

WOMEN'S UPHILL ROAD IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Trevor Beeson, *The Church's Other Half: Women's Ministry* (London: SCM, 2011. £19.99. pp. 256. ISBN: 978-0-334-04382-9).

The dust-jacket of *The Church's Other Half: Women's Ministry* claims that Trevor Beeson has written 'numerous highly entertaining books'; this is certainly a good read. He does several different things: narrates the contribution of women to Church life; gives an account of the movement to allow the ordained ministry of women in the Church of England, and suggests ways in which the contribution of women could make a difference to today's Church. The first 20 pages cover women in the Church from the New Testament to the eighteenth century, followed by 17 pages on the road to ordination and possible Episcopal consecration in the Church of England, and there is a short chapter at the end on hopes for the future. The remaining 224 pages are devoted to biographies of significant women from the Victorians to the present day.

Beeson's approach is by topic: the religious life (Priscilla Sellon), medical reform (Florence Nightingale), social work (e.g. Henrietta Barnett and Josephine Butler), writing (e.g. C.F. Alexander, Charlotte Yonge, Dorothy Sayers), feminism (e.g. Monica Furlong), priestly ministry (e.g. Lucy Winkett) and so on. It is a rich tale told with verve, though without photographs. Beeson sticks to narrative and eschews analysis, but many questions arise. If wealth left these remarkable women free to do non-domestic work, why was it these particular wealthy women? Their tendency to Evangelical Christianity? The supportive character of the men who surrounded them? It is certainly clear that there was a price to pay. Many suffered from illness, nervous strain and collapse. Was it the sheer difficulty of exercising leadership in such a male-dominated world? Were women over-conscientious?

It was clearly fine as long as the Church of England moved with you. The success of Mary Sumner (b. 1828) in founding the Mothers' Union owed much to her connections with clergy in high places. But Maude Royden (b. 1876), who felt called to a preaching ministry and then priesthood, was forbidden to speak in churches and had to find

non-Anglican venues. Of course, many of the women whom Beeson brings to life were opposed to the ordination of women. Others, such as Christian Howard (b. 1916) worked tirelessly in the Movement for the Ordination of Women without a vocation to ordained ministry themselves.

Beeson depicts women's long-standing capacity for leadership and transformational change in general; he tends to present it as a one-way road to ordination, but that issue really only arose with the general movement for women's rights in the later nineteenth century. It has now gone so far that it is hard for those outside the Church to understand why obstacles still remain for women's leadership. When the Church of England appoints its first women bishops, Beeson hopes for new female vision: more collaborative ministry, enhanced inclusion and deeper spirituality. Feminist antennae may detect a certain essentialism here, but the book as a whole is a splendidly hopeful cheering-on of the cause.

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MARK'S BAFFLING NAZARENE

C. Clifton Black, *Mark* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2011. \$27.00. pp. 406. ISBN: 978-0-687-05841-9).

This new commentary distils the learning and enjoyment that are the fruit of three decades of scholarly engagement with the second evangelist. It is written in a lively style, marked by a combination of pace and depth that seems intended to evoke St Mark's own combination of the 'immediate' and the mysterious not-to-be-told. The tone is lightened by a vivid turn of phrase, noting for example the 'baffling Nazarene', 'flabbergasted spectators' and their 'dumfounded disagreement'. Black's Mark is a brilliant narrator of an 'amazing story'; Black discerns in him a genius for enabling the reader to feel present at the events, and yet to remain ever perplexed at the experience, gripped and fascinated by the boundless mystery into which he has been drawn.

The watchwords defining the aims of the commentary series are 'compact' and 'critical'; Black's contribution fulfils both of these intentions.

He begins with only a brief introduction. He comments on the gospel not verse by verse, but section by section. Principal sections and their main subdivisions are each given titles; typically the subsections are divided into detailed comment and general comment, separated by diamond symbols. At times, this pattern is varied and the reticence of the diamond symbols becomes perplexing. There is no complete translation of the text, and Greek is all transliterated. Comments address a rich range of aspects of the gospel, from patristic reception to modern relevance; from significant scholarly debates to detailed classical comparanda; from historical elucidation to literary explication. Tables and diagrams appear where relevant, but for the most part the commentary engages the reader through precision and pertinence in its wealth of learning, and through the author's palpable enthusiasm for his subject. There is an extensive select bibliography and subject index. This book will be a useful resource for students, pastors and scholars.

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SEVEN SPIRITS AND FIRST-CREATED ANGELS

Bogdan Gabriel Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Writings* (VigChr Sup 95; Leiden: Brill, 2009. pp. xxix + 232. €107.00/US\$ 149.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-17414-6).

Reading this book feels like marvelling at the patterns of filigree on a finely wrought goldwork. The wonderful exegetical skill of the author detects tiny details in ancient texts and through them opens up an unexpected world, structured by a celestial hierarchy where a heptad of angelic spirits minister in a manner previously concealed. His learned and insightful book makes a significant contribution to the study of early Christian pneumatology.

Bucur revives and develops an obscure thesis developed by Christoph Oeyen in the mid 1960s concerning *Engelpneumatologie* in Clement of Alexandria. He argues that Clement's fragmentarily preserved works have been unjustly sidelined in

scholarship, and while he draws some texts from the *Stromateis* (esp. 4.25.125; 5.6.35; 7.2.9), he focuses chiefly on *Exc* 10-11, 27 and *Ecl* 56-57. He shows that Clement probably received a tradition from the 'elders' of seven 'first-created' angels (*protoclists*), placed third in the hierarchy of the universe, below the Face of God and the Son/Logos but above the archangels, angels and humans. The elders envisaged the possibility of rising by transformation from one rank into the next, but Clement interiorised this idea of ascent. Although Clement's theology remains fundamentally binatarian – only God and the Son/Logos are objects of worship – the protoctist pneumatology is central to how he conceives the Christ's unity as multiplicity. God is unknowable and one, but Christ is knowable and 'one thing as all things'. This is interpreted through a particular form of 'Spirit christology'. The term 'Spirit' can be used interchangeably with 'Christ', while the 'spirits' prove to be the dynamic power of the Logos. The interplay between the one 'spirit' and the angelic 'spirits' belongs to Clement's sensitivity to Christ's unity as multiplicity. Thus Bucur shows that while Clement did not envisage a hypostasised spirit as did later theologians, he did have an interesting pneumatology, far beyond what has previously been recognised by scholarship. Bucur prefers the term 'angelomorphic pneumatology' to 'angelic pneumatology' (*pace* Oeyen's *Engelpneumatologie*) because the angelic qualities of the spirits do not yet allow them simply to be identified as angels.

Bucur argues that similar angelomorphic pneumatology is detectable in other early Christian texts: he focuses on Revelation, *Shepherd of Hermas*, Justin Martyr, and Aphrahat the Persian Sage. In Justin and Aphrahat, as in Clement, he finds a combination of Matt 18:10; Zech 3:9; 4:10 and Isa 11:2-3 informing the idea of seven angelomorphic spirits, while in Hermas and Aphrahat he detects a link with ascetic teaching on the indwelling of the Spirit. His readings involve digging deep into details and concentrating closely on ideological connections, but despite the paucity and fragmentary character of his material, his arguments are sure-footed and compelling.

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