

## Book Reviews

### FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

Simon Guillebaud

Oxford: Monarch, 2006 220pp £7.99pb ISBN: 1 85424 760 3

This book bears the sub-title *A Call to No Holds Barred Discipleship* and that is just what it is. More than that, its author is someone who knows full well what he is writing about. The name Guillebaud will for ever be linked with the countries of Rwanda and Burundi, and Simon is an international youth evangelist based in these countries. So he can write, '...this life of surrender has taken me to Central Africa over the last seven years. With varying degrees of intensity, this has meant living in a war zone, and so life has been far from ordinary—at least for those who haven't lived through a time of war. Not many of us would consider it normal, for example, to have had an armed robbery a couple of houses down, a rocket fired between the cars of two friends, nights of intense shelling over the capital, and my flatmate's health centre trashed by rebels. Yet all these events happened within the space of seven days—and a prominent and influential friend was assassinated immediately before'.

Against that background the author's commitment to Christ and his calling shines through, and faces the reader with an inescapable challenge. Your reviewer comes from a generation of Christians who were faced with the all-embracing claims of Christ by such writings as Howard Guinness's *Sacrifice* and Hugh Evan Hopkins's *Henceforth*; it is hoped that God will use this book to call out a response from this generation of young and old Christians alike.

The autobiographical references and allusions bring the reader constantly face to face with the fact that Guillebaud's own commitment has been tested in the crucible of suffering, and these illustrations make the book well worth reading. He also quotes from a wide variety of authors ancient and modern: although there is a bibliography at the end of the book, this is incomplete (e.g. on p. 43 a reference to Capon is not picked up, and the reader is left wondering which Capon is referred to), and the lack of any foot- or end-notes is a drawback for those who would wish to explore these writings further.

Having said that, the copy of this book on our church bookstall carried a 'Recommended Reading' star, and that is well-deserved. It should also be

labelled ‘Dangerous Reading’ for those who are not ready to face its challenge to whole-hearted commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

DAVID WHEATON  
Chesham

## **JUDAS AND THE GOSPEL OF JESUS: Understanding a newly discovered ancient text and its contemporary significance**

**Tom Wright**

**London: SPCK, 2006    88pp    £6.99pb    ISBN: 978-0281058686**

*The Da Vinci Code* and the publication of the lost Gospel of Judas have put Gnostic ideas firmly in the public domain. Concomitant with the commendation of these Gnostic ideas, orthodox Christianity has been under public attack. Tom Wright’s well-written book is a brilliant demolition of Gnosticism and defence of orthodoxy.

Wright’s basic point is that the new-found Gospel of Judas tells us nothing about the real Jesus or the real Judas. The Gospel of Judas turns the heroes of the canonical gospels into villains and the villains into heroes. The Gospel of Judas does tell us a lot about how some people in the second century were reinterpreting the faith. Wright makes the point that first, Gnosticism was marked by a deep and dark dualism and rejection of created, physical realities. Second, Gnosticism stressed that the world was made by a bad, stupid, and perhaps capricious god. The true and ultimate god was not the creator, beyond and separate from creation. Third, humans should want to escape from the physical world. Fourth, the way to salvation is through special ‘knowledge’, given by a revealer from outside the physical creation.

This Gnosticism had a relentless hostility to Judaism. Wright speculates that Gnosticism had its source in Jewish disappointment after the failure of the Bar-Kochba revolt of 130-135AD. Here, Wright is unconvincing—he needs solid evidence to establish his point. Wright argues that in the Gospel of Judas, Judas is a hero precisely because he helps Jesus to escape from the physical world by his death, and so allows the divine spark in Jesus to escape from the material trappings of his body. There is, of course, in the Gospel of Judas no physical resurrection. In the Gospel of Judas, salvation is by introspection and it is self-centred. The cosmology of the Gospel of Judas is bizarre and confusing.

For Wright, the world view of the Gospel of Judas is utterly different to that of orthodox Christianity. The Gnostic gospels are, for the most part, not narratives but collections of sayings that offer secret teachings to the select few. The canonical gospels in contrast tell the story of the climax of the dealings of the God of Israel in the person of Christ. The canonical gospels are earlier and more historically convincing, and their world view infinitely preferable to the Gnostic one—points that Wright stresses and makes well. Orthodox Christianity produced many martyrs, because it challenged the claims of the Roman Empire. By contrast, Gnostics avoided persecution.

Wright then considers why Gnostic ideas have such currency today, and are being so energetically propagated. Wright argues that it has to do with social and anti-religious fashions in North America today. Gnosticism stresses the primacy of individual and immediate experience, and this explains its contemporary appeal. While Wright's cultural analysis is interesting, to my mind he exaggerates the New Testament's anti-dualistic world view. After all, the polarity of heaven and hell, the elect and the damned, etc. in the New Testament, are apocalyptic dualisms.

Wright has written a very fine little book. I warmly recommend it for pastors and lay-people who have been disturbed by the propagation of Gnostic views in the media, and want to know more. It will be especially useful apologetically, when non-Christians ask questions about Christian origins and whether Gnosticism is a legitimate form of Christianity. Wright makes it clear that ultimately, the Gospel of Judas is an anti-gospel and its Jesus is an anti-Christ.

ROHINTAN MODY

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## WHAT HAS CHRISTIANITY EVER DONE FOR US?

**Jonathan Hill**

Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2005 192pp £16.99hb ISBN: 0 7459 5168 6

With the subtitle "Its Role in Shaping the World Today" the publisher's blurb quotes a reviewer as saying that 'Hill has a wonderful ability to cut to the theological chase, explaining the most complex ideas in a lively way that makes perfect sense...'. This is so, but at the same time this reviewer was left

wondering what readership the author had in mind. As an exercise in apologetics it would be interesting to have the reactions of a non-Christian reader; for Christians it provides a stimulating introduction to a selection of thinkers who have helped to mould the present-day Christian mind.

However, it could leave the reader with a feeling that there is much more that could be said, possibly with greater effect, on the humanitarian impact of Christian belief (for example, the earliest schools and hospitals were Christian foundations). This may be due in part to the author's background as a philosopher as well as a theologian.

In several of his chapters the author demonstrates how Christian theologians were developing the ideas of classical philosophy, and it is not always evident what benefits were gained from distinctively Christian insights. For instance, on p.126 the claim that 'Christianity provided the West with two basic notions: first, the ordered state of the universe, and second, its basic rationality and comprehensibility' is immediately qualified by the statement that 'both of these were, of course, inherited from the classical world that came before, and given a Christian spin by figures such as Justin Martyr, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. And this world view provided the kind of context in which modern science could begin to develop'. One is left wondering whether the same world view would not have developed without the Christian input.

Chapters explore the areas of "Culture and Thought", the "Arts, the Landscape", "Education, Education, Education", the "Individual, Society and the World", a "Way of Life", and "Changing the World". A final chapter attempts to look into the future and assess what Christianity might do for us in the future: here we are told that 'as the churches in the developing nations become more vibrant, and those in Europe less so, the former are increasingly dictating the future of Christianity' (p. 183). The people who are filling the churches of Africa, so the author tells us, are not only doctrinally conservative and open to notions of the supernatural, but they are also especially concerned with this-world issues, with issues of poverty and justice.

The chapter on "Changing the World" gives an informative picture of the lead Christians have given in the moves to abolish injustices such as apartheid and slavery and to champion the poor. However, while the chapter on culture and

thought pays tribute to the part Christianity has played in developing language as a vehicle into which to translate the Scriptures, it would have been helpful to be brought up-to-date with reference to the influence on the modern linguistic scene by bodies like the Wycliffe Bible Translators. In fact the author gives the impression of being more familiar with the Roman Catholic background to his subject, and so there is no treatment of the impact of the nineteenth century missionary movement and its concern to provide hospitals and schools in the developing world along with a passion to spread the gospel. As one would expect from the publishers, the book is handsomely produced with apposite illustrations and boxes containing quotable quotes from many of the thinkers to whom reference is made.

DAVID WHEATON  
Chesham

## PLANTING MISSION SHAPED CHURCHES TODAY

**Martin Robinson**

Oxford: Monarch, 2006    288pp    £8.99pb    ISBN: 9781854247285

Dr. Robinson is a National Director of “Together in Mission” and a Churches of Christ minister. He resides in Birmingham, UK and his purposes for writing this book derive from at least two matters. First, after surveying the number of books on church planting, he found that there were fewer books than he originally expected. Second, in the early 1990s, he wrote *Planting Tomorrow’s Churches Today* with Stuart Christine.

Though Robinson considered revising this book, he came to realise that it would be best if he wrote a new work. Believing that his first work was too mechanistic in terms, he desired to produce a book that was more appropriate for church planting in the twenty-first century. Also, in writing *Planting Mission Shaped Churches Today*, Robinson worked with the assumption that tomorrow’s church planters want to be involved in a movement of mission rather than ‘be agents of evangelistic enterprise alone’ (p. 8).

This book has ten chapters. In the first, “Living Between Paradigms,” the author addresses the cultural shifts that have occurred in western societies over the past several decades. Chapter two, “The Changing Shape of Church,”

addresses the shifts in the western church in general, and in particular, those cultural shifts in the UK. Here Robinson notes ‘the time has come to begin again, to recover a new missional imagination that will create a completely new form of the church’ (p. 43). Chapter three, “The Art of Church Planting,” addresses the fact that church planting is not necessarily a mechanical science but rather more of an art form. “The Gathering Process,” (ch. 4) addresses the important element within the church planting process of studying one’s culture and gathering persons of peace. Chapter five, “Building the Team,” offers many good and practical points related to team development, while chapter 6, “Discipleship and the Creation of Community,” addresses issues such as the reation of communities, the habits of disciples, and culture wars.

Chapter seven, “The Spiritual Life,” involves a discussion of the important matter of the devotional life of the church planters, an area that Robinson found to be lacking in most contemporary church planting books. Chapter eight, “Churches that Plant Churches,” includes a discussion of the importance of becoming a partnering church in church planting. “Simple Church,” (ch. 9) addresses the growing influence of house churches in western societies. Finally, the tenth chapter “Going Public,” is devoted to the debate over church buildings and the first public, worship (launch) service of many congregations.

There are four strengths to Robinson’s work. The first is that the author does a good job of encouraging the reader to think about church planting in less mechanistic terms and in more organic terms. He does well to emphasise the planting of churches is a spiritual matter and that it cannot be broken down to a mathematical formula.

A second strength is that he does an excellent job of challenging his readers to understand their cultural contexts. Church planters need to study their peoples much like they would exegete a passage of Scripture. He strongly urges the reader to make certain that all church planting methods are contextually appropriate. Another strength of this work is that Robinson notes that crosscultural church planting teams need to be small in number lest they bring too much of the church planters’ culture to the people whom they are called to serve. Finally, Robinson does a good job encouraging his readers to make certain they guard their spiritual lives. Church planters must remain attached to the Vine in all they do if they are to bear much fruit.

Despite these strengths, there are a few limitations to Robinson's book. First, though the author makes many excellent points, he offers few practical examples supporting his points throughout the work. It would have been helpful to include more illustrative material. Second, although the author emphasises the need to ask the 'What' questions before asking the 'How' questions, such as 'What is the essence of Christianity?', 'What is the church?', 'What is the gospel?', 'What is missions?', 'What is evangelism?', 'What do we mean by church planting?' (p. 13), he fails to provide a solid biblical and theological response to these questions. Finally, at times I found that Robinson focused on the minutia of church planting and was slow to get to the point in each chapter.

Overall, *Planting Mission Shaped Churches Today* will provide another unique perspective in church planting literature. Robinson has a great desire to see churches planted throughout western cultures and in that he is to be greatly commended.

J. D. PAYNE  
Louisville, KY

**ADOPTED INTO GOD'S FAMILY: Exploring a Pauline metaphor**  
**Trevor J. Burke**

Nottingham: Apollos/Downers Grove: IVP, 2006 £12.99pb 233pp  
ISBN: 978-1-84474-146-5 (UK) ISBN: 978-0-8308-2623-0 (US)

Adoption is the most intimate of Paul's metaphors and this welcome study brings the subject back from a long period of neglect. The word itself (*huiothesia*) is found just five times in Scripture—all in Paul—a frequency that belies its importance. In comparing the Christian community to a family and articulating the acquired honour of being transferred into the family of God as a son, Paul's use of this metaphor brings rich nuances to our understanding of salvation in Christ.

The origin and background of Paul's use (ch. 3) is found within the framework of the ancient family, and especially the socio-legal practice of Roman society. The Old Testament theme of sonship is related in important ways but provides no parallels for adoption as such. Alleged cases of adoption in the Old

Testament are discussed in a brief appendix. Adoption is a Trinitarian action, and three successive chapters (4, 5 and 6) show how the three persons of the Godhead are involved: adoption is at the initiative of God who becomes our new *paterfamilias*.

*Huiothesia* or adoption is always used of believers, and never used of Jesus himself, who is the unique Son of God. Yet when God adopts men and women, it is always through Jesus Christ his Son. Both the Spirit and the Son are eschatological gifts, an indissoluble dual witness to the believer. Our final adoption (ch. 8) finds its climax in conformity to God's Son. Adoption brings a transfer from one family situation to another, invariably of greater honour (ch. 7). There is no higher honour than to belong to the family of God the Father; in addition to honour, adoption also brings responsibility to behave in such a way as to bring honour to the new *paterfamilias*. Paul's use of this familial metaphor brings to light many of the implications of the situation brought about by salvation in Christ.

The study is amply referenced and is certainly of the standard we have come to expect from the New Studies in Biblical Theology series. Chapters are clearly laid out, each with a summary. Bibliography and the usual indexes are present. Burke follows the five references to *huiothesia* in their biblical context with great clarity; and the topic itself leads to an edifying study so that the reader can hardly fail to grasp the assurance that flows from this doctrine. There is no greater privilege than to be able to call God, 'Father' by the adoption that is ours by the Spirit through Jesus Christ the Son. Amen!

ED MOLL  
Basingstoke

## ASPECTS OF ANGLICAN IDENTITY

Colin Podmore

London: Church House Publishing, 2005 196pp £14.99pbISBN:0-7151-4074-4

Events within the Anglican Communion in recent years have raised the question of Anglican identity. As divisions become ever more apparent the question of what makes someone Anglican has become pressing. Closer examination often undermines the assumption many make about certain features of church life as being definitively Anglican. This book is a very useful



collection of articles which provides such closer scrutiny. Although they were written for different purposes and at different times over the past decade or so, they provide important background material for anyone considering the questions troubling the Anglican Communion today.

In chapters 2 and 3 for example we see how the early nineteenth century (rather than the sixteenth!) was key in the formation of Anglican identity. Podmore demonstrates the significance of high church influence in this through the 'Hackney Phalanx' and their successors. We meet individuals like W. F. Hook who fostered relationships between the Church of England and the Episcopal churches in America and Scotland, and promoted the interchangeability of ministries between them.

There are several chapters which remind us that some current features of life within the Church of England have had very different forms in the past. In chapter 5 we find a history of the Declaration of Assent, with particular reference to the way the current version was arrived at in 1975. Chapter 7 examines the history and principles of synodical government. It is a salutary account for those who cannot imagine the Church of England surviving without its current synods. In chapter 9 the author gives a brief history of the way in which bishops have been appointed in England over the past 1000 years. It is illuminating to see how the real influences have changed while the outward forms have tended to remain constant.

For this reviewer chapters 5 and 6 were the most informative. The former examines the question of primacy in the Anglican tradition. Although much of the chapter is concerned with the Archbishop of Canterbury's role within the Anglican communion and a useful explanation of that confusing term 'primate', it is the metropolitanical jurisdiction of the two Archbishops of the Church of England that may be particularly worthy of note in current circumstances. It was this metropolitanical jurisdiction that was used to provide 'flying bishops' in 1993 and it is this which may yet provide a way of tackling divisions over the consecration of women bishops and the gay issue within the church of England. Chapter 6, which tackles the thorny issue of territoriality, is well worth reading simply because it shows that the naïve adoption of the so called Nicene principle of 'one bishop in one place' is hard to sustain in the face of Anglican practice and modern social realities (pp. 101-102).

Although expensive, this volume is a valuable contribution to current debates. Evangelicals will by no means agree with all that the author says, but the evidence he presents frequently supports those who insist that Anglicanism is to be defined by means of doctrine, and that this is more important than the organisational features of our denomination's life.

MARK BURKILL  
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## THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

**New Testament Theology Series**

**Klaus Haacker**

Cambridge: CUP, 2003 181pp £13.99pb ISBN: 0-521-43535-8

Many readers of *Churchman* will doubtless wonder if it is worth adding another book on Romans to the commentaries on their shelves: in this case, it is. Klaus Haacker, Professor of New Testament Studies at the Barmen School of Theology has completed Cambridge's New Testament Theology series with a concise and illuminating introduction to Paul's mighty manifesto. Chapter 1 is a helpful account of the historical background; chapter 2 looks at Romans 1:1-7 as the theology of Romans in nutshell; chapter 3 gives an outline of Romans which, as Haacker notes (p. 156), is very similar to Calvin's. Chapter 4 then deals thematically with some of Paul's major concerns, and chapter 5 with his sources. Chapter 6 considers 'The rhetoric of Romans as a model for preaching the Gospel in Rome', and chapter 7 the canonical context. Finally, chapter 8 considers the impact of Romans on some interpreters, and chapter 9 the relevance of Romans for today.

Professor Haacker's book is clear and easy to read: a considerable achievement given that he is not writing in his native language. He takes very seriously the facts that Paul was a missionary, and that Romans is a work of missionary theology. In this respect chapter 6 is especially important, as Haacker considers how Paul has 'contextualised' the gospel in Rome, and how issues such as 'peace' and 'righteousness' resonated with the concerns of a Romans audience. Sometimes too much weight was given to parallels with Latin authors at the expense of the Old Testament, but nevertheless this is a valuable study in how Romans might have been read by its intended audience.

Haacker's concern for missiology is one aspect of the book's greatest strength: it is theology for the church, and not just for the academy. Haacker is deeply concerned with the relevance of Romans for today, and preachers will find his book very thought provoking. It is very refreshing to read a book on Paul that concentrates on some of the great Christian interpreters of Romans through history—Clement, Augustine, Luther, Wesley, and Barth—rather than on the latest PhD thesis. Haacker correctly gives the New Perspective the credit that is due to it, without following it slavishly; on the whole, his exposition is closer to classical Protestant exegesis.

I do have some cautions. First, Professor Haacker does not share Paul's view of biblical inspiration, or believe that all the canonical Pauline letters are by Paul (although he does believe that Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy could have been written on Paul's behalf whilst he was in prison). Second, in expounding the cross he tends to see judgement as 'the destructive energy of sin', its natural consequences, rather than something directly imposed by God, as it is in Romans 1:18f. He explicitly links Paul's 'underlying anthropology' to that of Hinduism and Buddhism. Thus he tends to play down Paul's use of forensic ideas.

He also doubts if the use of *hilasterion* in Romans 3:25 is a reference to the Day of Atonement ritual, preferring parallels with the Maccabean revolt, and Roman generals sacrificing themselves for the Roman people; here I think he underestimates the amount of Old Testament knowledge the Roman readership would have had. (One should compare Andrew Das' theory that many had been proselytes at the synagogue).

Third, he does not think that Romans 9–11 teaches individual predestination. But whilst it is correct to recognise (as Calvin did) that this is not the main subject of these chapters, individual predestination is surely an inescapable implication of them, especially when they are compared to Ephesians 1. Fourth, in considering the contemporary relevance of Romans, Professor Haacker does not, I think, give sufficient importance to the need for personal faith in Christ. This reflects a trend in contemporary theology, (an overreaction to Bultmann?), to concentrate on 'global' issues at the expense of an individual's standing before God. Despite these cautions, this is a valuable introduction for both students and preachers.

STEPHEN WALTON  
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## **GOD'S NEW COMMUNITY: NEW TESTAMENT PATTERNS FOR TODAY'S CHURCH**

**Graham Beynon**

Leicester: IVP, 2005 137pp £6.99pb ISBN: 9781844740789

It is easy to dismiss yet another book about the nature and purpose of the church; there is no end to the supply. But the surfeit of studies may actually reveal how much the contemporary church wants and needs help to understand, be and do God's will for his church. So when a good, clear and constructive book comes along, it is both exceptional and welcome.

Graham Beynon's work is a collection of sermons on the nature and purpose of the church today. He selects nine New Testament passages and, in an expositional style, opens up God's Word for the reader. While he does not explain why he chose these particular passages, his selection makes sense.

Through this work he presents an articulate and coherent explanation of the church's identity and purpose. By church he means primarily, but not exclusively, a local gathering of God's people. He insists that when the Bible speaks of church, it speaks of a particular sort of people—people who believe in Jesus and people who belong to God. The church is a gathering of God's people who intentionally aim to glorify God, testify to the gospel of his Son and seek to edify (build up) each other in the way of discipleship and service.

Haven't we heard this before? Yes. At the same time, Beynon rightly pushes the reader to ask, 'If this is our identity and purpose, what are the implications? How does our "internal life" as a church express itself towards God and towards God's world?' Repeatedly, he raises these questions and is not afraid to answer them both theologically and practically; in fact, his expositions rightly insist that a failure to answer the questions theologically inevitably results in confused practical expression. Consequently, two reasons stand out why Beynon's book deserves commendation.

Here is the first reason. To be sure, Beynon is not saying anything new; but what is helpful is the way he applies his selection of New Testament passages to some of the particular issues and concerns that face many of us. Of special note is his striking way of probing our tendency towards individualism.

Chapters 4–6 contain some enormously instructive and constructive ways of tackling our consumerism and half-hearted engagement with our local gatherings of brothers and sisters in Christ. The book would be worth the cost if only for these chapters. But there is more.

The second reason is this—Beynon is himself a pastor and church leader, committed to a Bible-centred ministry with a clear gospel focus. This makes it all the more arresting when he addresses the issue of teaching in the local church. Precisely because he is dedicated to expository ministry he pushes the issue to the wider borders: he asks what kind of learning takes place in churches? One senses it is this question that stands behind each exposition in the book. He offers more than standard-fare expositions of predictable passages. He handles the texts in ways that probe our assumptions, examine our practices and weigh our values. The result of this aim for learning is evident in Beynon's concern not only for the dissemination of right information but also for right (wholesome or edifying) corporate integration. In simpler words—given the church is a local gathering of God's people, then the church is where God's people learn so to be and do God's will and purpose for his church in the world.

This collection of sermons makes an informative and constructive little book for busy church leaders, especially if one is thinking about, say, a short sermon series on the church. Equally, because there are study questions at the end of each chapter, the book would make an ideal group study of church elders, staff, PCCs and others involved in local church ministry. There are lots of books available on the nature and purpose of the church and it would be easy to dismiss yet another study on the church; but Beynon's makes a welcome exception. We need all the good help available.

GAVIN J. McGRATH  
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## **HOW TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE AS A CHURCH LEADER**

**Nick Cuthbert**

Oxford: Monarch Books, 2006 158pp £7.99pb ISBN 13:978-1-85424-761-2

This book could be read through in a couple of hours, for it is eminently readable. That, however, would limit its usefulness. All the chapters are short

and each ends with some questions, and so the reader would benefit from following the author's suggestion that it might be more helpful to take a chapter a day with time spent meditating on the questions.

Introducing himself, Nick Cuthbert tells how he was led to faith in Jesus Christ by David MacInnes who subsequently invited him and his wife, Lois, to join him in the youth work of Birmingham Cathedral in the 1970s. God's blessing on that work led Nick into the world of university missions and other youth events. Over the last twenty years, they have founded the Riverside church in Birmingham where he is still linked with the Cathedral as a lay canon.

However, a heart problem which flared up when they were celebrating their silver wedding in Venice led to a visit to a Christian cardiologist who was able to identify the problem as being due to stress and burnout. So in the introduction Nick points out helpfully several factors which can lead to this situation—the lack of boundaries, poor pay, discouragement, loneliness, the pressure to be perfect, and working with volunteers.

The chapters following all contain practical advice on subjects such as rejecting busyness and 'hurry sickness', functioning in your strengths, never dwelling on regret, understanding stress, turning away from envy and being grateful, as well as what one would expect on maintaining the devotional life, seeking to be obedient rather than successful and encouraging younger leaders, etc.

However, your reviewer found himself agreeing with Stuart Bell who is quoted in the publisher's blurb as saying that he was captured before the end of the first chapter. This deals with the importance for the Christian leader of receiving significance from God: 'you cannot hope to survive Christian leadership if you do not know deep in your innermost being that your security and significance lie in the personal love of God, the heavenly Father' (p. 28). In an age when there is a temptation for Christian leaders to write of their success stories, Nick Cuthbert is essentially down-to-earth and writes with a refreshing honesty. This book is a must for every church leader.

DAVID WHEATON  
Chesham

**THE GOD-CENTRED LIFE: INSIGHTS FROM JONATHAN EDWARDS FOR TODAY**

**Josh Moody**

Leicester: IVP, 2006 176pp £8.99pb ISBN: 978-1-84474-131-1

What would Jonathan Edwards think if he walked into our local church meeting next Sunday morning? Or if he trailed our pastor around for a week? What would he make of our preaching and our praying and our pastoral priorities? Edwards has been dead for nearly 250 years, but what message would he bring to the church today? These are some of the questions Josh Moody, a young scholar–pastor, seeks to answer in his latest book.

David Jackman’s endorsement is spot on: ‘Here you will find church history at its very best—detailed research, scholarly insight, pithy quotations, mature judgment—but always in the service of the contemporary church and the issues we are currently facing.’ Moody is an able scholar. He has put in the hard graft, the painful years of research, and his Cambridge PhD thesis is now published as *Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment: Knowing the Presence of God* (University Press of America, 2005).

Yet he is also an able pastor and preacher, who knows that historical scholarship is spiritually barren if it has no message for our lives in the present. So here we reap the spiritual lessons of Moody’s academic discipline. He has lived with Edwards for many years, and seeks to apply Edwards’ teaching to our situation. It is a timely message, down to earth, rooted in real life, and strong on practical implications.

The book’s central theme is that Western society in the twenty-first century is experiencing the death throes of the Enlightenment and is now searching for something better. Edwards is a valuable guide, says Moody, because he offers us a response to the Enlightenment which is distinctively Christian. Here is a call to put God back at the centre. Moody writes as he preaches and his chapter headings, like a good sermon outline, give us the main message: revival is biblical; true experience of God is heart experience; we need to analyse new Christian movements by their ‘fruit’; the cause of modernism’s plight is its human-centredness; secondary issues sometimes have primary importance; effective leadership must be biblically intelligent leadership; human leaders fail; family life and effective ministry are reconcilable.

There is much here to encourage and chasten the pastor and preacher in particular—much about building local churches, becoming an effective leader and making difficult pastoral decisions. Moody protests, as Edwards did, against our ‘dumbed-down religion’ and our untaught churches where people ‘float like amoebas in a soup of doctrinal spinelessness’ (pp. 109-110). The church will only be revived, we are reminded, when biblical preaching is revived. Comparison with Edwards ‘reveals the poverty, brevity and superficiality of much that passes for preaching today’ (p. 24). Again Moody warns, ‘much of our preaching today is play-preaching’ (p. 36).

Contemporary pastors seem to spend more time on the phone than in the Bible, and our sermons have become ‘more suggestive, more dialogical, aping the interactive style of modern lecturing sophists, the self-help gurus or the standup comedians’ (p. 45). ‘Put away the projector’, we are urged, ‘and instead take out the Bible’ (p. 47). These are vital spiritual lessons indeed, and there are many more beside. This excellent and accessible introduction is worth its weight in gold and drives us to our knees.

ANDREW ATHERSTONE

Eynsham

## **SOMETHING THERE: THE BIOLOGY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT**

**David Hay**

London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006    288pp    £15.95pb

ISBN: 978-0232526370

I might easily have ignored this book about ‘spirituality’. In this post-modern age, that term covers a spectrum of subjective experiences. Precisely for this reason, this book is enormously important: for Christians cannot understand contemporary currents of thought if they do not attend to what people say about their beliefs. It is essential to understand why ‘spirituality’ is resurgent even as church attendance dwindles. People are not becoming less religious—they are inherently religious—but they do not see Christianity as an authentic religious expression for their spirituality.

The author worked with the late Alister Hardy, a fellow zoologist, who established the Religious Experience Research Unit in Oxford. Hay is now at



the Centre for Spirituality and Health, King's College, Aberdeen. This book has emerged from an extended questionnaire-based research programme that has yielded a wealth of data on peoples' understanding of spirituality and on their attitudes to the Church.

'Spirituality' is defined as the awareness of a transcendent presence, as a numinous awareness, or as a sense of unity with the universe. Emphasis is given to the concept of 'relational consciousness' or 'holistic awareness'—the awareness that each one of us is part of a relational web that includes the material world, other people and God. Spirituality is not the same thing as religion. Rather, spiritual awareness 'is commonly the context out of which religion grows...it is prior to religion and is a built-in, biologically structured dimension of the lives of all members of the human species' (p. 48).

This study provides a refreshing perspective on the biological basis of this spiritual faculty. It challenges naturalistic presuppositions that have been used to question the validity of spiritual or religious awareness. It has been claimed that religious experience arises as the opiate of the oppressed (Marx); that it is a form of mental disease (Freud); or that it is a manifestation of crowd hysteria (Durkheim). Hay's research has indicated that spiritual experience is suppressed by oppression; that it is most evident among people who are mentally well; and that it flourishes in solitude (pp. 44-47).

The materialist Wolpert has speculated that religious 'causal beliefs' originated genetically as a by-product of tool-making. Hay suggests that, in the process of 'consciously investigating their environment, forerunners of the human species discovered an awareness of a transcendent presence that met them in a way that set the experience apart from the everyday' (p. 38). These creatures consciously chose to attend to this spiritual sensitivity. It gave them strength to cope with 'the dangers and difficulties of their physical and emotional environment' (p. 39). According to this idea, the spiritual faculty arose primarily from behavioural selection.

Dawkins says that religion is imposed on children by their parents. Hay provides evidence that spiritual experience is a universal characteristic of children, and that it is suppressed in the cynical world of adults (ch. 6). Indeed post-Enlightenment materialistic individualism has suppressed peoples' natural

spiritual tendencies. This tendency to quash the innate capacity for relational consciousness has reached its peak in the market economy with its heartless individualism and its presumption that people can act only out of self-interest. Avarice, in the garb of 'interests', has become a virtue (ch. 9). Humans as selfinterested consumers of commodities are required to enable the market to function efficiently (p. 239).

Christians must be informed as to why people have rejected the Church as the locus of communal relational spirituality in favour of an individualistic spirituality. The latter expression is a contradiction in terms, because 'spirituality is about relationship' (p. 209). 'Spirituality that buys in to the individualism of the surrounding secular world condemns itself to being selfcontradictory, superstitious, and vulnerable to fanaticism', disconnected from moral obligation (p. 231).

The interviews that form a large part of the book (chs. 3, 10) reveal that 'much of the fury directed towards the churches arises from disappointment' (p.201). People cited the perceived hypocrisy of those who went to church. In church one encountered bigotry, authoritarianism, narrow mindedness. Church people were out of touch, ignorant, capable only of simplistic, standard answers to important questions, too exclusive, white and middle class, socially conservative. Science has explained away religion. Church damaged people.

In chapter 11 which is the anticipated climax of the book, Hay offers suggestions as to how the Church may respond to peoples' spiritual needs. He urges the recovery of contemplative prayer, of the holistic mindset. Churches should be aware of the power of metaphor and reject those metaphors that are spirituality damaging. Genuine dialogue is mandated, as is a movement to build on the vast resource of relational consciousness in the population. These are all fair enough. But they miss the point. After establishing such a powerful base, the book fails at this point. There can be only one answer to the paradox that people are spiritually hungry even as church attendance is dwindling. Surely the spiritual faculty finds its satisfaction only in the worship of the God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ; and Who deals with us now by the Holy Spirit. It must be that the Church has failed to represent this God, and to fulfil its calling to be the loving, selfless, serving, sacrificial instrument of the *missio Dei*. The Church

has instead adopted the selfaggrandising, materialistic values of western civilisation.

Particularly disappointing is Hay's response to peoples' most frequently cited problem: suffering. Hay fails to mention the core of the gospel—the crucifixion of the Eternal Son for the sin of the world—as the one response to this mystery. I recommend this book. It is well researched, well written, well referenced, and well indexed. It is a rich resource of information on the post-modern mind and on popular attitudes to the church. It provides a credible alternative to the propaganda that spirituality is for the feeble-minded. It analyses the dehumanising effects of Enlightenment thought. It provides a vital message on where the church has failed in her role. But Christians will themselves have to apply its lessons to the disastrous failure of the Church to present the redeeming triune God to the world.

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## **CONSECRATED WOMEN? WOMEN BISHOPS: THE FORWARD IN FAITH RESPONSE**

**Jonathan Baker (ed.)**

Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2004 291pp £14.99 ISBN: 9781853115097

The first thing that ought to be said about the Forward in Faith document entitled “Women Bishops: The Way forward for the Church” is that it is a comprehensive and thoughtful piece of work with which Evangelicals ought to be in broad sympathy. In particular, what it says at 4.15 is something that we should be able to endorse as it stands: An alternative oversight, where those opposed would be under another jurisdiction, entirely separate from that of the diocesan bishop, would seem to be the only satisfactory way of providing for those opposed.

The document quite rightly says that once women are consecrated to the episcopate, it would be both unjust to them and impractical to put a glass ceiling on how high they might rise in the church, and it envisages the possibility that a woman might one day be consecrated as archbishop of Canterbury. This approach is a realistic one, and if the principle is accepted at the beginning,

should put an end to what would otherwise be an unremitting campaign for 'women's rights' which would not stop until that object was achieved.

At the same time, it is equally true that there is a substantial minority which will not accept women as bishops, and the only way to accommodate them fairly is to provide an autonomous jurisdiction which would not be subject to, or threatened by, the wider church. The logical implication of this is that such a jurisdiction must be independent of the current diocesan structure(s) so that both those who favour and those who oppose women bishops will be able to live in an environment in which their views are fully respected.

The document also points out that whatever arrangement is finally adopted ought to apply to the whole church and not be variable at the pleasure of a local diocesan bishop, as happens with the current Act of Synod. The nature of the opposition is such that it is impossible to imagine it being confined to a particular geographical area or areas, so the planned jurisdictions could not be strictly territorial in the sense that the current dioceses are. There would have to be a network of geographically separated parishes linked in a new formation which would contain a number of episcopal jurisdictions, or non-territorial dioceses. This too is logical and should be supported by Evangelicals.

The real questions arise when it comes to deciding how the proposed jurisdiction(s) would relate to the wider Church of England. The Forward in Faith report wants them to remain within the Church, but in practice its proposals create a separate body. This can be seen in the remarks made about the Church in Wales. In 5.3 the report denies that what it proposes is comparable to the Welsh Church, but in 5.27 it takes a different line and uses Wales as a model for what it is suggesting! Non-participation in General Synod and the right of the presiding bishop (or archbishop) to attend the Primate's meeting also point in the direction of a separate church.

Here Evangelicals ought to propose a different model. We are against women bishops because Scripture forbids a woman to exercise a headship role, and that is an important part of a bishop's function. However, we cannot refuse to recognize a woman bishop's actions, done in the name of the Church as a whole (e.g. ordinations, institutions, etc.) because to do that would be to call

the whole order of the Church into question. We must therefore dissent from what is said in 3.19-21, while at the same time insisting that a difference of approach on this matter does not diminish our opposition to the principle of women bishops, which is based on other premisses. We must regard women bishops as irregular, but in the same way as we regard child bishops (in the Middle Ages) and heretical ones as irregular.

The theological principle here is found in Article 26, which tells us that the unworthiness of the minister does not hinder the efficacy of the sacrament. We do not regard ordination (or many other episcopal functions) as sacraments, of course, but the principle of unworthy ministers applies by extension. The aim in such cases must be to reform the ministry, not deny the validity of the actions undertaken by such ministers in the name of the wider Church.

Similarly, Evangelicals should not accept that the proposed jurisdictions should be so far removed from the Church of England as not to have representation in General Synod. There would certainly have to be safeguards, and no legislation affecting the status of the jurisdictions should be carried without the approval of those directly concerned, but this can be assured without leaving General Synod altogether. There are many other matters on which a voice from the traditional constituency will need to be heard in Synod, and to leave it altogether would seem to be most unwise.

This is why the objections raised to peculiar jurisdictions are not as persuasive as the report makes out. The authors clearly see peculiars as close to what they want, but reject them for the following reasons.

First, they are obsolete. Secondly, there is a risk of a female archbishop whose jurisdiction over the peculiars would vitiate their *raison d'être* and third, they would probably involve the Crown in ways which neither the Church nor the Crown would wish.

To the first of these objections, it need only be said that the abolition of most of the ancient peculiars was carried out because the reason for having them had disappeared. At the present time, a new situation has arisen and there should be no objection to resurrecting a traditional solution when the reasons for having it are valid. The problem of a female archbishop can be solved by a

mechanism which says that in such an event, the archbishop would renounce jurisdiction over the peculiars and give it to a commissary or coadjutor.

Such a solution has ample precedent in church history and would not cause any major difficulty. The identity of the commissary could be established by making him the most senior male bishop in the province and the problem should be resolved fairly easily. As for Crown involvement, this would not be necessary if these safeguards were put in place, though it should be said that the Crown will always be involved to some extent in the affairs of the Church of England as long as it remains established and, in modern times, that involvement has usually been favourable to minority interests, something which ought to commend it to traditionalists.

In sum, Evangelicals ought to be broadly sympathetic to the proposals put forward in this document, but with certain reservations in areas where it appears to go too far in distancing the special jurisdictions which it favours from the wider church. It should also be remembered that the reasons why we object to women bishops are different, but more valid because they are scriptural.

We should not be afraid to say that one of the main reasons why women's ministry has caused such turmoil in the past twenty years is that the pattern of holy orders has remained unchanged and is not designed to meet the needs of the modern church, which include an active and valid form of women's ministry. The episcopate, but also the presbyterate and the diaconate, need to be thoroughly revamped and new forms of ministry should be introduced to allow for changed circumstances without having to distort the principles laid down in Scripture for the all-male headship form of ministry which the episcopate (and in a somewhat different way, the presbyterate) represent.

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## THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO REFORMATION THEOLOGY

David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (eds.)

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 289pp £16.99pb

ISBN: 0-521-77662-7

For decades it has been unfashionable amongst professional historians to study the great theologians and theologies of the Reformation. Secular scholars have loved to look instead to social, cultural and political developments in the sixteenth century to explain that momentous movement, while leaving doctrine out of the picture. The vogue has been to focus upon the forgotten lives of the illiterate 'simple folk', rather than the teaching of the ecclesiastical elite. Likewise the importance of Reformation theology has been minimized within the Christian church in our ecumenically-minded age, when talk of confessional differences is taboo.

It is a delight therefore to read this introduction, not to the Reformation in general but to Reformation theology in particular. Like other volumes in the excellent Cambridge Companion series, it is written by a team of first-rate scholars in short pithy chapters which give a delicious taste of the subject. All the usual characters are here—the Lollards and Hussites, Erasmus, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Bucer, Calvin, Cranmer. The focus is not upon their careers, but upon the heart of their theological teaching. There are also broader discussions of Lutheranism, Calvinism, the English and Scottish Reformations, the Anabaptists, and Roman Catholicism before and after the Council of Trent. The latest bibliography will aid those with whetted appetites who want to feast further.

These authors are fair, even sympathetic, in their attitude to the Protestant Reformers. Werner Packull, for example, is unashamedly warm-hearted in his assessment of the radical Anabaptists. Likewise Peter Newman Brooks lays his cards on the table when describing Archbishop Cranmer: '...somewhat akin to Beethoven's masterly "Eroica" symphony, there is a heroic quality about the life and work of the diligent scholar Henry VIII chose to be archbishop of Canterbury. Modern scholarship may spurn such a judgment, no doubt deeming it "old hat", simpliste, even partisan and divisive. Nevertheless, there remains an extraordinary dimension to the martyred Tudor primate' (p. 150).

Such sentiments are heartening to read in a respectable academic publication. It is a refreshing and nuanced study, revealing the plurality of sixteenth century religion. One dominant impression left by this survey is the tremendous theological and doctrinal variety of the period. However, the drawback of a chronological instead of thematic approach is the lack of direct comparison between the Reformers' teachings. We are left still wanting to know, What did they have in common? What were they corporately aiming to achieve? Was there one central message to the Reformation? Perhaps this introduction would more accurately be titled *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theologies*.

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## PASTORAL MINISTRY ACCORDING TO PAUL

**James W. Thompson**

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006 174pp \$13.50pb

ISBN: 0-8010-3109-5

Subtitled his book "A Biblical Vision" the author gives a competent and stimulating survey of the contents of the Pauline letters: however, he limits these to the generally accepted ones, and so we lack any treatment of Ephesians, Colossians or the Pastoral epistles. This would have introduced an important further dimension to his thesis.

The author writes as one who has spent years in educating future ministers and explains that the book arose from a faculty decision to write a vision statement to serve as a foundation for their curriculum and to describe the ministry for which they were training their students. He begins by suggesting that the Protestant focus on the doctrine of justification by faith has led to an understanding of the minister as the evangelist who offers God's grace to individuals and invites them to respond in faith. The same doctrine, he avers, has been the basis for viewing ministry as the offer of grace to individuals who suffer from continuing conflicts in their attempt to live the Christian life: hence the role of the minister is to communicate God's grace.

By contrast, Thompson's understanding of the role of the minister is to participate in the formation of the community into the image of Christ. To this



end his key words are ‘building’ and ‘transformation’, and he sees these as stages towards the eschatological goal. ‘Ministry’, he says (p. 150), ‘is participation in God’s work of transforming the community of faith until it is “blameless” at the coming of Christ’.

With this understanding of Paul’s pastoral theology in mind, Thompson claims that it was therefore primarily related to ecclesial concerns (p. 36), and he sees Paul’s letters as written to the whole community he addresses. Undoubtedly Paul’s concern in all his letters is to see the Christian community as the body of Christ being built up and transformed into the likeness of Christ, but such growth to maturity has to begin with the individual making a response initially to the gospel and then to its implications. The idea of Christ being formed in us (Gal. 4:19) is central to Thompson’s argument, but here again Paul’s desire will only be achieved as people seek the path of discipleship individually. Rather than superseding traditional understandings of Paul’s pastoral theology, the author’s insights need to stand alongside them.

Having said that, the book provides much food for thought both for pastors and especially those involved in theological education. Its emphasis on the implications of the gospel for the community are a valuable corrective in an age which has an excessive focus on the individual and their needs. His analysis of the primary task of the Corinthian letters being ‘to ensure that a community composed of individuals from a variety of backgrounds overcomes the barriers of ethnicity and social class to become a demonstration of the unifying power of the cross’ (p. 148) gives a parallel to those working in the multi-cultural societies of today. Evangelical ministers who sit light to liturgical forms can be challenged by his reminder that ‘the worship service is not intended to appeal to individual consumer tastes but to build a lasting community’ (pp. 160-1).

Perhaps the biggest challenge of this book comes to theological educators. When many of those training on courses and in colleges are concentrating on completing portfolios or producing course-work, being introduced to counselling and people-management, it is salutary to be reminded that ‘the dimension of spiritual formation has been a missing feature in the educating of leaders. Because seminary education is rooted in the academic tradition, it focuses on the knowledge and skills that are necessary for managing congregational life. If we consider pastoral care as the formation of

communities, the challenge for seminary education is to reconsider how to educate models of Christian transformation' (p. 161).

For Thompson, a key verse is 1 Corinthians 11:1 where Paul encourages the Corinthians to follow his example as he is following the example of Christ. This will involve experiencing for ourselves as for them sharing both in Jesus's experience of the cross and the resurrection on the lines of Philippians 3:10. This book is also a timely reminder to pastors of the eschatological goal which dominated Paul's thinking.

How many of us who are called to minister today can look at our congregation(s) and say with Paul, 'What is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ when He comes? Is it not you? Indeed you are our glory and joy' (1 Thess. 2:19).

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## **DARWIN'S NEMESIS: PHILLIP JOHNSON AND THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN MOVEMENT**

**William A Dembski (ed.)**

Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2006 357pp £14.99 ISBN: 978-0830828364

This book is a festschrift in honour of the founder of 'intelligent design theory' (IDT). Its contributors include eighteen leading figures in the movement. IDT may be defined as a 'teleological position that asserts recognition and empirical detectability of real design in the abiotic and/or biotic universe' (p. 274).

Philip Johnson is revealed as a much-venerated man of lucent character. He is also a master strategist: a man who is immensely focused and yet whose vision encompasses the big picture. He is a man who has not sought the preeminence, but has prepared the ground for younger collaborators to develop independently alongside him. One wishes that all church leaders could serve as selflessly.

This is a focused movement. But to my mind it is a confused movement. Dembski states that IDT represents no religious agenda (p. 14). He has seen IDT embraced by 'Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, agnostics and even

atheists. The idea that intelligent design is purely an “American thing” or an “evangelical Christian thing” can therefore no longer be maintained’ (p. 20). One must then wonder why IDT ‘provides the best mainstay for a Christian world-view’ (p. 24). I would have regarded the revelation of God in the history of Israel and (especially) in the work of Christ as the mainstay of a Christian world-view: ‘God has already placed Jesus Christ as the one and only foundation and no other foundation can be laid’ (1 Cor. 3:11).

Bad science must be exposed by good science. False ideology must be judged by good ideology. But in this book the false ideology of evolutionary naturalism (pp. 11, 13-16) is addressed by a critique of evolutionary science (p. 14), also called ‘neo-Darwinism’ (‘all organisms share a common ancestor’; adaptive complexity is the result of natural selection and random genetic mutations; p. 49).

‘Evolutionary naturalism’ is the metaphysical belief that there is no reality beyond the material world. This religious position is clearly opposed to biblical faith. Evolutionary science or neo-Darwinism (as defined above) seeks to describe the processes of the material world by which the diversity of life has arisen. It is folly to seek to discredit a process when the real enemy is the metaphysical denial of personal divine agency that gives being to the process. There is lots of hype in this book. I was led to expect new ideas. But this book lists the same litany of tired old chestnuts that ‘Creationists’ have raised for decades. We read yet again of Haeckel’s fabricated data, of gaps in the fossil record, of the overwhelming predominance of harmful mutations, and of the lack of evidence for speciation. ‘Macroevolution’ is repeatedly denied (indeed it is an ‘illusion’, p. 63).

There is little reference to the explosive knowledge of genetics with its proof that humans are directly descended from primate and mammalian ancestors. There is no awareness that duplications of genetic material (with subsequent sequence diversification) have repeatedly generated families of new genes.

Contributors explicitly and tragically accept the metaphysical pronouncements of militant atheists. Dawkins’ claim that knowledge of the mechanism of evolution leads to atheism (p. 69) is quoted with approval. Dennett’s assertion that evolution by natural selection combines meaning and purpose with

mechanism and physical law (p. 99) is accepted without criticism. To the Christian, natural law is not an alternative to the action of God, but a scientific expression of the way by which he faithfully upholds creation.

There are two sorts of natural theology. One seeks to address the natural world and, without reference to revelation, derive inferences about the nature of God. From Paley on, this has led at best to an aridly intellectual concept of deity. At worst, it has come to supplant faith. The second approach studies the natural world within the context of faith in the particular God who has revealed Himself in history, particularly the history of Israel and of Jesus Christ. Ironically the most explicit reference to God's redeeming work on the cross is made (negatively) by an unbelieving contributor, Ruse (p. 148). IDT does not add to theology. IDT displaces theology. I cannot recommend this book.

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## **WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY TEACHES: A CHALLENGE TO FUNDAMENTALISTS**

**Keith Ward**

London: SPCK, 2004 £9.99pb ISBN: 0-281-05680-3

Keith Ward, former Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, does not like conservative evangelicals. SPCK are promoting this book as follows: 'Ward shows us how to let the Bible speak and be heard, free from the "spin" that is often applied. [As he]...underlines the importance of allowing the Bible to be its own interpreter, he encourages us to read its life-changing ancient texts with fresh insight and vision.' Yet what this book is really about is how mistaken the Professor thinks evangelicals have been on central issues of the faith. He attacks distinctively evangelical views on the infallibility of the Bible, the second coming, salvation, the cross, the resurrection, eschatology, and various other things, labelling them as 'fundamentalist' and just plain wrong. In a rather patronising tone which speaks volumes he tells his 'Bible-believing friends' that they are not really biblical at all. He was converted, he says, 'to an evangelical form of Christian belief', but '[f]or forty years...my professional work has been the study of religion, theology and the Bible. I ended my professional career as the Regius Professor of Divinity (the senior Chair in

theology) at Oxford University. That does not make me an expert on everything in the Bible. But it does mean that I have had access to the best biblical scholars in the world, and from them I have gained a better idea of what the Bible actually does say' (pp. 2-3).

Just where to start with such bold assertions is difficult. It is safe to say, however, that no-one except the most prejudiced anti-evangelical who reads this book will be convinced that Mr. Ward has found, at last, the holy grail of presuppositionless exegesis. Indeed, the presupposition that evangelicals have got it wrong is so blatant, that the Bible must be so expounded as to make that principle clear at every stage. For all his supposed erudition and access to 'the best biblical scholars in the world', the Professor seems unaware of major works of conservative evangelical scholarship which have satisfyingly answered many, if not all, of his allegedly fatal accusations.

A cursory glance at Carson & Woodbridge's *Scripture and Truth* (1983) or *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (1986) shows his initial assumptions about evangelical views of inspiration to be utterly flawed. He attacks the substitutionary 'theory' of the atonement as a late invention of Calvin (p. 107); Ward was obviously preoccupied when Garry Williams was at Oxford writing that chapter of his D.Phil. which shows how ancient this doctrine of the atonement is, or too convinced of his own inside track to notice all the patristic references in *The Institutes*. Even a cursory glance at a very basic evangelical textbook like *How to read the Bible for all its Worth* by Fee and Stuart should have made him think twice about making such sweeping judgements concerning the state of evangelical understanding of the Bible.

Mr. Ward demonstrates no knowledge of any actual written work of 'fundamentalists', preferring instead to build straw men out of things these 'friends' of his have supposedly said. Thus the 'challenge' in the subtitle turns out to be really no challenge at all, which was a great disappointment. I was hoping, when I accepted this book for review, to read a thought provoking and stimulating case against conservative evangelical doctrine and practice which would interact with real evangelicals and the things they say and do.

Sadly, I found nothing but a condescending rant which only frustrated and annoyed me with its constant caricaturing tendencies and false assertions.

‘When evangelicals rediscover their own heritage, and read the Bible carefully, fundamentalism will fade away,’ says Ward (p. 182), by which he means belief in a divinely revealed Bible, a real judgement day, a non-universal salvation, a substitutionary atonement, and a physical resurrection will all disappear. It is not worth interacting with his arguments in detail in a short review, but it is hardly necessary either. Any reasonably well-taught evangelical perhaps with just a couple of IVP dictionaries to hand would be perfectly capable of seeing off such a weak and ineffectual challenge from a tired, rationalistic, moribund and limp liberalism.

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## INTRODUCING RADICAL ORTHODOXY: MAPPING A POSTSECULAR THEOLOGY

**James K. A. Smith**

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic/Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004 291pp

£9.99pb ISBN: 1-84227-350-7

Radical Orthodoxy (RO) is perhaps the most significant and interesting academic theological development of the past twenty years. Originating in Cambridge, with the work of John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, it has proved highly influential, and now encompasses theologians in North America and continental Europe. The movement seeks to read the contemporary world through the lens of the Christian tradition. It draws on historical Christian resources, particularly Augustine and more recently Aquinas, and on the thought of Plato, and engages with the work of continental philosophers such as Derrida, Foucault, and Levinas. It offers a critique of secular thought, and seeks to provide a theological account of all reality, including subjects such as economics, literature, music, politics, and sociology.

Whilst RO has its origins in Anglo-Catholicism, it seeks to be an ecumenical movement, incorporating insights from all Christians who are committed to a basic creedal orthodoxy. For those attracted to the Reformed world-and-lifeview thinking of Abraham Kuyper, and the presuppositionalism of Cornelius Van Til, RO thus provides an attractive set of conversation partners.

Writing from within that Dutch Reformed tradition, but also as a committed participant in the RO ‘conversation’, James Smith has provided an accurate, concise introduction to the central themes of RO. This volume has received plaudits from Milbank and Pickstock themselves, and also from Reformed theologians such as Kevin Vanhoozer and Michael Horton. Smith not only offers a summary and introduction to RO, he also seeks to advance discussion by engaging critically with key proponents on various points. The book is in two main parts. Part One (“Orientation”) situates Radical Orthodoxy as a response to secularism and to Christian theologies that leave room for the secular, and provides an orientation to the key themes of RO, explaining their account of the history of philosophy, particularly their predilection for Plato and criticism of Duns Scotus. Part Two (“Navigation”) then explores in more detail RO’s political analyses, epistemology, and ontology.

Smith’s achievement is particularly impressive given that the writings of RO’s major proponents, particularly Milbank, are at times remarkable for their density and difficulty. Smith has succeeded in communicating their thought in a way understandable to anyone with a basic theological education. Not that the book is always an easy read; it engages a wide range of thinkers, including various RO writers, plus Augustine, Aquinas, Leibniz, Herman Dooyeweerd, and others. This at times makes for heavy going, particularly when a number of strands of thought are summarised in just a few pages.

Smith, an associate professor of philosophy at Calvin College, is clearly at home interacting with the philosophical interests of RO, and is prepared to criticise, for example, Pickstock’s reading of Plato. He is also able to engage critically with the movement’s controversial (re)readings of Scotus and Aquinas. His own constructive contributions to the discussion are often helpful, although his criticism of RO’s ontology of creation left me wondering whether, in contrast to RO, Smith sounded closer to deism than to a traditional Reformed account of providence.

There are also omissions in the book, which is inevitable in an introductory volume. Nevertheless, it would have been useful to have included a discussion of the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura*. Although there is much common ground that Reformed Christians share with RO theologians, the relative lack of interaction with Scripture, and the absence of an explicit concern to ground

all theologising in God's word written is something that a Reformed theologian should probably have addressed in an introductory text. Another lacuna in the discussion is any substantial mention of the cross of Christ. Granted the importance of dogmatic loci such as Trinity, creation, incarnation, ecclesiology, and eucharist, any truly Christian theology and social theory should seek to centre itself on Christ crucified. The absence of any discussion of the difference the cross makes to the integrity of creation, or to Christian approaches to economics, or politics, is significant.

Nevertheless, for those interested in developing an authentic Christian view of reality, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy* is a stimulating and helpful book, and a useful orientation to the wider conversation that is Radical Orthodoxy.

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