Book Reviews

BODY, SOUL, AND HUMAN LIFE:
The Nature of Humanity in the Bible
Joel B. Green
Milton Keynes: Paternoster/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008 219pp
£12.99 ISBN: 978-0801035951

Recent advances in the neurological sciences have revealed much about how the human mind works. But those same advances raise more questions about what this means for our understanding of what it is to be human. Green, already a noted biblical scholar, has done further study in neurology in order to explore how the two disciplines relate to the question of human nature. The results bear examination. This volume is an attempt to take stock of the changes that recent science has brought to the way we think about ourselves and our cultural history.

One major area of challenge is to the traditional dualist interpretation of the human person as body and soul. Green is not attempting to read contemporary science back into the ancient text, but to read the biblical evidence in the light of these changes. When looking at what it means in Scripture to be human (ch. 2), Green gravitates towards a monist interpretation. Humanity's vocation is best understood in relation to the created order, and in relation to God. The sciences' approach (ch. 3) challenges the traditional affirmations of sin, original sin and free will. If so much of our behaviour is hard-wired, or is acquired by experience, what truth can there be in sin, free will, and conversion? To be sure, decision-making has a somatic base, but it is not determined entirely by bottom-up biology. Other factors influence how we are formed, and therefore how we choose. From their different perspectives, then, science and biblical studies can come to complementary affirmations.

Following on from this, salvation and conversion (ch. 4) is a re-orientation and a reforming of the mind's patterns and path-ways. There really is change, and there really are fruits of repentance. Luke–Acts is examined to show examples of 'embodied conversion' as the transformation by which 'what was previously inconceivable is now matter-of-fact' (p. 128). Green concludes "Conversion is a transformation of conceptual scheme—conceptual, conative, and

behavioral—by which life is reordered" (p. 137). While we cannot be defined by our bodies they are in any case constantly remaking themselves, who we are is inextricably bound up with our physicality. Death is therefore the cessation of life and the conclusion of embodied life, the severance of all relationships. The person really dies. Chapter 5 looks at eschatological issues and we see that in the New Testament, life-after-death requires embodiment. Despite all that death destroys, God can indeed bring a person to the new life because who I am is preserved in God's being.

This is a fascinating book. It is not a simple read because it does not deal with simple issues. Nevertheless Green writes as clearly as the matter allows, and has provided a valuable contribution to our understanding of what it means to be embodied souls—people made by God and redeemed in Christ. In time the conclusions will be sharpened, and will percolate to other areas of Christian endeavour. That will be to our benefit.

ED MOLL
Bridgwater

READING THE DECREE
Exegesis, election and Christology in Calvin and Barth
David Gibson
London: Continuum, 2009 221pp £65hb ISBN: 978-05674-68741

This book has appeared in a new series of monographs entitled *T and T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology*. It must be said straightaway that it is intended for those who already have a good grounding in the subject, including a working knowledge of the ancient languages as well as modern French and German. Those who are not up to speed in all this will find it heavy-going! In essence the book is a doctoral dissertation that has been prepared for publication, and the signs of its origin are apparent on every page. Technical terminology abounds, quotations in the original are commonplace (including from the New Testament, which is cited in Greek alone, without translation) and modern scholars are discussed in a way that presupposes considerable familiarity with their writings and general approach. For those who deplore the 'dumbing down' of so much Christian publishing nowadays, this volume will offer a refreshing change, but others must be warned what to expect!

Dr. Gibson has undertaken a detailed comparison of the theology of John Calvin and Karl Barth, touching on the central themes of Christology, election and salvation. It is obvious that Barth interacted with Calvin at many different levels, but the book is not restricted to examining that. Rather, it presents the systematic theology of each man as an integral whole and compares their methods to show that, although they had much in common as leading exponents of the Reformed tradition, they were also very different. Furthermore, Dr. Gibson demonstrates that their differences have deep roots in the way in which they tackled the primary task of any theologian, which is the interpretation of Scripture.

As Dr. Gibson points out, it is not uncommon for students of Calvin and/or Barth to ignore or downplay the important connection between their Biblical exegesis and their theological construction. Too often, scholars have concentrated on one of these to the detriment of the other, with the result that their analysis has been seriously flawed. By tying the threads together, Dr. Gibson aims to show what the differences are and why, and he succeeds admirably in doing so.

At the end of the day, Calvin regarded the Bible as a divinely-revealed text, in which God's plan of salvation is clearly expounded and Jesus Christ is presented to us as the mediator, who makes it possible for sinful human beings to enjoy the benefits of God's saving plan. Calvin's Christology is central to his interpretation of Scripture, but it is almost wholly grounded in soteriology. Christ comes to us as the way, the truth and the life—in that order. We are called to follow him first, and then we may understand the part that he plays in the eternal plan of God. The pattern of election is not revealed until after the fall, and although it is centred on Israel, the number of the saved is not coterminous with the ancient people of God. The elect are a remnant, chosen by God out of Israel but also out of the other nations, as the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed throughout the world.

Karl Barth, on the other hand, believed that Christ was both the God who elects and the man who was elected from before the foundation of the world. The pattern of redemption is to be understood as the restoration of all the children of Adam by the outpouring of God's mercy. It is true that some have resisted this, but in the end God will show mercy to them too, because that is

the destiny of every human being. Barth does not see the Bible as the direct revelation of God but as the chief witness to that revelation, which is only in and through Christ. In saying this, Barth shows that he is just as Christocentric as Calvin, but in a completely different way. For him, Jesus of Nazareth is the one who is supremely chosen as the elect of God, and it is in him that the entire race of Adam has been redeemed.

The heart of the book is an extended study of the way in which the two theologians read Romans 9 (and by extension Romans 10–11) and how they used it to develop their doctrine of election. What Dr. Gibson demonstrates is that although they both worked with the same text and both believed that it held the key to our understanding the mystery of divine election, they read it in such different ways that we now have two theologies which oppose each other at least as much, and possibly more, than they concur. His is a solid piece of work which scholars in the field will do well to engage with at the deepest level. Dr. Gibson has not only done a superb job of showing us what Calvin and Barth achieved by their different approaches, but also why there is continuing disagreement among even conservative Reformed thinkers, who may lean to one or the other of these but who cannot synthesize them because their methods are fundamentally incompatible with each other.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

SOME CHARACTERS FROM THE PAGES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT GOSPELS
John Lindeck
Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, Ltd 397pp (pb) ISBN: 978-1-4389-5108-9

John Lindeck has written a most interesting book on thirty three characters in the Gospels. With a deft touch and a discerning eye John Lindeck, with occasional touches of humour, opens up both the context and the personal character of the various individuals whom we meet in the pages of the New Testament. There are people involved in the early years of the boyhood and as the ministry· unfolds whom He met in the course of the three year ministry. This book is an attempt to Icrokat their background and to imagine their future after their contact with Jesus. In this book we are touching upon the great mystery of the incarnation. Jesus, the very Son of God became truly man

and lived and moved among us as the creed puts it. The author writes from the presupposition that human nature for all its differences in language and culture is still remarkably similar through the centuries. It is this which allows the author to use his imagination to fill in those areas that we would like to know but which we are not told. While imagination is stimulated and encouraged, the author states that whatever is written in the New Testament is accepted as true and nothing is altered or omitted just for the sake of the story. It is those guidelines which allow imagination to flourish but not to run riot. A helpful book which illustrates the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

DAVID STREATER
Swansea

A NEW HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Charles Freeman

London: Yale University Press, 2009 377pp £25.00hb
ISBN: 978-0300125818

This is not, as the title claims, a 'New History of Early Christianity'. The arguments are not new—they are old and outdated. The scholarship is secondhand and anecdotal—hardly 'history.' The narrative reveals more of nineteenth century liberalism, than 'Early Christianity.'

The author claims that his book is superior to other histories, because he keeps an open mind on issues such as the resurrection: 'The sources which describe the physical resurrection of Jesus are, so late, fragmentary and contradictory, that the question of whether it happened must be left open' (p. xvi). Freeman thinks that the fourth century marked a suppression of theological debate. In contrast, 'I think it helps if one does not feel that there is a correct answer to be found' (p. xvii). So Freeman portrays himself as a lone champion of free scholarly debate—able to rise above the shackles of conclusions and doctrine. The irony is that his approach is highly suppressive. Anybody who thinks they can come to a conclusion on matters such as the resurrection, is automatically wrong and unscholarly.

In any case, Freeman fails to maintain his stated goals of open-ended, conclusionless debate. He continually argues for liberal views which fly in the face of historical evidence. So Paul was 'authoritarian' (p. 47). The resurrection

of Jesus may be explained by his idea that Caiaphas stole the body (p. 32). Evidence for this is alleged to be found in the Gospel of Peter (p. 33). Freeman evaluates that apocryphal gospel to be from a 'careful writer' (unlike John!) - but omits mentioning that the said author was (as scholars such as Raymond Brown argue) dependent upon the canonical Gospels.

Freeman's narrative of Early Church history is painful to read. He appears to be ignorant of details in the Bible itself—an aside in his argument that the New Testament was compiled late, and included pseudonymous letters such as Titus, 1 and 2 Timothy, states: 'There is nothing in the New Testament to challenge the institution of slavery' (p. 99). What of 1 Timothy 1:10?

One could go on listing the crass caricatures which are peddled—Origin's hopes for the afterlife are preferred to Augustine's belief in eternal hell (p. 195). The latter is said to have supported misogyny (p. 285) and suffered a personality which 'warmed to the reality of hell fire' (p. 289). Augustine's victory over Pelagianism marked a 'low point' of Christianity, as Augustine's belief in original sin, 'made authoritarian societies easier to justify' (p. 297). The Nicene Creed represented a triumph of politics and state power over free academic debate (p. 253). Christian tradition is claimed to have had an obsessive and prurient fixation on the crucifixion' (p. 310). The footnote for that claim refers one to Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of the Christ". Freeman seems unaware that it has more to do with a strand of Roman Catholic piety, than with the Early Church.

The main strength of this book is that it gathers together, in one place, so many misrepresentations of Early Church History. This may be helpful to some who teach Church History.

PETER SANLON
Cambridge

GOD THE PEACEMAKER How atonement brings shalom
Graham A. Cole
Nottingham: IVP/Apollos, 2009 296pp £14.99pb ISBN: 978-184474-396-4

This is the latest volume in the series New Studies in Biblical Theology edited by Professor Donald Carson of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. In it, one

of his colleagues, Dr. Graham Cole, takes on the daunting task of expounding the doctrine of the atoning work of Christ, a subject that receives less attention that it deserves in spite of the fact that it remains deeply controversial in the life of the wider church. Even today, though there are many different theories of atonement, there is no clearly defined doctrine that can claim near-universal assent. Evangelical Christians however, can be characterised as those who believe in penal substitution, a doctrine which has taken its present shape in surprisingly recent times but whose origins can be traced back to the New Testament. Defenders of penal substitution, including Dr. Cole, maintain that it affirms everything that is good in other theories and goes beyond them to present a fuller and more compelling picture of the work of Christ. In general terms, that is what Dr. Cole sets out to do in this book, taking in a great many arguments and other related issues along the way.

Dr. Cole is clearly a gifted communicator, and his book is fresh and easy to read. His illustrations, and particularly his recounting of the experiences of P. T. Forsyth and C. E. M. Joad, will remain in the memory and be used by many for their own sermon illustrations. His introductory chapter sets out what he is trying to do and gives prospective readers guidance about how to tackle the book as a whole, for which he is to be commended. Navigating the waters of theology is never easy, and a good teacher, which Dr. Cole evidently is, provides a map for those brave enough to make the attempt. Having said that, this is not a study for beginners. It requires a good deal of background knowledge and a willingness to engage with themes which will be challenging (to put it mildly) to non-specialists. To go no further, there is a considerable amount of Greek and Hebrew to be mastered, even if it is transliterated, and Dr. Cole frequently throws in passing references to things like Pelagianism and 'five-point Calvinism', which he assumes his readers will understand without further explanation.

The first chapter introduces us to 'the righteous God of holy love' and concentrates heavily on the meaning of words like 'righteousness', 'holy', 'love' and 'wrath'. Somewhat oddly, given what follows later on, there is little engagement with word study, apart from a reference to dik- as the Greek root of 'righteous'. Nevertheless, it is clear that these concepts are fundamental to any doctrine of the atonement and we must pay close attention to what Dr. Cole says about them before moving on. He argues that Karl Barth's insistence

that 'God is love' is too narrow a definition, and that we must add notions of holiness and righteousness to love if we are to get a fully-rounded picture of who God is and what he is like.

Unfortunately, he defines 'holiness' in terms of morality, a common but serious mistake. Morality is a caricature of divine holiness, invented by pagan philosophers and frequently substituted for the real thing. Those who remember the way in which the holiness movements of the nineteenth century degenerated into moralistic crusades for social reform, and ended by discrediting both, will be particularly sensitive to this confusion. The holiness of God is unknowable and unattainable except through a deep experience of his love, which is what the atonement is all about. Dr. Cole almost certainly believes that, but his presentation of the issues is confused and confusing.

The subsequent chapters go on to elaborate, in a general historical sequence, what the Bible teaches about the fall of mankind and the work of Christ in redemption. Most of this is what one would expect, though Dr. Cole's eye for a good catch phrase sometimes gets the better of him. For example, his chapter on original sin is called 'The glory and garbage of the universe', which will doubtless stir a few undergraduates out of their usual slumber but which is theologically questionable. Fallen man is not 'garbage' for the simple reason that garbage is something meant to be discarded. But the point of the atonement is the exact opposite—it is because we are not garbage that the Father sent his Son to save us and did not allow us to suffer the condemnation that our own actions so richly deserve. A similar comment might apply to the phrase 'peace dividend' which is the title of another chapter later on, when Dr. Cole is talking about the effects of Christ's atonement on those who are saved. It seems to suggest that reconciliation to God is some kind of added bonus, when in fact it is the central theme of Christ's work on the cross. Here again, Dr. Cole has the right theology but seems to have been carried away by the teacher's desire to make sure his pupils remember what he is saying.

In general, it must be said that Dr. Cole ranges widely but not deeply, and that this is probably the inevitable consequence of his approach. His general method is to assemble a wide range of Bible texts, discuss the ways in which they can be interpreted and then come to a conclusion, which is almost invariably the one we would have expected him to come to all along. In the

process, he quotes a very broad range of sources which shows that he is extremely well read, although often it is not clear why he has selected these particular citations, other than to express his own approval of them.

The problem with this method is that it tends to make other people say what Dr. Cole wants them to say and does not give the reader much clue as to what the person being quoted really thinks (or thought). Often, though not always, he mentions lesser-known scholars without explaining who they are or where they are coming from, which is bound to leave a curious impression, especially on those who happen to know. Can it really be the case that a broad range of conservatives and liberals, Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox think the same thing about this ever-controversial doctrine? Of course it is not, but you have to know your modern theology quite well if you are going to make the necessary distinctions and reservations when confronted with a barrage of disparate quotes.

It must also be said that Dr. Cole is ill at ease with systematic theology. He often gets wrapped up in discussions about the supposed differences between things like 'expiation' and 'propitiation' which could have been greatly abbreviated if a systematic approach had been adopted from the start. It also means that his presentation of the ordo salutis in the 'peace dividend' chapter is confused, forcing him into explanations that would have been unnecessary had he followed a logical order. He is particularly anxious to show that Calvinists and Arminians are much closer to one another than they themselves think, possibly because he is trying to reconcile the two in his own mind. For example, on page 70 he writes: 'Where Calvinists and Arminians differ is whether God through a universal act of prevenient grace (grace that goes before us) has remedied the corruption to the extent that a man or woman may freely choose to follow Christ (Arminians) or rather only those whom God regenerates (the elect) voluntarily follow Christ (Calvinists).' That debate need not detain us.

If Dr. Cole has presented the two positions fairly, that debate is actually central to the meaning of the atonement, but this issue is simply passed over in silence. Other matters of theological controversy are relegated to an appendix, whether they belong there or not. In fairness, some of the issues he deals with are probably ephemeral (like feminist critiques of 'violence', which have already

been challenged by other feminists) but others are not. There is a curious section devoted to what Dr. Cole calls 'the Holy Saturday debate', which according to him broke out on the pages of *First Things* at the end of 2006.

Reading his account however soon shows that this debate is really about the descent of Christ into hell, an obscure and controversial subject that has long puzzled the great minds of the church. After expressing his own preference on the subject, Dr. Cole goes on to conclude (p. 247): 'In my view, the Reformed tradition has the better of the argument with regard to how best to interpret the creedal phrase. Even better, speaking as one involved in the worship of a liturgical church, would be to return to the earlier versions of the creed that do not include the question-raising phrase at all.' Needless to say, that would not have been Calvin's conclusion, nor is it the official position of the 'liturgical church' to which he belongs, where Christ's descent into hell is important enough to merit its own article in its confession of faith. (It is the third of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion.) If deleting question-raising phrases were the way to proceed, we might as well get rid of everything, the Bible included!

In conclusion, Dr. Cole has written an engaging study of the doctrine of the atonement in a popular style, though it is not readily accessible to a popular audience. It deals reasonably well with some modern controversies and provides an excellent bibliographical resource for those who want to pursue the issues further, but it does not really advance our understanding of Christ's work on the cross. Those who have read Leon Morris and John Stott on the subject will not find anything new here, though they may be surprised to learn how many modern theologians of other schools of thought occasionally approximate to Evangelical beliefs on the subject.

GERALD BRAY
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AN ANGLICAN EVANGELICAL IDENTITY CRISIS: THE CHURCHMAN—ANVIL AFFAIR OF 1981-1984

Andrew Atherstone

London: The Latimer Trust, 2009 92pp £3.50pb ISBN: 9780946307647

For many years Churchman was perceived, as it now is again, as the serious periodical of conservative evangelicalism in the tradition of J. C. Ryle, W. H.

Griffith Thomas, A. M. Stibbs. However in the early 1980s there seemed to have been a shift. Churchman was publishing reviews by such as Bishop Mervyn Stockwood on a dodgy book by one of his suffragans. I must declare an interest as I was, I guess, not alone in cancelling my subscription as I felt that Churchman no longer represented the Anglican evangelicalism that I espoused. When the editorial board refused to accept Gerald Bray as the editor of Churchman division became inevitable. The result was that Churchman was restored to its former position, and we renewed our subscriptions, and Anvil was born. The current editor of Anvil, Dr. Andrew Goddard, to his great credit invited Dr. Andrew Atherstone, a distinguished contributor to Churchman, to write an account of the 'affair'.

The first thing to say about this Latimer Study is that it is totally fair and accurate. It is history at its best. The account has been meticulously researched. Blame and praise are not apportioned. What we have is a factual account of what transpired stage by stage. It is inevitably sad to read of evangelical divisions, but it is right that we should have a detailed step by step account of what transpired. I am not sure that we have had a similar history of the BCMS/CMS split of the early 1920s, or of the Tyndale House/Clifton division that came much later.

Not only is this study fair it is also important for two reasons. The Churchman-Anvil affair is another piece of the jigsaw of what has happened within evangelicalism since that first NEAC at Keele in 1967. It is now generally recognised that Keele was a two headed monster. On the one hand there were the founding fathers, who contributed to Guidelines, the study book, before the conference, whose aim was to crusade and to bring the Church of England back to its evangelical and protestant roots. On the other hand the baton was handed to younger evangelicals whose aim was to make evangelicalism an acceptable stream within Anglicanism. To oversimplify, it was Anglican Evangelicalism on the one hand, and Evangelical Anglicanism on the other. If the Churchman-Anvil affair was the progeny of Keele, it was in some ways the parent of the current situation between Reform and Fulcrum.

The second reason why this study is important is that although Dr. Atherstone does not trespass into drawing lessons from the affair, the reader has the factual account from which lessons must be learnt. There is admittedly,

especially among younger conservative evangelicals, a sharp-edgedness which can dot too many 'i's and cross too many 't's in an unattractive way. Yet nonetheless we need to be constantly alerted to the danger of evangelicalism slipping into a 'liberal' or 'open' direction, or conversely slipping into a 'churchy' or 'Catholic' direction. Those who cannot remember and learn from the lessons of the past are condemned to repeat them. This Latimer Study, therefore, helps to explain where we are now, and warns us of dangers that always lie ahead.

JONATHAN FLETCHER
Wimbledon

AUGUSTINE, SINNER & SAINT A New Biography
James J.O'Donnell
London: Profile Books, 2005 396pp £12.99pb ISBN: 1-86197-686

Augustine wrote that some things are to be used, some enjoyed, and some both. Any serious student of Augustine will want to use this biography, and some may enjoy it as well; I cannot say that I did.

It is instructive to compare O'Donnell's work to the classic 1967 biography by Peter Brown (to whom O'Donnell pays generous tribute). Brown's work is a modern biography for the twentieth century. He uses a traditional narrative framework, and expounds Augustine's works along the way. Whilst certainly not uncritical or hagiographic, he accepts the basic reliability of Augustine's self-presentation. O'Donnell's work is a post-modern biography for the twenty-first century. The narrative framework is there: indeed, discoveries in the past 20 years of previously unknown sermons and letters make O'Donnell more reliable than Brown at points. But the framework is much more fluid, to the extent that O'Donnell's work seems more of a 'study' than a 'biography'. Moreover, O'Donnell has a much greater awareness of the distinction between the implied and actual authors of Augustine's works. For instance, he regards the Confessions as a 'deceptive' book, indeed as containing deliberate deception on Augustine's part. His purpose is to find the "real" Augustine behind his words.

O'Donnell's rigorous and searching analysis is undoubtedly a step forward in the study of Augustine. Any Christian reader of Augustine must face the fact

that he could be manipulative, ambitious, and unscrupulous, and that he lacked, as O'Donnell says, 'a Calvinist doctrine of assurance'. The problem is, as C.S. Lewis observed, that if one tries to see through everything, one ends up seeing nothing. Augustine seems to constantly recede from us, ('like a Cheshire cat' as O'Donnell says), and the effect on the reader is wearying. O'Donnell sees Augustine as a tragic figure, a brilliant, sensitive and lonely man trapped by self-doubt, whose 'putsch' against the Donatists fatally weakened the North African church. According to O'Donnell, Manichaeism was the great lost spiritual love of Augustine's life, and catholic Christianity the dutiful marriage that never quite lived up to it.

Wearying: and infuriating. First, because of O'Donnell's style. This is readable, but occasionally descends into a breezy colloquialism that grates. Second, because of his constant literary name dropping: we get everyone from Dickens to Dante, and PG Wodehouse to Proust. Third because of O'Donnell's deliberate use of the lower case 'g' for 'god'. His view is that 'Only the highest-minded had any idea of the identity of a single divine principle crossing all religions. Augustine was not so high-minded, at least not in the years when we know him best. (By leaving the word 'god' in lowercase, I hope to remind readers of this danger throughout this book.).' Not only is this condescending, it is misleading when O'Donnell uses the lower case in quotations from Augustine, for when the latter wrote deus he surely meant God and not god! O'Donnell leaves no doubt that Augustine's God is not his: he assumes that scripture is contradictory (whilst noting that Augustine believed in inerrancy). His sympathies lie more with Arianism (a more nuanced philosophical position) and Pelagianism than with Augustinian grace and Nicene Christology, although his explanation of the differences is valuable: the former pair 'imagined an ordinariness about Christianity and the world it described', whilst the latter 'imagine a world that has been deeply disrupted by the intrusion of the divine rescue mission'. A note of faint condescension towards orthodox Christianity runs through the book.

Having said all that, this is an important and insightful study of Augustine. But I was not sure of its intended readership. A very useful appendix on further reading in Augustine suggests that it is intended as an introductory biography. Yet O'Donnell assumes too much prior knowledge for this. Where he excels is in explaining Augustine's background, and the nuances of his world (for

instance, the nature of letter writing as a public activity). He is less helpful when it comes to introducing Augustine's thought. "Augustine, Sinner & Saint" will perhaps be most useful to those who already have some Augustine under their belts, and have read Brown.

STEPHEN WALTON
Marbury

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN THOUGHT AND THE OLD TESTAMENT: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible
John H. Walton
Nottingham: Apollos, 2007 334 pp £16.99pb ISBN: 9781844741762

When first faced with the chance of reviewing this book, my reaction was that, knowing as little as I did about this whole area, I was not best placed to do so, even though the subject was interesting enough. However, it then occurred to me that a lack of knowledge might actually be an advantage, given that most potential readers would be in the same position as myself. The expert reader does not need another expert book. By contrast, a non-expert's impression of a book's usefulness, particularly in this field, would be just as significant for the general reading and book-buying public. On that basis, therefore, I undertook the review.

So how useful is this book to the 'lay' reader? My immediate answer would be 'very'. Though there are places where I disagreed with some of Walton's theological conclusions, I found myself both informed and, just as importantly, stimulated by his work. The book begins with a outline of the various methods and theological approaches which have been applied to the topics of Ancient Near Eastern thought and Scripture, particularly where the two combine. This is very helpful in revealing both the background to the subject and the necessary assumptions we must all make.

The rest of the book is an overview and summary of contemporary knowledge about this whole field and its relationship to theology, divided by key areas of thought: literature, religion, the cosmos and people's understanding of themselves and the 'meaning of life'. The material here gives the impression of being well-researched, and is comprehensive in scope without being exhausting in length. The book is well illustrated throughout and interspersed with boxes

containing 'Comparative Explorations'. These are particularly helpful, as they consider subjects of more specifically theological concern: 'The Name Yahweh', 'Israelite Historiography', 'Why was Deductive Divination Forbidden to Israel?', 'What Does it Mean to Observe Torah?', and so on.

Personally, I found the book especially stimulating in pointing to the ANE context as the framework within which to understand the opening chapters of Genesis. Walton's material on gods and temples suggested interesting ways in which to understand not only the uniqueness of the biblical creation account, but the link between Genesis 1 and 2. Some books one reads and enjoys, but then files and forgets. I have found myself going back to Walton's book not only for specific details when these have been important, but to think again about the theological issues he addresses. It is a book I have tended to keep where I can find it —and that is a commendation in itself!

Walton's theological position comes across as essentially conservative. The one or two inevitable disagreements one might have with his theological conclusions did not detract from my enjoyment of the book as a whole. I cannot vouch for the absolute accuracy of all it contains. The wise reader will always cross check something before building too much on it. However, for those whose background in this area is sketchy, and who want something more than a drily descriptive 'primer', I would highly commend this book.

JOHN P. RICHARDSON
Elsenham, Essex

THE WORD IN SMALL BOATS Sermons from Oxford
Oliver O'Donovan
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010 172pp £11.99/$18pb
ISBN: 978-0-8028-6453-6

Professor O'Donovan is now at New College, Edinburgh, but for many years he was a pillar of the establishment at Christ Church, Oxford, the setting for most of the sermons in this collection, which has been put together by Andy Draycott of Aberdeen. Professor O'Donovan is not really a preacher, nor are the pieces assembled here sermons in the usual sense of the word. He is a thinker, and the thirty-two sermons reprinted here are best understood as theological meditations. They are based on a variety of biblical texts, but most

of them range fairly widely across the Scriptures, making connections that are not obvious and provoking reflections on the familiar by introducing new perspectives that few people would have thought of.

This needs to be understood, because otherwise readers of this book are liable to wonder what it is all about. The editor warns us in advance that the setting is a cathedral church and that the context of most of the sermons is the Anglican liturgy, shaped as it is by the church year. The period covered ranges from 1984 to 2006, with half the selections dating from 2000 or later. Some years are omitted altogether, and there is a certain concentration around 1991 and 2003, both of them times when there was war in the Middle East. Professor O'Donovan brings that into his meditations, but he covers such a vast array of subjects that it is impossible to characterise them with facile labels like 'political' or 'moral'. He is deeply engaged with politics and morality of course, and concerned to bring the Word of God to bear on the great issues of the day, but he is also acutely aware of being a pilgrim on a journey to the celestial city, a sailor heading for the safe haven of eternal rest in God.

For those with the poetic and conceptual imagination to follow him, Professor O'Donovan's reflections are a treat. Some of them are brilliant by any standard, and can be read with profit even by people with little or no interest in spiritual things. For example, his thoughts on marriage have a depth and universality about them that will speak even to people of little or no faith, and yet they are firmly embedded in traditional Christian teaching and values. His observations on the biblical use of the command 'come!' are likewise so insightful as to be a stroke of genius. For these and for other pieces like them, this book is worth its weight in gold. But preachers looking for sermon ideas must be warned. Prof. O'Donovan has a unique gift for seeing things in a way that others do not, which is why people who are not so gifted are liable to fall flat if they try to lift his ideas and apply them in a less subtle and balanced way.

Very occasionally, it must be said that the preacher strikes a false note which spoils the effect of what he is trying to say. For example, he does not appreciate the importance of the letters to the seven churches of Asia at the beginning of Revelation and advises his hearers to begin their reading with chapter four. Similarly, his attempt to reconstruct the life of the so-called 'Deutero-Isaiah' in the first sermon after the introduction is too speculative to be of much value.

This is a pity, because Professor O'Donovan knows that there is much that we do not know, and in this case he should probably have left it at that. But these are minor quibbles. There is much here to ponder and to learn from a great theological thinker of our time. If this book can inspire readers to reflect more deeply on the Scriptures it will have fulfilled its author's wish. Let us hope and pray that it may be so.

GERALD BRAY
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AN EVANGELICAL AMONG THE ANGLICAN LITURGISTS

Colin Buchanan

London: SPCK, 2009 198pp £19.99pb ISBN: 978-0-281-06026-9

For almost half a century Colin Buchanan has been at the cutting edge of liturgical scholarship, often as an isolated evangelical representative fighting his corner within the councils and committees of the Church of England. His contribution has been considerable, as witnessed by more than 150 books, booklets, papers and articles which he has authored on liturgical themes since the 1960s. This latest book (the annual Alcuin Club collection) offers seven short papers as a flavour of Buchanan's vast corpus – five previously published, and two new lectures. It is worth reading alongside his recent synodical memoir, *Taking the Long View* (reviewed in Churchman 122/1).

The Alcuin Club is, of course, an Anglo-Catholic liturgy society so it is surprising that they invited Buchanan to contribute this volume since he has so often been a fly in their anointment. These papers especially bring forward his Protestant colours, as he lays down the gauntlet to his Anglo-Catholic sparring-partners. Indeed Bishop Christopher Cocksworth (former Principal of Ridley Hall) suggests in the preface that Buchanan has been too tough on the Anglo-Catholics! The centrepiece of the volume is a wonderful classic, "What Did Cranmer Think He Was Doing?", now a standard text in Cranmerian studies which every Anglican minister should read. Other chapters include "Reasons for Dissent" (first published in Churchman in 1966), an important paper in which Buchanan announced his opposition to the Liturgical Commission's plan to include words of offering in the communion prayer. Although at that stage the youngest member of the Commission, and the only evangelical, he stood alone against the phrase 'we offer unto thee this bread

and this cup' because it departed from the biblical theology of the Book of Common Prayer. An abridgement of "The End of the Offertory (1978)" is included in this collection, though the full version is still well worth reading, another highlight which shows why subtle Anglo-Catholic errors need to be resisted and uprooted. There are also chapters on infant baptism and confirmation, in which Buchanan criticizes Anglo-Catholic theologies of indiscriminate baptism and two-stage initiation.

Often Buchanan brings out the cudgels, which will warm the heart of evangelical readers. He rightly dismisses Gregory Dix (such a lamentable influence upon Anglo-Catholic liturgists) for his 'maverick, mischievous, learned perversity' (p. 28) and expresses relief that Dix did not live beyond the 1950s. In the final paper he launches a broadside attack upon the ambiguous teaching of Anglo-Catholicism, with help from evangelical heavyweights William Goode and Nathaniel Dimock, concluding with the challenge: 'So bring out your biblical reasons why the eucharist is a sacrifice, or cease from the misleading language. Bring out your biblical reasons why the presbyter is a priest, or cease from the misleading language. Bring out your biblical reasons why a communion table is an altar or cease from the misleading language. Let not the self-contradictory language linger solely through mistaken charity, a half-loyalty to Rome, or an Anglican love of fudge. We hold a higher responsibility before God than that' (p. 163). Although aimed primarily as a challenge to his Anglo-Catholic readership, there is much good material here to sharpen up evangelical thinking.

ANDREW ATHERSTONE
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GRACE, ORDER, OPENNESS AND DIVERSITY
Reclaiming liberal theology
Ian Bradley

London: Continuum, 2010 208pp £18.99pb ISBN: 978-8056-7268-907

A hundred years ago the western world was moving into an era of peace and light. Ancient verities were being swept away by the force of rational argument and persuasion, and church people were in the vanguard of progress. But then there appeared a small cloud on the horizon in the shape of a series of booklets called "The fundamentals", which in time would destroy this liberal universe.

America would be held to ransom by an evil dictatorship of the mind, and other countries, especially the United Kingdom, would gradually feel the effects of this. So bad have things got now that the once broad Church of England is in thrall to the conservative Evangelicals within it, who are using such devices as the Windsor Report to impose their will and to drive out anybody who dislikes abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality. The wicked Evangelicals have captured the younger generation, not least through the conspiratorial Christian Unions in the universities and even the Church of Scotland, to which the author belongs, has seen fit to give its approval to the sinister Highland Theological College, which is about to have the same noxious effect north of the border.

It was all so different in the past. God originally established a universal covenant with the human race, and not only with them—with the animals too, as Noah's ark makes plain. Then, as Dr. Bradley explains: 'When God moves on from this universal covenant to establish a particular relationship with the people of Israel, it is not in an exclusivist spirit but rather to reinforce the importance of diversity' (p. 132). That must be why Ahab married Jezebel. It was a divine experiment in pluralism that the evil Evangelical prophet Elijah was bent on wrecking!

This amazing little book is full of such insights, which will come as a complete surprise to most people. Evangelical readers in particular, will discover not only that they are the force behind the destruction of the modern world, but also that they are succeeding all too well in their nefarious aims. Liberalism is the only force opposed to this evil power, but in the intolerant climate of recent years, it has been losing ground. As Dr. Bradley tells us, liberalism is a rational faith, which makes 'fuzziness' one of its greatest attributes. Liberalism is also committed to openness and diversity, which is why it welcomes adherents of all religions and none, as long as they do not really believe what those religions teach. And of course liberalism is Trinitarian, as anyone can see from its most radical incarnation, which is the Unitarian church. How have we missed all this for so long?

Liberals reading this book are liable to be depressed by Dr. Bradley's long list of bad news, but they should not lose heart. Jesus is dead and gone, of course, but towards the end the author reveals his great secret—the new Messiah is

here and has appeared in the heartland of the fundamentalist devil himself. Yes, it is none other than Barack Obama, the liberal theologian who will save the world for tolerance and slay the conservative beast once and for all. When you see it happening, just remember that you read it here first.

GERALD BRAY
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THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS
The Pillar New Testament Commentary
G. Walter Hansen

Nottingham: Apollos, 2009 392pp £26.99hb ISBN: 9781844744039

The Pillar commentary series is written with serious pastors and teachers of the Bible in mind. The ideal before the authors is rigorous exegesis and exposition, with an eye to biblical theology and contemporary relevance. The scholars writing these volumes interact with the most important current debates while keeping technical discussion, untransliterated Greek and references to secondary literature to the footnotes. This commentary uses the TNIV as the basis for exposition, except for 2:6-11 where the author uses his own translation. All this makes for a useful commentary, serious enough to be meaty and accessible enough to be realistic for preachers whose preparation time is limited.

The gospel of Christ takes first place in Paul's mission and his letter; it is his driving passion and one of the main themes of the letter. As he recounts his personal circumstances in Philippians 1, the progress of the gospel is Paul's most personal concern. Hansen briefly illustrates Paul's exposition of single-minded gospel concern with stories of modern martyrs, in Oxford and in Cambodia, to make for a rigorous and heart-warming exposition.

Most commentators on Philippians 2 will mention the impossibly large secondary literature related to this passage. Few will go on to describe the main contours as helpfully and clearly as Hansen has done, before providing his own translation and Christ-focused exegesis. Wonderfully, he has also seen that Timothy and Epaphroditus' travel plans (2:19ff.) are not at all a random insertion but a demonstration of the way even Paul's friends become an extension of the imperative to have the same attitude of mind as Christ Jesus.

The debates surrounding Philippians 3 and righteousness-related issues has taken off in recent decades. Once again, Hansen's overview is to the point and sheds light on the understanding of this chapter: no matter how precious the social privileges and how perfect the moral accomplishments may be, all that ultimately and eternally matters for a follower of Christ is Christ.

One of the puzzles about Philippians is that it seems to be a 'Thank You' letter in which Paul never actually thanks his readers. Recent commentators (most recently and accessibly, Fee in the IVP NT Commentary Series) have looked to Hellenistic friendship letters for help in understanding Philippians. Hansen agrees that this is a useful background, but shows that Paul is able to use this genre and subvert it to his own ends. It does however explain how, viewed through the conventions of the day, actually saying 'thank you' would have been misunderstood. Paul is indeed grateful for the Philippians' partnership and gifts and has expressed it in ways that they can understand.

I find this to be an excellent commentary, and one that could comfortably displace others from the preacher's bookshelf and become the lead volume on Philippians. The cost is not trivial, but well worth the investment.

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SEND THE FIRE, LORD!
Some places and characters of the 1859 Ulster Revival
J. Barry Shucksmith
Our Inheritance Bible Ministries: Polegate, East Sussex, 2009 180pp £6.50pb
ISBN: 1-90281-709-5

2009 saw the 150th anniversary of Ulster's 'fifty-nine revival'. This event helped shape the character of modern Northern Ireland and, for many, continues to retain a special place in the province's religious history. The first manifestations occurred in predominantly Presbyterian villages in Co. Antrim, but, within a year, the revival had spread to most parts of eastern Ulster including Belfast. Associated with the revival were mass outdoor rallies, scenes of religious enthusiasm and marked social transformation (particularly in regard to crime and alcohol abuse). It has often been suggested that more than 100,000 were converted. In what became known as 'The Year of Grace', over

10,000 were added to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's communicants rolls with many new congregations being established. Shucksmith's book is one of a number commemorating this anniversary: Free Presbyterian minister Stanley Barnes (author of this volume's forward) produced the Pictorial History of the Revival (2008) and Rev. Ian Paisley reissued an updated version of his The 1859 Revival (2009) first published fifty years ago.

Shucksmith rightly attempts to locate the revival in both its Irish and transatlantic contexts. For instance, his sketch of Irish church history includes the Six Mile Water Revival of 1625-30 and also outlines the religious awakening of 1857-58 in the Northern States of America. It would have been worth pointing out that the Presbyterian General Assembly appointed two ministers, William Gibson and William McClure, to travel to America in order to bring back a report about the awakening. Readers would find it instructive to learn of the positive assessment of the revival by Robert Bent Knox, Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore (and later Archbishop of Armagh).

There are minor historical errors: for instance the claim that 'on 23rd October 1644, a bloody insurrection broke out and within a few days 40,000-50,000 Protestant Englishmen were murdered' (p. 30). This rebellion in fact took place in 1641 and historians calculate that around 3,000–4,000 English and Scottish settlers were killed over several months with perhaps 6,000 more perishing from starvation and exposure.

The utility of this account would have been enhanced had two factors been given more attention. First, how the reformation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in the 1820s and 1830s (optimised in the 'Old Light' evangelical Henry Cooke's campaign against 'New Light' Presbyterianism) prepared the way for the revival. Secondly, some critical reflection on the negative consequences of the revival's import of pragmatism and Arminianism in the Irish Church would have been very helpful in understanding the long term effects of the revival. The author is particularly to be commended for drawing out application pertinent to the contemporary church—all too often church historians are hesitant at this point. This, together with the inclusion of hymns from the era, adds to the devotional nature of this popular work.

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