

Book Reviews

HUMANISTS AND REFORMERS **Bard Thompson**

Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans 1996 742pp £25 hb
ISBN 0 8028 3691 7

This book is advertised as a comprehensive history of the Renaissance and Reformation, and its great merit is that it places these two movements alongside each other, showing in particular how the work of the great 15th and 16th century humanists paved the way for the religious upheaval associated with Martin Luther and his followers. The book is also distinctive for the large amount of space which it gives to cultural matters, particularly the development of the arts in Italy. One of Dr Thompson's greatest strengths is his ability to present complex movements and ideas in simple terms, which are easily absorbed by non-specialists. For those who know little about this period, or who are confused by it, a book like this one is a useful way of situating people and places in their context. Ample, even lavish illustration will make it both a popular textbook and a welcome gift for those who like both good books and beautiful art.

Dr Thompson (who died in 1987) is to be congratulated for daring to cross disciplinary lines and offer us a synthesis of this highly formative period in Western culture. He has blazed a trail in this respect which we must hope others will follow. Of course, no one person can be equally expert in all areas, and specialists will soon notice that many of Dr Thompson's statements are questionable. For example, he dates the Elizabethan Settlement to 1563 (the date when the Articles of Religion were approved), whereas most historians place it in 1559 (the date of the main Parliamentary legislation and the Prayer Book). He says that the Wittenberg Articles were composed at the same time as the Ten Articles of 1536 (p579), whereas in fact the Wittenberg Articles preceded the Ten and were used as a source for them. More seriously, he claims that the Bishops' Book of 1537 was a conservative reaction to the Ten Articles, whereas in fact it was the opposite (p581)!

Details of this kind will be quickly spotted by those familiar with particular aspects of the field covered, and will unfortunately make them question the integrity of the rest. Dr Thompson's executors really should have employed specialists to read individual chapters and sections of the book, in order to avoid this type of mistake. Similarly, it would have been a good idea to get an English stylist to edit the book in its entirety. It is hard to know who is responsible for them, but infelicities of style and vocabulary abound. For example, Dr Thompson describes later Lollardy as

follows: 'There it remained, a fairly unheroic institution, until the opening of the sixteenth century' (p546). Lollardy was in no sense an institution, and what are we supposed to think happened to it after 1500? Did it revive or disappear? Or consider the following, on p522: 'Everywhere the Renaissance in Italy crumbled under the weight of foreign invasions, economic depression, and the increasingly sober nature of the Counter-Reformation. A failure of nerve overwhelmed the Renaissance humanists, who did little to stave off the sobriety of the Counter-Reformation.' The mixture of metaphors is so complex that it leaves the reader exhausted, even though the general gist of the passage is clear enough.

More seriously still, the division of the book into two major parts, the first of which is devoted to secular, 'southern' (ie mainly Italian and French) humanism and the second to religious, 'northern' (ie mainly German, Dutch and English) humanism has some advantages, but it creates its own distortions. For example, it is hard to see where the impetus for the Catholic Reformation came from, or why it was so successful in Italy and elsewhere, if southern Europe was demonstrably less religious than the north. Some of these generalizations seem to be altogether too crude, and serve to separate people and movements from each other, rather than to emphasize their relationships, which is the book's main intention. It also leads to distortions of another type – a great emphasis on Italian art for example, but little or nothing on the rest of Europe.

In sum, it must be said that Dr Thompson's overall aim is an excellent one, and in a general way, he has produced a remarkable book. However, it really requires a series of more cautious hands who can take the broad approach which he has outlined and ensure that it is adequately supported by the right sort of detail, presented and expressed in a manner which will not provoke a reaction from those who know the subject well.

GERALD BRAY

FAITH AND MODERNITY

Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden Edd

Oxford: Regnum Books International 1994 352pp £14.99 pb
ISBN 1-870345-17-7

This reviewer must confess, only half facetiously, that the initial attraction of this collection of essays was that its title is *Faith and Modernity* and not *Faith and Postmodernity*. There is now such a rash of material on postmodernity that the impression is often given that the philosophical, cultural and social movement known as modernity has slipped from its dominant position in the West into oblivion. Os Guinness points out that although it is being severely questioned philosophically and theologically, in terms of its social effects

modernity is still at the height of its powers. In fact, the suspicion remains that the confusion which many Christians feel in the face of understanding something as slippery as 'postmodernity' is actually caused by our failure seriously to come to grips with modernity in the first place. This is one of the underlying convictions of this excellent set of essays by a wide variety of scholars and writers, some familiar (Os Guinness, Lesslie Newbigin, Elaine Storkey, David Wells *et al*) others less so, but still of high quality. The essays were originally papers given at a conference held in Sweden in 1993, itself sparked off by a paper on modernity (the last in this volume) given by Os Guinness at Lausanne II in 1989.

An introduction by the editors and the first two essays attempt to trace the 'historical roots and contemporary features' of modernity, and to show how it has recently merged into postmodernity. Some of the most helpful aspects of this volume, which are sustained in subsequent essays, become evident here. First, there is a stress on modernity – which roughly describes the state of the West since the Enlightenment – as a mode of *social life* (eg technique rather than truth, management rather than authority) as well as a mode of moral understanding or philosophy. This allows the authors to give concrete examples of how cultural phenomena have affected the lives we all lead. There are many one-line illustrations that will help the applications offered by preachers. Second, especially in Philip Sampson's discussion of postmodernity, a clear link is drawn between postmodernity and modernity, pointing out that in many quarters postmodernity is in fact not seen as the new great successor, but only a temporary aberrant phase of late modernity. This is the most difficult essay in the volume, but its many practical examples (Sampson works in child welfare) might offer a very helpful understanding of our culture for readers who find more philosophical books rather too abstract, or for readers who are attracted to the abstract and find concrete examples hard to find. Third, the writers are all convinced that evangelicalism is marked by the features of modernity to a far greater extent than any of us realizes, and that, if we are to be distinctive counter-cultural voices in mission, this situation cannot be tolerated.

The subsequent essays cover a wide range of topics – truth and authority, theology, anthropology, morality, eschatology, spirituality, the New Age, economics, information technology, and non-Western societies (this, surprisingly and a little disturbingly, the shortest essay). Much of this material can be found elsewhere, but this volume is a handy compendium of introductory essays. This volume is therefore a gold-mine of evangelical expertise in each of these complex areas. For hard-pressed Christians whose limited reading-time sends them more often straight to commentaries and doctrine rather than to books on economics and sociology, these essays offer a helpful corrective, by presenting such a broad-scale picture of our world. Yet coherence is gained by the fact that

each essay is governed by the above three concerns. This can lead to some repetitiveness, since most begin with a definition of modernity, describe how it has affected their specialist area, how the church has been affected by worldliness at this point, and how the gospel offers an alternative. Far from irritating, this repetitiveness is actually instructive and compelling. Our culture is so complex that to sum it up in one neat phrase will always lead to absurd generalization. To observe how each writer analyses our culture in terms appropriate to his/her specialist area is to see the multi-faceted thing called 'modernity' revealed for what it is in a variety of different but ultimately coherent ways. This is not to say there is complete agreement however. The debate between Newbigin (on one side) and Netland and Wells (on the other) offers a clear insight into a very significant debate: Newbigin thinks that Netland and Wells have fallen foul of the Enlightenment's overly-objective criteria for truth in their doctrine of God and thus in their apologetics, and Netland and Wells think that Newbigin is a little too postmodern and ultimately leaves truth too much up for grabs. The debate is instructive as much for what it reveals of how each writer tries to discover when worldly thinking has infected the church as it is for what they actually say.

Ultimately, however, this is a collection of essays about us, and the Christian reader's reaction is less one of increased knowledge of our culture than of more profound insight into and conviction of the worldliness of oneself and of one's church. Os Guinness argues that today conservative Christians are generally more worldly than liberal Christians (p323). Any reader of this review surprised or shocked by that comment would do well to read this volume carefully, finding him- or herself described in many of the analyses, and discovering how the hope of the gospel offers redemption in so many more areas of our individual, corporate, social and cultural lives than we can often comprehend.

TIM WARD

THE ART OF PROPHESYING William Perkins

Edinburgh: Banner of Truth 1996 191pp £2.95 pb ISBN 0 85151 689 0

Prophesying to William Perkins and the Puritans was not what many today imagine it to be. Four hundred years ago in the Church of England prophesying consisted of 'preaching the Word and public prayer'. The Banner of Truth has issued this small volume, revised by Sinclair Ferguson, in the hope of reviving these central features of Christian ministry in our own generation. The book is remarkably cheap and worth paying five times the price for access to Perkins' wisdom. The best Christian writing often emerges from good pastoral practice, and that is certainly true in this case. His preaching at St Andrews church in

Cambridge was enormously influential and rightly regarded as a model of good practice for many years.

This volume actually contains two of Perkins' most influential tracts: *The Art of Prophesying* and *The Calling of the Ministry*. The former introduces the prospective minister to the subject of preaching the Word of God. The present day reader will be astonished by the modern ring of so much of this material. Chapters 5 'Principles for Expounding Scripture' and 6 'Rightly Handling the Word of God' amply demonstrate how the Puritans were well aware of what we would call canonical criticism as well as literary structure and techniques. Perkins gives many examples from the Bible to illustrate the points he is making.

Nevertheless the most useful material for the modern preacher is probably found in chapters 7 and 8 which explore the subject of application. This is not something we are very good at nowadays. Perkins is extraordinarily helpful through his analysis of the categories of hearers (he lists seven) and the various means of application which may be appropriate. There is so much that we can learn from these few pages.

The second tract on the minister's calling is itself in two parts. In the first Perkins uses Job 33:32-33 to explain the role or function of the Christian minister. The book will have to be read to see how Perkins does this, but it need only be stated that Perkins is remarkably effective at highlighting the priorities of Christian ministry. In the second part of this work the author takes a more familiar passage (Isaiah 6) to probe the spiritual attitudes and motivation of the preacher. It is very perceptive.

The book is not at all difficult to read and has the potential to change the lives of many people. It can be read by congregations to understand better what their minister should be doing. It really must be read by those entering a preaching ministry. In it is the distilled wisdom of a highly effective pastoral ministry. If anyone is interested in finding out more about William Perkins then Jonathan Long's article (*Churchman* vol 103 1989 pp53-59) is a good place to start.

MARK BURKILL

THE ORIGINAL JESUS Elmar R Gruber & Holger Kersten
Shaftesbury: Element 1996 274pp £9.99 pb ISBN 1-85230-835-4

Anyone who researches the religious beliefs of the ordinary Briton today will soon realize that they are very different from those of even twenty years ago. One indicator of this is the way in which books such as this one sell in vast numbers. *The Passover Plot* by Hugh Schonfield has sold over

three million copies. One of the authors of this book, Holger Kersten, wrote *Jesus Lived in India* which has sold 250,000 copies worldwide. Christians, and especially ministers, need to be aware of this phenomenon and consider their response to it.

The thesis of this work, simply stated, is that the real Jesus has been obscured by later Christianity, especially the apostle Paul, and that the original Jesus was extensively influenced by Buddhism. While this will come as a considerable surprise to most thinking Christians, the superficial reader will be impressed by the argument offered in this book, with its extensive notes referring to apparently learned scholarly works.

The first part of the book discusses contacts between India and the West, between the lifetime of the Buddha in the sixth century BC and the birth of Jesus. It is to be expected, given the need to trade and the extensive empire of Alexander the Great, that such contacts existed. However it is quite another step to assume that Buddhism was widely known through those contacts and that it exerted considerable influence upon Greek thought.

The second section of the book entitled 'Jesus – the Buddhist' lies at the heart of the authors' attempts to discover the 'original' Jesus. The theologically attuned reader will quickly notice that this section smells strongly of old fashioned German liberalism, and will find his suspicions confirmed in the references which are given. There is a heavy reliance upon the theory that Q contained the original material about Jesus, and Christian apocryphal works are mustered where convenient to boost Jesus' Buddhist connections. This approach is not surprising given that the presuppositions of those who created Q (a dislike of sin, redemption, grace etc) match the inclinations of those who are drawn to Buddhism. Similarly the Gnostic tendencies of apocryphal Christianity are very congenial to Buddhism.

The final section of the work tries to create a plausible background in which Jesus could have learnt his supposed Buddhist principles. It relies heavily on the fact that Jesus went to Egypt as a child and upon a very questionable interpretation of Essene beliefs and the Qumran material. This is the most extravagantly far-fetched theorizing.

It does not seem to occur to the authors that the manner in which they have 'proved' Jesus was a Buddhist could be used to 'prove' that the Buddha was a secret disciple of Moses. Gruber and Kersten are unabashed in admitting that the earliest Buddhist texts date from centuries after the Buddha was supposed to have lived. On p94 we are told 'the oldest texts were probably written down in the first century BC'. They happily accept that they have reliable access to the authentic Buddha while rejecting the reliability of the far superior textual material about Jesus. The incongruity of this appears to have escaped them.

One suspects that only the persistent exposure of such inconsistencies will undermine the popularity of works like these. Biblical Christians must be prepared to undertake this task with grace and perseverance.

MARK BURKILL

GOD, COSMOS, NATURE AND CREATIVITY *The Templeton Lectures, University of Sydney 1991-4* Jill Gready Ed
Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press 1995 102pp £9.95 pb
ISBN 7073-0745-7

John Marks Templeton, 'one of the world's most successful financial investors', is well-known for his sponsorship of large prizes for 'Progress in Religion'. These have been awarded to such people as Brother Roger of Taizé, Prof Thomas Torrance, Michael Bourdeaux, Lord Jakobovits, and the Hindu scholar Baba Amte. His book *The Humble Approach* (1981, 1995) indicates his perspective on things (which he calls 'humility theology'). 'It has much in common with but is not the same as natural theology, process theology, or empirical theology, whose horizons are all too narrow.' 'Many religions hold that knowledge about God comes not so much from human reasoning as from God choosing to reveal Himself to us.' But 'Men could write down only what they understood', and thus 'Communication reduced the revelations to the mental development of the messengers'. This seems to mean that for the author no scriptures can be regarded as final and authoritative, even the New Testament; and this opens the way to thinking of all religions and their scriptures as fallible contributions – no more – to the knowledge of God. Further progress in this direction is still possible, and we have to *humbly* look to the advances now being made by brilliantly-gifted or saintly men and women who build on the foundations already laid. That is what his emphasis on 'humility theology' is all about.

The present book consists of four Templeton Lectures given in the University of Sydney, Australia from 1991 to 1994. The first, *The Birth of the Cosmos*, is an account for laymen of the origin of the physical universe given by the cosmologist Paul Davies. It incorporates the ideas of Stephen Hawkins and others on the spontaneous origin of everything *up to and including consciousness*, taking as 'given' merely the laws of physics as we now know them. His conclusion is (to quote the physicist Freeman Dyson) that 'the universe in some sense knew we were coming'. The second lecture, *The Cosmos and God: the Dependence of Science on Faith*, is by the process theologian John Cobb Jr, and its point of view is naturally that of Process Theology. He ends, 'The divine reality, God, does not then exist in some external sphere unaffected by the world. God interacts with the cosmos... There is no God apart from the cosmos. There

is no cosmos apart from God.' The third lecture, *Culture, Nature and the Future*, is by a biologist, Stephen Boyden, and its theme is the relation between culture and the environment. He ends by stressing two points: humanity needs a cultural renaissance which results in a real and widespread understanding of our place in nature; and it needs new institutions to publicize this and make it socially effective. If these things are impossible to achieve, 'then I will have to join the pessimists and conclude that there is little or no hope for humanity'. The last lecture is an interesting one by the psychologist Margaret Boden: *Creativity: Inspiration, Intuition, or Illusion?* It analyses creativity in computational terms and compares it with Artificial Intelligence; architecture and jazz are two of the interesting arts she uses for illustration. 'A computational psychology can help us understand what goes on in creative minds'; but won't this ultimately drive out a sense of wonder? If creativity is neither inspiration, nor intuition, nor illusion; if science can explain it all to our intellectual understanding, won't this be the inevitable result? The author doesn't think so. It is only the *mythological* reasons for entertaining wonder that will be lost! Good riddance.

What is your reviewer's final reaction to this offering from the dividends of humility theology? I am afraid it is not commendatory. When men believe that they have a unique relationship to certain Scriptures claimed as revelation it can be (and historically has been) a powerful incentive to pride, hypocrisy, exclusivism and often fanaticism. This is perhaps what has led Templeton (disastrously) to exclude revelation from his 'humility theology' programme. But the stress of the Bible is never on the glory of *possessing* God's oracles, but rather of *obeying* them, a very different matter (Deut 4:6f; Matt 7:24f). On the other hand, to make advances in the knowledge of God dependent on men's intellectual and practical talent (for that is what humility theology's programme amounts to) is to turn God's way upside down! (Matt 11:25f; 1 Cor 1:26f; cf Isa 66:2). It is a pity that the thrust of a man so obviously concerned for the true welfare of his fellow men as John Templeton is should be so misdirected. The clue to real progress for humanity remains – JESUS CHRIST.

The last lecture has a useful table of References. I noticed quite a number of printer's errors.

DOUGLAS C SPANNER

SCIENTISTS AS THEOLOGIANS A comparison of the writings of Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke and John Polkinghorne

John Polkinghorne

London: SPCK 1996 96pp £9.99 pb ISBN 0-281-04945-9

The author has written this book, he says, to counter the idea that the

disciplines of science and theology are at loggerheads with each other; and he has chosen as his method to discuss the writings of three scientists who have written quite extensively on theological matters from a Christian position. All are eminent men, well-known in the scientific world – two physicists and one a biochemist. Two later became ordained ministers in the Church of England. One is a Bampton lecturer and the other two are Gifford lecturers – altogether an impressive team.

In the *Introduction* the author discusses some basic principles. How are science and theology to be related? Barbour's scheme names four possibilities: conflict, independence, dialogue, integration. His own has two: consonance (they fit together in a mutually-consistent way through dialogue, to the enriching of both), and assimilation (one, probably theology, loses its independence by accommodation, at least partly, to the other). His own stance is the first of these latter two. His next chapter is *Motivated Belief; Critical Realism*, and he starts with a very useful discussion of what is meant by the latter phrase. He goes on: 'Revelation is understood in terms of the human encounter with divine grace, and not as the uncritical acceptance of some unquestionable propositional knowledge made known by an infallible decree. It is *data*, not divinely dictated theory.' No doubt he has in mind certain crude 'fundamentalist' attitudes to the Bible here, but his comment is widely disparaging and unnecessarily pejorative. He must know that he impugns contemporary conservative scholarship of the highest rank as well. He goes on to quote Barbour writing more guardedly: '[Revelation] is not a system of divine propositions completed in the past but an invitation to new experience of God today.' I wonder what the authority is for putting the matter so categorically as this? It runs counter after all to many things Jesus is reported as saying in the canonical gospels (eg Luke 24:44ff). The denial here might be taken to imply that the God who made the tongue and gave his creature man uniquely the superlative gift of language with which to communicate never uses it dialectically and publicly himself. This seems an extraordinary presupposition to make, and one violently at odds with the whole biblical testimony. Of course revelation is also inward and private (eg 2 Cor 12:7ff); this need not be disputed.

The next chapter is *Embodied Existence: Agency*, and deals with the subject of divine action in the world, a topic which has lately come to the fore. It is somewhat analogous to the problem of human volitional agency, the relationship between the will and the physiology of the body responding to it. Here some marked differences appear between the three scientist-theologians. Barbour follows broadly the process theology of Whitehead; Polkinghorne is more orthodox; Peacocke is less easy to place. All wish to assert (*contra* M F Wiles) that God's 'interaction' with the physical world (they reject the idea of 'intervention') is more than merely

holding it in being. Providential agency is continuously at work; this is certainly a biblical emphasis too.

Cosmic Scope: Creation is a chapter concerned with creation. The evolving universe is a world allowed by its Creator to 'make itself' as Austin Farrer put it. The result of this divine 'letting be' is to rule out the idea of any unfolding of an inexorable divine plan. 'God interacts with creation, but he does not overrule it.' All three wish to emphasize that this involves a kenotic act of self-limitation. As nature evolves God appears as 'an Improviser of unsurpassed ingenuity' (Peacocke). So far as the Anthropic Principle is concerned (the fact that the great physical constants are so extremely finely 'tuned together' that life and man have been physically and chemically able to appear in the developing universe), the three agree that this constitutes no actual proof that Mind must be behind everything (the 'strong' position); but the 'weak' position (that it is just a consequence, tautologically, of our being here to see things) Polkinghorne thinks is inadequate too. More impressive to him are the facts that the universe is so *rationaly transparent* to human thought, that its ordered beauty has such deep accessibility to our minds. These points are well made. What about its expected terminal stages, its eschatology? All three recognize that the futility of cosmic history as science foresees it (its so-called 'heat death') poses a serious challenge to theology. Their responses are diverse. But 'a credible eschatology is essential for the coherence of Christian belief'.

A discussion of *World Faiths* follows. The author is the most orthodox of the three. He adopts the definition proposed by Gavin D'Costa: one that 'affirms the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions while still maintaining that Christ is the *definitive and authoritative* revelation of God' (italics added). It is good to hear him agreeing with that last affirmation, but it raises the considerable question of why, if that is so, God has not seen to it that subsequent generations (embracing the great majority of the human race) have not had a more *definitive and authoritative* record of the life of Jesus of Nazareth providentially enscripted for them than he takes the New Testament to be? Has he too low a view of the sovereign competence of God to mould history for such an enscription to result? And if the New Testament is not the reliable record the church has always taken it to be, what price its carrying worldwide conviction? Has all this anything to do with his initial decision to use the male pronoun for God because it is 'the traditional convention', and not because the Lord taught us to?

There are two more chapters. *Particularity; Christian Belief* deals with the Person of Christ. The Bible, he says, (again with inaccurate disparagement of the views of conservatives) is 'certainly not a divinely guaranteed textbook in which we can look up all the answers'. It is best

regarded as a 'classic', a 'prime means by which we come to know God's dealings with humankind and particularly his self-utterance in Christ'. So far as Christ is concerned, one would have thought it was not the prime, but the *only* means, ultimately, of knowing of him at all! More's the reason why it should be regarded much more as God-breathed than the scientist-theologians seem willing to do. This consideration is relevant to his two main concerns here: the Resurrection and the Virgin Birth. Polkinghorne is fairly orthodox about the first, Peacocke much less so, Barbour says little. On the Virgin Birth Polkinghorne is rather non-committal, while Peacocke tries, inconclusively to himself it seems, to invoke genetics.

Consonance or Assimilation is the last chapter. All three scientist-theologians agree at once on one thing: 'the ultimate unity of our knowledge of the one world of human experience'. This may seem unexceptionable, but it seems to your reviewer that it hides a damaging over-simplification. *Experience* becomes the fundamental thing which delineates our world. But experience is not all of a piece; at least everyone must acknowledge Buber's *I-it* and *I-thou* modes. But there is surely a distinction even more relevant to the present discussion. Science is based exclusively on evidence (ie experience) of a particular kind: evidence which is *in principle accessible at will to man as man* (Michael Foster *Mystery and Philosophy* 1957). Now there is knowledge which falls outside this category – Buber's *I-thou* does; it has to be *revealed* by the cooperative will of another. More importantly, where God is involved there is a further and greater barrier to be overcome, and to effect this is the function of what the Bible calls *atonement*. This is concerned with sin and righteousness, categories which are conspicuously absent from the present treatment. It introduces the subject of the Kingdom of God, which a man cannot 'see' or 'enter' until he is 'born again' through a will not his own (John 3:3; 1:13; James 1:18). If the divine authority of the New Testament is accepted, this removes such things quite out of the sphere of science, a conclusion Paul independently affirms (1 Cor 2:14). The scientist-theologians would probably all reject this argument; their understanding of the nature of revelation (quoted above) would certainly suggest this. But their stance entails a profound loss. Science's exclusive reliance on publicly accessible evidence is one of its great strengths; it holds the promise of ultimate universal agreement. The experiential *data* Polkinghorne regards as exclusively constituting revelation are at bottom essentially private (even if they are 'in the context of the worshipping community'); their significance cannot be thrashed out as the data of science can. The data of *written* Scripture are different. They may not lead to immediate agreement any more than the data of science do; but like the latter they hold the promise of ultimate concord. I am not arguing that Polkinghorne's 'encounter with divine grace' is not revelation; it is, the Bible itself declares so (Matt 11: 25ff; 2 Cor 12:7ff). What I am arguing is

that there is also a mode of revelation which is open to public gaze, ie the Scriptures (Luke 24:25ff). After all, science knows both of these modes; *seeing* a colour is not the same as recording an instrumental reading (even if this is carried out in 'the context of the observing community'!)

In concluding this review I should like to quote (again) Ian Ramsey. In *Models for Divine Activity* (1973) he wrote:

As everyone knows, theology is at present in turmoil; and if I were asked to characterize our present discontents I think I would select two features as basis – First, there is the loss of a sense of God's presence; and secondly, there is a growing inability to see the point of theological discourse. We have become... insensitive to God; and theology... has died on us.

I think these discontents persist, and this book is a symptom of them. I have a great respect for the fine minds of Polkinghorne and Barbour, and have profited greatly myself from their books (I am not well acquainted with Peacocke's). But there is no sense of a Presence here; God is introduced rather as someone to be theologized about. Nor can I see the point of these discussions. Given the author's estimate of the New Testament as merely a 'Classic' will they bring anyone to faith in Jesus Christ, as he at least should be concerned to wish to do? I hardly think so. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. And that surely means giving the message of the Bible the prominence it had to Jesus Christ himself.

DOUGLAS C SPANNER

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

Raymond B Dillard and Tremper Longman III

Leicester: Apollos 1995 473pp £14.99 hb ISBN 0-85110-653-6

This book is aimed at first and second year biblical studies students. It surveys the major themes of an Old Testament introduction together with a survey of the content of the Old Testament. It contains brief allusions to an Old Testament theology, and a brief overview of the New Testament. Thus it is not an introduction in the technical sense. While excluding the history of interpretation, the authors present the results of past research on issues related to individual biblical books. Extensive indexes and bibliographies of mostly English literature make the book a valuable study tool and enable the student to carry out further reading. Special attention is given to publications from the 1960s to the 1980s with a reasonable overview of still earlier publications. However, only a few recent publications are mentioned.

A general introduction including an overview of wisdom or prophetic

literature is missing. Instead, Dillard and Longman focus on each individual book, which is examined in terms of its historical background, literary analysis, and theological message. It is claimed that every historical event recorded in the Bible has actually taken place in space and time, although the biblical writers, who are identified where possible, selected, emphasized, arranged, and applied the events. Extensive coverage is given to basic issues such as the date of the exodus, the nature of the conquest, or the history of the composition of the books of Kings. The authors usually describe the historical-critical and evangelical approaches by referring to their major representatives and leave it to the student (or the instructor) to evaluate the positions and arrive at a conclusion. However, this useful approach is not always followed, and in some instances, eg, in the treatment of the book of Isaiah, the authors put forth their view of chapters 40-66 as exilic.

Following Alter, Sternberg, and especially Longman, the authors outline the different approaches and the main results of past research on each book, before they focus on narrative criticism and on genre as they define a literary structure that underlines the book's theological message. The nature of Deuteronomy and the different genres of the Psalms receive, for example, extensive treatment. The authors, however, struggle to integrate difficult passages such as Lev 16 which is excluded from the discussion on Leviticus because this chapter is part of the non-legal narrative in the book.

According to the authors the main message of each book of the Old Testament is theological. While they reject the view that there is a theme that covers the whole Old Testament, they discern a christocentric nature and – following G Vos – a redemption historical theme for the Old Testament. Texts that focus on the overall relationship of God to his people with its varying emphasis on covenant, obedience, worship, kingship, etc, are emphasized, such as the beginning of the history of redemption in Genesis, the sacrificial system in Leviticus, or the theme of worship in the Psalms.

Despite the criticisms mentioned this book provides a valuable introduction to the Old Testament though it should be accompanied by classroom lessons to eliminate its deficiencies.

WOLFGANG BLUEDORN

PROPHETS AND POETS: A COMPANION TO THE PROPHETIC BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT Grace Emmerson Ed
Oxford: The Bible Reading Fellowship 1994 301pp £8.99 pb
ISBN 0 7459 2599 5

This book is designed to be read alongside the Old Testament prophetic

books. It contains brief introductory essays on 'The Prophets as Poets', 'The Prophets and the New Testament', and 'Reading the Prophets Today' as well as some general remarks on the difficulties of Bible translation. The bulk of the material however is devoted to concise comments on the individual prophetic books. In addition to Grace Emmerson several other scholars have contributed whose names stand for sound historical-critical exegesis. Material included in *Prophets and Poets* was previously published in The Bible Reading Fellowship's *Guidelines* Bible reading notes. Each section on the prophetic books contains a general introduction dealing mainly with the historical background, some suggestions for further reading and the commentary proper. While the comments on most of the Minor Prophets cover the entire text, in the case of the larger prophetic books only certain sections receive attention.

Given the book's conciseness and the wide range of contributors it is not an easy task to evaluate the project. On the whole the availability of such a volume that facilitates access to these often difficult books is to be warmly welcomed. Particularly helpful are the notes and questions interspersed throughout the commentary that aim to bridge the historical gap between these texts and our present situation. However, in some instances questions concerning the methodological and hermeneutical approach need to be addressed. An example is Joseph Robinson's treatment of Isaiah 1-39. He rearranges parts of the text on the basis of historical considerations (eg Is 6 is treated first and 2:6-11; 3:1-15 are placed after Is 8). Since in recent years the present canonical shape of the Old Testament books has been emphasized not only by those who pursue new literary approaches but by redaction critics as well, Robinson's treatment appears to be somewhat anachronistic. Also from a merely practical perspective, these rearrangements are not desirable because they complicate the access to the comments for those who are not familiar with historical-critical ideas on Isaiah.

KARL MÖLLER

GOD'S DESIGN: A FOCUS ON OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Elmer A Martens

Leicester: Apollos 1994 (Second edition) 320pp £14.99 pb
ISBN 0 85111436 9

This is the second edition of Elmer Martens' Old Testament Theology which has been extended to include two new chapters as well as an appendix concerning the methodology employed. The first British edition was published in 1981 as *Plot and Purpose in the Old Testament*.

In his attempt to present an outline of Old Testament theology, Martens employs a thematic approach that traces four themes – deliverance,

community, knowledge of God, and the abundant life – over the time-span represented within the Old Testament (the pre-monarchy, monarchy, and post-monarchy eras). These four themes are subsumed under the concept of ‘God’s design’ which according to Martens is the centre of the Old Testament. This design is most clearly articulated in Ex 5:22–6:8, a passage that is therefore taken as the starting-point for the subsequent examination of Old Testament theology.

Martens ‘does not adhere to the critical reconstruction of Israel’s history’ (p299) but the ‘confessed history’ as it is presented in the canonical form of the Old Testament. In addition, since Martens believes its message to be still relevant for today, he pursues not merely a descriptive enterprise but aims at indicating its importance for today’s believer (cf the sections subtitled ‘Theological Reflections’ which are interspersed throughout the book).

When his book was first published it was welcomed as a highly stimulating and creative approach. However, reservations revolved around three major questions: (a) Is it possible to construct an Old Testament theology around a single passage which is assumed to function as an ‘appropriate grid’ for its entire message? Or, to put it differently, is it possible to determine a centre (albeit a fourfold one) for the Old Testament? (b) How does the important theme of ‘creation’ fit into this grid? (c) Is it justified to focus merely on Israel thus setting aside the theme of ‘the nations’ (ie, the issue of universalism)?

Although Martens introduces the notion of one concept (God’s design) consisting of four components and thereby overcomes the ‘single centre approach’, his ‘grid’ is still not flexible enough to account for the Old Testament message in its entirety. The appendix in this second edition does clarify his methodological approach but does not eliminate this weakness. However, in this extended edition the two issues of creation and universalism have rightly received more attention. Nevertheless, in the view of the reviewer Martens does not succeed in incorporating them into his fourfold grid. For example, in considering creation, Martens insists that the motifs of creation and salvation should not be wrenched apart since salvation consists not only of occasional divine interventions but of God’s sustaining activity of blessing as well (p264). While this is true, the concept of creation cannot be subsumed under the notion of salvation as Martens, in fact, has to admit himself: ‘Creation theology expands the horizons of a salvation history approach by insisting on God’s initiative in the cosmic realm’ (p266).

Although the book in the end does not succeed in determining *the* centre of the Old Testament (which appears to be an impossible enterprise), it

deserves a wide readership because it is a stimulating approach that illuminates some of the major issues of Old Testament theology. Particularly commendable are the sections that deal with its significance for our present time. Also the tracing of the concept of 'God's design' into the New Testament is appreciated as accounting for the coherence of the two Testaments.

It should be added that the book is easy to read and that its four useful indexes (bibliography, subjects, authors, and Bible references) facilitate access to specific issues.

KARL MÖLLER

WHAT PRICE THE NATIONAL LOTTERY? **Keith Tondeur**
Crowborough: Monarch 1996 160pp £6.99 pb ISBN 1-85424-349-7

It is proverbial that the English have a fixation with the weather. However, since the introduction of the National Lottery, the weather has taken a back seat as the major subject of English small talk! This book is therefore timely in its arrival. Christians need to be informed about the National Lottery in order to speak intelligently about it. If Christianity is relevant to contemporary life then we must have something to say about the subject on the lips of the majority. This book is a mine of factual information and thoughtful analysis.

The author begins with background information. He looks briefly at lottery history in Britain from the first recorded lottery, in 1569, through to the present. He then sets out the major arguments that were offered in favour of the present Lottery. The following chapter, 'What actually happened?', gives a brief analysis of the Lottery itself. Here we are reminded of the extent to which it has grabbed our nation. 'About 65% of the adult British population play every week' and '90% have played at least once'. The odds of winning a jackpot in excess of £2 million, however, are given as 14 million to 1, or, as the author puts it, 'far less likely than the chances of being struck by lightning'.

The author acknowledges his bias right at the start of the book. In the very first sentence of the introduction he admits 'I have strong reservations about the National Lottery'. This said however, the factual data are presented clearly and objectively. Do you want to know who are the members of the National Lottery charities board? Well here they are on p31ff. Do you want to know who has benefited from National Lottery grants to date? Again here they are on p72ff. Do you need some good sermon illustrations on greed, covetousness, envy etc.? You need look no further! Such information is clearly and concisely presented.

The main concerns expressed by the author are grouped into three areas: The effect on the winners and losers (chapter 4), the effect on charitable giving (chapter 5), and the encouragement of gambling (chapter 7). The author illustrates his points liberally with anecdotes and quotes from those effected both positively and negatively. A chapter dealing with the introduction of the National Lottery scratch cards makes quite alarming reading. Before presenting his own biblical response the author analyses the response of the churches. It is encouraging that the churches (with the exception of the Roman Catholics) seem generally united in their opposition to the Lottery, although to varying degrees. The difficulty is that many groups seem unsure of their reasons why! 'The widely differing views expressed within the Church must surely indicate the need for more Christian teaching on money issues' concludes the author. Finally he presents ten realistic recommendations to improve the current situation.

This book appears to be thoroughly researched and contains a great deal of useful information. It is well presented, if a little repetitive and occasionally seemingly uncollated. The author, a professional debt counsellor, is also well placed to assess the impact of the Lottery on our society. Those involved in ministry need to be aware of what is happening in the National Lottery and this book is certainly a useful source of information to this end.

MARK LUCAS

IN TUNEFUL ACCORD: Making music work in church

James Whitbourn

London: SPCK 1996 131pp £9.99 pb ISBN 0-281-04825-8

This book, together with the 1994 'The Church Musicians Handbook' from St Matthias Press, mark something of a new departure in publications about music in worship. They are good. They make us want music in church to work, and they make us believe it can work.

James Whitbourn's book is a realistic and cheerful guide with no fussy footnotes or complaints about our failings; it does not even mention 'the reluctant organist' – that slur on so many devoted volunteers. It ideally suits Christian singers and musicians who want to think about what they are doing and why, not forgetting when, how, and (most interesting) where.

It will also help church leaders with no great musical skills who want to work with the congregations and buildings for which they are responsible. The author does not praise or blame any one musical style, but he does say 'There is a dulling of the spirit which comes from constant exposure to the second-rate'.

Since the days of the Grantlys and the Proudies, Barchester has moved on. The town has a revitalized musical tradition in its famous cathedral and choir school; here we also visit three neighbouring parish churches with very different musical histories. Regrettably, we do not travel a few miles further out to All Saints', which has a Barchester postmark but an electoral roll of seventeen and no organist, let alone choir or music group, and shares a Rector with five other villages.

Within his practical parish framework, Mr Whitbourn goes back to first principles for singers, players, buildings and instruments, with the kind of basic information that most books assume we know. We discover, for instance, what is involved in asking a five-piece group to play the chord of C major, and then to perform another eight seconds (four bars) of music. This is vital reading for anyone who begrudges the music director a proper salary, or wonders what he/she does all day.

Many of us have said something like, 'We need music to cater for all tastes' (p55). As the author says, 'Ah! If only we had the secret!' I would have welcomed more about the humble recorder, copyright law, how musicians sing, and some common pastoral problems. What about the willing musical lad with no discernible Christian faith; the self-appointed soloist who sees no need to practice or even learn; the performer who only comes when asked to, and only functions up front? I fancy that this author could see potential in all these situations, and handle them for good.

At their best, all voluntary contributions to church music fulfil the biblical concept of sacrifice (p14); we also have a streak of self-indulgence that needs to be recognized and dealt with. It is the same with bell-ringers, and preachers.

Appendix A gives the musical range of ten standard instruments. Appendix B sets out an SS Wesley anthem to illustrate several points; its AV language may also suggest a further communication problem not covered here. Just before that, the Epilogue is bang on target – Spring Harvest, Russian Liturgy and all. Hymns are not discussed in any detail; a small sign of hope is that the book's title and two of its section headings come from the hymnal.

CHRISTOPHER IDLE

TAKE AND READ Eugene H Peterson

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996 122pp £10.00 pb ISBN 0-8028-4096-5

Every selection of 'best books' is fraught with dangers and is inevitably subjective. Every reviewer can produce a better group of books in his own

opinion but I take it that this review in *Churchman* is intended to look at the book from an orthodox evangelical point of view. Peterson has certainly produced a very interesting and catholic list for 'Spiritual Reading' but I find it difficult to understand how anyone with some knowledge of evangelical literature can omit J C Ryle's *Holiness* from the list. I also wonder whether Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* is really a spiritual classic although his story is of course a most important human document for the history of the church and for the understanding of the Tractarian movement. It is a strange book which includes in the 'Prayer' section Kenneth Leach's *True Prayer* but omits *Prayer* by Hallesby. Under 'Worship' he includes Dix's *Shape of the Liturgy* which is a sadly tendentious, if brilliant book. It seems somewhat perverse to include Gore among the great commentaries on Ephesians but not Westcott or Bruce. It also seems odd that Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* is not included in any section. I am afraid that though I have been blessed by some of Peterson's own writings, I cannot recommend this as a guide to spiritual reading – which is its purpose and sub-title.

JOHN PEARCE

HAS KEELE FAILED? REFORM IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND Charles Yeats Ed

London: Hodder and Stoughton 1995 218pp £8.99 pb
ISBN 0-340-64187-8

Should you want to save money do not buy this book, for you will not have missed that much. This loosely connected set of essays is a bit deceptive; it is not an analysis of the Keele Congress of 1967 in the light of time, nor has it much to say about reform (verb) or Reform (noun).

Michael Saward repeats the story long told about how Keele was something of a personal triumph in getting delegates to contribute rather than just receive. David Holloway presents a well argued but familiar warning about the Church of England's current state; Peter Baron responds by arguing for a church that will not discipline individuals or uphold doctrines in a scriptural and reformed manner.

Bishop Michael Turnbull has contributed an essay on finance. John Pritchard (Cranmer Hall) is interesting on training for ministry. David Day looks at lay presidency and is for it. Margaret Masson says nothing new about women. Michael Wilcock lauds parish clergy. Ruth Etchells is sane on bishops and John Arnold fails to convince me that cathedrals are not an expensive luxury for enquirers and aesthetes.

The Keele Statement is included as a useful appendix. However, this is a

lot of money for a book quickly read, not true to its title and soon forgotten.

IAN SMITH

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