

meaning that God intends to flood the lives of men and women, and ultimately the whole creation, with his own love, power and richness, and that he has already begun to put this plan into effect through Christ and by his Spirit. That is the Colossian's inheritance in Christ and they can want nothing more from any other source'.

Wright also claims that the traditional view of Paul's method, that is, first to lay out all of his theological arguments as his foundation in the first part of the epistle and then to make his practical application, is incorrect. He claims there is a much closer interaction between doctrine and practice: more of a quantum interaction. Paul's great difficulty is to resist the significance of a truth and so he immediately launches into its application. Thus Wright argues for a more dynamic flow of argument. which excites the doctrine through its more instantaneous application.

Tom Wright's commentary is full of refreshing theological and practical insights which stirred my mind with some of the excitement its author obviously feels. He makes valuable application to the twentieth century situation in both church, home and private life.

What of the commentary's weaknesses? I found the inevitable woolliness over his dealing with baptism. I felt it was to some extent patronising. I also felt that, in his eagerness to demonstrate the Judaistic background to the Colossian heresy, he spent, for the size of the work, rather a lot of time on related issues to support his thesis. What he says in these related issues is often excellent but it is a pity he did not give the

same energy or space to exploring aspects of Christ's work in depth which the epistle so readily lends itself to. Finally, I was left uneasy with the apparent suggestion that hell was possibly nothing more than the total demoralization of the sinner, such as the total loss of self respect (pp135-136).

I found the commentary one that excited my mind and left me wanting to preach on the marvellous themes in Colossians, and that is what I look for in a commentary.

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Old Testament

Numbers

*B Maarsingh
Eerdmans, 1987
122pp £6.50*

A simple, unadorned and fairly conservative explanation of the book of Numbers in the Text and Interpretation series. The volume shows, perhaps, rather less interest in the literary and theological structure of the book than might be expected in a modern commentary. A useful addition to the growing literature on a much neglected Bible book. However, Wenham remains the best all-round work especially for preachers.

The Covenants of Promise

*Thomas Edward McComiskey
IVP, 1987
259pp (paperback) £7.50*

The relationship between biblical

theology and reformed dogmatics has had its tense moments. In particular, biblical theology has been seen as a challenge to some of the fundamental tenets of covenant theology. This volume is an attempt to show that, while biblical theology demands some refinements be made to covenant theology, the latter has a secure biblical foundation.

Basic to McComiskey's thesis is his assertion that we can distinguish between two types of covenants in the Bible: the promissory and the administrative. The former is eternally valid, the latter administrate the promise in a variety of historical contexts and show some diversity. The promise is rooted in God's words to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3 etc.) and the antecedent word in Genesis 3:15 (where the singular 'seed' is regarded as a collective). It is appropriately called a covenant in view of the flexible usage of the word *BERITH* in the Bible. The covenant of circumcision, law and even the new covenant are administrations of the one eternal promise. He emphasises, then, that the law is a response to promise: it is not an impediment to the unity of the covenants. The Bible is opposed to legalism not law.

The author seeks to interact with some of the major issues that this raises, especially with covenant theology in mind. He concludes that it is best, with Murray, to view God's dealings with our primal ancestor as the 'Adamic Administration' and that it is wrong to view the 'covenant of works' as an offer of life but rather as maintaining an already existing relationship: 'the prospect of death, not life, was set before Adam' (p218). Finally, he concludes with

some suggestions on preaching from the Old Testament: 'The Old Testament must be viewed within the grid of the new covenant. The preacher will not want for Old Testament materials if he does this' (p231).

This is a valuable book which will be welcomed by both biblical and dogmatic theologians. Helpfully, it offers a basis for fruitful interaction. It is clearly and simply written.

New Bible Atlas

J J Bimson et al
IVP/Lion, 1985
128pp £9.95

A splendid atlas. It provides many attractive maps and some useful photographic illustrations to accompany every period and major event of the Bible. A conservative commentary which is both brief and yet comprehensive and interesting accompanies the maps. Of atlases recently published this is the best value for money, especially to the Old Testament student. If you want an atlas buy this one!

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