

Book Reviews

THE RADICAL EVANGELICAL – SEEKING A PLACE TO STAND

Nigel Wright

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What is the difference between a radical Evangelical and a conservative Liberal? The answer is very little in terms of belief and practice. The distinction comes in terms of personal spiritual history. The adjective *radical* indicates the theological position (eg the fallibility of Scripture, that Jesus made ‘innocent mistakes’, the denial of penal substitution, that those who have died without hearing the gospel can be given a ‘first chance’ after death, that hell is not a place of eternal punishment); whereas the noun *Evangelical* indicates the heritage from which the person has come and also indicates that the person, for whatever reason (kudos, links with friends, appreciation of some elements of that noble tradition), wishes to retain some association with it.

Nigel Wright, former lecturer in doctrine at Spurgeon’s College, London, holds all the views just outlined and others, which would give any mainstream Evangelical cause for concern. If the writer had dispensed with the term Evangelical altogether, or the reader had no idea of Wright’s heritage, the term ‘Evangelical’ based solely on the basis of his theological beliefs as expounded in this book (as traditionally understood) would be the last label one would think of using to describe his position.

This book is a powerful reminder that Evangelicalism is in a state of ferment. In what is taken as the ‘given’ pluralism of Evangelicalism, Nigel Wright is wanting to secure a place for another member – the radical Evangelical. He begins by adopting the cruciform definition of Bebbington-conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism, which, he says, is fast becoming a classical definition. That is true, but one wonders why? Is it because it is so general and loosely doctrinal that it appeals to those like Wright whose beliefs are so ill-suited doctrinally that it enables them to claim the title ‘Evangelical’ without too much trouble?

Fundamentalists get short shrift from Wright. Conservative Evangelicals receive a little more sympathy, although their views regarding the authorship of Daniel and the Pastorals call from Wright bewilderment, as if ‘the very Word of God is at stake over these issues’. The New Evangelicals score more favourably for they ‘have been more able to discriminate in the scholarly debate between what is of importance and what of relative indifference’ (one wonders what folk like D A Carson, and J I Packer have been doing all these years). One is also at a loss as to what

to make of the astonishing claim that ‘Conservative evangelicalism has been in danger of attending to the *form* of Scripture while paying inadequate attention to its *content* as the Word of God’ (has the ‘Bible Speaks Today’ series been in vain?). There are many such generalizations and false antitheses in this book designed to make the reader more susceptible to the position which Wright advocates – radical Evangelicalism.

What is radical Evangelicalism? According to Wright it is ‘a greater willingness to let the Bible be what it actually is, rather than seeking to determine this in advance on the basis of *a priori* assumptions’. If this is so, then I would suspect that most readers of this Journal would be classed as radical Evangelical. However, the rest of the book soon reveals what this actually entails – the adoption of other *a priori* assumptions about what Scripture is and what our theological framework should be.

The basis for Wright’s ‘revolutionary orthodoxy’ is the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus he sees the primary debate as not being between Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals but between those who hold to trinitarian beliefs and those who do not. One would not disagree with this. But it is a singularly myopic position, for all doctrine is interrelated. The reductionism of Wright is not sufficient to do justice to the whole web of beliefs which Evangelicals have espoused in the past, arising out of their treatment of Scripture. But Wright treats the trinitarian core as sufficient and not just necessary. It is therefore not surprising that having discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Calvinism and Arminianism (not always fairly – ‘Arminians were right with their hearts’ regarding outreach but ‘Calvinists right with their heads’ – what of Spurgeon and Whitfield? Was there no joining of heart and head in their ministries?), both are considered inadequate because they give us no ‘optimistic ground on which to stand’ on the matter of the number of people who will be saved. *A priori* Wright believes that many, if not the majority of mankind should be saved, as this would do justice to the revelation of the God we have as Trinity. But surely the question of whether we should be optimistic or pessimistic regarding mankind’s future destiny is an irrelevance, what we need is to be realistic and true to the scriptural testimony.

Wright then presents a caricature of the conservative-evangelical view of Scripture. He also falls into the error of the false absolute antithesis: ‘It is not correct beliefs about the Bible which have priority but living engagement with it, so that God’s Word may be addressed to us.’ Why can we not have both? Indeed, if we have wrong views about the Bible (that it is merely an ancient fallible testimony to what people thought, however mistakenly, was their experience of the divine) can we then have a living engagement with it as *God’s Word*?

Wright rejects the belief that the Cross is a means of God propitiating his own anger in penal substitution, not on exegetical grounds, but on theological grounds, again by way of creating a false antithesis – ‘the cross then becomes God’s way out of his own dilemma rather than a resolution of the human condition’, when Paul’s point is that it is both (Romans 3:26).

The valuable legacy which liberalism bequeathed to us, according to Wright, is its insistence on the humanity of both Christ and the Scriptures. Here the analogy of the divine-human nature of Christ as applied to the Bible is given a new twist, namely, that since to err is to be human, and Christ was human, so Christ erred (Mark 2:25-6; Matthew 23:25 are cited as examples). When the analogy is applied to the Bible, it follows that the Bible writers also erred. These are simply ‘innocent mistakes’ which, it is argued, do not substantially affect core beliefs. But surely the implications are more serious than that? Since we have no external reference point to check matters out, but only what Jesus and the apostles taught, it may well be that in his teaching about God, salvation, the kingdom etc, Jesus made some ‘innocent’ but significant mistakes. Why should Jesus be so loose in his handling of the facts of Scripture and yet so precise when it comes to its meaning? And if this is so with Jesus, one dreads to think what we might do with some of Paul’s beliefs on this basis!

The ‘radical’ implications of Wright’s theology are worked out in the areas of hell and judgment and politics, with no prizes for guessing what conclusions he comes to. The final chapter is an appeal for a more ‘generous religion’.

In his final chapter, Wright points to the tendency for Evangelicals to engage in judgmentalism, ‘presuming to pronounce definitively over other people’s opinion or status’. Sadly there is more than a grain of truth in this, and the tone of some advocates of Evangelicalism leaves much to be desired. However, the problem with leaving matters where Wright does, is that it makes it very difficult to criticize his position without that criticism being seen as further evidence of evangelical judgmentalism (and there is more than a trace of judgmentalism on Wright’s part too).

One could not help but read this book with more than a sense of sadness and frustration. The impression received is that in order to commend his own position, Wright does not always deal fairly with the position of others, especially conservative Evangelicals. It would have been far more helpful to engage with what many conservative scholars are actually saying, rather than the generalizations drawn up by Wright.

Wright’s book is a focused instance of what is happening in

Evangelicalism generally. There is a split taking place between a strand in Evangelicalism which wants to embrace all of true Christianity and another which insists on the non-negotiability of evangelical truth. Commenting on this trend, D A Carson has helpfully written:

this is reflected in the widely recognised clamour amongst many of the younger evangelical intellectuals, in their drumming criticism of evangelical ‘fathers’ (like immature adolescents who cannot allow any opinion to be respected but their own), in their persistent drift from biblical authority, and increasingly, from other doctrines as well. But most of them still want to call themselves evangelicals: that is their power base, that is their prime readership, and it is that group that funds many of the colleges where they teach. (*The Gaggling of God* p 453)

That hits the nail firmly on the head.

MELVIN TINKER

PASSING ON THE TRUTH; 1&2 TIMOTHY SIMPLY EXPLAINED
(Welwyn Commentary Series)

Michael Bentley

Durham: Evangelical Press 1997 316pp No price pb ISBN 0-85234-389- 2

The Pastoral Epistles are enjoying considerable attention from commentary writers at the moment, and it is good to welcome this accessible contribution. This commentary has its origins in sermons, which can be seen in the brevity of its chapters, its readable style and its application to the life of the local church. This reviewer was greatly encouraged to discover how the pressures on pastors today are so strikingly similar to the pressures experienced by Timothy and Titus, and how they are not portrayed as ‘Timid Timothy and Titus’. Bentley understands that they are gifted pastors, driven to despair by the persistence of false teaching and Christian gullibility. This is a book one could easily put in the hands of home-group leaders, knowing that their Bible studies would be the clearer for it.

As one would expect from this series, conservative positions are stated on authorship and dating, and those who wish to know more are referred to more substantial commentaries. I was not persuaded that the author had grappled with the arguments about the position of women in 1 Timothy 2, but perhaps the constraints of the series limited what he could cover. Some additional note would surely have helped, as members of even very conservative churches are affected by the culture, and are aware of the variety of interpretations within the evangelical fold.

This brings me to the reservations. First, I am surprised that no reference is made to the range of substantial recent commentaries – even conservative ones. Bentley has missed out on the major works of Fee, Knight, Towner, Earle, Lea and Griffin, and Stott on 1 Timothy and Titus. Even his quotations from Guthrie come from the 1957 version and not the 1990 revised edition. Although these works are not essential, they are all extremely helpful and provocative, and it is a shame to lose their insights even if it is not the aim of the commentary to interact with them.

Second, and this may be connected, there is too ready an assumption that the meaning of the text is obvious. For example, 1 Timothy 2 is assumed to be about public worship. That is a common assumption, shared by most Bible translators – but it is not widely shared among recent commentators, who have proposed intriguing and persuasive alternatives. Similarly, on 1 Timothy 3:15, where the church is described as ‘the pillar and foundation of truth’, the question Bentley asks is, ‘Is my life (as part of God’s church) built upon the foundation of God’s truth?’ (p 120), which is the precise reverse of Paul’s surprising point that the truth is built upon the foundation of the church. The tendency to read the text quickly and to jump too easily to application persists throughout, with the result that Bentley loses many opportunities to surprise us with the Pastorals.

Nevertheless, it is a great benefit to have a commentary which is as simple and clear as this, and which will help the reader to follow the text. For the majority of Christians who find reading the Bible a big challenge, this will surely help them on their way. Preachers will probably want to start elsewhere.

CHRIS GREEN

THEOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH REFORMERS

Philip Edgecumbe Hughes

Abington, PA: Horseradish 1997 267pp £12.99 pb ISBN 0-9656563-0-6

The reaction one has to the republishing of this book will clearly indicate one’s own attitude to the events of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Such reactions will polarize, on the one hand into the belief that the Reformation was simply concerning, ‘...the useless fooleries of disputes about doctrines’, or on the other that it was the greatest time since the age of the Apostles. There is little doubt that the latter view was held enthusiastically by the late Dr Hughes and that this comes through clearly in his work.

Dr Hughes, who died in 1990, was born in Australia, educated in South Africa, ordained in England, and spent much of his life lecturing in the

USA as a convinced Episcopalian but not a prelatist, and perhaps surprisingly at Westminster Theological Seminary with its Presbyterian polity. The breadth of Philip Hughes' erudite mind was matched by the breadth of his sympathies in the cause of the kingdom of Christ.

The work was originally undertaken at Latimer House in the 1960s and was published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1965. Dr Hughes continued to spend time on this subject, sections were added to the original and the book was republished in 1980 by Baker Book House. The additional sections were largely concerned to add quotations from the writings of Frith and Barnes. This further work considerably increased the value of the book for those researching the period.

It should be explained that towards the middle of the nineteenth century a project was put in hand to republish the original writings of the, '*Fathers and the early English Reformers*'. These volumes were published by the Parker Society and are now out of print and difficult to obtain.

It is from these volumes that Dr Hughes drew from the writings of the English Reformers, creating a theological compendium and identifying the main strands of the English Reformers' theology. There are sections from the writings of Cranmer, Tyndale, Latimer and Jewell on Holy Scripture, Justification, Sanctification, Preaching, Worship, Sacraments, Ministry, Church and State, Truth and Unity. In addition there is a list of key characters with their dates and significant events in their lives.

The work has been carefully edited and made 'reader-friendly' in both printing and layout. The present editor states that the text has been revised into American English, apart from such words as 'honour' and 'Saviour' in the spelling, and apparently in change of tenses, exchanging the pluperfect for the perfect. Having sat under Dr Hughes' ministry from time to time, I am not sure that he would have approved. However, all is not lost. I can confirm that our American brethren will feel at home and that the 'Brits' may be reassured that, in spite of the two nations being separated by a common language, they too will find the subject-matter quite clear.

Who should be interested in purchasing a copy? Any theological student who wishes to research this period in some depth will find the work invaluable. Those who purchased the original book would do well to upgrade their copy. Even those who purchased the 1980 edition will find that the new version is a distinct improvement with its additions of the *1555-1955 Commemoration of the Reformation Martyrs* and *The Thirty Nine Articles: a Restatement in Today's English*.

It may not be too much to hope that in the near future all the works of

the Parker Society may be put on to CD-Rom. Even in that case, the tour of the CD would be enhanced by using Dr Hughes as a guide to the Theology of the English Reformers.

DAVID STREATER

THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT: A DILEMMA FOR REFORMED THEOLOGY FROM CALVIN TO THE CONSENSUS (1536-1675) G Michael Thomas

Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1997 277pp £19.99 pb ISBN 0-85364-828-X

This discussion of the extent of the Atonement is well worth careful attention from anyone interested in either the history of that question or the systematic issues which it raises. Its strengths include both the admirable clarity with which the complexities of different theological systems are explained, and the consistent approach to analysis which permeates the wide-ranging historical exploration. This second strength is seen when Thomas applies a similar set of questions to each of the theologians he discusses, without sacrificing any necessary attention to their peculiarities.

John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Heinrich Bullinger, Girolamo Zanchi, John Cameron, and Moise Amyraut are the individuals who receive the most sustained treatment; the Heidelberg theologians are grouped together, as are the submissions from the various national deputations to the Synod of Dort. This *dramatis personae* itself explains that the historical fascination of the work lies partly in its being such a penetrating yet brisk discussion of many theologians who are not read as often as the earlier Protestant Reformers. But the interest of the work is still more compelling. Thomas often observes the tension between the two wills of God evinced by the preached message that all must repent and believe, and the hidden plan to save only the elect. With Calvin, for example, this was 'the way to do justice to the biblical data, but it left a grave difficulty, [...] how can Christ be regarded as an adequate revelation of God, if what is seen and heard in Christ has to be so severely qualified by considerations of a secret will?' (p 25). In this statement we have the seed of the two central theses which Thomas pursues throughout his analysis. The first is the interpretation of the next 140 years of Reformed thought as an attempt to resolve this tension in various ways. Calvin's theology is 'inherently unstable' (p 34), and it is this instability which, as Thomas shows, fed the later developments by self-professed Reformed theologians. In the case of Beza the tension was reduced by applying a vigorous logic at the expense of the ethics of theology, which is almost tantamount to saying that Beza made God the cause of sin because it was logical to do so, but in so doing sacrificed the goodness of God. With Cameron and Amyraut the tension was made even clearer by their adherence to both a particular election and

the claim that God willed the salvation of all if they would but repent, but this was at the expense of logic because these two positions contradict one another (p 217).

The second thesis is that the tension present in Calvin's thought should point us away from the answers offered by all the Reformed theologians discussed, because it cannot be resolved on their terms. Their common weakness is the failure to locate all of our knowledge of God in the knowledge of Christ. We are to turn from these older Reformed theologians to consider the doctrine of predestination taught by Karl Barth, who has offered a genuinely Christocentric account in which Jesus is the only reprobate. It is intriguing that Thomas leaves this argument until the Conclusion (pp 248-53), at which point it has slightly the character of a *deus ex machina* in that the suddenness and brevity of its appearance does not satisfy the reader, who has by now been brought to feel for himself the tension in Reformed theology. It is hard not to suspect that this tension needs a far more painstaking resolution, if any is available. This may be unfair since constraint of space could explain the brevity, but the problem remains that Thomas has applied a rigorous analysis to the older authors which he spares the fleetingly-glimpsed Barthian solution; it is hard to avoid the suspicion that Barth has been let off far too lightly by comparison. Is it really the case that basing our theology on Jesus alone will suggest that he is the one reprobate man and that God wills in the fullest sense to save all men? What of Jesus' own statements that 'no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' (Matt 11:27); 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him' (John 6:44) or, 'Many are called, but few are chosen' (Matt 22:14)? What of the hardening purpose of the parables as defined by Jesus himself (Mark 4:10-12)? It is too often and too quickly assumed that the Reformed doctrine of particular election contradicts the message of Jesus. This absence of a biblical evaluation of Barth's suggestion is indicative of a slight weakness throughout the book. Thomas treats the theologians he discusses almost as if they were only practitioners of systematic theology trying to balance various doctrinal emphases, rather than as theologians seeking to do justice to the teaching of Scripture. This is most striking when he comments in passing that 'it should be pointed out that the opponents of Amyraut believed that, as well as their reasoned theological arguments, they had statements of Scripture that were clearly on their side' (p 236). It is obvious that much of the debate was systematic, but more could be made of the arguments from Scripture. This takes us back to the earlier quotation from Calvin: might it be that the tension between the two wills must necessarily arise from a balanced exegesis of Scripture, and that the instability of Calvin's thought is something theologians actually have a responsibility to maintain?

Lastly, I must express a small hesitation concerning not content but form. It is a shame that Thomas uses so many old (by which I mean very old) translations in quoting from the works he discusses, so that we read from Calvin that God 'must play maister within our heartes' (p 21) or from Bullinger that 'God is the sovereigne, eternal and onlie god, the fountaine and head of all goodnesse' (p 67). With an old translation to hand, would it not have been quite easy to retranslate (or at least modernize) such passages?

These criticisms, however, should not undermine the impression which I wish to give of this work, since the section on Barth is very brief, and the translations are perfectly comprehensible. Thomas has produced an excellent discussion of the historical material which exhibits independent historical judgment and a sensitive eye for doctrinal concerns. It will be highly stimulating and illuminating reading for anyone interested in either this period or this question.

GARRY WILLIAMS

LIGHT TO THE ISLES **Douglas Dales**

Cambridge: Lutterworth Press 1997 208pp £14.95 pb ISBN 0 7188 2965 4

It is a relief these days to find a work covering the period 400-800 AD, that does not indulge in fanciful speculation about Celtic theology. Indeed those who do indulge in such speculation would be well advised to read this volume to gain a firmer grasp of the nature of the evidence for Christianity in the British Isles at that time. There is much that can be stated on this subject, but the evidence needs to be assessed carefully as it is by the author of this book.

Although the focus of the book is on the missionary theology which inspired the activity of a remarkable collection of Christian leaders, it actually serves as an excellent introduction to the church history of this period. Douglas Dales has taken the end of Roman occupation in Britain and the cessation of sustained missionary activity from Britain to Germany as the time limits of his study. He is well acquainted with the original texts, but he does not merely look at these as providing historical data. Quite properly he emphasizes the fact that these texts originally served theological and evangelistic purposes. He has also made use of archaeological and other material where appropriate.

The book begins with a study of Martin of Tours, for he is seen as a defining model for a missionary by later writers. In Part 1, key figures from the British (in the racial sense) church are covered. Of course this includes a sober and sensitive chapter on Patrick. In Part 2 the missionary

work amongst the Anglo-Saxons by people such as Augustine, Aidan and Theodore is highlighted. The book concludes in Part 3 with a look at the legacy of this earlier work as it is found in the great Bede and in the energetic activity of Willibrord and Boniface.

The book contains an extensive bibliography and is permeated by the author's admiration and enthusiasm for these godly Christian leaders from the past. Any who have been inspired by the anniversaries of Columba and Augustine in 1997 to find out more about this period of church history will find this book a very good place to start.

MARK BURKILL

RICHARD HOOKER AND THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND REASON – Reformed Theologian of the Church of England? Nigel Atkinson

Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1997 192pp £11.99 pb ISBN 0-85364-801-8

There is an unfortunate, but understandable, human tendency to judge people by the company they keep. On this basis, many Evangelicals have doubtless steered clear of Richard Hooker, since he seems to be the patron saint of what has been called 'the all-comprehensive nothingness of the Anglican Church'. Nigel Atkinson's new book may therefore not only have pulled off a considerable *coup* in the face of traditional Hooker scholarship, but may also have saved him from an undeserved reputation.

Atkinson's work is a model of simplicity. In his introduction he sets out his stall, both as regards traditional assessments of Hooker and his own suggestion that Hooker is 'a Reformed theologian of the Church of England'. There then follow three sections, each with the same structure, on Hooker's attitude to the authority of reason, tradition and Scripture. The view of Hooker's Puritan opponents is presented, Hooker's own view is assessed, a comparison is made with Luther and Calvin, conclusions are drawn and there is then a critique of 'Hooker scholarship' in the light of the foregoing. The final section of the book summarizes Atkinson's proposed reassessment of Hooker.

Atkinson's thesis is that Hooker's *via media* lay not (as is usually suggested) between Catholic and Reformed but between Catholicism and a Puritanism which had itself departed from the Reformed tradition into an extreme biblicism – a position represented by the anonymous authors of *A Christian Letter*, who criticized Hooker's *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* as a betrayal of Reformation principles. By contrast with these ancient critics and Hooker's modern friends, however, Atkinson shows time and again that Hooker's position can be held to be consistently and classically

Reformed. In doing so, he also casts some interesting light on the subtlety and depth of the views held by Calvin and Luther.

Given the evidence he musters, any future assertions about Hooker's views ought surely to take Atkinson's arguments into account. There are, however, one or two cautionary comments to make. The first is that the rehabilitation of Hooker should not lead to a corresponding ostracizing of the Puritans. Although Atkinson's case seems sound, I am aware that not all Puritans were as rigid or indeed as fundamentalist as those who attacked Hooker. As amongst Evangelicals today, there were the learned and the not-so-learned, the wise and the foolish. And in his analysis of the Puritan attitude to worship, I feel that Atkinson is sometimes less than fair to their position.

Second, we should not rush to claim Hooker as our own 'patron' from those who have canonized him as the measure of true Anglicanism. We do not want to become 'Hookerians' on a par with Lutherans or Calvinists. It is well to bear in mind the words of another champion of the church, that 'all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas', to which we can add 'or Hooker, or Luther, or Calvin, or the Puritans'. As a result of Atkinson's efforts, we may well want to read Hooker for edification. We do not, however, want to become slaves to men. Hooker is still subject to Scripture, and his handling of Scripture was not always of the best, as Atkinson shows (perhaps inadvertently) in his presentation of Hooker's critique of the suggestion that 'water' in John 3:5 refers to the Spirit rather than baptism. (He would be opposed today by Don Carson, amongst others!) In this matter, and perhaps others, Hooker was unwilling to allow a new reading of Scripture to challenge tradition to the same degree that his opponents did.

Atkinson's book is already gathering a deserved reputation and is to be welcomed, not least because it is always good to have a cat thrown amongst the scholarly pigeons. It should make Evangelicals more willing to give Hooker a hearing, and less willing to allow claims in his name that true Anglicanism has always 'balanced' Scripture, tradition and reason. The Hooker presented by Atkinson was not a man of balance, but of emphasis, and emphatically Scripture came first.

JOHN RICHARDSON

HATED WITHOUT A CAUSE? A SURVEY OF ANTI-SEMITISM

Graham Keith

Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1997 301pp £17.99 pb ISBN 0-85364-783-6

We have here a contribution which is particularly accessible to non-specialists, and will surely become a favourite of Evangelicals in the years

to come. Dr Keith is a teacher of Religious Education at James Hamilton Academy in Ayr, and is a member of the Tyndale Fellowship, having written a number of articles for their Bulletin. The motivation to write this book seems to have come from his reaction against the commonplace presentation of anti-Semitism as a Christian creation, and in this he is to be congratulated.

Dr Keith has attempted to combine historical and theological disciplines in this work, but it lacks the important contribution of sociological and psychological analyses in trying to unearth the complex reasons for anti-Semitism in different cultures and historical contexts. He has produced an excellent Select Bibliography for students to master as they come to this area of study, which is broken down helpfully into different historical periods. The chapter titles spell out his treatment of this subject, and he certainly succeeds in his task of demonstrating that anti-Semitism had a history and an ideology before the time of the birth of the church, and that there is an active anti-Semitism which does not share the presuppositions of Christian hostility to Jewish people and all things Jewish (pp 32-3, 147-8, 173-4, 206-10, 265-6).

The book moves fairly systematically through the following range of issues: anti-Semitism before Christianity; the charge of anti-Semitism in the New Testament; Luther and the developing Protestant antagonism to Jews; modern European anti-Semitism and the degeneration into racism; Arab and Islamic anti-Semitism, and a concluding chapter in which he suggests that anti-Semitism is essentially a theological issue, having its origins in satanic opposition to God and his purposes.

Strengths of the book include a persuasive argument that anti-Semitism should be distinguished from anti-Judaism, although the assumptions behind the latter when held by Christians may well need correction as well (pp 2-6, 194), and a clear demonstration that the New Testament is not a library which reflects anti-Semitic prejudices, although texts in it have been abused by anti-Semites to justify their own hostility to Jewish people (pp 48-55, 72-3, 90, 268). He is weaker in establishing, which he needs to do in the light of his conclusion that there is a satanic root to this problem, that anti-Semitism really is *sui generis* in the whole area of inter-communal prejudice and discrimination (pp 73-4, 113-14, 238-41).

I would also suggest that someone reading this book might well receive the incorrect and inappropriate impression that Jewish people can be defined simply as victims in history (pp 264-5, 275-6). The Jewish community is creative, caring and purposeful, and resists the image of victim. Dr Keith is clearly a committed and compassionate Evangelical who is ashamed of the church's record of hostility towards Jewish people,

and yet he is also convinced of the need for the sharing of the gospel among them, rejecting the call for a moratorium on evangelism (pp 279-83), and affirming, in passing, the role of Messianic Jews in both the Christian and Jewish worlds (p 280). The book's enduring value will be as a springboard for Evangelicals into the complex and murky waters of Christian anti-Semitism.

WALTER RIGGANS

CHRISTOLOGY AND THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM: AN ARGUMENT FOR MARKAN PRIORITY Peter M Head

Cambridge: CUP 1997 337pp £37.50 hb ISBN 0-521-58488-4

Students of the Gospels, whether involved in academia or not, will be well aware of the debates regarding the synoptic problem. Attempts to state, resolve and account for the relationships between the first three Gospels abound, and it is into this fierce arena of debate that Peter Head attempts to step. The book examines the two major theories that have been put forward to explain the dependent relationship between the Synoptics – either the traditional two-source theory which accords Mark and an unknown source document (Q) priority over Matthew and Luke, or the Griesbach hypothesis, whereby Mark is later, having brought together and redacted material from Matthew and Luke. These two theses, and the history of their articulation, is helpfully documented in the first chapter, which will be of use to anyone new to this subject.

Head's main thesis is that, by examining the differences in Christology between the documents, a judgment can be made between these two classical views. However, in a key chapter on methodology, Head points out that common to New Testament scholarship has been the assumption that Christology develops in a linear way, moving from a 'low' Christology up to a 'high' Christology. On this basis, Mark has been viewed as prior, due to its apparent 'lower' Christology. Yet evidence for this growth is lacking. Authors may reinterpret material into their particular christological grid, yet christological views do not necessarily progress in such a linear fashion. In addition, Head reveals that this assumption concerning christological development and the priority of Mark is fraught with dangers, including circularity, the lack of a christological development scale, and ambiguity concerning the traditional evidence used to make this case (for example, Matthew's supposed shift away from the humanity of Jesus). The methodology employed here is much more level-headed, taking the relevant passages in turn, from both the two-source perspective and the Griesbach perspective, and evaluating the coherence and plausibility of each theory on the basis of the christological picture drawn. Key passages include the rich young ruler, Jesus' rejection at

Nazareth, and Jesus walking on water. Following the discussion of these passages is an analysis of themes vital to Christology – Jesus' emotions, the worship of Jesus, christological titles, and the controversial topic of the Messianic secret.

Head's conclusions are well-argued. The methodology demonstrates the strong case for Markan priority (on foundations which are more secure than some traditional assumptions), and Head makes clear the continued need for the Griesbach hypothesis to provide a redaction-critical commentary if it is to stand its ground. The fair-mindedness of his methodology is to be applauded, as is his honesty concerning the outcome of his investigation into passages which would otherwise prove his thesis (for example, in concluding that a comparison of the parable of the rich young ruler between Matthew and Mark does not yield a conclusive argument for Markan priority). The work is also fascinating for allowing further insight into the Christology of the Gospels, and is written in such a way that it draws the reader into the debate. Readers of *Churchman* will also appreciate Head's comments regarding the role of tradition history in the redaction of the Gospels. Head has provided a first-class contribution to an ongoing debate, and a powerful blow to the Griesbachian camp. Thoroughly recommended for all interested in this area of NT scholarship.

TONY GRAY

THE COMMUNION SERVICE: A GUIDE **David Stone**
London: Hodder & Stoughton 1996 126pp £6.99 pb ISBN 0 340 64200 9

THE FUNERAL SERVICE: A GUIDE **David Saville**
London: Hodder & Stoughton 1996 127pp £6.99 pb ISBN 0 340 65183 0

Older readers of *Churchman* will remember the helpful series of *Prayer Book Commentaries* published by Hodder & Stoughton in the 1960s. The same publishers have now produced a similar series entitled *Your Local Church*, which offers to give essential guides to services, to explain symbols and words, and provide plain introductions to beliefs and practice. These are two in the series, both written by clergy with good pastoral experience.

David Stone is Vicar of St Jude's, Courtfield Gardens, in the Earls Court area of West London. His book aims, in his own words, 'to explain the background to Holy Communion, and to suggest various ways of entering more fully into what happens'. In doing so, he focuses mainly on what the Bible itself says about the sacrament. Chapters then follow on 'Looking together', 'Looking back', 'Looking within', 'Taking a closer look within', 'Looking up', 'Looking around', 'Looking forward' and 'Looking out'.

Each chapter includes both doctrinal and devotional material, and the inclusion of appropriate prayers and hymns makes the book a useful present to give at confirmation, or to a Christian of longer standing who is wanting to get more out of this service.

While the author seeks to cater for all traditions within the church, he is firm in his evangelical understanding that there can be no repetition of, or addition to, what was accomplished once for all by Christ. Similarly, he stresses that Jesus' teaching in John 6:52-7 is not primarily about Holy Communion at all. In tackling the question of how Christ is present at the service, he gives the varying answers that have been put forward, noting where they differ from biblical teaching, but ends by quoting with approval the progress made in seeking to reconcile differences by the ARCIC 'Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine'.

In his guide to the Funeral Service, David Saville, Adviser in Evangelism to the Edmonton Area of London Diocese, says he is writing particularly for those in the middle of deep feelings. 'Some will be facing the pain and grief of bereavement, others the anxiety about their own health, death, mortality (and therefore perhaps setting out their wishes for their own funeral), others the perplexity about funerals they have attended but which they did not really understand or perhaps found uninspiring or even discouraging.' He then goes on to analyse the various components of a funeral service (sentences and prayers, psalms, readings, sermon, hymns and other music, prayers and the committal) and adds further advice on signs, symbols and rituals, the funerals of children, and services and prayers before and after the funeral itself. There are also useful postscripts to the chapters on such subjects as emotion in the funeral service, 'Heaven and hell?', 'What do we know about heaven?', 'What should I wear?', 'Where do I sit', and 'What about flowers'? Three appendices cover further reading, a checklist for when planning one's own funeral, and useful addresses.

In his ministry as an incumbent David Saville has evidently met a number of church members and others with a basically Christian viewpoint, who think that reincarnation can be 'bolted on' to their other beliefs, so he considers this in a further postscript. He points out that such an idea is not, and cannot logically be, part of the Christian faith with its emphasis on the uniqueness of each human life and the certainty of the Resurrection. Reincarnation is exposed as yet another attempt to get to heaven by our own merit.

With the wide variety of options currently available for a funeral service, the author examines them and sets out the pros and cons with much pastoral wisdom. In a consideration of the future destiny of the departed he is unequivocal in his dismissal of universalism, and in the

vexed question of prayers for the dead, states that they ‘have to reflect the difficult fact that people make irrevocable choices for or against God in this life, but also the exciting fact that God’s promise of eternal life is also irrevocable to all who believe in him’ (p 97).

Every one of us could benefit from prayerfully reading this book before planning our own funeral service (a task which will greatly ease the burden on our executors). It could with profit be given to the bereaved or to those approaching a bereavement as they face the task of arranging a funeral, with the hope and prayer that they will actually get round to reading it.

We look forward to the appearance of further publications in this series.

DAVID WHEATON

EVANGELICALISM IN BRITAIN 1935-1995 – a personal sketch
Oliver Barclay

Leicester: IVP 1997 159pp £8.99 pb ISBN 0 85111 189 0

It has often been said that if we do not learn from the mistakes of the past, we are doomed to repeat them. Because I believe that to be true, I am convinced that this book by Oliver Barclay, who was General Secretary of the UCCF (IVF) from 1964 to 1980, and whose active involvement extended many years either side of these dates, is not only fascinating but vital as well. It will warm the hearts of those of us who are older, as we are reminded of heroes of the past who bore the heat and burden of the day, and it will challenge and warn younger readers who imagine that their generation has at last got it all sorted.

The story really begins a few years before the ‘1935’ of the title. Within Anglicanism, but reflected in the other denominations, there occurred in 1922 a split within the ranks of those who called themselves Evangelicals. Dr Barclay shrewdly points out that it was and is not helpful for either side to refuse the title of ‘Evangelical’ to the other. Nonetheless, one side was soon known as Liberal Evangelical (LE throughout the book) and the other as Conservative or Classical Evangelical (CE). LEs were represented by the Church Missionary Society, the SCM (though this split in the student work had taken place earlier), the Evangelical Fellowship for Theological Literature and the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement. The CEs were represented by the Bible Churchman’s Missionary Society, the IVF, Scripture Union and Crusaders. To all outward appearances, throughout the 1920s and 1930s the CEs looked pathetically weak, and were indeed largely discounted. What is so moving about Dr Barclay’s memoir is the way it recalls those who in those dark, doldrum years remained absolutely steadfast, and laid the

foundation for a quite remarkable revival in the fortunes of CEs, that took place in the two decades that followed the Second World War.

Although Dr Barclay's history is refreshingly broader than Anglicanism, and also constantly tells us what was happening in Scotland, Ireland and Wales, nonetheless he is understandably and justifiably wearing his IVF spectacles. This is fair enough for, as his earlier book *Whatever happened to the Jesus Lane lot?* showed, the work in the universities and colleges did not merely mirror what was going on in the rest of the CE scene, it was the major influence. This means that for Dr Barclay, the chief heroes were such figures as John Wenham, Alan Stibbs, Martyn Lloyd-Jones and, very especially, Douglas Johnson. None would want to deny such men their due honour. They were indeed giants. I suspect there were others in those lean years who were beavering away outside the student world and to whom we owe an enormous debt – the Woods (Frederick is mentioned but not his brothers), E J H Nash (underestimated, I judge, by Dr Barclay), Hudson Pope (not mentioned at all) and many other unsung heroes.

When the Second World War ended, the LEs thought that the field was theirs, with people like Max Warren poised to take over the leadership of the evangelical world. It did not turn out like that. Because of the unseen faithfulness of those warriors in the 1930s, the scene was set for John Stott, Jim Packer, Maurice Wood and Leith Samuel to emerge as very gifted leaders. The story of the 1950s and 1960s, with the great Graham Crusades, the University Missions led by Donald G Barnhouse, John Stott, Billy Graham, Dick Lucas and then David Watson, Michael Green and David MacInnes is truly exciting, and the reminder of those days moved me to praise and adoration.

However, in my judgment it is the final two chapters which are the most important and salutary. At this stage, Dr Barclay's sketch becomes more of a plea and a heart-cry. The old Liberal Evangelicalism ran into the sand and in effect became rank liberalism. However, Dr Barclay sees emerging within the ranks of what for the last fifty years has been 'Classical Evangelicalism' exactly those seeds that led to the split, back in the 1920s, only now they call themselves 'Open' Evangelicals rather than 'Liberal'. Dr Barclay is particularly devastating in his critique of the 1995 symposium 'Has Keele failed?', and especially of Peter Baron's (one 'r', not Barron) contribution. 'He and others... speak as if what they are saying is somehow novel and daring, when it is merely a repetition of the 1920s departure of the LEs from biblical orthodoxy.'

If we do not learn from the mistakes of the past...

JONATHAN FLETCHER

THEY SHAPED OUR WORSHIP Christopher Irvine ed
 London: SPCK 1998 164pp £25.00 hb ISBN 0-281-05095-3

This is an amazing price for a number of very brief essays on the contribution to liturgy of various Anglicans world-wide (though concentrating on the UK). Twenty-three liturgists are covered from Procter and Frere to Dix and Jasper. There are thirteen contributors. It is difficult to imagine who will buy such a book as it is comparatively lightweight, even though there are some interesting facts to be discovered about the less well-known of the worthies covered. What strikes one most forcibly is that none of these men even attempted what Cranmer and his helpers at least assayed, which was to produce a liturgy which sought to go back to the first principles of New Testament theology. That radical approach has still to be espoused by modern liturgists today. What an extraordinary fact this is!

JOHN PEARCE

POSSIBLE DREAMS Chris Bryant
 London: Hodder & Stoughton 1997 £9.99 pb ISBN 0 340 68674 X

This book was originally printed in 1996 and has now been reissued in paperback. Chris Bryant is fast making a name for himself in a new field, as a biographer of socialist worthies, and his new biography of Stafford Cripps has received very good reviews indeed. The book under review is quite fascinating – at least for an ex-member of the Christian Socialist Movement, who is now a Tory. It is in fact a careful history of Christian socialist thinking as seen through the lives of the chief actors, and it is therefore partly a series of short and illuminating biographies which are woven into the story. He charts the history of a whole series of organizations, from the Levellers right up to today's Jubilee Group (the socialist one), and he also tells us who amongst the members of parliament were active in the various societies.

What he fails to do is to provide any kind of assessment of how far the Labour governments actually set forward the ideals and the practical aims of the Christian socialist groups. This is a major loss and requires another book from Bryant, one which might be more critical and less hagiographical.

He also fails to diagnose why various attempts at co-operatives so signally failed for, as Bryant says, 'nationalised industries... can act as little in the interests of the poor as can multi-national corporations'. It seems to me that there is a serious lack of a political philosophy which will actually show how to restrain the great powers of our age (the

multinationals) and preserve the freedom of the individual and the power of free association in Unions and the like. Few are actually facing this highly urgent issue from a Christian point of view and in a way which is practical politically. What does that marvellous slogan 'common ownership' actually mean in a world where man competes with man?

Bryant also fails to assess the theology behind the socialist dynamic and to suggest how far its theology is in fact properly thought out. For example, the word 'kingdom' is used without any kind of enquiry into its biblical roots – an issue which is still of the greatest moment in our day, for so many Christian leaders use the word in what can only be called a sloppy way, without any serious consideration of its biblical background. Furthermore Bryant fails to consider carefully the Christian doctrine of sin and is therefore unable to assess how far Christian socialism is in fact a realistic creed at all.

All that having been said, the truth remains that this book fills a most important gap and is almost indispensable for anyone who is interested in the development of a Christian critique of capitalism and Tory economic theory. It is a book of principle and a book with some passion, demonstrating deep care and concern for the poor and those unjustly treated in our society.

The question that remains is this. In practice what kind of government actually delivers justice and a sense of self-worth to the less privileged members of our society? And how far is the answer to that question dependent upon one's theology of the Fall? One still wonders who will speak for the poor in our society. Are we ready to sacrifice our standard of living for the sake of the real poor who are outside Europe and in the Third World? Selfishness abides.

JOHN PEARCE

THE RECOVERY OF MISSION Vinoth Ramachandra

Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1996 293pp £17.99 pb ISBN 0-85364-73909

The following observation on non-Christian religions was overheard some time ago in a conversation at a fairly liberal missionary conference: 'I am convinced that when any devout person bows to an idol or invokes the name of any deity, he is in reality bowing to and invoking the God of Israel.' It was probably based on a statement of The Revd Professor Godfrey Phillips which was quoted by A C Bouquet at the beginning of his *Comparative Religion* (London 1941):

It will greatly ease the missionary situation, and lift the burden from

not a few consciences, if it is firmly established that it is *our* God who is dimly perceived by fetish-worshippers, *our* God who hears the trembling lips of the non-Christian fatherless and widow, *our* God who receives psalms of faith addressed in ignorant sincerity to different beings.

Such utterances still breathe a patronizing air, but they represent the watershed of a new attitude in the approach to other religions by Christian scholars. They have also influenced to a large extent the world-view of certain denominational missions. Evangelization has given place to dialogue; dialogue to syncretism; syncretism to universalism. This process has developed into a weakening of the idea of a personal God among theologians and some prominent church leaders, and thus many have adopted the monistic conception of the Divinity. This has been influenced to some extent by – to borrow Bishop Wilson Cash’s phrase – ‘the great new fact’ of a pluralistic society in our nation today. Holding such a fluid idea of God is thought to soften our approach to those of other religions who are now our fellow citizens and therefore avoid confrontation.

Evangelism among them is therefore *out*; extended ecumenism is *in*. Here, the sage dictum of Isaiah Berlin in a recent BBC Radio 3 lecture is worth pondering: ‘Pluralism is not Universalism’; but so many take it for granted that *sui generis* it is. Vinoth Ramachandra’s book *The Recovery of Mission* boldly announces that a rescue operation has now been mounted to restore to Christian mission its proper perspective and aim. Its subtitle is *Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm*. Like ‘all Gaul’, the book is divided into three parts.

In part one Vinoth Ramachandra subjects the thesis of each of the three authors to a thorough analysis. He identifies the philosophical ideas drawn from Eastern religions with which they seek to build a new paradigm in the Christian evaluation of them and association with them. Under the title of ‘Mystery-centred Faith’, he lays out Stanley Samartha’s revision of New Testament theology. Samartha is an Indian Protestant theologian, active in ecumenical interfaith relations, and has contributed to *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* of which John Hick is a co-editor. But it is from the monograph *One Christ – Many Religions* that Ramachandra draws his distinctive ideas. He shows that Samartha tries to reinterpret the New Testament revelation of Christ by giving it a ‘broader and deeper conceptual framework’. A mystery-centred Christology is claimed to be more helpful in establishing new relationships with people of other faiths.

All three authors, in their distinctive ways, aim at the same new paradigm of religious understanding. The thesis of Aloysius Pieris, a Sri Lankan Jesuit theologian with an openly political bent, is presented as

'Liberating Gnosis'. Ramachandra points out that, for Pieris, the terms *Christ* and *Son of God* are one and the same 'mediating reality' with *Tathagata* and *Dharma* in Buddhism, *Atman* and *Brahm* in Hinduism. He talks of a *salvific beyond* in all systems (including Marxism!). Terms such as *cosmic soteriology* and *metacosmic soteriology* are used by him to reconcile even animistic systems with monistic philosophy, implying that the monistic *All* underlies the individualistic diversity (pp 41, 48, 64).

The third author, Raimondo Panikkar, a Hispanic-Indian Roman Catholic theologian, is dealt with under the title 'Christic Theandrim'. Ramachandra shows how his book *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, draws its ideas from the 'transtheism' of the Hindu Upanishads. Incidentally, this tends to be the ultimate position of the out and out mystic, that Christ is not simply the *Way*, but the *Way through* to full identity with God.

In the second part of his book Ramachandra deals with the differences and similarities in the arguments of the three authors. Then he explores the common ground between them with a masterly exposition of their ideas in what he calls the 'wider landscape' of the philosophical influences of earlier thinkers, from Descartes to Kant and then Hegel. He shows how the latter philosopher prepared the ground for the revisionist stance among modern theologians from Rudolf Otto down to these three. He also gives an extremely perceptive critique of the well-known views of John Hick, who he says:

stands squarely within the Neo-Kantian perspective in the philosophy of religion. Thus, for Hick, using language similar to that of Samartha, 'Allah and Brahman (the Vedantic *Absolute*) are two ways in which limitless divine reality has been thought and experienced by different human mentalities...' (p 120)

The question is: 'Does Vinoth Ramachandra discharge his commission successfully?' The answer is a resounding, 'Yes he does!'

On 'Engaging Modernity' (pp 143-72) the author's critique is consummate, not to say devastating in the areas of epistemology, revelation and reason, and even church and society. Finally, in the third part, his vindication of the biblical revelation of the uniqueness of Christ, and the theology of mission is masterly. We are left in no doubt that the gospel of Christ is a mystery that has been fully revealed and must be proclaimed openly as a *Gospel for the World*:

...the synoptic Gospels tell the story of Jesus, and especially that of his cross and resurrection, not as an historical 'quirk', a sudden and

bizarre eruption of divine power into history, but as the climax to a much longer story, the story of Israel, which in turn is the pivotal focus of the story of the Creator's involvement with his world. (p 229)

OWEN THOMAS

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