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Book Reviews

PERSONS IN COMMUNION: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation Alan J Torrance

Edinburgh: T and T Clark 1996 388pp £24.95 hb ISBN 0-567-09740-4

Dr Torrance is the nephew of Professor Thomas Torrance, who has also written extensively on the Trinity, and it is fascinating to observe how one generation has given way to the next in his writings. To the elder Torrance, who studied under Karl Barth, the neo-orthodoxy of the inter-war years remains a beacon of light, supplemented by other streams to be sure, but nevertheless central to his whole way of thought. For Alan Torrance however, Barth belongs to a past generation, whose limitations have now become clearer than they once were. This is not to suggest that Alan Torrance undervalues Barth – far from it. Rather it shows that he can examine the great man's theology with a certain critical objectivity and show that some of Barth's concerns and hesitations can be overcome once further reflection and new insights are applied to the question at hand.

This is particularly true with Barth's doctrine of the Trinity, which is notorious for its unwillingness to use the word 'person'. Barth has, as a result, been accused of modalism, of Christomonism, of denying the doctrine of creation, and so on. Dr Torrance rightly demonstrates that these accusations are exaggerated, even to the point of making them false, though he admits that Barth did leave himself open to that kind of attack more than he should have done. He was in fact a prisoner of his own ideas, notably his belief that revelation was a 'concept' which could be analyzed from the pages of the Bible. By making use of more recent theologians, notably the great Orthodox writer John Zizioulas, Alan Torrance is able to take us beyond this and show that, properly understood, the word 'person' provides a thoroughly adequate basis for speaking about the communion which we are called to have with and in God.

He also tackles Barth's famous *analogia fidei*, which was deliberately intended to contrast with the Thomist *analogia entis*. In a fascinating discussion of these two concepts, Torrance shows that this is a false dichotomy, that the two analogies can and must be held together, and that when combined in the right way they point us to a higher and richer *analogia communionis*. This in turn leads us to the point where theology merges with doxology, and we are lost in wonder, love and praise.

This is a magisterial book which is bound to earn its author a well-deserved reputation as a staunch defender of Christian orthodoxy in an age which takes fright at the very thought. It bears the marks of a doctoral

thesis – too much Latin and German floating around unaided by translation, and a lot of indigestible theological jargon in what must, alas, be regarded as English. This is a pity, and it is to be hoped that Dr Torrance will come down a notch or two in his next book. His is a readable style – far more so than that of his uncle – and the content deserves to be communicated with maximum effect. Beginners in theology will need their dictionaries if they are to get the most out of this volume, but the effort is well worthwhile. Dr Torrance is to be congratulated for making a significant addition to theological literature, and in particular, to our understanding of Barth and his doctrine of the Trinity.

GERALD BRAY

THE ANGLICAN EVANGELICAL CRISIS Melvin Tinker ed
Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications 1995 222pp £8.99 pb
ISBN 1-857-92186-6

The thesis of this collection of essays is clear from the title. There is a crisis within the Anglican evangelical community; a crisis of identity, theology and purpose. Calling the reader back to the theology of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Ordinal and the Book of Common Prayer, the purpose of the book, as one contributor comments, 'is to reform the Church and motivate it to evangelize this country' (Carson p 204). The book arises out of the influential Anglican evangelical group 'Reform'.

In the opening essay Holloway sets the scene by arguing that the Church of England is in desperate need of reformation. Yet this reformation must be in line with its historic roots, which according to Holloway are thoroughly evangelical. This drift from evangelical moorings is also documented in Packer's analysis of the changing nature of Anglican comprehensiveness. However, this book makes very clear that the problem lies not just in the Anglican arena. Thompson provides us with a somewhat refreshing definition of evangelicalism, which steers well clear of the all too common sociological understanding in favour of a more satisfying theological explanation. Tinker then suggests that contemporary evangelical theology may not be as 'evangelical' as we think, as he examines some recent trends. This thesis is further developed by Bray in his useful analysis of the changes in the understanding of scriptural authority. At this point the book helpfully turns to examine various issues which are currently prominent on the Anglican evangelical scene. We have essays on the ordination of women (which interestingly utilize both biblical testimony and natural observation), ecclesiology, preaching (supported by a further very helpful essay examining 'the surrounding cultural influences which have led to the general malaise in present-day western preaching' [Guiness p 156]), homosexuality, lay administration of

the Lord's Supper, and social action. The book finishes with some 'observations from a friend', in which Carson, in typically erudite manner, contrasts this volume with that of R T France and A McGrath's *Evangelical Anglicans, their role and influence in the Church today*.

Here is a thoroughly helpful work with plenty of food for thought. Those currently satisfied with the state of Anglican evangelicalism will be greatly challenged by what it has to say, whilst those already aware of 'the crisis' will take heart that they are not alone. However the strengths of this volume also reflect its weaknesses. Aside from Carson's comments, which are well worth dwelling on, let me highlight four areas. Firstly, *The Anglican Evangelical Crisis* has an impressive list of contributors to whet the appetite although one wonders why the list is so 'international'? Of the twelve writers, only six currently live and work in this country. Three of the others are 'home grown' (Packer, Bray and Guinness). Bearing in mind that 'Reform' is an English affair, why do we not find here more contributors from within the group itself? Secondly, the book brings together much material that can be found elsewhere. For some this will mean that there is little here that is 'new'. Thirdly, at times the analysis of the situation is insightful and pertinent and we are left in no doubt that the Anglican evangelical world is in crisis. But one is often left thinking 'where do we go from here? What can I, the individual reader do about this?' Yet perhaps that is a good thing, because it ensures that if carefully read, this book will drive us to our knees in prayer!

Fourthly, it is encouraging for the Anglican tradition to be defended as historically evangelical. It reminds us, in Tinker's words, that 'far from Evangelicals being cuckoos in the Anglican nest, we do humbly believe the nest to be ours and invite others to receive and enjoy its riches' (p 12). However, the point is surely that even if our heritage were not so evangelical, the Anglican church must be reformed to make it more biblical. In that respect, it matters less what Hooker or any other Anglican divine said, and more what the Bible says. Carson's point is also worth mentioning. At the end of the day, arguments over Anglican history are less likely to 'win people from one party to another' and more likely to 'strengthen the hands of those already within this or that party' (p 215).

Having said all this, there is some excellent material here which could be used in study groups, or discussions with a friend. Either way, once you have read this book yourself, do not put it away on the shelf, but lend it out to others.

Let me finish with a note of caution. This book has not been written that we might wallow in self-pity. Rather, it has been written that we might recognize the crisis facing us, and pray and strive for change, so that men

and women at present cut off from the gospel, may hear the truth and believe. In the midst of 'the crisis', we must not lose sight of this.

MIKE KENDALL

INTERPRETING THE PROPHETIC WORD: An Introduction to the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament Willem A VanGemeren
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan 1996 545pp \$24.99 pb
ISBN 0-310-21138-7

This is a book which should quickly find its way on to the desks of preachers who are serious about teaching the Old Testament in their churches. VanGemeren has provided us with a masterly summary of the Old Testament prophetic books which will be of enormous value at the early stage of planning a sermon, when one needs a survey of the theological shape and contribution of a book as a whole. Major prophets have a chapter each, others are clustered together.

Three features make this an exceptionally valuable book. First, although VanGemeren is hugely well-read he displays his learning lightly. Much material of interest to scholars is relegated to the extensive footnotes. Similarly, those who require lengthy discussions on authorship, date or source will find these subjects hardly mentioned. Academics may be irritated by this, as by his conservative conclusions which tend to be stated rather than argued, but the reader who wishes to discuss the shape of the final material will find that VanGemeren's concerns are in the same area. Students will thus find this an excellent resource but may need to supplement it from elsewhere; busy pastors may rejoice that so much of what they do not need has not been included, while what VanGemeren attempts he does well and thoroughly.

Second, VanGemeren is committed to an understanding of the Bible as a whole (as outlined in his earlier work *The Progress of Redemption*, Paternoster), and therefore each prophetic book is placed within its canonical context. OT and NT are in frequent, fruitful dialogue. Those who find biblical or canonical theology indefensible might be advised to steer clear, but those who proof text will find his deep and thoughtful analysis challenging, and his thoughts on hermeneutics in chapter three will not allow them cheap solutions.

Third, there are some excellent essays on the role of the prophet in Israel. Chapters one and two 'The Prophetic Tradition' survey the history of prophecy from Moses onwards, and demonstrate how true prophecy may be distinguished from false, bearing in mind the twin temptations of *realpolitik* and *vox populi vox dei*. Half-way through the book

VanGemeren pauses for a chapter which summarizes the concerns of the prophets as a whole. He does it here rather than as a conclusion because he intends the book to be a textbook for students, and he wants them to have cut their teeth on the minor prophets before tackling the major ones. The chapter would make a more natural conclusion, but one can see why he has chosen this route. His actual conclusion is an equally relevant chapter on how Christians live in the light of the partial fulfilment of the prophets' message.

The weaknesses are few, and are more in the way of irritations. The book is scattered with simple diagrams, which obviously have their origin in the lecture room. I found I did not need them and that on occasion they obscured rather than illuminated. Similarly, the questions at the end of each chapter to check one's comprehension of what one has read, may be useful for exam revision, but not for the general readership. Any reader will have places of disagreement over exegesis, and it would be tempting to pick holes in his masterly bibliography. As I have indicated, those who require the academic questions to be addressed will need to go to his voluminous endnotes and the referred reading there.

This is a book worthy of unreserved recommendation for those who wish to have the prophets preaching from their pulpits.

CHRIS GREEN

HIDDEN SAYINGS OF JESUS **William Morrice**
London: SPCK 1997 247pp £14.99 pb ISBN 0-281-04922-X

In John's Gospel the evidence for believing that Jesus is the Christ is continually set forth, yet we see many of the apostle's contemporaries exhibiting a profound distaste for the evidence that God has chosen to lay before them. Such distaste for God's evidence about Jesus leads many to this day to seek material about him from elsewhere. This book is an examination of the quality of this other material which purports to preserve sayings of Jesus not found in the canonical gospels. For those who wish to dip their toes into these rather murky waters it forms a useful introduction.

However the attitude to canonical Scripture displayed by the author will be questionable to many readers. We are told (p 16) that 'the most important matter is to discover the mind of Jesus behind the words recorded by different evangelists within the New Testament'. The methodology adopted towards NT apocryphal writings is therefore one of seeking to separate the gold from the dross. Here there is scope for many basic questions about our expectations of the way in which God

communicates his mind to us.

Morrice grades the sayings attributed to Jesus according to four categories of authenticity. This has some merit, but there is something greatly amiss when the Arabic Bridge Saying dated to 1601 (see pp 195-7) is given a higher grade than 1 Thessalonians 4:15! In fact many of the sayings attributed to Jesus outside the NT come from the Gospel of Thomas. While F F Bruce does not consider this work to be directly gnostic, Morrice is far too optimistic of his ability to distinguish those parts of it which are not gnostically inspired.

Of course the Gospel of Thomas cannot really be regarded as of the same genre as the canonical gospels since it is largely a collection of sayings. This therefore only serves to highlight the limitations of looking for the mind of Jesus in his sayings. The central feature of Jesus' ministry is his death and resurrection and the significance he claimed for these events. His words can only be properly understood in the context of these deeds. This vital aspect of true Christianity inevitably sidelines the importance of this book. It is a helpful work for the curious but the treasure it claims to unveil is fool's gold.

MARK BURKILL

TESTING THE FIRE Mark D J Smith

Cambridge: St Matthew Publishing 1996 221pp £6.25 pb
ISBN 0-9524672-7-5

This useful book has been written by someone who is not unsympathetic to the charismatic movement, and yet has serious reservations about the so-called Toronto Blessing. The author witnessed this religious movement at first hand when it appeared in the church he attended. This experience enables him to engage directly with the arguments and enthusiasm of the movement's advocates.

Smith makes some telling criticisms of the spirituality and the theological stance which lies behind the Toronto Blessing. He demonstrates the absurd distortion of those scriptural texts which are deployed in promoting Toronto. He properly warns (p 65) the movement's adherents of the dangerous gulf they have established between the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

The author also examines the underlying attitudes and motives which make the Toronto Blessing so popular. Those in a pastoral ministry who seek to help anyone involved in the Toronto movement need to appreciate these points if their counsel is to be heeded. Chapters seven, eight and nine

make some perceptive comments on the movement's spirituality. The quest for the Toronto experience and the motivation of those who participate in 'raves' is noted as being remarkably similar. Likewise the correspondence of the Toronto phenomena with those found in other religions is indicated. Here there is much wisdom that will still be relevant when Toronto has passed and the next wave of excitement comes along.

Mark Smith has a desire to distance himself from an attitude which sees the Bible as inerrant (p 186), but this should not dissuade Evangelicals and others from buying this book. It can be put in the hands of a thoughtful Toronto adherent as well as used for reflection by those who are already cautious about this influential religious experience.

MARK BURKILL

INTERPRETING THE BOOK OF ACTS: Guides to New Testament Exegesis Walter L Liefeld
Grand Rapids: Baker Books 1995 141pp No Price pb ISBN 0-8010-2015-8

This book's stated aim is to provide guidelines for interpretation, rather than to do the exegesis itself (p 20). It is an aim which this slim volume accurately fulfils. Brevity here is a bonus as well as a surprise, given the ground covered; it enables the wood to be seen for the trees. Liefeld provides an excellent and concise survey of the issues surrounding the interpretation of Acts.

Chapters are devoted to the Purpose(s) of Acts, Structure, Narrative as Theology, Speeches, Major Themes, Background, and 'from Exegesis to Application'. Those familiar with Acts will know how much could be included under any one heading, let alone seven. Liefeld's approach is to give a concise summary of the main scholarly works and streams (with some footnotes), followed by pointers for exegesis and interpretation. In a few places (especially within Purpose, Structure, Speeches, Themes and Exegesis), he draws his own conclusions with supporting arguments. In every case, precise judgments are reserved for the reader. Regular reference is made throughout to F F Bruce's commentary on the Greek text, where detailed arguments may be looked up.

The clear and readable style makes for a smooth introduction to the few surprises found in this book. For example, once the possible purposes for Acts are surveyed, it becomes quite manifest that, whatever its purpose, the book was not written as a paradigm for Christian mission and evangelism. So too the need to avoid using the speeches to solve modern questions is obvious, when viewed against the attention Luke gives to an apologetic purpose in Acts. (Incidentally, the summary of speeches (pp 73-7) reveals

just how important they are to the book as a whole). The chapter on Narrative and Theology is not as tidy as the others, but this may be more a reflection of the discipline rather than the author. It was certainly useful to see that a narrative moves towards a resolution of tensions rather than doctrinal declaration. Interpreting narrative is hard at the best of times, let alone when it is studded with so many other genres, as it is in Acts.

In summary, this book is worth recommending for three reasons. First, it is short enough to be read in one or two sittings. Second, it raises the questions which must be dealt with when the detailed exegesis and preparation begin, without forcing answers upon the reader. With such a concise introduction, detailed exegesis can be undertaken with the 'big' picture still in mind. Third, reading this book makes me look forward to the next opportunity to spend time in Acts, and I resolve to re-read this book before embarking on commentary work. I wish I had read it earlier!

ED MOLL

COVENANT AND CREATION: A Theology of the Old Testament
Covenants W J Dumbrell
 Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1997 206pp £3.99 pb ISBN 0-85364-771-2

This book fully deserves its place in Paternoster's Biblical and Theological Classics Library, and I for one am very glad a work first published in 1984 should be available once more – and at a very reasonable price. Close reading is required for what is a detailed treatment of key passages in Old Testament Covenant theology.

Dumbrell starts from the premise that there is only one covenant, from which the others are derivative. The first covenant, that with creation, never 'begins' because the relationship it formalizes already exists. In the first part of the book we are shown that in Genesis, a 'covenant' formalizes a set of existing relationships. So, to 'cut' a covenant is consistently used for covenant entry, while to 'establish' a covenant is to perpetuate an existing one. Moreover, the use of 'my covenant' with respect to God's covenant made with Noah (Genesis 6:18) shows that the covenant is God's self-obligation: it is not a treaty between two parties. The purpose of this and all subsequent covenants is divine rule.

God's elective and redemptive call to Abram is made in the shadow of Babel. The promises and the covenant which confirms them fulfil the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 and foreshadow the final shape of God's rule. Time and again future covenant events point back to this call, which is itself closely linked to Creation. Indeed, the covenant at Sinai builds on

the patriarchal covenant (Exodus 6:4), and the giving of the divine name is a commitment to a relationship of trust. God's unilateral commitment to Israel is further strengthened with the introduction of the Lord's faithfulness when the covenant is renewed (Exodus 34). At this point the Ancient Near-East background is examined, and is seen to shed some light on the Old Testament covenants: Sinai is cast as a suzerain treaty, while Deuteronomy and Joshua 24 are covenant renewals.

The purpose of the covenant with David was to engraft monarchy onto the existing covenant structure. Indeed the Davidic covenant contains significant Abrahamic allusions, and lies within the framework of Sinai. The book of Judges, accordingly, points to the fact that the Lord has preserved the covenant in the face of all odds, rather than to the need for kings. Indeed kingship was actually a threat to the covenant, because the Lord is properly the king. In order to safeguard the covenant, therefore, the rise of kingship was accompanied by the institutionalization of prophecy, with the latter retaining supremacy.

With the Exile in 587 BC, land, Temple and kingship were all lost, and a shift in covenant theology was introduced. The hope spoken of by the prophets was much more than a simple return to the *status quo ante*. The new covenant edifice is built on older promises, and the Servant (here a corporate figure) is a pledge of that covenant. There is both continuity (the Lord as the same husband, for example) and discontinuity (Israel would not break this covenant) in the new covenant.

A brief epilogue confirms that there is no advance of covenant theology in the (so-called) post-exilic prophets, nor in the wisdom literature. Naturally, the link between covenant and kingship becomes important in the light of the prominence of the Kingdom of God in the Persian prophets. We are left with the conviction that nothing less than a new Creation – and thus a new Covenant – will achieve the ideal of God's perfected people. The goal of the covenant, as of creation, is divine rule – an expectation developed as the Kingdom of God, whose fulfilment awaits the new creation.

It should be clear by now that the book's two hundred and six pages must be densely packed to cover so much material. Dr Dumbrell does interact with scholarly literature throughout, yet references are brief, and include many foreign-language works. Nevertheless, there were usually enough clues to allow the interested reader to pursue and engage other schools of thought.

All in all this book provides a detailed evangelical treatment of the Old Testament covenants covering many key and subsidiary questions. It

requires close reading, but I was gripped once past the first thirty or so pages. There is no introduction, and the small type is a bit daunting, but this is a classic after all!

ED MOLL

MARK: A COMMENTARY ON HIS APOLOGY FOR THE CROSS

Robert H Gundry

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1993 1069pp \$60.00 hb ISBN 0-8028-3698-4

This massive commentary on Mark is a significant achievement by Robert H Gundry, an evangelical New Testament scholar already well known for his previous (somewhat controversial) commentary on Matthew and a number of other books. It is remarkable not only for its length (the biggest modern commentary on Mark in English) but also for the breadth of its engagement with Markan scholarship and the independence and clarity of its exposition. Gundry largely focuses on the question of what the final form of the text itself communicates; concluding, as the subtitle suggests and a memorable opening page asserts, that Mark 'writes a straightforward apology for the Cross, for the shameful way in which the object of Christian faith and subject of Christian proclamation died, and hence for Jesus as the Crucified One'. Gundry thus carves an independent path through the rather complex and convoluted symbolic readings that abound these days (reflecting the oft-misinterpreted publication bias towards weird and original theories).

As regards format, Gundry adopts the technique of firstly presenting his own exegetic discussion and then, normally at greater length and in smaller type, interacting in note form with other commentators in detail. The notes are a resource in themselves, not in the form of a bibliography (as too many other commentaries offer), but in the form of an ongoing critical dialogue between Gundry and a host of other scholars; they are thus of great value for students and scholars, since even the ridiculous theories get a thorough rebuttal (but it does make for a big book). The exposition is firmly based on the Greek text, with words and phrases regularly cited and discussed, and the scholarly discussion, although by no means limited to English-speaking scholarship, is conducted without pretentious citation of foreign languages. Gundry pays particular attention to Markan micro-literary techniques, such as euphony, word order, vocabulary variation, asyndeton etc. He is also basically confident of the Markan account and the authenticity of his Jesus tradition. The basis for this confidence is that Gundry accepts the tradition that Mark's material comes from Peter, and was remembered and compiled by John Mark in Rome. He also argues that Peter was still alive and preaching in Rome during the writing of the gospel, which must precede the beginning of the

Jewish War in AD 66 and the writing of Luke-Acts (AD 62-7), perhaps around AD 60 (he does not offer any precise dating at this point). Much of this remains controversial and although Gundry advances his case with clarity and conviction there are few really fresh arguments. In particular I wonder whether he has taken the developments in the Peter-Mark tradition sufficiently seriously in drawing conclusions about the date of writing. Gundry follows later writers such as Clement, Origen and Jerome (Peter was alive when Mark wrote), while downplaying the possibility that earlier writers such as Papias, Irenaeus and the anti-Marcionite prologue reflect the conviction that Mark wrote after Peter's death (this on the basis of a controversial reading of a perfect tense in Irenaeus). In support of an early date Gundry also argues that Mark 13 does not reflect the Jewish War, an argument maintained with great force in the commentary proper (Mark 13 serves to prove that Jesus' predictions do come true, and therefore to encourage faith in his Second Coming, as traditionally understood: there is no re-envisioning of eschatological metaphors here).

No doubt there will be disagreements on any number of points of detail, such a stimulating work could hardly do other than provoke them! Perhaps Gundry is too negative, almost always denying the importance for Mark of the many and various themes, including discipleship, that others have discerned and focusing exclusively on his view of Mark's overall christological vision. For Gundry, Mark's 'straightforward apology for the Cross' involves a presentation of a powerful, divine Messiah whose powerful and glorious ministry appeals to the multitudes. In particular, and in response to dominant strands of Markan scholarship, according to Gundry Mark's theology of glory qualifies and modifies the traditions of a suffering Messiah that Mark received. Thus, for example, the passion predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:33f) take the sting out of Jesus' passion by exhibiting his power to predict even the details of it; and the forecasting of the circumstances of one's own death is taken as indicative of divine power. Furthermore, the passion narrative has little to do with suffering, pain or martyrdom but is rather, for Gundry, dressed up 'in colors of fulfilment, decency, dignity, and the supernatural'. Even Jesus' cry of dereliction does not reflect suffering and abandonment; rather the loud voice (15:34) represents his 'superhuman strength', the Aramaic is given 'because the mystique of an oriental foreign language carries the connotation of power', and when Jesus expired 'the force of the Spirit's exhalation by Jesus causes the veil of the temple to be rent from the top downward'. It is the sight of these signs of power that prompts the centurion's declaration, 'truly he was the Son of God'.

This represents a reading of Mark which is itself rather idiosyncratic and many readers will wonder whether Gundry has rightly understood Mark's vision of the Cross. Gundry's view is that Mark, seeking to

convert Gentile readers, downplays the scandal of the crucified Messiah in favour of 'the Marcan apologetics of miraculous ability, of didactic authority, and of predictive power', presenting them with an overpowering Jesus who warrants their allegiance. It seems likely, however, that Gundry has over-emphasized the powerful and glorious elements of Mark's presentation and underestimated those elements in Mark in which Jesus' Messiahship is redefined in terms of suffering. The new vision of 'God' implicit in the suffering of his Messiah is not something that Gentile converts could afford to avoid (as Paul knew clearly, see 1 Cor 1 and 2 or Phil 2).

In summary this commentary is large, detailed, thorough, stimulating and offers a consistent approach to the overall purpose and theology of Mark. Many pastors will no doubt find it too large, too detailed, too thorough and possibly rather unsatisfying in its theological vision for it to be their primary port of call in preparing sermons. But if you are looking for clarity, originality, stimulation, along with sustained and detailed engagement with alternative views then this will be the commentary for you.

PETER HEAD

GOD AND THE BIOLOGIST – FAITH AT THE FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE R J Berry

Leicester: Apollos 1996 114pp £12.99 pb ISBN 0-8511-446-6

Professor R J Berry is an ecological geneticist and Professor of Genetics at University College, London. He has been an active member of the General Synod of the Church of England, chairing several working parties on issues of science and faith. As a committed Evangelical, Professor Berry follows in the tradition of scientists like Donald Mackay in seeking to develop an integrated approach to the relationship between science and Christianity; eschewing compartmentalization on the one hand and an unsophisticated adversarialism on the other.

This thoroughly readable and enjoyable book is unique in the way in which key issues such as evolution, genetics and environmental ethics are considered within the context of Professor Berry's own life. We are given an intimate and touching description of the author's journey into the Christian faith following the suicide of his father when Dr Berry was still a teenager. As is often the case with people of ability and Christian zeal, Dr Berry flirted with the idea that the only 'real' Christian work is to be found in the ordained ministry, before he realized his true gifts lay in the field of biology, and that these too could be used for the glory of God.

Following a helpful chapter on the nature of science and its relation to

Christianity within an historical context, the question of evolution and purpose is approached. Professor Berry advocates what could be termed a 'complementary' position, such that the Bible is primarily concerned with 'why' questions (purpose) and science with 'how' questions (method). While being fully aware of how proponents of evolutionism have attempted to bolster their tenuous position by appealing to Darwinian theory, Professor Berry argues a strong case that ultimately there is no final conflict between evolution and the Christian position.

In the fourth chapter, entitled 'Genes and Genesis', we are carefully led through the delicate and often controversial areas of genetic engineering, artificial insemination and abortion. The author chaired the Church of England's working party which produced 'Personal Origins', a response to the Warnock report. Having explained what light tradition, reason and Scripture, shed on the question of personal origins, the conclusion is reached that none of these really give clear-cut teaching on the value of the early human embryo. However, there is a serious slip in Dr Berry's handling of Psalm 139 which could be seized upon by critics. The author's whole approach to the relation between science and Christianity is that God is sovereign over all, 'holding all things in being by the Word of his power'. He is 'Lord of all or not at all'. It is therefore surprising to find Dr Berry writing: 'If we are honest, we need to be agnostic about the relationship between God and early embryos. He *may* be involved with and overseeing every fertilized egg, but the balance of tradition, reason and Scripture is that there is no direct evidence for it, and the balance of probability is against it.' (p 73-4). Surely, the reverse is the case, the evidence is for God overseeing all things. That fact alone may not be sufficient to determine what value God or we place on early embryos, but to deny God overseeing such development is a major theological and logical blunder.

The chapter on environmental ethics demonstrates that the only lasting and reasonable basis for an adequate response to environmental issues comes from within the Judeo-Christian world view. The reviewer was surprised to discover how fundamental biblical concepts found their way into speeches on the environment by Prime Ministers Thatcher and Major. One small quibble. Is it really true to say that 'God so loved the *cosmos* – not merely the human world that he sent his only Son to die for it' (p 106)? It may well be, but John 3:16 is not the text to be used to support such an idea given that almost invariably 'cosmos' in Johannine usage denotes mankind in rebellion against God, and not the natural world, which is the very thing which makes the verse so remarkable.

The final chapter is a superb and unashamed affirmation of basic Christian beliefs made against the backdrop of the scientific enterprise. It

also has an effective evangelistic edge to it. In this postmodern age, when science itself is having a rough time as well as orthodox Christianity, this is a book well worth reading.

MELVIN TINKER

THE WORD OF LIFE William Challis

London: Harper & Collins 1997 186pp £8.99 pb ISBN 0-551-03061-5

This is a splendid book; I would love to be able to send a copy to every theological student. In a short compass it puts together a number of issues and addresses them in a helpful way, bringing just the kind of help and challenge which many hard-pressed preachers and pastors need today. William Challis declares that his concern is for the Bible and the working out of its authority in ministry, and equally for pastoral ministry which itself needs to be informed by the Bible and to interact with it.

Part One of the book looks at the pastoral Bible as the foundation for and focus of ministry. The work here is helpfully done, a number of important issues are faced and the author's aim of setting forward the Bible as the foundation of true Christian pastoral theology well established.

The writer then moves on to address the issue of pastoral care and, again, there is much refreshment and clear thinking here. This is typical of the style followed and the conclusions reached. Drawing close to people pastorally, getting involved in a community pastorally is risky because it accepts us and our limitations. Preachers who sit in the study all week make few mistakes because the preaching that results takes few risks, but does such a preaching ministry build up the people of God where they are? One of the features of a real preacher is a pastoral heart which refuses to take refuge in safety, but is always ready to engage with pastoral and scriptural truth. Oh, that this message was heard, believed and followed within the churches today.

The writer is particularly helpful in the whole area of counselling which he feels should be subject to the pastoral task. After some helpful material on pastoral ministry in the Bible, Challis then examines the work of Jay Adams, Lawrence Crabb, Roger Hurdling and Derek Tidball. He declares himself happier with the latter two rather than the former two although, in the case of Adams and Crabb he underlines very helpfully and clearly the way in which their work has attempted to integrate scripture into pastoral and counselling ministry. The book is worth buying for the analysis of these writers alone, because this work has not been available to the Christian public in such a straightforward form and many who are involved in pastoral counselling need to hear the challenges and comments that

Challis draws out from this important area.

He concludes that we do not have to work our way through situations according to one route map to be biblical, but that we do have to keep the range of biblical questions and models constantly in our minds. He concludes that some of the work that Hurring and Tidball have done may even encourage a revival of genuine English evangelical pastoral theology which, as he observes, has been semi-dormant since the days of the Puritans!

This is a good read in a vitally important area. It is a book that will refresh a preaching pastoral ministry beyond measure, and I commend it warmly. There are a few questions to ask, but I prefer the reader to get into the book first and to get the value of it before addressing these.

TREVOR PARKIN

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD, ONE BEING THREE PERSONS Thomas F Torrance

Edinburgh: T and T Clark 1996 260pp £19.95 hb ISBN 0-567-09741-2

Professor Torrance has written a great deal in recent years about the Trinity, but his most recent book breaks new ground in a number of important respects. First of all, it is more comprehensive and systematic than most of what he has written before, and thus the reader can follow the fullness of his thought more easily. His predilections for Athanasius and Karl Barth are in evidence, as one would expect, but they are not in isolation from the broad sweep of Christian history. Irenaeus, Gregory of Nazianzus and Calvin, to name but three, also figure prominently and Professor Torrance is keen to demonstrate how they too, fit into the broader picture which he recreates for us on these pages.

The author's basic argument is that the *homoousion* ('consubstantial') of the so-called Nicene Creed (in actual fact the creed of Constantinople in 381) signals a revolution in Christian thought. He recognizes that it may not be the last word on the subject, but insists that, as with any discovery of that nature, it cannot any longer be ignored. If we move on from it at some future stage it will be because we have absorbed its truth and gone farther, not because we have abandoned it. God can only be known by self-revelation, and this occurs fully and finally in Christ. In Jesus, the Christian meets God, and it is this apparently simple affirmation of faith which leads us to confess the *homoousion*. Once we understand that, it changes our entire perception of God. For a start, we can no longer be simple 'theists', positing the existence of a supreme being and evaluating the rest of the universe accordingly. For whatever truth there may be in

theism, it is wholly inadequate to do justice to the mystery of a direct, personal encounter with the Living God.

The Bible is not a philosophical treatise about ultimate reality, but the story of a self-revealing God who wants us to know him in a personal way. The ancient world had no categories in which to express this, which is why the early Church had to battle to establish a theological vocabulary which would give adequate expression to its faith. Athanasius played a key role in this, as did Gregory of Nazianzus. It was the latter, for example, who first applied the *homoousion* unambiguously to the Holy Spirit as well as to the Son, thereby rounding out the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Professor Torrance shows us, by his study of the Bible above all, that the Church Fathers were compelled to make this confession by the evidence of Scripture and by the nature of their own encounter with Christ. In the process, they transformed the Greek understanding of reality, and made it something infinitely more subtle and more powerful.

Along the way Professor Torrance introduces us to all the classical vocabulary of Trinitarianism, giving particular weight to the notion of *perichoresis*, or 'mutual indwelling', which he sees as the key for transcending the ancient dispute over the procession of the Holy Spirit. Without this mutual indwelling, we are either compelled to subordinate the Son to the Father by saying that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, quite independently of the Son, or we are obliged to say that he proceeds from both, thereby positing two sources of deity and dividing the Godhead in two. *Perichoresis* solves this dilemma by allowing us to say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father in the context of their mutual indwelling in the Son, so that the latter is not excluded from the procession, nor is his divinity diminished in any way. Whether this is an acceptable resolution of the problem remains to be seen, but Professor Torrance is to be commended for expounding it so clearly, thereby enabling us all to reflect on what he suggests more deeply. In a similar spirit, he also tackles such difficult issues as divine impassibility, pointing out that in Christ it was God who suffered and died on the cross, though it still remains true that God cannot suffer and die in himself. Ultimately God is greater than our categories, and it is only by knowing him personally that we can resolve these paradoxes in our minds.

There is no sense pretending that this book is an easy read – Professor Torrance tells us himself in the preface that it is heavy going. But it is always worthwhile trying to get to grips with great minds, and in this book we have a veritable feast of them. If one may be permitted to express a regret, it is that Augustine and the rich medieval tradition which followed him does not get the attention which it deserves. This is a pity, but it should not stop us from appreciating the great Greek Fathers, who for

many of us have stood in Augustine's shadow far too long. Professor Torrance is to be congratulated for bringing them back to light for us, and his book will hopefully make a significant contribution to our wider understanding of this fundamental Christian truth.

GERALD BRAY

THE COMPLETE WHO'S WHO IN THE BIBLE Paul Gardner ed
London: Marshall Pickering 1995 688pp £29.99 hb ISBN 0-551-02575-1

The subtitle on the jacket claims that the book is an 'exhaustive listing of all the characters in the Bible'. The reviewer's reaction was to take the biblical name of one of his forefathers, Ragau, and check to see if this appeared in the alphabetical order in which the work has been formatted; it did not. Whatever happened to Ragau? According to Young's *Analytical Concordance of the Bible* Ragau was the 'father of Saruch an ancestor of Jesus' (Luke 3:35).

However, this minor point really draws attention to the strengths of the book. It is much more than an exhaustive list of names minus Ragau. There are a number of articles on various subjects which lift this book from the province of being the easy man's guide to names in the Bible to a condensed Biblical Theology, and therein lies its usefulness (*vide* LORD and Lord, pp 415-21).

The book is user-friendly in that it is easy to handle and to store, which Young's *Analytical Concordance* is certainly not. It is an aid to the stressed student, the plodding preacher and the interested lay person. As it is in alphabetical order, there is no difficulty in turning up the relevant name or subject and extracting the information which is clearly and concisely set out.

Paul Gardner has assembled a team of experts, both pastoral and academic, who are able to convey biblical facts and theology in a clear way. This is the book to reach for when a subject is touched upon in a sermon which may not be directly in the manuscript. Nevertheless, it affects the way that one treats a passage, bearing in mind that Scripture is not to be expounded in such a way that one set of texts is made 'repugnant' to another.

At £29.99 this is a good buy. The book is well bound and should last a lifetime of useful ministry. Paul Gardner and the publishers are to be congratulated on this initiative.

DAVID STREATNER

JESUS AND THE LOGIC OF HISTORY **Paul W Barnett**
 Leicester: IVP 1997 182pp £12.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-512-8

This short book is an examination of the historical evidence for the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, relying to a greater extent than is usual on the testimony of the New Testament epistles, as well as the gospels and extra-canonical sources. Dr Barnett's main contention is that the Christian Church would not have come into being or lasted in the way that it has if Jesus were not substantially the figure that orthodox Christians have always claimed him to be. An eccentric rabbi who performed miracles would not have been able to transform the ancient world by his teaching, even if he had acquired a sizeable following. There was something unique about Jesus which allowed the claims made about him to stick – and to spread.

This book is a welcome restatement of the case for traditional orthodox belief in the light of the challenges which have been made to it in recent years. It is well written and easy to digest, which will ensure that it will appeal to a broader audience than is customary for scholarly works. Dr Barnett is to be congratulated for having provided the Christian public with a reasoned and balanced presentation of the Church's traditional beliefs, backed up with the weight of the most recent and responsible scholarship.

GERALD BRAY

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