Book Reviews

A New Era in the Study of the New Testament. A REVIEW ESSAY

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Recent shifts in the understanding of the religion of Israel in the first century BC and the first century AD signal the start of a new era in the understanding of the history of the earliest Christianity and, as a consequence, in the understanding of the New Testament. If you look at the first chapter of most introductions to the New Testament, or most Church histories, you will find something about 'the Jewish background'. It is apparent, on a careful reading, that what is said there does not lead on to the history of the Church, or to the content of the New Testament, in any way except in matters of detail or manner of expression. As a result, the undoubted originality of the content of the New Testament seems to become exaggerated to the point where the thoughtful reader starts to wonder how it was that large numbers of ordinary people flocked to John the Baptist or Jesus, or how churches sprang up from Arabia to Spain within living memory of the mission of Jesus. The Prophets took much longer to communicate ideas of supposedly much less originality, within a much more restricted stretch of territory. **Something is missing: the knowledge of what was on the way to becoming Christian thought just before the work of John the Baptist** (as opposed to varieties of religious thought that show some affinity with some aspect of Christian expression). A whole discipline is missing, and as a result, the treatment of the New Testament is unbalanced, so much that the imbalance is not noticed.

The kind of knowledge that is needed is indicated indirectly in two new publications, which will serve as pointers to a change in thinking that has started to become apparent over tha last twenty years of so. Both books are of first-rate importance in their own right.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered. The First Complete Translation and Interpretation of 50 Key Documents Withheld for Over 35 Years.
Robert H. Eisenman and Michael Wise. Element, Shaftsebury (UK), Rockport (USA), Brisbane, 1992. ix + 286 pp + 16 plates. ISBN 1-85230-368-9. $39.95.

Although the sub-title does not make it clear, this book makes available a full transcription of all the Hebrew and Ara-

maic texts treated, with photographic reproductions of many of them and with references to photographic reproductions of all the texts. The translation and commentary can thus be checked against the original documents. The work is impressively accurate (though the number of misprints in the bibliography and commentary is too high, and the phonetic transcription of the Hebrew is a bit strange).

Technically, then, the book is highly reliable. What about the rather sensational sub-title? Well, in this case the facts justify quite a bit of dramatisation. It is true that the texts were withheld for over thirty-five years, and they are certainly key documents. There is no need to go into the well known history of the sordid monopolisation of these texts, the full story can be read in Eisenman and Wise's introductions. One point only needs to be brought out here: the claims that the unpublished and inaccessible texts had nothing of interest to add to what was already known can now be seen, even to a non-specialist, to be false. It can be seen as well that the descriptions of the content of the texts, to the extent that they were given, were in part false to the point of dishonesty.

The texts published here are all from Cave 4. They tend to deal with theology more than community organisation. Matters treated include revelation, inspiration, pre-destination, the rule of God on earth, the nature of evil, the fate of the soul, and so on.

The importance of these texts for the present purpose is that although the Qumran community was neither Christian nor semi-Christian, it influenced Christianity profoundly, both directly and also by provoking a reaction. There is room to disagree with Eisenman and Wise over the nature of the relationship to Christianity (though I have to admit that theological and doctrinal considerations might be affecting my perception of the data); but there is no denying that the comparisons they draw between the newly-published texts and the New Testament are profoundly significant, go well beyond what would once have been conceivable, and are too numerous and direct to be explained away. We can now see much more clearly what Catholic Christianity defined itself against, what divided James from Paul, and so on (: 170-171). Martin Luther's reservations about the Epistle of James turn out to have some historical support (chapter 6). Furthermore, there are glimpses of the lines of thought that came before both types of Christianity.

I would like to make some observations of my own here. Leaving aside the question of the relationship of the history of the Qumran community to the history of the formation of Christianity, one fact remains: Christianity shows up as a **natural**development of its time. This means that what the Church had put forward as doctrine, that Israel is the Church, can be seen to be a proposition defensible in historical terms. By contrast, Pharisaism did not have hegemony, and has less claim to be representative than the complex movements that led to Christianity.

The religion called Judaism in modern times is the descendant of Pharisaism as re-organised in the second century AD. Now, it deserves to be mentioned that the custodian of these texts during the years when they were withheld from scholars was the Department of Antiquities of the State of Israel; that the conclusions that could be drawn from the content of these texts are in opposition to the viewpoint of fundamentalist Protestant eschatological thinking, specially in North America, which sees the State of Israel as a fulfil-

ment of prophecy; and that such conclusions are in opposition, in a different way, to the modernistic Vatican pronouncements on the relationship of Jews to Christians and Judaism to Christianity. I do not say that the custodians necessarily perceived these connections but the texts are there to br interpreted, and the connections are logically demonstrable. The texts do not 'threaten Christianity', as has been claimed, but they have potential political significance.

The insight derived from the new material must have a pervasive effect on the way that other texts from the same period are evaluated. Some of the documents of diverse character conveniently labelled as the Pseudepigrapha, such as the Jewish sections (not the Christian sections) of the Sibylline Oracles, or the Testament of Levi (see XVIII: 10-12) or I Enoch (see Book II), or II Enoch, or IV Ezra(see VI: 1 according to the Ethiopic version), contain passages that seem to be 'too Christian' for Jewish texts of any period, but which are not Christian enough to be explained away as Christian interpolation. A few very recent studies, based in part on the Cave 4 texts, have shown that such passages in the Pseudepigrapha will have to be treated as authentic. On the other hand, given the diversity of thought in the Qumran texts, The Pseudepigrapha, Philo, and so on, it will no longer be possible to rely on Rabbinic texts for an adequate picture of the religion of Israel in the first century. The Rabbinic texts will have a place, but no more than that.

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The second book to be noticed is of quite different format and purpose, but has the same implications for the history of Christianity.

Die Samaritaner

Ferdinand Dexinger and Reinhard Pummer (eds). Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1992. VIII + 477 pp. ISBN 3-534-08557-4. ISSN 0509-9609.

This book is intended by the editors to be a source for all aspects of the study of the Samaritans, but there is a weighting towards the late Old Testament period, and more particularly towards the inter-Testamental and New Testament periods. For our present purpose, the book can be looked at from the last-mentioned aspect.

First, a word on the organisation of the book. Knowledge of the Samaritans has been achieved very slowly, literally over centuries. There are three main reasons for this: the difficulties in recovering and interpreting the primary sources in Aramaic and Arabic; the fragmentariness of the sources from the ancient period; and the consequent need to work backwards in time from the relatively well known to the obscure. The most important studies on the Samaritans are not very general in scope, and some of them are fairly old by comparison with the standard sources in other disciplines. What Pummer and Dexinger have done is to compose two long introductory chapters to summarise the present state of knowledge and orientate the reader, and then to add nineteen articles, by various authors, setting out various aspects of the subject. These nineteen articles are not all of equal quality, some of them were written before the publication of some quite important texts, and only one short item was specially written for the volume. Nevertheless, the editors have used the only feasible method of setting out the present state of knowledge. The quality of their judgment in the choice of the articles is really remarkable.

The two chapters by Pummer and Dexinger are in German. Of the nineteen articles attached, eleven are in German

(including a couple translated from Hebrew), and the remaining eight are in English.

The chapter by Pummer is a survey of the main aspects of the present state of knowledge of the Samaritans. Under some headings, such as Samaritans and Qumran, hardly anything is said, but that is how it is in the present state of knowledge. The short Bibliographies at the start of each section and in the footnotes are very well done, though there are some lapses, where articles that are not relevant have been put down on the strength of their title. The best feature of this chapter is undoubtedly Pummer's own assessments, which are sober and profound , specially in regard to the plausibility of competing theories or the quality of the secondary sources. The non-specialist can rely on this chapter with confidence.

The chapter by Dexinger is concerned with the question of the origin of the Samaritans. This is a question that had to be tackled because it affects the question of the reliability of Samaritan traditions. This study is not the longest, but it is the most thorough ever done on the subject. Much remains uncertain, but there are a couple of indisputable facts: first, that they arose within the religious community of Israel; second, that there has been no foreign influence on their theology and practice, or at least, no more than the equivalent foreign influences on the Jews. Whether they arose in the first instance as a distinct community over the question of the location of the Holy Place, or for some other reason, is not yet clear. Well before the New Testament period, however, the Samaritans could define themselves as orthodox Israelites upholding the sanctity of Mt Gerizim, with the Jews being by definition heretical Israelites that had rejected Mt. Gerizim for the unhallowed Jerusalem. Dexinger takes the dispute over the location of the Holy Place to be the original matter of dispute, and his arguments are very convincing. My own study of the material on Samaritan sects indicates that ideas spread freely between Jews and Samaritans, which would support Dexinger's conclusions.

There is only one serious flaw in this excellent book, and that lies in the general bibliography. To cite some examples: the reference to *Der Taheb*, by Dexinger, is wrong. The work is listed as a monograph, but in fact was published as an article in the journal *Kairos*. It would be impossible to locate my article 'Use, Authority, and Exegesis of Mirka in the Samaritan Tradition' on the basis of the entry in the bibliography. Articles and books in Hebrew are referred to only in a translation of their title in German. Mistakes like this are a trap for the non-specialist and sometime for the expert. Not every book and article mentioned in the book has an entry in the bibliography, e.g. Macuch's book on Samaritan Aramaic.

In all other respects, this book can be recommended unreservedly. There would be no practical way of approaching the study of the Samaritans without using it constantly.

The information given in the book, difficult as much of it is to handle, makes it possible to look at a question that the authors raise for consideration (: 39-50). What follows is not necessarily the view of either Pummer or Dexinger. Did any form of Samaritan thought (and the variety was quite considerable) tend towards any of the central tenets of Christianity? The answer is that some Samaritans were working towards a concept of the Incarnation. This is an enormously important discovery. In contrast, to debate the existence of Messianic concepts is often

to avoid the most important questions. The term Mashiah/Messias/Christ/Messiah is so general that it could be translated as "authorised person". To say that the first Christians accepted Jesus as the Christ is nearly a tautology: it only means they considered their leader to have some kind of divine approval. The leader of the Jewish revolt against Rome was equally a Christ to his soldiers. What defines Christianity is not belief in a Christ, but belief in the Incarnation. This belief has then led to a narrowing down of the word Christ in Christian usage.

The following is a very brief summary of the evidence for what is claimed.

The publication of a critical edition of the Tibat Marqe (4th century) and comparison with information from the oldest surviving Samaritan liturgy, along with Patristic sources, shows that some Samaritans were well on the way to hypostatising the creative Power of God, moving on from concepts to be found in some Jewish sources, such as the Book of Wisdom and the Book of Baruch. A cluster of groups called Dositheans included some that were willing to see their founder as expressing this Power, giving him the title 'the Standing One'[1]. The same title was claimed by Simon Magus. Some Dositheans used the title 'the Example', with the connotation of what we would call 'the first-fruits of them that slept' (I Cor. XV:20). The title, or the concept of the Christ as primarily or only the leader in resurrection, is found in some forms of early Christianity[2]. None of this shows that some Samaritans were Christian, but it does show that the preaching of Christianity would have been intelligible to its first hearers, if they had been Samaritans, or Samaritans of the right kind.

The hypostatisation of the creative Power of God mentioned previously is not far from the concept of the figure of the Lesser Yahweh or Metatron in some of the more explicit *Hechaloth* texts of Rabbinic metaphysics. The absorption of Enoch into this figure after his translation is in the same line of thought as some forms of adoptionist Christology[3]. None of this is Christianity, but it is a world of concepts that stand in some historical relationship to the central doctrines of Christianity. This path leads back to the Pseudepigrapha and then back to the Old Testament. The doctrines were pre-supposed in the Temple cult itself, as Maier has shown. We could add the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifices from Qumran to Maier's examples. There are connections with many other Qumran texts as well, as Eisenman and Wise point out continually.

The New Testament itself gives clear evidence that Christianity was first preached in an environment of concepts that were common property and were well on the way towards Christianity. **These are not the 'parallels' of the standard commentaries**, referring to forms of expression or isolated concepts: **they are concepts central to Christian dogma**. John the Baptist was a person of his time: the multitudes heard him gladly; and John fully expected someone like Jesus. Jesus could expect his opponents to find Christology in the Pentateuch without needing any source references (or the evangelist thought that Jesus would have expected this: the distinction does not matter) [4]. Are the opponents of Jesus here any different from the learned Jew quoted in *Against Celsus* (I:49 and II:77), who could accept something approaching Christology but not the person of Jesus? The Samaritan woman expected someone exactly like Jesus, and so did the rest of the village (John IV). When the High Priest accused Jesus of blasphemy, Jesus

had not said anything that would provoke such a charge (Matt XXVI:62-65; Luke XXII:67-71). There can be no blasphemy in claiming the title Christ/Messias, **without any further definition.** There could be no blasphemy in quoting the Book of Daniel, **without comment.** There could be no blasphemy in using the title Son of God, **without further definition**[5]. A common explanation is that the High Priest already knew what Jesus had claimed and needed only a confirmation. This might well be right, but the High Priest himself fell into a trap in unthinkingly asserting that these vague terms could have only what we would call a Christian meaning, and then confirming his mistake by not asking Jesus to define how he used them. When Jesus asked the man he had cured of blindness whether he believed in the Son of Man, the man immediately took the term in what we would call a Christian sense and assumed that the Son of Man could be expected to be incarnated (John X:35-38). The crowd that did not believe in Jesus complained that he had an earthly origin. They expected someone in earthly guise but of supernatural origin, with no real component of earthly origin [6].

The synoptic Gospels are not an adequate basis for explaining what Christianity consists of, except to someone who is already a Christian. John's Gospel is full of explicit theology, but it would be hard to understand without already knowing basic doctrine. Both types of Gospel assume existing knowledge of the essential concepts of Christianity. Now, this might be due to the circumstances and purpose of their composition and editing, and might only mean that the very early church had its doctrine set out in a creed with a commentary, an idea which seems to surface here and there in the Epistles. Nevertheless, there should be some echo of the teaching of basic concepts by Jesus in the Gospels, if it were necessary for him to do so. What can be seen is hardly ever the teaching of basic doctrines, but the correction of errors in doctrine held by a part of the people, but not by everyone (Mark XII:18-27; 35-37), or additions to doctrine already known (Mark VIII: 31-31; IX:11-13; X: 32-34). This can be taken to mean that most of what was to become Christian doctrine was already commonly known, though some matters were in dispute, and not all the complex of ideas was equally acceptable to Jesus [7].

Some of the information set out here needs more consideration, but enough is clear to draw a general conclusion. **New Testament scholars will have to shift their gaze to what has been their blind spot, the thought-world where the main Christian doctrines** (not just forms of expression or detail) **were easily understandable when heard preached, because they were already familiar.** As usual with rather fundamental advances, the first signs of the new perception have come from scholars outside, or on the edges, of the field. The realisation is old, but Origen and Pico della Mirandola, and others like them over the centuries, did not have the textual evidence to go from instinct to proof. At the end of the twentieth century, we can do that and the first steps in documentation have been taken.

Notes

1. See Hans Leisegang *Die Gnosis*, Leipzig 1941 (French translation, *La Gnose*, Paris 1951), chapter 3, on the precise meaning of this term.

2. See the Epistle of the Apostles, par 21 & 28; Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, X: 2-3. For a striking Jewish (not Jewish-Christian)

expression of the same idea, see Origen *Against Celsus*, II: 77. For the Dosithean evidence, see my article 'Use, authority, and exegesis of Mikra in the Samaritan tradition', note 51 (in CRINT part 2, vol 1, *Mikra*) quoting Abul-Fatah. See also Leisegang on the Patristic evidence.

3. For our present purpose the date of the texts does not matter, since the concepts can be traced back to the first century, and they would not have been entertained after the appearance of Christianity unless they had very deep roots. For the collected materials, see Peter Schäfer *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, Tübingen 1981. For the continuity and antiquity of the ideas, see Ithamar Gruenewald *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden, E J Brill 1980; Johann Maier *Vom Kultus zur Gnosis: Bundeslade, Gottesthron, und Märkabah*, Salzburg 1964.

4. See John V: 45-47 in context.

5. On this term see Brendan Byrne *'Sons of God' - 'Seed of Abraham'*, Rome 1979, chapter 1.

6. This is the outlook that led to docetic Christianity (John VII: 27).

7. The Pharisees and Sadducees are singled out for attack because they represent incompatible organised movements, but even they wanted to get first some advantage from John (Matt III: 7).

Religion and Multiculturalism in Australia: Essays in Honour of Victor Hayes

Norman Habel (ed.) AASR, Adelaide 1992. Special Studies in Religion Series No.7. ISBN 0 908083165, 359 pp. $29.95

This latest book in the AASR series is mainly about weasel words, dangerously slippery concepts that are often a substitute for thought and close analysis. Some of these are: 'multiculturalism' itself, and its cognate 'culture'; 'syncretism', 'secularisation', 'pluralism', 'ethnicity', 'racism', and, of course, 'religion'. Anyone who deals in this verbal currency whether in classroom or pulpit, office or living room, will profit by a close reading.

The first, theoretical section, attempts to link multiculturalism with religion in various ways. Personally I found the most provocative essay here the Charles Strong lecture by Victor Hayes in honour of whom the volume is dedicated. I am not convinced that his concept of 'faithful syncretism' solves all the problems of conceptual clarity and historical usage for which it is enlisted, but it clearly is important to distinguish a successful integration of concepts and practices from one in which fundamental unresolved tensions remain.

While the notion of religious essences is rightly suspect today, it would seem that syncretism lies in beliefs rather practices. Visser 't Hooft's emphasis on 'structures' in distinguishing syncretism from what he calls 'absorption' and 'translation' blurs this key issue by its implicit claim that it is formal properties that distinguish religions. Hayes' notion of fidelity, emphasising both continuities and personal commitment, is a considerable advance. There are, however, still many questions left open as in all good theoretical explorations. I myself have never met Victor Hayes' ideal traveller to other religious realms who returns 'without cargo' but it is an intriguing and provoking image.

The second section on 'Multiculturalism in the Australian Context' raises fundamental questions about the religiosity of Australian culture. Many would query Ian Gillman's reading of Australian religious history as demonstrating a preference for morality over *mysterium*. The central question is, as always, where to look for 'rumours of angels'. The seminal works of Australian literary and artistic culture, even those often cited as support-

ing the 'secularist' thesis - Lawson and Adam Lindsay Gordon, landscape painters and Dionysian artists and musicians- may be read as openings into transcendence. Penny Magee's analysis of Patrick White moves in this direction.

The most original contribution to this second section, however, is Tony Swain's 'Reinventing the Eternal: Aboriginal Spirituality and Modernity'. Swain's theme is none other than the emergence of a new pan-Aboriginal religion in Australia based on mythical themes drawn from the experience of oppression and dispossession (the 'Captain Cook' stories found very widely now) as well as old images in new ecological bottles ('Mother Earth'). If there are still any who think Aboriginal religion is frozen and/or dying this important article should disabuse them.

The third section includes chapters on Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism in Australia, as well as one on multicultural congregations in the Uniting Church. These would be very useful to teachers of the Victorian VCE unit on 'Religion and Society' and their equivalents elsewhere. So too would the discussions in part IV on curriculum and ethics, especially Basil Moore's criticism of the absence of explicit attention to racism in Australian school religious education.

The last chapters deal with 'Multiculturalism and the Biblical Text'. All three, however, those by Habel and Gardner explicitly, and Conrad's implicitly, deal with Old Testament multiculturalism. There seems to be a gap here in the absence of a treatment of the multiculturalism of the Early Christian Church, especially in Paul.

Gaps are not, on the whole, a feature of this collection as they are in so many *festschrifts*. Norman Habel, the editor, has done an unusually fine job in assembling such a balanced and comprehensive range of papers while retaining a common focus. It would be hard to imagine a more appropriate tribute to a man who is himself a consummate editor, and to whose labours in this regard AASR owes so much.

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Collections of Religion and Theology in Australia and New Zealand.

Jenkin, Coralie E.J.(ed.) Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1992. 186 pp. $32.00 pap. ISBN 1-875145-11-7

Allan Bundy's Auslib Press continues to improve the physical quality of its products in terms of both binding and layout. The present work is no exception, although the high reduction in font size used in the frontmatter is a strain on ageing eyes. Inside this otherwise attractive volume what does one find?

'CORTIANZ (an exceedingly unattractive acronym sounding more medicinal than theological) has been compiled to assist in the location of religious and theological materials held in libraries in Australia and New Zealand, as well as collections held by bodies which define themselves as religions or are listed in...*Many Faiths One Nation* ...or.. *Beliefs and Practices in New Zealand*.... I have not defined "religion" or "theology"' [p.3].

The result of this approach is a compilation which includes far more than it should. For example, Christian Science Reading Rooms are listed, yet none of them has more than a handful of books and certainly cannot be defined as a library. Equally, is it acceptable to speak of a collection of thirty (State Zionist Council) or forty (South Eastern Christian Centre) books as a library? I think not, unless

those few books are unique volumes of scholarship, which is most unlikely. In other words Jenkin includes many entries which hardly count as libraries and which are certainly questionable as theological or religious collections.

On the other hand she does include much that is useful - universities and theological colleges, religious orders and diocesan resource centres, private societies and public libraries. Here is the most extensive guide yet produced to religion and theology collections in Australia and New Zealand. Each entry consists of the following elements: name, religious affiliation, address, precise location, date of foundation, name of librarian, opening hours, size of collection, subject strengths, classification system, subject headings, number of staff, note on access. Not every entry includes all elements, and occasionally the information can be misleading, as that for the National Library of New Zealand that lists serial holdings as 4870, most of which must be in fields other than religion. New Zealand libraries are interfiled with Australian entries, which makes no sense. There is an institutional index at the beginning and a subject index at the end, the latter often unhelpfully broad: 'Bible Study' certainly could have been subdivided by tradition, for example. The preface provides precious little information on how the data were collected or when - key information in a work of this kind.

While it is valuable to have public and university libraries included in a guide to religious and theological libraries, and to have updated information on all of the entries, there are on balance far too many flaws and shortcomings in this volume for it to be recommended. The major theological collections are listed in other Auslib Press directories, which I would prefer to rely on for the present.

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Keyguide to Information Sources on World Religions.

Holm, Jean. London: Mansell Publishing, 1991. xi + 259 pp. £50.00 cloth ISBN 0-7201-2083-7

In this work the compiler has sought to have two bob each way in her definition of 'world religions'. On the one hand she includes all major religious systems from Baha'i to Zoroastrianism (twelve religions in all) but on the other excludes 'biblical studies and mainstream Christian theology and Church history...because sources of information on these are already well documented' (p. x). But surely one could say the same of all aspects of Christianity and also of Judaism at the very least, so why include these religions at all? Holm has been hoist on her own petard and cannot justify the present volume according to her own criteria.

This is not to say that such a volume is unwarranted. Adams' *A Reader's Guide to the Great Religions* and Karpinski's *The Religious Life of Man*, the closest competitors to Holm, are both nearly fifteen years old. The only current title which comes close to this volume is Volume 4 of *The Reader's Adviser* (13th ed., 1988), which covers Judaism and Christianity together with some attention to Islam and Eastern religions, but this is a far more basic guide than Holm.

What does she seek to achieve? 'The aim of this book is to indicate the nature and range of the reference material available for the study of world religions' (p. ix). To achieve this aim, Holm presents her information in three parts. Part 1 of-

fers an introduction to the scope of religious studies and a discussion of relevant organisations and types of literature. This overview is well suited to the needs of reference librarians unfamiliar with religious studies and to students. Part 2, nearly 200 pages, is the bibliographic listing. The 1019 entries are arranged into twenty-two sections, both geographical and religious. The rationale for this is not clearly explained: 'works which deal with only one religion are in their named sections. However, all the religions are also represented in the multi-regional/multi-faith and regional sections, and most in the interfaith relations section, and, to a lesser extent, in the general section' (p. 47). What this really means is that works on a particular religion can appear almost anywhere: for example, there are some fifty entries on Hinduism which appear outside the section on that religion. Furthermore, there is no indication of what the regional sections (of which there are six, with subdivisions) contain. Frankly, the organisation is puzzling and frustrating. The index, combining authors, titles and subjects in a single sequence, will do little to allay the puzzlement and frustration; and I suspect that many potential users will end up looking elsewhere.

Finally, the range of sources is also puzzling. Some highly marginal titles are included - Gorman and Mills' *Guide to Current National BIbliographies in the Third World*, for example, while countless directly relevant items are missed, many in this reviewer's Greenwood Press series, Bibliographies and Indexes in Religious Studies (Choquette, Mojzes, etc.). In addition, sequels are often missed - for example, the second volume of *History of the Church in Southern Africa* (of which the first volume should have been excluded in view of Holm's exclusive clause cited above).

On the whole titles in the Keyguide series can be recommended for purchase; unfortunately, this one cannot because of its dog's breakfast approach to both content and arrangement. This is a pity, because buried among the dross is some useful and clearly annotated material. On the whole one would be better advised to spend money on a series of discrete volumes on specific religions.

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Encyclopedia of Early Christianity. Ferguson, Everett, ed. London: St James Press, 1990. xx + 983 pp. price not reported cloth ISBN 1-55862-104-0

Taking as its time frame the period from the life of Jesus to about 600AD, this encyclopedia covers people, places, doctrines and practices, art and liturgy, heresies and schisms of the early church. It contains 977 signed entries from 135 contributors, all of whom are listed together with their affiliations at the beginning of the work. It is a fully ecumenical work incorporating the views of Protestant, Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox scholarship. The Preface provides an excellent description of the rationale, content and arrangement of the work; this is followed by a General Bibliography, Abbreviations, Contributors and Chronology, and the entire work concludes with a thirty-seven page index. The entries themselves generally follow a standard format: definition or identification, antecedents if applicable, chronological or topical development of the subject in early Christianity, main patristic sources and selected recent studies. The editors state that this work is addressed to 'general

readers, students and professionals in other fields who want information about early Christianity. The articles, therefore, avoid technical language as much as possible, and where such is necessary provide definitions or explanations' (p. vii). It is not, in other words, meant to supplant more detailed studies such as Kelly's *Early Christian Doctrines, specialist encyclopedias such as Cabrol's Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie.*

Entries can be as short as five lines (Anianus of Celeda, Hegemonius) or as long as several pages but for the most part are appropriate to the significance of the individual or topic. A major entry, such as that on Christ/Christology, extends to seventeen columns and provides very concise and clear summaries of doctrinal development during the period. On the Apostles' Creed (four columns), for instance, the entry is carefully balanced and avoids any dogmatic position unacceptable to mainstream scholarship; this balance extends to the entry's bibliography, which lists works by Rufinus, Kelly, McGiffert, de Ghellinck, Crehan, Holland and others.

A particularly noteworthy feature of this compilation is the inclusion of major modern scholars of early Christianity, giants such as F.C. Bauer and Harnack, as well as such notable encyclopaedists and editors as Leclercq and Quasten. There are thus entries for both Neander and Schaff (but lacking 'see also' references), the former with half a column and the latter with a full column, but not Schleiermacher (Neander's teacher and more influential contemporary) or Nevin (Schaff's fellow Mercersburg theologian). The excellent index then includes all references to such individuals in other entries, even when these are only bibliographical.

Overall one can say without fear of contradiction that the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* is a carefully executed reference volume that clearly targets its non-specialist audience and provides detail appropriate to the entries. It succeeds in summarising difficult concepts and movements without sacrificing accuracy or colour - an admirable achievement. Any private or institutional library which possesses *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* will want a copy of this encyclopedia.

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A Dictionary of Judaism and Christianity

Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. 1991. SPCK, London.181pp $47.00 pap. ISBN 0-281-04538-0 (from Charles Paine PL)

As Rabbi Cohn-Sherbok reminds us in his Preface, '... it is often the case that even those who are actively engaged in Jewish-Christian encounter lack basic knowledge about one another's beliefs and practices.' Accordingly, in this dictionary he sets out to describe the similarities among and differences between these two religions, using direct and simple language to draw important connections.

The work is arranged alphabetically, from 'Abortion' to 'Zionism'. Entries range from a few words (fifty on 'Earlocks') to several hundred (c.900 on 'Resurrection'), with a few hundred the norm. Words are entered under their English forms with 'see' references from the Hebrew equivalents. In his choice of entries Cohn-Sherbok has sought to cover all major aspects of the two religions, from theological and ethical to social and

organisational. It is impossible to convey what the author has managed to squeeze into his succinct treatment of each term; this is a pity, because so many entries are simply brilliant summaries of Jewish-Christian thought. On more contentious issues Cohn-Sherbok is invariably fair, objective and judicious in his descriptions. This is precisely what a theological dictionary should achieve and Cohn-Sherbok is to be commended for such an achievement.

As always in such compilations there are shortcomings. First, while 'see' references are liberally employer, 'see also' references are not. Second, the lack of suggestions for further reading is an unfortunate oversight - just one or two references at the end of major entries, or perhaps a selective bibliography at the conclusion of the work, would have done much to assist users whose appetites are bound to be whetted by the marvellous work.

A Dictionary of Judaism and Christianity cannot be too highly recommended for all academic, secondary school, public and personal libraries with religious studies collections. It is a brilliantly conceived and executed volume that is a credit to Dan Cohn-Sherbok and SPCK. Even the cover, Chagall's *The White Crucifixion*, couldn't be more appropriate.

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A World Theology: The Central Spiritual Reality of Humankind

N. Ross Reat and Edmund F. Perry. Cambridge: CUP, 1991. ISBN 0-521-33159-5 hard Pp. x + 314. $99.00

With increasing globalisation in all areas of life - culture, politics, economics - it is timely that some more energy should be directed towards developing a "world theology". N. Ross Reat and Edmund F. Perry have taken some sizeable steps, nurtured over a decade of collaborative work, in that direction.

Perhaps the main aim of the book is to steer a course between a rampant pluralism on the one hand and a dogmatic assertion of the truth on the other. Over against these two options the religions studied - Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam - are permitted their own local validity and colour; at the same time they point beyond themselves to a greater reality. The awareness of this reality, it is hoped, will facilitate communication and discussion between the different religious traditions (the example of Esperanto is evoked as an analogy on the realm of language). Other aims include the intention to engage in an activity which combines theology and religious studies and the wish to open up a new category in the study of religion, namely "world theology".

The crucial first chapter has a dual purpose: to establish the basic theological categories and essential conceptual machinery; and to offer some argument for the "reality" (rather than "existence") of "the central spiritual reality of humankind". While these two areas work together throughout the chapter, the argument for the reality of the central spiritual reality need not detain us, save in noting that it works on the basis that human behaviour invariably points to a non-material spiritual reality. The basic theological categories, however, form the structural frame upon which the remainder of the book is arranged. The first category is that of the symbol, which is defined as that which "points beyond itself to a larger reality in which it participates and whose larger dimensions it

makes present and known" (p 5). In this sense the religions of the world and their various elements are symbolic expressions of the ultimate reality; they all indicate something beyond themselves. Reat and Perry designate four forms of symbolism (the terms speak for themselves): intellectual symbolism, mythological symbolism; spiritual symbolism and moral symbolism.

The second theological category is concerned with the nature of the central spiritual reality, which has three fundamental characteristics: undeniability, desirability, and elusiveness. The central spiritual reality cannot genuinely be denied; five major religions affirm undeniability and human behaviour witnesses to it. Each of the religions also affirms that the central spiritual reality is desirable, and thus it provides the norms of value by which everything else is judged. Finally, the ultimate reality is beyond human understanding and control (the more traditional word here is transcendent, but Reat and Perry seem to wish to avoid its traditional baggage). The analytic framework of the remaining chapters arranges the four types of symbolism under each of these three characteristics of the ultimate reality. The result is twelve topics under which to assess each of the religions. I have dwelt on this chapter due to its centrality in the whole book.

The second chapter follows in the steps of traditional Christian theology, dealing with the philosophical question, in response to the challenge from atheism, of the existence and nature of "God". Basically, while western atheism has played a salutary role in ridding us of many culture-bound elements of the concept of God it does not affect the central spiritual reality of all religions. In a turnover, Reat and Perry argue that atheism in fact functions as one response to this reality.

Chapters three to seven deal with Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the traditional "major" religions of the world. Reat and Perry begin with the religious tradition - Hinduism - which, in allowing religions their zones of validity from which they point beyond themselves to a single reality, shares much with their own approach. Upanishadic monism, as formulated by Sankara, is taken as the ground for the discussion of Hinduism. At the basis of the four symbolic types (mythological, spiritual, intellectual, and moral) of the undeniability of the ultimate referent in Hinduism lies this monism and the theory of karma and rebirth. Desirability continues focusing on these elements, but with the greater emphasis placed upon karma and rebirth. In the mythological desirability of the ultimate reality the many Hindu gods and Hindu ritual find their place. Under the final category - elusiveness - polytheism indicates the mythological dimension of elusiveness, the inability to conceptualise Brahman the intellectual dimension, and the inability to achieve salvation by morality or spiritual practices suggests the moral and spiritual dimension of elusiveness.

This rigorous pattern of assessment continues with Buddhism, the selection for analysis in this case, out of the wide variety of Buddhism, being the branches of Theravada and Mahayana. Although Buddhism is atheistic, the central spiritual reality is represented by the concepts of Nirvana and Dharma. The undeniability, desirability and elusiveness of Nirvana and Dharma are constituted with a strong emphasis, characteristic of Buddhism itself, on the intellectual symbolism of the three categories. Other elements of Bud-

dhism which appear are karma and rebirth in moral symbolism; the status of, and focus upon, the figure of the Buddha in mythological and spiritual symbolism; and the role of the Bodhisattva in all but intellectual symbolism. While these elements cut across the three categories of undeniability, desirability and elusiveness, the final category is focused upon the freedom and responsibility of the spiritual dimension of human life.

The three remaining religions are monotheistic, regarding the ultimate reality as a conscious and single Will. While Hinduism and Buddhism are in principle more open to other religions, the monotheistic religions have been much less so, and thus one of the tasks in these chapters is to show that they remain absolutist at their own peril. The significant factors of Judaism are its uncompromising monotheism, its ethnicity, scriptures (which are referred to frequently in this chapter), moral code, and status as a world religion. The various symbolisms of undeniability rely upon belief in God "the Lord", the ethical demand of God, the self-revelation of God and the imagery of God's unlimited and irresistible power. The desirability of the ultimate reality turns around the presence of God in history, which provides the basis of all values, the source of salvation in response to this presence, and the definition of desirable human conduct. This abstract notion of God's presence is represented in various concrete mythological images. The radical monotheism of Judaism leads to the elusiveness of the ultimate referent: the refusal of representation in any form, the inscrutability of God, the insufficiency of good behaviour. Despite this elusiveness, Jews have persevered in the discipline of following God.

As far as Christianity is concerned, the focus of the categories and the types of symbolism is the figure of Jesus Christ, the central feature of all forms of Christianity. The main symbolic dimensions of Christianity are the spiritual and the moral, and these are based on the presence of God in history through Jesus Christ. Both dimensions indicate God's undeniability in that the appropriate spiritual response is one of personal consent to living with reference to such a reality and the behaviour that follows from this consent. In regard to intellectual symbolism, Christianity emphasises that intellectual inquiry is always paired with faith. The mythological dimension lies in the historicisation of the cosmos and mythology, pointing back to the importance of the spiritual and moral. The various symbolisms of the desirability of the ultimate reality in Christianity focus on the need for personal engagement with Jesus Christ, in whom God is present for the purpose of providing salvation. The paradox of immediate accessibility and elusiveness is expressed in the Christian doctrine of grace: God's love is a free gift, uncalled for and undeserved and thereby beyond human comprehension and control. Grace is necessary for human salvation, requires faith in response, indicates the inadequacy of good behaviour and is mythologically represented in the sacraments.

Finally, there is Islam, characterised by a high degree of homogeneity, its exclusion of other religions, its literalistic understanding of its mythology, and its insistence on predeterminism. The undeniability of the ultimate reality in Islam is expressed in Islam's radical exclusivism. The absolute demand for obedience to God finds negative expression in the unforgivable sin of *shirk*, "associationism" or "idolatry", the adoration of anything apart from Allah. Spiritually and morally, such a notion leads to the role of heaven

and hell in salvation and punishment, as well as the function of the divine law, or *shari'a*. Creation and eschatology also point to the undeniability of Allah. Intellectually both the conservative thinkers and the sufis witness to undeniability. While exclusivism was the focus of the question of undeniability, the literal depictions of Allah, heaven and hell, emphasise in their graphic detail the desirability of the ultimate reality. The elusiveness of the central spiritual reality in Islam is based on predeterminism, the idea that those destined for salvation and damnation have been predetermined by Allah before the beginning of time. Thus, salvation is beyond any form of human striving, whether intellectual or moral, yet the spiritual traditions emphasise the need for continual spiritual discipline despite this elusiveness.

A number of things must be said in praise of this book. First, it is clearly set out and at no point is it difficult to follow the argument. The authors have stated their basic purpose, established the interpretive paradigm or model and then adhered closely to this model. Second, in each of the religions studied, the focus has been on the major facets and tenets of those religions. If an exercise such as this one is to achieve anything, the basic categories of each tradition must be dealt with. Third, the book itself functions both as a useful introduction to those religions and as a sustained argument for its thesis. It has accomplished both tasks admirably well. Fourth, I must admit that I was somewhat skeptical in beginning the reading of the book, but as I read on I found myself beginning to appreciate the weight of the argument brought forward by the authors. In other words, the book has a good deal of persuasive power. For these reasons it will have a place in subsequent discussions on the question of a world theology.

There are, however, some drawbacks. The first of these makes its most obvious appearance in the chapter on Islam, specifically in the argument that not only do Sufi and Mut'azila beliefs express the undeniability and desirability of the ultimate reality, but so also do the beliefs and arguments of the more conservative and dominant tradition stemming from Al- Ash'ari. When such opposed groups begin providing complementary evidence for certain categories (in this case undeniability and desirability) there is a suspicion that the categories may be too broad, including too much to be of any analytic use. Indeed, it is stated that **all** human expression - religious and non-religious - points to a reality beyond itself (312). This is, however, a relatively minor problem, since broad and inclusive categories are required for the task at hand.

Perhaps the major problem lies with a very limited place for the ambiguity of religion. There is some discussion of the need to distinguish between religion as a human expression on the one hand and suspicion and pseudoreligion on the other (312-313). It is argued that a distinction may be made in terms of the three basic categories: undeniability, desirability and elusiveness. However, by the ambiguity of religion I refer to its utopian power to provide hope and release to people and its simultaneous power to oppress and marginalise. It might be argued that the oppressive side may be excluded from what is essential to religion, but one only needs to consider the relation between the caste system in India and the stages of rebirth, the relationship between transcendence and the male-gendered body in Buddhism, the negative side of ethnicity in Judaism, the centrality of Paul for both

Christian theology and the subordinate role of women in Christianity, and the relationship between exclusivism and intolerance in Islam. The choice of religions also points to this absence of the ambiguity of religion: in selecting the major religions for discussion, those which have most often been the victims of the major religions have been excluded, namely, the native traditions in China and Japan before Buddhism, in Europe, the Americas and Australia before Christianity. Yet, as the authors, indicate, there is room to develop the discussion in these directions.

Apart from this drawback - the virtual absence of the place of the dark underside of religion - Reat and Perry have made an extremely significant contribution to an area felt to be beyond most religion scholars, save for scholars such as Wilfred Cantwell Smith, whose *Towards a World Theology* also sought to bring together theology and religious studies. Many would baulk at the prospect of dealing with the total perspective that the discussion of world theology demands, and it is here that perhaps the greatest merit of this book lies: the call for others to totalise, to attempt a total and global picture of religion. The need to provide such a total map of religion will be with us for some time since our present situation under global capitalism would seem to be the order of the day. This book, therefore, provides an significant effort in dealing with the religious dimension of globalisation.

It is to be hoped that its intention to provide an incentive for further discussion, debate and elaboration on the topic of a world theology will be realised. This book is too important not to be read and discussed.

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Religion in Australia: Sociological Perspectives

Alan W Black (ed.) Allen and Unwin, Sydney. 1991. ix +222pp. $19.95 pap.
ISBN 0-04-442342-X

Religion: Meaning, Transcendence and Community in Australia.

Gary D Bouma. Longman Cheshire, Melbourne. 1992. x + 194pp. $19.99pap
ISBN 0-582-87011-9

While Australian publishing has a solid record in the sociology of religion, it is rare to witness the appearance of two notable titles within two months. Both Bouma and Black have been writing on Australian religion for many years and have shared the rostrum on more than one occasion - Bouma, for instance, appears both in Black's 1983 collection and in the new one. It is appropriate then for these two works to appear together - all the more so because each performs a distinct task.

Although Bouma's intention is somewhat obscure his work is in fact part of a series of sociology texts for Australian students. Pitched primarily at the tertiary sector, especially beginning students in the sociology of religion, this work consists of three parts - religion and society (Chs 3-4), organisation of religion (Chs 5-6), religion and the individual (Chs 7-9). Two introductory chapters define religion and explore ways in which religion has been examined by sociology. Each chapter concludes with a summary of main points, notes, and suggestions for further reading. A set of 'specimen questions for essays and examinations' (forty-three items) and substantial bibliography (heavily American and minimally Australian) are useful additions for students.

Clearly Bouma has sought to follow a traditional pattern in his text and in this re-

spect offers nothing unique. For Australian needs, however, Bouma does have some advantages. First and foremost is the fact that he relies heavily on Australian data and examples, particularly data from the Australian Values Study Survey (1983). At the same time one should note the almost exclusive reliance on christian data; the paucity of discussion relevant to Jews, Muslims and Buddhists is a significant weakness in a multicultural environment. The second advantage lies in Bouma's readily accessible writing style, which includes not only a clear approach to jargon-laden sociological analysis but also an often elegant turn of phrase which does much to lighten an often dull subject.

The third part of the text (Religion and the Individual) causes some misgivings. It is really about religiosity rather than religion - that is, about measures of religiosity rather than the deeper content of religion as perceived by believers. This is especially apparent in Chapters 7 and 8, dealing respectively with laity and clergy. In the latter chapter, under the rubric of 'changes in the clergy', Bouma treats two topics very poorly - professionalisation of the clergy, and female clergy. These criticisms aside, *Religion: Meaning, Transcendence and Community in Australia* can be viewed as a landmark text for Australian undergraduates.

Alan Black's*Religion in Australia* differs significantly from Bouma's text - although it does contain a chapter by Bouma on authority in the church which was largely replicated as Chapter 5 in Bouma's textbook. This collection of papers is meant to provide '... a sample of recent theorising and research on the sociology of religion in Australia' (:13), and as such it is a welcome sequel to Black's earlier *Practice and Belief*. The thirteen chapters include papers by many of the leading lights in the sociology of religion in Australia: aside from Black himself and Bouma, there are contributions by Rowan Ireland, Ken Dempsey, Philip Hughes, Rachael Kohn and others. The work includes a substantial bibliography (:193-211) and opens with a very competent introduction by Black on recent studies in the sociology of religion in Australia - a valuable resource for anyone new to the field or seeking to supplement knowledge of the literature.

Aside from the expected contributions on diversity in Catholicism (Ireland and Rule), women in Anglicanism (Sturmey, Field) and rural churches (Dempsey), there are several papers on non-christian and non-traditional religions: Pentecostalism (Black), self-religions (Kohn), aboriginal religions (Swain), ethnic christians (McKay and Lewins). Also it is pleasing to see two contributions derived from the Combined Churches Survey for Faith and Mission (1987) - as important a study as the AVSS cited in Bouma. These chapters look at concepts of God (Ch6 Blombery) and decline in the mainline churches (Ch 7 Hughes). There is surprisingly little overlap in these and the other chapters, and on the whole they are well written and adequately illustrated. While the editor highlights common themes and approaches in his introduction, there is no attempt to provide a forum for airing divergent views; yet there would be much to gain from, say, an exchange of views between Bouma and Kohn on the 'locus of ultimate authority' in self-religions, or between Sturmey and Field on gender and Anglicanism.

Because of its thematic approach to issues in the sociology of religion, its discussion of several religions that figure prominently in Australian life, its clear presentation and superior physical produc-

tion, this collection is an ideal complement to Bouma and a significant contribution to our understanding of religion in Australian life at the end of the twentieth century.

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A Theology of the Human Person
Margaret Rodgers and Max Thomas (eds)
1992. Collins Dove, Melbourne. Paper
$19.95

We are such stuff as dreams are made on and our little life is rounded with a sleep

The Anglican General Synod Doctrine Commission may not have had Prospero's light touch in considering the question, 'Who are we?', but it does have more theology.

Prospero, ever sensitive to dramatic possibilities, would probably say that the Commission's new book *A Theology of the Human Person* comes in two acts and an epilogue. Act I presents the Commission's perspective on the subject, drafted by Don Edwards of St Francis' Theological College in Brisbane. It unfolds like this.

We humans are 'embodied' creatures formed in the image of a personal God - both as individuals and collectively, for we are essentially social beings. Each of us is a unity of disparate parts - soul, mind, body. Christ offers 'radical transformation' of our whole person, through resurrection to new life. Despite generic and other determinative factors, we are free to choose to transcend barriers, even death. Inevitably we sin, individually and corporately, in the profound sense of an estrangement from God in our underlying orientation. Beyond even what is our own doing, evil lurks. We cannot resolve this mystery ourselves. But Christianity proclaims God's redemptive presence. We become 'participants of the divine nature' through the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ-with-us offers 'newness and wholeness of life for all humanity'. Finally: we must develop 'a christian theology of the human person ... in our [Australian economic, social, ecological, technological] context ... in dialogue with other disciplines and viewpoints, and with an eye to what is happening around us'.

Time for intermission. We sit there, chin in hand. That first act - condensed, scholarly, dry, delivered in unison by twelve theologians silhouetted upstage against back-lit stained glass - takes some absorbing. Impressed, we nonetheless feel weighed down by what seems like a class-action argument. are they talking about **me**?

But now the curtain rises on a series of lively monologues, in which six new actors step in turn into a spotlight to address us.

First is Ian Barnes, who asks straight away: who are **you** (referring to the author of Act I)? We need to know about your **own** life context, which for a start is not universal but 'white, Western, educated, urban, Anglican, male'. He adds, 'the subjective and personal knower is [central] in the process of knowing'. Moreover, Jesus taught not by abstract theology but by stories related to his own setting. And crucial today is the perspective of the lay person, where church and world meet.

We are no longer slumped in our seats, but alert.

Janet Gaden makes a brief but moving appearance. She too cries: Author, tell me **your** context. Mine has been critical for me, and I feel you are too objective in

what you say. Remember, please, that women are human persons too, with characteristics which are distinctive and so frequently devalued. And why did you not say more about 'creativity, intellect and sensuality, playfulness and joy, and our capacity for ecstasy'?

Ah - the flesh comes on the bones!

Michael Horsburgh enters, to invite us to consider how difficult and complex is the interaction of real-world social administration structures and the individual. 'It is the ... absence of a personal relationship which confounds much of social policy,' he says. The church itself has not done well in this respect. Even theological discussion tends to reflect the participants' generalised social attitudes, rather than the reverse. And remember, church leaders. the perceptions of your constituency in the pews ...

Peter Hughes, with a contemplative eye, reminds us that Christ, incarnate, showed us the New Being and a consequent vision of social transformation. Our liturgy constantly reminds and empowers. The task of theology is dynamic: 'empirical rather than deductive, [in] dialogue with the human and social sciences' and expressed in parish action according to context - for example, through the St James' Ethics Centre in the City of Sydney.

Kay Pitman, like Janet Garden, is concerned at the debilitating effects of continuing determinism and stereotyping - especially for women but for any oppressed or minority group.

John Roffey moves centre-stage to bring us his insights from AIDS education, and from pastoral care - for which 'we need to be prepared to journey within ourselves and to know our humanity'. The scriptures are not a body of general theory but 'the living story of people in their relationship with God, people who ask questions of life similar to our questions'.

End of ACT II. There is much conversation in the stalls now, stimulated by what the Primate calls in the program notes 'a true flesh-and-blood discussion'.

In the Epilogue Don Edwards, himself now downstage and spotlit, explains his personal context, open about his own experiences of pain and affirmation. He concedes some criticisms, challenges others.

Finally, all those who have spoken receive, together, our warm applause, and it is time to go. On our way out, musing again through the printed program, we discover in it a Doctrine Commission paper entitled 'A Christian Discussion on Sexuality', which looks relevant, candid, balanced, and comprehensive. We must read this later, for ourselves ...

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Clearly this book from the Commission is a significant and welcome contribution to Australian christian thought. It is interesting to note what is left out, or at best, merely touched upon in passing. How can one not include - particularly as theology speaks of the unity of the person's disparate parts - some reflection on: meditation, consciousness and detachment (Eckhart, Ignatius, Jung); our art sensibilities (the visual forms, dance, literature, music) and the mystery of beauty; the meaning of pain and humour (which might reveal why this review of a profound work has shaped itself with a slight levity); and the insights we are learning to gain from the wisdoms of the East, which are opening our Aristotelian minds to new christian realisations.

Perhaps some aspects are amongst the 'other disciplines' with which theology is said to need to be 'in dialogue', but dialogue suggests separateness rather than in-

tegration or, at least, intersection. A seventh response, to give even brief recognition to such things, would have rounded out the work - like a green gate half open at the side of a stately house, beyond which one glimpses an inviting courtyard.

Not the least commendable feature of the book is its process. The Doctrine commission has sought responses and opened a debate. 'Doctrine' turns out to be dynamic after all. This has been fostered for the reader by the professionalism of the editing, including astute sequencing.

The debate continues, say the editors. Perhaps a sequel, later? Can there be a richer topic? Can there be boundaries to the image of God, or the stuff of dreams?

Meredith Ryan
(Reprinted with permission of the editor St James', Sydney Parish Newsletter.)

Changing Women, Changing Church
Marie Louise Uhr (ed.), 1992, Newtown, N.S.W.: Millennium Books, xi + 154
ISBN 0 85574 909 1, $16.95

This collection of essays and reflections in honour of the Foundation President of the Movement for the Ordination of Women (M.O.W.), Dr Patricia Brennan, was published just four months before the General Synod of the Anglican Church in Australia passed a canon allowing women to become priests in all dioceses supporting the change. For the intended readership of 'all women and men committed to transforming the Christian Church into the more just, equitable and compassionate community that the gospel demands' (:7), the General Synod decision marked the beginning of the end of twenty years of struggle to open the three-fold order of ministry of deacon, priest, and bishop to women. For others it marked the end of a 'national church' as they knew it, and the beginning of impaired communion with pro-ordination dioceses.

Described both as a *Festschrift* (:7, 124) and as a tribute, the book opens with a preface by current M.O.W. President, Janet Scarfe, who followed Brennan in 1989. This sets the essays and reflections in the context of a 'prophetic tradition' and of the 'prophetic voices' of Brennan and of Christian feminism in Australia and elsewhere. Scarfe provides a helpful summary of M.O.W.'s origins, aims, and development, but her discussion of Brennan's life and work is hardly adequate. As either *Festschrift* or tribute, this book should have included a short biographical essay on Brennan. Given feminist concern to affirm one's subjectivity and experience as a basis both for reflection and action, this omission is surprising.

The book contains nine essays by Brennan's 'friends, admirers, and companions', the choice of whom reflects her international and ecumenical interests. Eight shorter pieces follow, six of which were first published in the *M.O.W. Newsletter* or *Balaam's Ass*, the Sydney M.O.W. Newsletter. Marie Louise Uhr summarises each of these in her Introduction, but the voices of author and editor are not always distinct. This is particularly the case in her discussion of Janet Gaden's work, with its excursus on the theological implications of the changing scientific understanding of human fertilisation. Given Brennan's own expertise both in medicine and feminist theology, it would have been appropriate if Uhr had explored these ideas more rigorously in a separate essay.

The contributions could be viewed within four broad categories: stating the problem and arguing that the Church must change if it is to be inclusive of

women's insights; re-examining scriptural passages cited by those opposed to women's leadership in the Church; exhorting the reader to work for change; and acknowledging the difficulties of change. The ordination of women is rarely discussed, but always within the context of the need for much wider reform of the Church.

Nine of the seventeen contributions state the problem and argue that the Church must change. I found those by Janet Gaden and John Gaden, 'Calling God Names', 'Adding My Piece', and 'Postscript', the most poignant. Written as letters to God and to each other, they are lucid and provocative. Janet wrestles with the inadequacy of masculine and power images of God in today's world. She challenges the romantic feminism that would call God 'Mother' in a reductionist manner. John Gaden also challenges views which could become feminist orthodoxy, finding his earlier espousal of God as androgynous similarly reductionist. Both affirm the importance of relating to God, despite the difficulties of using metaphor, human constructs, and paradoxes to speak of God. It is in loving acts surrounding her dead husband's body that Janet Gaden discovers silence as presence rather than as absence, and her most powerful experience of the presence of God.

Bishop John Spong's 'Women: Less than Free in Christ's Church' and Marie Louise Uhr's essay on 'The Portrayal of Women in the Lectionary' discuss beliefs and practices which have silenced women. In so doing they tend to treat Christianity as monolithic. Spong's analysis draws heavily on the work of feminist scholars Marina Warner and Elaine Pagels. He laudably places his examination of sexuality in the Christian tradition in the wider religious context of Hinduism, Chinese philosophy, Judaism, and Greek thought. However in his discussion of Cyprian, Tertullian, and Jerome, he makes the same mistake as the early feminist revisionists, in particular Ruether, in concentrating on male portrayal of women and not on women's resistance. Uhr argues that the selection of scripture passages in the Lectionary effectively silences women's voice. In concentrating on the Lectionary rather than on the process of liturgical worship, Uhr tends to present women as passive rather than as critical hearers, and as victims (:89). At a time when the laity is arguably more theologically literate than ever, I find this approach patronising. However the corrective stories Uhr cites, drawing on the work of Phyllis Trible, could provide helpful source material for those who might wish to 'deconstruct' the Lectionary, perhaps as a dialogue sermon in the liturgy.

Roberta Hakendorf's 'Reflections on the Priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church' addresses the problem of the shortage of male clerics honestly and imaginatively. She calls for a 'painful demythologising of priesthood' in order to face and plan for a possibly priestless church. She sees lay theological education, lay ministries, and base communities as signs of hope for transformation and calls for participative structures, the full restoration of national churches, effective collegiality, and presidency of the Eucharist determined by the charism of leadership alone, and not by gender. There is fleeting mention of the Australian context, but Hakendorf neither examines the transportability of the concept of the base community from South America to white Australia, nor asks whether this is an appropriate model for Aboriginal people.

Three of the eight 'voices' following the essays address the limitations of the Church and the potential for change. Eileen Baldry argues that while Anglican synods rival the Australian federal parliament for their 'lobbying, number-crunching and politicking', the Church nevertheless has potential to generate enormous social reform, particularly through those on the periphery. Ali Wurm's 'Sexuality and the Gospel of Love' argues that the ordination of women and the full acceptance of homosexuals are linked issues, since both test the limits of acceptance and love in the Church. A letter by the late Irene McCormack, RSJ, talks of the priest shortage in Peru and the need for her to use a 'paraliturgy' or 'liturgy of the word' rather than the official Mass. While the Church impoverished the people, McCormack's understanding of Eucharist was enriched by a culture with many symbolic acts to express communion and remembering.

In the second main category, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Peta Sherlock, and Alison Cheek re-examine scriptural passages cited by those opposed to women's leadership in the Church. Sherlock's contribution is an imaginative re-interpretation; Cheek's is an imaginative re-construction, based apparently on her application of Fiorenza's four-fold hermeneutical model (:125). It would have been helpful if Cheek had discussed this briefly for non-specialist readers. Fiorenza's essay on 'The Twelve and the Discipleship of Equals' is a close examination of the earliest and later traditions about the twelve, which concludes that their signifying function is eschatological-symbolic rather than historical-masculine. Far from having support in the New Testament, the notion of 'apostolic succession' is shown to be a later theological construct.

Three contributors exhort the reader to work for change. Veronica Brady uses the familiar metaphor of journey, of 'moving across the frontier', to place the contemporary struggle for women to be ordained priests within the biblical context of Exodus and Sinai. She then balances the image of the fierce God of the desert with Julian of Norwich's understanding of God as Mother. Brady briefly evokes the Australian context in her introductory remarks, but draws substantially on writing generated in other contexts.

Alison Cheek's essay 'A Theological Seminary's Bold Venture: Teaching Feminist Liberation Theology' is the only contribution to problematise white feminist activism in the Church, but within an American rather than an Australian context. Cheek acknowledges the inadequacy of the equal rights feminism she espoused in the 1970s to address the power differential amongst women generated by class, sexual orientation, race, and ethnic community. Her discussion of changes at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and her critique of white feminist pedagogy should be read by all teaching in theological colleges in Australia and New Zealand.

In the last category, three of the 'Voices' concentrate on the difficulties of change. Jean Groves, in the shortest contribution, calls the reader to acknowledge the futility of trying to 'capture' God. In our changing concepts of God and of spirituality, possessiveness must go. Like Cheek's essay, Heather Thomson's parable subverts notions of 'sisterhood'. Elaine Lindsay's interview of Angela, a member of the Anglican Community of St Clare in Stroud, N.S.W., highlights the indispensable role such women religious played in reviving M.O.W. workers worn by their struggle to reform the Church.

From the periphery, Angela affirms the need for both structure and liberating creativity.

This book brings together a variety of literary forms and insights. It is hardly a 'ground-breaking contribution to the ongoing debate about the roles of women in the Christian Church' as the publishers claim, although it contains useful material drawn from a wide range of sources. As in nearly all works of this kind, the quality of contributions is uneven. My main disappointment is that this book does not live up to the promise of its preface, of addressing the prophetic. Too many contributors concentrate on the problem of changing the Church; too few articulate a vision of churches and society which could empower readers to work for change in their particularised contexts. Only Cheek seriously addresses the question of varieties of feminist praxis. Like the early revisionist feminist scholars, there is a tendency in some contributions to treat Christianity as monolithic. Selective reading results in special pleading. To the extent that writers are held captive by their context, Christian feminists will only break new ground when all those affected by the ordination debate in the Anglican Church in Australia move beyond antagonistic oppositional stances towards mutual understanding, no matter how painful this may be, and when women in church leadership experience acceptance rather than hostility.

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Faith in Catholic Classrooms
Patrick S Fahy. St Paul Publications, Homebush. 1992.

I am not a sociologist nor a statistician, I'm a religious educator. Thus I approached this book from the perspective of seeking to discover the implications for developing appropriate Religious Education strategies as we head towards the turn of the century.

The author's study is interesting and the comparative analysis with other research is timely. One does need to question the relevance of research based primarily around 1980 studies. My relationship with student in Catholic schools today and with their teachers shows there have been massive changes in students and their family structures since the early '80s. Patterns of affiliation and Church practice have also changed significantly in that time as evidenced in research undertaken by the Christian Research Association.

However, my view is that such studies at Pat Fahy's offer signposts to us. In this instance the author is adding to the necessary debate about what is appropriate in religious Education in the classroom setting and what is the relationship between home and school in the faith development of students.

I detected throughout the book that its real purpose is an apologia for catechesis and a challenge to the views of education in religion espoused by Graham Rossiter and others. The author clearly states where he stands and this is useful. I suspect his analysis of Moran on the issue of appropriate forms of classroom Religious Education might change upon reading *PACE* 21 where Moran writes under the title ' Understanding religion and being religious'.

This is a carefully detailed book, almost to the point of having a thesis type character. There is careful description of the research methods used and a most helpful critique of earlier research around similar educational questions.

I would have appreciated a more succinct conclusion and some concrete spelling out of the implications which the author sees. The concluding chapter is repetitious of earlier chapters and I was left, at the end of the book, with a sense that the author was unable to provide clear concrete directions. One cannot say the same about Rossiter, which is possibly one of the reasons that the curriculum materials which have developed from his writings are so popular with many practising Religious Education teachers.

So, my problem is not the research but the style of the book. I make a plea to all researchers. Please put your findings in succinct form somewhere in your writings so we ordinary folk can get at them easily.

A second comment on the book refers to the graphics. They are obscure and quite dated in style. I found them obscure and quite dated in style. I found them unhelpful as did those to whom I showed them.

This is a serious study which has much to commend it. It attempts to show how schools, and in particular the 103 classrooms surveyed, can aid the process of faith development of students. I am unsure of its implications outside the Catholic community. It does not address what students actually learn in Religious Education classrooms. That for me remains the burning issue of our time.

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Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, Volume 1: The Formative Period

Andrew Rippin 1990. Routledge, London, xviii + 155 pp Paper, $23.95

This work is intended as part of a series being prepared on religious beliefs and practices of various contemporary faiths. Andrew Rippin, a recognised authority on Islam, has prepared this present volume as a forerunner to subsequent volumes on different periods of Islamic history. His focus in this work on the Formative Period addresses what is in many ways the most important period of Islamic history: the period of the foundation and first great expansion of Islam. The series as a whole is intended to provide an overview of religious faith, and as such is most suited as a reference for survey courses or for interested individuals in the general community, rather than for the specialist.

In the first chapter, the author makes the important point that Islam should not be regarded as having been a solid entity from the outset, but as gradually developing, needing a period of several centuries to emerge in terms of its ultimate identity as a discrete faith. This period of emergence depended very much on inputs from a range of sources, both Arab and non-Arab, from regions which had attained a high degree of development, such as Persia.

Chapter Two addresses what is in essence the core of Islamic belief: the Qur'an. Though short in word length, this chapter packs in a considerable amount of important detail regarding this great Muslim work. The author examines themes and leading characters which appear in the Qur'an, and he also addresses the important issues of the authority of the Qur'an and its basic theological premises. In many ways this chapter is the most important in this work, reflecting the fact that the Qur'an represents the essence of Islam.

In the third chapter the author devotes his attention to the person of the Prophet Muhammad. The attention devoted to historiographical detail is not wasted, as the Prophet played an essential part in forming the structure of Islamic belief and practice. The Prophet represents the prime source of *Hadith* literature which serves as the second most important body of revelation within Islam other than the Qu'ran.

After having presented the essential elements of Islam in Part One, the author proceeds in Part Two to devote his attention to the formation of Islamic identity during the centuries of expansion and consolidation following the death of the Prophet.

Chapter Five includes a very useful nutshell overview of Islamic theology and the fundamental tenets of Muslim belief, and in the process addresses in summarised form some of the great issues of controversy which led to divisions within the Muslim community, such as the issue of free will versus predestination, the place of reason as a mechanism for developing Islamic belief, and the role and profile of God and the Qu'ran. The author mentions some of the leading factions to emerge from the great theological debates. In subsequent chapters the author deals with the various legal schools of Islam, Islamic ritual practice, and in this latter section he focuses upon the five fundamental pillars of Islam.

In the final part of this book the author devotes his attention to two of the great movements within the Islamic community, namely Shi'ism, the branch centred on Iran and owing its allegiance to the descendants of Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, and Sufism, the mystical movement within Islam, which has led to the emergence of a plethora of various mystical orders, which have found their expression from Morocco to Indonesia. The author concludes the work with a brief presentation on the literary formation of Islam, and in doing so, tantalises the reader with a brief encounter with a rich and abundant area of Islamic achievement.

Students of Religion Studies, whether formally enrolled for an award or lay-persons interested in gaining an insight into Islam, are encouraged to read this book. Andrew Rippin succeeds in presenting in summary form a balanced and informative overview of Islam, without being overly telescopic to the detriment of this rich faith. We look forward to subsequent volumes in this series.

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