

Book Reviews

REVIVAL AND REVIVALISM: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858 Iain H Murray
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust 1994
455pp £12.99 hb ISBN 0 85151 660 2

The subject of revival is particularly relevant at the present time with the prominence being given in the media to the so-called 'Toronto Blessing'. Although Iain Murray's work does not even remotely set out to discuss this latest phenomenon upon the religious scene of the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, in a very real way it sets the scene by carefully documenting past revivals in America.

In one sense, this work forms the third part of a trilogy, although the reviewer is certain that Mr Murray might wish to disclaim this. However, there are chapters in *The Puritan Hope* by the same author dealing with the subject of revival in the seventeenth century. The author has also written the biography of Jonathan Edwards which by its very subject matter leads on into the events of the Second Great Awakening.

All three books teach that revival is always a possibility provided that it is recognised as a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in which numbers of people come as under conviction of sin, recognise themselves as lost sinners and are enabled to come to Christ for salvation. The major difference between the 'ordinary' conversion of one sinner and the 'extraordinary' many in revival is simply the number.

Iain Murray is keen to show that the subject of revivals has passed through several different phases in America between the years 1620 and 1858 and the book begins with Samuel Davies in the 1750s for the sole reason that to have made it any earlier would have lengthened the book 'beyond manageable proportions'. The theology of the Second Awakening was similar to that involved in the earlier revivals and the progress of such revivals is fascinatingly traced across the American countryside.

It leads on to Princeton and the glorious days of evangelical scholarship married to vital spirituality. There are chapters on Virginia and Kentucky and appendices on revivalism in England and revivals in the South. But the wonderful era begins to come to an end when revivals begin to be manipulated, so that revival becomes revivalism.

Although Iain Murray approaches his subject in his usual inimitable style from an historical perspective, there is nonetheless a serious doctrinal content. For revival is bound up, not in high excitement, but with the presentation of Christ as the all-sufficient Saviour and Lord in soundness of doctrine and genuine compassion for the lost.

Such a presentation presupposes the total depravity of man and his

inability to turn to Christ without the grace of God enabling him. In this way Christ is exalted, God is glorified and man, humbled into the dust, is invincibly brought to salvation. This is not hyper-Calvinism, for the Gospel is freely offered to all, and all are called to repent and believe the Gospel that they might be saved.

Revivalism begins when the phenomena associated from time to time with revivals begin to be regarded as something essential and not a side issue rather to be discouraged. The plea that such an experience must make the recipient unable to control himself must be seen in the light of the Pauline statement that 'the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets'.

With the rise of exciting phenomena, there is inevitably a decline in the standard of doctrine preached, for the minds of the people no longer focus on Christ and his truth but rather on the visible manifestations. Such decline took its form from the ministry of C G Finney, a hero to many, but one who was essentially Pelagian in his doctrine.

In simple terms Finney made revivals man-centred and there is little doubt that his influence has continued to fashion the thinking of the evangelical Church. That is not to deny that Finney actually saw revival under his ministry. Nor is it an argument from pragmatism that because something works it must be right. Murray writes:

Our understanding of God's ways in history is far too fallible to make providence the test of what is truth. In the end while evangelicalism was seeking to guard faith in Scripture, it was her readiness to be impressed by pragmatic arguments, and by alleged success, by quantity rather than quality, that did so much to deprive her of true authority and strength. (p383)

Although the subject matter refers mainly to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in America, it is extremely relevant today when there is a strong temptation to imitate the success syndrome of the world with disastrous consequences.

This is a well-produced book and at £12.99 must be substantially subsidised. For the 'pastor-preacher' and the godly academic, this book is a must as an encouragement as to what God can do, because he has already done it. But it serves also as a warning that when man usurps the place of God the consequences are dire.

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DAVID STREATER

DOES GOD'S EXISTENCE NEED PROOF? Richard Messer

Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993

160pp £20.00

ISBN 0 19 826747 9

One of the more exciting developments in recent years has been the

revival of interest in the classic Proofs for the existence of God. Not long ago it would have been assumed, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, that Wittgensteinian scepticism had conclusively demonstrated that God's existence could not be demonstrated by logical or rational means. But the work of Richard Swinburne at Oxford, and of Alvin Plantinga in the USA, has made it clear that such a verdict can no longer be accepted without question. The legacy of Anselm and Aquinas will not be written off as easily as the men of the 1950s might have liked, even if it cannot be said that it has returned with a vengeance, to sweep all else before it.

It is this situation of philosophical duality to which Richard Messer addresses himself in this book. He tries to show that representative philosophers like Swinburne and (on the other side) D Z Phillips make assumptions which are mutually incompatible, with the result that their assertions cannot be directly compared. Whether God is 'knowable' or not depends largely on what is meant by 'knowable', and in the case of God there are good reasons for saying that this is different from what it is in other instances. The existence of a tree, for example, can be demonstrated by logical analysis proceeding from the normal human senses, but a similar quest for God will produce nothing, because God is not a material object.

This leads people like Phillips to argue that human language, which is sense-related, cannot extend to God, who is not. But as Messer points out, such a conclusion is not required by the facts of the case. If God is to be known, it must be in ways which are appropriate to his being, and human language is capable of expressing this by analogy. All descriptions of God are inadequate, but that does not mean that they are necessarily inaccurate within the frame of reference given to them. Religious believers have often been quite precise in their statements about God, but they would be the first to reject a crudely materialistic interpretation. For example, Christians worship God as Father, but do not reduce the meaning of that word to its purely human dimension—there is no divine mother, and most Christians would find such a suggestion quite meaningless.

Messer concludes by saying that both philosophical approaches are unsatisfactory in that both ignore the importance of relativity in making statements about God, and neither has fully come to terms with the fundamental trust in the reliability of knowledge which underlies all philosophical endeavour. What makes one person accept the viability of a philosophical theology along traditional lines, and another person reject it? What are the basic assumptions at work? It is at this level, says Messer, that the argument has not been resolved. Furthermore, it is an argument which goes back to the early centuries of the Church, when Clement of Alexandria adopted the former, and Tertullian the latter, approach. Messer concludes that the nature of the subject is such that no resolution will ever be possible in this life, and that the age-old argument will continue in different forms as it always has done.

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY: THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES Wayne A Meeks

New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1993

x + 275 pp Price: £22.50

ISBN 0 300 05640 0

Wayne Meeks, Professor of Biblical Studies at Yale University, has produced a book which avoids the attempt to define Christian morality. Instead, Meeks aims 'to describe its rough contours in its formative years, from the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth to the end of the second century of the common era' (p3). To this end, he moves beyond the canonical books of the New Testament to explore Christian works contemporaneous with the New Testament. He endeavours to understand the ways in which early Christians developed moral common sense rather than the great ethical principles of Christianity (p11).

Meeks does not work systematically. Rather, he presents what he calls a number of case studies which spotlight differing perspectives on early Christian morality. He begins by exploring the consequences for morality of the early Christian movement being made up of converts. He suggests that differing understandings of conversion, as individual moral reform or as being a 'new creation', led to two contrary movements within the early church.

In chapters three and four Meeks explores the Christian struggle of being 'in the world but not of it'. He emphasizes the significance of Christianity being primarily an urban movement, focusing particularly on the relevance of civic institutions and the household for Christian moral reflection. He then discusses the tension caused by the two-fold call for Christians to love the world while hating it.

At this point Meeks turns to specific ways in which early Christians gave moral directives to one another. He begins by examining the language used to express moral obligation, focusing on how Christians used and adapted the patterns of moral discourse found within the larger Graeco-Roman culture. In 'The Grammar of Christian Practice' Meeks suggests that the moral sensibilities of early Christians were formed by habit and communicated to others by being put into action.

Chapters seven through nine investigate the problem of identifying evil, the struggle with human existence in a physical body with its own needs and desires, and the challenge of knowing God's will through knowing God. He shows how the moral discourse of the early Christians was intimately intertwined with such issues.

Finally, Meeks sketches the variety of eschatological thinking in Christian moral discourse. This 'sense of ending' is then located within the larger moral stories of the early Christians, stories in which they situated themselves in relation to Israel's history and within a cosmic schema.

This book is primarily a survey and summary of moral reflection in the New Testament and early Christian literature. Meeks does not attempt to

establish a single, uniform Christian morality within the diversity of early Christian groups, although he does show commonalities where they exist (ie pp188, 212, 213). He places Christian moral reflection firmly within the culture of antiquity. There is some interaction with Jewish and 'pagan' ethical texts. However, in contrasting Christians with other groups Meeks seems to assume a certain homogeneity amongst 'pagan' groups which may not have been there (ie pp110, 213). Often these groups differed from one another in ways similar to the variations amongst the Christian groups which he explores.

The origin of the book in the Speaker's Lectures delivered at Oxford University in 1990 and 1991 is revealed in the tone of each chapter. Each is highly readable, and enough secondary information is supplied to provide direction for further inquiry without the book being overly footnoted.

Meeks' book provides the data for two tasks important for scholars and lay people alike: cultural critique and ethical reflection. Knowing the context in which Christian ethical reflection arose and tracing how Christian morality developed from its inception will surely help one to understand one's own culture better. The 'distancing' effect of which Meeks speaks (p212) serves well to allow one a means to critique the culture and sub-cultures of which one is a part, even as one learns what moral reflection involved for Christians in antiquity. This is a book which will be read profitably by those interested in the past as well as those interested in the present.

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TIME TO WAKE UP! Leith Samuel

Bath: Evangelical Press 1992 158pp £4.95 pb

ISBN 0 85234 296 9

It is high time this book was written, and it is good news that Leith Samuel, for 28 years Minister of Above Bar Church at Southampton, has decided to write it. The sub-title is a good indication of the contents: *Evangelical fantasy vs biblical realism*. Leith Samuel unashamedly belongs to the right-hand end, the conservative end, of the evangelical spectrum. Dick Lucas, who contributes a commendatory cover comment, is at the same end. The book is asking us to look again at what we are accepting into the beliefs and practices of Evangelicals and to see what biblical authority there is for it. Quite clearly Leith Samuel is of the view that there is not much!

He asks about the *sufficiency* of Scripture. He is clearly concerned that many Evangelicals ignore the classic injunction of the early church: 'Do not go beyond what it written' (1 Cor 4:6). He tackles the problem of so-called prophecy, the content of which is often either trivial or simply wrong. He tackles the question of the 'greater works' that Christians are to do, and the demand for signs and wonders to demonstrate the credibility of

the gospel. He deals with the on-going problem posed by tongues (when *will* Christians realise that 'tongues' (glossolalia) are found in virtually all religions, and are the common coin of the 'witch doctors', the *shaman*, the ritual experts of traditional religions?). He tackles baptism in the Spirit and slaying in the Spirit ('. . . there is absolutely no trace in the New Testament of people being "slain in the Spirit"' p83). And prosperity theology (chapter six) and healing for all (chapter five).

What he is asking is: 'What is the biblical authority for all this?'. And the answer usually is 'None'. Then the sixty-four thousand dollar question is 'Why then do we approve of it?'. And the answer to *that* appears to be, firstly because we would hate to be thought old fashioned ('back to the hymn sandwich' p59), and secondly because we have allowed ourselves to be mesmerised by certain cult figures who are very persuasive but either not overly concerned with biblical authority or else quite prepared to make the Bible say what they want it to say. (I recall myself being paired with a charismatic leader at a conference, both of us to speak on prophecy. My part was to be the biblical basis. His the modern experience. I did my part. He began by announcing 'Well, that *is* what the Bible says, but now let's see what is happening in the Church today'!) Leith Samuel does not attack *anyone*. But he raises some huge and very uncomfortable questions.

So. My recommendation is: buy this book. You will not agree with everything (I did not). You may find here an unrealistic holding on to a lost past (I did). But honesty should make every Evangelical who reads the book start asking some long-overdue questions.

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PETER COTTERELL

THE DEATH OF THE MESSIAH: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels Raymond E Brown

New York: Doubleday 1994 2 vols xxvii + 1,608pp

\$75.00

ISBN 0 385 47177 7

Raymond Brown's long awaited companion volume to his largely influential *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday 1977; revised 1993) has finally been brought into print. With over 1,600 pages of text divided into two volumes, Brown has clearly put much scholarly effort (12 years' worth!) into the production of this volume. In his opening chapter he states clearly the primary aim of this book: 'to explain in detail what the evangelists intended and conveyed to their audiences by the narratives of the passion and death of Jesus' (p4). He takes each aspect of this statement seriously, and spends some time elaborating it phrase by phrase in his introduction.

Rather than treat each Gospel individually, Brown works 'through the passion "horizontally"', studying each episode in all four Gospels simulta-

neously' (p viii). To do this, he divides the passion narrative into four 'Acts', each having two 'scenes' (with the exception of Act III which has only one 'scene'). In Act I 'Jesus prays and is arrested in Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives across the Kidron'. Act II has 'Jesus before the Jewish Authorities' while Act III presents 'Jesus before Pilate, the Roman governor'. In the final Act 'Jesus is crucified and dies on Golgotha; he is buried nearby'. The pertinent sections of each Gospel's passion narrative are treated under these broad headings.

Brown himself admits in his preface that the decision to treat the material in this fashion will be controversial (p viii). More to the point, it makes the commentary awkward for reference purposes. While Brown's desire to read the passion narrative as one continuous story is laudable, the length of his commentary, and the nature of most people's experience of studying or preaching the passion narratives, make it more likely that this work will be treated as a reference tool than a continuous report. To his credit, Brown has provided a new translation of each of the four passion narratives. In a parallel column he provides an index of principal comments on each pericope, allowing the person using the commentary easier access to the discussion of a particular passage. However, ease of reference was not an overarching concern in the layout of the commentary.

Despite the overall presentation of the passion narrative as a drama, Brown works not as a literary critic but as a careful, conservative historical critic. The primary impetus of his observation is redaction criticism, with some recourse to form and source criticism. Throughout the commentary Brown compares and contrasts the four perspectives of the Gospel writers. Not all of his exegetical insights will find sympathetic hearings, but he provides solid reasoning for each and thus each must be taken seriously.

To sift the historical details from the literary work of the evangelists and the pre-Gospel traditions Brown employs four 'criteria of authenticity': multiple attestation, coherence, embarrassment, and discontinuity or dissimilarity. These criteria are not unique to him and provide a solid beginning point from which to discuss what we can establish with some certainty as having occurred during the time of Jesus' passion. Those who seek to harmonize the Gospel accounts will not be sympathetic to all of Brown's conclusions. However, the weight of his evidence must be taken up point by point before anyone can simply assert a unified account.

When faced with such a magisterial book, so full of astute observations and helpful insights, it is somewhat unfair to critique it on the basis of what is left out. However, one might wish that Brown had provided a more lengthy section which discusses the overarching concern(s) which govern each of the individual passion narratives. He also chooses to avoid discussing the account of the Last Supper out of consideration for the overall length of the commentary. However, such an integral part of each of the synoptic passion accounts, and the possible lack thereof in John, is surely significant for understanding the theological emphasis of each evangelist.

For each pericope investigated Brown provides a thorough summary of contemporary scholarship and his bibliographies extend over 70 pages. A number of helpful appendices (200 pages) provide pertinent information on such diverse topics as *The Gospel of Peter*, the date of the Crucifixion and Old Testament backgrounds. Brown's solid scholarship and clarity of expression mean that any subsequent work on any of the passion narratives of the Gospels will have to agree with, nuance, or react to Brown's work. Any of the misgivings pointed out here are minor and are in no way meant to detract from the overwhelming merits of a great work. Once again Raymond Brown has put scholars, preachers and lay people in his debt by providing an exhaustive analysis of important biblical texts.

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RICHARD S ASCOUGH

**THE APOCRYPHAL NEW TESTAMENT A Collection of
Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English
translation based on M R James Ed J K Elliott**

Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993 xxv + 747pp £50

ISBN 0 19 8261829

Many readers of *Churchman* will be familiar with James' edition of the *Apocryphal New Testament* both as a reference book and as a fascinating source of information on that body of Christian literature which is commonly referred to as 'apocryphal' in the sense that it is fictitious and lacking in authenticity. The examples of such texts are very numerous, beginning in the second century and continuing to mediaeval times, and generally describe events relating to various characters of the New Testament or purport to be the writings of some of the New Testament authors. The collection made by James contained the most important and the most influential of these texts and gave valuable access to a significant but often little known part of the Christian heritage. For all that the apocryphal literature is not genuine in what it claims to be, it is of immense interest for two principal reasons which James himself explains in his Introduction and which Elliott reprints in part in the Preface to his edition: on the one hand, the evident authenticity of the canonical books of the New Testament stands out in comparison with these spurious texts; and on the other, testifying as they do to the vibrant life and faith of the early centuries of the Church, they have inspired works of Christian art and literature and have been the origin of Christian legends and traditions of which some are still familiar today.

As a one volume introduction to these texts, James' book has been the standard work in English since it was brought out in 1924. Despite a subsequent revision and the inclusion of some of the more recently discovered material, it was, nevertheless, beginning to be dated. New archeological

excavations have been made and scholarly discussion has been flourishing; the style of English used in religious texts has been changing, too. These are the chief factors which created a need for not only a revision of James but a thorough overhaul. The need has been well-recognized by the editor of this 'new James', Keith Elliott, who has retained the main features of the original version whilst introducing many important improvements.

A significant fact to be considered in bringing out an updated version of James' *Apocryphal New Testament* was the publication of comparable work since the time at which James' book was first written. In English, there has been notably the translation of the German collection of apocryphal texts edited by Hennecke-Schneemelcher, a 2 volume edition which is to be found in many theological libraries. By its size, however, it is very much a library edition. By the detailed nature of its critical discussion, it is unnecessarily complex for many purposes. Elliott's edition has the specific aim of allowing 'readers access to this vast range of literature without overburdening the translations with excessive textual or critical notes' (p x).

This does not mean that this edition is superficial or ignores the many complicated issues involved in the study of the apocryphal Christian literature. On the contrary, Dr Elliott has drawn on the scholarly discussion and critical editions of his texts in a variety of languages. He has worked personally with experts in the field of the apocryphal literature from this country and abroad whose help he acknowledges. He has, as it were, done the groundwork and readers are able to benefit from the results of his research without the task of wading through the secondary literature for themselves. For all but those with a specialist interest in the subject or in a particular text, the introductions to the texts which he provides are amply complete and supply valuable background information both to the text itself as well as to the history of its transmission including as they do details of the manuscripts and of editions in other languages. Dr Elliott sets out extensive references to his sources of information among which are the several revisions of Hennecke-Schneemelcher in English and in German. He has also added detailed bibliographies (general, and specific to each work) for further reading on the apocryphal material, a welcome feature not present in the original James.

The background information is clearly laid out and separated from the actual text so that readers do not have to sift through pages of unwanted facts to find the section relevant to their purpose. There are useful guides, too, in the form of four indexes which supplement the numerous cross-references throughout the body of the book. The result is an easy to consult, conveniently-sized volume.

In terms of the actual works this edition contains there is little change. Some of James' 'Lost Heretical Books' are not mentioned and likewise some of his 'Minor Acts'. Other new works find a place in Elliott's edition, namely samples of the Pseudo-Clementine literature and the Nag-Hammadi Letter of James. There is also the Gospel of the Nazaraeans which has some

of the passages assigned by James to the Gospel to the Hebrews. The arrangement of some works is altered so as to provide clearer grouping of texts: all the material relating to Pilate is gathered in a 'Pilate Cycle' and the writing attributed to Bartholomew (a 'gospel' or 'questions', and the 'Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ') is moved from the Gospels section to the Apocalypse section. A slight difficulty may be felt with the list of contents given at the beginning of the book where more specific detail could have been helpful, for example to describe the exact contents of the sections containing minor miscellaneous Gospels, Acts and Apocalypses; or to show readers at a glance which samples of certain works (such as the Pseudo-Clementine literature or the Agrapha) have been selected; or to indicate where the text of a work itself is not given but is presented or summarized with an accompanying bibliography (for example, 'Other Infancy Narratives' or 'Other Apocryphal Acts'). It would have added to the length of the Contents pages, and the corresponding pages in the 'old James' which listed almost every section of every work are, in comparison, very cumbersome, but a little more detail could prevent a reader optimistically believing that he had a copy of some work when in fact he had only an extract or an introduction to it. It would also allow those who are accustomed to James' book to locate familiar works in the new edition more easily.

The translations have all been revised and in many cases re-written. Sometimes, all that was necessary was to modernize James' language. Elsewhere it has happened that new recensions of the texts have come to light since James produced his edition or that there has been dissension over James' collation of texts. In such instances, either a fresh translation has been provided by Dr Elliott or it has been possible to print a version based on an existing English translation (for example, from Hennecke-Schneemelcher) where a satisfactory one has already been made.

During the course of preparing his edition of the *Apocryphal New Testament* Dr Elliott has published two lectures given by him relating to the material on which he was working and which present helpful overviews of the subject by bringing together some of the various strands of the introductory remarks to the individual texts found in his book. The lectures were published in the *Expository Times* 103/1991 ('The Apocryphal Gospels') and 105/1993 ('The Apocryphal Acts').

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GUARDIANS OF CREATION - Nature in theology and the Christian life Lawrence Osborn

Leicester: IVP-Apollos 1993 176pp £9.99 pb

ISBN 0 85110 9519

Just in case anyone is in doubt about it, this is a book about theology. Osborn himself suggests at the beginning of chapter eight (there are nine

chapters in all) that some readers may be tempted to start at this point because they are not willing to 'wade through a long theological preamble'. He goes on to defend his largely theological approach by pointing out that those whose starting point is 'the uncritical appropriation of non-Christian ethics (even if they are given 'a smokescreen of biblical verses') are likely to distort the Christian revelation. 'By contrast' he says 'the Christian approach to ethics must be by way of theology. Every aspect of life is related to the God who is the creator, redeemer and fulfiller of all things.'

The book begins with a brief review of the present environmental crisis and even here comes to the conclusion that the most fruitful approach is to look not at immediate problems and solutions but at the underlying attitudes to the environment. This leads directly to what must be a key question for Christians: are we Christians really to blame for the environmental crisis? Osborn is prepared to admit that, at least in terms of the Western tradition, the Christian stance is at best ambivalent. He traces the trouble back to St Augustine!

Osborn then doubles back and reviews the non-Christian attitudes to environmentalism with particular emphasis on 'green spirituality', before resuming his main theme, ie the Christian response. He deals with what he considers to be inadequate approaches (a technocratic approach; the rejection of the idea of 'nature' as a meaningful term in Christian theology; process theology; Teilhard de Chardin; Matthew Fox's 'creation spirituality') and then moves on to an examination of the specifically biblical material. He concludes that the Bible takes a non-exploitative approach but adds:

. . . it is not enough to reply to the criticisms of the environmentalists by showing that the biblical traditions do not themselves advocate an exploitative approach. We must go on to look at ways in which this insight may cause us to revise our theology and our ethics.

So it is back to theology, and chapter six begins with the excellent heading 'Refreshing our view of God'. Osborn here, it seems to me, moves on to the most original part of his thesis. Arguing both from a wide selection of Christian traditions and from what he considers to be the distinctive witness of Christianity as against the other world religions, he suggests that a re-examination of God as Trinity might be the key to unlock a new approach to 'the theology of nature'. Referring specifically to creation, for example, Osborn claims that 'a distinctively Christian doctrine of creation may not be developed independently of a doctrine of Trinity'. The Trinity is also involved in the sustenance of the creation and its consummation. The fact that we humans are made in the image of a Trinitarian God, a God who originated, who sustains and who will lead the created order to consummation, means that we have God-like responsibilities towards the

non-human creation. A final chapter looks at Christian environmentalism in practice and suggests some ways in which we can fulfill this mandate.

My main criticism of Osborn's otherwise excellent book is that it is too short! He deals with a very wide range of topics and in my view would have been wise either, as I say, to write a longer book, or to concentrate on one or more aspects of his argument and leave the rest to another time or other authors. Too often he touches upon complex issues only to hurry on, leaving this reader at least unsatisfied. The central theological section (chapters six to eight) is full of fascinating insights which could have been developed further. Having said this, I notice that the blurb says that Dr Osborn 'advances suggestions for further theological debate, prayer and practical Christian action'. If we accept this, then the book is a very welcome resource for those of us who continue to worry about the environment, who are not sure what we should do about it as Christians, and who want to think theologically.

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JONATHAN INGLEBY

WORK AND WORSHIP Ben Patterson

Leicester: IVP 1994 192pp £5.99pb ISBN 0 85111 151 3

A major gap in evangelical, pastoral and missiological thinking and writing has been the whole area of Christian responsibility in working life. It is very good to see IVP publish this book by Ben Patterson from the USA. He recognises helpfully that work is part of the vocation to which God has called us, and underlines some of the responsibilities that Christians have in fulfilling this aspect of their calling. He accepts that Christians are not to seek release and relief from the complexities and pressures of working life by opting out but, rather, seeks to set these realities in the greater reality of God's love, grace and purpose. It is good so see, also, some thinking being explored in the area of productive work and leisure and retirement, and Patterson seeks again to relate these areas to our total obedience to God in an ongoing and dynamic way.

Your reviewer came to read this book, given the publisher's evangelical credentials, with expectations that were not fulfilled. Patterson wrestles, I think unsuccessfully, with the relationship between work and worship and comes to the conclusion that our understanding of, and fulfilment of, our working responsibility is most clearly seen in the Lord's Supper. We are back again, I am afraid, to the old problem of eucharistic sacrifice. The author suggests that as 'work is an offering' so the sequence of creation, incarnation, sacraments, can be made on the basis that:

The God who meets us in Jesus meets us also in his world and through his sacraments. The bread and cup we use in communion are of the same fabric as the creation and the incarnation. The mystery and meaning of communion for our work is the offering we make of ourselves when it is offered in love.

Readers of this journal will, I imagine, be surprised to discover such teaching in a publication by IVP. We are still deeply in debt to the late Professor Sir Norman Anderson's clear and consistent essay at Keele, 1967, on Christian worldliness. In his essay Anderson argued that the Christian is called to relate to God both as Creator and Redeemer. There is a distinction of function with the sovereign purpose of God here which must be maintained, and Evangelicals still need to affirm that the focus of the Lord's Supper relates to what the Lord has done, rather than to what we are doing or must do.

Patterson's whole chapter, 'Our Daily Bread', seems to be an exercise in special pleading of the need for an offering, thus turning the ordinance of the Supper from a salvation-centred sacrament to one that centres on creation and our part within it. There is almost a Quaker tendency in the argument presented that as the Lord can be met at the Holy Communion so also he can be met at the shop where the Lord's Table is made. It is a short step from this to the Quaker position of not meeting at the Lord's Table at all!

It is interesting that the publisher has produced two books on the same subject recently and, although there is much that is helpful in Patterson's book *Work and Leisure* by Leland Ryken needs to be read alongside it to get a balanced and fuller picture of the issues involved.

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TREVOR K PARKIN

RELIGION & REVELATION Keith Ward

Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994 350pp £13.95

ISBN 0 19 826375 9

A couple of decades ago Wilfred Cantwell Smith wonderingly observed 'We explain the fact that the Milky Way is there by the doctrine of creation, but how do we explain the fact that the Bhagavad Gita is there?' (*Religious Diversity* 1976). Ward's latest book is an attempt to answer such a question and to offer a Christian theology of revelation in the world's religions. His thesis is that God is at work in the major faiths drawing their adherents into a knowledge of his being and into a relationship with him which results in human flourishing and fulfilment (p337). Each revelation is partial and fallibly discerned since it is mediated to and through a specific worldview with its own language, conceptual sophistication and set of foundational presuppositions (p25). God is therefore able to communicate more of himself through some cultures than others. Revelation is seen by Ward as primarily existential, an encounter with God, and although, for example, the Christian Scriptures contain propositions, they should be viewed as timely rather than timeless truths and as moral and existential challenges rather than detached information (p226). Similarly, theology should be viewed as offering provisional propositions

(p29) in response to an imaginative contemplation of the mystery of God's self-revelation, rather than as a deductive exercise in refining orthodox doctrinal propositions (p34).

Ward's theological methodology is what he calls 'open orthodoxy', that is the attempt to maintain the distinctives of Christian conviction while interacting openly and sometimes convergently with other faiths. Such a theology will be constantly evolving, as it learns from other traditions and discovers deep structured commonalities as well as crucial differences with fellow pilgrims on the spiritual path, and as it profits from human discoveries in the sciences and other disciplines (p339).

The traditional conservative view that the Bible is wholly inerrant, while the scriptures of other religions are merely the products of human imagination or worse, is therefore emphatically rejected by Ward, as is the common justification of this view by claiming that the authority of the Bible is self-authenticating since, as Ward points out, conservative traditions in the different religions make exactly the same claim (p18). Like other scriptures, the Bible emerges out of a primal (animistic) worldview which continues to influence early biblical strands of tradition (eg the use of such oracles as the Urim and Thummin [p103], and like the other scriptures it contains elements of moral restrictiveness and factual error such as the contradictions in the resurrection narratives (p211). Nevertheless the Bible, for Ward, is inerrant 'in all those truths which God intends to be present therein to lead us to salvation' (p212).

In his quest both to evaluate and to learn from other religions, Ward surveys primal religions, Judaism, Vedanta Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam as well as certain distinctive aspects of Christianity, most notably the belief in incarnation. To avoid superficiality he concentrates on one key doctrine in each case. What emerges is a series of sparkling insights into how apparently contradictory tenets may be partially harmonised at a deeper level of analysis. For example, the Christology of Islam seems diametrically opposed to that of Christianity, but Ward argues that what both religions and their respective scriptures vehemently reject are polytheism and the worship of a creature other than God. They are therefore not as far apart as it first appears. Christians need to stress that Christ is not a creature but is himself God, and that the Trinity does not teach that God is *in* a trinity (polytheism) but *is* trinity. What is more, Ward suggests that the Muslim belief that Muhammad's prayers are effective in bringing about the divine forgiveness of others is not very remote from the Christian view that Jesus gave his life's blood as a sort of prayer for the blotting out of human sin (p185).

In the course of working through his main theme Ward offers fascinating observations on all sorts of topics, from the definition of religion (pp50–54) to the purpose of the ritual laws in the Torah (p116ff), to the coherence of the notion of miracle (pp288–294). He also provides trenchant critiques of key thinkers from Barth (p21) to Hick (pp310–317), thus

displaying his considerable expertise in philosophy and logic as well as in theology.

Those of us who feared a radical and unorthodox turn in Ward's thought as a result of his somewhat irresponsible previous book *A Vision to Pursue* (1991) will find a much more robust defence of the doctrine of incarnation (there is a mild *mea culpa* on p240) and of the general trustworthiness of the portrait of Jesus found in the Gospels in *Religion & Revelation*. He is back defending both the importance of belief in Christ's resurrection (p252), and the contention that Jesus is the final revelation of God as he demonstrated and taught that God is suffering and redeeming love and showed that the human goal is a love union with the divine (p279). Ward reassuringly asserts that although one may be on the road to salvation without holding Christian beliefs, the state of final salvation must entail the acceptance of the truth of Christ's person (p317).

This book is thoroughly recommended as the fertile thoughts of one of Britain's most prodigious and profound theological and philosophical Christian minds writing today. Surveying his intellectual development over a number of books it is fascinating to observe his working and reworking of reflections on the mystery of incarnation. If I might proffer a request for his future intellectual agenda, it seems to me that he has avoided for long enough an equally profound treatment of the mystery of atonement. Please, Professor Ward, give this some concentrated attention and offer us the fruits of your labour in due course!

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ROB COOK

**THE ANACHRONISM OF TIME: A Theological Study
into the Nature of Time Ian M MacKenzie**

Norwich: Canterbury Press 1994 191pp £17.50pb

ISBN 1 85311 089 2

This is a demanding book, but one I am glad to have read. It deals with an extremely difficult subject, the nature of time and its relation to eternity and (it may be said) to many other things we take for granted. Some eminent philosophers have regarded time as unreal, and after having read Canon MacKenzie's book I cannot say that it seems any more solid or comprehensible to me than it did before! The value of reading such a book as this is rather that it makes one aware of the profoundly mysterious dimensions of our existence and of the need both for humility as a consequence, and for readiness to accept that some matters will probably be for ever beyond the competence of the human mind to resolve. After all, the relationship of mind and body is one we manage to live with; like it, we necessarily have to live and function within a 'something' (here the continuum of time and space) we cannot by any conceivable means get outside of to view objectively.

That is not to say that we may not legitimately speculate about it, nor that the exercise will be wholly unprofitable. Dr MacKenzie does in fact give us some fine thinking here. His categories are largely biblical, and especially Christological; but I would personally have appreciated him stressing more explicitly these as stemming from *revelation*. 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; the things that are *revealed* belong unto us . . .', and it is within their limits that our minds must work. This rather puts a curb on speculation, of which there is a fair amount here. Dr MacKenzie takes as his mentors Irenaeus, Augustine, Grosseteste, Barth and his old tutor Professor Torrance, though he does not simply reproduce their thoughts. His style cannot be said to be always lucid or economical, and a second reading of the whole book would really be needed to do it justice, so I must be content with some selected impressions. There is a 'double contingency' he thinks, in the creation of the world: a contingency *to* and a contingency *from* God. The latter, he seems to imply, means that to God there was a 'risk' factor involved in creating at all (though he is not explicit on this). If so, this would be a far-reaching conclusion that emphatically not all conservatives would endorse (cf P Helm *The Providence of God*). Time and space are not independent entities, he says, but an integral part of the created order; they are 'co-created' with 'things', a 'necessary corollary of creation'. In a similar way eternity is not a superior sort of self-existing space-time which God inhabits; it is analogously a necessary corollary of his uncreated existence. MacKenzie refers much more to the incarnation than to the cross: he would seem to give it the greater importance in the overall divine economy.

A difficult book, but probably quite an important one. I noticed misprints on pp65, 102, 171 and 183. There are five pages of Notes, a select Bibliography of two, and an Index of three. The book is well produced.

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DOUGLAS SPANNER

RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY AND PROTESTANT EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA Julius H Rubin

Oxford: Oxford University Press 308pp £27.50hb

ISBN 0 19 508301 6

Religious Melancholy and Protestant Experience in America is a masterly piece of research. All credit must go to Julius H Rubin for the way he has marshalled his evidence to validate his thesis. This evidence consists of well documented historical biography and autobiography, unpublished diaries, fascinating case studies of patients treated in nineteenth century asylums and other material old and new that he has carefully unearthed. He has done this to examine a disturbing historical/religious paradox usefully described on the 'dust cover', namely that over the years 'fervent believers who devoted themselves completely to the challenges of making

a Christian life, who longed to know God's rapturous love, all too often languished in despair, feeling forsaken by God. Indeed, some individuals became obsessed by guilt, terror of damnation and the idea that they had committed an unpardonable sin'.

Rubin describes how some became so mentally trapped into hopelessness that they were driven to take their own lives, some abruptly and violently, others through self-inflicted starvation. This he describes as 'evangelical Anorexia Nervosa' or 'sinners who would fast unto death'. His research takes him from the days of 'Colonial Puritanism' to today's highly complex and multi-faceted religious scene in America. His spotlight falls on an amazingly diverse grouping of people, from early puritans like Cotton Mather to the contemporary international evangelist Billy Graham. He uncovers a spectrum of religious melancholy that ranges from moderate depression to catastrophic suicide.

I have to admit that this book had quite an effect upon me. Like a morbid curiosity that draws some people to stare at the victims of an accident, I was fascinated, appalled and disturbed as I read the evidence before me. Surely this must serve as a warning to us all, not to interpret one doctrine of Scripture at the expense of another—in this case predestination and free-will? 'The dangers of the "Arminian position" that in Puritan belief distorted man's capacity to win salvation by good works; and the "Antinomianism" which viewed salvation by faith alone, passively as revelation in one's heart directed by God.' (p32) It seems that many Puritans could never be sure of their election and therefore lived in terror of eternal damnation.

The frightening truth is that these 'terrors' are alive and well and experienced by many a devoted believer today. Like the case of Edward J Carnell, former president of the highly respected Fuller Theological Seminary, a brilliant and faithful evangelical apologist and theologian. He committed suicide in 1967 because he could not accept divine forgiveness, nor could he forgive himself.

The most depressing aspect of Rubin's thesis is his personal conclusion. He himself could envisage only a healthy future for 'religious melancholy'; I quote: 'In the light of these findings, the future of religious melancholy unfortunately looks bright'. (p238)

It seems to me that we are indebted to him for the warning implicit in his research, namely that a distorted view of God, and his plan for our lives, can lead to infection by a spiritual sickness that has unthinkable consequences in the lives of even wholly committed believers. To see God as he is and not as we suppose must be the object of our life—the development of a holy balance that would keep us away from unhealthy extremes.

This is an academic work of interest to scholars and students of history, theology, psychology and sociology, but its biographical nature makes it accessible to the non-academic. Although it is principally about the 'American experience', the phenomena observed are by no means con-

fined to that continent. The truth is that 'Religious Melancholy' will exist wherever Christians can be found.

Some practical observations. I wonder whether 308 pages really are worth £27.50. Rubin has compiled helpful notes for each of the six chapters and the two appendices. He has produced a precise bibliography. What is missing is a 'glossary of terms', for he uses words like *auto machia* without explanation except what can be deduced from the context.

Emmanuel Vicarage, Vicarage Road, Hastings, East Sussex PAUL A O'GORMAN

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