telling sentence in which Ellis indicates what way the wind is blowing in Baptist churches today:

> *Where other churches might have an altar, they have a table, where others process, their leaders slip into their respective places at the beginning of worship, and where others face east, Baptists face the preacher – and, increasingly, the musicians.* (p. 177)

Ellis admits that Baptists are now "part of what might be called a 'pan-Evangelical' shift in worship culture." Indeed the English Baptist Union's official hymn book published in 1991 is now out of print, having received support from barely a quarter of the denomination's churches. But Ellis makes no assessment of what this pan-Evangelical movement, which is strong in all denominations, might mean for his and other traditions. Could it be that the free church tradition, so long the underdog, is now taking over all our churches, carried on an irresistible tide of sentimental 'pop' praise, shallow, over-emotional preaching, and the all-conquering Alpha Course? Ellis insists that 'the doctrinal critique of worship is a natural part of the Protestant tradition' (p. 249). Yet his book, excellent though it is, shies away from this much needed critical assessment.

Denis Campbell,
St. Andrew's Church,
Blackrock,
County Dublin

***Parallel Lives: The Relation of Paul to the Apostles in the Lucan Perspective*, Andrew C. Clark. Carlisle: Paternoster (Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monographs), 2001, pp. xviii + 385, ISBN 1842270354. £19.99**

***The Genre, Composition and Hermeneutics of James*, Luke L. Cheung, Carlisle: Paternoster (Paternoster Biblical and Theological Mono-graphs), 2003, pp. xvi + 372, ISBN 1842270621. £24.99**

The Paternoster Monograph series publishes a variety of theological work: some of the volumes are directly biblical, as here; others deal with church history or doctrine. The aim is always to present a specialised piece of research, often the reworking of a doctoral thesis. Narrow the topics may seem; but even a narrow window, in the right place, will offer a broad view of territory around. Good theology always opens our eyes to God, and to God's work and ways.

Andrew C. Clark (of Scripture Union; not Andrew D. Clarke of Aberdeen University) writes on the book of Acts. Even a casual reader notices how much of Acts is taken up by the two figures of Peter (in chapters 1-12) and Paul (in 13-28). One or other of them is on stage nearly all the time. They are responsible for almost all the preaching we hear, and for most of the missionary work we see. But they hardly ever appear together. They follow parallel lines. Miracles, preaching, visions, beating, imprisonment – what Peter does Paul does too, and what Paul endures was very likely suffered by Peter first. Compare, for example, 3.2-9 with 14.8-11, or Paul's speech in Acts 13 with Peter's earlier sermons. This has to be intentional, argues Clark. Luke must have meant to tell the two men's stories in parallel ways. The bulk of Clark's book seeks to back up this view of Acts and explore Luke's reasons for it.

So most of the book deals directly with the text of Acts, tracing characters, events and themes, and discerning how and why these connect. The method is narrative-critical. There is not much discussion of sources or historicity. The approach presumes that Luke's finished product has integrity of its own, and is worth studying for this.

There are, however, two pieces of external control. The Greek author Plutarch, at the beginning of the second century, wrote a series of 'Parallel Lives', comparing Greek and Roman statesmen. His cross-referencing of these dual biographies, through sequence, event and characterisation, is very similar to what Luke does. So the method was around: this type of comparison was practised in the culture. The second control comes from Luke's own Gospel, from the birth narratives of John the Baptist and Jesus, which are clearly parallel,

even though not quite symmetrical. These two points suggest that the extensive similarities between Peter's story and Paul's are part of the author's intent, and of the meaning of his book.

Clark then identifies two key aspects to Luke's portraits of Peter and Paul. One is unity: both are champions and pioneers of law-free Gentile mission, breaking the tight cultural boundary around Judaism to proclaim salvation to the world by faith alone. Jewish and Gentile Christians belong together. The second theme is continuity: together Peter and Paul form a dual thread that binds Jesus' ministry in Israel to the international spread of the gospel. And lesser characters, such as Stephen, Philip and Barnabas, are parallel or connecting strands in the tapestry. Some two thirds of the book is taken up with working all this out, and we are given, in the bygoing, an extensive tour of the theology and narrative web of Acts.

So what does it mean to be apostolic? Visible continuity with the ministry of the Twelve? A missionary sending that breaks new ground for the good news? A commitment to the unity and wholeness of the church? Luke's answer might have been that, while the visible thread of historical connection is important, missionary commitment is an absolute essential, for it recalls in a new day the apostolic obedience to God shown by Peter and Paul. And truly apostolic mission will bind the church together, older and newer Christians as one body in Christ. A missionary church has a genuinely 'parallel life' to that of the first-generation Christians.

Luke Cheung's thesis on the Letter of James was researched under Professor Richard Bauckham of St Andrews, who commends the work warmly in a foreword. The letter was written, we gather, by James of Jerusalem, brother of the Lord, to Jewish Christians outside the Holy Land. One aim was to affirm and sustain links between the mother church and the scattered churches. But because the readers' situations were so varied, there is no warrant for thinking that specific circumstances motivated the letter and for trying to trace these between the lines.

Rather this letter was ethical instruction that could be applied in a variety of settings. It was subversive wisdom. The mode of writing owed much to the Jewish wisdom tradition, with its practical orientation, pithy style, lively illustration, and deep sense of life as a gift and responsibility from God. But the ethic was counter-cultural. Here is no easy riding with the tide of current social values. James wanted to give his readers the nerve to be different, to adopt a distinctively messianic lifestyle, based on faith in Jesus and attention to his teaching.

Listening and learning matter. Only if the word is given room to grow, will Christians be likely to practise it properly (Jas. 1.21-25):

> *To say that James' theology centres on the word means that it also centres on the law … the same law given to Israel through Moses but now summarised as well as fulfilled in the love command .... This law is to be obeyed, not just heard.* (p.134)

Integrity, of heart and of love for God, is a key theme in the letter; there is a right kind of Christian simple-mindedness.

Finally, in the book and in God's good time, comes eschatology. The very life of a messianic people was itself a sign of promise: God was stirring. A new light was shining across the world. Status, society, wealth and wisdom suddenly looked very different. There was new reason to live humbly, distinctively and hopefully.

James has often lived in the shadows of the New Testament, sidelined by our attention to Paul, cut down to stubble by Luther, with too sharp an edge for comfortable reading. But perhaps we, like James' first readers, need subversive and practical wisdom, if we are to discern and serve the values of the gospel in an increasingly secular society. This letter could be an important resource, to shape a wisely counter-cultural church. James' themes of love, wisdom, commitment, promise and judgment will always be guiding lights for right Christian practice.

Clark and Cheung have both served the church in China, where the call to be apostolic and the need to be subversive may be more demanding and complex than for us in the West. They have done their work with learning, and they care about the church. These two books are not light reading. But either would be within reach of a graduate in theology in a reading week away from regular duties.

John Proctor,
Westminster College,
Cambridge