

# Book Reviews

## **HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH AND HAGGAI John Calvin**

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1986 411pp. £5.95 hb. ISBN 0 85151 477 4

This, like the other republished volumes of Calvin's lectures on the Minor Prophets, is a must for every preacher and serious student of this portion of sacred Scripture. These twenty-eight lectures first appeared in print (in Latin) some four hundred and thirty years ago and in this (Calvin Translation Society) format in 1848. Yet they still represent a formidable contribution to the exposition of the sacred text by the greatest exegete of all time. In his preface the translator, John Owen, one time Vicar of Thrussington, provides us with these judicious words:

Though in some instances our Commentator may not give the precise import of a passage, yet he never advances what is inconsistent with Divine Truth, and always useful and practical, and often betokens a profound acquaintance with the operations of the human mind under the various trials and temptations which we meet with in this life; so that the observations made are ever interesting and instructive. Calvin never deduces from a passage what is in itself erroneous or unsound, though in all cases he may not deduce what the text may legitimately warrant . . . for the most part his application of doctrine is what may be fully justified, and is often striking, and calculated to instruct and edify.

Although today we would express ourselves somewhat differently, it remains true that these words aptly and succinctly summarize the fruit of the expositor's labour. I have used this volume both devotionally and in the preparation of sermons to my own, let alone my hearers', benefit. At £5.95 this book is a bargain. If you do not possess it yet then I urge you to purchase both this and the other volumes in the set as soon as you possibly can.

St. Stephen's Vicarage, Newcastle upon Tyne

GEORGE CURRY

## **MARK: BE DILIGENT Warren W. Wiersbe**

Victor Books U.K., Amersham 1987 160pp. £2.50

ISBN 0 946515 39 5

Another book in the 'BE' series, this time studying Mark's gospel. 'Mark is the perfect gospel for space-age people on the go'—so says the back cover. I do not know about that, but I would agree, and have always felt that Mark's gospel is action-packed and dramatic from start to finish.

Dr. Wiersbe suggests that the *theme of the gospel* is Jesus Christ the Servant always doing the Father's will and serving others; the *aim* is to motivate and encourage us in our own ministry for the Lord and to help increasingly to do so. The *Key Verse* is Mark 10:45: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many'. The

*Key Word* 'straightway' meaning 'immediately' is used forty-one times in the gospel, according to Dr. Wiersbe. The words that stand out for me are 'amazed' and 'astonished', particularly the recording of our Lord's 'amazement' at the unbelief of the people in Nazareth (6:6.).

The gospel *emphasis* is on activity. Mark does not record many of our Lord's sermons, but rather what He did (p.12). Dr. Wiersbe suggests that Mark wrote with the Romans in mind and this helps us to understand his style and approach and explains why Mark did not include certain details and incidents. This is illustrated on p.110:

Jesus sent two of His disciples to Bethphage to get the colt that He needed for the event. Most people think of a donkey today as nothing but a humble beast of burden, but in that day, it was looked upon as an animal fit for a King to use (I Kings 1:33). Our Lord needed this beast so that He might fulfil the Messianic prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9. Mark does not quote this verse or refer to it because he was writing primarily for Gentile readers.

Throughout the whole Bible study there are many references to the other gospels and to the whole of Scripture which I found most helpful and in which I took great delight. The reference quoted immediately above bears this out. I learnt many new insights into the wholeness and completeness of God's revealed word and it showed to me the marvellous way in which the Bible fits together in its smallest details. The whole of the Bible is God's word, but the individuality of each writer also shows through as they wrote under the inspiration and instruction of the Holy Spirit.

The study of Mark's gospel is divided by Dr. Wiersbe into twelve chapters, each with a different aspect of the Servant's work in the title, starting with Chapter One: 'God's Servant is here!', and ending with Chapter Twelve 'The Servant finishes His work'. I completed the Bible studies during Easter week and the Easter weekend, and this was especially helpful in bringing home the events of that first Easter with greater clarity and meaning.

The book is designed for personal Bible study, but can also be used for a group. A leader's guide with visual aids is available. I can certainly recommend it as providing excellent material for serious Bible study. I look forward with anticipation to further Bible study using other volumes in the 'BE' series.

London S.W.6

NICKY COOK

### **EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON JOHN J.C. Ryle**

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1987

Vol.1 xix+425pp. £2.95

ISBN 0 85151 504 5

Vol.2 vii+433pp. £2.95

ISBN 0 85151 505 3

Vol.3 xvi+536pp. £3.50

ISBN 0 85151 506 1

Bishop Ryle's *Expository Thoughts* are too well-known to need any lengthy recommendation, and the Banner of Truth Trust is to be thanked for making them available again in so attractive and cheap a form. Bishop Ryle excels in bringing out the solid practical meaning of all he expounds. He may not relay the latest scholarship or the most novel interpretations, but he misses little that is calculated to establish the reader in godly wisdom. He is a master of

plain robust speaking, a commodity of which our pulpits could do with a great deal more. His *Expository Thoughts* are ideal for devotional reading, family use, or sermon preparation. For private use, the 'expository thoughts' themselves (in larger print) are comparable in extent with those in the four volumes on the Synoptics; but in the present volumes the commentary proper is much more extensive than in the latter and extends to every verse. This will be of great value to the student and preacher. Our churches would be transformed if men who have almost given up expository preaching would purchase these volumes and make good use of them. Their sheep would look up and be fed indeed. I wish these volumes a wide circulation.

Ivy Cottage, Grove, Wantage

DOUGLAS SPANNER

**CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE BIBLE OF JUDAISM: THE JUDAIC ENCOUNTER WITH SCRIPTURE** Jacob Neusner

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1987 205pp. \$12.95pb. ISBN 0 8028 0278 8

Jacob Neusner is well known to Biblical scholars as an extremely prolific author who produces several volumes a year on different aspects of Rabbinical thought. In this book, he turns his attention to the Christian world, and offers us an introduction to the exegesis of the rabbis of the fourth century A.D., who were writing just as Christianity was becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire, and as their own future as Jews came under increasing threat.

Neusner evokes the feelings of the era with all the love and insight of a scholar who is deeply immersed in it. He tells us that the rabbis needed to find a contemporary application for the ancient Scriptural text, and shows us how they did this. They abandoned the historical approach to the text, and began to treat it instead as a manual for everyday living. It would not be accurate to say that this was a form of allegorizing, as we normally understand that, but it certainly had the effect of removing the authority which had previously attached to the literal sense of the text understood in its historical context.

An example of this can be seen in the creation story, where it is pointed out that the Garden of Eden was created on the third day, but man (Adam) only on the sixth day. The lesson which the rabbis drew from this is that God provides our reward even before we begin to work, and that this should therefore make us stand in awe of his providential goodness.

It is difficult to argue with Neusner when he draws general conclusions of this kind, but few Christian readers will be disposed to follow him in regarding rabbinical interpretation as a model for today. It is much more likely that this book will convince Christians that post-Biblical Judaism wandered off into an exegesis which may have a lot of practical wisdom in it but which has very little to do with the original text.

Nevertheless, this book provides a valuable service for us in that it demonstrates what Jewish exegesis of this period was like, and illustrates how profoundly modern Judaism differs from Christianity. It is not just the identity of Christ as the Messiah, but a whole way of reading the Scriptures which is at stake, and Christians would do well to ponder this. The book covers the opening chapters of Genesis, and a selection from Leviticus and

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Numbers, and consists largely of quotations from the corresponding Mishnaic sources (Genesis Rabbah, Leviticus Rabbah and the Sifré on Numbers), with a brief introductory comment by the editor.

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GERALD BRAY

### **THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE** Noel Weeks

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1988 309pp. £9.95

ISBN 0 85151 523 1

This book consists of a number of articles put together by the author, who is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Sydney and a member of the Reformed Church of Australia. It represents an extremely conservative approach to Biblical authority, as would be expected, including a forthright defence of what by any standard would have to be called a 'fundamentalist' position.

The author points out that authority is not the same thing as exhaustiveness, and is careful to distinguish between imprecision and error before going on to consider wider questions of translation and meaning. He is particularly concerned to knock down the arguments of those who would relativize Scripture by reducing its authority to its immediate context, and insists that the Bible must retain its traditional position regardless of the 'advances' of modern scholarship and technology. In general it must be said that his points are well taken, though some of his argumentation will appear to many to be based on the wrong criteria and to be headed in the wrong direction.

In the second section of the book he tackles specific issues which have disturbed the traditional doctrine of Scripture in recent years, and his conclusions are invariably ultra-conservative, though by no means without interest, as can be seen from his approach to the question of slavery. In particular, he is always concerned to maintain a practical, pastoral dimension to his argument, which makes his conclusions more worthy of respect, even when it may be necessary to disagree with them on other grounds.

This book will provide useful insights into debated issues in Biblical Studies and at the same time challenge those who are perhaps too ready to accept the findings of liberal scholars without giving them due critical attention. The author is to be congratulated on having produced such a fine volume in a field which is not his own specialist interest, and it will be particularly interesting to see whether he meets with any response from those whose main subject of study it is.

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GERALD BRAY

### **THE CHURCH IN THE BIBLE AND THE WORLD** Edited by

**D.A. Carson**

Paternoster Press, Exeter 1987 359pp. £12.50

ISBN 0 85364 421 7

This symposium is written from the standpoint of classical Evangelicalism and produced under the auspices of the World Evangelical Fellowship. Their findings are, therefore, based upon Scripture rather than just illustrative of Scripture.

The areas covered include the Church, its calling, commitment and communion by E.D. Clowney. He traces the origins in the Old Testament, through the New Testament to modern expressions highlighted in the witness and worship under the guidance and unifying of the Holy Spirit. Dr. P.T. O'Brien from Australia takes the aspect of the church as a heavenly and eschatological entity'. Seen as a divinely created entity under the headship of Christ, the membership of the heavenly assembly gathered around Christ is to assemble in local gatherings here on earth. This he sees illustrated in the various images recorded in Scripture: the Temple, the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. In each there is to be found the tension of the present and the future, which he sums up in brief study in Colossians 3:1-4:6.

Another issue exercising the attention of many Christians to-day is that of time (and, therefore, the day) allocated to the worship of God. R.P. Shedd sees Christians adopting the sanctification of all time, and, therefore, recognizing Sabbath observance as only being obligatory on Old Testament believers. He finds that historically set times and ecclesiastical forms have usurped the spirit of urgency which the 'last days' should inculcate. In his chapter he extends the study of the Church as the Temple begun in the previous chapter so that worship is not a timed event but a pattern where thoughts, words and deeds express the glory of God. To encourage such worship, Ronald Fung delineates the requirements of ministry. In a useful table he classifies the spiritual gifts found in such passages as I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. He is clear in stating that all possess charismata, as equal endowments of the Spirit—in short all are 'charismatics'. This means that, although specialized ministries are mentioned in Paul's writings, the rigidity of present orders needs to be tested not against a succession of office but of doctrine. 'The holding of an office is conditional upon the person's faithfulness to the truth, and his possessing the gift to teach it to others.'—and this is not confined to any body of elders. This raises the question of the ministry of women to which his reply is—'Charismata do not constitute the only or all-determining factor in considering the rôle of women in the Church. He concludes that women may take part in the ministry of the Church so long as they are not involved in exercising doctrinal or ecclesiastical authority over men.

The last three chapters, although as scriptural in basis, are not so biblical in content. D.A. Carson deals with the new hermeneutic on the grounds of a critique of Von Allmein's standpoint. First he draws attention to the varying interpretations of the word 'mission'. Some Western theologians consider the idea of winning people to Christ a parochial vestige of past imperialism. Yet, as he says, this clearly raises the question of Paul's christological exclusivism and Jesus' originating evangelism among the Gentiles. In seeking to answer this question he explores the 'new hermeneutic'. He shows how important it is to grasp the relevance of contextualization when Scripture is the final authority in interpretation. Despite protestations to the effect that the exponents claim fidelity to the New Testament he finds in them a vagueness far removed from the interpretation that such a phrase implies.

Sunand Sumithra, who until recently was teaching in a theological college in India, exposes the dangers of syncretism, and secularization. From his experience in a Hindu society, he contrasts the difference between syncretism and indigenization: the first being the illegitimate mingling of

irreconcilable elements and the second being the showing of the relevance and meaning of the Christian Gospel in a given cultural context, without diluting the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ as God's revelation. He quotes, in particular Vatican II's approach to non-Christian religions as ordinary ways of salvation, while the Christian is the extra-ordinary way. This should be a matter of concern to biblical Christians as it nullifies the need to seek the conversion of individuals.

The final chapter on persecution by David Adeney is illustrated by a number of modern examples and emphasizes the impact that such has had and should have on the Christian Church.

In all this is a very thought-provoking book, but one felt as with any symposium, there were times when the articles stood in their own right and might have appeared as separate publications.

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JOHN BOURNON

### **THREE SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS Julia Gatta**

Cowley Publications, Cambridge, U.S.A. 1987 137pp. No Price

ISBN 0 936384 44 1

To treat Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and the author of *Cloud of Unknowing* in a short compass is no easy task. But Julia Gatta has given a clear exposition of mystic concepts held by these three fourteenth century spiritual writers that in her view apply essentially to modern soul surgery. Based on experiential thought-forms, she claims that their close relationship to God fully qualified them to be pastoral counsellors. In the present age when the term 'spiritual' is mostly applied to the paranormal, sensational, and effervescent charismata, Julia Gatta, an American episcopal clergy-woman, offers a view of spirituality that majors on the thought of God as man's ground of being, the nature of sin, and the centrality of Christ crucified.

From Walter Hilton's 'Scale of Perfection' she distils his views on the place of emotion in the soul's experience of God, distractions in prayer, and the necessity of distancing the soul from reliance on self-induced visions and physical phenomena. Of particular importance is Hilton's emphasis that we are saved by faith, not by feelings, and by grace alone, which leads to a close union with God and holy living. But the faith in view is sacramental, the soul being made right with God by baptism and penance. What is missing is the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness to the sinner and the saved soul's final preservation. In happier vein, Hilton's view of sanctification is that of God's unmerited love flooding the soul and restoring the divine image in it.

Mrs. Gatta's treatment of Julian's 'Revelations' is a tightly packed analysis of what she styles 'Passion and Compassion'. The former is Christ's crucifixion, which Julian appears to have apprehended physically. The latter is her own involvement in the Lord's sufferings, and the revelations that accompanied it.

There is much here for those who desire to go deeper into God, particularly for Christians who suffer from spiritual sloth and despair of self. The author points out that with Julian the problem of life is not pain and suffering, but moral evil, and finds the answer in God's omnipotence and in

his one day making all things well. In this universalist view there is no place for Christ's parables of final Judgment. Julian has her own parable, that of the 'Servant' who in doing his Lord's will falls into a ditch, but incurs no blame on account of his promptness to do his master's will. Again, her view of God attaching no blame to the soul that is in Christ opens the way to anti-nomianism and a denial of the force of law in Christian living. She also opens the door to pantheism in her view of the creator-God immanent in his world. Nor will her idea that Jesus is our mother with feminine functions appeal to all.

Nevertheless Mrs. Gatta's examination of Julian's 'Revelations' forms a fitting introduction to the anchorite's writings.

Her study of the unknown author's *The Cloud of Unknowing* with its negative mysticism is not easy to comprehend. Gone are the affirmatives of God, that is, what he is. The approach to God is here set forth in terms of what he is not. Always the incomprehensible beyond human thought, the 'Cloud' hides his being from intellectual knowledge. As to prayer, the pray-er's longing-love may pierce the 'Cloud' and experience God in the heart. This comes near to Pascal's dictum that, 'The heart has its reasons the mind does not understand'. What is missing here is the truth that God has revealed himself in scripture, and in the person of his Son.

Throughout these studies the emphasis is placed on the faith of the Church as the foundation of living the Christian life. Mrs. Gatta's shallow treatment of John Wycliffe and the Lollards betrays her own 'Catholic' interests. This is not an easy book to read for those uninstructed in metaphysics, clinical theology, and basic Christian doctrines. Even counsellors and spiritual directors, for whom it is intended, may find it to be a literary morass. The approach to spirituality by these so-called Directors is other than that of Protestant thought. What they do is to challenge the modern church to re-think its spirituality and to correct its secularism, liberalism, and social-political theories to which it has bound itself. In this, Mrs. Gatta's book is worth studying.

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ARTHUR BENNETT

**THE DAWN OF THE REFORMATION. ESSAYS IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY REFORMATION THOUGHT Heiko A. Oberman**

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1986 309pp. £14.95hb.

ISBN 0 567 09371 9

One of the most important trends in the study of the Reformation in recent decades has been the concern to relate it to the late Middle Ages. Until recently late mediaeval theology was little studied which prevented an accurate interpretation of Reformation theology. Luther tended to be seen 'as a latter-day Melchizedek—"a man without beginnings"', to quote out of context (p.82). Professor Oberman is one of the pioneers who have sought to correct this situation. From 1966 to 1984 he was at Tübingen University, where he became the director of the Institute for Late Middle Ages and Reformation.

This volume is a collection of twelve of Professor Oberman's articles, which first appeared between 1962 and 1978. The first two consider late mediaeval thought in its own right. These are both useful survey articles, on

'Fourteenth-century Religious Thought' and 'The Shape of Late Medieval Thought'. The last is a survey of the relation between Scripture and tradition from Irenaeus to *Humani Generis* (1950). It is perhaps a shame that this essay was included in the collection. First, it does not fit within the stated scope of the volume. Secondly, the essay considers Scripture and tradition without paying adequate attention to the rôle of the church in that relationship, with a resultant distortion of the picture. (I have argued this at length in *Vox Evangelica* 9, 1975, 37-55) Finally, the space could have been better used to include another of Oberman's writings on the late Middle Ages. A bibliography of Oberman's works would also have been welcome.

The bulk of the book is on the Reformation period, with most of the essays relating this to the late Middle Ages. Four of these relate to Luther, two to Calvin and one each to Copernicus, Trent and the Peasants' Revolt. All of these are solid and valuable contributions to the field and the student of the Reformation will encounter a number of familiar articles here. On Calvin there is the important and much-quoted article on 'The "Extra" Dimension in the Theology of Calvin'. The other Calvin item is the least substantial essay in the volume, of less than ten pages and with less documentation than the others. It is nonetheless useful in that it lists briefly six different 'schools' of Calvin interpretation and points out six areas where there is conflict in interpretation and scope for further study. All of this is given the somewhat obscure title of 'Calvin's Critique of Calvinism', leaving one with the suspicion that the author was presented with a title to speak to (at a conference) and made of it what he could!

It would be unreasonable to expect from twelve separate articles an overview of the whole field. Yet by exploring a series of related fields the articles do have the cumulative effect of presenting a perspective on the relation between late Middle Ages and Reformation. They remain a collection of articles, but they do on the whole present a coherent exposition of the area delineated by the subtitle.

Who will be interested in the book? It is not for the beginner. It presupposes a general grasp of Reformation history and doctrine. On opening the book ten times at random I found Latin words or sentences in the text every time. Below the text there is an average of about a quarter of a page of footnotes in small print. These contain a mine of useful information for the scholar and yet it is quite possible to follow the argument without reading them. Those with a serious scholarly interest in the Reformation will find this a valuable addition to their library. The publishers are to be commended for bringing together in one convenient volume a number of studies which were previously widely scattered and, in some instances, not very readily accessible.

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TONY LANE

**CHOSEN FOR LIFE: An Introductory Guide to the Doctrine of Divine Election C. Samuel Storms**

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1987

ISBN 0 8010 8270 6

This book by a biblical theologian in a pastoral situation is a concise study of Divine election in relation to man's freewill. Accepting that, the subject is 'one of the most enigmatic theological issues in scripture', the author offers



the reader a clear outline of Calvinist concepts of God's method of salvation in contrast to that of the Arminian view. For him the problem is not the fact of Divine election, but the reasons for and grounds of it. The crux of the matter is whether the individual is elected because he believes in Jesus Christ, or is he chosen in order to believe? He sees this as the basic issue between the Arminian and Calvinist position. While safeguarding God's sovereignty, he argues that Divine election arises from man's total depravity and inability to come to God of himself. Thus, he can be saved only on the grounds of God's eternal plan to give him to Christ, but this not from God's pre-knowledge that a person will believe, but out of his volitional free grace.

Storms builds up his case around two brothers, Frank and Fred, of identical cultural and educational background, and both of them unwilling to come to Christ. He notes that many non-Christians live good moral lives without a religious belief, in accordance with the Greek classical virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, but that they are not 'good' towards God; they lack the will to believe. Here Storms has to face what is meant by freewill, a subject he closely dealt with in a previous book, *Tragedy in Eden*. In his *Chosen for Life* he offers a simpler framework. Using the two brothers as examples, he argues that because they are dead in trespasses and sins, neither could or would believe. But Frank does, because divine power enables him spiritually to become a Lazarus from the grave. At this point Storms could have strengthened his case by using Calvin's biblical analogy set forth in his *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, that with Jesus' command to the man with a crippled hand to stretch it forth he was given the power to obey; so God makes the unwilling willing.

Of immense value is Storms's chapter, 'The Order of Salvation', that sets forward, in his view, the biblical steps to believing. In the case of Frank and Fred he points out that both heard the external call through a proclamation of the Gospel, yet only Frank came to believe. He did so by being given 'spiritual ears' that led to inward regeneration and transformation. To that end, Storms is driven to posit two wills in the Christian. First, the rational and moral choices that all people make. Secondly, the will to believe that God gives to those he has elected. If not, and Frank comes to God of himself, God's absolute grace is seriously compromised. Hence, 'A man does not become a sheep by believing in Jesus . . . He believes in Jesus because he is already one of his sheep', (p.69). Such is unconditional election.

Storms is not alone in this. Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, and Jonathan Edwards's *Freedom of the Will*, say more or less the same thing, though in more complex forms. To Storms's credit he is fair to the Arminians in setting forth their case and in wrestling with problems that arise in his own. He accepts that the Calvinist view appears to call in question God's justice and love, puts an end to preaching and evangelism, and makes nonsense of prayer, to all which he answers biblically and rationally. His close and full treatment of scripture texts that support his case is beyond praise. Few books on this subject set forth in such clear, restrained and biblical terms the Reformed view of God's act in the salvation of sinners. Amongst others, it is a book for Anglicans to ponder over and digest as members of a Church that by its Articles states that fallen man cannot of himself turn to God (10), has no works pleasing to God before activated by the grace of Christ (13), and is committed to the doctrine of Predestination and Election (17); as also at a

funeral he hears a prayer to God shortly to number his elect and bring in his kingdom. Storms's book is highly commended.

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ARTHUR BENNETT

**CASPAR SCHWENCKFELD RELUCTANT RADICAL. HIS LIFE TO**

**1540 R. Emmett McLaughlin**

Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1986 xii+250pp. £25hb.

ISBN 0 300 03367 2

'Despite the detailed scholarship on him . . . Schwenckfeld remains an elusive figure. Known to all scholars of the Reformation at least by name, Schwenckfeld has always been difficult to classify' (pp.vii-viii). Doubtless many readers of the *Churchman* with a general interest in the Reformation will identify with the difficulty in placing Schwenckfeld. For such this book will prove an excellent introduction. It is a work of 'theological biography' which both outlines Schwenckfeld's life and expounds his developing ideas in that setting. By this method the author avoids the onesidedness of either biography without theology or vice-versa. It should however be noted that the story stops in 1540, while Schwenckfeld was to live till 1561. This is because 'to have covered his entire life with the care and detail useful to scholars was simply not feasible'. It is also justified on the grounds that 'by [1540] all of the major elements in Schwenckfeld's theology had received their first full formulation' (p.viii).

Schwenckfeld's career is divided into various stages. First, he was a courtier until loss of hearing led him to withdraw from court life in 1522/23. The author shows the significance of Schwenckfeld's time as a courtier for his whole career. Life as a courtier demanded specific gifts, which Schwenckfeld possessed, and also served to develop these gifts further. Schwenckfeld was a nobleman and possessed gifts of persuasion, diplomacy, and eloquence. He was to make good use of these gifts in his later years of conflict with the leaders of the Reformation in southern Germany.

From 1521 to 1524 Schwenckfeld worked hard for the introduction of the Reformation into Silesia (the southern part of today's Poland, then German). At this stage the author argues that he was still a faithful disciple of Luther. By 1525, however, Schwenckfeld had moved from a Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper to one close to the later Reformed view. This marked the beginning of his reaction against the externals of religion and his increasing emphasis on the Spirit. This process was to lead him also to de-emphasize the written Word of Scripture, which he felt Luther stressed too much, and to emphasize instead the interior voice of the Spirit. It also led him to stress interior piety to the neglect of the secular world. 'His theology developed around an ever more thoroughgoing dualism which safely buffered the inner spiritual world of Christianity from intrusion by the external material world of everyday life' (p.61).

By 1527 Schwenckfeld's opposition to externals had led him beyond the pale of the Reformed Protestantism of his time. In 1526 Schwenckfeld and others announced that they would cease to observe the Lord's Supper until certain reforms had been instituted. This 'Stillstand' was patchily observed, but Schwenckfeld himself never again took communion. His opposition to

externals also led him to reject the concept of a coercive state church. By 1529 it became prudent for Schwenckfeld to leave Silesia. Lutheranism had become the only tolerated form of Protestantism and Schwenckfeld's presence was an embarrassment to his now nominally Lutheran ruler.

From 1529 to his death Schwenckfeld lived in southern Germany. At first he was able to settle openly in Strasbourg and later, when he was no longer welcome there, in other cities such as Ulm. Eventually he was forced to live in hiding and on the run. Why was he unable to settle? Because of the unorthodoxy of his views. In many ways these prefigured Quakerism. Schwenckfeld had dealings with Anabaptist leaders, especially at Strasbourg. In some ways he sympathized with their views on baptism, but more fundamentally he disagreed in that for him, as with the Lord's Supper, the external rite was not important. Again, his doctrine of the church reflected this approach. 'For Schwenckfeld the church was merely a gathering of believers; the individual preceded the church. Schwenckfeld's focus was on individual faith, individual self-discipline, and individual salvation. He simply lacked any sympathy for the ideal of *corpus christianorum* which ran throughout Zwingli's and Butzer's thought' (p.136). For this reason Schwenckfeld favoured religious toleration and opposed the idea of a state church monopoly.

In 1537 Schwenckfeld came to a new and distinctive doctrine of the person of Christ. He came to deny that Christ's human nature was created. He had taken his emphasis on the unity of Christ to such an extent as to undermine his true humanity. This doctrine led to Schwenckfeld's condemnation by a gathering of theologians at Schmalkald in 1540.

The book presupposes a general grasp of the history of the Reformation, and an understanding of some of the basic theological issues of the time is also helpful. Granted such a foundation, the book is readable and interesting. There is a considerable scholarly apparatus, with an average of about a quarter of each page being taken up with footnotes in small print. But while these are of value to the scholar, it is perfectly possible to read and appreciate the entire book without referring to a single footnote.

In short, a book to be commended to the Reformation scholar and to anyone else feeling the need to know more about Schwenckfeld.

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TONY LANE

### **THE REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH Iain H. Murray**

Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1987 414pp. £5.50pb. ISBN 0 85151 118 X

Iain Murray and the Banner of Truth Trust did the Church of Jesus Christ a great service when this volume of source documents was first published in 1965. It is to be hoped that this second printing will be as warmly and widely received as the first. In the space of this volume Mr. Murray has brought together some two dozen articles and other extracts on Church issues. They provide an invaluable insight into the best of Reformed-Puritan methodology and thought on this subject. In the main the documents date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but extracts from the writings of Cunningham and Hodge, for example, two nineteenth century Reformed theologians, are included. The subject matter is arranged under five heads:

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*The Nature of the Church; The Rule for the Reformation of the Church; The Need for Reformation; New Testament Church Government; and The Unity of the Church.* Two appendices, the first of which represents a fine exposition of the position of children within the church, are also added. Many of the articles are preceded by apposite historical and theological comments provided by the compiler. It can be said without equivocation that Murray provides both the student of church history and others with an invaluable and indispensable aid. This book will illuminate and stimulate all who care to read it. In these days of ecumenism, relativism and confusion the diligent reader will find these documents seminal. Page after page shed light on issues that are at least as crucial in this critical era of the church's history as they were when first written centuries ago.

St. Stephen's Vicarage, Newcastle upon Tyne

GEORGE CURRY

**AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN LIFE FROM 1788** Edited by **Iain H. Murray**  
Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1988 357pp. £9.95 ISBN 0 85151 189 9

As one who has a personal interest in Christian work in Australia, I found this book a fascinating insight into areas of the past that I had not considered before. Being an anthology the standard of presentation varies but the editor's selection gives within prescribed limits a fine survey for about the first hundred years of Christian witness 'down under'. The areas which were fresh to me were those linked with Methodism and Presbyterianism, though one wonders whether there were not some available documents illustrating the impact of Baptists and others. However, the outstanding influence undoubtedly lay with the Anglicans and not least with Sydney diocese. The growth of this importance is best traced in Marcus Loane's book *Hewn from the Rock*.

At first it was only the Anglicans that were wrestling with a situation dominated by the Army and convicts. The story of Richard Johnston, the first chaplain, who was among those encouraged by Charles Simeon to embark on a ministry in this remote land, introduces this anthology and has entries from his journal as well as his letters. It was he who blazed the trail for those who followed. Within five years he was employing a school-master and within ten years had set up a school with a convinced Christian basis. Six years after the First Fleet, there arrived in Sydney one who was to be even more influential for the Gospel. Samuel Marsden, whose main ministry was to be in Parramatta, nineteen miles from Sydney, was to be a spiritual force in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. In secular eyes his name is besmirched by his having to perform the duty of magistrate involving the harshness of the sentencing of that time. It was not until 1816 that the first of the Methodists arrived. Like their founder they were men given to travelling far for the sake of the Gospel. They laboured in tough situations and the Lord graciously blessed them so that they left their Christians organized in classes in places far removed from the centres of population and often encouraged by the Anglicans. Although Tasmania had a chaplain, it was not until the arrival of another Methodist that any real spiritual work was done. While the work in Sydney lay mainly with Anglicans, Methodists and a few Presbyterians were to see the work of the Holy Spirit further inland,

and it was here that the importance of the Bible as the Word of God and the gathering of Christians regularly for prayer was to have its impact. A short survey is made of Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. A chapter raises the problem of taking the Gospel to the aborigines and there are the first hints of the difficulties which such work presents, as the thought-forms and practices of these people are so far removed from the concepts of the Western mind, something that was not appreciated in the mid nineteenth century.

It is in his chapter on 'Recovery and Opposition in Sydney Diocese' that Iain Murray gives a clue to the present situation throughout the whole of the continent. When Frederick Barker was appointed Bishop of Sydney he was faced with a situation that had departed from the original Evangelicalism of the City and diocese. Backed by his wife's prayers and preaching the fundamentals of the Gospel, he experienced and overcame the antagonism of the clergy who by that time were employed in the diocese. In 1855, thanks to the generous will of one who had come out as a ship's carpenter, Moore College was founded to train men for the ministry. By 1881 when he returned home as a widower, Bishop Barker had established the diocese as a centre of orthodoxy and evangelism.

In his closing chapter the editor gives a diagnosis of the Church in Australia today. Here it is that he has to regret the decline of Methodists, presbyterians and others. He finds this in the passing of biblical Christianity which he emphasises has its bearing on the whole nation. This, he feels, is not always appreciated by the members of the Church as so often the lessons of history are not taken to heart as they should be. Just as in the Homeland the decline is probably traceable to the same causes, which gives an added dimension to this book as far as a British readership is concerned. Much of the past was based on Christian education, which still continues in the private sphere. (More Christians subscribe out of the state system in Australia than they do in Great Britain.) In a land, like Australia, where history, as far as the whites are concerned, only goes back two hundred years, the influence of Christianity cannot be dismissed. yet due to the prevailing existentialism and liberal biblical studies, history is at a discount. Many have failed to see that the decline of positive Gospel preaching has sprung from the influence of such scholars as Arthur S. Peake in Methodism and Samuel Angus in Presbyterianism. The former's commentary became the set book of the colleges and the latter based his lectures on the premiss—'Jesus had not the slightest interest in what men were to believe, and he never required any intellectual creed.' There was, however, one college where their influence was not accepted and that was Moore.

I found the reading of this book both heart-warming and head-warning. I felt it mirrored circumstances in Britain even to the extent, though not so widespread, of classic Evangelicalism. Maybe some of our leaders, including our bishops, could take note, and not dismiss the Australian scene as having nothing to teach us. To the ordinary church member and every minister this book might encourage us to return to the fundamentals of the Gospel and the reinstatement of prayer in the ongoing life of the local church, in the hope that the Holy Spirit might once again visit our nation with times of refreshing.

**THE CHRISTIAN IN COMPLETE ARMOUR Volume I** (Abridged and modernized) **William Gurnall**  
Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1986 308pp. £2.95pb. ISBN 0 85151 456 1

Both J.C. Ryle and C.H. Spurgeon, the two outstanding preachers of the late eighteenth century, described Gurnall's classic in fulsome terms. Spurgeon called it *peerless and priceless* whilst Ryle advised that *solid scriptural theology, like that contained in these pages, should be valued and studied in the church*. Many who have read the original (still published by the Banner of Truth Trust, 1240pp. £13.95hb.) concur wholeheartedly with these statements. Certainly David Wilkerson, author of *The Cross and the Switchblade*, does. In his preface to this modern abridgement he testifies to the profound influence it had on him. However, he is also honest about the difficulties many have found with the original. *It was too long, too wordy, and written in seventeenth century English. But, he goes on, we believe that as 'Christian in Complete Armour' is such an important book, it should be published in a shortened, modern version for wider acceptance.* A team of four, led by Ruthanne Garlock, spent over a year working on this abridgement which, when fully published, will appear in three volumes (Volume 2 is due out in 1988). They have done sterling work. The feel of the original remains but it is now made available in a more popular style. It is a pity that the Scripture quotations are not taken from the *New International Version*. The use of old English in a modern abridgement jars a little, as does the American spelling. However one soon adjusts and the reader finds himself saying with David Wilkerson

either this abridgement or the full version . . . , should be in the library of every man and woman of God. No Christian leader, teacher, pastor, evangelist, or Christian worker should be without it. It breathes of holiness, purity, and provokes one to prayer and fuller dedication to Jesus Christ.

St. Stephen's Vicarage, Newcastle upon Tyne

GEORGE CURRY

**INTRODUCING LIBERATION THEOLOGY** **Leonardo and Clodovis Boff**

Burns and Oates, Tunbridge Wells 1987 100pp. £3.95 ISBN 0 86012 156 9

For a long time there has been the need for a short, succinct and well-communicated introduction to liberation theology. This book scores well on all counts. It has the added advantage of being written by two brothers who have been at the heart of the development of liberation theology since its beginning. All that is said comes from a long, passionate involvement both in theological reflection on liberation and in the reality of severely disadvantaged communities from which it springs.

The authors cover all the main aspects of the subject; the context that theology seeks to tackle; the method it uses; who the theologians are—not just the academics and professionals; the key themes and the history of its development. Two final chapters deal with liberation theology in other parts of the world outside Latin America, and with an appeal to all theologians 'to work out the social-liberative dimension of faith', according to a vision in which society and humanity can be transformed into a truly free community.

This book is clear and well-set out, with ample headings and sub-headings. The reader will find some fascinating and, according to its image, unexpected reflections on Marxism. It deals well with the vitally important, though controversial, question of hermeneutics.

The stance of the book is one of advocacy. The reader will find only spasmodic attempts to discuss sensitive disagreements, voiced by those who do not believe that liberation theology does justice to the whole of the Gospel. The biography at the end also lacks authors writing from a more critical perspective. Nevertheless, as a statement of what liberation theology is all about, what motivates it and where it is going there is nothing better available on the market within the same scope.

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ANDREW KIRK

**THEOLOGY IN TURMOIL The Roots, Course and Significance of the Conservative—Liberal Debate in Modern Theology Alan P.F. Sell**  
Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 1986 199pp. \$9.95 ISBN 0 8010 8246 3

In this useful book Alan Sell (formerly the principal lecturer in religious studies at West Midlands College of Higher Education, and now serving the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as theological secretary) has given us an historical resumé of the rise, progress and present state of the conservative liberal debate; the latest reference quoted seems to be 1980. The author's own theological standpoint is not obtrusive; his coverage and comments give the impression of a desire to be fair to both sides. As the write-up on the rear cover aptly remarks, the treatment is 'lean in its exposition but full in its documentation'. There are six chapters. The first is, Immanentism and the Gospel. Next come The Rise and Reception of Modern Biblical Criticism; Evolution: Theory and Theme; The Contribution of Albrecht Ritschl (the most detailed chapter); Conservatives and Liberals in Theology; and finally, Conservatives, Liberals and the Gospel. There are forty-five pages of notes, and an Index of Persons (about 550 in all). A number of living theologians appear in the latter, but there is no mention of several important ones, e.g. Moltmann, Pannenberg and Torrance. The author presupposes some prior knowledge of the technicalities of the Enlightenment, and so employs some terms which lay readers might find difficult. As a result the book can hardly be recommended as an introduction for the general reader, but it will be of great value to the student or minister wishing to get a better overall grasp of the debate. 'Conservative' and 'Liberal' are shown to be terms covering a fairly wide diversity of opinion, with respect to both the attitude to Scripture and to the actual content of the Christian gospel. The author ends irenically with a quotation from John 'Rabbi' Duncan:

Some persons preach only doctrine; that makes people all head, which is a monster. Some preach only experience; that makes people all heart, which is a monster too. Others preach only practice; that makes people all hands and feet, which is likewise a monster. But if you preach doctrine and experience and practice, by the blessing of God you will have head, and heart, and hands, and feet—a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps the issue is not quite so simple as that; but it illustrates well the author's own standpoint.

My copy of the book was appallingly bound. By the time I had finished it all the pages had separated.

Ivy Cottage, Grove, Wantage

DOUGLAS SPANNER

**ANOTHER GOSPEL? An Account of the Growing Involvement of the Anglican Church in Secular Politics Rachel Tingle**

The Christian Studies Centre, London 1988 77pp. £3.95 ISBN 0 9513721 0 6

Rachel Tingle has produced a short, cogently argued and concise work of reference to the subtle, pervasive and all powerful corruption of the ethos and workings of the Church of England which has been accomplished over the last forty years.

This gradual but now almost complete destruction of the historical conservatism of the Church of England has reached its apogee. The Church of England in its key inner workings (the chairmanship and biased bureaucracy of the various Boards of General Synod) is now openly espousing party politics. The bishops and clergy who have reached positions of prestige and personal power are drawn from the generation largely influenced by the same anti-conservative trends which secured the 1945 electoral landslide and gave birth to the permissive society.

Anyone who has personally experienced and endured the workings of synodical government will recognize immediately the picture she paints of the trendy modern liberal Church of England which is fed and watered by the synodical system. Its veneer of Christian discipleship masks in reality a power game played according to synodical rules designed to give to outsiders the appearance of elected democratic control exercisable by synods. As Gareth Bennett illustrated to his cost the rules allow a tiny number of (generally) unelected individuals answerable to no conscience but their own to manipulate synodical decisions according to their own agenda.

What the authoress has achieved in such a short compass is a systematic list of 171 references which give chapter and verse to the relentless destabilization of the Church of England which many of us have observed, but which so few of us, having sufficient access to the inner workings of synodical government, have been able to pin-point, nail down and expose.

Any lay member of the Church of England whose synodical experience has not extended beyond his parish or deanery, and who feels that the wider synodical environment is best left to the experts, the theologians and the church's politicians, and who has not read Gareth Bennett's percipient preface to *Crockford's* in full, is almost bound to reject the thesis of this work on the grounds that it must be exaggerated; that the facts must have been bent to fit a theory; but the writer of this review was reassured at many points in the book that such a view is naive and mistaken. One particular example was subjected a year ago to challenge in the press by one of the organisations accused in this book of political bias. It is noteworthy that the authoress has repeated her allegation here a year later.

The book is aptly entitled 'Another Gospel?'. Socialism is based on the fundamental goodness of Man. Improve his environment through social



engineering and he will give of his best. That is another Gospel. It is certainly not Christian, but in order to deceive Christians it is cunningly transformed to mimic the Gospel of Christ. What is left out is the need for each individual to recognize his own sin and repent. That is the fundamental part of the true Gospel which is missing from *Faith in the City* and which makes that much acclaimed work a man-centred, man-sufficient and spiritless manifesto.

This book explains—what may have mystified many grass-roots Anglicans—how Report after Report debated by General Synod is grossly unrepresentative of the commonsense views of ordinary lay men and women, and how they come to be written and given Synod's rubber stamp; how vote after vote seems to bear little relevance to the conversion of England.

This book is a comprehensive indictment of the present malaise in the Church of England. What is now needed after such an excellent start is a forward-looking sequel spelling out how the loyal laity of the Church of England may so reform the systems of synodical government that it may become the servant of the parishes and not their master; how the Prime Minister may be so advised that liberalizing, ecumenically-motivated clerics may be refused advancement. We need time for the revolution in political thinking which has swept the Western world since 1979—in essence the realization that socialism ultimately fails to give individuals their freedom—to convince the clergy of the Church of England that liberalizing the church, relaxing the rules, seeing good in all other religions (almost), seeking unity as a goal in itself, is trying to mould the church into the image of Man, and will, like socialism, also ultimately fail.

A useful summary of the thesis appears on the outside back cover. There is a Foreword by the Reverend Tony Higton, founder of Action for Biblical Witness to Our Nation and a member of General Synod. Like the book, it is concise, and relates how he, too, has reached a new understanding of the Evangelical identity crisis.

This is a book for the members of the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament to read and take to heart before they have to consider yet another General Synod request for legislation to be laid before Parliament.

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MALCOLM BARKER

**ESSENTIALS: A liberal-evangelical dialogue** David L. Edwards with a response by John Stott

Hodder & Stoughton, London 1988 354pp. £5.95

ISBN 0 340 42623 3

In the 1940s mainstream evangelicalism in America parted company with traditional 'fundamentalism' and opted for exposure to, amongst other things, biblical criticism and the culture of society at large. What followed from this in the U.S.A. has been documented in Richard Quebedeaux's two books, *The Young Evangelicals* and *The Worldly Evangelicals*. In the U.K. similar trends were evident at the Keele National Evangelical Anglican Congress (1967) and at the Nottingham Congress in 1977—the determination to get to grips with contemporary problems in church and nation, and the willingness of evangelicals to expose themselves to liberalizing influences. This line of development culminated in the National Evangelical Anglican Celebration at Caister, Norfolk, 29 April–3 May 1988. It is now clear that

mainstream Anglican evangelicalism has acquired some elements of what we have always known as liberalism.

Once more it is time to ask, 'What is evangelicalism?' Some of the old defences are down and the lines of demarcation unclear. How far can evangelicals allow themselves to be 'liberalized'? At what point does the removal of evangelical prejudices lead to the erosion of essential evangelical convictions? Where is the 'sticking-point' between a properly liberalized evangelicalism and Gospel-destructive theological liberalism? What *are* the essentials?

This background makes the present dialogue between distinguished Anglican advocates of the liberal and evangelical positions profoundly significant. *Essentials* is written by Provost David Edwards of Southwark, a prolific author and perceptive commentator on the Anglican scene, with a response by Dr. John Stott, Rector Emeritus of All Souls', Langham Place, and the much-loved father-figure of Anglican evangelicalism. The book is a critique by David Edwards of most of the published works of John Stott. After each chapter there is a response by John Stott, and the book ends with an epilogue by him.

The idea for the book came from David Edwards. He

asked John Stott if he might write a book based on his published works. As a Church historian, he wanted to explore the dynamics of the current worldwide Evangelical revival. He also hoped to persuade his liberal friends to read Evangelical books, and his Evangelical friends to face liberal criticisms. More specifically, he wished to pose a question and invite John's reply: *how 'conservative' do Evangelicals have to be, if they are to be faithful to the truth, including the Gospel?* (Preface. My italics.)

Dr. Stott 'eventually acquiesced' to this proposal.

He began as a somewhat reluctant collaborator. And in the book he expresses dissatisfaction with some of the methodology adopted. But with David Edwards he hopes that the book will help individuals and groups to grow 'into a greater Christian unity in the truth. (Preface.)

But the quest for unity in the truth is set in the context of a liberal 'demolition job,' as John Stott calls the Edwards's onslaught in his chapter on Scripture. Provost Edwards says that his contribution 'will boil down to the suggestion that there are some conservative Evangelical ideas which, whether or not they are valid, are *not* essential if one is to believe the gospel revealed in the Bible.' (p.30) The ideas that must be modified or abandoned are not Evangelical taboos, but—as indicated in the book's title—*essentials*:

'Yes, a great sacrifice will be required, for the ideas which I shall criticise are very dear to many conservatives. I shall be asking whether the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are infallible or inerrant; whether Christ died in order to propitiate the wrath of God by enduring as a substitute for us the punishment we deserved; whether in order to believe in God as a Christian it is necessary to believe all the miracles reported in the Bible; whether the Bible authoritatively offers us detailed teaching about our behaviour or about the future; and whether it is necessary to respond to the Christian gospel before death in order to be saved by God. That is asking a lot!' (p.30)

It certainly is! Abandon these, and you have a different God. You have destroyed the Gospel of salvation. And there is no urgency in the evangelistic task.

Both authors seek to be scrupulously fair in commenting on what the other has written. There is no cheap scoring of points, but a deep mutual respect and an eirenic tone. All this is very commendable. Yet there is unfairness in the methodology and this militates against the evangelical case. First, readers of *Essentials* are faced with David Edwards's critique without having read John Stott's original works. Dr. Stott complains about this in relation to his book *The Cross of Christ* (p.159). Second, David Edwards sometimes deals with what he considers is characteristic of Evangelicalism, rather than with what John Stott has actually written. This 'very flammable straw man,' as Dr. Stott calls it, is not only unfair to him but also to the cause of Evangelical truth. Third, at certain points David Edwards raises whole strings of problems (especially in the chapters on Scripture and miracles) which John Stott cannot answer in the space available. Quite rightly, Dr. Stott deals with principles, says that most of the 'problems' have been answered and indicates books where answers may be found. But the quick or unthinking reader might have the impression that Evangelicals have to cling blindly to their belief in the face of a host of unsolved problems.

David Edwards is a thoughtful proponent of moderate liberalism. His knowledge and treatment of Scripture is thorough. And so it is especially interesting to see the old liberal weaknesses emerge so clearly—lists of alleged 'mistakes' in Scripture, based on the presupposition that there must be mistakes; the idea that spiritual truth can be conveyed by stories that are fabrications of history, that you can have spiritual truth based on a historical lie; the argument that the inerrancy of the Old Testament is destroyed by the way the New Testament writers do not quote it exactly, and give it a spiritual meaning hidden to the original human authors. Sometimes there is a refusal to understand the obvious—for example, that the abrogation of the Old Testament laws about 'clean' foods in Mark 7.14–23 was not a contradiction of the Scriptures by Jesus; he did not mean that the law was wrong when originally given, but that it had come to an end now it had served its purpose (p.64). David Edwards refuses to see any morality in the Cross: 'Every principle of true justice is outraged by the idea that there must be some punishment no matter who is punished' (p.149). That is a travesty of biblical teaching about God's attitude to sin and about the Cross, where the Son *willingly* suffered for sin. David Edwards's dislike for penal substitution leads him to a conclusion that ignores the evidence: 'In the New Testament there is, I conclude, no clear statement that providing the appeasement or satisfaction of the just wrath of God was the mission of Jesus' (p.145). John Stott's earlier comment is applicable:

What worries me is your biblical selectivity . . . you reject traditional Christian teaching about the atonement, miracles, homosexual partnerships, and the awful reality of hell, not on the ground that you consider it unbiblical, but because on other grounds you find it unacceptable. (pp.104–5)

David Edwards is a true liberal. He sets reason above Scripture.

John Stott argues with his customary clarity and conviction. He offers a spiritual and reasoned rejection of Catholicism (p.38). He comes down on the side of the total inerrancy of Scripture (pp.101–2). Disappointingly from this reviewer's viewpoint, he argues cogently for the annihilation of the wicked, but admits that his conclusion is tentative (pp.314–320). He rejects

universalism, but says—surprisingly—that God has not revealed how he will deal with those who have never heard the Gospel (p.327). It is where Dr. Stott is most influenced by liberalism, where he allows cultural or scientific considerations to colour his interpretation of Scripture, that he is least persuasive. There is some muddle in his treatment of Genesis 1–3. David Edwards points out the logical weakness of his argument that women may be ordained, but not appointed to positions where they lead men (pp.253–4). He also detects in John Stott a move away from the Reformers' teaching on certain aspects of the atonement. Certainly, Dr. Stott is cautious in how he expresses the holiness and wrath of God and in how he explains propitiation. It is a pity that his caution can be construed as a doctrinal shift. On the whole, John Stott's contribution is a masterly restatement of many Gospel essentials. But it does show how cultural background and 'horizons' have blighted much evangelical interpretation of Scripture.

Has the time not come for a third force to emerge in contemporary evangelicalism? Not the old arbitrary and culture-rejecting evangelicalism of the ghetto. Nor the neo-evangelicalism of which John Stott is a moderate and able exponent, for this is prone to impose cultural factors upon Scripture and is vulnerable to the shifts of human scholarship. Has not the time come for the re-emergence of what some are beginning to call 'classic' evangelicalism? What I mean is an evangelicalism with a renewed confidence in Scripture as the Word of *God*, and therefore *sufficient* and bringing a *spiritual* message that can be understood without reference to outside scholarship. Should we not stop believing the myth that we cannot interpret the Bible without understanding its background? The background can be helpful, but it is not necessary for grasping the spiritual message and it must never *decide* our interpretation. Should not our preachers and Evangelical academics apply their minds to understanding Scripture, using the principles of interpretation found in Scripture itself?

Liberalism is seen as being destructive of the Gospel. But the book's courteous and gentlemanly tone hides the enormity of the issues. It is *not* simply an ecclesiastical tradition, Evangelicalism, that is at stake. If the things that David Edwards asks us to sacrifice are abandoned (although some are more important than others) there is nothing left worth having. He would have us throw the authority, truthfulness and clarity of Scripture out of the window. Doubts are cast on God's ability to communicate with men and to perform miracles. Substitutionary atonement is rejected as immoral. But without it, there is no Gospel, no urgency to evangelize, no message for sinners, no hope for the world. If the great transaction on the Cross did not take place, no human being could ever be saved. What David Edwards wants us to abandon is everything that matters. Liberalism, even in this thoughtful and biblical guise, is the destroyer of souls.

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REG BURROWS

**RELIGION IN CONTEXT: CULTS AND CHARISMA** I.M. Lewis

Cambridge University Press 1986 139pp. £20hb.

ISBN 0 521 30616 7

£6.95pb.

ISBN 0 521 31596 4

For anyone who has a serious interest in what are sometimes patronisingly termed 'primal' religions this is an important book and at £6.95 outstanding value.

Professor Lewis of the London School of Economics shows here the danger of excessive sub-classification in that it may serve to conceal essential homogeneity. He deals with phenomena which have recently been comparatively neglected: shamanism, the *zar* cults and spirit possession, the medium, cannibalism. As the title of the book indicates these phenomena are presented in context, and he shows how the social context supplies the key to an understanding of the function of each.

Rightly he questions Eliade's somewhat limited view of the rôle of shamanism, and emphasizes the rôle of the shaman in resolving social tensions (p.25). The consequences of separating this and related phenomena from their context so as neatly to incorporate them into a convenient academic anthropological framework are persuasively set out.

Lewis has comments to make on possible explanations for the strong female element in spiritism that might be relevant to the apparently unrelated contemporary debate on women's ordination (ch.2). The final chapter on African 'Survivals' in Islam is particularly useful.

A bold, stimulating, scholarly work, which includes a very valuable bibliography.

London Bible College, Green Lane, Northwood

PETER COTTERELL

### **FAITH AND SPECULATION An Essay in Philosophical Theology**

**Austin Farrer**

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1988 vii+175pp. £7.95

ISBN 0 567 29141 3

This is a reprint of a book originally published by A. & C. Black, London in 1967, and the present publishers are to be thanked for making it available again. As a work of Philosophical Theology it will interest the professional rather than the layman. The author is recognized as one of the acutest theoretical minds which the Church of England has produced this century, and certainly the present work makes heavy demands on the reader. Every sentence needs to be pondered! The concern of the book is to examine the reasonableness of Theism, as that term is understood in orthodox catholic circles. It starts from man as creature, that is, not as sinner, and makes very little (if any) direct appeal to Scripture. Why does the believer believe? What reasons has he? Can he claim (as the scientists do) that his evidence is 'empirical'? Hardly, for religious evidence, unlike scientific, does not touch the 'causal joint' (between our action and God's, in the case of religion); we do not know where the divine actually impinges on us. This is true in the three fields of Grace, Nature and Revelation, in each of which we meet the fact of 'double agency': God acts in the action of the creature. (It would have helped the non-professional reader greatly if the author had given biblical examples of this; my own mind went at once to Gen. 50.20, Matt. 5.45 and Acts 3.21). Farrer does not attempt to resolve this paradox—how an act can be attributed to two free agents at once. What he does is to discuss two 'palliatives'. The first is logical: we do not mean *quite the same* when we say 'God did it' as when we say 'man, or nature, did it'. This is the analogical escape route. The second is pragmatic: the response which as believers we are called to make is quite definite and does not depend on our resolving the paradox. We can proceed with doing the thing at once. This leads to the

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conclusion that since it is the Will of God that matters to the believer the right way to think of God is not the Aristotelian one (as Absolute Being), but as 'free, absolute and sovereign Will'. This is equally proper for metaphysical speculation as for practical life. It illustrates Farrer's principle that empirical reality is to be accorded only to what we can 'do something about', in this case, God's Will.

Can we say anything about the 'causal joint' between divine agency and human, that is, about the way divine action promotes human action? Farrer instances the well-known analogy of the action of our own wills on 'the minute constituents of our bodies'. Can the divine Will have an analogous relationship to the constituents of the Universe? The analogy, he concludes, breaks down 'because the Universe does not constitute an organic system, nor even exists as a totality'. 'The Universe is not a whole'; 'there is no world pattern pulling the Universe together'. Without disagreeing with his main thesis, this left me wondering whether the author would have written in quite this way had he been acquainted with that relatively new development in cosmology, the Anthropic Principle. Of this the eminent theoretical physicist P.C.W. Davies has written (*The Accidental Universe*, Cambridge University Press 1982)

The catalogue of extraordinary physical coincidences and apparently accidental cooperation . . . offers compelling evidence that something is 'going on', . . . that a hidden principle seems to be at work organising the cosmos in a coherent way . . . a guiding principle which works to fine-tune the cosmos to incredible accuracy . . . not a physical principle, however, but an *anthropic* principle . . . a principle somehow connected with our being here.

As a matter of fact, even some of the earlier pointers of Quantum Physics would have put a question mark on assertions of Farrer's.

The book ends with a chapter on the transcendence of God. Is God necessarily confined to the world He creates? Is it absurd to try to conceive of God as pure Spirit, transcending it? No, Farrer concludes; 'God is intelligent *Act*'.

Hardly a book for bedtime reading, nor a book for reading at a sitting. Demanding, rewarding, and sometimes (when Farrer argues with himself) entertaining. There seems to be a misprint at the top of p.128 where 'by' should probably read 'be'.

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DOUGLAS SPANNER

### **RESCUE SHOP John Allan**

Paternoster Press, Exeter 1987 129pp. £2.95

ISBN 0 85364 448 9

This book, according to the description on the rear cover, 'contains ten workshop sessions, designed to give Christians the skills they need to recover people for Jesus'. In this task the book succeeds, though of course it would be best tested on a group of Christians to see what they make of it. The first paragraph on page 3 was my own story, especially learning through painful experience. The book is easy to read and easy to follow. the workshops are flexible and can be adapted to meet most types of Christian who may wish to

be trained in evangelism. Each workshop begins with the aim of the session and the outline. Then follows an explanation of content, exercises, visuals, back-up material and further reading, and, lastly, homework. In the Introduction it says: 'so it's presented in what (I hope) will be a fairly "idiot-proof" style'. I remember being taught about safety devices on engineering equipment and being told, 'you can make something fool-proof, but never anything "idiot-proof"'. The Church desperately needs 'fools' and 'idiots' to be engaged in evangelism, and this book certainly knocks on the head the excuses 'I don't know enough', 'I'm not clever enough', and the like.

The first workshop deals with the theme 'Evangelism—doing what comes naturally'. On page 12 I liked the emphasis on the point that all Christians are witnesses. There are no exceptions. It was good to see on page 14 the need for honesty. 'Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God' (2 Cor. 4:20). On page 16 we read of an exercise designed to show the futility of arguing and it is good to remember that no-one is ever argued into becoming a Christian.

The second workshop is entitled 'The Secret Ingredient in Evangelism'. This deals with the importance of prayer in evangelism and on pages 21 and 22 I liked the stress on the need for information on the people we hope to evangelize. He says on page 22, 'The key to praying in depth is: use our imagination'. Care must be shown that we don't stray into 'imagineering' or 'visualisation' and I am sure that the author doesn't intend us to. Section 4 on page 22 is full of some good advice. Workshop number three is 'Explaining what the Good News is'. When explaining the Gospel or trying to answer objections we must realize that these people we are trying to reach have not read our books, which means that they could respond in a way which is different from the way in which we think that they should. I thought that the choice of verses—called 'The Roman Road'—very helpful and a useful tool.

Workshop number four deals with the subject 'Producing Evidence For What You Say'. In this section, and in number five, the author lists questions which people ask. Some people do indeed ask the questions but some people ask other questions as well. The fifth workshop is headed 'Arguments and Evidence' and the responses are good, especially on page 53 when the reply is made to the question 'Did he rise from the grave?'

The sixth workshop has as its theme 'Sharing Your Experience'. This section deals with testimonies and it's good to read the warnings on pages 64 and 65 about the temptation to go overboard. The examples on pages 66–68 are funny until you realize that this is standard fare in some Christian meetings today.

Workshop number seven is concerned with 'Know How Much To Say and When To Say It'. On page 72 the danger of embarrassment is highlighted and it is good to see stressed the individuality of each one of us. We must not try to copy other people but be ourselves. The author is right. He cautions us about being insensitive and is right to point out that a lack of courage is not really an excuse. I quote: 'We do have to take the occasional social risk, and chance taking the initiative for Jesus.'

The eighth workshop is called 'Making the Big Introduction', and as I read this section I was once again made aware of the importance of Ananias and his dealings with the Apostle Paul. Who knows what purposes God has in store for the next person with whom we share the Gospel?

## Churchman

The ninth workshop is headed 'Making a Disciple' and is concerned with the nurturing of new Christians. On page 90 the author lists a number of good comments, especially in 'The Basics of Growth' paragraphs on page 91. The last workshop, number ten, is called 'Helping the Baby Grow'. In these days of mass evangelism and big name speakers I feel that the words on page 100 are very appropriate. The Church is growing 'because ordinary Christians are sharing their faith with acquaintances'. One-to-one conversation is still the most effective way of sharing the Gospel.

At the end of the book there is a section called 'The Course Notebook'. These are notes and diagrams for each of the ten workshops and the author gives his permission for them to be copied. The book's title comes from these lines of C.T. Studd, the cricketer and missionary:

Some wish to live within the sound  
Of Church or Chapel Bell,  
I want to run a Rescue Shop  
Within a yard of Hell.

Perhaps this book will be a help to Christians to turn their churches into Rescue Shops.

Finally, this book is a salutary reminder that the Great Commission told us to go and proclaim the Gospel, not, as so many do today, 'expect people to come to us'.

London S.W.6

ROGER COOK

### **ENEMY TERRITORY Andrew Walker**

Hodder and Stoughton, London 1987 288 pp. £7.95

ISBN 0 340 40747 6

In the first of what promises to be a series of new books, Andrew Walker, the director of the newly-formed C.S. Lewis Centre, tackles the theme of modernity, as he sees it, and issues a clarion call to Christians to oppose, more vigorously than has hitherto been our custom, the insidious influences which surround us.

The book is basically an attempt to rehabilitate the Devil as a force to be reckoned with in Christian thinking. One of the effects of modernity, introduced into the Churches as 'modernism', has been to downgrade Satan as a practical reality in the spiritual lives of many Christians, and the author sees this (rightly, in the opinion of this reviewer) as a major cause of the spiritual weakness and irrelevance of the modern Church.

Unfortunately, instead of giving us a sustained critique of Satan and his ways, the book then slides off into a sociological analysis. From the point of view of theology, which is a highly developed discipline with a very precise vocabulary, sociology appears to be a pseudo-science which relies more on impressions created by the sociologist than on objectively observed fact. This feeling is intensified as the book proceeds. The author condemns many features of modern life (e.g. television) as demonic, but the answers which he proposes seem to have remarkably little to do with the problems which he identifies. At the end of the day what he wants is a more orthodox form of ecumenism which will renew the spiritual roots of the Christian tradition.



It is hard to disagree with this as it stands, just as it is hard not to feel that such a renewal, if it is possible, will transform the world. But the transformation, if it comes, will be a change of hearts and lives, not the abolition of modern technology and its byproducts. It is at this level that more thinking needs to be done, particularly about the nature of the Devil. The author's conviction, expressed in his preface, that the Devil is not a person seems to lie at the heart of the difficulty. The Devil is a person, because only a personal being is capable of the sin and evil (disobedience to God) with which we are engaged as Christians. Greater clarity on this point might lead to less confusion elsewhere, and produce a more logically tight piece of work than this one appears to be.

Perhaps that is coming, and the C.S. Lewis Centre will develop a more articulate lay theology with which to address the needs of the modern world.

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GERALD BRAY

### **BUILDING INTO THE FUTURE (Agreed Syllabus and Handbook)**

Essex County Council Religious Advisory Committee

Collins Educational, London, 1987 128 pp. £5.95

ISBN 0 00 3230139

We live in strange times, theologically speaking. The Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge writes a book attempting to be 'as heretical as possible' and stirs scarcely a ripple of indignation. Archbishops talk on morality without reference to the Ten Commandments, and preach to the bereaved with no mention of the Resurrection. The Pope convenes an inter-faith Prayer Meeting at Assisi, and Winchester Cathedral hosts an Inter-faith Conservation Service. When Church dignitaries are thus confused and misleading, what can we expect of a mere County R.E. Syllabus? But first, the good points. Given the assumptions, it is competent and comprehensive. No one can quarrel with statements such as these:

It is through contact with members of the faith community that the reality of their religious experience can be apprehended. . . .

It is important that the teacher is careful to respect the beliefs and feelings of the pupils about their own faith. . . .

. . . this world can be described as God's world and God's creatures.

The list of lives to be studied includes St. Paul, Augustine, the Wesleys, General Booth and Mother Teresa. Another commendable feature is three chapters on children with 'Special Educational' needs.

Now we must examine those assumptions: of which the first, and worst, is that Christianity is by no means the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about God, Man, and Eternity. Hans Küng is quoted: 'Where does man come from, and where does he go to?'—a question which many of us thought had been answered thirteen centuries ago in Bede's story of the sparrow flying in from the dark into King Edwin's lighted banquet-hall ('God . . . by revelation *made known* unto me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known . . .' Ephesians 3.3). The assumption throughout this Syllabus is that all religions are man-made, man's 'quest' for God; none is truly, or wholly, revelation from a personal objective Deity. The only 'error' castigated is of those who set up 'their own dogmas as

absolutes'; and '. . . it may be that the traditional religions will be found wanting.' So pupils are invited to explore the religious supermarket, examine the labels, and select or reject at will—since the different faiths are 'not mutually exclusive'. Very little time is allowed for Bible study, because there is such a vast range of extra-biblical material to cover.

Secondly, the stated purpose of enabling pupils to 'understand the Christian faith' is frustrated because no mention is made of the Great Commission *to make disciples of all nations*. So careful are the writers to prevent any child from despising

'the heathen in their blindness'  
who 'bow down to wood and stone'

that nothing is said about Missions—apart from one reference to David Livingstone. Thus children will be deprived of some of the world's most thrilling stories, heroism and adventure, from China to Peru. Why did Nero burn the Christians? Who were Foxe's Martyrs? Why is there persecution in Russia today? Pupils who learn the bowdlerized version of Christianity here presented will have no clue to the answers. Why, indeed, would anyone wish to harm such inoffensive goody-goodies? But this sterner side of Christian endeavour is just as much part and parcel of the New Testament as the love-your-neighbour ethic, and the Church *cannot be understood* without it.

Another grievous omission is traditional *hymns*, some of which are among the finest lyrics in our language, and one of the best ways of making theology both intelligible and memorable. Instead of 'There is a green hill . . .' we are shown rough-hewn 'poems' by Primary kids: 'original', no doubt, and 'good for their age', but hardly worth printing, and eminently unsingable. Singing should be one of the most enjoyable parts of worship, but it is only once suggested, and that as a casual option. No reader would guess that much of the world's greatest music has been inspired by Christian 'dogma' and Christian experience. 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' receives honourable mention, but not the 'Messiah'!

'Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit' (Jeremiah 2.11). It is a fact that Muslims have not changed Islam, nor have Hindus changed Hinduism. Only in 'Christian' Britain is there now a shame-faced shuffling from public confession of Christianity. It will be a tragedy if this embarrassed reticence is passed on to another generation. More than a tragedy: a grievous sin, which evoked from the Lord a thunderous denunciation (Matthew 18.6). Obviously the classroom is not the place to urge upon children the duty of evangelism; but it is surely dishonest to conceal the *fact* that Christianity has always been a militant movement, boldly proclaiming that all other faiths are false.

Finally, how does the Syllabus tackle the thorny subject of Religion and Science? Sadly, it is a century out of date. Miracles are not mentioned. Genesis One is classed with fairy stories and the Gilgamesh epic; Darwinism is assumed to be true; and the old, old fallacy is yet again repeated—that 'the supposed incompatibility of science and religion is founded upon a *misunderstanding* . . .' (my italics). The authors seem unaware of the world-wide creationist movement, of the rejection of evolution by hundreds of scientists, and the proliferation of anti-Darwin books written by non-Christians. Problems of

geology and theology are swept under the carpet as though they did not exist. Considering the wide range of books on creation/evolution now available, such ignorance is hard to excuse. One pities the teenager whose enquiries will be fobbed off by these unexamined and unsupported half-truths.

To sum up: this Syllabus clearly demonstrates the chronic weakness of R.E. as a school subject in 'post-Christian' Britain. The purpose of the 1944 Education Act was that Christian doctrines and Christian duties should be taught with Christian enthusiasm. It failed because Heads and teachers failed to rise to the challenge. Now, with a million Muslims in our midst, and many thousand Sikhs and Hindus, Heads and R.E. teachers are even less inclined to teach Scripture scripturally. Anxious to avoid the charge of 'racism', they offer a two-dimensional Christianity devoid of moral or spiritual inspiration. That inspiration comes only from the Bible—with its commands and promises, its warnings and examples, its searching discovery of the thoughts and intents of the heart, its sure and certain Hope of a better world to come. Dr. Leslie Francis's recent study (*Religion in the Primary School*) has shown that Church of England teaching actually has 'a negative influence on pupils' attitude towards Christianity'. Thus will it always be when a captive audience is taught lukewarm religion by lukewarm teachers; and we predict exactly the same fate for those on the receiving end of this syllabus. It is high time for Government to step in. Mr. Baker should *either* put the Bible right back in the centre of school curricula, where our forefathers put it, *or* abolish R.E. altogether and hand over to voluntary organisations the responsibility for attracting and instructing the young.

Dr. Cupitt's heresies will influence very few, and those few will be adults who choose to read his book. This Syllabus, on the other hand, will lead astray tens of thousands of children who have no choice but to listen. 'Building For the Future'—? We are reminded of the Parable of the Two Builders. In our view the book is based *not* upon the 'impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture' but on the shifting sands of philosophical fashion—pluralism and syncretism. As such it may achieve some success in the short-term goal of promoting inter-faith harmony; but it will certainly fail of the true purpose of all Religious Education—to make children 'wise unto salvation' (II Timothy 3.15).

#### POSTSCRIPT

Inevitably one's views on R.E. are coloured by personal experience. I had the good fortune to be sent to a school where the Headmistress believed passionately in the educational value of the Bible. Learning verses by heart was routine; we delighted in Bible stories, especially those in Judges! Locating verses by a Concordance excited keen competition. The same Scripture Exam. was taken by the whole school—a chance for bright boys in the lower forms to beat their elders. Above all, the Lessons in Chapel were impressive: 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth . . .' had a wonderfully solemnizing effect. For these foundations of faith I am eternally grateful. Why should not every child in Essex—and every other county—enjoy the same experience?

Churchman

**THE DEFENCE OF THE FAMILY: The Battle against Permissiveness**  
**James F. Pawsey M.P., Dr. Rhodes Boyson M.P., The Revd. Dr. David N. Samuel**

Church Society, London 1987 12 pp. £1.00

This is the second booklet in the 'Back from the Brink' Series. Like the first it consists of addresses given at a Conservative Party Conference, this time at Bournemouth in October 1986. There is a short opening by James Pawsey, and then the substance of two addresses by Dr. Boyson (now Sir Rhodes Boyson) and Dr. Samuel respectively. Dr. Boyson writes trenchantly and informatively on the family under attack from within, from Education Authorities, and from the State, and he ends with three earnest hopes which he (rather pessimistically) entertains: that children may be born into normal families with father and mother; that they may go to schools where they are taught discipline and respect; and that they may be welcomed into churches where religion is a personal relationship with God. Dr. Samuel's address starts by noting the continuing battle for the mind and soul of the nation. Are we winning? he asks. It doesn't sometimes look like it. But there are encouraging signs—awakening concern on our side and increasing alarm on the other. A change is coming about, but it will take time to assert itself. I am glad he stressed that our priority is in the realm of the *mind*, and that he vividly and powerfully enlarges on this. The *family* is the key area, and we need to create as a matter of urgency conditions which operate strongly to preserve it. The church too needs to recover its traditional concern for salvation and the life of the world to come.

May I suggest that it would be a good thing if these booklets could be produced in a much cheaper and simpler format for widespread distribution, say in everyday correspondence?

Ivy Cottage, Main Street, Grove, Wantage

DOUGLAS C. SPANNER

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## Other Books Received

- Banner of Truth Trust** Hugh Martin, *Simon Peter*, 1984, £2.45  
**Collins** Christopher Herbert, *Alive to God*, 1987, £2.50  
**Eerdmans** Stephen Mosma, ed., *Responsible Technology*, 1986, no price  
**Eyre & Spottiswoode** Sylvia Read and William Fry, *Christian Theatre*, 1986, £4.95  
**Focus Christian Ministries Trust** S.M. Houghton, *William Tyndale: His Life and Times*, 1985, no price  
**Harold Shaw Publishers** Roger Steer, *Spiritual Secrets of George Müller*, 1987, no price  
**Hodder & Stoughton** John Perry, *Effective Christian Leadership*, 1987, £2.25  
**J.S.O.T. Press** James D. Martin, Philip R. Davies, edd., *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane*, 1986, £10.50  
**Marc Europe** Cheryl Forbes, *The Religion of Power*, 1986, £2.50  
**Mowbray** Arthur L. Moore, *A Pocket Guide to the Life and Meaning of Jesus*, 1986, £1.95; Richard Harries, *Evidence for the Love of God*, 1987, 50p.; Keith Ward, *Evidence for the Virgin Birth*, 1987, 50p.; Pauline Webb, *Evidence for the Power of Prayer*, 1987, 50p.; David Winter, *Evidence for Life after Death*, 1987, 50p.; Cleverly Ford, *Preaching on Devotional Occasions*, 1986, £4.75  
**Poolbeg** Ed. Moloney & Andy Pollak, *Paisley*, 1986, £5.95  
**S.P.C.K.** Margaret Baxter, *Jesus Christ: His Life and His Church: New Testament Introduction 1*, 1987, £6.50; Michael Stancliffe, *Symbols and Dances*, 1986, £3.50  
**Triangle/S.P.C.K.** Margaret Cundiff, *Living by the Book*, 1986, £1.95  
**Winston Press** Ron DelBene, *Alone with God: A Guide for a Personal Retreat*, 1984, £3.95  
**Word Books** David Luecke & Samuel Southard, *Pastoral Administration*, 1986, no price

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