

Book Reviews

RICHARD SIBBES: PURITANISM AND CALVINISM IN LATE ELIZABETHAN AND EARLY STUART ENGLAND Mark Dever
 Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000 270pp hb
 ISBN 0-86554-657-6

Richard Sibbes is one of the most accessible and attractive of the Puritans; his *Bruised Reed* was instrumental in the conversion of Richard Baxter, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones testified to its help at a crisis in his ministry. He was also the mentor for the next generation of Puritan leaders, including John Cotton and Thomas Goodwin. Therefore this study from the pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington D.C. (and former assistant at Eden Baptist Church, Cambridge) is very welcome. It is based on his PhD thesis which was supervised by Eamon Duffy.

The first part of the book is a painstaking investigation of Sibbes' life and career. Dever teases out Sibbes' extensive web of friendships with Puritans at the Inns of Court and in parliament, and also explodes some myths about his subject. Sibbes was not, as he has been portrayed, a Puritan martyr, expelled from his Cambridge fellowship. His change to Gray's Inn was simply a career move. Nor was he a revolutionary; he was one of the last conformist Puritans, committed to reform within the established church. Dever outlines the difficulties and disappointments this led to during Laud's ascendancy, as Puritans like Sibbes struggled both with their conscience and their desire to see the Church of England reformed without separation. This position became increasingly difficult to hold; Sibbes was aware that his arguments in defence of separation from Rome could be used to justify separation from the Church of England. Yet, as Dever points out, his position was held with integrity and was consistent with his theology. One cannot help but feel that it was a mercy that Sibbes died when he did (in 1635), before the tragedies of the next decades. It is surely significant that many of his disciples, such as Goodwin, became Independents. The struggles and dilemmas of this faithful pastor and preacher will strike a chord with many modern Anglican evangelicals! Part 1 is thoroughly and meticulously researched, and convincingly argued. It does assume a fair amount of knowledge of contemporary history.

Part 2 examines Sibbes' thought and writings, and is, in part, a refutation of

the idea that he was a 'mystic' (Dever rightly questions the definition of that slippery word) who was uninterested in theology, and who was not fully committed to Reformed doctrine. Dever describes Sibbes' 'interiorization' of Reformed piety and sets him within the context of covenant theology. Dever's work here provides another nail in the coffin of the 'Calvin against the Calvinists' theory; he is quietly scathing about the work of R. T. Kendall. He depicts Sibbes as an 'affectionate theologian', a preacher of whom the affections were at the heart of piety, and defends his doctrine of assurance against charges of moralism, whilst acknowledging that there were weaknesses. Dever emphasises the fact that Sibbes was 'one of the last great Reformed preachers of England to believe in theory and know in practice an officially undivided covenant community' (i.e., a mixed church of elect and non-elect, in which all could be treated as baptised Christians).

This is an excellent study of a prominent but neglected figure in the history of the Church of England. Dever has given us a penetrating and sympathetic overview of Sibbes' thought in its historical context. I put it down determined to pick up Sibbes again!

STEPHEN WALTON
Thurnby

WHAT WAS THE OXFORD MOVEMENT? George Herring
London & N.Y: Continuum 2002 148pp £12.99pb ISBN 0 8264 5186 1

This slim volume is designed to provide an introduction to the Oxford Movement which is particularly suited to the needs of university students. The book has four main sections: Contexts, Ideas, Events, and Parishes with an Epilogue and useful appendix of relevant documents.

The opening chapter on Contexts indicates that the time when the Oxford Movement emerged was one in which the Evangelicals were making an impact on factory reform. It was also an era in which the Church of England was subject to attacks from radicals. Herring considers the social, political and cultural contexts of the Oxford Movement and underlines the fact that it was born out of crisis. He sees the Oxford Movement as essentially a part of its age and points out that it combined both conservatism and radicalism.

In the chapter, 'Ideas', Herring considers the Oxford Movement's stress on the visible church, the authority of the early church Fathers as 'the final court of appeal', 'The Via Media' of the undivided Catholic Church as the ideal model for Anglicanism and the stress on the sacraments, most notably the Eucharist, but also the practice of Confession and Reserve in Communicating Christian Knowledge.

The chapter on 'Events' first considers key personalities and their specific and individual contributions. This is followed by a consideration of the major events and the way in which they impacted the Tractarians. These include Keble's Assize Sermon, The Hadleigh Conference, Hampden's appointment as Regius Professor of Divinity, the publication of Froude's *Remains*, the Jerusalem Bishopric, Newman's reception into the Church of Rome and the Gorham Judgement.

In the chapter, 'Parishes', Herring indicates that the Tractarians remained numerically a very small element in the Church of England. He identifies only 1,000 Tractarian clergy in the whole 30 year period 1841-71. Tractarians were strongest in the dioceses of London, Oxford and Exeter. Herring paints a very clear picture of what it was like to live in a Tractarian parish. There would be daily services, choral singing, confession, frequent Holy Communion services and a growing eucharistic community. Central in the church building would be a stone altar on which there would be lighted candles. The parish priest would celebrate the sacrament standing in the eastward position and in some cases he would wear a chasuble.

In his Epilogue, Herring offers a critical assessment of the Oxford Movement. Although stressing the importance of Catholic authority, many of their number became sectarian rebels who defied episcopal authority and engaged in illegal ritualistic practices. Following the publication of *Lux Mundi* in 1889, for the first time, Anglo-Catholics began to assimilate the liberal theology against which Newman had stood out so strongly. With the creation of the General Synod in 1970, the Anglo-Catholics found themselves a small minority. They were further marginalized by the revival of evangelical Anglicanism prompted by the charismatic movement and by the Synod vote in 1992 to approve the ordination of women.

This readable book, rooted in scholarly opinion and classic texts, will be invaluable both to students in higher education and those with an interest in the history of the Church of England.

NIGEL SCOTLAND
Cheltenham

POWER IN PREACHING

Johnson T. K. Lim

Oxford: University Press of America 2002 172pp pb ISBN 0-7618-2346-8

It is good to have a contribution to our libraries from an evangelical from the Far East. It is especially good that the subject is the preaching of the Word of God. Mr. Kim was influenced by American Southern Baptist missionaries in his native Singapore and has a passion for preaching. The book takes an interesting route but finally arrives on the solid ground of the need for unction from the Lord. Here it is no surprise that it is to Dr. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones that Kim turns for expression of the biblical doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit without losing the importance of the primacy of preaching in the churches. It is here that all the cleverness of purpose driven (i.e., man driven) church building efforts are relegated to their rightful place before Almighty God.

The spiritual dearth of modern preaching is tackled from the very beginning of the book. It suggests that, sadly, hearers may enjoy the 'absence of God' in their churches, hearing about God rather than encountering God. There is a good critique of modern hermeneutical theories and quests that have had a deadening effect on power in preaching. He quotes the observation of an old preacher that preaching should not be trying to get something out of your head but rather getting something into the hearer's head. He compares preaching to giving medicine rather than a lecture on medicine. It is giving a meal rather than a menu.

For all that, this is a book that has gone too far into the modern ways. A new inductive or narrative style of preaching is advocated that claims not to water down truth but sounds very *avant garde* and theatrical, more a performance than a proclamation. While we should not rule out different ways of constructing a sermon (and some of us may have a more witty disposition than others), we should not be forced to abandon conventional biblical exposition

in order to keep people awake. The idea of this inductive style is to preach as if you are not preaching but nevertheless to have an effect on people. It does not sound like the plain speaking for which the Apostle Paul made no apology. Though C. H. Spurgeon is mentioned briefly there is not much rooted in the Reformers and Puritans. It is good to have Calvin quoted, 'Good preachers are good scholars', but it is somewhat disturbing on the very same page to be told, 'Go to the movies and theatres, watch TV shows.' If preaching is to have power it must have authority. It is unbiblical for women to have this authority over men. It is regretted that Mr. Kim does not say that women preaching should only be to other women or children and so leaves open the possibility of ordaining women.

Generally this is a pleasant and well written book gleaning gems from a whole host of modern writers. It will serve as useful refreshment for the weary preacher and will sit well with the more important works of Spurgeon, Lloyd-Jones, Charles Bridges, Dabney and friends.

PETER J. RATCLIFF
Redhill

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CENTURIES: Perspectives on the Early Church
Paul McKechnie
Leicester: Apollos, 2001 270pp £12.99 pb SBN 0-85111-479-2

For many evangelicals, the years between the completion of the New Testament and 313A.D. when Constantine legalised Christianity, are at best the source of some heroic martyr stories. Therefore, this study, by the Senior Lecturer in Classics and Ancient History at the University of Auckland, N.Z., is to be welcomed. It is not, as the author himself says, a comprehensive narrative history of the early church; nor is it an introduction to patristic theology. The reader with no knowledge of these might be better off turning to W. C. Frend, H. Chadwick, or G. Bray for an introduction. It is a valuable introduction to the historiography of early Christianity and the modern disputes concerning it.

One thread running through the book is a challenge to the view, prevalent amongst recent historians and theologians, that there was no such thing as

'orthodoxy' before 200A.D., rather an array of competing versions of Christianity, history having been written by the winner. McKechnie does not see the first centuries as a heroic age, void of disputes, and he acknowledges the contribution of recent writers such as Elaine Pagels. However, he defends the view that was evident to contemporary non-Christians such as Celsus: that there was a single 'Great Church', catholic Christianity, which valued continuity with apostolic doctrine, and from which a variety of more or less 'heretical' shoots split off. McKechnie believes that it was the Great Church, not Gnosticism as some have claimed, that provided the energy in second and third century Christianity. With regard to the documents (such as those from Nag Hammadi) appealed to by Pagels and others, he makes the sensible observation that 'the simple existence of an ancient text does not prove that its content was widely valued'. In this context, McKechnie gives a helpful introduction to the debate concerning the sources for the history of first century Christianity. He cautiously defends J. A. T. Robinson's early dating of the New Testament, and argues that it is still the best source for the history of first century Christianity, discounting the value of works such as the Gospel of Thomas.

Other chapters introduce readers to the disputes over the social composition and location of the early church, and to the story of the persecutions. One chapter is devoted to the place of women in the early church, again paying careful attention to the sources, and again acknowledging the contribution of feminist scholarship whilst challenging some of its more ideologically motivated claims. We are given a fascinating insight into the slaves of Caesar's household, the hub of the imperial civil service, which functioned as something of a safe haven for Christians. A particularly valuable chapter takes us into the difficult issue of describing and defining Gnosticism.

The book has two weaknesses. One is that the chapters read like a series of separate articles rather than as an integrated whole. A conclusion, drawing together the separate threads, is badly needed. The other is that McKechnie has deliberately chosen not to deal with theology, believing that others are better qualified. However, the Great Church and Catholic Christianity are theologically defined concepts, and, as the author freely admits, the key question of 'who is a Christian?' is never dealt with. Furthermore, it was their beliefs that motivated the first Christians to show the most extraordinary

courage and tenacity; without a consideration of them, one has not reached the heart of the early church. However, these limits are self-imposed, and make the book more focused. McKechnie has packed an enormous amount of research into an astonishingly small space, explained it clearly, and made it available for the non-specialist. Anyone with an interest in Church History will find this book fascinating.

STEPHEN WALTON
Thurnby

CREED AND CULTURE. A Touchstone reader.

Edited by James M. Kushiner

Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2003 254pp \$15.00 pb
ISBN: 1-932236-07-4

Few people in Britain or elsewhere outside the USA will have heard of Touchstone, an ecumenical journal written by and for conservative Christians who stand in the 'great tradition' of the faith. The inspiration for this concept comes largely from C. S. Lewis and his promotion of 'mere' Christianity, which he understood as doctrinal orthodoxy shorn of denominational distinctives. Touchstone is meant to be a magazine which appeals equally to Baptists and Orthodox, to Pentecostals, Reformed and Catholics. Not a few of its contributors can be regarded as 'Anglican', at least to the extent that they have come to the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA from a fundamentalist background. Some have stayed there, content with traditional hymns and liturgy, but others have moved on to even higher reaches. Rome has claimed a good many, and some have migrated as far as Eastern Orthodoxy. It appears that no-one associated with Touchstone has ever gone the other way though, and that perhaps tells us what the true flavour of the journal is.

It may be too much to say that it is composed mainly of Evangelicals who have discovered Churchianity, but the reader who starts with that assumption will be less surprised than most by what he discovers. This book is a collection of essays published since the journal's founding in 1987, and some of them have stood the test of time remarkably well. The opening piece, by James Hitchcock, is called "Christ and culture: a dilemma reconsidered" and it is probably the best in the whole volume. Hitchcock has a good grasp of the many problems

which face committed Christians as they seek to address the modern secular world, and he weaves his way through various alternatives—and their accompanying minefields—with great dexterity. A surprising number of essays are devoted to imaginative literature, poetry in particular, though of course this reflects Lewis' own interests very well. The most moving essay is a short piece by James Sauer, describing the birth and death of his badly deformed daughter.

The book, like the magazine, is written for an American audience, which means that some of the chapters in it will be hard for outsiders to relate to. Apart from the usual problems associated with school prayer and the like, which do not seem to occur in other countries, there are some sociological discoveries in store, as (for example) the 'latcons', who are 'latitudinarian conservatives', whatever that term is supposed to convey. The description given of them will mean little to most Europeans, and it is probably safe to say that the species is either extinct or has not yet penetrated beyond North America.

The worst piece (from this reviewer's perspective) is Thomas Howard's justification of why he moved from fundamentalist Evangelicalism to Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. His rosy picture of the Roman church does not correspond to any known reality, and it is hard not to conclude that (like John Henry Newman before him) he fantasized an ideal church, identified that with Rome, and then converted to it. What he must be thinking now, when his beloved idol is being rocked to its foundations by one scandal after another, is hard to say, but as those who put their faith in some form of idealism are seldom distracted by the facts, the whole business has probably passed him by.

Publishing an anthology like this one is a brave undertaking, and the editor has to be congratulated for having chosen his material well. Most of the articles he reprints have survived the test of time and are still worth reading, which is no mean achievement for a journal which specializes in addressing contemporary—and therefore often ephemeral—concerns. Anyone wanting to get a flavour of *Touchstone* without actually reading the magazine will find much to satisfy the mind in these pages, and will probably go away with a generally positive impression of what its backers are trying to achieve.

GERALD BRAY
Cambridge

EVANGELICAL CONCERNS Rediscovering the Christian Mind on
Issues Facing the Church Today Melvin Tinker
Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2001 272pp £9.99 pb
ISBN 185792675-7

'I don't have a point of view on that.' So said an evangelical clergyman in a home meeting at which I was present. He was seeking to evade criticism on a contentious subject. However, his lack of leadership left his flock in confusion. He would have benefitted from the insights of this important book.

Evangelical Concerns is a collection of fourteen essays of varying length on different topics. Several of them have been published before (some in Churchman). Each one is a model of biblical thinking in response to trends and issues within Anglicanism today.

The author writes with freshness and directness. For instance, in the chapter on the church, he writes that the 'primary movement is one of grace from God to man. Architecturally, let the building reflect this: let the pulpit occupy a central position. More importantly, let it be expressed ministerially, with the minister functioning and looking not like a sacrificing priest but a teaching presbyter. Let everything communicate not barriers but access, which has been achieved by Christ's sacrificial death' (p. 231).

In another essay Tinker seeks to rescue the Lord's Supper from a tendency to be seen as merely a visual aid. His work draws on modern ideas of communication as well as the Reformers. 'A deeper appreciation of Calvin's work on the subject, against the backdrop of the speech act theory, may provide what is necessary to recapture a richer appreciation of this central sacrament of the gospel' (p. 135).

The longest chapter is given to concern at evangelical approaches to social concern. There is respectful criticism of other evangelical spokesmen including statements made at NEAC conferences. Once again, his keen eye spots tendencies to drift from the Bible.

These essays are written for 'ministers and students of theology' (p. 8) and presuppose a familiarity with technical terms and the names of theologians.

Some sentences have a conversational style that reads clumsily and the pattern of footnotes is not consistent. But this should not deter us from making this book widely recommended and greatly valued.

This book will help us to have a point of view. Then we will not 'be blown here and there by every wind of teaching' (Eph. 4:14). Instead, we will be people of courage and integrity.

JONATHAN FRAIS
Ukraine

HOPE FOR THE CHURCH

London: Church House Publishing, 2002 196pp £10.95 pb
ISBN 0-7151-5551-2

Bob Jackson

This book is a significant step along a road, however the danger is that it will be seen as the only step that needs to be taken. The author is part of the Springboard team, but he joined that after twenty years of parish ministry. The purpose of the book is to demonstrate that the Church of England is in decline and then to identify ways in which that decline can be addressed.

The evidence for the decline of the Church of England is plainly stated through a variety of statistics. This has to be done at some length because the significance and reality of this decline is so often denied by many within the denomination. Jackson especially highlights the recent fall in attendance by children. He has written an important chapter in which he shows why these statistics matter and convincingly responds to the arguments which deny that, while remaining conscious that numbers are not everything.

Nevertheless the depressing decline that he documents is not the main purpose of the book. His main purpose is to show that there are ways in which churches are growing, and that there are dioceses where certain steps are being taken to reverse the decline. For any who do not realise the significance of process evangelism courses, the importance of small groups, the need to take risks, the ways in which youth can be reached and so on, there are a vast number of ideas to think about and take up. There are plenty of good ideas for the parish, the deanery and the diocese to pursue.

In so many ways this is an excellent piece of work that has been written in an easily accessible style (e.g., for PCCs and deanery synods) and one hopes that it will have a wide circulation and a considerable impact. Nevertheless there is one dominant anxiety I have about the book. My concern is that there is little investigation of the theological background of churches where growth is occurring. The definition of the gospel is not totally ignored but one feels that it is has been deliberately underplayed. Perhaps that is because it is feared that the book would not reach large parts of the Church of England if the issue were pursued. Yet in the long run this matter is of the utmost importance. The content of the faith matters deeply. If the place of the Scriptures in the life of churches is not examined then one runs the danger of building growth on sand.

Nevertheless for those who accept the authority of the Bible there is much to gain from reading this book. And one hopes that the Church of England is genuinely open to the radical ideas within it which can be taken up for the sake of the gospel by evangelicals.

MARK BURKILL
Leytonstone, London

HOMEWARD BOUND—Preparing Your Family for Eternity

Edward A. Hartman

**Fearn, Ross-shire, U.K.: Christian Focus 2001 240 pp £7.99 pb
ISBN 185792-682-X**

Amy was dying. She had cancer. She went to the florist to choose flowers for her funeral. She rejected the card, 'With deepest sympathy', and choose instead, 'Welcome to your new home'. She was a believer who knew she was going to heaven and understood that the sovereign Lord did not allow accidents in his world.

This book is written by her husband. He was left with four children under ten years of age. The author was reading at the time a sixteenth century essay by William Perkins on preparing for death. The Rev'd. Hartman drew great comfort from that puritan essay and it saw him through the pain.

The introduction explains what was happening to Edward and Amy. Then the

first chapter meditates on the fact that there are two types of people in the world. There are those, like Judas, concerning whom ‘It would be better for him if he had not been born’ (Matt. 26:24). And there are believers for whom ‘the day of death [is] better than the day of birth’ (Ecc. 7:1).

There are eight chapters which explain what it means to raise a family who are ready for an eternity with Christ. Husband and wife are a picture of Christ and the church, the ‘family is the nursery for heaven’ (p. 87), and we must ‘learn to lead our families, so that they become true churches’ (p. 89). There is a useful seven-point strategy for personal evangelism (p. 106) and a penetrating diagnosis of church decline across the generations where the faith moves from being an experience to an inheritance to a convenience to a nuisance (p. 145). ‘The Centrality of the Lord’s Day in the Godly Home’ (ch. 7) is powerful and persuasive. The last chapter is the moving testimony of the woman who becomes first the nanny and then the new mother. Perkins’ essay on ‘The Right Manner of Dying Well’ is appended.

While this book teaches how to point a family to Christ, one would need to go elsewhere for the detail of parenting, such as Ezzo and Bucknam’s *Babywise* (Growing Families International) or Sherbondy’s *Changing Your Child’s Heart* (Tyndale House Publishers). The book is inspiring and recommended. Perhaps a second edition might edit out the occasional US spellings and a modern picture on the cover would make the book attractive to a wider readership.

JONATHAN FRAIS
Ukraine

OPENING THE DOOR TO JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

Trevor Willis

Worthing: Pinpoint Publications 2001 154pp £8.95 pb
ISBN 0-9540182-0-6

Trevor Willis’ book seeks to let the reader into the organisation behind the knock on the door. He describes in general terms (no dates or places) his own childhood and early adult life as a Jehovah’s Witness, and his experiences on leaving the Society. The reader is led through the history of the Watchtower Society, which also reveals the way that their beliefs have changed over the

years. It is a very readable book, full of information. There are, however, some (quite serious) concerns to point out.

As it is unashamedly one man's story of life in (and out of) The Watchtower Society; it would have been helpful to see at least one testimonial to Willis' qualification to critique the movement and its beliefs, irksome as such eulogies can sometimes be. In particular, throughout the book he compares and contrasts quotes from the New World Translation (the Society's own translation) with *The New English Bible*, but without informing the reader of his own theological background.

Willis is silent as to whether or not he has put his faith elsewhere, and certain comments seem deliberately open-ended. It may have been perceived that this approach would increase his pool of potential readers, but I think it lessens the book's utility to readers of Churchman. It does not critique the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses against biblical Christianity, nor does it set out the gospel. More insidious, perhaps, is Willis' understanding (or lack of it) of the fall and grace, briefly revealed at the end of the book: 'Despite all our failings, we are as a race making progress...Life on earth is as good as it can be....we have a long way to go, and our journey will involve suffering, but humans are brave and wonderful creatures who will meet the challenges of the future.'

These concerns, sadly, go against the merits of the book and I would be cautious about recommending it.

DEBORAH KELLY
Romford

WORDS IN ACTION: SPEECH ACT THEORY AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Richard S. Briggs
Edinburgh: Continuum/T&T Clark, 2001 352pp £25.00 hb
ISBN 0-567-08809-X

In Chapter 1, Briggs defines Speech Act Theory as being concerned with utterances such as 'I do' in a wedding ceremony or 'I name this ship...' cases where 'an act is performed by, in and through the use of speech'. (p. 3) He then seeks to assess the possibilities and limits of Speech Act Theory investigating

what can be expected from the theory, and arguing that it is a hermeneutical resource, useful in exegeting texts containing strongly self-involving language, before interacting with the work of A. C. Thiselton and K. J. Vanhoozer.

Part I of Briggs' work, which comprises chapters two to four, is concerned with defining criteria for using Speech Act Theory. In chapter two, he interacts with the work of J. L. Austin and John Searle, before isolating the key ideas of Speech Act Theory. Here the distinction made between strong and weak illocutions, between 'I name this ship' and 'the lamp is on the table' (p64-5) is essential. The meaning of an 'illocution' is discussed in chapter two, and is further clarified in chapter three (see especially p101). Also in chapter three, Briggs examines the work of Derrida and Fish. Then, in chapter four, he examines construal: X counts as Y in context C. He advocates a spectrum of construal, from strong to weak (p. 124), before examining construal in relation to Biblical studies, for example the 'Theology of the Imagination' of Walter Brueggemann.

In Part II, chapters 5-8, Briggs moves to examine self-involvement in relation to New Testament Texts. Chapter five is concerned with the work of Donald Evans, and his work on the 'Logic of Self-Involvement' which statements such as 'The Creator Made the World' entail. Chapter six examines confession as a Speech Act, and concludes that confessions in the New Testament are significantly self-involving. In chapter seven, Briggs discusses forgiveness of sins as a speech act, whilst chapter eight examines speech acts in New Testament teaching acts, with particular reference to kingdom of God texts. In chapter nine, Briggs concludes by highlighting again the importance of self-involvement as a hermeneutical category, and some of the other hermeneutical implications of his examination of Speech Act theory.

Briggs provides a survey of the field, interacting with various thinkers, and examining the historical development of Speech Act Theory, before looking at some interesting examples of New Testament application. Although it is too technical to be the 'illuminating introduction' to the subject that the book sleeve claims it to be, this is nevertheless a very helpful and stimulating survey of Speech Act Theory.

JAMES HUGHES
London

THE MESSAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL Grace and Destiny

Bruce Milne

Leicester, U.K: IVP, 2002 351pp £9.99 pb ISBN 0-85111-276-5

'Why doesn't the Bible tell us more about heaven?' asked a friend who was puzzled by the apparent lack of information in Scripture about the next world. This book would help him.

This is the sixth book in the 'Bible Themes' series which accompanies the commentaries of the 'Bible Speaks Today' library. The author was a pastor in Canada for nearly two decades and is widely known for his *Message of John* (a BST) and *Know the Truth*. This book is another tome with faithful analysis of Scripture and helpful pastoral application. Milne is clear about 'the awesome terrors of hell and the overwhelming glories of heaven' (p. 12). He studies them in three parts—(1) he finds pointers to them in the Old Testament; (2) he considers the Lord's preaching of them in the Gospels; (3) he expounds the apostles' teaching of them in the rest of the New Testament.

Milne interacts with many views. He knows Neibuhr's criticism that some seem to know 'too much about the furniture of heaven and the temperature of hell' (p. 105). But 'Jesus Christ, incarnate God, taught with great frequency and unwavering solemnity the fact of a future divine judgement awaiting every person' (p. 121). The book records the irony that, just as hell 'has almost entirely dropped from the language of the church, and from its preaching in particular' (p. 174), it has become a common word in newspaper headlines and ordinary speech. Hell is 'the eternal form of God's wrath' (p. 216) while death is 'the sacrament of sin' (after Denney) and 'guilt made visible' (after Rahner) (p. 179).

The Lord's words in Mark 9 are the basis for a plea to those who believe in conditional immortality and annihilationism to reconsider their stance (ch. 8). Concluding expositions from 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Peter, and Revelation 20-22 (but not 7) comfort and refresh believer and pastor alike. Subheadings assist the reader to digest the teaching. A study guide makes the book accessible to small group study. Many of the quotations are from the NIVI (NIV inclusive language edition).

This book would help my friend very much. But he also needs to hear that

every miracle by Christ in the Gospels is a touch of heaven on earth. The absence in this book of a study of the miracles is a regrettable omission from an otherwise excellent work. It should be warmly welcomed.

JONATHAN FRAIS
Ukraine

SHAPES OF THE CHURCH TO COME Michael Nazir-Ali
Eastbourne: Kingsway Communications Ltd 2001 286pp £8.99
ISBN 0-85476-891-2

Shape or shapes? In response to the question inherent in the title, Bishop Michael affirms the latter. If, as is often claimed, it is true that the Anglican establishment is close to collapse, now is a good time to listen to what a leading pillar of that establishment is proposing. A key strength of this book is in the questions it poses: how should we understand church? how should we be church? what sort of ministry is needed to serve the church? Inevitably, not all of the answers will be to everyone's liking, but it is encouraging to see a leading Anglican Bishop address these fundamental issues with such frankness.

A few 'sacred cows' remain unquestioned. Is it really true that 'hatch, match and dispatch...remain significant moments of outreach' (p. 131)? Is it really true that 'whatever decision churches make about the ordination of women, it must be in the light of their experience of women using the gifts the Holy Spirit has given them' (p157)? And is it really true that the absence of the Roman Catholic Church from the structures of the global ecumenical movement 'seriously hinders the work and witness of the church as a whole' (p. 169)

My main complaint is that this book is light on the Bible. Although there are many Scripture references, thoroughly indexed, there is a lack of reflection on such important passages (1 Thess. 1 & 2; Rev. 2 & 3). A key passage such as 1 Peter 2: 4-10 is largely examined only in so far as it addresses priesthood. The chapter on 'what kind of ministry does the church require?' owes more to the common Anglican understanding of the priesthood than to the Pastoral Epistles, and such an important biblical idea as church discipline is passed over.

Nevertheless, this is a book grounded in parochial and pastoral practice.

Church unity and mission are constant priorities. The variety of case studies reflect the different challenges of today's ministry, and the many insights from across the Anglican communion are incisive. The author rightly refrains from being too prescriptive, acknowledging that specifics need to be worked out locally in response to individual needs. To this end, the comprehensive Study Guide contains many excellent questions for further study.

Shape or shapes? The easy part is in acknowledging the need for flexibility and diversity; the hard work is in establishing a biblical foundation for consensus. It is heartening to read a leading bishop challenging local leadership to adapt and develop; may God grant all such leaders his wisdom as they respond.

MARK WALLACE

Ryde

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Do you long for the Church of England to be an effective witness in the Nation?
Do you long for a Nation living under God's will?*

Church Society exists to promote a biblical faith which shapes both the Church of England and the society in which we live for the sake of Christ. Such a faith is carefully expressed in the 39 Articles of Religion and in the Protestant liturgy entrusted to us after the Reformation.

Church Society works through:

- Publishing a range of literature intended to spread a biblical faith. Our regular titles are *Churchman* and *Cross+Way* (our members' magazine). *Be Thankful* is our recent video study course on the Holy Communion and *An English Prayer Book* is a complete prayer book of reformed worship in contemporary language.
- Supporting Churches, particularly through **Church Society Trust**, by resourcing and defending the local church as the best place to carry forward the gospel.
- Campaigning both nationally and locally within the structures of the church, through media work and where necessary through Parliament.

If you long to see the Church of England upholding a clear biblical faith and being a faithful witness in the nation then we invite you to join us. Please contact:

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Church Society Trust is a patronage body involved in appointing clergy to over 100 parishes and proprietary chapels. We are often asked by others to help in putting Bible believing ministers in touch with prospective congregations.

www.churchsociety.org

the truth shall make you free. John 8.32