

peripherally' on spiritual life. God, in their experience, belongs in another realm though he is concerned with this one. 'The God to whom the women pray is not in the same room with them or in the same world'. They have a stronger sense of God's transcendence than of immanence. 'The women go to church to be nearer to God, not to be nearer to one another'. She even claims that they hold a 'dualistic understanding of matter and spirit.'

On the other hand, she insists that feminists and the church as a whole have a lot to learn from the Newcastle women for whom 'feminism is an alien concept' and God is 'not a God of transformation but of survival'.

Throughout the book she has feminist theology in mind. She expresses concern that there are 'signs...of a move towards a theory that has left it mired in jargon so impenetrable as to cut it off entirely from all but other academics'. She finds more kinship with Elizabeth Johnson's approach than with Ruether's or Jantzen's where she fears that the voices of the Newcastle women might 'seem to be squeezed out'. Yet she finds support for her project from a feminist view of theology as 'an embodied and passionate process rather than one that is purely cerebral and logical.'

I found this an extremely valuable book, not least for its ability to listen very carefully, for its respect for the women's views at points where her own views differed, and for her insistence on what she calls a 'choral theology' in which different voices come together. We need more studies of this kind which try to overcome the gulf between the academy and the back streets.

I was slightly surprised that she does not refer to other works on the north-east such as the collection 'The Kingdom of God and North-East England' which James Dunn edited. The name of Margaret Kane, who did so much to develop contextual theology south of the Tyne is missing. And, in view of the author's deep knowledge of feminist theological writing, it is odd to find 'New Woman, New Earth' described as Rosemary Ruether's 'earliest book'. Her book 'The Radical Kingdom' was published in 1970, and 'Liberation Theology' in 1972!

Reviewer: Kenneth Leech

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Good News to the Poor by Tim Chester published InterVarsity Press, Leicester 2004 ISBN 1-84474-019-6 £9.99

'The cars in the churchyard are shiny and German; distinctly at odds with the theme of the sermon. And during communion I study the people squeezing themselves through the eye of the needle.'

This lyric from 'Eye of the Needle' from the album Regeneration, by Neil Hannon is quoted in Chapter 6, the most useful and challenging element of Tim Chester's book. In it he addresses the issue of what is the good news for the rich – often a far harder question for those of us committed to the urban gospel to answer than discovering the good news for the poor, which is the

main thrust of his book. It is sad that Chester and his publisher still felt the need to persuade Christians that the Bible does give an imperative to address material poverty, but this book is a useful and closely argued case from Biblical sources for prioritising poverty issues. Although his background is in third world development the main emphasis is on the need to address UK poverty and to this extent it complements some of the other books reviewed here. He knows the challenge of shifting the comfortable from their complacency, and the nub is in how to entice people into repentance around material wealth. He cites Timothy Dudley-Smith's hymn 'Lord, for the years' as demonstrating that the 'preoccupation with possessions is a form of oppression' and 'the dark side of our consumerist culture: the pollution, the unemployment, the alienation and social breakdown' and the poor 'condition of the workers who make the products'. He goes on to say that the 'danger is that we degenerate into legalism and legalism does not have the power to change lives.' 'The answer', he says, quoting Mike Starkey, 'is less to tell people to throw away the trash than to teach people to root identity in more valuable sources, such as family, community, faith and a different set of values.' How to entice the rich into change is suggested in the rest of the chapter where he uses 1 Tim. 6:6–19 as his starting point to highlight four behaviour shifts:

1. Find your joy in God
2. Find your security in God
3. Enjoy God's good creation
4. Live for God's new creation

His main thesis is that 'incarnation affirms the goodness of creation and to be spiritual is to affirm God's goodness in creation' and 'contentment is found not by getting more, but by wanting less' and 'it is found by enjoying those things that are of true value': 'For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving' (1 Tim. 4:1–4). He says that too often comfortable Christians have focused on career and material gain as their life's goals and that we cannot be surprised if Thatcher's generation have picked up not our Biblical message but 'our great cultural message' that 'it is an affluent lifestyle that counts for success and happiness.' Were we to follow his four points 'what would count would no longer be the Western dream, but serving God and putting first his kingdom. Instead of leftover service, we would have whole life discipleship and leftover lifestyles. We would be content with whatever standard of living allowed us to serve God and seek first his kingdom.'

All in all this is a useful book to prime those in urban ministry with arguments for use in Synods and with their affluent acquaintance.

Reviewer: Erica Dunmow

The Provocative Church by Graham Tomlin published by SPCK ISBN: 0281 05641 2 'Unless there is something about Church or Christians or Christianity that intrigues, provokes or entices then all the evangelism

in the world will fall on deaf ears.'

This refreshing book from the Vice Principal of Wycliffe Hall tackles honestly the conspicuous failure of what goes for 'evangelism' in today's church in the west. In so doing he both releases Christian from the guilt induced exhortations which the pulpit lays as the power and points the way for churches to provoke the questions. What? Why? Who? At its heart Romlin argues evangelism starts with kingdom actions, the words of explanation comes last. This is how the Good News spread in the first century and how it is best made known in our post-Christian era.

The ten chapters are full of down to earth observations and practical experience. The chapters on the relationship between the Kingdom & Church provides the theological & biblical underpinning. 'Is my church worth going to?' seeks to put church health before church growth: 'A healthy church is a transforming community in both senses'. A chapter on 'How to spot an evangelistic church?' challenges the stereotypes. With a study guide on all ten chapters it is an ideal resource for a housegroup series or sessions. Get it and be provoked.

Reviewer: Michael Eastman

The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience by Ronald J. Sider. Published by Baker Books ISBN 0-8010-6541-0
Treasure in Clay Jars by Lois Y. Barrett et al. Published by Eerdman. ISBN 0-8028-2692-X

At first sight there is little that these two books share in common. 'The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience' is written by Ronald Sider, best known, at least on this side of the Atlantic, for his searing challenge to complacent and materialistic Western Christendom in 'Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger'. 'Treasure in Clay Jars' declares itself to be the work of Lois Y. Barrett et al., which on closer investigation turns out to be a group of six authors associated with 'the Gospel and our Culture network' in North America.

Sider writes against the background of the powerful and influential movement that is modern American evangelicalism. He is appalled by the growing evidence, including the findings of pollsters, that evangelicals in the U.S.A. are often indistinguishable in their lifestyles and moral standards from the society around them. He pleads for a turning away from 'conforming to the culture' in areas such as sexual morality and consumerism, and a rediscovery of what it means to embrace 'the whole Gospel' instead of 'cheap grace'. Sider's book will probably be most noticed for its exposure of worldly standards in the personal lives of evangelical Christians. In fact he goes much further than that, touching on the gospel priority of challenging systems as well as changing individuals; on the need for churches to be counter-cultural communities as well as witnesses to personal salvation.

In our own nation where evangelicals are a far less visible part of the establishment, and do not figure so largely in, for