

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Book Reviews

NOW CHOOSE LIFE: THEOLOGY AND ETHICS IN DEUTERONOMY (New Studies in Biblical Theology No 6)

J Gary Millar

Leicester: Apollos 1998 216pp £12.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-515-2

As with the other titles in this excellent series, this is a scholarly and thorough study of its subject. Millar is Associate Minister at Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church in Bangor, County Down, and has a doctorate in Old Testament Studies. Despite well-documented interaction with the interpretations of other scholars and careful study of the Hebrew text, Millar never gets bogged down in detail. Throughout the book he always has his eye on how Deuteronomy holds together and functions as a literary and theological whole. From the very first page it is an encouragement to preach Deuteronomy, providing both the motivation and the interpretive tools to do so.

The introduction orientates the reader both historically and methodologically. Deuteronomy is made a test-case: if a synthesis of the ethics of one book cannot be produced, there can be little hope of producing one for the whole of the Old Testament. Although current fashions favour the presupposition of overwhelming diversity in the Old Testament generally and in Deuteronomy in particular, Millar assumes that a holistic reading of the book is possible. Historical questions are not, however, ignored and diversity is not naively smoothed over. Nevertheless he does criticize what he sees as an unhealthy preoccupation with form, source and redaction criticism at the expense of the actual content of the book in its literary and theological coherence.

Throughout the book he tests the notion that Deuteronomy is fundamentally a book concerned with *decision*, splitting it into three parts: 'Israel at the place of decision' (chs 1-11), 'The decision spelled out' (12-26) and 'The outcome of the decision' (27-34). The ethics of Deuteronomy are then examined under five headings: covenant, journey, law, the nations and human nature. Millar effectively shows how each theme shapes and sharpens Deuteronomy's call to decision. There are some interesting structural insights along the way, which help us to see the book as a coherent whole. Chapters 27-34 for example, have often been seen as a jumble of unconnected fragments with little or no connection to the rest of the book. Millar, however, demonstrates that they play an important theological role, particularly when the motif of Israel's journey is considered.

The central section of Deuteronomy (chs 12-26) is examined in detail to see if there is any validity to the idea that it is structured around the Decalogue in chapter 5. Millar concludes that such ordering can be a little

contrived, and is not sufficiently flexible to accommodate all the details, but in the process of doing so he is emphatic that the theological agenda of the book is paramount even here. The laws serve the message of the book as a whole. Further on, he deals with the keenly felt problem of how a book like Deuteronomy can be considered ethical in today's climate given its stance towards the Canaanites, which he expounds in line with the message of the rest of the book.

All Hebrew words are transliterated, which may annoy those with Hebrew and be of little real benefit to those without. It is assumed (and it is essential!) that readers have the text of Deuteronomy open beside them throughout. Footnotes are never too long (unlike those in Ortlund's volume in the same series) and often simply give a list of pertinent references in Deuteronomy. Millar specifically avoids the question of applying Deuteronomy to today's world. This is understandable given the limited aims of the series. Now that he has so effectively shown us the big picture and opened up the possibilities, I hope he will give us more on that subject in the future.

LEE GATISS

CHAMELEON OR TRIBE: Recovering authentic Christian community
Richard Keyes

Leicester: IVP 1999 149pp £7.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-595-0

In a world crying out for answers, why is the voice of evangelical Christians not being heard? Richard Keyes points to a polarization that has driven Christians into either accommodation with the world or quarantine from it: either way, marginalization prevents 'salt and light' engagement with the world. Accommodation marks the loss of a distinctive Christian identity, and is itself a legacy of modernism. By contrast, a community in quarantine fulfils the post-modern description of a society in which groups are so isolated that differences overshadow commonality (p 24). Both groups feed off each other as Christians appalled at the shortcomings of one pole or the other are driven deeper into the arms of the opposite extreme: for instance, the many refugees from a fundamentalist (in a negative sense) background who have become some of the most radical accommodating liberals. A response to these observations is a plea for the recovery of apologetics and of community (understood on page 110 as 'simply short-hand for God's commands about how we relate to each another').

The question to ask of this book is: 'who would disagree that Christians can speak better to our generation if we are more obedient to Christ?' Christians who have, unwittingly, fled to the extremes of accommodation or quarantine will hardly recognize that the brief and stark descriptions of the Chameleon and the Tribe apply precisely to *them*, and not to *others*. By the same token, Christians who earnestly seek the 'sane middle ground'

will agree with the desire for better community and apologetics, but find little by way of practical steps towards getting there. This little book is strong on readable and brief presentation of the basic ideas essential to applying Christian faith to the contemporary world, but weak on application. It should be useful either as a summary of themes, or as a discussion starter for Christians who covenant not to let one another off the hook: then the vital work of persuasion and change can begin.

ED MOLL

PREACHING THE CRUSADES: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century

Christoph T Maier

Cambridge: CUP 1998 202pp £13.95 pb ISBN 0-521-638739

This book is a development of the author's doctoral thesis, not, let it be said, about the rhetoric but the campaign for the Crusades. It appears in the Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, a series long established and of the highest scholarly reputation. Dr Maier traces the complicated history of papal involvement throughout Europe in the thirteenth century, placing particular emphasis on the role of the first pope in that period, Gregory IX. He describes the work of the Dominicans and Franciscans, showing how Gregory deployed them in one of those not infrequent clashes between the Papacy and the Emperor at that time, their role a mixture of propagandist, tax-gatherer and recruiting sergeant.

The first half of the book is largely historical, the second an account, so far as surviving documentation allows, of the organization of the preaching of the Crusades, embracing the authority of the friars, the strategy and location of their sermons, the use of model sermons and preaching tracts, the modes of persuasion and especially the inducement of indulgences. Indeed, the chapter on 'Friars, crusade sermons and preaching aids', though it cannot cite what was actually said, is a fascinating reconstruction of the likely homiletic approach at the time, depending tellingly on Humbert of Romans' *De praedicatione Sanctae crucis* (c1266), what appears to have been a kind of friars' pocket-book of ready-made sermons. The final chapter deals with the financing of the Crusades, an object achieved in significant degree by the commutation of their crusade vows by those either unfit to fulfil them or by those who thought better of what they had perhaps too rashly promised.

Working in a comparatively under-cultivated area of medieval church history Dr Maier has succeeded in showing how pivotal was the work of the friars in the complex manoeuvrings of the Papacy's ecclesiastical and political activities in the period he has considered.

ARTHUR POLLARD

Churchman

NO ONE SEEKS FOR GOD

Richard H Bell

Mohr Siebeck 1988

No price

hb

ISBN 3-16-146864-3

This is a most important book on a very brief section of the New Testament (Rom 1:18 – 3:20) written by Richard Bell, Senior Lecturer in Theology at Nottingham, after studies in Tübingen. It requires Greek and some German.

Perhaps his own introduction will show why it is important: 'it is argued that Rom 2:6, 12-13 and 14-16 seem to point to a possible way of salvation by works'. 'Many Christians, including Protestants, have questioned the idea of salvation "*sola fide, sola gratia*".' 'If the bad news of Romans 1:18 – 3:20 is not understood, there is little chance that the good news of Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-26 will be understood.' Again he asserts that 'Pauline studies, like many other areas, seem to be under the tyranny of novelty'. 'The ultimate aim of my book is unashamedly to know God.'

There are many good things in this book. To me one of the most important is the discussion of the exact nature of the wrath of God in chapter 2 where Bell's conclusion is that that wrath is 'personal but not emotional'. This is very important since so many have gone along with the argument of Dodd and Hanson that wrath is simply 'a process which sinners bring upon themselves' (Hanson *Wrath of the Lamb*). This whole discussion is important because so many clergy have been trained by liberals and have imbibed an idea of God which effectively discounts his wrath.

Chapter 3 is a fascinating discussion of natural theology. Bell defines this as 'knowledge of God gained from the creation independent of God's special revelation to Israel and independent of the gospel (but not necessarily independent of Christ)'. What I found most illuminating was his remark on man's loss of the knowledge of God: 'the knowledge which was lost was both knowledge of God himself and knowledge of his attributes'. Here is a clue surely as to why man today acts as if he had never known God in spite of the argument of this passage of Romans. Paul's view is not that every person has their own fall but that they find themselves already fallen and therefore lacking the knowledge of God which fits precisely with the argument of Gal 4:8-9. Paul 'denied the actuality of a natural theology'. Indeed 'according to Paul, idolatry is the inevitable result of natural theology'. Another important insight is that: 'I believe that [the] view [that Christians and Muslims worship the same God] cannot be sustained on the basis of Paul's theology'.

Chapter 4 is an exposition of Romans 2:1-16 and Bell's conclusion is summed up thus: 'The conclusion that there is a way of salvation other

than through faith in Christ can only be held if the context of our verses is ignored.' Bell's contention is that 'no one can be saved by works of law'. There is no judgment unto salvation upon the basis of obedience to the law outside of Christ. There is no other way except through Christ and his free grace offered: 'If works are required for justification, faith is insufficient, and by implication God's grace is also insufficient.'

This reviewer would not normally tackle such a specialist and academic book but it has proved one of the most exciting volumes ever read. The implications of his work are numerous: first of all, as to whether anyone at all can be saved outside of faith by obedience to the law; secondly whether the saved Christian still needs to offer complete obedience if he is to be accepted at the last day; and thirdly, as to whether the religions are other ways to God. Bell has not set out to answer these questions but his careful research has illuminated these questions which are so vital for theology in these days.

JOHN PEARCE

THE CHURCHES IN ENGLAND FROM ELIZABETH I TO ELIZABETH II Vol III – 1833-1998

Kenneth Hylson-Smith

London: SCM 1998 xiii+383pp £19.95 hb ISBN 0-334-02727-6

With this final volume Dr Hylson-Smith completes a notable achievement in tracing English ecclesiastical history from the Reformation to the present day. He divides this section of his survey into three parts, the first from 1833 to 1901, the second 1901 to 1945 and the last up to 1998. Secular events are not always the most useful for defining the parameters of the religious world, and whilst with the perspective we have got, (and events of the recent past are not always easy to place) the end of the Second World War looks serviceable, there is much to be said for dating the close of Hylson-Smith's first period at the beginning, or perhaps even better, the end of the First World War rather than from the death of Queen Victoria. Certainly the period 1918-45 reads now much more as the expiry of an old world than as the prelude to a new. In this regard Hylson-Smith is right to introduce his middle period under the title 'General Decline of All the Churches'. Incidentally, he subscribes to the only fairly recently fashionable theory that decline had set in during the late Victorian years, a parallel to the view of secular history that in those final decades of the nineteenth century British economic dominance had passed its peak. Certainly there were despondent voices, but such there are in every age and those most fully embroiled in the events are not always best placed to focus a judgment.

Hylson-Smith's own judgments are generally much more balanced and

he has a word of correction for those who have displayed 'undue pessimism' about the state of religion at the time of the 1851 census, remarking that 'Parish ministry was in general in quite a healthy state throughout the whole of the Victorian era, and in many places was flourishing' (p 67). That note of correction, incidentally, reminds us of one of Hylson-Smith's strengths: his reading is extensive and wider, be it said, than the useful 'Further Reading' lists which he adds to the end of each chapter. His quotation from these sources is both judicious and economical.

The neat arrangement of his work divides each period into three with a general survey, a second chapter on the Church of England and a final one devoted to the denominations. The whole work is rounded off by Part Four on Global Missions over the full range of the author's concern. In the opening Victorian section the Overview gives extensive space to the science versus Christianity and the Higher Criticism issues; the Church of England chapter looks at diocesan and parochial reforms, mainly through the work of key bishops (with a sympathetic sketch of Ryle, who is not often so treated) and priests, and follows this with successive consideration of the Oxford Movement, the Evangelicals and the Liberals, whilst the inevitably more superficial final chapter attempts to cover church life beyond the Anglican confines.

Hylson-Smith does regard the inter-War period as transitional from the 'residual Victorianism' of the pre-1914 world to 'the vastly contrasting post-1945 world' with its scientific and technological advances and 'equally significant shifts in values and attitudes' (p 156). Transition is inevitably a time of uncertainty, and this comes out well in Hylson-Smith's survey. The inter-War era lacked firm direction. A generation had been decimated and with it had also gone much Christian belief. Those left behind were paralysed out of any strong convictions, and with the rise of Fascism they waited helplessly for the worst. In such a world the church seemed often either irrelevant or simply futile. It turned in on itself and engaged in domestic controversy, of which Prayer-Book revision was only the most spectacular example. The other denominations fared no better.

It would be dishonest to pretend that decline has not continued in the modern period, but I think it is fair to say that, in general, commitment among believers is probably stronger since the 1939-45 War than it was before. In this part of his work Hylson-Smith summarizes some important events such as the *Honest to God* debate, but he misses the importance of the Billy Graham crusades and fails to notice the responses to *The Myth of God Incarnate*, not least *The Truth of God Incarnate*, this despite the fact that he is responsive to resurgent Evangelicalism in these years.

Like its predecessors, this volume is a masterpiece of condensation, thoroughly researched, noticing practically everybody and everything that mattered, neatly ordered and crisply written. It is a pity that yet again I have to remark on the careless proof-reading which revealed even to my merely cursory notice at least 20 misprints.

ARTHUR POLLARD

GLORIOUS BATTLE: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism

John Shelton Reed

London: Tufton Books 1998 xxiv+357pp np ISBN 0-85191-237-0

This work was originally published in the United States in 1996 and its author is an American sociologist from the University of North Carolina. It is a fascinating study by a self-styled 'skeptical observer' who sees Anglo-Catholicism as a counter-culture, not unlike the hippies of the 1960s, with an 'offensiveness [that] was not just accidental, not just the result of shortsightedness or thoughtless lack of tact, [with] many ... drawn to the movement precisely because it offended those whom they wished to offend'. Reed goes on: 'Anglo-Catholicism, in other words, thrived on opposition; it attracted adherents in part because of those who opposed it.' Whilst conceding that its counter-cultural aspects are not the whole story, Reed nevertheless concludes his introduction thus: 'I now find the movement less sympathetic, if more entertaining, than when I began... Many Anglo-Catholics asked for the treatment they got, and clearly they sometimes enjoyed it' (p xxiv).

Reed quite properly spends little time on the Oxford Movement itself in order to concentrate on the external features of the Anglo-Catholic revival. He notes the building of St Saviour's, Leeds, under Walter Hook and the surplice riots at St George's-in-the-East, but the work is more concerned with the manifestation, rather than the history, of ritualism, making specific reference to the English Church Union's 'Six Points' in 1875, namely, the mixed chalice, vestments, the eastward position, altar lights, wafers and incense. The movement's essential externality is further stressed in liturgical practice and clerical appearance, what Reed calls 'a sort of semiotic shift' (p 83).

In a series of chapters addressing what he describes as 'the ordinary questions that sociologists ask about any social movement, most obviously: What kinds of people took it up, who opposed it, and why?' (p xxii), Reed examines the appeal of Anglo-Catholicism to the clergy, the urban poor, the laity, women and young men before concluding with chapters on its opponents and their methods. The clergy were attracted, of course, by the sacerdotalism of the movement, though often uncomfortable

with bishops whom their beliefs required them to honour but whom they found it difficult to respect. The colourfulness of worship and, to some degree, the works of benevolence have often been cited as reasons for attracting the urban poor. Reed, however, thinks that the appeal of ritualism for its working-class adherents is still not clear, though hazarding 'the conclusion that Ritualist slum churches won the support of their people only when they were brought into being by saintly men' (p 168). As for the laity, Reed finds an appeal among the professional classes, hostile to the rising bourgeoisie and attracted by the latest fashion, whilst also noting the aesthetic allure to women and especially to middle-class spinsters in an age when marriage was the only obvious purpose in life for them. Similarly, aesthetic allure, especially of a semi-secret-society character, what Reed calls 'a heavy blend of partnership and arcana' (p 215), was a strong attraction for young men.

'The common sense party' was against all such, but there were greater causes for alarm than this, what Walter Walsh summed up as the Romeward movement of the Church of England – not so much travelling to Rome as bringing it into Anglicanism. Chapter XIII is a brilliant survey of the activity, mainly by the Church Association, to put down ritualism.

Reed ends by noticing what he considers to be 'The Irony of Anglo-Catholicism', not only in wondering whether the term was not self-contradictory, what Cardinal Manning described as 'private judgment in gorgeous raiment', but also in its becoming accepted, 'increasingly conventional, almost respectable'. As Reed concludes: 'By the 1890s most Anglo-Catholics plainly regarded this fact as a triumph. But it could also be seen as the ultimate indignity' (p 264). This is a work of serious scholarship and simultaneously a most enjoyable read.

ARTHUR POLLARD

GRIFFITH JOHN – APOSTLE TO CENTRAL CHINA

Noel Gibbard

Bryntirion: Bryntirion Press 1998 250pp £7.99 pb ISBN 1-85049 150 X

The first person most will think of when considering the work of Christian missions in China will be James Hudson Taylor. However he was not the only pioneer in that vast corner of God's harvest field. Here we have a new and most welcome biography of another cast in the same mould as Hudson Taylor, the Welshman, Griffith John.

Griffith John knew Hudson Taylor well and although he worked through a different organization, he collaborated with the CIM founder in many ways. John came from Swansea and the world of Welsh chapels, and

served with the London Missionary Society in central China from 1855 until a year before his death in 1912. His energy and contribution to the work of the gospel can be seen to match that of his well-known friend and contemporary.

Noel Gibbard simply tells the story of Griffith John, but he does so with a good awareness of the recurring issues which face such ministers of the gospel in every age. There is a brief concluding chapter which assesses the character, creed and contribution of Griffith John. The story is worth hearing because it is good to realize that not everyone went about Chinese mission work in exactly the same way as Hudson Taylor.

John was the sort of missionary who truly served the Chinese people. He was happy to preach to the poor and yet also capably handled the questioning of intellectuals. In later years he saw the influence of the social gospel and firmly resisted it. Nevertheless he encouraged the development of Christian schools and hospitals. He personally knew illness and sadness in his life and we see how he battled with those trials.

We can be grateful to the author for making the story of this man's life available. It has been thoroughly researched, yet it is made accessible and is a source of inspiration for any Christian.

MARK BURKILL

THE WEEKEND THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Peter Walker

London: Marshall Pickering 1999 220pp £9.99 pb ISBN 0-551-3135-2

This is an unusual and excellent book which studies that central feature of the Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, from a number of angles. Its helpfulness stems from the author's thorough knowledge of the Scriptures on the one hand and the historical and archaeological evidence concerning Jerusalem on the other.

The first section called 'The Story' is an account of the events that took place in that weekend in Jerusalem which changed the world. While it goes beyond the actual text of Scripture it does so in a way which is entirely respectful of that evidence. Some of the account is based on Wenham's well known reconstruction of events. The last chapter of this section considers and answers the theories which seek to explain away the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

In Part II Walker sets out the competing claims of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb to be the sites of the location of those unique events at the heart of the Christian faith. This is done through

consideration of the panoply of historical and archaeological evidence. These chapters should be essential reading for anyone who wishes to make a serious assessment of these competing claims. The author himself weighs the evidence for each in the final chapter of this section. The book concludes with some chapters devoted to the significance of the Resurrection today. As one would expect these are based primarily around the biblical material and the testimonies of various Christians. There is a thorough evangelistic edge to this section.

One can envisage this book being used in a number of ways. It can certainly be used by those preparing to travel to Israel (and indeed while they are there too). It does a really good job of relating the sights one sees in Jerusalem to an authentic Christian faith. Some Christian visitors to Israel find this hard to do. However one may also see this book being used by anyone who finds it hard to grasp the real context of events that we hear of in the New Testament. It is a powerful antidote to the steady stream of sensationalist paperbacks which claim to have demythologized Jesus. Here is solid reliable material which not only reminds us of the real location of Jesus in history, but will also challenge its readers to respond to Jesus as the resurrected Lord and Saviour.

MARK BURKILL

TERTULLIAN'S THEOLOGY OF DIVINE POWER

Roy Kearsley

Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1998 179pp £24.99 pb ISBN 0-946068-61-5

This book is the latest of the *Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology*, published under the auspices of Rutherford House in Edinburgh. Like other volumes in the series, it began life as a doctoral dissertation, and readers will quickly realize that many traces of its origin remain in the finished product, in spite of the extensive revision which has gone into it. It is a book full of scholarly debates and footnotes, and will not be fully appreciated by readers unfamiliar with current developments in early church history. That said, it is a valuable contribution to the very intense debates which have characterized this field over the past generation.

Dr Kearsley has two major themes – Tertullian the man and theologian, and the concept of divine power as he developed it in his writings. This duality is inevitable, since it is impossible to study Tertullian's writings without coming to grips with the man himself. He is unique among early Christian writers in that, although we know almost nothing about his life or career, his personality comes across to us as well as that of Paul or of Augustine, and far better than that of any of his contemporaries. Tertullian is famous for his trenchant views and readiness to express them in a pithy

and memorable manner, and no one would ever have left his company without being told exactly what he thought – not only of his ideas, but of him personally as well. On the other hand, he was a highly complex personality who drew on many different intellectual resources, which he used for his own purposes and on which he placed his own particular stamp. Dr Kearsley demonstrates his affinities with Stoicism, with Judaism and (of course) with Montanism, but points out that in every case his relations with these currents of thought cannot be reduced to simple acceptance or rejection of them. Indeed, it frequently appears that the philosophical ideas to which he was most opposed were the ones which had the greatest influence on him, making the traditional judgments of him as an ‘anti-philosophical’ writer largely untenable.

On the subject of divine power, Dr Kearsley follows the well-worn path of detailed analysis of Tertullian’s vocabulary. As a translator from Greek into Latin, Tertullian has enormous cultural importance, since it is very often the choice of vocabulary which he made which has governed the Western expression of theology ever since. Equally important was the process of definition, which in his day was still far from complete. Along with most other early Christians, Tertullian was faced with the formidable task of putting new theological wine into old linguistic wineskins and his success at this can only be measured by considering the way in which so many of his coinages have survived to the present time. Pre-Christian philosophical thought was much less systematic than has often been supposed, and very often it is almost impossible to give a ‘definition’ of key terms, even when they are frequently used. A word like ‘substance’, for instance, could mean many different things, and it was only reduced to a relatively narrow (and carefully defined) range as it became necessary to defend orthodox Christianity against the various heresies which challenged it.

Dr Kearsley demonstrates how certain vocabulary items, like *monarchia*, were inadequate to the task which confronted him, and therefore required further supplementation and closer definition. In the process, Tertullian had to grapple with the fact that it was not enough to describe God as the supreme ‘being’ or ‘substance’; it was also necessary to conceive of this being as the supreme ‘power’ who brought all things into existence and who maintained them by his providential ordering. To a pagan world in which the supreme being was an abstraction which we today would call ‘divinity’, and where there were a number of powers which drew on that substance and used it for different purposes, the idea of concentrating substance and power in a single divine monarchy was both novel and uncongenial. Christians faced the further difficulty that it was also necessary for them to maintain the complete divine equality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without sacrificing their fundamental monotheism.

This required shifting the notion of 'God' from a 'what' to a 'who', and developing the concept of relationships within the Godhead. Working all this out adequately took a long time, but in Tertullian we can see the main lines of future developments already beginning to take shape. From the concept of divine power, Tertullian was propelled logically into developing the concept of 'person', which would eventually become the standard term used to express the category of divine relationships. That he did not get that far is hardly his fault; what is remarkable is that so much of what he said retains its validity even after the final theological synthesis was achieved, and that we can read most of it back into his writings without distorting them.

Dr Kearsley takes us through all this very carefully and with little room to spare – virtually every sentence has a footnote! Readers must follow what he says with care and absorb each point as it comes along; it will not help to go straight to the conclusion. Indeed, the last chapter, which is devoted to conclusions, is somewhat disappointing in that Dr Kearsley allows himself to be caught up in certain modern debates about such things as the 'vulnerability' of Christ, and feminism. Obviously Tertullian lived in a very different world, and although Dr Kearsley is careful to point that out, it is hard not to feel that his subject suffers somewhat when modern trends are taken as some kind of 'norm'. Tertullian has survived as long as he has – and in spite of considerable opposition to him at different times – because what he has to say is profound and compelling. So much of modern theology is simply faddish, and will disappear with the generation which created it. That he is not a feminist icon is surely to his credit, and future scholars may view his attitudes towards women very differently. Dr Kearsley is bold enough to insist that Tertullian was not a misogynist (which is true), and it is a shame that he was not bold enough to go further and state openly that most of the modern criticism levelled against him is as superficial and will be as transient as the attacks which were made upon him in antiquity.

GERALD BRAY