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REVIEWS

New Dictionary of Biblical Theology

T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (eds)

IVP, Leicester, 2000; xx+866pp., £29.95; ISBN 0 85111 976 X

The *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* will be welcomed by all who have an interest in understanding and teaching the message of the Bible. The Dictionary, which is the product of a joint venture between the Biblical Theology Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship and Rutherford House, Edinburgh, provides a scholarly and accessible introduction to biblical theology as a discrete discipline, and to many significant biblical topics.

Part One contains twelve major articles: 'Biblical Theology' (B. S. Rosner); 'History of Biblical Theology' (C. H. H. Scobie); 'Challenges to Biblical Theology' (P. Balla); 'The Canon of Scripture' (R. T. Beckwith); 'Scripture' (E. J. Schnabel); 'The Unity and Diversity of Scripture' (C. L. Blomberg); 'New Testament Use of the Old Testament' (C. A. Evans); 'Relationship of Old Testament and New Testament' (Graeme Goldsworthy – one of two Consulting Editors); and 'Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology' (D. A. Carson – the other Consulting Editor). Philip Satterthwaite's article on 'Biblical History', Kevin Vanhoozer's article on 'Exegesis and Hermeneutics', and P. Adam's article on 'Preaching and Biblical Theology' are particularly valuable.

Part Two consists of a thematic study of groups of biblical books (for example, 'Genesis to Kings' (Desmond Alexander) and 'Paul' (Douglas Moo – in which he advises caution in accepting E. P. Sanders' view in its entirety) followed by a description and discussion of the *theological* emphases of each of the biblical books. Authors who contributed to this section include Richard Hess (Joshua); Murray Gow (Ruth); Geoffrey Grogan (Psalms); John Oswalt (Isaiah); Donald Hagner (Matthew); Douglas Moo (Romans); Anthony Thistleton (1 Corinthians); Howard Marshall (Philippians and Thessalonians); Paul Ellingworth (Hebrews); Peter Davids (James) and Gregory Beale (Revelation).

Part Three, which is the longest section, focuses on topics which, in the editors' opinion, are of importance for understanding the Bible's unity and theology. Attention is given to such themes as Abraham (Desmond

Alexander); Atonement (Robert Yarbrough – Jesus' death is both an expiation and propitiation); Blessing/curse (Mary J. Evans); Covenant (P. R. Williamson); David (M. L. Strauss); Glory (Richard Gaffin); Gospel (Graeme Goldsworthy); Hell (P. S. Johnston); Jesus Christ (Howard Marshall); Land (an excellent discussion by J. G. Millar); Righteousness, justice and justification (M. A. Seifrid); Seed (Desmond Alexander) and Sin (Henri Blocher).

The editors and publisher of this *Dictionary* are to be congratulated for producing another publication that exhibits the qualities of clarity, presentation and scholarship that we have come to expect of IVP productions. Each article contains cross-references to related articles and is concluded with a select bibliography for further study. Not all readers will concur with the post-script to the article on the Sabbath, and I was disappointed that no article by John Goldingay was included (though his work is referred to in a number of articles). Nevertheless, the *Dictionary* is both stimulating and valuable. Indeed, should I be cast away on the BBC's mythical desert island, and asked to choose a dictionary to take with me – then this is it!

Ian D. Glover, Livingston Free Church of Scotland

The Starting Point of Calvin's Theology

George H. Tavaré

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids and Cambridge, 2000; 199pp.; ISBN 0-8028-4718-8

The value of this book lies primarily in its being one of the very few works on Calvin's first theological treatise against soul sleep, *Psychopannychia*. Most students of Calvin think of his unsuccessful commentary on Seneca, *De Clementia* (important because of its being the prototype of his future commentaries on the books of the Bible), as being, in 1532, his first excursion into literature. This was followed in 1536 by the more readily received first version of the *Institutes*, revised in 1539 and in the French version in 1541, a year after his commentary on Romans was published. He had, however, written *Psychopannychia*, possibly at the same time as he was writing *Institutes 1*, while sojourning at the Angouleme mansion of Canon Louis du Tillet, with its extensive library. Intended for publication in 1536, *Psychopannychia* does not seem to have been printed until as late as 1542 and has been clearly overshadowed by the greater works. Calvin had been persuaded to write the treatise in an attempt to refute the increasingly widespread Anabaptist teaching that at death, the soul falls asleep, or even dies with

the body, until it is either awakened or resurrected on the Day of Judgement.

The Starting Point of Calvin's Theology was not written as an academic examination of *Psychopannychia*, although George Tavard, formerly Professor of Theology at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, provides a thorough criticism of the work and its relationship with *Institutes I*. He argues that Calvin's theology, moulded around this period shortly after his conversion to the Reform Group (the precise circumstances of which are uncertain), was deeply pietistic. He compares Calvin's piety to that of the great Catholic mystics, especially St Bonaventure, and also that of St Augustine. It is at this juncture, Tavard argues, that there is to be found common ground for dialogue between the Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

Calvin's pietistic theology is unfolded in his approach to the immortality of the soul. He was well aware of the teachings of Aristotle and Plato on the subject and of the widespread debates of the Renaissance humanists. For Calvin, however, philosophical arguments were merely speculative and he lays the foundations for his case on what, for him, was the firmer ground of the Holy Scripture. In support, he cites many biblical references, such as Christ's promise to the penitent thief and, more especially, the story of Dives and Lazarus, to which he devotes fifteen subsections.

Yet the full force of his argument is theological. The immortality of the soul can only be meaningfully perceived with regard to the redeemed. After death, the lot of the reprobate, like that of Dives, is to face the first judgement of God, finally to be sealed on the last day. But that is not our affair. As far as the redeemed person is concerned, he enters immortality at conversion. God the Father, through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, makes his abode in his soul, of which he remains conscious, uninterrupted by death, ever increasingly receiving grace and gifts until the final sealing of his Redemption on the Day of Judgement. Calvin compares the lot of the soul of the redeemed after death with that of Israel when, crossing Jordan, the Israelites came out of the wilderness into the promised land to await the building of Jerusalem, the figure of the New Jerusalem in the New Heaven and New Earth yet to be realised.

All this hinges on the knowledge or existential apprehension of God in Christ and of oneself, which is the beginning, for Calvin, of wisdom and of sound theology, and, for George Tavard, of worthwhile ecumenical dialogue.

Peter Cook, Alston, Cumbria

Pilgrimage to Puritanism: History and Theology of the Marian Exiles at Geneva, 1555-1560

Dan G. Danner

Studies in Church History 9, Peter Lang, New York, 1999; 168pp., £26.00; ISBN 0-8204-3884-7

It is a virtual truism of English Reformation studies that the impact of exile upon the shape of the various conflicts that dogged the Anglican settlement throughout the sixteenth and well into the seventeenth centuries was profound. While the various English exiles under Henry VIII helped to shape not only Bible translation (Tyndale and company) and debates about ecclesiology under Edward VI (e.g. John Hooper), those who went to the continent during the reign of Mary brought back agendas on vestments, discipline, and church-state relationships which effectively shaped debates within the Anglican church for over a century. This book by Dan G. Danner is thus to be welcomed as a contribution to unpacking the troubled years between 1553 and 1557 and thus helping us to see more clearly why church policy under Elizabeth I was shaped as it was.

The book is divided into four chapters dealing with historical background (chapter 1), the earliest members of the Geneva refugee church (chapter 2), bishops and notable Puritans who were members of the Genevan refugee church (chapter 3), and the theology of the Genevan exiles (chapter 4). While the book is brief, it is nonetheless packed with useful information.

What comes through so clearly from Danner's analysis is the self-conscious international flavour of much of what was to become distinctively Puritan theology. I have felt for some time that Anglicanism is exactly that: a narrow church settlement designed to create a distinctive form of church order specifically linked to the interests of the English state; while Puritanism, for all of its bad press, was actually a movement which was attempting to retain a catholic, international vision for what the church should be. This whole debate is played out in miniature in the clash between John Knox and Richard Cox, to which Danner alludes in chapter 1, and is reinforced by the experience of the more radical exiles in Geneva. Danner's book provides additional material for exploring this thesis further.

Theologically, Danner is not as sure-footed as he should be. A wedge is driven between Luther/Calvin on Scripture and the exiles on p. 105, where the former are portrayed as more kerygmatic, the latter more Erasmian. No footnotes are provided for this, presumably because it is considered to be self-evident; the real state of affairs is, of course, far

more complex than such slogans can intimate. The same thing occurs with relation to tradition on p. 105, where the Puritans are presented as more iconoclastic towards tradition than Calvin. Again, the question is more complex than Danner makes it: the Puritans were profoundly sensitive to tradition (see how often they self-consciously cite the early church creeds as in some sense authoritative) and one cannot, as Danner does, attempt to drive a wedge between Puritans who considered themselves to be restoring apostolic simplicity and Calvin who did not. My reading is that both regarded themselves as restoring early church simplicity – indeed, it would have been ideologically difficult for them to consider themselves as doing anything else and remaining true to their basic project.

There are other similar faults throughout the theological chapter, which is weak and apparently based on the tired old clichés of the Barthian from the 50s and 60s which we now really do have no excuse for taking particularly seriously. This should not detract from the usefulness of the historical sections, however – though it may mean that the price is a little too steep for a personal purchase.

Carl R. Trueman, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission

Andreas Köstenburger & Peter T. O'Brien

Apollos/IVP, Leicester, 2001; 351pp., £12.99; ISBN 0-85111-519-5

This volume provides a useful and welcome addition to the literature dealing with the biblical theology of mission. After a very brief introduction, the authors survey the teaching of the Bible as a whole, providing useful outlines of the teaching of each section of Scripture on the theme of mission before presenting a concluding synthesis and a comprehensive bibliography. The book will make a very valuable text for students and it fills an obvious gap by providing us with a biblical survey written from a Protestant and Evangelical perspective. It is, therefore, warmly welcomed.

That Köstenberger and O'Brien are abreast of contemporary biblical and missiological scholarship is evident in the range of questions discussed within these pages. These include issues such as the character of second-temple Judaism and its relation to the mission of Jesus, and the question as to whether Christ limited his own ministry to Israel or included Gentiles in his mission. Such issues are helpfully, if briefly,

discussed and the authors make valuable practical applications of the biblical material throughout their text.

Although this volume runs to over 350 pages, it is disappointing to discover a degree of superficiality in the treatment of some aspects of the subject. For example, the Old Testament is dealt with in a single chapter covering a mere forty-six pages, an approach that invites invidious comparison with existing works of this kind from Roman Catholic sources. Elsewhere the authors state what is true but fairly obvious, failing to recognise the dynamic missiological relevance of, say, the book of Revelation. While it is certainly true that John's Apocalypse contains 'a vision of the results of the Christian mission at the end of time' it surely does far more than that? Some reference to the purpose of Revelation's symbolism and the role given to the Christian imagination by this book would have been helpful.

Despite these reservations, this book makes a most valuable addition to the literature dealing with the biblical foundations of mission and it can be warmly recommended, especially as a text for undergraduate students of the Christian mission.

David Smith, Whitefield Institute, Oxford

Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church in 18th Century Scotland

Kenneth B. E. Roxburgh

Bern, Peter Lang, 1999; xvi+272 pp., £26.00; ISBN 3 906762 19 X

Thomas Gillespie is remembered, if at all, as the founder of the Relief Church that in the later eighteenth century gathered those Presbyterians who objected so strongly to the exercise of patronage that they felt compelled to worship outside the Church of Scotland. Kenneth Roxburgh, the Principal of the Scottish Baptist College and editor of this journal, has taken pains to illuminate the origins of this Evangelical denomination, demonstrating the reasons for the formation of its early congregations. But the main subject of these pages is Gillespie himself. Although he wrote only two books and there is little surviving correspondence, there are many allusions to him in the records of the church courts and he left several volumes of sermons. Inferences can also be drawn from the testimonies of converts during the Cambuslang revival of 1742 whose narratives he edited so as to exclude references to visions or fainting spells. This elimination of experiences that might be considered dubious is one of the symptoms of Gillespie's relationship with the age of reason in which he lived. A central theme of the author is

the extent to which Gillespie was himself shaped by the Enlightenment. After a university course at Edinburgh where he was open to contemporary intellectual influences, he went on to the theological hall of the Secession Church, a bastion of unsullied confessional theology from the previous century. Gillespie stayed only ten days; instead he went to Northampton, where he assimilated the teaching of the Independent Philip Doddridge, fully accommodated to the Enlightenment, and there he spent several months. The author is careful to explain that Gillespie did not follow Doddridge into a moderate form of Calvinism, preferring a full-blooded Westminster federal theology, but the legacy of Northampton lingered, for example in his rejection of the Confession's teaching about the power in religion of the civil magistrate. Gillespie stressed light, reason and liberty; he upheld a version of the idea of progress in his expectation of the worldwide growth of the church; he had no reservations about the free offer of the gospel; he maintained a strong doctrine of assurance; he took an interest in medical science, personal ethics and reform. Although the author observes at one point (p. 171) that it is doubtful if the Evangelicalism of his subject was allied with the Enlightenment, he gives ample evidence in the conclusion (pp. 246-9) that this was, in fact, the case. Gillespie's enlightened stance undergirded his ecclesiastical politics. He condemned the way in which great men could impose ministers of their choice on unwilling congregations as a form of oppression. Yet the Relief Church reflected the views of its founder when it insisted that the Lord's Table should be open to all true Christians, even Episcopalians. The book is an admirable study of a man who might appear to be a schismatic, but in reality cherished unity in the gospel.

D. W. Bebbington, University of Stirling

Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia

Timothy J. Wengert

Baker Books/Paternoster, 1997; 232pp; ISBN 0-85364-855-7

In this contribution to the *Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought*, Professor Timothy Wengert of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia provides an overwhelmingly detailed study in the development of two men's theologies. One man is the celebrated Philip Melancthon, the grand systematic theologian of first-generation Lutheranism, biblical humanist par excellence, and devoted friend of both Martin Luther and John Calvin. The other is the

now forgotten John Agricola (1494-1566). Agricola was a student of Luther's at Wittenberg, but his ardent Protestantism soon took an independent direction, which brought conflict with Luther over the relationship between law and gospel. In order to escape the possibly ruinous consequences of this 'antinomian' controversy, Agricola left Wittenberg in 1540 to become court preacher to Joachim II of Brandenburg. What Wengert examines with meticulous care is the role played by Melanchthon in the controversy, and the shifting nuances of theological thought in both Melanchthon and Agricola as they crossed swords over the place of the law in God's dealings with sinners.

The theological issues involved were weighty and complex. Essentially Agricola saw no positive function for the law. Its sole purpose is to restrain people from evil-doing through the fear of punishment; and this has absolutely no connection, for Agricola, with conversion or true repentance, which flow exclusively from gospel-evoked faith. In the course of responding to Agricola's arguments, Melanchthon in 1534 took a momentous doctrinal step, by expanding his previous twofold notion of the law's role to a threefold concept. Prior to this, Melanchthon had followed Luther in holding to two offices for the law, the 'political' (restraining sin in the world) and the 'theological' (convicting the conscience of sin before God in order to drive the sinner to Christ). Melanchthon's new third use of the law was as a positive guide to justified Christians concerning how they should live their lives to God's glory. This meant that whereas Luther had one ground of complaint against Agricola (*viz.*, Agricola's denial of the 'theological' use of the law), Melanchthon now had a second ground of complaint (Agricola's refusal to see the law as having a positive use in Christian obedience). Melanchthon was brought to embrace this third use of the law in order to underscore the necessity of good works in the faith-justified sinner, against the threat of practical antinomianism that he perceived in Agricola's minimalist approach.

Paradoxically, Melanchthon's threefold formulation of the uses of the law found a far more congenial soil in the Reformed tradition than it did in his native Lutheranism, which remained rather ambivalent about the third use. Nevertheless, Melanchthon's general polemic against Agricola helped to prevent the latter's voice from exercising a serious influence toward a gospel 'monism' within the emerging Lutheran tradition. The second use of the law in convicting the conscience of sin as preparatory to faith in Christ was assured of its place in Lutheran theology and piety, while the third use of the law was taken up and developed much more fully by the Reformed Churches.

Wengert's book, although illuminating and significant, does not make for particularly easy reading. This is simply because it is so finely detailed, devoting (for example) substantial space to analysing changes in successive editions of primary source material, in the manner of a textual critic. The result is a book more for specialists than for the general reader.

Nick Needham, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

The Face of Old Testament Studies. A survey of contemporary approaches

David D. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (eds)

Apollos, Leicester, 1999; 512pp., £27.99; ISBN 0-85111-774-0

Apollos (and Baker Books) are to be congratulated on the production of this survey of contemporary approaches to many – though not all – of the most significant aspects of OT studies, a worthy evangelical successor to earlier surveys produced under the auspices of the British Society for Old Testament Studies. Undergraduates will find here a whole series of helpful overviews of significant areas of study from a largely evangelical perspective, which many of the rest of us could have wished for during our own undergraduate days! How thankful we ought to be for the great strides that have been made in evangelical OT scholarship in the past thirty years. Postgraduates and hard-pressed tutors in Biblical Studies, who may have to teach or examine outwith the particular areas of their research, will also be grateful for these state-of-the-art summaries, although it would have been even more useful had all the chapters presented a review of the most important contributions in the field as well as the most significant theories. In addition, many older divinity graduates who retain an interest in biblical studies will find here helpful overviews of recent approaches to the interpretation of the OT which they may not have encountered in their own undergraduate days, e.g., the literary and social scientific approaches found in chapters 4 and 15 respectively.

The sixteen chapters – covering subjects such as text, archaeology, historiography, Israelite religion, and theology; as well as focusing on literary sections of the OT such as Pentateuch, Prophets, Wisdom Literature, Psalms, and Apocalyptic; also on historical periods such as Early Israel, the Monarchy, the Exile and After – have been written by eighteen contributors (some of the chapters are co-authored), the vast majority of whom are North American, with the UK being represented by Gordon Wenham (Pentateuch), Hugh Williamson (Exile and After) and Walter Moberly (OT Theology).

The chapters focus on developments from 1970, though previous research is sometimes presented to provide needed context. They 'attempt to sketch the contours of our ever-changing discipline' and recognise that maximum benefit will be reaped by readers who 'follow the trajectories set by these essays'.

Inevitably, in such a survey, there is a measure of overlap between some articles, particularly with respect to Early Israel. Equally, as indicated above, the survey is not exhaustive, and while there is clearly a limit to what one can include, the lack of a distinct chapter on OT ethics is regrettable, particularly in the light of the wealth of research and writing in this area in recent years.

The chapters raise many matters of significance, which will require further debate in – as well as beyond – evangelical circles. With such conservative scholars as Waltke pointing out that the idea of 'original autographs' may have to be modified to accommodate the possibility of two equally inspired editions of the same biblical book or pericope, Al Walters (pp. 36f.) is surely right in insisting that this is one issue to which evangelicals working in the discipline of OT textual criticism will have to give greater attention in the twenty-first century.

Hector Morrison, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Living in God's Presence (The Present Tenses of Christian Life)

F. B. Meyer

Gwasg Brynterion Press, Wales, revised edition 1997 (first published by Morgan and Scott); 144pp., ISBN 1 85049 134 8

This is a reprint of the book originally published under the title, *The Present Tenses of the Blessed Life*. It comes to us under a new title but very much as a voice from the past. F. B. Meyer (1847-1929) is one of the spiritual giants of the early days of the Keswick Convention, admired and respected as a Bible teacher.

There has been a real attempt to recognise the changed culture that the book now addresses, with biblical quotations from the New International Version (previously the Authorised Version) and, as the preface indicates, 'some archaisms of language have been removed...'

There is a certain reluctance on the part of this reviewer to be ultra-critical of the work of a man of such spiritual stature with a well-deserved place in the history of Christian piety. At the same time, there is no doubt that in a time of new interest in spirituality, there is need for those insights from the vaults of Christian spirituality that are both orthodox

and challenging. This book, which is seeking to move us to a deeper relationship with God, is both orthodox and challenging in many ways. There are powerful correctives of a distorted view of the gospels. They are God's word to us here and now; 'we more often look on the evangelists as historians of the past than as chroniclers of the present'. We are challenged to remember that Jesus Christ is the same today: 'What He was, that He is. What He said, that He says. What He did, that He does.'

Nevertheless there are a number of questions to be asked about the relevance of the book for the twenty-first century, not so much in terms of its subject matter as its style, its intended readership and its cultural appropriateness. It is widely inconsistent in its style of language and writing. Not all archaisms have been removed, and when they occur they irritate rather than edify. The sentence structures are often complex and wordy. I am not persuaded that there is a market in today's Christian community or, indeed, beyond it, that the book will really touch. For example, there is an assumption that twenty-first century Christians are rooted in a regular practice of what orthodox evangelicals know as a 'quiet time'. It may be regretted but my experience is that it is not so, and this book will not reach those who may need to be called back to such a worthy practice. In an age of storytelling and concrete imagery, Meyer's style is much too conceptual to be compelling reading.

There are Christians with a foot in a previous pietistic individualism who may find the book both warmly affirming and spiritually helpful but I have a sense, sadly, that this is a great voice from the past that will not be heard or truly understood in the present.

Norman Maciver, Newhills Parish Church

Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous

W. Jay Wood

Apollos, Leicester, 1998; 216pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 85111 195 5

Jay Wood has written about the theory of knowledge in a way which is genuinely introductory while yet advocating a distinctive approach to epistemological issues which is resurgent (after many centuries' neglect), and promising. This asks us to treat our cognitive activities and attitudes as virtuous and/or vicious, and to recognise that the central concerns of the theory of knowledge in more recent times are well illuminated by such treatment.

Other authors, most notably Linda Zagzebski in her *Virtues of the Mind* (Cambridge, 1996), have been pursuing this approach; but Wood's treatment commends the approach to beginners in the field, and does so in

a way which is engaging, rich in telling examples, and Christian (but not exclusively so) by indicating in how many respects a virtue-epistemology coheres with Christian Scripture.

Since Descartes, philosophers of knowledge in the West have characteristically addressed the challenges of scepticisms, have sought firm foundations for the edifice of our knowledge, have argued about what are necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, and about how a person can be justified in her claim to know. But the modern (i.e. post-Descartes) debates have made little or no reference to wisdom, honesty, humility, teachableness, persistence in pursuit of the truth, nor to many many other of the virtues of the mind. Yet these virtues have, from the beginning of the subject (whenever we take that to have been), and properly, been thought to be central concerns of philosophy (love of wisdom).

Why the neglect of these in recent epistemology? Perhaps the central place accorded for much of this period to the natural sciences as suppliers of knowledge, and of the paradigms of what knowledge properly is, together with the conviction that science deals in value-free facts, led people to neglect the connections between theory of knowledge and broadly evaluative matters of character and virtue? Wood's concern is less to explain how things got this way than to repair the situation.

He is not disparaging of recent epistemology, nor skimping in the attention he gives to it; nor does his distinctive angle on its concerns distort what he says about it: he is able fully to set out the issues raised by and for, e.g., foundationalism, epistemic justification, and reliabilism, in their own terms, and so to make clear to the new student what is the central point and what the strengths and weaknesses, of each of these doctrines. As far as modern epistemology goes, it is ingenious and frequently is helpfully perceptive. But, of course, Wood aims to go further: 'It will... be a motif of this book that study of some of the traditional concerns of contemporary epistemology illuminates powerfully our understanding of certain intellectual virtues, and vice-versa. The old and the new thus complement one another' (pp. 75f.).

He leads us along in a way that is easy and pleasurable to follow; by reason of the wealth of apt illustration, from literature (Dickens, Dostoevsky, *etc.*) and life (politics, scientific discovery, *etc.*) he grasps our interest and makes the point luminous.

As one would expect in a series entitled 'Contours of Christian Philosophy', the case of religious belief is given particular attention, with the enterprise of so-called Reformed Epistemology, which Alston, Plantinga, Wolterstorff, and others have advanced so forcefully, taking

centre stage. Wood is well aware of these developments, which have contributed to making the philosophy of religion the field in which the most conspicuous intellectual advances in the advocacy of Christian belief have taken place in the last thirty years.

In a thoughtful final chapter, Wood carries forward his own distinctive interest as he reflects on the role of the emotions and virtues in proper cognitive functioning. This is a fine introductory text, which yet contains plenty to stimulate readers who are already epistemologically initiated.

J. Houston, University of Glasgow

A Cloud of Witnesses: 20th Century Martyrs

Susan Bergman (ed.)

Fount Paperbacks, Glasgow, 1998; 336pp., £9.99; ISBN 000 628034 X

The rather sombre covers of this book from America enclose a multi-faceted challenge from the lives of eighteen martyrs of this century by twenty writers, including the editor. These male and female contributors are briefly described in a final short chapter and they bring a rich and variegated view of historical situations, political and social factors, theological positions, and inner struggles of the martyrs as well as recording something of the impact made upon themselves.

The eighteen central chapters are neatly sandwiched between two contributors. One, the editor, provides a stimulating introduction on the nature of martyrdom from an initial personal challenge of the lives of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr, and the other provides a thought-provoking complement to the introductory themes, ending with a note of the ecumenical effect of martyrdom and a quote from Pope John Paul II.

Many of the contributors are Roman Catholics and describe Roman Catholic martyrs so giving some insights into a particular theology of martyrdom, though not exclusively so. Susan Bergman's definition of martyrdom is not so restricted.

Each main chapter has a very useful list of publications for further study.

A great attraction of this collection is its breadth. Not only is there the stimulus of different treatments and styles of writing but also that of having such a range of geographical sites represented (Russia, Africa, USA, Latin America, Africa, Europe, China, and Japan). Add to this the differing socio-political situations in which these martyrs found themselves and then the diversity of human characters described here and the result has to be a rich multi-coloured picture. The humanity of this

book is real. The suffering experienced by some of the contributors enhances this.

The mixture of catholic and protestant theologies, including liberation theologies, is a part of the diversity but the emphasis on the processes leading up to the climax of martyrdom has the sharper focus. It is to the credit of the contributors that the horrors of torture, suffering, and murder are not treated as some grotesque entertainment but with sensitivity and didactic purpose. There is sufficient detail to do more than inform.

The time scale of 1993 to 1900 for the events of this book yields another perspective. Since the book works backwards in time the Christian thinking described as typical of, say, the time of the Boxer rebellion reminds that there have been changes in missiology, and other disciplines, during this century. The challenge of 'how much – if any?' remains.

Whatever agreement is reached as to the martyrs described here, indeed, whether they were Christian martyrs at all, the research represented in the introduction alone is of enough weight to make it a challenging and worthwhile read.

Ralph W. Martin, St George's-Tron Parish Church

After Our Likeness. The Church as the Image of the Trinity

Miroslav Volf

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1998; iix+314pp.; ISBN 0 8028 4440 5

It is a brave person who goes head-to-head with the most formidable theologian of the Vatican hard right. And it is another brave person who does the same with the most brilliant luminary of Eastern Orthodoxy. Hats off, then, to Miroslav Volf for writing a book that engages so competently with both of these giants at once. Volf contends on behalf of a 'Free Churches' ecclesiology (Independents not Scottish Presbyterian) using the early English Baptist John Smyth as his champion. Volf rattles the cages of the mighty – Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith and Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Greek Orthodox patriarch of Pergamum. At the same time the author uses the occasion to challenge individualism in Protestantism and to take from the dialogue a renewed respect for the concept of God's community, the Church.

The first part of the book critically scrutinises Ratzinger and Zizioulas in turn. Volf carefully draws out the assumptions of both writers, presents them in the most persuasive light and then aims carefully at the

proverbial crack in the armour. His chief criticism of Ratzinger is that he projects an Augustinian pure unity of the Trinity upon the relationship of Christ with the Church. This allows for Christ to be the real, one subject of the Church. Of course, Christ is one subject through what else but the apostolic office and before we know where we are the classic, Roman hierarchical view of the Church has risen once again, triumphant over its many critics. Volf coolly alerts us to the fact that although Ratzinger's handling has the appearance of relativising the hierarchical structure, in reality 'it merely gives a free hand to power of the hierarchs'. He contests the use of a particular, much controverted, exposition of the Trinity to provide a shaky foundation for hierarchy and catholicity.

With Zizioulas, the situation is very different. Rather than start with the universal and impose it on the local church, for Zizioulas it is the local church (=metropolitan congregation gathered for eucharist) which is primary and the metropolitan bishop who is central. Volf is more sympathetic to the orthodox Trinitarian basis. According to Zizioulas the very meaning of 'person' is communion and a 'going' out. It is not a 'relation' but is *before relation, making external relation possible*. The same is true of human person but there personhood can only be realised supernaturally in communion with Christ – that is, in eucharistic communion with Christ in the local church. The argument is too detailed to condense into a review. Suffice to point out two alleged contradictions spotted by Volf: a) the idea of divine person as communion somehow preceding relations, since such terms as 'generation' presumably *define* the nature of that same communion and b) the self-contained completeness of metropolitan churches somehow able to be in catholic association with other such self-complete churches.

In the second part the author turns to a 'Free Churches' solution – an ecclesiology based on confession. Christology, commitment and confession provide the basis for a right view of the church. He believes this to be better than both alternatives examined and also superior to the episodic, passive, clerico-centric Barthian ecclesiology together with other 'kerygmatic' models of the church. The church 'is not a club of the perfect but rather a communion of human beings who confess themselves as sinners'. The defence of this simple principle from many aspects is the main contribution of the book and, whilst inviting many questions, makes it a powerful new element in ecumenical ecclesiology. His mentor, Jürgen Moltmann, declares that Volf 'is a match for his dialogue partners' and it seems so. Volf should also be read because of the foundation he lays for ecclesiology fit for an era of mission. However, even Volf probably has some way to go yet before his account of church

catholicity and association is made watertight. If there are responses from his 'dialogue partners' we can be sure they will not lack cogency and spirit. And some of the criticisms of Zizioulas were not as weighty and convincing as those of Ratzinger. It is critical that none of this should hinder an epoch-making book being taken seriously in all quarters at a time when the idea of the 'gathered church' is back on the rise and being taken seriously in practice even if not always in theology. And that in some unexpected places too! A highly significant book, which is required reading for anyone concerned with the doctrine of the Church.

The book is not a casual read and, sometimes, technical Latin and Greek words appear without explanation or reminder of meaning. All the same, determination will be richly rewarded!

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College/Cardiff University

From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100-1625

Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (eds)

Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999; 838pp., £45 (cloth) £30 (p/b); ISBN 0-8028-3876-6 (cloth) 0-8028-4209-7 (p/b)

This book is a collection of excerpts from a huge range of scholars, in the attempt to identify a recognisable 'Christian political tradition', albeit that the editors define these words very carefully. The aim of the book is to inform and to challenge. It is directed to theologians, with perhaps particular reference to those who are writing in the area of political theology whom the editors feel might be basing their work too firmly on recent theological and political reflection while being unaware of the older tradition. It is also aimed at Christians who work as lawyers or politicians in the hope that they will take into these professions some sustained thought and reflection, based on this very long tradition of Christian political thought.

The book is divided into five sections: first, the Patristic Age; second, Late Antiquity and Romano-Germanic Christian Kingship; third, The Struggle over Empire and the Integration of Aristotle; fourth, Political Community, Spiritual Church, Individual Right, and *Dominium*; fifth, Renaissance, Reformation, and Radicalism: Scholastic Revival and the Consolation of Legal Theory. Within these sections there is a huge number of well-known authors, from Tertullian, Origen and Augustine to Justinian, Aquinas and Wyclif; from Luther, Calvin and Knox to Cartwright, Perkins and Grotius. There are also authors who will be

unknown to most readers. Indeed, some of the selections are available for the very first time in English.

As well as a general introduction, explaining the structure and layout of the book, with some analysis and defence of its content and purpose, each section begins with a scholarly introduction and appended bibliography.

This is a huge tome and is rightly described as a 'sourcebook'. Although it is fascinating to read on from section to section, the sheer range and variety of material makes this difficult. Far better either to study in detail one section at a time, gaining thereby some understanding of the political ideas and theological reflections of that age and region, or to use the book like an historical dictionary and reference volume.

Those who have an interest in politics or in developing a theological response to political issues will find this book to be a treasure trove. Above all, it underlines the point that the critical interaction between church and state, between theology and politics, is not some new diversion created by late twentieth-century Christians but has been one of the main preoccupations of the church in all ages.

A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

John Calvin's Rhetorical Doctrine of Sin

Don H. Compier

Texts and Studies in Religion, vol. 86. The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston NY, Queenston Ont., Lampeter UK, 2001; 154pp., h/b \$79.95; ISBN 0-7734-7619-0 (TSR Series ISBN 0-88946-976-8)

When the reviewer was offered this book it was described as being on a rather obscure aspect of the writings of John Calvin. While the title would seem to suggest this, the monograph soon turned out to be unfolding a very important but often disregarded side of Calvin's works amongst theological scholars of the great Reformer's rhetoric.

Don Compier, an assistant Professor of Theology in the Pacific Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, is lodging a protest that so many students of Calvin overlook, the fact that Calvin was essentially a political theologian, using persuasive rhetoric as a principal tool. Among the chief culprits appears to be Professor Richard Gamble, formerly of the Henry Meter Centre for Calvin Studies, who has argued that the mature Calvin 'threw over rhetorical persuasion in favour of an appeal which throws readers back on objective truth' (p. 23). Emphatically not, Compier maintains. 'Virtually every page of the great work [Calvin's *Institutes*] resonates with the tenor of epideictic oratory'

(p. 25). This is also true of the great part of Calvin's writings in Compier's view, but in a short monograph he has to confine his examination to Calvin's principal work, and even then limit it to a consideration of the doctrine of sin.

The book is divided into four chapters with an introduction and conclusion, and also a foreword and an appreciative preface.

In the introduction Compier charges many scholars with having been too ready to view Calvin through the eyes of a modern systematic theologian, and consequently having reduced the contents of his voluminous writings into a cold systematised form. They have not been ready to come together with literary critics of Calvin's works, and again have disregarded the plethora of rhetorical devices used by him on almost every page to persuade whomever he may be addressing. With regard to the doctrine of sin, they have defined it chiefly with regard to the first table of the law almost ignoring Calvin's passion for the second table, underlining sin against one's neighbour.

In the first chapter, 'Calvin as a Rhetorical Theologian', Compier traces the influence that the great classical rhetorical writers had on him, especially Cicero, Quintillian, and Seneca, as part of his earlier education in Paris. Calvin's later education was in law, not theology, where he was trained for advocacy by the contemporary jurists, Pierre de l'Estoile at Orleans and Andreas Alciati at Bourges, masters of legal rhetoric in their day. Calvin could not have thrown off his training in rhetoric even had he wished to do so!

In chapter 2, 'The Political Purpose of the Institutes of the Christian Religion', Compier shows how the *Institutes* was a unique work, which, although it became a theological handbook for pastors, maintained its original aim of persuading the French Monarchy of the need for reform in church and state.

Chapter 3, "'No excuse.'" Sin, Knowledge, and Moral Action', shows how although man in Calvin's view is naturally religious, on account of his depravity his religion degenerates into idolatry and superstition from which springs social injustice.

Chapter 4, "'A wicked spoilation.'" Calvin's Attack on the Papacy', pointing to Book 4 of the *Institutes*, shows how human depravity in religion found its epitome in the medieval Papacy. The latter had disregarded the divine authority of Scripture, distorted its teachings and implanted its own myths, was riddled with idolatry and superstition sustaining itself by tyranny. Consequently its false teachings, especially on redemption, denied believers of 'any solid foundation for assurance and

comfort' (p. 120), and robbed the poor of sustenance by its lust for luxurious living.

Compier's conclusion is that while Calvin's call to the Monarchy and aristocracy of France fell on deaf ears on account of their own vested interests it found a degree of fulfilment elsewhere in Europe, and even more so in the New World.

The value of the monograph will be found in any success it may have as a catalyst for students of Calvin to make a new examination of the great Reformer as a political, rhetorical and ultimately persuasive theologian.

Peter Cook, Alston, Cumbria

Dictionary of Christian Biography

Michael Walsh (ed.)

Continuum, London, 2001; 1250pp.; ISBN 0 8264 5263 9

This new dictionary contains brief biographies of more than 6500 Christians from a wide spectrum of backgrounds. It comes from Heythrop College in the University of London, but with a remarkably small number of contributors (forty-six in all); they are predominantly English.

In the introduction to the work, the editor explains the criteria by which he chose those to be included. There are three: first of all, everyone included has lived since the close of the New Testament era; secondly, they are all dead; and thirdly, 'professional' Christians (i.e. theologians and saints) are 'interspersed with people whose professional lives may well have been fundamentally affected by their Christian faith'. This last criterion means that lawyers, politicians, and artists of all kinds have found their way into this work. There are many entries that one would expect to find in these pages, as well as some others that might be thought surprising in a Dictionary of *Christian Biography*. There are 2 indexes at the back of the book, which, intriguingly, arrange the entries first of all by the date and secondly by the place, of death of the individual concerned. Continental Europe is most heavily represented.

By the very nature of a work like this, it is selective. The compilers have made their selection, which I'm sure would introduce the Scottish reader to a wide variety of new Christian biography. It would be churlish to concentrate on those who are not included, but one of the frustrations with this book is that, from a Scottish viewpoint, it is quite light. If you are looking for a thorough overview of Scottish Christian biography, you will need to look elsewhere.

Equally, the entries are short. The information contained in each entry is limited to between 100 and 200 words, which means that each individual is covered in summary fashion. If this is a fault, it is compounded by a lack of 'further reading' resources; having the appetite whetted, there is no menu provided to direct the serious student to more substantial fare! There is a feeling that the reader has scraped the surface of a life, but is given no help in digging deeper.

I'm sure that the content of this book would be useful as an introduction to Christian biography for people who are unfamiliar with the idea. However, for any serious student who wishes to glean detailed information about Christians of the past in any depth, you will need to look elsewhere. Even as a route-map on that journey, it comes up short.

James S. Dewar, Juniper Green Parish Church, Edinburgh

Christ and the Spirit. The Doctrine of the Incarnation according to Edward Irving

Graham W. P. McFarlane

Paternoster, Carlisle, 1996; 204pp.; ISBN 0 85364 694 5

Theology from the nineteenth century is not exactly hip at the moment, even less hip hip hooray. The choice too often lies between Christianised romanticism and a German liberalism kicked into touch by today's postmodern onslaught. So we should be grateful that Graham McFarlane has come up with a snapshot of the neglected Edward Irving containing some thoughtful constructive content. The foreword comes from Colin Gunton, the author's doctoral supervisor, a sympathetic though not uncritical re-interpreter of Irving. The value of this book is that it implicitly provides a connection between Irving's serious theological writing and the 'charismatic' outbreak in his church long before the modern Pentecostal and charismatic renewal movements. For McFarlane's chief interest is in the place of the Holy Spirit in Irving's Christological thought, particularly the way in which a Spirit-Christology feeds a theory of transformative salvation. There are obvious affinities here with Irenaeus and Athanasius, and these compel a fair reader to give the approach a hearing.

All the same, the author does not really explore some of the problems that arise from Irving. While not quite sycophantic the tone is certainly reverential and rarely questioning of Irving's approach. And there *are* problems to be explored. For instance, if Christ's human *will* is holy, as Irving says, what can it mean for the Son to have assumed fallen human nature as Irving also claimed (so scandalising his time)? An

'anhypostatic' Christology does not answer the question since that idea was not meant to delete the human will from Christ but only to stress the origin of his human centre from the Word. The transformation of human nature through the Christological union *is* in line with patristic orthodoxy, but to blend in the assumption of a fallen human nature was novel. Nor did early Christians mean anything like this by the celebrated axiom 'what is not assumed is not healed' because they saw in Christ a fresh start, a new humanity.

All the same, the slapping of a heresy label on Irving is, to most eyes today, harsh. McFarlane is right to disregard Irving's trial for heresy, for the real problem with Irving's position is not notoriety but obscurity. We are never quite sure what it is. Take the statement (p.145) that Irving regards Jesus as 'possessing a fallen nature... whilst remaining sinless'. Presumably this translates into 'possessing a fallen (human) nature... whilst remaining sinless (in the fallen [human] nature)'. What can this conundrum mean? What is human nature here? What does 'fallen' mean? The statement is not heretical – for we simply cannot nail its meaning and condemn it. Those who say that Irving did not intend to ascribe sin to Christ are almost certainly right, but the innocence is too often obscured by the rhetoric.

It would have been helpful, and perhaps groundbreaking, to have explored more of the nineteenth century background to Irving's way of thinking about transformation of substance. Did prevailing scientific theories of substance have anything to do with it? What about evolutionary optimism and the transforming of human nature? Eschatology?

McFarlane helpfully spotlights an esteemed soteriology of human transformation through Christ and reminds of connections between Christology, teaching about the Spirit, sanctification and church life. We may, however, need to be choosy about what in Irving's approach merits immortality.

The style of the book is fairly wordy and repetitive with echoes of Irving's own cadence, but still worth the effort.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College/Cardiff University

Systematic Theology, Volume 3

Wolfhart Pannenberg

Eerdmans/T&T Clark, Grand Rapids/Edinburgh, 1998; xvi+713 pp.; ISBN 0 5670 9599 1

Admittedly, the German edition of this work was published five years before its English translation; nevertheless, we may be forgiven for

feeling that, with this contribution, the curtain falls on the second theological millennium. The swan song is shared with Moltmann, whose 1995 volume on eschatology also looks like a conclusion to his studies in dogmatics. Since the 1960s, Pannenberg, along with Moltmann, has been a dominant influence in German Protestant theology but the domination of German Protestant influence over Western theology ended some years ago. Hence the *fin-de-siecle* atmosphere (with millennial vengeance) that engulfs this volume and its reader.

The qualities that we associate with Pannenberg all feature: erudition, vigour, independence, a high view of the dignity and importance of the theological enterprise. Ecclesiology is at the heart of the work. The second of its four chapters, dealing with 'The Messianic Community and Individuals' is longer than the other three put together. These successively treat 'The Outpouring of the Spirit, the Kingdom of God, and Church', 'Election and History' and 'The Consummation of Creation in the Kingdom of God'. The church may be central, but it must be understood in the context of the kingdom of God. In lapidary statements, Pannenberg announces early that '[t]he church... is nothing apart from its function as an eschatological community and therefore as an anticipatory sign of God's coming rule and its salvation for all humanity' (p. 32) and that it is 'a sign of the kingdom's future of salvation' (p. 37). This orientation is familiar in modern theology.

All through the work, the author is eager to do justice to both individual and corporate aspects of the Christian life. In treating the church, considerable space is therefore given both to the phenomena of faith, hope and love and to the sacraments. Before, then, getting on to the doctrine of election, Pannenberg has shown his concern to treat individual regeneration with dogmatic seriousness, which is important to note as he interprets election principally in terms of historical calling. When he comes on to eschatology, he closely knits together personal and cosmic destiny, typically bucking any trends to avoid being committed to theses about individual resurrection. In his first volume, Pannenberg had set out his understanding of the way questions of God and truth must steer dogmatics and he keeps this in sight to the end.

Pannenberg's work impresses by its integrity and comprehensiveness. There is nothing trivial here and a genuine sense of the greatness of God pervades the opus. Luther is always in there at ground level and Lutheran Orthodoxy is not neglected or disdained. The edifice itself is hewn out of biblical, ecumenical and rational materials. Ultimately, our evaluation must pivot on the question of the use of Scripture in theological construction. Pannenberg's discussion of the sacraments is especially

illustrative of this and III.2, on 'The Lord's Supper and Christian Worship', is a particularly good example. For historical-critical reasons, we cannot be sure what Jesus said at the Last Supper, so we 'have to evaluate the tradition of Jesus' last supper with his disciples before his crucifixion in the context of the meals he had with them in the preceding period of his earthly ministry' in order to ground our eucharistic theology in the Synoptic accounts (p. 284). But suppose that we agree (as the reviewer does not) with Pannenberg's perspective on the Gospel reports and suppose that we agree (as is plausible) that Jesus' recorded meals with his disciples have a potential hermeneutical role when it comes to interpreting the Last Supper. There is still a logical hiatus in the claim that *because* we cannot be sure what Jesus said at it, *therefore* we must interpret it in the wider context. This surely exemplifies a serious methodological difficulty in the use of Scripture in theology.

Nevertheless, Wolfhart Pannenberg deserves our gratitude for keeping alive, and treating seriously and profoundly, many biblical and traditional themes in theology which are scarcely on the map of much contemporary Christian thought. Careful engagement with this volume is amply rewarding.

Stephen N. Williams, Union Theological College, Belfast

Can we believe Genesis today? The Bible and the questions of Science

Ernest Lucas

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 2001; 192pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 85111 658 2

'I never read a book before reviewing it; it prejudices a man so' wrote Sydney Smith who was, in 1802, a founding father of the Edinburgh Review. Your reviewer has not only read the book before (when first published as *Genesis Today* by Scripture Union in 1989), but has reviewed it before, although elsewhere. How prejudiced can one get?

This book is basically a re-issue of the author's *Genesis Today*, revised and enlarged, with a new chapter on creation, chaos and design and a slightly different title. It takes up and tackles the questions that arise in the minds of thinking readers who turn to the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

The author makes the simplest of beginnings by disentangling 'how?' questions from 'why?' questions. He examines the nature of scientific truth and the role and function of theory in science. He then examines the Bible, discusses the ways in which we interpret it and proceeds to lay

down ways toward a proper understanding of Scripture. The first third of the book deals with such basic issues.

The author now turns to his major theme, Genesis 1 to 11, and considers the literal approach to interpretation. He adduces reasons for dissatisfaction with it and so he outlines alternative approaches. Of these variants, he chooses the literary-cultural approach as the most compelling, and contrasts it with the literalistic approach. This middle section of the book concludes with a consideration of design and other matters.

In the final third of his book the author turns from chapter 1 of Genesis to the events of chapters 2-11. He ends as he began by looking at the overall picture. The scientist may look at the world in terms of mechanism. The Christian has a differing but complementary view, which is concerned with meaning.

This is a popular presentation, which will be easily read and readily understood by senior pupils at school. It will also be useful for the general reader and for those who are drawn into these areas of discussion through contact with the younger generation. If one has heard only strongly literalistic interpretations of these chapters of Scripture, the range and variety of alternative explanations could come as a shock, or as a relief. Guidance for further reading is provided at the end of each chapter.

When it appeared in its first format, I gave a welcome to this book. I welcome it anew in its revised and up-dated format.

Your reviewer is not the A. McIntosh cited in the text (pp. 75, 90 and Index).

Alex McIntosh, Olivet Evangelical Church, Falkirk

Accuracy of Translation

Robert Martin

Banner of Truth Trust, 1997; 89pp.; £4.95; ISBN 0 85151 735 8

Subtitled 'The Primary Criterion in Evaluating Bible Versions with special reference to the New International Version', this book purports to establish the ground rules whereby we can evaluate the plethora of English versions of the biblical text which are available. That, of itself, is a helpful aim, for there is a clear need for pastors to be able to ensure that the versions they recommend (or do not recommend) to their people, are evaluated as objectively as possible, and are not merely a result of personal preference and/or prejudice. As the author says, 'The Bible is the touchstone of our faith and practice. We cannot afford to be careless and uninformed in these matters.'

However, the fact that the book eschews the translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Old Testament greatly diminishes its scope and value. After all, the Old Testament makes up the major part of our Bible, and is important, especially in setting out the covenantal nature of the biblical revelation. 'All scripture is God-breathed.' God has provided us with two testaments not one, so a book which purports to provide us with a means of evaluating different English versions of the Bible must surely address the translation of the Old Testament as well as the New. It is not enough for the author to say, 'My knowledge of Hebrew is not such that I can remark with equal confidence on the translation accuracy of the NIV Old Testament', and then sail on regardless. He ought surely to have sought out and collaborated with someone who was competent in the Old Testament languages in order to provide us with a book which would do what he claims: viz. provide 'the Primary Criterion in Evaluating Bible Versions...'

When we turn to the content of the book, the lynchpin of the author's argument is chapter 3 – 'The Nature of the Bible's Inspiration'. In it he argues that 'The Bible is inspired in such a way that its very words are inspired (i.e., 'verbal' inspiration); and that inspiration extends to all the words of Scripture (i.e. plenary inspiration). The nature of the Bible's inspiration is such that what it says is what God has said.' Now, that in itself is not controversial, but the author then develops his argument to seek to demonstrate that 'the fact that the Bible teaches a doctrine of verbal-plenary inspiration must influence the work of the translator. ... The translator must keep in mind that he is dealing with truth exactly expressed.' Again this is not controversial. The conclusion he draws, however, is that the only appropriate method of translation is that of 'formal equivalence' where the translation 'attempts to say 'what' the original text says by retaining 'how' it says it.'

However, the author's argument fails to take into account how words are actually used to communicate: they are generally used together – in context. So, God uses words to communicate. But the 'words' are not isolated. Rather they are embedded in a context of other words which are required for any sense to be communicated. Similarly, when translation is made, that context must be taken into account, for it can radically affect the way in which a 'word' is rendered in another language. Anything else reduces translation to a mechanical process of word substitution, forcing on the receptor language the thought forms and even the syntax of the original language. Whatever that process is, it is not translation. However, even the so-called formal equivalence translations are not literal translations, as the author is forced to concede (though it doesn't impinge

on his argument). They are all to some extent dynamic; they have to be, for language is dynamic. And this is something that the author fails to engage fully with in his argument. Instead he devotes the rest of the book to demonstrating at every turn the NIV's departures from strict formal equivalence; and all with the ultimate aim of showing that 'the NIV is not worthy of becoming the standard version of the English-speaking world'.

In conclusion, if what you want is a stick to beat the NIV with then this might just do. However, if you are looking for a tool with which to help you to evaluate as objectively as possible the bewildering choice of English versions on offer today, then look elsewhere.

Alan Macgregor, Banff Parish Church

Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2

R. P. Martin & Brian J. Dodd

WJKP, Louisville, 1998; x+169pp.; ISBN 0-664-25619-8

This volume is a very useful collection of essays by able scholars on a fascinating and important portion of the New Testament. Although the title appears hopelessly inaccurate to anyone with a concept of biblical theology – the issue is noted and an attempt to justify it is made (p. 3) – our real interest lies in what is within the cover.

A brief orientation to the book by Ralph Martin is followed by two essays by Colin Brown and Robert Morgan who consider two classic contributions to the discussion of Philippians 2:5-11 by E. Lohmeyer and E. Käsemann respectively. These two substantial analyses account for just less than half the content of this book and by themselves make the book indispensable to the serious student of this passage since Lohmeyer's book has not been translated from German and Käsemann's essay is highly inaccessible.

The views on the pre-existence of Christ expressed by James Dunn in the brief fourth chapter, entitled 'Christ, Adam and Preexistence' will surprise no one who is familiar with Dunn's more substantial writings. The editors are to be commended, however, for including a point-by-point response to Dunn's view by Lincoln D. Hurst. This allows the reader immediate access to two important perspectives in the debate.

A lexical study by Gerald Hawthorne of the Greek phrases in Philippians 2:6 translated 'in the form of God' and 'equal with God', while useful in itself as a brief survey of recent discussion, ultimately adopts the position argued by N. T. Wright.

The latter verses of Paul's profound passage are the focus of Larry Kreitzer's essay. Kreitzer notes that scholarly debate has centred on the first part of the passage, and that many interpreters believe that Paul is presenting the self-humbling act of Jesus as a model for Christian behaviour. The eschatological portion (verses 9-11) of the passage, however, appears to sit uncomfortably with such an interpretation.

Building on a substantial body of his own previous research and publication, Richard Bauckham takes up the matter of the worship of Jesus in chapter 8.

Stephen Fowl's essay considers the significance of the passage for Christian ethics, concluding that Paul issues 'a call to adopt Paul's manner of practical reasoning, a practical reasoning based on what they see in Christ Jesus' (p. 148).

In the brief closing essay, Brian Dodd argues that at the foundation of Paul's concerns lies not imitation of Christ – legitimate though that is in its place – but soteriology.

There is a tendency in these essays to regard the pre-Pauline, hymnic character of the passage as established. Kreitzer recognises that this is not the view of all interpreters (p. 122, footnote 1, citing scholars such as S. Kim, D. A. Carson and G. D. Fee) but there is little debate with the alternative position. Hawthorne shows most caution in his adoption of the term 'hymn' (p. 105, footnote 2) but I would have liked to have seen a little more recognition of the debate in this book.

The articles are generally thoroughly referenced. For example, Brown's essay is followed by over eleven pages of notes while Hurst's six-page article is followed by five pages of notes.

The book closes with a modest bibliography that includes a number of classic studies plus some more recent monographs and articles. It will be most useful as a supplement to the bibliographies in the second edition of Martin's *Carmen Christi* for those who do not wish to purchase the recently published third edition (now called *A Hymn of Christ*).

Alistair I. Wilson, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Changing Youth Worship

Patrick Angier

National Society/Church House Publishing 1997; 114pp., £5.95; ISBN 0 7151 4892 3

Patrick Angier attempts a rather monumental task within the covers of a relatively short book. Within 114 pages, he seeks to give a basic outline

of the thinking and practice of a range of diverse groups who loosely come under the umbrella term of 'alternative worship'. In writing his book, he sets himself a number of objectives: to give the reader a 'feel' what goes on in 'alternative worship', to explain the rationale behind its various and disparate manifestations, and to explain why so many people feel the need to depart from mainstream church and explore different avenues for expressing their faith.

Angier succeeds admirably in the first of his objectives. In a concise first chapter, he outlines the contours of a number of different styles of 'culturally-specific' worship, as he prefers to call it. At the same time he gives valuable insights into the thoughts and feelings of the people involved. Throughout the book, Angier seeks to avoid falling into the trap of criticising those who benefit from more traditional forms of worship, stating that; '*It is important that we recognize and affirm their place in the Church and their spirituality*' (p. 59).

One of the areas of the book that will potentially arouse controversy in the minds of many is the section on the theological rationale of many 'culturally-specific' worship groups. Angier is at pains to point out that many 'culturally-specific' worship groups exist within mainstream evangelicalism. However, the very mention of the theological indebtedness of some groups to Liberation Theology or Matthew Fox and his Environmental Theology would cause concern for many readers. Likewise, the patchy treatment of issues such as post-modernism will leave some wishing for considerably more information before making decisions about the merits of 'culturally-specific' worship.

The following two chapters also leave the reader looking for more; Angier's discussion of 'church' is fairly cursory and draws fairly sweeping conclusions on the basis of sketchy argument. Similarly, his discussion of reasons why so many young people leave the church, in which he bases his argument on theories of faith development, although interesting, will probably do little to convince anyone who does not already subscribe to his view.

Although Angier's reflection on the thinking that underpins 'culturally-specific' worship leaves something to be desired, his penultimate section on developing a worship event which has meaning for those involved, and which they can take ownership of, is very helpful. Some useful advice is coupled with warnings about the dangers of confusing form and substance in worship. Angier concludes with a useful list of contacts for further information as well as a brief, but valuable, bibliography.

Overall, perhaps the greatest asset of Angier's book is that it imparts a clear understanding of the rationale and motivation behind many of the common features of 'culturally-specific' worship services. Not everyone will agree with the underlying theology, but Angier's concise and lucid book would be a valuable addition to the library of any church leader or youth worker who seeks a starting point for an informed opinion about this rising trend within Christian youth work.

Neil Pratt, International Christian College

Paul, the Jewish Theologian

Brad H. Young

Hendriksen, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1997; 164pp.; ISBN 1 56563 248 6

The argument of this book is designed to show that Paul's thinking remained thoroughly Hebrew despite his belief in Jesus as Messiah. Accordingly, it is mostly concerned with a study of Paul's view of Torah. The apostle is a Jewish theologian who anchored his beliefs in the Hebrew Bible, which is spiritual and good, and reveals God's plan for all people.

The book is a strange mixture of the scholarly and the popular. It is well researched, has extensive bibliography, and adequate indexes. However, it is strange, to say the least, to find Paul described as having a 'bubbly personality'. The Acts accounts are accepted unquestioningly. Scriptures are discussed without references being given, and strictly speaking, the use of rabbinic examples to illuminate Paul's thought is, of course, anachronistic, fascinating though this may be.

Those interested in the debate as to the continuity between Paul and Judaism will find little that is new. Many have already been convinced that Paul has a high view of Torah, that the Judaism of his day was a religion of grace, and that his ethics were based upon his training as a Pharisee. Nevertheless, the examination of the Jewish nature of Paul's mode of thinking is interesting and stimulating. Young argues that Paul's thought is circular and interactive rather than linear, i.e. Jewish rather than Gentile. Torah is the epicentre, from which all other theological motifs are developed. However, Jesus has invaded that epicentre, and ideas such as grace, flesh, righteousness and so on must constantly interact with this theme. In Hebrew fashion, clusters of associated concepts are connected with each other in continuous motion.

When the contours of Pauline thought are considered in a cycle of interactive concepts rather than in a straight line where each new idea

supersedes and eliminates the previous one, the apostle's conceptual approach to God is given fresh vigour. It is a Jewish way of thinking. Paul, for instance, does not annul Torah by the preaching of grace. Was not the giving of Torah a powerful manifestation of divine grace? In reality, grace and Torah are interrelated (p. 42).

The idea of the 'Jewish way of thinking' cries out for further definition and discussion. More, for example, on the 'Hebrew mind' as 'filled with wonder at the mystery of God' and as thriving 'on the inconsistencies and contradictions of the one awe-inspiring God' could bring new insights into the apostle's thinking. A footnote tantalisingly suggests a similarity in this respect between Paul and the modern theologian Herschel, but does not go into more detail.

The book is also a valuable contribution to Jewish Christian dialogue. On the basis of the olive tree image, Young insists that the Christian church should 'reject the path of arrogance concerning God's people the Jews'. It is good, too, to see a Jewish writer providing a preface to the work, although I am not convinced that Young intended to argue that Paul invented a wholly new religion, as he suggests.

Marion L. S. Carson, Glasgow

Nelson's New Christian Dictionary

George Thomas Kurian (ed.)

Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2001; 977pp.; ISBN 0-7852-4300-3

The *Nelson's New Christian Dictionary* is designed as a bold project to identify the multi-faceted character of Christianity. The dictionary contains over 10,000 entries in a compressed but comprehensive format. This means that the publication is intentionally a dictionary and not an encyclopaedia. All the entries are brief with no authorship listed for each entry. The *NNCD* provides 'up-to-date information on a host of topics, including its doctrines, creeds, key events and people, worship, music literature, history, arts...' (Preface, ix). Yet the Preface reminds the reader that the *NNCD* is written for the lay person and not the academic. The lay person will find topics that cover Protestant, Anabaptist, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox subjects.

The Appendices are a fascinating collection of twenty-two articles with a wide variety of data on church history, theology, and statistics. The Appendices confirm that there is a thread running through the dictionary. The thread is identified as 'evangelical, interdenominational,

and ecumenical, emphasising the Lordship of Jesus Christ' (Preface, ix). Appendix 14 comprises twenty-five pages of 'Notable Christian Missionaries'. The reason for such a list is not clear since many of the 'notable missionaries' are not included in the dictionary entries. Along with Appendix 14, other appendices that deal with evangelism have not been limited to Protestant work but include Roman Catholic and Orthodox material.

The more controversial appendices will be those that create a ratings system. Appendix 15 rates the '100 Most Important Events of Christian History'; a person may wonder how the Jesus Movement of the 1960s rates above the Salvation Army. At the end of Appendix 16 the '100 Greatest Christians in the Twentieth Century' are rated. It is not clear how this has been done; Karl Barth is rated number 1 and Billy Graham is rated number 2. Appendix 23 rates the '25 Greatest Hymns of the Christian Church'. It should be noted that 'All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name' receives positions 5 and 19.

Since this is a dictionary no biographical material exceeds one page. The sections on John Calvin and Martin Luther provide the largest amount of information yet the information is presented with a broad overview. These biographical summaries are well done although the 'John Wesley' article is somewhat carelessly written implying that he travelled to North America after 1738, 'where he deputed Thomas Coke to superintend the fledgling church'. Also, the use of the word 'call' in the Wesley article indicates a cross reference to the article on 'call', yet the definition of 'call' does not fit the reference in the Wesley article.

The question is, who is going to use the *NNCD*? Students beginning in theology will find the dictionary useful as a first step of discovery, and Church libraries may find it useful for educational purposes due to the comprehensive material. It is hard to know if individual lay people will purchase the dictionary although it appears to be marketed in that direction.

David Rainey, Nazarene Theological College, Didsbury

Hellenism in the Land of Israel

John J. Collins, Gregory E. Sterling (eds)

University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 2001; ix+343pp.; ISBN 0268030529

This fine book provides a welcome update on current research into the relation between Greek and Jewish culture in the land of Israel in antiquity. The topics discussed here cover the range of ways in which

Greek civilisation influenced Judaism: language, architecture, education, architecture, scholarship, social customs, literature and more. The focus is the Second-Temple period, although some of the essays range earlier and later. The authors are internationally acknowledged experts in the field of Jewish studies, and the quality of the essays is extremely high.

Martin Hengel begins the volume with an essay revisiting, but not, he emphasises, *revising* the thesis of his monumental work *Judaism and Hellenism*. He maintains that he was essentially correct in arguing that Palestinian Judaism was as thoroughly hellenised as diaspora Judaism in the period immediately before the emergence of Christianity. A number of the essays in this collection discuss to some extent the 'Hellenistic reform' movement, which attempted to transform Jerusalem into a Greek city-state in 175-164. It is interesting to see, in this connection, the different positions taken by Hengel and John Collins. Hengel sees the 'violent break with ancestral law' as being instigated by the Jewish high priest Menelaus ('Judaism and Hellenism Revisited', pp. 19-20), while Collins notes that the primary sources all ascribe primary responsibility to the foreign king, Antiochus Epiphanes ('Cult and Culture', p. 51). Collins also focuses not just on the influence of Greek culture, but also on the *limits* of that influence. There was some distinctiveness in Palestinian Judaism which made it less tolerant of un-Jewish forces than the diaspora was. (Witness the hostile response to Herod's introduction of gladiatorial contests.) Again, Erich Gruen's article, 'Jewish Perspectives on Greek Culture and Ethnicity', focuses not only on the adoption of Hellenism by Jews, but also emphasises the way in which Jewish portraits of Greece and Greeks continued to be very hostile.

Two other issues of wider interest are touched on by several of the essays. The first concerns the status of Greek as a second language among Jews in Palestine. Sterling notes that while 'Aramaic probably continued to be the main language... Greek was the second language for many Jerusalem Jews' ('Judaism between Jerusalem and Alexandria', pp. 272-3, 274). This is echoed by James VanderKam ('Greek at Qumran') and P. van der Horst, who concludes that 'alongside the vernacular Aramaic, Greek was widely used and understood' ('Greek in Jewish Palestine in the Light of Jewish Epigraphy', p. 166).

The second issue touches on a question which a number of scholars have raised recently. In using the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha to reconstruct the Judaism of Jesus' and Paul's day, scholars tend to privilege the *Palestinian* non-biblical sources. The criteria for judging which texts are from Palestine tend to be a Jerusalem focus and an original language of Hebrew or Aramaic. Texts originally written in

Greek tend to be assigned to the Diaspora, especially Egypt, and most especially Alexandria. Several of the contributors here question these assumptions. Gregory Sterling doubts whether Greek works should not be assigned to Jerusalem, as does Martin Goodman in his epilogue. Together, they wonder whether Philo the Epic Poet, Eupolemus, 2 Maccabees, *Lives of the Prophets* (Sterling, p. 279) as well as Demetrius the Chronographer, Ezekiel the Tragedian, *Wisdom of Solomon*, and the *Orphic Fragments* (Goodman, p. 303) might well be assigned to Jerusalem. If correct, this would have far-reaching implications for the study of Palestinian Judaism.

There is, unfortunately, not room to discuss all the articles here. Two essays on the honorary decree for Simon the Maccabee (in 1 Macc. 14.25-49) come from Edgar Krentz and Jan Willem van Henten; Robert Doran offers an interesting, though by his own admission, speculative analysis of Greek and Jewish educational practices; Shaye Cohen gives three case studies, in my view unconvincing, of the influence of Greek scholarly technique on Jewish writing ('Hellenism in Unexpected Places'); Tessa Rajak's 'Greeks and Barbarians in Josephus' explores where Jews fit in this binary opposition fundamental to Greek thought (see also Gruen, pp. 84-5).

The book is beautifully produced, though suffers slightly from not having a bibliography at the end. Most of the essays are surprisingly accessible (though Sean Freyne's article, 'Galileans, Phoenicians and Ituraeans' is not for the faint-hearted) and there is not a significant amount of repetitive overlap in the different chapters. The pagination in the contents page is not quite right, and the book's usefulness is slightly diminished by the lack of a subject index. But nevertheless, as a state-of-the-art collection of essays on this subject so important for Jewish and New Testament studies, it is an excellent resource for scholars.

Simon Gathercole, University of Aberdeen

Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen

Jan Rohls. Translated by John Hoffmeyer

Columbia Series in Reformed Theology. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1998; xxiii+311pp.; ISBN 0-664-22078-9

This monograph is a study of Reformed confessional literature from its heyday in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the later writing of 'Neo-Reformed' confessions in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment era. It is a translation of a German-language original, published in 1987. This goes some way to explaining the very dated feel

of the arguments presented. Indeed, it sheds more light on the theology of certain twentieth-century systematians who dabble in church history than on the theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The book is very poor, primarily because of its serious methodological flaws. The most significant of these is the author's confusion of theological controversies with the history of Reformed confessions. Thus, the chapters draw primarily upon confessional documents for their theological content and yet the historical introduction pits Calvin against Beza on predestination, talks in general terms about the impact of Ramism on dogmatic formulation, opposes Cocceius to Voetius on covenant versus scholasticism, and discusses the debates surrounding the Academy of Saumur. This is all highly problematic. For a start, the first three positions have been subject to heavy, if not devastating criticism, in the last decade. One wonders why anyone should go the effort of translating a book which fails to grapple with the now sizeable amount of literature which has emerged in the last few years on these topics. More important, however, is the fact that none of these debates (with the exception of Saumur) had any impact whatsoever on confessional formulation, indicating quite clearly that Rohls does not really have any understanding of how the confessions were formulated or the ways in which they were understood and used in their times. On Rohls' account, it would be impossible to explain why, for example, theologians such as Richard Baxter and John Owen could both regard themselves as standing in the line of Dort and Westminster. But, of course, to discover that would involve study of a wide-range of historical documents, not simply the prediction of what should be the case based upon isolating the confessions from their historical context. Indeed, at the heart of Rohls' book is a basic and elementary failure to understand the history (and hence, one might add, the theology) of the very confessions with which he claims to deal. As for the controversy of Saumur, anyone working within the field of seventeenth-century theology knows that, for the most part, this debate was regarded at the time as an intra-confessional dispute. These are basic points which any competent writer on this subject would presuppose.

This problem is, of course, ultimately a problem with anachronistic criteria. Rohls has a clear 1950s neo-orthodox agenda that distorts even the historical readings of the documents. One can, if for some reason one still wishes to do so, make a case for Barth and the theology that flows from his writings, but one should not do so on the back of pseudo-historical scholarship. To write any kind of plausible history of the theology of Reformed confessions, however, one needs to separate

confessional history from the history of non-confessional theological controversies; and one also needs to understand how confessions functioned within their various historical contexts, bearing in mind that, e.g., an issue such as subscription in the modern sense of the word is essentially a post-seventeenth-century issue. This should alert the student to the fact that the documents may well do different things at different points in history. Rohls, a systematician, makes none of the necessary historical distinctions and the resulting work, while interesting as an historiographical artefact, is of radically limited interest to intellectual historians.

While it may well be the fault of a politically correct translator, the claim that the Westminster Confession uses the phrase 'Godself' is a metaphor for the historical insensitivity and anachronistic nonsense of the whole.

Carl R. Trueman, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

Space, Time and Incarnation

Thomas F. Torrance

T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1997; 92pp.; £ 9.95; ISBN 0 567 08583 X

This book is vintage Torrance, not only very like what readers familiar with his work have come to welcome, but in fact a reissue of the 1969 classic of the same title, published by Oxford University Press. It would be odd, then, if Torrance's long-standing commitments both to the enfleshment of God in Christ and to the unity of the still divided Christian church, anchored by his tireless commitment to the ecumenical resources of Nicene-Constantinopolitan theology, were anything but central in this slender book.

Unsurprisingly, *Space Time and Incarnation* is both simple and profound, with Torrance's remarkable intelligence showing itself clearly but not in such a way as to fatigue the reader or undermine the book's interest in accessibility. The book is, in fact, pretty easy to navigate. In addition to an index of centrally important names and subjects (a short perusal of which will reveal Torrance's principal theological debts), the book deprives itself of detailed documentation and other technicalities, and thus makes it easier to follow Torrance's argument without abstraction or distraction. The argument itself is dense but fairly straightforward, in both clarity and cumulative force. It has three movements, each intelligible on its own but together creating something more compelling: an incarnational (Nicene) interpretation of the Christian faith that strips space/time concepts of their philosophical baggage in sustained

engagement with some of the auspicious developments of scientific thinking in the modern era, such as relativity theory (p. 58), unitary field theory (p. 76), and Gödel's theorem (p. 88).

After a preface outlining the threefold purpose of the book amounting, essentially, to a critique of unhealthy dichotomies in theological thinking and 'a positive account of the relation of the incarnation to space and time... within the context of modern scientific thought' (p. v), Torrance turns in chapter 1 to the problems of spatial concepts in Nicene theology. Torrance hopes to clarify as well as deepen basic theological concepts, not simply the concepts of space and time but indeed all (human) concepts with spatial and temporal ingredients (p. 6), and this, he tells us, will involve a critique of the way medieval and modern (especially Lutheran) theology has uncritically taken over from Aristotle a receptacle notion of space (p. 25). But first he must construct the foundation – i.e. reconstruct the foundation – in Patristic thought, beginning with Origen and culminating with Athanasius (pp. 10-21). The Patristic achievement, simply, is the articulation and development of a *relational*, rather than a *receptacle*, conception of space, in which creation and incarnation figure decisively.

The Nicene Fathers were anxious to maintain the transcendence of God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, over the space and time that are relations within God's creation; but they were no less insistent that in becoming man the Son of God really entered not only the poverty of the human condition but also the space- and time-conditioned circumstances of human existence. The substance of the Nicene achievement, then, is, negatively, an intrepid denial of all container notions of space and, positively, an assertion and development, conditioned by God's presence in Jesus Christ, of a dynamic 'differential' and 'essentially open-ended' concept of space (p. 18), 'brought to its sharpest focus in Jesus Christ as the place where God has made room for Himself in the midst of our human existence and as the place where man on earth and in history may meet and have communion with the heavenly Father' (p. 24).

In chapter 2 Torrance shows how, with respect to the *extra Calvinisticum*, the hypostatic union, and the eucharistic *parousia*, German Lutheran theology, representative of too much modern theology, squandered the Patristic insight, and created a number of 'damaging dichotomies' in the theological concepts of space, time and incarnation (pp. 30-51). In chapter 3, the final one of this fine book, Torrance develops his constructive proposal. It amounts, in short, to a recovery of the Patristic insight articulated into, and allowed to come to articulation

within, the context of modern science, thereby attesting both the scientific and the ecumenical relevance of the incarnation (pp. 77-90).

These relatively simple claims, taken together, are intended to cultivate a deeper and more unitary understanding of the Christian faith within which to navigate God's world and interpret it Christianly, in fidelity to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. And that is both the simplicity and profundity of Torrance's argument. In other words, Torrance's incarnational theology is subtle and articulate, but because of the ease with which he makes his case, one may be tempted to think that he is doing neither serious theology nor serious science. The temptation should lose sway on closer reading.

There is some repetition in Torrance's argument (the chapters were originally given as lectures on different occasions), but the recapitulations contribute to the overall coherence of the book and thus to the coherence of the scientific (incarnational) theology it promises. *Space, Time and Incarnation* should be welcomed in a climate where too much theology is either arid or anaemic. Indeed, it would be a happy and deserving fate if Professor Torrance's book remained in print in perpetuity.

Jeffrey S. Privette, Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Theology in Rabbinic Stories

Chaim Pearl

Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts, 1997; 180pp.; ISBN 1 56563 285 0

In this fascinating and highly readable book Chaim Pearl presents lively translations of fifty short stories drawn from a range of rabbinic teaching – parables, folklore, and legend (known as *aggadah*). Some develop familiar themes from the Old Testament, others describe events and teaching linked to Jewish sages of the first few centuries AD. What they all have in common is that they have a moral lesson to teach, a lesson that is often as relevant today as when it was first written. Pearl helpfully supplements each one with his own commentary, setting the story in its historical context and drawing out various ways of interpreting each one. Material is grouped around certain key themes: the beginning of things; Torah; aspects of Jewish history; ethics; mysteries (which includes discussion of miracles and the Messiah); the nations; and a few miscellaneous stories at the end. As a whole, the book provides an excellent introduction to rabbinic theology.

The work, however, is far from being of only historical interest. Throughout his commentaries, Pearl consistently interprets the meaning

of the stories for modern, post-Holocaust Judaism, drawing out eternally relevant aspects of the nature of God, his relations with the world, and the proper human response to him. Readers not familiar with modern Jewish thought will gain a much deeper appreciation of some of its key themes.

Every reader will have his or her own favourites amongst these charming and very human stories. I was particularly interested to read Jewish interpretations of Old Testament passages, some of which had quite different slants to traditional Christian readings (for example the creation of humans which has no concept of any kind of 'original sin'); stories set during the Hadrianic persecution brought what is often a little-known area of Jewish history vividly to life; and discussions of anti-semitism showed that the rabbis were faced with similar concerns to Jewish people living in our own century. On a lighter note, the images of Potiphar's wife inviting her friends round to marvel at Joseph or God forbidding the angels from singing in heaven at the destruction of the Egyptians in the Re(e)d Sea will stay with me for a long time to come.

My only criticism of Pearl's book is that, having kindled our interest in rabbinic texts, he gives us no suggestions for further reading, no indications as to which translations or collections would be appropriate as a second step. Although he acknowledges the source of each story in abbreviated form, without a list of abbreviations it might be difficult to locate extracts of particular interest. The lack of an index also makes finding a specific section again rather more difficult.

Overall the book will appeal to anyone who wants to explore the traditions common to Judaism and Christianity, and to gain an insight into Jewish doctrine and ethics through a rich collection of legend and folklore.

Helen K. Bond, University of Aberdeen

Spes Scotorum, Hope of Scots

Dauvit Broun and Thomas Owen Clancy (eds)

T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1999; xv+314pp., £15.95; ISBN 0 567 08682

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The title of the book grabbed my interest and is obtained from a fragment of a medieval prayer on the island of Inchcolm: 'O Columba, hope of Scots, by your merits' mediation, make us companions of the blessed angels.' It appears that the 'spes Scotorum' (hope of Scots) was readily invoked at times of plague and war in the fourteenth century. With Celtic spirituality in fashion, I wondered whether historians would be tempted to underwrite a modern re-interpretation of the Gael.

This collection of essays is dedicated to the Scottish Catholic Historical Association (the academic credentials of the ten contributors are impressive) and offers the latest research on the saint. Divided into three sections, they explore Columba's historical and written world (along with that of his biographer Adomnan) and offer a critical assessment of his legacy for the modern world. The presentation of Columba is of a robust figure who has survived successive attempts to reinterpret him in the image of the times. His Gaelic culture and ascetic lifestyle is difficult to combine with contemporary forms of Christianity – whether it be the Iona Community or the consumer spirituality from North America. He is no plaster-cast saint and his reputation for being environmentally friendly comes in for critical comment. The authors serve us well by attempting to demythologise the saint, and the final essay bravely provides a profile of him 'between faith and folklore, between preaching and propaganda, between saint and symbol'.

In these uncertain post-modern times, Columba has become an icon of spiritual identity, but ritualistic use of the saints, as recommended by his biographer, is not something to which we need to return. It is possible to appreciate them from afar as 'holy' people of their time. Unlike other saints, Columba has always inspired more fascination in his reputation than in his remains. Indeed, it seems that his cult was created by medieval poets whose interest in history was, at best, secondary. Today those who live among the foothills and paths between Iona and Lindisfarne may be fascinated by the analysis of place-names with his seventh-century associates. The close relationship between the church and the monarchy established by Columba together with the use of Dunkeld as the source of Scottish identity is immensely interesting.

In the end, I found the book to be somewhat uneven, which is what one might expect from a project that draws five unpublished papers, two recent conference papers and two specially prepared studies from so many authors. With the exception of the final chapter by Donald Meek, it is more a case of historical scholars writing for each other than for the general public. However, a book of this scholarly stature is needed to outline the limits of investigation as well as the sober impossibility of attempting to reconstruct Celtic Christianity... like trying to put Humpty Dumpty together again!

Robert Calvert, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

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