms; vocabulary links between the two halves of Psalm 19; the structure of Psalm 78; Psalm 111’s use of material from earlier in Israel’s history; the imprecation closing Psalm 137 (linking it with Isa. 14); the whole of Psalm 144; and much, much more. Occasionally there seems to be an unevenness of treatment. So, Psalms which seem most clearly to have a liturgical origin (*e.g.*, Ps. 15) are given detailed study, whereas others are treated rather cursorily (*e.g.*, the monster Ps. 119 receives a mere three pages).

Lots of good material, then, but I fear the heart of the Psalter has been somewhat overlooked.

CHRISTOPHER HAYWARD

GOD’S LESSER GLORY: THE DIMINISHED GOD OF OPEN THEISM

Bruce A. Ware

Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2000

230pp

US\$14.99 pb

ISBN 1-58134-229-2

This book addresses one specific area of ‘open theism’, by presenting it, critiquing it, and then drawing out some pastoral dangers if open theism is pursued. It is a tremendous book, easy (and often heart-warming) to read, gracious to open theists, whilst devastating to open theism.

Bruce Ware is a Southern Baptist who knows personally many of the leading proponents of open theism. His respect for them as people is clear throughout, and one would dare to say even a model of gracious dealing with

those considered 'friends' yet who are in serious doctrinal error.

The third of three parts of the book addresses areas of practical Christian living (prayer, divine guidance, and hope/suffering) to show just how dangerous open theism is. Although sometimes simply content with exposing the logical and rational weakness of open theism, when it does argue biblically it succeeds in exposing open theism's inadequacies. The chapter on the problem of suffering is thorough and accurate in its exegesis defending orthodox evangelical theology.

The first part explains broadly and fairly open theism's doctrine of the providence of God, specifically his foreknowledge. It explains the open theists' critique of traditional Arminianism, and explains why (in their mind) open theism is the proper response.

It is the second part of the book where the real goldmine is to be found, and very little mining is necessary. Rich treasures adorn each page. The open theist's assertion to read the Bible in a 'straight forward' way is assessed with particular reference to Genesis 22, and shown to be hermeneutically illogical, contradicting other parts of scripture and contradicting other beliefs within open theism. The same hermeneutic is then applied to Genesis 3 to produce (hypothetically) a God who does not even have any present or past knowledge, as well as being no longer omnipresent!

In the light of this, this book is humbling, because it reminds us of the God who is full of glory. Without even being explicit, readers are challenged to rethink how they consider God in his majesty, as well as, more subtly, to ask of themselves where their hermeneutic may be inconsistent and in error.

God's Lesser Glory shows that the God at the heart of open theism is not the God of the whole of the Bible. It is exegetically sound, as well as engaging theologically and philosophically. If there is one weakness, it is that it underplays the significance of the open theist's reduction of the atonement. At least one advocate is quoted as saying that God did not know that Christ would be crucified. Nor does God know for certain that the ultimate victory has been won, since he does not know the future perfectly. Open theism makes the penal substitutionary atonement redundant, as well as a matter of luck. Whilst Ware does discuss this to some degree, it would have been

helpful to give this more attention, since it is the cross where Jesus reveals the full extent of God's glory (*e.g.*, John 17). This is just a minor point, however, given the excellence of this book. It should be read for its doctrine of God, its excellent exegesis, its graciousness in correction of error, and its pastoral sensitivity.

CARL CHAMBERS

LIGHTEN THEIR DARKNESS: THE EVANGELICAL MISSION TO WORKING-CLASS LONDON, 1828-1860

Donald M. Lewis

Carlisle: Paternoster 2001 369pp £12.99 pb ISBN 1-84227-074-5

The herculean labours of Lord Shaftesbury apart, little has been written of evangelical ministry amongst the urban poor in the nineteenth century. Don Lewis' ground-breaking study, with its analysis of often-overlooked personalities and organisations, helps to redress the balance and points to an alternative approach to that of the later ritualist 'slum-priests'. It recounts the successes and failures of evangelical missionary endeavour in London, which aimed at 'nothing less than the conversion of an entire social class that was largely indifferent to organised religion'. Lewis speaks of the movement's 'pervasive character, superb organization, remarkable duration, the most influential religious crusade to affect the Victorian working classes' (p. 276). This is a scholarly account, making extensive use of neglected manuscript sources, but which nonetheless will inspire and chasten modern-day evangelicals with its portrayal of the energy, seriousness and huge vision of our forebears.

The tensions between Anglican and Nonconformist evangelicals in the 1820s and 30s are explored in depth, although Lewis argues that too much has been made of their significance. He demonstrates that these divisions were bridged sooner than most historians allow, with evangelicals drawn together by their shared concerns over the dangers of Roman Catholicism and theological liberalism, the need to protect 'the Lord's Day' and the urgency of urban evangelism. Inter-denominational groups such as the London City Mission and the Open Air Mission compare favourably to those run exclusively by Anglican Evangelicals, such as the Scripture Readers' Association, the District Visiting Society and the Church Pastoral Aid Society. These latter societies, wedded to the parochial system, are shown to be less flexible than their pan-evangelical rivals, which adapted more quickly to specialised evangelism in

particular venues (such as pubs and coffee houses) or to particular professions (such as the police, sailors, prostitutes and thieves). Fascinating extracts from the surviving journals of a London City Missionary illustrate the frustrations, boldness, joys and sheer persistence of the door-to-door evangelist.

The age-old criticism that 'middle-class' Victorian evangelicals engaged in urban evangelism out of a desire for social control is rebuffed. There is some exploration of organisations which aimed to fight social ills as a barrier to the progress of the gospel, but the book would have been strengthened by wider discussion of nineteenth-century evangelical views on the relationship between 'evangelism' and 'social action'. Nevertheless, Lewis has produced a first class monograph, now re-issued after fifteen years out of print. This rare second opportunity to procure a copy should not be missed.

ANDREW ATHERSTONE

COLONIES OF HEAVEN – CELTIC MODELS FOR TODAY'S CHURCH

Ian Bradley

London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2000

255 pp

£9.95 pb

ISBN

0-232-52337-1

Newbiggin argues that 'trying to criticise one's own culture is like trying to push a bus while you're sitting on it'. *Colonies of Heaven* tries to critique our modern day church culture by hopping on to another bus: the golden age of 'Celtic Christianity'. This was an age, which saw rapid church growth in a pagan culture, so we may expect that there are lessons for today's church in an increasingly pagan Britain.

The book is divided into six chapters. Each chapter first looks at a theme of Celtic Christianity, then moves on to explore its relevance for today. The first chapter considers the 'minster system' of church organisation and in particular contrasts it with the 'parish system', which was not introduced until the tenth century. Clergy lived together in the minsters as communities of prayer going out from them to minister and evangelise. The minsters themselves also acted as Christian centres which people went to. In today's world where parish boundaries are meaningless and people are very mobile, such an approach seems more sensible than the present struggling parish system with its surfeit of buildings and isolated clergy.

Other chapters look at Blessing and Cursing, Penance and Pastoral Care, Worship, the Communion of Saints and Pilgrimage. Ian Bradley accepts all of these as good things, although often arguing that the Celtic approach differed from medieval Catholicism. So, for example, he argues that penance was not salvation by works, but discipline accepted freely to promote personal growth (p. 91). Similarly, pilgrimage was not travelling somewhere for a spiritual buzz, but ‘an inner state of mind expressed in a life of physical exile and journeying’ (p. 200). Yet despite these justifications the book fails to distinguish between the good and bad in the Celtic Church.

Another problem is that little is known about this historic period (p. ix). This means that the Celtic themes are loosely defined and the corresponding applications to today very broad. So, for example, he applies the Celtic theme of pilgrimage to everything from ‘the Walk of 1000 Men’ to ‘March for Jesus’ to ‘Nature Trails’. Thus, the book becomes a ‘hotch potch’ of ideas and ‘hobby horses’.

Despite the ‘hotch potch’ there are some themes. One is that modern Celtic Christian revivalism bears little resemblance to the Celtic Christianity of the seventh and eighth centuries. For example Celtic liturgy was far more centred on sin and judgement and less affirmative of the natural world (p. 125). Indeed, its greatest part was a daily liturgy of Psalms (p. 127). Another theme, which unfortunately is not emphasised until the end of the book, is that the Celtic church was very eschatologically focused. Hence, the title of the book – *Colonies of Heaven*. Perhaps it was this aspect of the Celtic church that has most to teach us. Maybe that is why it was successful in its mission among pagans. After all, isn’t the best way to critique our culture to look at it from heaven’s perspective?

PAUL WORLEDGE

J.C. RYLE, FIRST BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL: A STUDY IN MISSION AMONG THE MASSES

Ian D. Farley

Carlisle: Paternoster Press 2000 258pp £19.99 pb ISBN 1-84227-017

This is not a biography of Ryle, the author declares in his introduction. (Peter Toon, Marcus Loane and very recently Eric Russell have already provided us with these.) Hence the sub-title, for this work is mainly concerned with the

last twenty years of its subject's life, those immensely formative decades in the history of the diocese of Liverpool. The first two chapters deal with Ryle's theology, whilst the remaining four take up those last twenty years – an old man (Ryle was 64 when he was appointed) in a new diocese. For the greater part of that period, certainly over the first ten years with the vigour that had characterised him lifelong, he stamped the evangelical mark on his charge which it has borne ever since and is now personified so definitely in its present occupant, James Jones, who contributes a foreword.

Before Liverpool, Ryle was the Dean of Salisbury who never went there. As his ministry was falling and his own health was failing, the Tory Disraeli was intent on denying the Liberal High Churchman Gladstone the nomination of the first bishop for the latter's own native city, and he did it literally with a vengeance when he put forward the name of an 'Evangelical of the Evangelicals'. Ryle was known as a prolific tract-writer, his popular brief essays selling in their thousands. In the 1870s he secured a different and, in some ways, more influential platform by speaking at Church Congresses, but this association with churchmen of different hues not unexpectedly drew down upon him the wrath of his stricter brethren. If he had not done this, it may be questioned whether Disraeli would have heard of him.

This apart, Ryle's evangelicalism was able to stand the severest scrutiny. Indeed, for us it makes him look dated at times – the millennialism, Sabbatarianism, uncritical biblical literalism, the hell-fire punishments, the condemnation of so-called worldly pursuits (at times with almost pharasaical hair-splitting of what was permissible and what was not), but the evangelical essentials are always there, neatly summed up by Farley as 'the absolute supremacy of Scripture; an emphasis on human sinfulness; an emphasis on the work and office of Christ; an emphasis on the inward work of the Holy Spirit; and the outward evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit'. What also comes out clearly from his first two chapters is Ryle's staunch Anglicanism. These chapters, in fact, provide a fuller and more discriminating account of Ryle's theology than any that I know elsewhere.

The remaining two-thirds of the book are devoted to Liverpool, the product of Farley's extensive and detailed research, drawing especially and profitably on local newspaper reports and providing a substantial background of the local circumstances confronting Ryle. He covers Ryle's own evangelising

work as well as that of others and his approach to such social issues as unemployment, education, drink, the position of women, Sunday observance and war. Ryle was struggling with problems surpassing his ability, even his comprehension. His recipe for alleviating unemployment, for instance, was emigration, but it has to be said that he worked valiantly at these social difficulties and, though not spectacular, his success in sustaining church schools and his energetic promotion of Sunday schools deserve to be acknowledged. The penultimate chapter considers 'the public image of the diocese [and] Ryle's difficulties with misbehaving clergy, the failure to establish a cathedral and the Church's involvement in charity work. In none of these areas was Ryle a success' (p.165); whilst the final one, a model of detailed narrative, is concerned with the last of the ritual cases (apart, that is, from Bishop King), that of Bell Cox at St Margaret's, Princes Road, about which Farley claims and proves his case (in the face of much adverse criticism of Ryle) that 'He behaved honourably and magnanimously throughout'. There is an appendix showing the first publication of what were subsequently incorporated as chapters in Ryle's books together with an exemplary bibliography. This is a book that no studious evangelical or serious reader of nineteenth-century Church history can afford to ignore.

ARTHUR POLLARD

ANGLICAN EVANGELICALS: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media

Grayson Carter

Oxford University Press 2001 470pp £55 hb ISBN 0-19-827008-9

This is the second fairly recent and very notable study of Evangelical secessions in a period better known for those who departed in the Roman direction, following as it does Timothy Stunt's *From Awakening to Secession*. Indeed it is a pity that this book does not contain a reference to secession in its main title which without it may read a little misleadingly.

The book begins with a consideration of two High Calvinist departures in Ireland around 1800, named respectively after their leaders, the Kellyites and the Walkerites. This is followed by a study of the so-called Western Schism in the years after 1815, centred upon the Baring family and much occupied with such issues as predestination, itinerancy, separatism and believers' baptism, this last perhaps stimulated by the current controversy about Anglican

baptismal belief and practice, led from the one side by the High Church Irish bishop, Mant, and from the other by the Bristol evangelical T.T. Biddulph. In this regard the Schism anticipated other seceders such as the Oxford trio of Bulteel, Philpot and Tiptaft. It also displayed characteristics common to later secessions – doctrinal volatility with consequent fissiparousness and, on a more simply personal level, the influence of male wealth and female fervour. That doctrinal volatility is illustrated in the way in which, after the collapse of their movement, some of the Schismatics drifted into Irvingism with its millennialist (Big Bang stuff when the world had become bad enough for that event), glossolalial and pseudo-Catholic inclinations. No wonder Simeon described these people as ‘brain-sick enthusiasts’. Modern parallels spring easily to mind. Irving’s sponsor, Henry Drummond, personifies the pernicious combination of too much money and too little religious sense.

After this the beginnings of Brethrenism, first in Ireland and then in Plymouth, seem eminently sane. Prophecy is there again (explained no doubt to some degree by the panic about the predicted consequences of Catholic Emancipation and the 1832 Reform Act); and this time female fervour and the money bags are combined in the person of Lady Powerscourt. Like other secession movements, Brethrenism grew out of a supposedly regained Scriptural primitivism reacting against the alleged Loadiceanism of the Established Church, a purer-than-thou self-assured coterie, a familiar phenomenon with this breed of religious enthusiasm. Again, like others of its kind, how this purity was to be defined and defended soon led to division and to differing discipleships, whether to I.N. Darby, A.N. Groves or B.W. Newton. Its influence spread to Oxford and affected the trio mentioned above, but, as Carter observes, these ‘Oxford seceders were too outre to attract large numbers of clerical followers’.

The last chapters are devoted to two individuals, later in time than the rest, both from the 1840s when Newman was moving to Rome and Gorham was being persecuted for his views on baptism by the irascible and litigious Bishop Phillpotts, to which Carter gives much attention in one of these chapters, that on Baptist Noel, who eventually parted company with the Church not just because he disagreed with its doctrine of baptismal regeneration but also on account of its alleged Erastianism. The other cleric considered, James Shore, was also a victim of Phillpotts through becoming embroiled in an immensely complex series of events, or rather non-events, in which his supposed curacy

of Bridgetown proved null in law. He continued to preach, though not in the church itself, whereupon Phillpotts took out a prosecution and won his case. Shore went to prison – an evangelical long before any of the ritualists suffered similarly!

Carter has written a fascinating book, in which the subtlety and refinement of his judgements extract from his narrative both the commonality and the differences of the various seceders. He recognises their motivation, acknowledges their fervour and exposes their weaknesses. He notes how they brought into the light some of the worries that troubled many evangelicals, such as the doubts they entertained about statements in the liturgy on baptism and burial, the stresses inherent in the Church State connection and the decreasing conviction among some members of the party. At the same time in a telling sentence he says, ‘The seceders compromised the efforts of men like Charles Simeon and William Goode to build up a sensible, orderly Evangelical party in the Church, which was moderate enough to attract intelligent and respectable converts’ (pp. 391-2). Some of us know how hard that has been, not least in recent years, in the Church we love. Carter glances at some current issues in his final paragraph. The dreadful impact of the disastrous events he chronicles hits us then with tremendous force.

ARTHUR POLLARD

MERE CREATION SCIENCE! FAITH AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN

William A. Dembski (editor)

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998 475pp. £16.99pb
ISBN 0-8308-1515-5

The ‘mere’ in the title of this impressive book is not to be understood as trivializing the subject but rather, as C.S. Lewis used it in his *Mere Christianity*, to focus on its essentials. Of late years the battle has been hotting-up between those who believe in ‘naturalism’ (that the totality of things can be understood without invoking any idea of the ‘supernatural’) and those who believe otherwise (that it cannot). On the latter side are mostly conservative Christian or Jewish believers, and on the other, strong disbelievers such as Richard Dawkins (of *The Selfish Gene*) and many who side with him. The debate is especially active in America, one prominent leader being the noted Professor of Law, Phillip Johnson of Berkeley,

California, who contributes to this book. In the past there has been a considerable amount of rather shallow argumentation from the conservative side against what I have referred to elsewhere as ‘Darwinian fundamentalism’: the idea that evolution based on ‘natural selection’ can explain every aspect of the world of living things, and in some sense too even of cosmic origins pre-dating them (see *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* by Daniel Dennett a brilliant book much admired by Dawkins).

The present book enters the fray on the side of biblical creation. In his brief Afterword, Phillip Johnson recalls the 1959 centennial at Chicago of the *Origin of Species* where the mood was triumphalistic. This was followed in 1960 by the film *Inherit the Wind*, a ‘great propaganda masterpiece of all time’ based on the famous Scopes trial and again belittling biblical faith. Then came the decision in 1962 of the United States Supreme Court to weaken the reference to God in school prayers. What went wrong at that first centennial is something that Prof. Johnson hopes will be reversed well before the second centennial (2059). He goes on to recommend that ‘for the present we should put the biblical issues to one side’ lest we should seem to want ‘to lessen the freedom of scientific enquiry’.

There is certainly a point there, and it explains why the thrust of this book is directed not towards openly defending the Bible, but to setting up a target programme for science which will unobtrusively undermine its common antagonisms to it. The objective chosen is to seek out evidence for ‘intelligent design’: that is to find and pin-point phenomena which are difficult to explain on any other basis.

It is heartening to see clearly scholarly men and women so ably undertaking this task. The writers include mathematicians, an engineer, several philosophers, theologians, anthropologists, a lawyer, physicists, an astrophysicist, a physical chemist, an historian of science, a microbial ecologist, an evolutionary ecologist, and an embryologist specializing in the conflict between fundamentalist Darwinism and Christian faith. Many of the articles are fairly technical and addressed to the specialist, but others can be appreciated by any reader well-acquainted with science and its philosophy. They all inspire confidence. The whole is edited by Professor Dembeki who has doctorates in mathematics (Chicago) and philosophy (Illinois), and a master’s degree in theology (Princeton).

This is a book for thoughtful men and women concerned to uphold the harmony between the biblical account of things and the findings of sound science: its authors ably ‘press the case for a radical rethinking of established evolutionary assumptions’. I recommend it.

DOUGLAS C. SPANNER

HALLMARKS OF DESIGN – EVIDENCE OF DESIGN IN THE NATURAL WORLD

Stuart Burgess

London: Day One (2000) 200pp £6.99 pb ISBN 1-903087-01-5

A superb title! A hallmark is a verification of the standard of material to be found in a product made of precious metal, the name of the maker and the date. The author, without hesitation, justly applies this declaration to the written account of the Creation.

Dr Burgess, a chartered engineer, is a lecturer in Engineering Design at Bristol University. He has held posts in industry designing spacecraft systems, he is author of numerous technical papers and has broadcast on his subject. From his practical background he treats his subject objectively and in a manner to be readily understood by his readers. This work comprises twelve chapters covering a wide range of investigations, with five relevant appendices. It closes with a bibliography of thirty-five references, which includes 130 or so references in the text, and a comprehensive index.

Dr Burgess does not approach his subject with an apology, nor does he start with a reasoning upon the basis of evolutionary thought. He is pleasingly dogmatic in that if God said something including the early chapters of Genesis – then that is the last word on the matter. Burgess goes on to prove that any suggested alternative is not, cannot be, admissible. A typical introduction to a chapter states, ‘The first chapter of the Bible gives a historical record of the creation of the entire universe, describing in detail the order of creation and the length of the whole creation process. Many people find the biblical account of creation strange because it was carried out in an order which contradicts evolutionary theory. This chapter (10) shows how the biblical account of creation in Genesis 1 is actually entirely consistent with a perfect Designer and Creator. It shows that Genesis 1 should be a tremendous

encouragement because it demonstrates that the earth was specially made for mankind by a loving heavenly Father’.

In his first chapter Burgess plunges straight into the ‘irreducible mechanism’ of the human condylar knee joint demonstrating that in no way could this complex (in engineering terms) four-bar hinge have evolved through any stage. It is in similar manner that the author proceeds throughout treating with, for example, the Irreducible Flight Mechanism of Birds; Complete Optimum Design; Added Beauty; Man-Centred Features, etc. Of this last subject he states, ‘The earth is exceptionally well suited to supporting a large population of people. The water system, raw materials, fossil fuels’ plants and animals contain many man-centred features that make them very convenient for human use. The evolutionist can only say that man-centred features have been produced by sheer coincidence’.

He brings forward a multiplicity of examples to illustrate his arguments, all most convincing. From a classification tree for land vehicles to the biology of the duck-billed platypus; from piano-playing to mathematical curves in petals and leaves, a wide variety of subjects is treated.

Any criticism mostly concerns detail in presentation. To a schoolboy of the 1930s, having had English grammar dinned into his thick head, to the extent that the correct preposition to follow the adverb ‘different’ is ‘from’, the frequent occurrence of ‘different to’ becomes a niggling annoyance. To mollify this, only one case of a mis-spelling has been found, that of ‘complements’ (p. 81). Your reviewer, like the author, is also a chartered engineer and he readily accepts the arguments put forward by the author. However, in the instance of the Kitty Hawk (p. 40), your reviewer would challenge that the auxiliary lifting surface of an aircraft – in this case the foreplane, as the aircraft example is a canard – determines the flight attitude of the aircraft and only indirectly does it affect its altitude.

Again, although your reviewer is not into the realms of bird song, he would strongly challenge the intimation that the song of the ‘wood pewee’ (?) or any other bird exceeds the range of the average human voice, *i.e.*, two octaves and more (p. 72). Surely the second illustration, as in the first, should have its key signature in the treble clef.

Putting these relatively minor criticisms to one side, Burgess closes this most fascinating book with a presentation of the Gospel, a fine opportunity, ending with a reference to Isaiah 45:18-22. A very readable, convincing book, suitable for the church library, the general reader and the student alike. The reviewer will treasure and frequently refer to his copy.

GEOFF COOPER

THE LETTER OF JAMES (PILLAR NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY)

Douglas J. Moo

Leicester: Apollos 2000 271pp £14.99 hb ISBN 0-85111-977-8

All sorts of indignities have been heaped on the letter of James over the centuries. Luther's 'right strawy epistle' comment may be misunderstood, but sums up the view of many more critical interpreters who attack the letter's authorship, canonicity and theology. Why bother with a letter which has also been neglected by so many parts of the church? Moo's conviction, and that of the Pillar Commentary Series for which he writes, is that God speaks through the inspired text of Scripture. The Pillar Commentary series therefore seeks to clarify the biblical text and let it speak for itself. The vain chimera of 'objective scholarship' is left behind in favour of even-handed openness put at the service of serious pastors and teachers of the Bible. The present volume stands squarely within that framework as the author of a major commentary on Romans brings his skills to bear once again on the letter of James. (Moo wrote an earlier commentary on James published in 1985).

According to Moo, James writes to call Jewish Christians back to a wholehearted commitment to Christ – to 'completeness' or 'wholeness'. They have come under pressure through various trials and become 'double-minded' and worldly. James responds with a written homily. Because the worldliness of the Church finds so many different forms, James touches on a range of practical matters. The form of a homily allows for a loose ordering of material, moving from topic to topic. The emotional climax of the letter is found at 4:4-10: calling fellow-Christians 'You adulteresses' is to evoke Old Testament language of unfaithfulness, and to challenge them on their single-mindedness in serving the Lord. As Moo himself admits in his preface, it is easy also for Bible teachers to back off from fervour in serving the Lord. This is a sharp challenge which needs to be heard just as much as the exhortations of Romans.

James' teaching draws on material common to Christians and Jews. Moo points out significant parallels between James and the literature of Hellenistic Judaism. Yet he resists the call to classify James as Wisdom. By the same token, the parallel literature is not allowed to drive the interpretation of a Christian document. Moo notes that major developments of Wisdom in the Hellenistic literature (for instance the identification of Wisdom with Torah) are not present in James. Finally, James makes many allusions to the teaching of Jesus, and his letter therefore remains a wholly Christian writing.

Moo is well placed to deal with the stock issue of faith and works, and he does so with a commendable economy. Paul and James write to address different issues: Paul to combat legalism, James to confront quietism. Both messages are still needed in the Church. An early date for James also means that if anything the two apostles were at cross-purposes, rather than in conflict. Throughout the commentary, the key issues are laid out with clarity and simplicity, and accompanied by thoughtful application. Greek is transliterated, and technical discussion of syntax mercifully limited. Relevant issues of translation are referred to the major English translations. This book is clear, concise and highly recommended. Even readers not entirely persuaded by the overall purpose of the Letter will find the exegesis of great help in pastoral Bible-teaching ministry.

ED MOLL

HOW CAN I HEAR GOD?

Gillian Peall

Bletchley: Scripture Union 1999 120pp pb ISBN 1 85999 293 5

The front cover illustration on this book is probably more apt than the publishers intended. It is a picture of a sea-shell. We all know that when we put a shell to our ear we hear the sea. Only, it is not the sea but the sound of our blood coursing through our veins.

The answer to the question, *How Can I Hear God?* seems to be: Take the dog for a walk in your local woods, and be sure to notice the plants and trees. God will reveal things to you as you are made to notice the commonplace. The things that God reveals are all about us.

What a person has heard needs to be proved, and suggestions are made as to

how this could be done. The main advice is to ensure that it is biblical. ‘Does it square with Scripture?’ But it is clear from the outset that there is a fundamentally flawed understanding of what the Bible is. A ‘Manual for life’ and ‘Handbook for living’ it is called, and of course it is. But is that a sufficient definition? This book assumes that the Bible is a book about mankind. It is, of course, a book about God’s self-revelation to his creation, which culminates in the revelation of the Word incarnate. Since the Bible reveals God to us, and Jesus Christ reveals God to us, it is to be expected that any additional ‘words’ will reveal God to us. But they tend to reveal ourselves to us.

The author is aware of the possibility of counterfeit voices, which may be caused either by mental disorders or satanic intervention. It is also possible to manufacture voices according to our needs. Therefore it is necessary to seek support, either from the Bible or from other, mature believers, in order to be sure that the voice heard was really God’s. He will not tell anyone to do anything contrary to the Bible, or anything that is known to be sinful. One is reminded of Martin Luther’s own experience. On seeing a vision of the risen Christ he responded with the words, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan’, because he was well aware of the source of that vision.

One is therefore tempted to ask, if God will never speak anything contrary to his word, would we not be better advised to study his word, rather than rely on possibly misleading and certainly subjective methods of communication? The Bible is fixed and final, and the authoritative revelation of God to his creation. We may not always understand it, but we need never doubt it either.

EDWARD MALCOLM

THE REDISCOVERY OF WISDOM – FROM HERE TO ANTIQUITY IN QUEST OF SOPHIA

David Conway

Basingstoke: Macmillan Press 2000 x + 196pp hb ISBN 0-333-74711-9

Philosophy, the love of wisdom, is a high aim. The philosopher is not the pursuer after wisdom, but the one who has found wisdom, and now contemplates it. So says David Conway in this very well written book on the current state of philosophy. His thesis is that modern practitioners have

abandoned the high ideal as being impractical, impossible and even undesirable, and have exchanged it for either science or pure agnosticism. The need, he says, is to recover the aims and ideals of the classical conception of philosophy, which is able to answer the great questions.

The modern conception is defined in terms of two main schools. The English speaking world holds positivistic naturalism, saying there is nothing beyond experience, that which natural observation and science can tell us. Man is insignificant in the universe, which functions as though he were not here. The non-English speaking world holds anti-realism, where ideas of space and time, object and property, truth and falsehood, only exist because man has so labelled them. They are not to be found otherwise. This latter view has led to post-modernism.

Thus modern philosophy rejects the notion that man can know God. Since God is outside man's experience, and since God cannot be arrived at through scientific enquiry, and since the world does not need an explanation for its existence, philosophy must content itself with lesser matters.

Conway seeks to show that the classical conception as held by Plato and Aristotle in particular, is capable of beholding God. He shows that Aristotle conceived of God as being immutable, immaterial, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, unite, and necessary. This, he says, is so close to the Judaeo-Christian concept as to be identical. Further, the neo-platonists are evidenced to show that the contemplation of God, which is the end of philosophy, is identical to Christian worship.

The demise of the classical conception is ascribed to three events. Its absorption into fifth century Christianity, the Copernican Revolution, and the Enlightenment all shook the presuppositions of the time. However, the author maintains that each of these challenges is false, and that the objections raised to the classical conception can be answered. Neither Christianity, the Copernican Revolution, nor the views of Hume, Kant, or Nietzsche, actually destroy the classical understanding and method. God is still the object of philosophy.

It might therefore be assumed that any monotheistic religion would be better equipped to do this. But Conway denies this: '[T]he classical conception of

philosophy in its pagan form differs from these religions by denying there to be any greater wisdom than that which is capable of being discovered through reason alone'. However, he has a deficient view of revelation: 'Christians believe all such doctrines and precepts have been revealed as are expressly so depicted in the New Testament'. But this is not true. Christians believe that the whole of the Bible, New Testament and Old, are the revelation of God, in terms of narrative, historical fact, and literary form, as well as in terms of specific doctrines and precepts. Furthermore, the 'non-literal construal of biblical verses enables philosophical profundity to be read into it. Philo was able to find in allegorical form in the Bible virtually the entire contents of Plato's philosophy'. This may be one of the best arguments for utterly discarding the allegorical method!

As Conway engages with Christian understandings of the content of revelation, in particular the fact of the incarnation and the purpose of Jesus' death, it is clear that his own understandings, and so his presuppositions, are informed by theological liberalism: 'it is Paul, not Jesus, who is responsible for having superimposed onto Jesus' last meal the symbolism belonging to the ritual meals associated with the pagan mystery cults'. 'Paul states, in the account he gives of the Last Supper, that his knowledge of what Jesus said to his disciples on this occasion came directly from what Jesus told Paul in a vision'. He denies that the Christians in Jerusalem celebrated the Lord's Supper prior to Paul's writing of it! The purpose of these and other arguments is to show that the New Testament is supposed to contain teachings, wisdom, that could not be known by reasoning alone. Conway denies their actual presence, and so does away with the need for revelation *per se*. Such wisdom as the Bible (and, indeed, each monotheistic religion) contains is consonant with wisdom at its best. There is no divergence between religion and philosophy once the possibility of revelation is discounted.

Having removed from Christianity that which makes it unique, namely the revelation of the word of God which culminated in the revelation of the Word made flesh to reconcile us to God and atone for the sin of the world and in order to give eternal life to all who believe, and having held up as the highest ideal the contemplation of God through the exercise of the reasoning faculty, Conway comes to this conclusion: 'If the argument of this book has been sound, the sad truth is that that ours is a culture that has never been more spiritually lost., This is a view with which we would concur, but for very

different reasons. Conway believes that the denial of the existence of God has led to the emasculation of philosophy. This may very well be true. However, he maintains that human reason unaided is capable of finding out God, of contemplating him, and of loving him and being loved by him. He reckons without sin, for he has rejected revelation. He has discounted special revelation, and has lowered natural revelation to the realm of human reasoning. To paraphrase the Paul he disdains, professing himself to be wise, he has become foolish, for the God he says we can find is the God who made man in his image, and the God he says we cannot find is the God who sent his only begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

EDWARD MALCOLM

RENEWING BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION. SCRIPTURE AND HERMENEUTICS SERIES, VOLUME 1

Editors: Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, Karl Möller

Carlisle: Paternoster 2000 391pp £19.99 hb ISBN 0-85364-034-3

This profound and thought-provoking volume is the first fruits of an exciting new project: the 'Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar', a planned ten year partnership between The British & Foreign Bible Society and Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, under the leadership of Craig Bartholomew. This has been convened in response to the perception that we have plunged into a 'crisis' in biblical interpretation. The historical-critical method is crumbling, its positivist foundations and its pretence at 'neutrality' having been mercilessly exposed. Instead biblical studies have taken a 'literary turn', but this has led to an increasing subjectivism. The results are, as Brevard Childs says in his foreword, 'methodological impasse, conflicting private agenda, loss of clear direction, extreme fragmentation, unbridgeable diversity, and even a deep sense of resignation'. The members of the seminar are not, however, concerned solely with academic issues. They believe that the academy should serve the church, and that the Bible should be heard as God's word, a desire seen in Walter Sundberg's essay 'The Social Effect of Biblical Criticism' which details the devastation wrought by covertly anti-Christian scholarship.

In his introduction and programmatic first essay Bartholomew shows that modern biblical interpretation has always been shaped by its philosophical

assumptions, even when it has pretended to be 'unbiased'. Thus the book seeks to go beyond questions of methodology and look at the crucial philosophical issues that underlie them. If there is a single thread running through these essays, it is that the crisis is above all a theological one, and a theological hermeneutics is needed in response. I had a slight sense of *dejà vu* here: growing up in a 'fundamentalist' church, I can remember being told repeatedly by 'conservative' apologists that biblical criticism was not unbiased, but controlled by anti-Christian presuppositions. Nice to see the professionals catching up! That aside, the call for a theological, and explicitly Christian, hermeneutics is very encouraging. Several of the essays are sympathetic towards so-called 'pre-critical' readings, and even protest at the dismissal implicit in that label. The crisis in hermeneutics is ultimately a crisis of belief: it faces us with the question of whether or not we trust the divine author that scripture claims to have, of whether our hermeneutics will be theocentric or anthropocentric. This choice is unwittingly revealed in the 'Retrospect' by Walter Brueggeman; he opts for the latter! In this respect one hopes that future volumes will find space to interact with Van Til, and his successors Poythress and Frame, who have always emphasised the importance of basic theological presuppositions in interpretation.

The quality of the essays is outstanding. The only disappointment was Neil Macdonald's contribution on the philosophy of language and typology; this looked promising at the start, but petered out in an unconvincing barthianism. The highlights are probably Al Wolters' 'Confessional Criticism and the Night Visions of Zechariah', and Brian Ingrassia's 'Deconstructing the Tower of Babel: Ontotheology and the Modern Bible'. Both of these move beyond theory to give examples of how a responsible, theological Christian exegesis might be carried out. The book is worth buying for these two alone. The latter contains a searching response to post-modernism and deconstructionist literary theories, themes echoed in Karl Möller's 'Renewing Historical Criticism', which suggests a way in which historical criticism can be saved, (thus avoiding post-modernism's disregard for the truth), within a Christian framework that avoids the positivism that has dominated the discipline. Other essays include Thorsten Moritz on N.T Wright, Harry Beeby on 'A Missional Approach to Renewed Interpretation', Colin Greene on Christology and the Philosophy of History, and Trevor Hart on 'Imagination and Responsible Reading'. The latter is especially stimulating, although I was left wondering about the difference between the use of the imagination and

unfounded speculation. Stephen Wright's essay on aesthetics was interesting, but a little out of step with the others, as he states that we should approach the bible without 'preconceptions'.

A criticism and a warning must be registered. First of all, some contributors show the tendency of hermeneutics to descend into ever more arcane jargon. There is no excuse for the writer who uses 'precedent' as an adjective when 'preceding' would have done! Second, issues of biblical authority will not go away. In a fascinating historical study of the interpretation of Daniel, Christopher Seitz shows how twentieth century scholarship did not resolve the theological questions that nineteenth century scholarship had raised, it simply 'changed the subject'. This surely applies to issues of inspiration and infallibility, which contemporary scholarship, (including evangelical scholars), has agreed to ignore. Inerrancy has not been refuted, it has been quietly done away with; but like Banquo's ghost it will reappear at the post-modern feast. One hopes that the Seminar will face these issues as they pursue their goal of renewing biblical interpretation and thus renewing the church.

STEVE WALTON

SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSION

Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O'Brien

Leicester: Apollos 2001 352pp £14.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-519-5

The biblical foundations of mission are always worth revisiting, lest our own practice becomes either unfounded and wayward or unconsidered and perfunctory. This recent addition to the 'New Studies in Biblical Theology' series provides an excellent survey of mission, from Genesis to Revelation. Beginning with an accessible introduction to Biblical theology, this volume traces the progression of mission as an unfolding theme in Scripture. Although weighted towards the New Testament (there is one chapter on the whole Old Testament, and another on the second-temple period) the survey is wide-ranging but always carefully controlled by writers working with a continual eye for the links to fulfilment in Christ. The result is a refreshing correction for dioceses – and parishes – where 'mission' has exchanged its christocentric focus for a broader welfare paradigm.

Although much more could be said concerning the Old Testament contours of mission than is possible in the one chapter dedicated to it, the divine purpose for mission, and the unity and diversity of its outworking, is clearly presented. Next comes an assessment of the Second Temple period as being not typified by great missionary outreach. Consequently the missionary church of the New Testament represents a unique development in God's saving plan.

Several of the New Testament chapters examine the 'narrative flow' of particular New Testament books: here particularly this volume rewards being read alongside an open Bible. Rather than isolating their theme, Köstenberger and O'Brien use it to illuminate with great effect the overall concerns of particular Bible writers. These chapters could stand alone as introductions to the biblical books in question. Little is missed: perhaps one surprising absence was the omission of any discussion of Stephen's speech in Acts 7.

Other chapters on Paul, John, and the general epistles and Revelation are more diffuse in their approach, adopting a more thematic outline. In every chapter the authors work hard to ground what they are saying in explicit implications for the reader. The reader is repeatedly drawn into the flow, and not kept at a distance, which surely must be a key aim for a book on mission.

My one regret concerns the final chapter, entitled 'Concluding Synthesis'. A lot of space is given to reiterating the conclusions of each chapter – indeed, here is an accessible summary of the book as a whole. Yet less than ten pages explore the implications of what has been mined from Scripture. It seems a shame that fruitful observations and implications appear rushed at the end. Nevertheless, the authors' three desires, outlined in the introduction (p. 23), are well served by the volume as a whole.

MATTHEW SLEEMAN

BODY, SOUL AND LIFE EVERLASTING

John W. Cooper

Leicester: Apollos 2001 241pp £16.99 pb ISBN 0 85111 474 1

Here is the second edition of a book first published in 1989, which considers the fundamental question of the relationship between soul and body in biblical anthropology. The Preface brings us up to date on the current debate.

The author then begins his carefully crafted defence, asserting that Scripture teaches both the holistic unity of body and soul, and the separation of body and soul in the 'intermediate state', between physical death and final resurrection. Popular evangelicalism has certainly neglected these important questions. The result is much confusion over what will happen when we die. This work is important, inasmuch as it introduces us to some of the biblical texts on the matter. The author argues for a holistic dualism which blends exegesis with biblical and historical theology as well as with some philosophical insights. It offers a concise, accessible historical survey of the question, tracing an established body-soul dualism through Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin and Descartes. It then argues how non-dualistic anthropologies developed during the Enlightenment, under the influence of such men as Hobbes and Spinoza, before considering the challenge to holistic dualism found in much contemporary science and biblical scholarship. The unremitting contemporary trend towards monism (the idea that soul and body are not distinct entities) has led to a growing rejection of any Old Testament concept of the afterlife. This would be an illustration of how (ill-conceived?) systematic conclusions have coloured our interpretation of Old Testament Scripture.

The author then offers an incisive overview of Old Testament anthropology. He asserts that body and soul are functionally intertwined in life, but also separated at death, in Old Testament descriptions of the 'intermediate state' of Sheol. From New Testament passages, he argues convincingly against the two alternatives to the intermediate state (immediate resurrection at death ['soul sleep'] and extinction-recreation). There is a helpful overview of the biblical Hebrew and Greek terms, and a clear appraisal of Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. The concluding chapters seek to defend this 'holistic dualism' in relation to science, philosophy, and other possible objectors.

The author defends this dualistic anthropology over against contemporary support for monism and physicalism. Crucial to his defence, is his redefinition of dualism as holistic, rather than ontological, thereby avoiding the possible confusion between Scripture's intermediate state and Platonic philosophy. The book introduces most helpfully the subtleties and complexities of biblical anthropology, highlighting the modern trend to atomise and ignore parts of the biblical witness. There is a good treatment of the topic of Sheol, all too easily veiled by popular Bible translations. Perhaps most importantly, the

author shows how the logic of the resurrection is contained within the Old Testament itself, thereby declaring the consistency of biblical eschatology in both testaments.

With these strengths in mind however, the author is in slight danger of weakening the biblical case he makes so persuasively, with his appeals in chapter 4 to inter-testamental anthropology, whose varied eschatological imagery threatens simply to confuse the biblical clarity. The last chapter also appeals to extraordinary human experiences and convoluted contemporary theologies, in attempts to substantiate the biblical case already made. Moreover, there are times when we feel dragged into an intense monist-dualist debate akin to a personal feud, exemplified by such phrases as ‘the debate as a whole has not yet been concluded. But the dualist has scored some points’ (p. 119). The ‘problem’ is that the reader has not been fully initiated into the vested interests of both parties. Furthermore, though the book does argue persuasively against monism, the dualist debate is still inconclusive, in as much as there is no consideration of trichotomy (the view that we are constituted as body, soul and spirit).

Overall, however, this is a good, thorough, readable and accessible work, on an important topic much neglected in contemporary preaching – namely what happens at death. Here is a topic integral to the gospel, and therefore one with which we must wrestle. To that end, reading this book will take effort, but it is well worth it.

JOHN PAUL ARANZULLA

READING ECCLESIASTES: OLD TESTAMENT EXEGESIS AND HERMENEUTICAL THEORY

Craig G. Bartholomew

Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico 1998 325pp £24.99 pb
ISBN 88-7653-139-4

This book is a revised edition of a doctoral dissertation. Bartholomew argues that philosophical approaches are fundamental to hermeneutics, and then proposes a Christian approach. The Book of Ecclesiastes serves as an illustration of the principles advanced and of the methods used in the book.

Bartholomew first demonstrates that philosophical hermeneutics are

important, because they have shaped how Ecclesiastes has been read through history, with allegorical, grammatical, historical-critical and literary readings all influenced by the philosophical thinking of the time. His definition of hermeneutics as ‘the theory of text interpretation to include the relationship between the general problem of understanding and the specific focus of text interpretation’ (p. 5) is helpful here as it highlights the continued importance of context for interpretation.

Then, in chapters three to five, Bartholomew first explores the Historical-Critical method, giving particular attention to it because of its continued importance. He then highlights twentieth century reactions to it, such as New Criticism and Canonical Criticism. Of particular interest here is the argument that historical criticism has been decontextualised, that is it has come to be regarded as normal, the way to look at the text ‘independent of context’. This is a problem because historical criticism emerged in an enlightenment environment hostile to religion, with basic beliefs at odds with Christianity, for example, on human nature.

In chapter six, Bartholomew engages with postmodernism, setting it in context as part of a reaction to modernity. The helpful insights of postmodernism, such as the recognition that any approach carries assumptions with it, are highlighted. Some inconsistencies are also highlighted: the continued existence of meta-narratives or philosophical positions even if their existence is denied, or the dependence of ‘against the grain’ readings, such as feminist readings, on traditional readings as a point of departure.

Having thoroughly examined the relationship between philosophy and hermeneutics, illustrated with reference to Ecclesiastes, Bartholomew proposes, in chapter seven, a Christian reading amongst a genuine plurality of approaches, that is, one which accepts a Christian reading as legitimate. He argues that this Christian reading would involve a ‘Communication model’ of hermeneutics, a ‘sender-message-receiver’ framework (p. 213). This framework gives the text the priority in exegesis and interpretation, and examines the structure of the text and the wider scriptural context.

Bartholomew’s final appeal is that philosophical approaches to texts be made clear; given that all have presuppositions, those presuppositions should be acknowledged.

It should be clear from what has been said above that this book is not a commentary on Ecclesiastes. However, it does shed light on the book, mainly in chapter seven, although the conclusions drawn are highlighted as tentative and in need of further investigation. Bartholomew argues that Ecclesiastes is 'a developed wisdom form of the royal testament or fictional autobiography cast in frame-narrative' (p. 228). He examines the structure of the book in some depth, arguing that the author leaves deliberate 'gaps' in the text that can potentially be filled by remembrance of God as creator. Bartholomew then argues that Ecclesiastes is an ironical exposure of Greek epistemology, designed to move fourth century B.C. Jews back to the fear of God and away from Epicurean wisdom.

This is unquestionably a very stimulating book, and as is appropriate for a book on hermeneutics, it is useful on a number of levels. It sheds light on Ecclesiastes, on philosophical hermeneutics, particularly on the historical critical method, and as an introduction to a wide variety of hermeneutical approaches. However, as Bartholomew acknowledges, it does not complete any of these tasks.

JAMES HUGHES

**THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM STILL, VOLUME III.
THEOLOGICAL STUDIES IN GENESIS & ROMANS.**

William Still (David C. Searle and Sinclair B. Ferguson, eds.)

Edinburgh: Rutherford House/Christian Focus Publications 2000 341pp
£19.99 hb ISBN 1 85792 5718

Don't judge a book by its cover. This one is quite solemn, has no pictures, contains the word 'theological', but is quite pleasant. Serious as it looks it does not contain complex arguments from the higher echelons of ivory tower academia. Neither is it a clever attempt to combine the truth of Genesis and Romans into some newfangled theory of God. This is no heavy tome. It is not a technical commentary, has very few long words and is written entirely in English.

Having said that, the book is not bedtime reading and is best read slowly, studiously and prayerfully. The reader is provided with what were daily Bible reading notes from a loving pastor who recognised that his flock needed spiritual food between sermons.

There are 179 readings from Genesis and 152 from Romans so the book could be studied in a year. Written for the housewife, parent, tradesman, scholar, preacher or student, all who read will benefit. These notes proved popular to a wider readership than Still's Aberdeen congregation, and were sent out regularly far afield. This book is a great antidote to dumbing down and a suitable up-grade for those using the various daily reading notes that come from Arminian authors. Here is the type of writing that will change people because it doesn't just tell us what to do, it tells us who God is, what he has done, and what it means to believe it. Some of the readings will stretch the mind more than others, but all are useful, warm and relevant. We are led to consider and develop how to apply them prayerfully.

Some quotations will give you a flavour of what to expect:

'One of the signs that our own nation is heading for disaster is that few things are as despised as sheer goodness'.

'When we know ourselves to be hell-deserving sinners every tiniest favour is a cause of gratitude, so that we spend our life giving thanks to men and to God.'

'The mind of any intelligent person can revel in the Genesis stories, but only faith sees the thin red line of God's mighty purpose. Does this come naturally – I mean spiritually natural – to you?'

And finally on prayer: 'It is a matter of living the whole of one's life in the Lord's presence.'

Still is excellent at bringing out the sovereignty and grace of God to the reader but there are one or two problems. He capitulates on six-day creation and the extent of the flood. He fails to consider Matthew 22:30 so takes that horrible view of the sons of God in Genesis 6.

What does the latest survey show? So few Christians are reading their Bibles. So few parents are leading their family worship at home. The preacher's efforts are in vain if the people will not study. The new versions have hardly been successful in getting people reading. These notes could greatly help non-readers to get stuck into their Bibles. They could be used for group study or

even better, for family worship, even to stimulate discussion after a meal. Eat together? There's an old path that William Still would heartily endorse.

PETER J. RATCLIFF

FEARLESS LOVE: UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Anne Sanderson

Fearn: Christian Focus 2000 272pp £5.99 pb ISBN 185792-506-8

This very accessible book was written by an ex-JW to motivate and equip Christians to reach JW friends, relatives and those who knock on our doors. To do that the author wants us to be sure of what we believe, to understand the Watchtower's teaching and to have up-to-date information on the society. The title is inspired by 1 John 4:18: 'There is no fear in love.' Fear is the Watchtower's chief weapon. Fearless Christian love is required of us. The book explains these two issues

Sanderson starts with her background and testimony. She then looks at various JW fears. This bit of the book is brilliant, as she really allows the reader to get into the head of a JW. You get a clear JW worldview and begin to see the difference between what we say and what they hear and how we can frighten them away, at times compounding the problem. We also see the society from the inside. Sanderson's chatty style of writing is harder to follow through the more technical sections about JW distinctives and leading a Bible study compared to more pithy books that just give a straightforward comparison of beliefs.

The section dealing with the hows and whys to speak to JW's is full of helpful tips, tested by experience. Much should be commended here. She shows confidence from her Biblical understanding and experience in the power of the gospel, prayer and testimony both of individuals and churches. It is encouraging to know what goes on in a JW's mind after they have left an Evangelical's door. Of course we 'know' the power of the gospel but it is great to read about how many leave the society and go to Bible-believing Churches that we will never hear about.

Although clear on the gospel many readers may clash with some peripheral theological points *e.g.*, confidence that particular JW's she knows will be

saved. I also think she is over-confident that *all* Christians should stop and speak to JW's. The challenge is fair, too many of us avoid it, but babies in the faith need protection, or at least an adult hand.

The book is promoted as being timely because of developments within the society and the opportunities of the Internet. Nevertheless there was not much that was startling within it. This book is a useful resource, but did not deliver all that it promised in the opening chapters.

DARREN MOORE

FIVE FESTAL GARMENTS

Barry Webb

Leicester: Apollos 2000 151pp £10.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-518-7

This book is the tenth in a series called 'New Studies in Biblical Theology' and it is in a work such as this one that we see why biblical theology is so important. One of the undergirding principles of biblical theology is that the different books of the Bible have an underlying unity and a coherent message, based on their single divine author. This principle is, of course, most congenial to an evangelical view of the Scriptures such as Webb holds. Here we see the rich fruit that such convictions about Scripture can bring to biblical study and preaching. Without biblical theology the five books that are studied in this volume (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther) would be well nigh impossible to preach to a Christian congregation today.

Indeed few congregations are likely to have heard sermons on these books. If the Old Testament is neglected amongst Christians today then supremely it is these books that are unknown territory for the modern believer. Thus the author has done an immense service to the Christian community in showing how these five books relate to the rest of the biblical canon and giving pointers as to how they may be preached today in a way that is faithful to their original genre and purpose.

Webb calls the books five 'festal garments' because of their association in the lectionary with five Jewish festivals. Indeed his exposition of each book is assisted by an awareness of the role that it played within Jewish theology and

the process of its incorporation in the canon. There is a chapter devoted to each book. In each chapter we are given an overview of the book which highlights the structure of the work and key words or themes that are addressed within it. It is then related to the rest of the Old Testament. This may be done through its relationship with the Torah or with wisdom literature for example. Finally there is a Christian reflection which shows how the book relates to New Testament ideas. It is in this that the most helpful vistas open up for the modern Christian preacher. Naturally such reflection is brief given the limited size of the work but there is no doubt that what today's reader will find here is immensely valuable. The brevity of the work also leaves the reader longing for wider discussion of some issues (such as the use of the Song of Songs in much Christian tradition) but that does not detract from the usefulness of what has been written

Any Christian who wants to understand these neglected portions of Scripture better will find this book a great blessing. However it is the Christian preacher who desires to teach the whole counsel of God who will be most appreciative of Webb's work. This is the volume to turn to before the commentaries are taken off the shelf. If we are to rescue these five festal garments from neglect then this book itself must not be neglected.

MARK BURKILL

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In the present critical times for the **Church of England**, Church Society represents all members and congregations who want the Church's **Protestant doctrine** upheld and the views of **Conservative Evangelicals** heard. Through Church Society the parish church and the individual have a national voice and can contend effectively for the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Another advantage is free membership of the **Church Society Book Club** which offers members both current and classic books on theology and related subjects at reduced prices. It provides substantial savings in building up a reference library and also allows the opportunity to keep abreast of current thinking.

Church Society Trust exercises patronage in over 100 parishes and seeks to provide gospel ministry and biblical teaching by spiritually minded men.

More information about the Society, its work and details of subscription rates will gladly be sent on request. Church Society's office is at

Dean Wace House 16 Rosslyn Road Watford
Hertfordshire England WD1 7EY
Telephone 01923 235111 (24 hours)
Fax 01923 800362

E-mail admin@churchsociety.org
WWW <http://www.churchsociety.org>
Registered Charity number 249574