

BOOK REVIEWS

Colossians: the Church's Lord and the Christian's Liberty. An Expository Commentary with a Present-Day Application, by Ralph P. Martin. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972. 180 pages. \$5.95.

Professor Martin has given us a commentary which “tries to express in popular form the insights and helps which abound in larger works and in some significant articles in recent journals” (p. ix). The RSV text is taken as the base for the commentary, but it is clear throughout that the author has the Greek text before him.

Martin has taken an interesting but significant step on matters one usually considers “introductory”. In the Introduction proper he discusses only issues which relate to an understanding of the epistle itself. The other matters of provenance and authorship which usually are treated in an introduction are here relegated to an appendix after the commentary. Though useful in drawing attention to the relative importance of these difference questions, the format still appears somewhat awkward.

The introductory discussion of the Colossian problem and why Paul responded the way he did is first-rate. The Colossian heresy, whether gnostic, proto-gnostic or whatever, clearly gave to Jesus Christ a role less than what Paul sensed to be fundamental to Christian faith and life. If Christ does not have total primacy in the Church's theological expression, something is critically wrong. The remarkable delineations of thought are Paul's attempt to ensure that the grandeur of Christ is not shared with others. Ethics, and not theology alone, is seen to be involved; for the liberty of the believer is threatened by speculations which force a man into subservience to calendrical calculations and similar contrivances which guarantee cultic conformity. The type of heresy at hand is seen to be the result of free-thinking Judaism of the dispersion having conversation with speculative Greek thought.

The commentary proper presents very little that is novel—nor should it necessarily—but gives us lucid and mature insights into the purpose of this small epistle. The author's own definitive study of pre-Pauline material in the Pauline epistles (Carmen Christi, 1967) has enabled him to speak and write from the vantage point of much reflection on Paul's thought and ministry in the earth Church.

Occasionally one is disappointed: (e.g.,) on the text of Col.

1:15-20, we have less than a full page of theological commentary; whereas considerable space is given to critical matters such as origin and strophic arrangement of this pre-Pauline hymn. Surely the proportion of space ought to be reversed, for it is the present text that comes to us as Word of God. Martin's material here is useful, but our concern is for a more adequate commentary on the text.

Taken as a whole, the book is a welcome addition to those recent publications which seek to relate the apparently esoteric thought of this epistle to the issues of modern man. Many pastors will certainly be grateful for the availability of this volume.

Robert W. Lyon

The Universe: Plan or Accident? by Robert E. D. Clark, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972. 240 pages. \$2.95.

The editors at Zondervan have done a favor to all interested in the relationship between science and religion by issuing this book in the Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives series. It is a reprint of the 1961 third revised edition of a book first published in 1949 by the well-known lecturer in Chemistry at Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology.

The book is a near-classic statement of the impact of data from the sciences which are indicative of design in the universe. A primary tenet held by the author is the necessity of focusing on the "unexplained" in order to gain further understanding, an approach basic to the sciences themselves. A second principle emphasized is that evidences of design exist in all the sciences, but researchers in each attempt to explain them away as if such evidences were unique to that science. The result has been to prevent the realization of the cumulative effect.

Problems discussed include (1) whether the universe was created or whether it has always existed, and the subsidiary problem of entropy; (2) whether our planet is unique or one among many; (3) whether life exists elsewhere; (4) conditions necessary for life; (5) the origin of the earth; (6) evidence for design in history; (7) evidence for a Designer; and (8) evil in the universe.

Through all the discussion the author shows a mature grasp of the basic and sometimes hidden presuppositions underlying different perspectives on the relation of science, the universe and man. A truly fine grasp of the history of science is in evidence, as well as a significant acquaintance with the evidence from more than just chemistry among the sciences. This publication remains one of the best works in this field, well worth the moderate price.

Ivan L. Zabilka

The Old Testament Books of Poetry From 26 Translations, Curtis T. Vaughn (ed), Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973. 710 pages. \$9.95.

This volume is the first in a projected series which will, when completed, cover the entire Old Testament. As such, it forms a companion to Zondervan's New Testament from 26 Translations.

Although it is doubtful if a work of this nature will be read straight through, the book will be of value for reference purposes. The basic format has the KJV rendering of each verse first, followed by as many as a half-dozen other translations chosen from the basic stock of twenty-five. Although no principles of choice are stated, it appears that editors chose those translations which they felt would shed most light on a given verse.

Perhaps the greatest danger of a work of this nature is that it tends to perpetuate a "verse-by isolated-verse" approach to Scripture instead of the sounder paragraphical approach. However, if one has first analyzed the entire passage and then turns to a work such as this, the danger will be minimized.

Both those who know and those who do not know Hebrew will profit from this book. Those not conversant with the language will be helped to see some of the nuances in the original by the differing translations; the student of Hebrew will be able to trace directly the ways in which differing scholars handle the original.

J. Oswalt

Knowing God, J. I. Packer. Downers Grove (IL.). InterVarsity Press, 1973. 256 pages. \$5.95.

The author, Associate Principal of Trinity College, Bristol (Eng.), seeks to give an exposition of what happens when God, before whom the nations are as a drop in a bucket, comes to a man and begins to talk to him through the words and truths of the Scriptures. Man, as he listens, realizes that God is actually opening His heart to him, enlisting him—in Barth's phrase, as a "covenant partner". Although in the divine confrontation man is brought very low, he nevertheless comes to realize that it is all to one end—God in love seeks everlasting dialogue with man. The conviction behind the book is that of ignorance of God—of His ways and of the practice of communion with Him. The author cites two trends in today's church that seem to have produced this state of affairs: (1) The Christian mind has conformed to the modern spirit. It has spawned great thoughts of man, leaving room for only small thoughts of God. (2) The Christian mind has been confused by modern scepticism. For more than three centuries the naturalistic leaven in the Renaissance outlook has worked like a cancer in Western thought. As a result, the Bible and the foundation facts of faith are called in question. The remedy is a divine-human confrontation, in our acknowledgement that God speaks to us through His word. Thereby we shall return to the "old paths."

James D. Robertson

The New Oxford Annotated Bible, with the Apocrypha. An Ecumenical Bible, New York: Oxford University Press. 1563 pages plus. \$11.95.

This volume, first published in 1965, and widely acclaimed as a Common Bible, was the first edition of The English Bible to receive both Protestant and Catholic approval. This new, updated edition contains the *Second Edition of the Revised Standard Version New Testament Text*. Numerous aids for Bible study are furnished, including introductions and page-for-page annotations. In each book of the Old

and New Testaments, these have been carefully reviewed and, where necessary, revised. Three new supplementary articles have been added: "Modern Approaches to Biblical Study" by Father R. E. Murphy, "Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry" by G. W. Anderson, and "Literary Forms in the Gospels" by Bruce M. Metzger. The forty page map section has been carefully revised in the light of recent archaeological developments, and the grid reference system has been made uniform throughout. This ecumenical study Bible will be most helpful to students, clergy, and lay people of all faiths.

James D. Robertson

Hand to the Plough, by H. Cecil Pawson, Nutfield, Sy., England. Denholm House Press, 1973. 176 pages. (paperback).

H. Cecil Pawson, one-time Vice-President of the Methodist Conference in the British Isles, was a professor of agriculture in the University of Newcastle. A friend of Sangster and that circle of great hearts in British Methodism, Pawson has something to say worth hearing.

The reviewer especially likes the way the author relates God to both land and people. Get close to God's good earth and one gets close to God, he believes. Get the Gospel in your heart and you get God. Combine Gospel experience with scientific knowledge, and help God make a better world.

This is the kind of biography that is enjoyable. Pawson begins with his heritage, demonstrating the influences of his early upbringing. He takes us through his professional career, showing the role of research (one cannot be a good teacher without eventually doing research), the essentiality of loving one's work, and the necessity of working out a credo for one's profession.

His beautiful tributes to men and women who have influenced him demonstrate again that the course of one's life is determined in no small part by one's friends and associates. What he says about John Henry Jowett provides fresh insight into the life of a great preacher; his treatment of Chadwick is worth reading; the beautiful and moving

account of Sister Winifred Laver, the mission worker, will linger in one's memory.

One is delighted to see the place of home and family in this good man's life. Contrary to what is often supposed, frequently the men who have been used of God are family men. A good reminder in a day of unsettled homes!

Now an old man, Dr. Pawson nonetheless is no "stick in the mud." He can change with the times. Preaching the age-old Gospel in the context of contemporary need, he has been God's instrument in changing many lives.

Donald E. Demaray

Jeremiah and Lamentations, by R. K. Harrison. Downers Grove (IL): InterVarsity Press, 1973. 240 pages. \$5.95.

This volume belongs in *The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* series. The aim of the whole is to provide an up-to-date commentary, with the primary emphasis on exegesis. The general editor is D. J. Wiseman, Professor of Assyriology, University of London. The author is Professor of Old Testament, Wycliffe College, University of Toronto. The two books comprising this commentary deal with one of the most tragic events in the life of the Chosen People. The first shows the shameless idolatry of Judah in the pre-exilic period, totally ignoring the warnings of the prophet. The second reveals something of the agony endured as a result of divine judgement. Relevant archaeological discoveries shed light on the material under consideration. Significant textual problems are discussed in the commentary sections. Major critical questions are treated, mainly in the introductions. This is an illuminating passage-by-passage commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations.

James D. Robertson

Peter in the New Testament. A Collaborative Study by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars, by Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House; Toronto: Paulist Press, 1973. 181 pages. \$1.95.

The volume under consideration originated in discussion between Lutheran and Roman Catholic scholars in preparation for a forthcoming study of Papal primacy. The depth of background and careful examination of evidence marshalled by the panel makes this volume an important contribution to Petrine studies as well as an obvious landmark in ecumenical discussion of a perennial problem.

Participants in this dialogue included Paul J. Achtemeier, Myles M. Bourke, P. Schuyler Brown, Raymond E. Brown, Joseph Burgess, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, Karlfried Froehlich, Reginald H. Fuller, Gerhard Krodel, and John Reumann.

The presuppositions and methodology of the two-year study, tracing "how the historical facts about this companion of Jesus have been developed into the New Testament portrait of the bestknown of the Twelve apostles" (p. 8), are detailed in chapter two. The New Testament is examined "in a roughly chronological fashion" (p. 9) using "methods common in contemporary biblical criticism." (p. 7).

Throughout the volume tough critical and historical concerns are treated on the basis of the New Testament evidence alone. The historian is pacified by the promise of a separate volume on the evidence pertaining to the first five centuries.

Generally to be commended are the rigorous adherence to the text and the responsible critical and historical method. Unfortunately the scope of the subject mitigated against close attention being given to many key issues. The extensive footnotes provide supplemental helpful information and valuable bibliographic clues, but one wishes the discussion had been more full, especially as regards the glimpses of Peter in the Pauline corpus and Luke's account of Peter's role in the early Christian community as recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

The strongest portion of the volume is the discussion of the Matthean representation of Peter. Peter's priority is seen especially in his ecclesiastical responsibilities, these being his lot not because of natural gifts but because of Jesus' giving the keys of the kingdom to this very human instrument. The relationship to the other disciples is unclear. He who is often the spokesman is, in the crucial confession passage, speaking for himself and alone receives the commendation. Here as often is the case in this volume, the implications of the observation are not pursued in detail.

The conclusions of the study are presented in two categories: (1) the historical career of Simon Peter and (2) images of Peter in the New Testament thought. However, "it has become clear to us that an investigation of the historical career does not necessarily settle the question of Peter's importance for the subsequent church." (p. 168). The problem remains, to what extent one's influence and continuing significance is dependent upon one's historical character and career.

David D. Bundy

God Is Up To Something, by David A. Redding. Waco: Word Books, 1972. 161 pages, plus index. \$4.95.

No minister of the Gospel ought to be without this book. And once he himself has read it, he will want to use it with his people in groups and in counseling those depressed about the age in which we live.

Genuinely Gospel oriented, David Redding's book documents vividly that no sinner is clever enough to outwit God. (See, e. g., the incident recorded on pp. 157-8.) To put it otherwise, his view of history is thoroughly Christian and Biblical.

The preacher will profit by this book in other ways too: (1) He will, for example, learn something about communication. Few writers of our day are so creative and fresh. (2) Again, the alert minister will increase the size of his illustration file by working through this book. David Redding knows how to tell a story. (3) Redding will throw light on Biblical truth for the preacher of the Gospel. Always Bible oriented, the author takes old truth and seasons it generously with new insight. (4) Finally, the minister will add considerably to his store of quotations, for Pastor Redding knows how to create proverbs, couching truth in unforgettable language.

Aware of both traditional and contemporary theology, Dr. Redding captures a theology of hope in forms available to the common man. And just there—at the point of understandability—he identifies with our hurts and hopes. Somehow he brings God's truth right down to us, and assists us in doing the same for the people to whom God has called us to minister.

Do not read David Redding's book on hope if you are unwilling to be stirred from apathy. He disturbs the reader, but it is the pain of surgery before healing.

Donald E. Demaray