

BOOK REVIEWS

JESUS CHRIST IS LORD by the Rev Dr Peter Toon
Published by Marshall Paperbacks @ £2.25 (154 pp)

The subject and theme dealt with in this book by Dr Peter Toon is the highest and treats perhaps the earliest Christian affirmation embodying the doctrine of the ascended, exalted God/Man Jesus Christ.

According to the Introduction of the book, the task the author sets himself is *"to attempt to explain what the Lordship of Jesus Christ means for the Christian Faith today"*.

The Introduction describes the complex and varied pressures and temptations in Western society which lead to an erosion of traditional sources and views of authority. That erosion inevitably involves the authority of Christ in His Church, and in the world at large, which is infatuated with materialism, awed by science's accelerating prowess and enticed into permissiveness. Dr Toon comments *"the authority of Christ in His Church has been diminished. He competes with other 'Lords' ..."* [p.2] Again he writes *"The Lordship of Christ over moral systems and behaviour patterns appears to be a very rare phenomenon in today's world"* [p.3]. He adds that even in the churches one may look in vain for a clear unequivocal statement that Jesus is Lord. There, confused and confusing confessions are too often made, which are deferential to the claims of science and accommodating to the proponents of comparative religion.

In dealing with this grand theme the author covers considerable ground and presents aspects of Christ's Lordship which all too few contemporary Christians realise are involved in the confession

that Jesus is Lord. Apart from some concessive statements the general tone of the book is orthodox, conservative and edifying.

While aiming to offer a popular presentation of this theme, which may account for his use of the *Good News Bible*, the author does attempt to identify and analyse the strata of teaching found among the different writers of the Bible, related to Christ's Lordship. He attempts to get at the textual and exegetical bases for this doctrine, and in so doing sometimes multiples quotations whose bearing upon his argument are not made clear. The comprehensiveness of the subject conflicting with the limits imposed by the format of the book may account for this. However, this is largely compensated for by the useful summaries found within the chapters. The addition of a prayer at the close of each chapter provides an humbling and reverential aspect to the studies.

The book consists of ten chapters and an appendix. The first chapter is an introduction to the theme, from which we have already quoted.

Chapter 2 is entitled '*The exalted Jesus*' and traces the two main parts of Jesus' life. Firstly, it describes His earthly human life from His humble birth to His crucifixion. Secondly, it examines Jesus' exalted humanity from His ascension on into the endless ages. The early Christians spoke of this, writes Dr Toon, convinced of the fact of Christ's resurrection, ascension and session at the Father's right hand in majesty, which they described in analogical and symbolical terms. Dr Toon puts forth a compromise solution to the apparently differing accounts in the Gospels of the resurrection appearances and the time scale of the actual ascension. He suggests that the ascension took place immediately on the first Sunday, but later appearances were temporary accommodations to the needs of His disciples - an entering again and again into the temporal and material conditions from His exalted state in the heavens. These visits or appearances were set into a symbolical framework of forty days culminating in a public ascension drawn

from Old Testament models. Acts 1:1-11. See pages 12-18 for this reconstruction.

Chapter 3 entitled '*Jesus, Messiah and Lord*' is a study of the concepts of Jesus as Messiah/King and Lord. It deals with Old Testament predictions and also explores the possibility of a relationship between Christ and the 'Suffering Servant' motif in Isaiah.

Chapter 4 entitled '*The meaning of the Ascension*' is a comparison of the 'insights' of several biblical writers on the subject of our Lord's ascension. Included in this chapter is a summary of the New Testament teaching. Although this is a comprehensive summary, perhaps he ought to have included the biblical teaching relative to the enthroned Lord waiting for the subjugation of all His enemies. See Ps.110:1; I Cor.15:25; Heb.1:13.

Chapter 5, entitled '*Jesus, Lord of the nations*' discusses the kingdom of Christ on Earth, i.e. the rule of the exalted Messiah and Lord, over nations and human history. The book begins to make more demands of the reader here, as it treats upon the invisible but universal scope of the reign of the ascended, exalted Jesus. This doctrine, says Dr Toon, is only meaningful through the mind and eyes of faith. The author deals with some problems sanely and courageously e.g., the interpretation of history; see pages 56-57. The author is prepared to venture solutions but in doing so presents some unusual explanations of interpretive problems. The reviewer found these, in the main, refreshing. However, there were some disconcerting, if only occasional departures from accepted conservative positions. There are hints of a tendency to rationalize e.g., pages 58-59, where Dr Toon uses the words '*presupposed*' and '*mythological*' of Paul's teaching on '*principalities and powers*'. Is this an over-eagerness to accommodate modern scientific thought at the expense of the inerrancy of Scripture?

Somewhat confusing and inconsistent translations of I Cor.11:3 (KEPHALE) are found on pages 61 and 72.

There are some important matters for consideration in the discussion of the '*Lord of Structures*' pp.59-63, some of which Evangelicals may be shirking.

Chapter 6, entitled '*Jesus, Lord of the Church*' enters into the question of the Church, taking into account the Church 'Invisible' and the Church 'Local'. He discusses whether the term 'Body'(i.e.CHURCH) has relevance both for the 'Invisible' and the 'Local' manifestation of the Universal Church and in what way Christ is said to be 'Lord' of both, and in what way the Church has its origin and sustenance in its Head.

The question of unity is taken up and there is an evident desire for 'oneness' both spiritual and visible at the local level. An aversion to 'separation' appears, derived perhaps from the author's sharing an Anglican view-point? That attitude may underestimate the necessity for the emerging of a God-honouring fellowship despite the abundance of 'congregations' in a given locality. See pp 65, 74-76.

The section on the Lordship of Christ over public worship enriches the concept of worship both for the congregation and those who lead it.

Chapter 7 entitled '*Jesus, Lord of the Universe*' deals with some knotty problems related to the divine/human Christ's role as Lord of the universe. Aspects covered include His pre-incarnate work as Creator, His continued sustaining of the universe as the ascended God/Man, the re-creation of a new cosmos, and the questions raised by the expanding concepts of the post-Copernican era of cosmic science. The author desires a better union between science and theology and suggests that theologians be prepared to sit at the feet of scientists to facilitate the making of '*new doctrine*' such as a theology of the cosmic Christ. see pp 95-96.

Chapter 8 entitled '*Jesus, Lord of all religions*'

has some uncertain notes as the author grapples with the relation between Christianity and other religions. What for instance does he imply when he concedes that "... no longer can one hold the view that Christianity is wholly true and all other religions are wholly false"? p.101 para 1. If he is saying that the portrayal of Christianity by the 'Church' has not been wholly true then we concur, but are we talking about that or the nature of Revelatory Christianity?

In discussing the claims of Christianity to be the true religion over against all other religions, Dr Toon presents several approaches to this comparison. He examines 'cultural relativism' (the cultural bases for the different religions) then 'epistemological relativism' (the unknowableness of absolute truth) and then 'teleological relativism' (the same goal or end reached by diverse religious systems taking different routes). These are effectively analysed and dismissed. Dr Toon takes up Professor John Hick's views on Monism (essential oneness of all religions) and Universal salvation, and fairly discusses them, together with Hans Küng's philosophy of 'ordinary' and 'extra-ordinary' salvation, all of which he counters ably and succinctly. A further discussion of Barth's views on 'revelation versus religion' adds some backbone to the presentation of historic Christianity. see p.113. The whole is summarised by Dr Toon's own confession, marred perhaps by a somewhat equivocal expression on page 119, para 2. "*We avoid any suggestion that he who does not know of, or does not submit to, the Lordship of Jesus will be eternally punished*". To that we reply that original sin and guilt renders all mankind liable to judgement irrespective of their knowledge of Christ or otherwise; human nature is fallen whatever its cultural roots as he himself points out on p.142.

Chapter 9 entitled '*The exalted Jesus and the Creeds*' deals with the development of Christ's place within Trinitarian Confessions, with attention 36.

paid to non-biblical sources utilized by the Creed-makers. This is a good section in explication of the Creeds and clear and helpful analogies of the relation between Scripture and credal development are given.

Chapter 10 entitled '*Jesus, my Lord*' gives outlines bearing upon the lordship of Christ over the individual and also corporate church life. The chapter takes up the dangers arising from isolationism and individualism and also examines the centrality of love in the Christian faith as well as the high and radical ethic of its true disciples. pp.136-137. Finally an excellent section on guidance completes the study. This chapter is warm and appealing in its delineation of the Christian and his Lord.

An appendix containing excerpts from Reformed Confessions closes the book.

As the author himself emphasises, the ontological Christ is a fact which the mind and eye of faith embrace, until the eschatological return of Christ in power and glory.

The reviewer commends this book for thoughtful reading, the subject is high and Dr Toon does justice to it.

Gilbert T. Evans

TOO HOT TO HANDLE by Gilbert W. Kirby

Published by Marshall, Morgan & Scott.
Lakeland Paperback pp. ix, 147 £1.25

Nothing but good can result from dispelling ignorance, prejudice and petty divisiveness from evangelicals or any other body of people. The cause of the gospel has frequently suffered from such evils so any book designed to counteract them is to be welcomed provided it achieves its object. One must never forget what can sometimes happen by intervening to prevent a husband and his wife from having a fight!

The charge that evangelicals are more inclined to quarrels and divisions than liberals has more than a grain of truth in it. The liberal by believing nothing

in particular is able to smile benignly at the views of all men with the exception of those who believe the truth. But the convictions of the evangelical make it hard for him to tolerate persons whose views he must reject absolutely; and, unless he is careful to draw a distinction between truths essential to the gospel and those which are not, he will have difficulty in living in harmony with fellow evangelicals.

Earlier this year (as reported in the June issue of the *Evangelical Times*) some evangelical Baptists declared that all truth was equally 'mandatory' in order, apparently, to justify their unwillingness to unite with other evangelicals in the matter of theological education. Still reeling from the impact of this blow to our hopes of evangelical unity we are somewhat refreshed by the Principal of the London Bible College who reminds his readers that a necessary distinction must be drawn between truths essential and truths non-essential in delineating the bounds of Christian unity (pp.viii, 38). To part company from other evangelicals over what some choose to call their 'distinctives' (such matters as mode of baptism, church order, spiritual gifts etc.) is to be guilty of the terrible sin of schism because such beliefs are not part of the foundations essential to church unity.

In this book dealing with some thirteen theological issues which engender controversy between evangelicals Gilbert Kirby includes a variety of non-essential 'distinctives' such as views held by evangelicals on prophetic interpretation (including a helpful treatment of the Book of the Revelation), Sunday observance, the arts, Christian involvement in society, the Charismatic Movement, the sacraments and the place of women in the church. He is concerned that evangelicals should learn to live 'in fellowship' with one another even though they may differ on such issues. All evangelicals ought to share Mr Kirby's concern and deplore the fact

38.

that frequently we get more agitated when our views on minor issues are discounted than when the centralities of the faith are endangered.

Mr Kirby's handling of issues which involve the essentials of the faith is disturbing, such as when he deals with divergent views held on the nature of the church and the subject of Christian unity. Evangelicals are urged to continue 'in fellowship' with one another even when the behaviour of some threatens the centralities. The great weakness of this book is the author's failure to be biblical when it comes to specifying where, in practice, that fellowship is to be found. The New Testament knows of no other place than the local church, but Mr Kirby has other ideas.

He argues that evangelicals are united on the fundamental truths ("*the apostles' doctrine*" of Acts 2:42), but instead of urging them to do what they did in the New Testament times, unite in local churches, he proposes that they should express their unity and find their fellowship within evangelical movements such as the Keswick Convention (once a year!), the Scripture Union and the Evangelical Alliance (pp.39, 46). In this way he is advocating that evangelicals should continue to tolerate their church divisions over non-essentials and return to the theological indifference over the doctrine of the church which prevailed amongst evangelicals before the birth of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

The clock cannot be put back in this manner. The developments within the ecumenical movement have convinced many evangelicals that this movement, though it has challenged our sinful complacency over petty divisions, threatens to undermine the historic Christian faith. We can now see that the nature of the church is inseparable from the character of the gospel we preach. They rise or fall together. The evangelical unity demanded by the New Testament is nothing less than evangelical church unity.

By attempting to steer a middle-course on the issue of the church and the ecumenical movement the author

'does the splits' and ends up floundering between irreconcilables. He states that *"our understanding of the true nature of the Church is probably the most crucial issue of the day"* (p.17), but then proceeds to consider it as though it were just another of those controversies over non-essentials about which evangelicals ought to agree to differ. The cruciality of the issue for Mr Kirby appears to lie in the regrettable alienation it has caused between 'separatist' evangelicals and those continuing within the doctrinally-mixed denominations, where *"liberalism is tolerated alongside 'conservative' evangelicalism"* (p.39), rather than in the undeniable threat which the ecumenical movement constitutes to the future of the gospel.

The author plays the part of Mr Facing-Both-Ways. He appreciates the danger of the ecumenical movement and maintains that unity should never be bought at the expense of the truth (p.38); but whilst admitting that many within the ecumenical movement and the 'main-line' denominations are no longer on the line but deny the essential truths of the gospel he fails to deal with the implications of evangelical involvement with such bodies. He deplores those evangelicals who by arguing from 'guilt by association' refuse to continue in fellowship at a church level with evangelicals involved within the doctrinally-mixed denominations, and then adds, *"All this is happening at a time when radical theologians are denying the essential truths of the Gospel"* (p.47)! How then can it be a matter of indifference whether or not evangelicals continue in association with such heretics (to give them their New Testament name)? Is it of no consequence to the outcome of a spiritual battle whether or not we collaborate with the enemy?

By introducing the issue of the nature of the church and the subject of Christian unity into a book rightly pleading for tolerance between evangelicals over non-essential, though controversial,

40.

theological issues Mr Kirby lays himself open to the charge of being unable to distinguish the essentials and matters which vitally affect them from the non-essentials.

This book is only helpful when it deals with the relatively unimportant issues, and even then it is lacking in perception. Although Mr Kirby expounds the traditional 'Keswick teaching' in his chapter on the subject of holiness, drawing attention to its strong emphasis upon passivity, it does not seem to occur to him that the influence of this teaching since 1874 with its false doctrine of sin, the world and holiness was responsible for the evangelical aloofness of former years to the arts, politics and society in general about which he complains.

Like Mr Kirby we deeply regret the division which has developed between evangelicals. We regret that our evangelical Anglican brethren have been more eager to have 'fellowship' with Anglo-Catholics and other non-evangelicals within the ecumenical movement than with their evangelical brethren outside it. We regret the refusal of evangelical Anglicans to admit any possibility of their being wrong in collaborating with Anglo-Catholics and their unwillingness to discuss the matter further with their independent evangelical brethren (see Introduction to *Growing into Unity*, 1970). These are the real causes of disunity between evangelicals.

But unlike Mr Kirby we make an important distinction between Christian fellowship which can still continue between such evangelicals on a personal level, and church fellowship where issues transcending the personal are involved, such as co-operation with churches confederated (on Mr Kirby's own admission) with enemies of the gospel.

Paul E. G. Cook

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

Published in April and October by the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, New Delhi. Annual subscription £2.25
W.E.F., LES EMRAIS, CASTEL, GUERNSEY, C.I. U.K.

Launched a year ago, the ERT aims to "*bridge the gap between the professional theologian and the thoughtful Christian communicator*". While the articles vary considerably both in quality and importance, the first two issues contain some useful material, book reviews and information. The ERT reviews the worldwide spectrum of evangelical thought and opinion and plans to include more articles from other languages (e.g. Norwegian, Portuguese, Swahili, Arabic, Chinese, etc) not normally accessible to English readers. ERT could be useful to Pastors who wish to keep abreast of international 'evangelical' thought.

BIBLICAL CREATION

45p per single issue. Published October, February and June.
Details from B.C.S. 16 Woodview Avenue, Chingford, London E4 95L

The newly formed BIBLICAL CREATION SOCIETY, formed to expound the biblical teaching on creation, is publishing the first issue of this magazine in October with articles on the re-investigating of origins and the hermeneutical problem of Genesis 1-11.

CHRISTOLOGY AT THE CROSSROADS: A LATIN AMERICAN APPROACH by Jon Sobrino

Published by SCM Press 434pp £4.95

Sobrino's message is by no means new; his pre-suppositions and methodology are drawn from contemporary European and Latin American theologians

representing the attempt to redirect Roman Catholic Christology away from a systematic norm (e.g. Chalcedon) to one more historically and politically accommodated to the now popular liberation theology. Sobrino's presentation of this position is nevertheless important and scholarly and this book is being regarded by some as one of the seminal studies of our decade.

According to the author, the Chalcedonian formula concerning Christ's person is not a suitable starting point for Christology. Apart from the influence of Greek philosophy in its composition, the difficulties in understanding technical terms and the fact that dogma as such cannot give us access to the reality of Christ, he argues that the Chalcedonian statement "*does not make it clear that God is at work, through his own free choice, in the struggle for justice and the expectations of hope*" (pp.4-5). He maintains it is the concrete figure of Jesus Himself, not some later theological effort of conceptualization "*which unifies the various christologies of the New Testament*" (p.6). Because in Latin America, liberation theology has turned to the historical Jesus "*for guidance and orientation*" (p.10), the author sees his task as that of pointing up "*those traits of Jesus which are most securely guaranteed by exegesis and which offer us a most trustworthy image of the historical Jesus*" (p.14).

As we might expect, his approach is critical, involving a radical re-interpretation of biblical terminology and teaching. His conclusions are disturbing. For example, he infers from Mark 13 verses 22 and 30 "*that Jesus' ignorance is not merely in matters of incidental detail. It goes right to the core of his own person and his mission*" (p.101). In his detailed study of the death of Christ, he sees its main significance for us as "*a life of service to human beings ... Those who are oppressed will instinctively look to it to find a response to their own lives*" (p.235). Three basic requisites are then suggested as essential to an understanding of the

resurrection of Jesus, namely, a radical hope in the future which is inseparable from our questioning search for justice in an unredeemed world, an historical consciousness (*"the work of the theologian is not to secure the faith against the conflicts of history"* but *"to place faith in the midst of the historical conflict triggered by Jesus' resurrection"* p.253) and the following of Jesus. This latter point is the main thrust of the book for he claims that access to the Christ of faith can only come through access to the historical Jesus, through discipleship. In the closing chapters he discusses the tension between faith and religion and traces the notion and historical development of dogma.

This book will help evangelicals to understand the basis of liberation theology and, at the same time, to face the growing challenge for competent, relevant but thoroughly biblical writing in the areas of hermeneutics and political theology.

Eryl Davies

NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION: ESSAYS IN
PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

Edited by I. Howard Marshall

Published by Paternoster pp 406 £6.00

Title, length and various contributors suggest that this new publication will be an important tool for evangelical expositors of the New Testament. Certainly, the editor leads with the claim that *"we have written as conservative evangelicals who combine a high regard for the authority of Holy Scripture with the belief that we are called to study it with the full use of our minds"* (Foreword). Equally impressive is the declared *"aim of the symposium"*, which is *"to establish the principles and methods involved in understanding the New Testament"* (p.11). The relevance to the working

pastor of such a volume is obvious - yet caution is required! The Foreword also tells us that "not all will agree with everything that we say ... the statements in this book carry no sort of imprimatur".

This review is presented under the following headings for the sake of clarity:

1. The Structure of the Book

Helpfully, the publication divides into four parts: The Background to Interpretation; The Use of Critical Methods in Interpretation; The Task of Exegesis; The New Testament and the Modern Reader. The layout is comprehensive and to the point, covering the history of interpretation from sub-apostolic times to the present day and posing various questions raised by the more modern textual investigation.

2. Modern Critical Disciplines

Again, in an extremely helpful way the book gives a concise account of the rise and developing influence of historical, source, form, tradition and redaction criticism. All this, in fact, occupies most of Part 2 of the volume which, without such a contribution, would be sadly lacking. It is surely necessary that "conservative evangelicals" (the editor's words, not the reviewer's) understand and appraise the views of all past and present New Testament scholars, whatever their basic presuppositions. Here, in a nutshell, we are presented with Bultmann, Dibelius and the 'New Hermeneutic' etc.

3. Good Points

Apart from the comments above, 'New Testament Interpretation' contains some material which is good and, perhaps, excellent, including:

- i. Chapter 5: *Questions of Introduction* by
D. Guthrie
- ii. Chapter 6: *The History of New Testament Study*
by F. F. Bruce
- iii. An exegesis of 1 Peter 3:18-22 by R.T. France

(p.264) - compelling even if not convincing.

4. Bad Points

Unhappily, this section, in the reviewer's opinion, heavily outweighs (3).

i. Certain chapters are far too abstruse for even the well-read preacher - for example, Chapter 16, '*The New Hermeneutic*', A.C.Thiselton.

ii. An acceptance of the partial validity of the basic assumptions of modern critical discipline seems inherent in much of the volume. Bearing in mind the stated presuppositions of form criticism (p.153,154,187), we can understand the cautions thrown out by the Foreword. The publication is seriously vulnerable at this point.

iii. From this weakness, others flow. Why is a whole chapter provocatively entitled '*Demythologising - The Problem of Myth in the New Testament*'? Why, in closing, does the book commend the expository preacher to "*use tools, such as source-, form-, and redaction-criticism as creative hermeneutical aids*" (p.362). Why is there such thoroughly bad exegesis (in the reviewer's opinion) as that on pages 167 and 168, where we learn that it is "*unlikely that Matthew 18:17 is authentic*". Why is the traditional 'grammatical-historico' method of exegesis played down in so many places? Why are there so many bald remarks guaranteed to distress informed Christians who will disagree that accurate scholarship must lead to statements such as:

"Theories which attempt to harmonise the narratives of Easter morning by postulating several different visits by the women to the tomb seem much more improbable than those which allow for a certain amount of confusion in the narratives" [I.H.Marshall, p.135].

"... the correct solution to a difficulty lies in the unhistorical character of a

particular narrative" [ibid, p.136]. In fairness, Marshall concedes that such a radical conclusion may only apply "on occasion"

"The problem of myth in the NT is that the NT presents events critical to Christian faith in language and concepts which are often outmoded and meaningless to 20th century man" [J.D.G.Dunn, p.300].

"... out of date conceptualisations determine certain traditionally important expressions of NT faith about Christ at this point - in particular the problem that 'ascension' (Acts 1:11) and parousia 'in clouds' 'from heaven' (Mark 13:26; 1 Thess.4:16) were not merely metaphors or analogies but were intended as literal descriptions ... which derive from and depend on a first century cosmology which is impossible for us" [ibid, p.300]

"Those who do go to the Bible will often find that there is nothing there which can be applied direct to the situation in question" [R.Nixon, p.334].

"... it can hardly be claimed that the issue of authority is greatly affected by whether isolated sayings are considered to be ipsissima verba of Jesus"; "The formation of the canon was a recognition of the fact that there were different interpretations of the Christ event current in the apostolic church"; "... we can have no cut and dried proof that all the New Testament documents were written by apostles or their companions"; "The diversity in church order between the Pauline churches and that at Jerusalem suggests that there is no one given form of order and ministry in the New Testament which is valid for

everyone everywhere"; "The Bible ... (is) not ... a direct solver of current problems" (*ibid*, p.334,338,339,342,345, 347).

"For the idea of sacrifices to propitiate God is so foreign that people may still find it objectionable when they understand it ... We need to go no further in exegesis to find out what is expressed by the metaphor (ie. of atonement, sacrifice and substitution - reviewer's note), and then to find a new metaphor ..."
[J. Goldingay, p.358]

5. Conclusion

This book is important because it challenges 'conservative evangelicals' to produce a similarly targeted volume in defence of what could be termed the B.B.Warfield understanding of the New Testament texts. A thermometer for the current evangelical climate, '*New Testament Interpretation*', one feels, will not be greatly appreciated by expository preachers. This reviewer, new to his duty, regrets to make this comment, particularly in the opening number of a new journal and with regard to a well-produced book concerned with such a sublime theme.

Peter Naylor

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN J.C.Ryle

Published by Evangelical Press pp.311 £2.75

This book contains twenty-one of the best but lesser known sermons preached by Bishop Ryle. Originally published in 1900 under the title of *The Christian Race*, this new title more accurately describes the theme of these sermons as Ryle preaches the gospel with a deep concern for the salvation of sinners. His style as usual is direct and practical and the sermons contain some good 48.

material. This is the kind of book you can happily give to both unbelievers and believers for their profit. Buy it and encourage others to read it!

FROM NOTHING TO NATURE

A Young People's Guide to Evolution and Creation

by Professor E.H.Andrews

Published by Evangelical Press pp.120 £2.50

It is refreshing to find a distinguished scientist like Professor Andrews questioning the theory of evolution and advocating the biblical account of creation. The author, who is Professor of Materials in the University of London and an international authority in the science of large molecules, provides us here with an accurate picture of the theory of evolution and a helpful criticism and exposure of Darwinianism and the whole philosophy of evolution. Technical terms are explained and the word-pictures, verbal illustrations, diagrams and photographs make the book interesting and extremely helpful. Here is a book that will help to confirm our young people and other age groups in their acceptance of the Genesis account of creation and should be regarded as essential reading for pastors.

KARL BARTH PREACHING THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

Edited by John McTavish and Harold Wells

Published by T. & T.Clark pp.279 £3.80

It is unlikely that many pastors have read the thirteen volumes which comprise Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. The volumes contain more than six million words and the style is repetitive, sometimes tedious and the language paradoxical. This new book, however, could be helpful as an introduction to Barth for the authors have searched the small print of the 'Dogmatics' for what they regard as the most significant exegetical passages.

In the first section Barth deals with subjects such as the knowledge of God in His works, the Name and unity of God, and gives expression to his

unorthodox view of revelation and his strong opposition to 'natural' theology (pp.2-6). He regards the Scripture writers, of course, as fallible witnesses to revelation but their words can become the Word of God in the 'event' of revelation. He also argues that the doctrine of inspiration current in the early church and the puritan period led to a naive secularisation of the whole concept of revelation.

The second section contains a provocatively unorthodox treatment of subjects like creation out of nothing, Christ and creation and the image of God. For example, he regards the creation narratives of Genesis 1 and 2 as saga which he defines as *"the sense of an intuitive and poetic picture of a pre-historical reality of history which is enacted once and for all within the confines of time and space" [p.62]*. In other words, man's creation in God's image occurs in the area of primal history, in the present.

In the section entitled '*Epiphany*' Barth deals with the important New Testament concept of *"The fulness of time"* ('*that time in which God comes to us and we come to God*') and vital subjects such as the baptism, transfiguration and sinlessness of Jesus. He views the Lord's baptism as an *"act of obedience in which he entered upon his ministry and way of life in a manner typical and decisive for all that was to follow"* [p.136]. In typical Barthian style, what he calls *"The story of a contrapuntal and crowning event from the other side"*, namely, the attestation of the Son in His baptism by the Father, he regards as *"mythological"*.

The Lent and Easter section is by far the longest and most important section where in addition to dealing with subjects like the temptation of the serpent, the golden calf, David and Bathsheba, stupidity (Psalm 14:1) Barth turns his attention to crucial themes such as the purpose of Christ's work, justification by faith alone, reconciliation,

the history and meaning of the resurrection with a concluding discussion of baptism viewed as response to God's grace.

His treatment of these themes is certainly unsound and his exegesis more ingenious than biblical. He espouses universalism and criticises severely the reformers' theology of the atonement and justification (e.g. pp.190-193). The resurrection of Christ, Barth asserts, *"is not peripheral to the New Testament, but central: not inessential or dispensable, but essential and indispensable ..."*. He then makes an interesting attack on Bultmann's demythologising of Easter but Barth himself adopts an unorthodox stance partly because of his view of revelation time. This time has little to do with calendar events. *"Is the empty tomb"*, he asks, *"just a legend?"* His answer is an indifferent one. *"What matter?"* [p.211] He adopts a similar attitude towards the ascension: *"There is no sense in trying to visualise the ascension as a literal event"*. For Barth, history is dumb and speaks with a variety of voices contradicting each other. He bases his own understanding of the resurrection on the words ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι in 1 Timothy 3:16. *"He himself ... was justified by God in his resurrection from the dead. He was justified as man and in him as the representative of all men all were justified"* [p.213]. According to Barth, the resurrection as an historical fact is a process involving and representing the progress of the whole human race towards perfection.

One fact is clear. Barth does not embrace the evangelical faith, despite his claim to be reformed and a theologian of the Word. His influence, however, in recent years has been considerable and some pastors may deem it useful to acquaint themselves with his theology if only, in contrast, to proclaim the true word more clearly and relevantly in our generation. Provided it is read critically this book could be a useful tool for such pastors.

Eryl Davies