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A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

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## REVIEWS

### **The Best of Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

Compiled by Christopher Catherwood

Kingsway, Eastbourne, 1992; 241pp., £8.99; ISBN 0 86065 406 0

The reader of this volume needs to be sensitive to the fact that it is compiled by the proud grandson of a famous man. Not that this calls for concession – far from it; but it follows that we are affected by what Christopher Catherwood says about his grandfather in the introductions to his choices. Choosing cannot have been easy from the wealth of material even so far published of Dr Lloyd-Jones' many years of phenomenally fruitful ministry.

The wonder to many deeply appreciative readers will be that Catherwood begins with what might be considered the good doctor's most unfortunate utterance, namely that on the controversial issue of baptismal regeneration. For there is little doubt that despite his emphatic and dogmatic assertion, with various scriptural references, that the word 'baptism' does not necessarily belong to the believer's initial experience of Christ but can belong to a subsequent blessing, in the eyes of most orthodox judges, he is not able to make it stick. One such eminent judge, Howard Marshall, writing of the crux of Acts 19:1-4 says, 'These men can hardly have been Christians since they had not received the gift of the Spirit; it is safe to say that the New Testament does not recognise the possibility of being a Christian apart from possession of the Spirit.' (*Acts*, p. 305).

Dr. Lloyd-Jones is in a far safer field on 'Healing and Medicine', and while many of the things he says initially may be comparatively elementary and matters of common sense (which is not always so common), some of his later observations only a man of his medical knowledge and experience could have made. His handling of the subject of 'Spiritual Depression' also shows what a master psychologist as well as physician he was, enabling him to distinguish, as a pastor needs to, elements in a depressive state which may have other than spiritual causes.

His evangelistic message on the Cross is an excellent example of his wide-ranging ability to use Scripture to drive home his message. However, perhaps the most effectual and moving parts are the sermons on 'The Sparrow and the Swallow' (Ps. 84:1-3) and 'Life in the Spirit, Balanced Discipline', both of which amply bear out what Catherwood testifies to, and what many who retain impressions of Lloyd-Jones' severe attitude to life need to know, namely his compassionate heart and tender dealings with those who consulted him in times of need. The queues generally waiting to see him after services in Westminster Chapel alone bear testimony to his rare pastoral gift, but it needed to be put on record that it was not only his own loved ones who enjoyed his exquisite

kindness, but many including complete strangers. This is very beautiful and moving. His exceedingly sensitive understanding of children is surely one of his rarest qualities.

Those who have read and re-read *Preaching and Preachers* will recall the great benefit they derived from its author's experience of preaching – not only all those years in Westminster Chapel, but in countless places, especially in America. It was right that choice be made from what the compiler calls the 'magisterial Romans series', and what better than part of the climactic eighth chapter on 'Final Perseverance', which is appropriate for one as thoroughly Reformed as he. The book ends fittingly with a most entrancing exposition of John 17:24, entitled 'With Him in the Glory'. There is no doubt that the dear man longed to be with the Lord; and that longing comes through in almost every paragraph of this heavenly meditation.

I have left the chapter on 'Knowing the Times, Evangelical Unity: An Appeal' to last, because along with the baptismal regeneration controversy, it illustrates how the monumental reputation of this 'prince of preachers' has been affected by his excursions into debatable areas, both of which seem to detract from the true greatness of the man. The challenge to Reformed Evangelicals in mixed denominations to consider their position, even if that challenge was not as confrontational as has been alleged, was undoubted. And although his grandson as a boy was glad to have heard his grandfather give it, there is surely no doubt that it was misconceived. Everyone has heard how John Stott was constrained to object to his utterance on that occasion. When years later he came to speak at a rally in Edinburgh, James Philip, who was to chair it, was deeply concerned as to what he would say.

The astute old man suspected what was in James' mind, and before the meeting volunteered the information that he was not going to tell them all to leave the Church of Scotland. To which James replied, 'I am very glad that you're not!' What he meant by that was that he, one of the most pacific souls, would have been obliged, like John Stott, to object if he had done so.

What a pity these two items should have been included in this otherwise excellent book. Fortunately, however, there will be ample opportunity for us all to read more and more of the Doctor's works as, happily, they continue to pour from the press.

*William Still, Gilcomston South Church, Aberdeen.*

**Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism: Essays in Intercultural Theology; Festschrift in Honour of Professor Walter J. Hollenweger**

Edited by Jan A.B. Jongeneel *et al.*

Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1992; 376pp., n.p.; ISBN 3 631 44010 3

Since Pentecostalism has been viewed by commentators from both conservative and liberal perspectives as largely an anti-intellectual development, it is perhaps not surprising that, until comparatively recently, it was little noticed and analysed within academic theological circles. With increasing interest in such aspects as narrative theology and the sociocultural aspects of church development, however, the situation has happily changed. The theologian who has probably contributed more than any other to bring about that change is Professor Walter Hollenweger, the Swiss Pentecostal pastor who became Professor of Mission at the University of Birmingham. It is fitting, therefore, that this collection of essays in intercultural theology, focusing on the Pentecostal context, is dedicated to him.

The volume opens with valuable biographical material on Hollenweger himself and his developing theology, a section which does not eschew the anecdotal, as is entirely appropriate given the Professor's particular interest in the field of orality.

The bulk of the volume is taken up by essays of considerable diversity, involving doctrinal, cultural and missiological analyses. Of particular interest are essays by Iain MacRobert, Cecil Robeck and others which explore the social concern of the early Pentecostals. At a time when Pentecostalism is (not always justly) identified with the New Right in the USA and with apolitical pietism, which usually evolves into a pro-status-quo conservatism in other parts of the world, it is important to be reminded of those pioneer Pentecostals who challenged, for example, racial and class barriers in the name of the gospel, and especially how they saw the role of their Pentecostal distinctiveness in their social context. MacRobert writes of William Seymour, the black leader of the Azusa Street mission, Los Angeles (where Pentecostalism broke out onto the world scene in the 1900s), that 'Spirit baptism was, for Seymour, more than a glossolalic episode. It was the power to draw all peoples into one Church without racial distinctions or barriers.' Such reminders are all the more needful, moreover, given the fact that the formation of the actual historical record has not been immune to racial bias, for example, in the way that Pentecostal histories generally acknowledge the white Charles Parham (despite his later fall from grace, probably as a result of an accusation of homosexuality) as the 'father' of the movement while playing down Seymour's pioneering role.

Other essays focus on the role of Pentecostalism within the ecumenical movement, a seemingly surprising development given the separatist emphasis of the early days of the movement, and owing much to the work of David du Plessis in bringing the wider Christian world to the attention of the Pentecostals and the Pentecostals to the attention of the so-called 'mainstream' denominations. Du Plessis quite deservedly merits a full essay by Martin Robinson on his life of ecclesiological diplomacy.

Most significant of all, perhaps, is the recognition in several of the essays of the re-emergence or the rediscovery of the revolutionary power of the Pentecostal vision, as in Jean-Jacques Surmond's essay 'The Church at Play', which explores Pentecostal renewal of the liturgy as potentially a worldview-changing (or even, ultimately, world-changing) force, a potential which he argues can be seen beginning to become reality, especially in some Third World contexts.

Inevitably, a volume which is a collection of short essays covering such diverse facets of the field of study may leave the reader somewhat frustrated in wishing to see a deeper or wider treatment of each particular aspect. Such frustration should, in this case, however, be seen as the constructive result of a very effective whetting of the appetite, with extensive footnotes and bibliographies ably pointing the way forward for those who wish to study further. If indeed they do so, they will have caught something of the enthusiasm for this subject, the importance of which is only just being recognised, which has fired the life-work of Walter Hollenweger himself.

*Siôn A. Owen, Glasgow Bible College*

## **Christ and Creation**

C.E. Gunton

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1992; 127pp., £5.99; ISBN 0 85364 527 2 (UK); 0 8028 0579 5 (USA).

To produce 'a summary dogmatic christology' in the space of 127 pages is a considerable challenge and one tackled with enthusiasm and erudition by Colin Gunton in this printed version of his 1990 Didsbury Lectures at the British Isles Nazarene College. As Gunton points out, only limited revision of the lectures has been made and so a number of topics have to be left aside, but the resulting volume provides ample stimulation for thought.

Several unifying themes are evident throughout the book's four chapters, chiefly the relationship between creation and incarnation and also the essential role which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit must play in formulating Christology. Underlying these is the familiar theme developed in other Gunton works of the need to view the being of God as a trinitarian communion of Father, Son and Spirit.

The first chapter, 'An Interpretation of Scripture', sets the scene for what follows and considers several terms that have been applied to Christ. At the outset Gunton stresses that a faithful Christian theology must in some way be an interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, and it is there that Christ and creation are first related. He believes, however, that modern criticism and the Christian tradition cannot be ignored, since the Spirit uses the latter and draws out new insights, and he cautions against enforcing unity on Scripture as if every text had an inspired significance. The criteria to be used for discerning those texts which do have inspired significance are not explained, and Gunton's doctrine of Scripture at this point fails to do justice to the 'God-breathed' character of 'all scripture'.

The rest of the chapter considers the designations 'Lord', 'God', 'Man' and 'Cosmic Saviour'. Gunton shows that Jesus is portrayed as both Lord of creation and as part of it. He upholds creation, reestablishes the dominion lost in Adam and manifests true humanity in his birth, temptation, death, resurrection and ascension. Gunton stresses that the work of Christ relates to the whole creation, but not independently of the salvation of human beings: creation is not of concern apart from people.

The second chapter, 'Christ the Creature', examines two interrelated themes, namely what it is to be a human creature and how Christ is the same as and also different from us. With regard to the first theme, Gunton argues that to be a creature is to be made what one is by and in a network of relationships and he applies this to Jesus in his 'horizontal relatedness'. It is also essential to take into account Christ's relatedness to God, his 'vertical relatedness', which Gunton links closely to the work of the Spirit.

With regard to the second theme, Christ is shown to be different from us in that he stands in a redemptive relationship to the world of created relationships and he is a perfect sample of creation's directedness to future perfection before God. These themes are then related particularly to Christ's resurrection and ascension.

The third chapter, 'Incarnation, Kenosis and Divine Action', considers how the action of Christ which has its roots in eternity restores creation to its proper relationship to God. Gunton argues that the only satisfactory relationship of God to the world is trinitarian, allowing God to be both related to the world and distinct from it. Christ becomes part of the creation without ceasing to be what he was eternally. To explain how this is possible, Gunton makes use of the term *kenosis* which he defines as an act of power, contrary to many modern views. By his sacrifice Christ brings about a reordering of creation, through his redemptive condescension. Creation and redemption are related thus: 'The divine self-emptying is the actualisation in time and space of the very love which gives being and form to the world.'

The concluding chapter, 'In the Image and Likeness of God', stresses that it is supremely Christ who is the image of God and the source of human renewal in that image. This image Gunton considers in terms of

relatedness and dominion, in a dynamic of relationships with God, humans and the created order, and representing God to creation and creation to God. The beginning of the restoration of the image is to be located in the Church and is the work of the Spirit as he particularizes the work of the ascended Christ. By their priestly work renewed men and women offer the creation to God as a sacrifice of praise.

In a short space a great range of subjects are touched upon, often of necessity rather briefly, but always in a stimulating way. Not all of Gunton's views can be accepted, for example a formulation of the atonement which makes no reference to penal substitution, but there is much of value to be considered positively. So many names and themes are mentioned that, in spite of the brevity of the work, the lack of an index is a sad omission. If the value of a book is measured by the number of lines of thought which it sparks off, *Christ and Creation* well repays study.

*W. David J. McKay, Coleraine*

### **New Bible Commentary – 21st Century Edition**

Edited by D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, G.J. Wenham

IVP, Leicester, 1994; xii+1455pp., £34.99; ISBN 0 85110 648 X

The *New Bible Commentary* has served Bible students for over four decades now. It has already been extensively revised (1970) in its time of service, but now it has again undergone change in order to prepare it for action in the twenty-first century. It is more than a cosmetic change, too. The preface tells us 'nothing remains from 1953 and little from 1970'. So what is new?

The NIV is adopted as the text on which the commentary is based (which is surely a sensible move, given its widespread use, even if the RSV was a slightly more appropriate study version) and a clearer typeface is used which is certainly easier to read than the previous version. The new edition is some one hundred and fifty pages longer than the previous edition. There are, however, more substantive changes as well.

First, the authors. The group of editors' names hints that this is a work exhibiting evangelical commitment alongside scholarly excellence, and this is borne out as we note the list of contributors. Many have already written major commentaries on the book for which they are responsible here (*e.g.* O'Brien on Colossians and Philemon, Wenham on Genesis), though some well-known authors have tackled something different from their full-scale works (*e.g.* Goldingay on Proverbs, Motyer on Psalms) and there are also a good number of younger or less well known scholars included (*e.g.* Gempf on Acts). A second new characteristic of this commentary is an emphasis on the structure and

literary form of the various books. This is seen particularly in the new introductory essays which deal *inter alia* with general principles of interpretation and the characteristics of the various literary genres (e.g. OT poetry, Gospels, Letters). Thirdly, bibliographies have been updated to incorporate key works from more recent days, although, as in the previous edition, there is no significant interaction with secondary material in the main body of the commentary.

So there is much that is new. But many good things remain the same. For example, a concern to deal first and foremost with the meaning of the biblical text, and a critical conservative approach to introductory matters (the integrity of Isaiah is defended, Daniel is dated in the sixth century BC, Ephesians is accepted as Pauline) without allowing these questions to obscure the text itself.

One of the key tests for a commentary is how it deals with a difficult text. In 'notes' on the 'spirits in prison' passage in 1 Peter 3 we are given a summary of the various positions, referred to discussions by W. Grudem and R.T. France, and offered the suggestion that the phrase refers to something accomplished between the death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus we are enabled to make an informed judgement and follow up the discussion, even if, as we might expect, not all our questions are answered.

All in all this is a worthy successor to the third edition of the *New Bible Dictionary*. It is questionable whether it is worth buying this edition if you already have the third edition, since it also was a very dependable work, but if you are looking for a one-volume commentary to buy or recommend then this commentary can be commended as an excellent basic resource for Bible study.

*Alistair Wilson, Free North Church, Inverness*

## **Understanding Doctrine. Its Purpose and Relevance for Today**

Alistair McGrath

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990; 182pp., £6.99; ISBN 0 340 53822 8

No one could disagree with Alistair McGrath's contention that to many people 'doctrine' seems both petty and pedantic: whilst they may have a profound experience of God, doctrine seems unreal. McGrath agrees that Christianity is about encountering a living and loving Lord, not about finding the right combination of words, but he goes on to point out that in order to talk about God or to share experiences, doctrinal statements must be made. The aim of this book is to explore *what* doctrine is and *why* it matters.

Before embarking on these themes, McGrath first stresses that we cannot avoid choices regarding beliefs and actions, and that we must have

values, which are determined by beliefs which may be stated as doctrine. Christian doctrine thus provides the fundamental framework for Christian living. McGrath forcefully exposes how people often make Jesus in their own image to endorse their own values. At the centre of Christian doctrine must be the person and work of Christ, and McGrath defines doctrine as 'the Christian church giving an account of itself, as it answers the call of God in Jesus Christ'.

The first main part of the book is entitled 'Doctrine: What It Is' and deals with the relationship of doctrine to description (cpt 2), revelation (cpt 3), experience (cpt 4) and Christian identity (cpt 5). In chapter 2, for example, McGrath argues that doctrine is a matter of truth rather than of relevance: to be concerned about doctrine is to be concerned that our actions are a response to *God*, not to some illusion. As far as revelation is concerned, Scripture acts as a control over doctrine since it provides our only access to the history of Jesus. McGrath maintains that all Christians agree on the authority of Scripture, although his quotation from the Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation scarcely gives a balanced view of the outlook of modern Roman Catholicism on authority.

Many valuable points are made in these chapters, for example regarding the communal nature of the reading of Scripture and its relationship to tradition, the way in which biblical narrative is authoritative and how it may be converted into doctrine, and the place of doctrine in interpreting experience. McGrath argues that doctrine enables the Church to be faithful to her calling and that it also stimulates evangelism to those outside the Church.

The second part, 'Doctrine: Why It Matters', takes up a range of issues: Doctrine and Faith, Doctrine and the Christian Life, Is Christianity Possible without Doctrine?, The Coherence of Doctrine and The Challenge of Heresy, Wrestling with Doctrine: Discovering the Creeds. With regard to the Christian life, McGrath draws out in a very helpful way the significance of the doctrines of justification by faith, creation and prevenient grace for Christian spirituality, and provides a similar set of links between doctrine and ethics. The difficult and unpopular subject of heresy is well handled in relation to Arianism and Apollinarianism, but his view of the McLeod Campbell trial, whilst reflecting a contemporary consensus, will not satisfy all Scots. The final part, 'Some Key Doctrines Examined', provides a concise but stimulating survey of the doctrines of the Person of Christ, the Work of Christ and the Trinity.

McGrath writes well and clearly, and at a level which should be grasped by most educated Christians, the readership which it would appear that he has in view. Good use is made of illustrations, especially those drawn from church history, the life of Luther being a clear favourite. Rarely do these illustrations obstruct the progress of argument and often they prove very illuminating. Given that the reader is not expected to be theologically literate, however, more care could have been taken with

quotations from theologians whose basic position is entirely at odds with McGrath's. Thus Bultmann is quoted without any indication that many other things that he said would be totally unacceptable. Those who would recognise the problem would not need to be reading the book. In the same vein, the bibliography provides material from the most diverse, and often conflicting, sources without any indication of the writer's orientation being provided. The beginner moving on to read Hendrikus Berkhof, Leonardo Boff or George Lindbeck is in for a few surprises, not all of them pleasant. More guidance for the uninitiated is needed.

*Understanding Doctrine* succeeds well in introducing Christians to the basic issues involved in the formulation of doctrine and its role in church and individual life, and would provide a helpful structure for a course of studies on the subjects discussed.

W. David J. McKay, Coleraine.

### **Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology**

Edited by Joel B. Green and Max Turner

Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1994; 536pp., £29.99; ISBN 0 8028 3750 6

This handsome volume is a *Festschrift* to honour Professor I. Howard Marshall on his sixtieth birthday. The list of thirty contributors, many of them conservative, is impressive, ranging from older scholars, such as George Beasley-Murray, Leon Morris, Kingsley Barrett and the late Donald Guthrie, to many younger ones. Many of the latter have studied or done research under Howard Marshall. They are almost equally divided between British and North American authors with half a dozen from other lands.

In their preface, the editors (writing of the past two decades) say that 'some scholars have taken an increasingly gloomy attitude toward the possibility of knowing much about Jesus from the canonical Gospels, while others have begun moving the whole discussion into fresh areas of creative inquiry.' The contributors to this volume belong to the second category, and there is an emphasis on the veracity of the historical documents to be found in the New Testament.

The work is divided into three sections. It comes as no surprise, in a tribute to a real Lukan scholar, to find that section 1, on Jesus, the Synoptic Gospels, and Acts, is by far the longest, with its seventeen chapters accounting for more than half the book. Again we are not surprised to find a number of the essays addressing issues arising from Luke and Acts, although Mark and Matthew are not neglected.

It is always good to be confronted with biblical facts we have not noticed before. The reviewer, for instance, was taken by surprise to find Eckhard Schnabel saying that in Luke 'the references to Gentiles are on a

more modest scale than those in Matthew and in Mark', which he then went on to demonstrate. Rainer Riesner makes out an interesting case for taking seriously Chrysostom's identification of Simeon, mentioned in Acts 15:14, not with Simon Peter but with the aged saint who uttered the *Nunc Dimittis*. There is some convergence of interests so that, for instance, both Darrell Bock and Earle Ellis focus attention on the accusation of the religious authorities that Jesus was a blasphemer. Some contact is made with contemporary issues, such as ecology and liberationism.

Section 2, following the title of Howard Marshall's Inaugural Lecture, is entitled, 'Jesus, Paul and John'. Some of the studies are wide-ranging, such as Donald Guthrie's fine survey of the Christology of revelation, while others focus on more detailed issues, such as Jesus as head of the church in Colossians and Ephesians and also the Christological basis of the Johannine footwashing. The reviewer found Stephen Travis' approach to Pauline atonement doctrine interesting but unconvincing.

The final section deals with wider issues relating to New Testament Christology. Gordon Fee, writing on Christology and Pneumatology in Romans 8:9-11 (in section 2 of the book), takes issue with the views of J.D.G. Dunn, and Max Turner does so much more fully in the masterly essay which opens section 3. Interestingly, this is followed by a chapter written by Professor Dunn himself, in which he seeks to counter M. Casey's views on the development of New Testament Christology.

The whole volume is very stimulating and there is little doubt that the arguments and findings of many of the essays will need to be taken seriously by subsequent workers in this field of study. There are some quotations of untranslated German, but these are few and brief. One small criticism: quite a number of volumes of this kind provide the reader with a complete list of the writings of the scholar in whose honour they are produced. It was a little disappointing to find this feature absent from the present volume.

*Geoffrey W. Grogan, Glasgow*

## **Theological Basis of Ethics**

Karl Barth

Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1993; 70pp., \$9.99; ISBN 0 664 25325 3

This book is a lecture delivered in Germany on October 9th, 1929. In addition to the text itself, Barth offers the reader twenty-eight pages of footnotes! Many add substantially to the discussion and for the serious student of historical theology, may be the most interesting and rewarding part of the book. Barth directs the reader to many passages in Augustine, Luther and Calvin. He seeks to distance himself from tendencies in Augustine (and later the Council of Trent) which misrepresent divine

grace. In affirming the importance of grace, Barth draws much support from Luther and Calvin.

The book is published in the 'Library of Christian Ethics', 'designed to present a selection of important texts that would otherwise be unavailable for scholarly purposes and classroom use'.

Barth's lecture is broken down into three parts: The Holy Spirit as Creator / Reconciler / Redeemer. Under the heading 'The Holy Spirit as Creator', Barth stresses that 'being in the image of God only becomes actual fact when the Holy Spirit comes on the spot on man's behalf', and that 'Christian life is human life that has been made open by the Holy Spirit to receive God's Word'. On 'The Holy Spirit as Reconciler', Barth writes, 'Christian life is man's actual life in the Holy Spirit'. Because this righteousness – this being accounted as righteous – attaches to the actual man, it coincides with his sanctification'. Expounding the theme 'The Holy Spirit as Redeemer', he describes the Holy Spirit as 'Spirit of promise' and Christian life as 'the new life in hope'.

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

## **Computers for Churches**

Nigel Hardcastle

CCBI, London, 1993; 168pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 85169 213 3

This book is a clear and well-organised review of the main tasks performed by a computer used in a church and is a guide (as the sub-title says) to planning and buying computer systems for church use. It is the compilation of the results of a Church Computer Project directed by Nigel Hardcastle from 1986 to 1989, but it has been updated for publication in 1993. It is excellent value. Written in a style which is easy and conversational the author covers all of the major topics and concerns that a church ought to consider when planning a computer system. The author never loses sight of the real objectives, that of helping to run a church. The first page says: 'A computer will never do the really important jobs in church life. It will never care for a person, love them or preach the gospel to them. The church is about relationships with God and with people. Computers cannot help here. (However) the church needs to deal with information.'

The suggested uses of a computer in churches are for word-processing, desk top publishing, record handling (or databases), financial transactions and computer Bibles. Before tackling each of these Hardcastle looks at computer basics. In a short space (only 13 pages) he explains a lot of the jargon and demystifies the machine. Common sense prevails throughout. 'There is no point in trying to use the computer for your accounts if (the treasurer) is not happy with the general idea or the particular program.' Early in the book a seven-step plan to buying a computer is presented. This and the advice that follows is excellent stuff. If you have not thought through all the steps or understood the problems then you ought

not to rush into buying anything. There is quite a long section on publishing and another on the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Part 5 of the book opens out the human side of the system: Who will operate it? All in all, I do not think there are any topics that should be covered which are not given an airing. Advice is simple and obviously based on experience. Where particular makes of computer hardware and particular brands of software are mentioned then the information is well presented and up to date. Nigel Hardcastle gives sound advice on selecting an appropriate software package and how to choose a computer that many systems purchasers (not only in churches) could benefit from. He also gives an insight into his own preferences and what he has bought.

I found only two problems with the book. The first is minor and personal. The layout of the text has been done on a computer (the author tells us so) and sometimes looks more like a report, with five or six different type fonts on one page, than a book. I found this annoying. The second is that, as the information is so up to date but set in a constantly changing market, the book will date quickly. The basic advice about buying will still be relevant, but the particular systems recommended will not. Of course the answer is to have the author revise the text regularly. I hope he will do so.

*Maurice Houston, Charis House, Edinburgh*

## **Freedom to Reform: The 'Articles Declaratory' of the Church of Scotland 1921**

Douglas M. Murray

T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993; xii+179pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 567 29216 9

The Chalmers Lectures of 1991 delivered in the Edinburgh and St Andrews Divinity Faculties dealt most appropriately with the background, formulation and significance of the Articles Declaratory (1921), which paved the way for the 1929 union of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church and remain the Kirk's key constitutional statement. Dr Douglas Murray, who lectures in church history and kindred subjects in the Glasgow Faculty, here provides the first extended account of the framing of the Articles. He makes much use of manuscript papers and unpublished minutes. This book will certainly be the standard record of the negotiations and debates which issued in the framing of the Articles.

But Dr Murray's conclusions as to the 'freedom to reform' (surely it should be 'freedom to change'? It is too readily assumed today that all change is for the better) conferred by the Articles are unlikely to go wholly uncontested. This is not only because, as he faithfully chronicles, conflicting legal opinions have in recent years been given on this very point, nor only because of the subtlety of some of the wording of the Articles (for example, Article I is itself not exempt from revision, it

seems), but also because he does not always distinguish as clearly as he might between what the Articles say and what their original framers intended them to say, or said that they say. As a recent General Assembly debate on the import of the legislation authorising the ordination of women put unambiguously beyond doubt, all that counts is what the law says – not what its originators intended it to say, or what they said (in this case in the Assembly debate when it was enacted) that it said.

The confusion on this point may reflect the difference between the historian's and the lawyer's understanding of texts. It is very natural for the former to believe that the decisive voice in interpretation should lie with authorial intention. The lawyer has every right to allow for a mismatch between intention and execution, and where it occurs to insist on attending only to the execution. As it is, Murray's final paragraph rather cuts the corners (this is, after all, no disinterested historical enquiry) when he says that 'The Articles stated the church's identity in terms of catholic doctrine, not of the Westminster Confession.' This hardly squares with the statements in Articles II and IV. What presumably he meant to say (!) is that the Articles, on his interpretation, allow the Church in future to redefine its identity without reference to the Westminster Confession.

By the same token, the Church of Scotland could cease to be Presbyterian, deny its continuity with 'the Church of Scotland which was reformed in 1560', disown its role as a national Church with a call to serve 'the people in every parish of Scotland', and even submit to the papacy so long as the Church at the time agreed to regard this action as consistent with Article I, which merely talks vaguely about 'adhering to' the Scottish Reformation. One may wonder whether the fathers of the union really intended the Church to be open to such chameleonic mutability. But then when the chips are down, what they intended is an historical irrelevance. The irony is that the interest of Douglas Murray and others of like mind in this freedom to change bears chiefly upon the possibility of dispensing with secondary elements such as the Westminster Confession and synods. In their confidence in the lyrical recital of catholic doctrines set out in Article I as the sole essential (but not irreformable!) bearer of the Church's continuity and corporate life, they would be wise to reflect on the nonchalance with which liberal churchmen regularly repeat such statements in the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds wilfully heedless of their meaning as originally formulated. What price such 'freedom to reform'? Tinkering with the status of the Westminster Confession increasingly looks like a cosmetic indulgence when the health of the Body suffers from galloping consumption.

*D.F. Wright, New College, University of Edinburgh*

## **Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation**

Joel R. Beeke

Peter Lang, New York, 1991; 518pp., £26; ISBN 0 8204 1428 X

The questions of salvation – ‘What must I do to be saved?’ – and the assurance – ‘How can I know I am saved?’ – are distinct: ‘A person may be really saved, and still not be sure, in his own mind, of his salvation.... His salvation is not in doubt, but he may be in doubt about his salvation’ (J.G. Vos). This book is concerned with the question of assurance. Its historical analysis is summed up thus: ‘Different emphases notwithstanding, the Reformers and post-Reformers, both English and Dutch, are essentially one: *Assurance of salvation ought to be regarded as the possession of all Christians in principle, despite varying measures of consciousness*’. Its practical significance is summed up thus: ‘the divines we have studied have set before us the model we need today: right and rich doctrinal thinking coupled with (and, indeed *leading to*) sanctified and vibrant living.’

Citing L. Berkhof, the author identifies ‘two extremes that should be avoided’; (i) ‘it is possible to have a true living faith without any degree of subjective assurance’; (ii) ‘no one is in a state of grace who does not have absolute assurance’ (p. 176). Beeke traces the ways in which various writers have sought to avoid these two extremes. While he offers much insightful exposition of individual authors, such as John Calvin, John Owen and Thomas Goodwin, his main concern is to offer an analysis of historical trends.

Regarding historical trends, we may note Beeke’s comments on the relationship between Calvin and (a) the Westminster Confession; and (b) the Dutch Second Reformation. He emphasises that the post-Reformation developments, both English and Dutch, must be seen in the context of an increased ‘taking for granted (of) God’s saving grace’ which ‘fostered dead orthodoxy’. On the relation between Calvin and the Westminster Confession, Beeke writes, ‘Though not departing in essence from the teaching of the Reformers, the WCF’s chapter 18 does systematize emphases and distinctives that were minimized by Calvin’. Observing that ‘their varying emphases are related to the somewhat different questions being raised in the early and later Reformation era’, Beeke contends that ‘the WCF’s divines are by no means parted from the company of the Reformers’. Concerning Calvin and the Dutch Second Reformation, Beeke maintains that ‘these Dutch divines as a whole did not misread Calvin and the Reformers, but simply adapted the teaching of the early Reformers in a practical way to their own day’. This adaptation produced ‘a “nearer”, “more intimate”, or “more precise reformation”’ in which they ‘sought to *apply* Reformation truths to daily life and “heart”

experience'. Their 'goal was to join doctrine to the whole of life' (p. 390). Their great theme may be summed up thus: '*The scriptural appeal for sanctification must be zealously pursued. Reformation doctrine must be lived*' (p. 389).

This is not merely a scholarly work which 'implicitly repudiate(s) the sharp distinction... between Calvin and Calvinism'. It is a work of real spiritual value, guiding the believer away from both despondency – 'Assurance... must never be regarded as the privilege of "exceptional sainthood"' (John Murray) – and complacency – 'none are so perfect' that 'their assurance' cannot 'be increased' (George Downname).

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

## **Human Immortality and the Redemption of Death**

Simon Tugwell

Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1990; 196pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 232 51830 0

The central argument of this book is that the tension between ideas of the immortality of the soul and of the final resurrection and judgement creates significant problems for Christian eschatology. In particular, it leads to a conflict between the tendency to locate the decisive moment of judgement at death, and the tendency to locate it at the resurrection. A number of intermediate positions also emerge. Augustine *e.g.*, holds that the final judgement of the soul will not occur until the end, but that in the meantime, the soul is kept in a 'hidden receptacle' and given a provisional reward or punishment. Much later, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas argued that since the beatitude of the soul and body together is higher than merely the beatitude of the soul, we must await the resurrection to receive our full reward.

Tugwell's implicit, but nevertheless clear, thesis is that Christian theology would do best to opt for the clarity of the full-blown resurrection-only scenario, and to leave the philosophically and theologically dubious doctrine of the soul and its immortality to the ancient Greeks, whence it came. The view that 'all are alive to God', grounded in the relation of time to eternity rather than in the soul's own putative post-mortem existence, provides a sufficient basis for dealing with the problem of the continuity of existence of the dead, who from the temporal point of view have simply ceased to be.

It is, however, difficult to extract this thesis from the book, buried as it is in a history of Christian eschatology, and contrasted as it is with a lengthy account of pagan Greek views. As a mine of information, the book is invaluable, insightful, and an impressive feat of scholarship. It is not, however, a systematic treatise on human immortality and the redemption of death, nor does it attempt to provide a complete historical picture, since the analysis does not extend beyond the pre-Reformation era. This limits the usefulness of the book, but it also helps to define its

scope clearly for potential readers. Specialists will no doubt find it a helpful volume, and indeed the book includes an index and a glossary for non-specialists; most Protestants, however, along with those looking for a direct response to modern doubts about Christian eschatology, are still likely to find it somewhat abortive.

*G.D. Badcock, New College, University of Edinburgh*

## **On Being the Church. Essays on the Christian Community**

Edited by C.E. Gunton and D.W. Hardy

T.& T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1989; 263pp., £15; ISBN 0 567 0095010

This is a must for those seeking a more meaningful rationale for the church's existence. Six essays centre around the theme of 'sociality' – community as the identity of the church. They represent a commitment to the possibility of the church as a community of sociality. It makes interesting reading because of the contributors' various churchmanships and their approach to the doctrine of the church from a theological perspective. They are not so much concerned with the *functional* identity of the church as with its *ontological* roots and seek to identify the proper foundation upon which a meaningful doctrine of the church can be built, that is, the Triune God who comes to us in incarnation.

D.W. Hardy starts with the central question of *sociality*. His is a practical concern broadening the horizon of the church beyond that of a particular institution to grasp intelligently the foundations of society in order to appreciate the church as community. Thus, there is a movement from 'created sociality' into which we are all born, towards a truly 'redeemed sociality' found in Christ's church. In the second essay, C.E. Gunton develops the more particular paradigm of sociality. 'The Church is what it is by virtue of being called to be a temporal echo of the eternal community that God is.' The doctrine of God has not sufficiently influenced our understanding of the church. Thus, a legal-political view of the church has developed, the authority structure of which is developed in the third essay by W. Jeanrond with his penetrating critique of ecclesial authority as the manifestation of secular rather than theological concepts of authority. C. Schwobel and R. Roberts add more particular responses. The former exegetes the divine and human boundaries in the church according to Luther and Calvin. The latter offers a penetrating critique of Anglican ecclesiology in dialogue with the Bishop of Ely, Stephen Sykes. Lastly, the essays end on a refreshingly biblical note, where each essay can 'be brought into fresh relation with the Bible' through D. Ford's comparison of 2 Corinthians in order to see what lessons can be gained for today.

This book of essays deserves wide reading and well achieves its aim of attempting to unite 'the academic study of theology' with the narrow focus and pragmatic procedures of 'official church conversations and committees'.

*G.W.P. McFarlane, London Bible College*

## **Faith and Modernity**

Edited by Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden  
Regnum Books / Lynx Communications, Oxford, 1994;  
352pp., £17.50; ISBN 0 7459 3039 5.

In 1989, Os Guinness delivered a paper on 'Faith and Modernity' in Manila at the Second Lausanne Conference. This provoked much interest and led to an international conference on 'Modernity and Postmodernity', held at Uppsala in 1993. The papers given at it are brought together in the present volume.

The modernity / postmodernity distinction has come into vogue in recent parlance, especially since about 1985, to describe a distinction of outlook which has emerged increasingly during the second half of our century.

In the Introduction the editors define 'modernity' and postmodernity' as used in the volume: 'Modernity is the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Enlightenment project – namely, the rejection of traditional and religious sources of authority in favour of reason and knowledge as the road to human emancipation. From this point of view, postmodernity refers to the progressive loss of confidence in, if not failure of, the Enlightenment project since 1945. This accelerated in the seventies and eighties as the consequences of modernization became more apparent.' Several of the contributors, however, make it clear that they consider postmodernity to be simply a further stage of modernity.

The writers represent different disciplines – theology, philosophy, sociology, missiology, communication – and they handle a wide range of subjects. Inevitably the scope is huge, for it relates to a whole culture. Most of the book addresses the tension between modernity and Christianity. Two chapters on truth, authority and modernity by Newbigin and Netland reveal some difference of outlook, the former holding that every system of thought must rest on an undemonstrable faith-basis, the latter that Christianity must be seen not as a preferred belief-system but as demonstrable truth.

There are chapters discussing the relationship of modernity to the doctrine of God, to anthropology, morality, eschatology and spirituality. Divine transcendence, the divine moral order, the uniqueness of Christ and the balance of the spiritual, intellectual and physical in the biblical world-view are here set over against modernity's obsession with human beings

as self-creative, self-defining and autonomous and yet, paradoxically, as doomed to lose any real personal significance.

The longest chapter is by Lars Johansson and is a penetrating analysis of the New Age phenomenon as a synthesis of the premodern, modern and postmodern. He says, 'The NA claims to present a new holistic vision of humanity as a cure for Cartesian dualism. But their solution is not holistic enough.' He points out that biblical Christianity affirms the value of the physical as well as the spiritual and intellectual. This is followed by chapters on economics and information technology.

John Seel, himself an American Evangelical, mounts a devastating critique of certain aspects of American Evangelicalism in its corruption by modernity, but warns us that we too are in danger. Vinay Samuel's subject, 'Modernity, mission and non-Western societies', in the handling of which he makes special reference to Islam and Hinduism, is very important and much too brief.

The final chapter is a revised version of Os Guinness' paper, entitled 'Mission modernity: seven checkpoints on mission in the modern world'. It is very clearly written, uncomfortably so at times, especially when he writes about the worldliness of modern evangelical Christians. 'No persecutor or foe in two thousand years has wreaked such havoc on the church as its modernity.' Nevertheless, with all his criticisms and warnings, he sounds a note of hope, encouraging us to understand the challenge of modernity, and to put our trust in the eternal power of God's Word and Spirit.

As there is, regrettably, no index, you may have to read the volume right through to find items that interest you most. It will not do you any harm, for it compels thought on a matter of great importance for the church's mission today.

*Geoffrey W. Grogan, Glasgow*

## **Living on the Edge**

Clive Calver, Steve Chilcraft, Steve Gaukroger and Peter Meadows

Lynx Communications, Oxford, 1993; 96pp., £6.00; ISBN 0 7459 2689 4

*Living on the Edge* consists of study material originally prepared for the 80,000 people who attend one of the annual Spring Harvest events held on four sites throughout the UK each year. It forms the substance for the main seminars that are taught at different levels each morning following the daily Bible exposition. Many people who have taught or attended main seminars will welcome their being made available to a wider audience in this publication.

Spring Harvest seeks to cater to the whole range of evangelical perspectives and to present a holistic theology that leads to action both in the church and in the community. Both these perspectives are reflected in this material.

The themes in the book – environment, ethics, evangelism and eternity – do not hang too comfortably together beyond the obvious initial letter. That said, each study stands on its own and the four provide a representative range of issues suitable for discussion and study. The material is laid out in double columns with key points and arresting quotes down the margins. There is a contemporary feel to the way the material is presented and handled and a real effort to take seriously John Stott's two horizons of the Word and the world. Flow charts, bar graphs and statistics sit comfortably with Bible verses and theological explanation. The use of 'bullet points' and lists makes the presentation more accessible to groups.

The material is written by thoughtful intelligent Christians rather than 'experts', and that is both a strength and a weakness. The writers have obviously sought to research and represent contemporary evangelical opinion on the issues and to present fairly where Evangelicals disagree. The weakness is that like all such issues the 'experts' have moved further on and can get irritated at what to them seem dated arguments, or lack of precise terminology. But the material is intended to introduce Christians to these issues and to provoke them to action and I believe they do precisely that. There is a section on foundational and further reading at the end of each chapter.

During the last few years I have taught seminars at Spring Harvest using the main seminar material. There has always been far more material provided than can be taught in 90 minutes. I believe that the material is balanced, stimulating, provocative and practical. It faces up to issues we can often be tempted to duck. It exposes us to opinions that we may never have considered before. I hope that this will be the first of an annual series which also provide an excellent introduction into the ethos and heart of Spring Harvest.

*Colin Sinclair, Scripture Union, Glasgow*

## **The Dead Sea Scrolls Today**

James C. VanderKam

Eerdmans / SPCK, Grand Rapids / London, 1994; 210pp.,  
£9.99; ISBN 0 281 04774 X

Recent years have witnessed a renewed interest in the documents discovered in the late 1940s and early 1950s in caves not far from the north-western shore of the Dead Sea at a location known as Qumran. Unfortunately, undue attention has focused on the more sensational claims of certain scholars / journalists (*e.g.* Eisenman; Baigent and

Leigh), giving many people a very distorted view of the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for our understanding of the origins of Christianity. In the light of the misinformation circulating today VanderKam's book is both welcome and timely. Here, in marked contrast to some recent works, is a sober, balanced and up-to-date introduction to the Scrolls.

While most of the book reflects views which enjoy widespread support among scholars, the ordinary reader should be aware that this is not always the case. On occasions he seeks to move forward the discussion of particular issues by presenting his own ideas. This is especially so as regards the section on the canon of Scripture. Here VanderKam suggests that certain books (*i.e.*, Jubilees; 1 Enoch; the Temple Scroll) which are not now part of the Jewish canon (that is, the OT in the Reformation tradition) were viewed by the Essene inhabitants of Qumran as scripture. While the evidence as presented suggests such a conclusion, VanderKam's case rests on one important premise: all books which were 'especially authoritative' were viewed as scripture. Yet, while it is true that all books of scripture are normally viewed by believing communities to be authoritative, the reverse does not necessarily follow.

Presbyterians, for example, may consider the Westminster Confession to be especially authoritative, but this does not automatically make it part of scripture. Unfortunately, VanderKam's criterion of authoritativeness lacks the very kind of precision which is required in deciding which books were held to be scripture at Qumran. Differing degrees of authoritativeness may have existed. Certain books may have been viewed as authoritative without at the same time being considered scripture. What we can know, however, is that almost all the books which comprise the present Jewish canon were known and highly esteemed at Qumran.

These observations regarding the canon of scripture at Qumran highlight the danger which exists in trying to arrive at firm conclusions on the basis of limited evidence. Similar comments might be made about parts of VanderKam's work (*e.g.* the composition of Daniel ch. 4; the Scrolls and the New Testament). Given the limited nature of the evidence before them, scholars often speculate beyond what it indicates in an attempt to shed more light on a specific subject. In such instances we must always be conscious that we are in the realm of uncertainty, not fact.

The reservations voiced should not be seen as detracting seriously from what is a very valuable introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls. VanderKam is to be thanked for the lucid way in which he brings together a wealth of information on the Scrolls in a very accessible form.

*T.D. Alexander, The Queen's University of Belfast*

**Bible Praying**

Michael Perry

Fount Paperbacks, London, 1992; 352pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 00 627609 1

'Restore unto us the years that the locust hath eaten'. Fifty years ago a phrase like this came naturally into a minister's public prayers. In his lecture on extempore *Public Prayer*, Spurgeon urged his students to prepare by 'the commitment to memory of the Psalms and parts of Scripture containing promises, supplications, praises and confessions such as may be helpful in the act of prayer.' A minister friend once showed me Professor James Moffatt's *A Book of Biblical Devotions for Ministers of the Scottish Church*. Published in the 1920s, this was an anthology of Bible passages in the words of the Authorised Version, arranged under subject headings. I felt that something of the sort, in modern translation, would be a great help to ministers, not only in private devotions, but in the preparation of services. I made a start for my own use by listing New Testament benedictions in various modern translations, but realised that much more could be done. The good news is that now much more *has* been done.

Perry's *Bible Praying* consists of 534 prayers, in or adapted from the words of Scripture, under subject headings which follow the sequence of a typical modern Anglican service. The prayers are in modern English, and the wording is the arranger's own, but clearly owes much to felicitous phrases in a variety of translations. Under each heading the prayers are arranged in the order of their biblical origin: half are from the Old Testament (especially Psalms and Isaiah) and half from the New. Two examples illustrate the method used:

**APPROACH** (from Deuteronomy 12).

Lord, our God,

this is the place where we may worship you;

you have set your name here.

Here in your presence

our families shall rejoice,

because you have blessed us;

here we present to you

the offering of our lives;

here we pledge our obedience to your laws;

here we pray for our children,

that we and they

may do what is right in your eyes.

Lord, our God,

this is the place where we may worship you. Amen.

**BLESSING** (from Isaiah 26).

Trust in the Lord,

your eternal Rock,

and he will keep your minds in perfect peace.  
Keep faith with him,  
walk with him, wait for him, desire him;  
reach out to him in the night,  
seek him in the morning:  
and his blessing be upon you always.  
Amen.

The book is a large paperback and would benefit from a smaller (and cheaper?) reprint, but it is made to last and opens well, and the layout is excellent – no pages need to be turned during a prayer. There are two indexes – Season and Subject, and Bible Reference. If some subjects are more adequately represented than others, this may act as a spur to users to produce their own prayers!

I heartily recommend this book.

*William G. Young, North Kessock*

## **Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology**

Edited by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino

Orbis, Maryknoll, NY, 1993; 751pp., \$44.95; ISBN 0 888344 917 X

It was a quarter of a century ago that liberation theology first began to register as a specific movement in the history of the church. Beginning with Gustavo Gutiérrez's exploratory lectures and essays of 1968 and his seminal *Teología de la liberación* of 1971, the church, at first in Latin America and speedily in many quarters of the First World, was alerted not so much to 'a new theme for reflection' but to 'a new way of doing theology'. Such, at least, was the claim. It became increasingly difficult during the 1970s to avoid the challenge of liberation theology even if the specific contextual canons of the movement made it impossible for First-World Christians to apply liberationist principles to their own *de facto* oppressionist situation. Yet by the late 1970s such terms as praxis, liberation, and 'the preferential option for the poor', as well as knowledge of the existence of the sort of theology being practised by ordinary people in the innumerable base communities of South America, had become part of the current western Christian consensus. Whatever qualms traditionalists had with this new way of doing theology, criticisms, for the most part, were muted. The feeling was that this movement could not, indeed should not, be ignored.

That was in the 1970s. Despite immense practical and theological energy generated by the liberationist movement during its first phase, within a decade there were signs of both increasing development and a more obvious reverse. The excitement of discovery was being tempered by a growing appreciation of the intractabilities of the situations which

liberation theology had set out to change and an admission to a certain naiveté, both political and doctrinal, in liberation theory itself. Nowhere was this more patent than in the attitude of Gutiérrez, whose integrity has remained intact throughout the vicissitudes of the last two decades and a half. If liberation theology was chastened by both internal criticisms and external events, not least being the (unexpected) triumph of democracy in so many of the South American states during the 1980s, the movement's basic perceptions were still felt, by its practitioners, to be sound and its witness relevant to the ongoing life of both the church and the world. However subversive it was deemed to have been, not least by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, its ultimate acceptability had by 1987 been assured following John Paul II's cautious espousal of some of its themes in his own uniquely conservative / radical social teaching. Then came 1989 and that is where this authoritative compendium of liberation theology begins.

1989 was a momentous year both for international socialism generally and for liberation theology particularly. The breaching of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of communism and the discrediting of socialism could have been felt to have destroyed the validity of the liberationist movement permanently. But November 1989 also witnessed the murder of Ignacio Ellacuría, one of the editors of this volume, along with five of his fellow Jesuits. Liberation theology was obviously still considered as potent a threat then as it had been nine years earlier when those same forces of reaction had murdered another Salvadorian churchman, Archbishop Oscar Romero. This hefty volume, therefore, despite its unblushingly academic appearance, still witnesses to a live and potentially dangerous theology. Its contents supply perhaps the most substantial resumé of liberation theology to date.

*Mysterium Liberationis* has two parts, the first covering the history, methodology and distinctive features of liberation theology, while the second, which is subdivided into five, includes what the editors call the 'Systematic Contents of the Theology of Liberation'. There is much overlap between the two sections and a good deal of repetition occurs even within the separate sections. The treatment of the different themes, though, is extensive if not quite exhaustive, and even a glance at the list of authors shows how authoritative the volume is. There are contributions by both Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, by Enrique Dussel, Pablo Richard, Juan Luis Segundo, José Comblin, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino and at least a dozen others. The treatment of both the history and the methodology of the movement is workmanlike rather than striking and the sections interpreting individual doctrines such as the Trinity, God the Father, Jesus as liberator and as mediator of God's reign, and the Holy Spirit, indicate at least a desire to remain faithful to classical orthodoxy even if the result, in some cases, is not wholly convincing. Despite some turgidity, the book succeeds in presenting the reader with both a guide and up-to-date assessment of the movement and its significance. Although one

is conscious of a degree of self-criticism among some of the contributors, no sharp critique is provided. The book's usefulness is in its descriptive content and in its factual analysis of liberationist theory and themes.

If the planning and much of the compilation of this volume had been completed by 1989, its publication, four years later, coincided with yet further change. By the mid-1990s liberation theology has been criticized even more vociferously from within; Latin American Catholicism is being challenged by Protestant Pentecostalism to an amazing and unprecedented degree; and Marxism seems now to be positively antediluvian. Sobrino, in his preface, rises to this three-pronged challenge by claiming: 1) that whatever validity current ecological, feminist and cultural criticisms of liberation theology may have, they do not by any means invalidate the movement's original thesis: 'It remains true ... that the most original and fruitful features of the theology of liberation ... remain its mode of understanding the business of theology as a theoretical reflection on praxis [and]... the identification of the world's poor as a *locus theologicus*'; 2) had the institutional church allowed the base communities to renew the ecclesiastical structure rather than operate on its periphery, the rise of Pentecostalism may have been stemmed; and 3) liberation theology, despite its use of Marxist economic analysis, was never enamoured of Marxist ideology. Be that as it may, the fact that these criticisms have had to be parried indicates that liberation theology has gone through a very significant transitional phase. Whether it will be deemed a live theological option by the end of the millennium is anyone's guess. With the persistence of poverty, ongoing oppressions, and the continuing call for radical discipleship one hopes that the gains of liberation theology will not be forgotten, but its very contextuality in both practice and theory may militate against the movement's permanent significance.

Either as a transitional report on the progress of liberation theology, or, more sombrely, as the movement's epitaph, *Mysterium Liberationis* deserves to be read widely.

*D.Densil Morgan, School of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales, Bangor*

## **Women at the Well: Feminist Perspectives on Spiritual Direction**

Kathleen Fisher

SPCK, London, 1989; 215pp., £7.95; ISBN 0 281 04426 0

This is a book about helping people, especially women, in spiritual growth. Its author is a spiritual director, social worker, teacher and psychotherapist. Her writing arises directly out of her experiences in working with women, and her conviction that they have the gifts and

resources for strong personal and spiritual growth. These resources are what she called 'the spring within', which is God's empowering grace given through Jesus Christ (*cf.* John 4:13-124).

There are ten chapters, covering such topics as women experiencing God, Jesus and women, women and power, violence against women, the problem of anger, and relationships with female members of one's own family. The book is eminently easy to read, yet so full of ideas that it needs to be taken at a gentle pace over a period of time. There are useful notes and a bibliography, and each chapter includes exercises involving relaxation, physical movement, Bible reading, personal reflection, 'journalling' and imaginative meditation. The exercises are designed to be used individually or in groups, in the context of spiritual direction.

Kathleen Fisher writes as a committed feminist. She sees women's great needs as affirmation and a sense of self-worth, and liberation from pressure from men to conform to male ideals and values. Women also need strategies for bringing about change, especially in areas of social injustice and personal oppression, and freedom to develop into full personhood in relationships of mutuality and friendship. She believes that our concept of God is profoundly influenced by the images and language we use for God in prayer. She challenges the idea of an exclusively male imagery, advocating a wide range of fresh, non-masculine images, such as God as mother, water, or fire, and Jesus as a sister. She encourages women to explore their own spiritual pilgrimage, to be aware of the presence of God, to be strong and active (rather than passive or resigned), to identify imaginatively with biblical women, and with Jesus, whose maleness she sees as theologically unimportant.

The book evinces a strong sense of the reality of God, and of the potential of women (and men) for a profound relationship with God. I liked its emphasis on the redefining of 'power' in terms of mutual relationships, and on the transformation of society, rather than on the social adjustment of individuals in situations of oppression. But the book raises questions which need careful thought. How does the revelation of God's nature through Scripture relate to our awareness of it through personal experience? How does psychotherapy's current emphasis on self-esteem and self-development relate to biblical teaching on self-denial, mutual submission, and total dependence on God? At times there is a looseness in the way the author talks about God, suggesting a sympathy for pantheism rather than a full Christian doctrine of sin and redemption. I also felt uneasy about some of the exercises. For example, exploring one's sexual 'life-line' might be very painful for someone abused in childhood; rituals like that of 'self-blessing', using candles, water and incense, could readily become sub-Christian.

Yet in spite of such reservations, I felt this is a book which could help pastors, counsellors and other carers in relating to women. It would also make good reading for teachers, ministers and students who are not yet familiar with some of the basic concepts of modern feminism.

Ruth B. Edwards, University of Aberdeen

## The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide

W. de Greef. Translated by Lyle D. Bierman

Baker Books, Grand Rapids, and Apollos, Leicester, 1993; 254pp., £14.99; ISBN 0 8010 3021 8 (USA), 0 8511 435 0 (UK)

This is a key book indeed for all who love that kind of interpretation of Scripture, so readily attributable to John Calvin, which properly unfolds the mind of the writer and at the same time conveys the vital message of the Holy Spirit to the mind and heart of the reader. Surely he was not only the one who merits this description, but he was the foremost expositor of all time, and one to whom any biblical scholar or preacher worth his salt readily refers.

Willem van't Spijker, the writer of the foreword, aptly describes de Greef's introduction to the entire corpus of the writings of Calvin (who produced 'more in the space of thirty years than any other one person can adequately study and digest in an entire lifetime') as a 'guidebook to the vast quantity of secondary literature on Calvin and also an orientation to the many writings that flowed from Calvin's own pen. This is the kind of book that is among the materials given to a traveller about to embark on a fascinating journey. It contains descriptions of the route, calls attention to points of interest here and there, offers us views which even today take us by surprise.... Calvin himself is a reliable guide to a time in need of the reminder that, in all situations, human beings stand before the face of God.'

The first third of the guide is given over to a brief life of Calvin, punctuated by appropriate references to letters, which should be pursued to give deeper insights into the genius of the Reformer and his biblically conceived charisma. The last chapter is devoted to some examination of these letters. Every page is also well peppered with footnotes referring to secondary literature.

Most important of Calvin's writings were what T.H.L.Parker has called his twin-towered cathedral, the *Institutes* and the *Commentaries*, the former being a companion to the latter. The *Institutes*, of course, is Calvin's *magnum opus* of biblical theology, to which the late Dr D.M. Lloyd-Jones referred a young preacher (together with Hodge's *Systematic Theology* and the Westminster symposium's *The Infallible Word*) with the words, 'If you master these, you really need no more!'

The development of the six editions of the *Institutes*, in Latin and French, between 1536, a tract particularly for new Christians, and the definitive edition of 1559, which is in effect a near-exhaustive exposition of the Apostles' Creed, is traced in Chapter 8. Chapter 3 deals not only

with the background and writing of each of the commentaries and their dedicatory epistles, but also with a complete survey of Calvin's other expository works, *i.e.* his lectures and sermons, enumerating those sermons which as yet have not been published.

Calvin's applied theology is to be found in the discussion at some length of his published debates and tracts, including those which strove for Christian unity (for instance, the *Confession of Faith concerning the Lord's Supper* and the *Consensus Tigurinus* of 1549, agreement with Bullinger and Zurich), as well as his polemic outbursts against the Anabaptists and the 'libertines', the *Reply to Cardinal Sadoletto*, the *Treatise on Relics*, and others.

The value of this brief but meaty work is threefold. First, it provides an introduction to all who would embark on being a student of the greatest biblical expositor of all time. Secondly, it offers a flip-through reference for those who are already well-seasoned in Calvin's works. Thirdly, it enables anyone who wishes to know who Calvin was and what is his place in history and theology, to attain just that and to be inspired, perhaps, to want to know more.

A word of warning, therefore, to the intended new student of Calvin: de Greef gives only the story of Calvin and the background to his works, with very little of the flavour of his writings. This can only come from reading the text of Calvin himself.

*Peter Cook, St Andrews, Cheadle Hulme*

## **A Commentary on 1 John**

Robert S. Candlish

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1993 (reprint of 1877 edition); 577pp., £12.95; ISBN 0 85151 662 9

Among the many associates of Thomas Chalmers, perhaps none were more noteworthy than Edward Irving and Robert Candlish. The former was Chalmers' assistant at St John's Glasgow in his earlier days, is well known as the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and has become a hero of many Pentecostals and Charismatics in recent years.

Less well known outside Scottish Reformed evangelical circles is Robert Smith Candlish. He was minister of St George's Edinburgh and, with Chalmers, was one of the principals in the founding of the Free Church of Scotland. He succeeded Chalmers both in the Chair of Divinity at New College and in prominence in the Free Church. A founder of the Evangelical Alliance, he became Principal of New College in 1862. Foremost among his writings was the commentary under review. When looked at in the light of the teachings of Irving and his successors, it demonstrates that no one grouping has the monopoly over dynamic spiritual renewal. The commentary may indeed well be described as a thorough examination of biblical Trinitarian renewal.

If Irving and his supposed successors in the present day renewal movement have laid themselves open to the charge of neglecting in-depth biblical exposition, many of those who have reacted against the Charismatic movement are hardly guiltless of the counter-charge of reducing the apostles' doctrine to mere cerebral orthodoxy. In these respects, Candlish sets us all on a right course. He leads us quietly, step by step, through the letter from the pen of the disciple so loved by Christ. He teaches us to meditate (rather than speculate) on the objective truths contained within the letter, then directs us to open our hearts to spiritual renewal and reformation of Christian conduct inspired by those very truths.

Candlish constantly stresses the need for new birth and adoption as the sons of God, without which we can walk only in darkness and unrighteousness of life, lacking intimate knowledge of and fellowship with the Trinitarian God. Only when, through faith, we have passed from darkness to light, from death to life, may we begin to learn what it is to abide in Christ, draw spiritual sustenance from him and be led along the paths of light, righteousness and love. Only then can we find victory over the world and its destructive influences and withstand its prince, the antichrist, the father of all that is false, not least in religion.

The commentary is divided into four sections outlining the conditions for divine fellowship between God and his people; the nature of light, producing the guileless spirit (which is its primary condition), righteousness and the secret of sinlessness (which is its intermediate condition), love (which is its ultimate condition) and the divine fellowship itself, which conjointly overcomes the world and the antichrist.

The sections are made up of forty-six relatively short and simply constructed lectures, each of which consists of a brief introduction to the text under consideration, followed by two or three principal points, again sub-divided into a few short secondary points. Nevertheless, the lectures need to be read several times in order to extract the full measure of the wholesome teaching. Candlish moves steadily through the letter verse by verse, phrase by phrase, word by word, in each unit of thought, enlarging and applying to the reader the implications.

This is not a technical commentary; there are no background considerations, the grammatical and critical work has been consigned to the preparation. In his own words, Candlish's aim is 'to bring out the general scope and tenor of the apostles' teaching as simply and clearly as I can.' Certainly the most valuable of all his practical teaching is to be found in Lecture 41 on prayer, for which alone the book is worth buying.

The commentary thus merits a careful and meditative study, it provides a book for spiritual exercise in sanctification and mortification, a guide to renewal, trinitarian and biblical, through fellowship with the Father in the Son, 'His own good Spirit helping us'.

*Peter Cook, St Andrews, Cheadle Hulme*

## **What's Wrong with Preaching Today?**

A.N. Martin

Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1992; 29pp., 95p; ISBN 0 85151 632 7

This short booklet was originally published in 1967, the year in which it was delivered as an address to the Ministers' Conference of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the USA. It is in two parts, dealing first with 'The Man' and then with 'The Message'. The first part is based on the author's biblically-based conviction that the efficacy of preaching is largely dependent upon the nature and spiritual character of the person doing the preaching. That is to say, preaching is not a performance, it takes place when God uses a man to declare his Word. To prepare for this task the preacher needs to prepare not only his message but also himself. Martin gives attention to various aspects of this preparation including the personal devotional life and secret prayer.

It is also the case, however, that no matter how well qualified and prepared the preacher might be spiritually, his message must also be well prepared. Martin points to the need for solid biblical content, solid doctrinal substance and practical application. The preacher must never peddle his own opinions or ideas, rather his function is to take the Word of God and expound it to the people of God. The text must be exegeted, its doctrinal relation to other texts must be explained and then the whole must be applied.

Finally, the manner in which this message is communicated also comes in for attention. It must be preached with an urgency and a conviction which can come only from the Holy Spirit. This is a useful little booklet and is to be commended.

*A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theological Institute*

## **Divine Government**

R.T. France

S.P.C.K., London, 1990; 135pp., £7.99;  
ISBN 0 281 04471 6

The term 'the kingdom of God' in the synoptic gospels is, like the 'Son of Man', one of the most hermeneutically elusive phrases in the New Testament. So it is hardly surprising to find yet another New Testament scholar turning his attention to it. What is more surprising is that, though he is best known for his work on Matthew's gospel, here he has written a book subtitled 'God's Kingship in the Gospel of Mark'. But as he argues himself, 'Mark is a more limited, and in some ways less developed, record of Jesus, and for that reason a suitable starting point for an attempt to get as close as we can to what Jesus Himself taught, and

thought, about the Kingdom of God'. The book, in fact, is the more or less unaltered text of a series of lectures delivered in Australia, and, as such, has retained the engaging robust directness of the lecture medium but without sacrificing too much academic rigour in detail.

This detailed argument comes through especially in the core thesis of the book, that the phrase 'kingdom of God' has to be understood dynamically in terms of active rule and authority, rather than statically or spatially. France argues trenchantly and, I think, convincingly for this dynamic understanding of *he basileia tou theou*, to the extent that he prefers the rendering 'divine government' which he adopted for the title of the book.

Having established this understanding, the rest of the book seeks 'to unpack some of the rich content which Mark has included in his use of the phrase, as a key to his understanding of what it was that Jesus came to do'. France investigates his material along traditional historical-critical lines in five short but cogently argued chapters. The result is an interesting and persuasive book, accompanied by notes which engage the scholarly literature and provide an entry point for the reader wishing to pursue particular lines of enquiry.

This is a book which can easily be read at a single sitting, though its episodic lecture-structure encourages a more extended, reflective approach which helps the reader get more from the text. Dr France has produced a work which is both scholarly and homiletically suggestive, and is at the same time eminently readable – in short, a useful addition to the study library.

*Alan Macgregor, Kirkconnel*

### **Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**

Edited by Walter A. Elwell, abridged by Peter Toon

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1991; 569pp., £19.99; ISBN 0 8010.3210 5

*The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (CEDT)* is a scaled-down and up-dated version of the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (EDT)* published in 1984. Around 200 articles have been cut out of *EDT*, and the remaining articles abridged. Despite this trimming down, *CEDT* still contains over 1000 articles and aims to be comprehensive. It deals with most issues in doctrine and practice which arise directly from Scripture. It also follows these issues as they came to be discussed in the development of the church's thinking. This means that the reader is introduced to a large number of influential thinkers in the history of the church. Various religious and philosophical approaches from outwith the Christian tradition are also covered. *CEDT* also aims to be understandable. The publishers say that the goal was 'that the scholar find the dictionary correct; the layman usable'. *CEDT* is particularly 'designed for those who want to quickly find broad, general definitions and facts'.

Contributors to the *CEDT* include many of the leading names in the evangelical world, as J.I. Packer, Carl F.H. Henry, F.F. Bruce, G.W. Bromiley. But over 260 contributors are listed and, as the publishers say, 'no attempt has been made to enforce uniformity'. An example of this lack of uniformity might be found when the reader compares the article on 'Mariology' with that on 'Mary, Assumption of'. In the latter, the belief that Mary was sinless and was assumed body and soul into heaven to be crowned Queen of Heaven is clearly identified with the Roman Catholic Church and the comment is made, 'There is no explicit biblical basis for this teaching'. However, in the article on 'Mariology', there are statements like 'She is Queen of Heaven... Mary's involvement in salvation makes her co-redemptrix along with Christ' without any indication that the views being described are peculiar to the tradition of the R.C. Church. Perhaps this omission occurred as an accident during the difficult work of scaling down this particular contribution from its original length. Similarly, although the reader is told after the article on 'Deism' that he may seek further light on the subject by reading the article on 'Lessing', Lessing seems to have slipped quietly out between 'Leo I, the Great' and 'Lewis, Clive Staples'!

Generally, *CEDT* is strongly committed to basic evangelical emphases. Now and again however I had a sense of disappointment, as with the weak statement, under 'Euthanasia', 'Both revealed and nonreligious principles suggest that active euthanasia is less than God's best.' On the other hand, there are many articles in which the traditional evangelical position on difficult questions is expressed with great skill and economy of language, as in the brief article on 'Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit': 'It is the enlightened, wilful, high-handed nature of such sin that makes it unforgiveable.' In that and other contributions, the data from Scripture are arranged and presented in an impressive way. Such articles have the potential, not only to inform the reader, but also to impart spiritual edification.

To sum up, *CEDT* is not perfect; but as an attempt to provide a theological dictionary which is accurate, accessible and attractively presented it achieves a high level of success.

*John Tallach, Alford Place Church, Aberdeen*

## **Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness**

Eugene H. Peterson

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids / Gracewing, Leominster, England,  
1992; 197pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 8028 3705 0

*Under the Unpredictable Plant* comes with a glowing recommendation from William H. Willimon of Duke University, describing it as '*the new book for pastors*'. Some readers may agree with Willimon. I felt that the increased sense of expectation only served to heighten my disappointment. Part of my disappointment may stem from the fact that I am reading Peterson within a Scottish context, while he writes primarily and explicitly for an American readership. His basic insights are transferable to the British situation, and others may enthuse about his book more than I.

This book has three different aspects. It confronts a contemporary issue, protesting against religious careerism. It builds upon spiritual insights, drawn from the book of Jonah. It presents Peterson's spiritual autobiography. Each of these is interesting. Trying to combine the three is difficult. At times, Peterson's insights into the prophecy of Jonah are striking. At other times, Jonah appears to disappear from view more than one might have expected in a book whose chapter-titles allude to Jonah, and whose chapters each begin with a text from Jonah. I think here of Peterson's lengthy account of his interest in Dostoevsky (pp. 49-67). This section is based on Peterson's chapter, 'Fyodor Dostoevsky: God and Passion', in *Reality and the Vision*, edited by Philip Yancey. Does *such* a large section of Dostoevsky really fit into this book? At times, I wondered if there was not too much of Peterson's own story in this book. Even if you do not read the whole book, it would be worth noting Peterson's insights on Jonah: e.g. 'Going to Nineveh to preach was not a coveted assignment for a Hebrew prophet with good references. But Tarshish was something else... exotic... adventure... a far-off and sometimes idealized port... a distant paradise.' Peterson shares his own experience: 'I gradually gave up my illusions of Tarshish and settled into the realities of Nineveh. But not easily, and not all at once'. You may find yourselves wanting to read more, but do not read with the preconception that this is '*the new book for pastors*'!

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

## An Introduction to the Christian Faith

Robin Keeley (ed.)

Lynx Communications, Oxford, 1992; 352pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 7459 2384 4

This is an updated version of *The Lion Handbook of Christian Belief* (1982). There are differences. This is a paperback, while the original was hardback. The original had plenty of colour and photographs. This version has no colourful photographs. It is text only. The significant differences, in favour of the present edition, are the inclusion of questions 'for further thinking' and lists of 'Bible references'. The questions are found at the end of twenty-six of the thirty chapters, while the Bible references are placed at the close of seventeen of the chapters. These additions will be particularly helpful to the student. A preacher planning to preach on a given theme may find the questions helpful in suggesting a line of approach which might be taken. Leaders of study groups will find much to clarify their own thinking and to stimulate discussion. While this edition lacks the eye-catching colour of the original, it remains very accessible to those who have no formal theological education. We have distinguished academics, writing in a way that is simple and clear, *e.g.* D.A. Carson on 'The Personal God'. We have distinguished churchmen making a significant contribution, *e.g.* George Carey on 'Made in the Image of God', 'Good News of Freedom' and 'Finding Faith'. But this is by no means a book produced solely by distinguished academics and churchmen. Among the ninety-four contributors, there is great variety. This is not simply a compendium of biblical and systematic theology. It provides quite an education in practical theology – *e.g.* articles on 'Depression', 'Grief', 'Physical Handicap', 'Christian Healing', 'Violence and Non-Violence', 'Marriage and Divorce' – in historical theology – the series of articles on 'People and Movements through the Centuries' – and in comparative religion – 'How Muslims (Hindus, Marxists) see Jesus', 'God in Other Religions', 'Christianity and Marxism'. There is also a fairly substantial glossary. It is well worth reading through the whole book over a period of time – preferably not with the haste required for book review purposes! It would be best read within the context of an ordered plan for study, teaching, preaching and learning through discussion. Even if you never read the whole book, it is well worth having as a reference book, which will help you to think theologically without getting too bogged down in academic technicalities.

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian's Parish Church, Dunfermline*

## The Glory of Christ

Peter Lewis

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1992; 505pp., £9.99; ISBN 0 340 56894 1

This is a book of quality. It richly deserves the praises accorded it by the publishers – ‘this magnificent work’ – and by Terry Virgo – ‘this outstanding book’. Dr R.T. France, Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, describes it as ‘rich material from a preacher-theologian’. Its quality derives from the fact that Lewis has learned from many others. *The Glory of Christ* is primarily a study of the Scriptures from one who has spent much time, over many years, learning from God’s Word. He has drawn much upon commentaries and dictionaries, notably from the *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (he refers to seven commentaries in this series), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* and the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (from each of these, he cites twelve articles). The range of his reading is most impressive. There are over 750 references to other writers. Often, Lewis has a better way of putting things than many of the scholars he quotes. He writes as ‘a preacher-theologian’ who provides us with ‘a towering book of pastoral scholarship’.

In thirty-four chapters, Lewis explores many aspects of the Christian faith, focusing attention on its central figure, our Lord Jesus Christ. I have highlighted the scholarly qualities of this book, since Lewis himself tends to play down this aspect. Reading the book’s opening words, ‘This is a book of theology for everybody’, the more scholarly among us might suspect that it is a bit lightweight. This would be a mistaken impression. The reader who intends to read *The Glory of Christ* from beginning to end faces a demanding challenge. It should, of course, be said that this book need not be read from cover to cover. The material is well organized and the chapter titles give a clear indication of their content. The reader can easily identify a particular matter of interest and then read the appropriate chapter.

The Elders and members of Cornerstone (Evangelical Church, Nottingham), are greatly privileged to have, as their pastor, such an able expositor of God’s Word. The reader can benefit greatly from this expository ministry by reading this book ‘about Jesus... written so that as we get nearer he might get *bigger* – in our minds,... hearts and ... lives!’

*Charles M. Cameron, St Ninian’s Parish Church, Dunfermline.*