

## REVIEWS

### **The Community of the Word: toward an evangelical ecclesiology**

Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (eds)

InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2005; 291 pp., £14.99

ISBN-10: 1-84474-082-X; ISBN-13: 978-1-84474-082-6

In a day where there seems to be a lack of any clear consensus within the evangelical church as to what the church should be, I welcomed with eager anticipation the opportunity to read *The Community of the Word: toward an evangelical ecclesiology*. With high hopes I was looking forward to a specific critique of such current issues as the so-called 'emerging church' and the role of the church in an increasingly secular society. However, *The Community of the Word*, while generally interesting in its treatment of certain topical issues, failed to provide the truly biblical kind of basis for an evangelical ecclesiology that I was expecting to find.

Perhaps this failure is due in part to the fact that *The Community of the Word* is a compilation of fourteen essays written by thirteen different academic theologians, mostly North American, who are representative of a broad range of theological backgrounds and ecclesiastical perspectives. I am sure that anyone reading this book would find it very scholarly and stimulating, but, I would have to add, probably more beneficial as an academic study than an immediately practical guide to developing an evangelical ecclesiology within their own particular church setting. It would provide a good read for the theological student wishing to explore the evangelical ecclesiology of the church in terms of its recent history, its view of the sacraments and its moral and missionary role within society generally.

What is helpful is the way in which *The Community of the Word* is divided into five parts, presenting a careful progression in the study of the church beginning with certain historical perspectives, e.g. high-church Protestantism and North American dispensationalism with their respective continuing influences on ecclesiology and eschatology.

In Chapter 3 of Part one, Jonathan Wilson explores the contemporary ecclesiology of four popular authors, including Rick Warren and Brian McLaren. Wilson notes that 'it is difficult to discern any ecclesiology that guides Warren's book [*The Purpose-Driven Life*]'. Of McLaren's ecclesiology he writes, '[it] seems driven by the fear of irrelevance.... But fear of irrelevance is not the foundation of ecclesiology; the fear of the Lord is'. He concludes that what evangelicals really need is 'an evangelical ecclesiology, as an account of the church that holds us accountable to the gospel'.

Part two, 'Locating the Church Dogmatically', builds on this theme and really gets to the meat of the book. It delves into the significance of the church's nature in its mystical union with the risen Christ. There is a welcome and persuasive emphasis on the need for the true church to be characterised by its deference to Holy Scripture; and for Christians to be speakers and doers of the Word, by living lives that are morally distinctive and marked by holiness. The section concludes with mission, and with the necessity of the church to be defined and to act as part of the larger mission of God in the outworking of his love for the whole of creation.

Parts three, four and five were for me heavier going and seemed perhaps more applicable to the individualistic North American context than to our own. They tackled respectively the issues of the church as moral community, the church as sacramental community and locating the church culturally. Some truths are, however, universal as William Abraham states, 'The church is a moral and spiritual community that is constantly beset with its own failings and corruptions.' By way of encouragement he quickly adds that, 'The church is always a community of holiness in the making.' What comes across clearly in these chapters is a welcome emphasis on God's prevenient grace. Craig Carter makes the point that for the church to carry out its mission to be a witness to God's grace it need not be perfect, 'for it [the church] is a community of forgiveness, reconciliation and love.... For this reason the gospel call to enter the church can be heard by those outside as truly good news.'

However in today's multi-faith culture it would have been helpful if some discussion had been included on matters where there is an interface between church and society. For example what practical role should the church play in our state schools or in the administration of government at all levels?

*The Community of the Word* is not the easiest book to read, but it does raise many interesting issues on the nature and mission of the church today. For anyone involved in Christian ministry it will therefore

prove helpful in identifying and confronting issues which threaten to distort or distract the church.

*Iain Cameron, UFM Scottish Secretary, Glasgow*

### **Scripture Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine**

R. C. Sproul

P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, 2005; 210 pp., £10.95

ISBN-10: 1-59638-010-1; ISBN-13: 978-1-59638-010-3

In 1973 R. C. Sproul, a foremost evangelical leader in America, invited a number of prominent evangelical scholars to present a series of papers on the subject of biblical inerrancy. This took place in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Subsequently a brief statement of faith on the subject of inerrancy was published. The need to strengthen this foundation led to further effort and in 1977 the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy was formed. An outcome of that was the publication in 1978 of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. Every issue germane to inerrancy is addressed in this fifteen-page statement. Contained within it are nineteen articles of Affirmation and Denial. This vital document appears at the end of the volume.

The book is presented in two parts. Part one consists of four essays: 1. *Sola Scriptura: Crucial to Evangelicalism*, 2. *The Establishment of Scripture*, 3. *The case for Inerrancy: A Methodological Analysis*, and 4. *The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit*.

In Part one there are telling quotations from the Reformation creeds. The claim of Rome that the Scriptures and the Church are both infallible is refuted. J. I. Packer is helpfully cited: 'What Luther thus voiced at Worms shows the essential motivation and concern, theological and religious, of the entire Reformation movement: namely that the Word of God alone must rule, and no Christian man dare do other than allow it to enthrone itself in his conscience and heart' (p. 27).

The heretical teaching of Rudolf Bultmann is explained. G. C. Berkouwer is brought into the frame. He had his defects (he shrank from the notion of verbal inspiration – p. 64). The position of Karl Barth is discussed (pp. 83-4). Calvin's considerable contribution to the subject of the internal witness of Scripture (the Testimonium) is opened up. Neo-orthodox views of the Testimonium (Emil Brunner and Thomas F. Torrance) are analysed (pp. 110-14). The New Testament basis for the Testimonium is discussed (p. 115).

Part two consists of R. C. Sproul's exposition of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, in which he comments on and explains

each of the nineteen articles of affirmation and denial. An example is Article X: The Autographs:

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translation of Scriptures are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original. We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

This work, while it stretches the mind, is not just for scholars and pastors but for all Christians. The faith of every Christian rests on Scripture. If inerrancy is rejected 'grave consequences, both to the individual and to the church' ensue (p. 186).

I testify that at the commencement of my Christian life in the mid-1950s I read B. B. Warfield's *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (P&R Publishing, 1948 edition). I found Warfield's exposition of 'all Scripture is God-breathed' (2 Tim. 3:16) compelling. For me the question of inerrancy was settled once and for all and has strengthened my faith ever since. This work by Sproul is a welcome addition. It not only covers all the principal issues but it is also a mini historical theology which portrays the battle lines from the time of Warfield to the present day.

Since Warfield, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner educated an entire generation of scholars, evangelical seminaries have deviated from inerrancy. For instance in the early 1960s the well-known Fuller Theological Seminary abandoned commitment to inerrancy. But the Lord raises up leaders to defend the truth. R. C. Sproul is foremost among these.

Apart from battles that rage within Christianity we are reminded of the relevance of this subject by the challenge of Islam. Muslims believe that the Koran was dictated to Mohammed and is the unmediated word of God. Muslims put their trust in that one man's experience and in the book given through him. Christians follow revelation given progressively over a period of about 1,400 years. This book *Scripture Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine* is about that revelation. Clearly written, well presented, with indices and references. I commend it highly.

*Erroll Hulse, Associate Pastor, Leeds Reformed Baptist Church*

## Evangelicals and Tradition

D. H. Williams

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005; 192 pp., £9.99

ISBN-10: 0-8010-2713-6; ISBN-13: 978-0-8010-2713-0

D. H. Williams, professor of patristics and historical theology at Baylor University in Texas, has produced this volume as part of a series called 'Evangelical *Ressourcement*; Ancient Sources for the Church's Future'. Dr Williams is the editor of the series, whose stated aim is to address the ways in which the modern church, in its contemporary challenges, may draw upon the thought and life of the early church for assistance. In the Series Preface (p. 9), we are told that the term *ressourcement* was coined by French Roman Catholic writers in the mid-twentieth century, in their conviction that declared Christians must return to the sources of the ancient Christian tradition. Each volume in the series is devoted to a particular theme related to biblical and theological interpretation.

The author begins his book with the observation that the 'great tradition' is now being discussed by pastors and laity within denominations that heretofore have often regarded 'tradition' as being irrelevant or obstructive to Christian piety. He notes that, in the centuries following the Council of Trent, many Protestants tended to regard tradition as something 'other', in competition with the authority of Scripture. Roman Catholic tradition has been seen as something monolithic and unchanging, but the author notes that some Roman Catholic writers are attacking that idea, showing that even their own tradition has been subject to growth and change. Williams shows how Irenaeus is a good example of this: in his writings he often gives the idea of the Christian faith as a homogeneous unity, but in his inter-church politics, he shows himself aware that there were differences *within the tradition*.

The beginning of chapter I of the book gives valuable insights into what it meant to be a Christian in the early years of the faith, set against the pagan religiosity of the Roman Empire. Williams shows what was expected of Christians, and what was available to them in resources. In a Christian society which was largely 'functionally illiterate' (p. 31), the tradition would have assumed great importance and would have loomed large in catechesis. One of the author's strongest points is that the tradition existed before the writings that we call the New Testament had come together in their final form, and that the tradition itself was regarded as canonical. He is aware that some from a strongly Protestant background may disagree with the idea of the tradition being canonical,

and he rightly notes that the 'time lines' (i.e. 'the New Testament period' followed by 'the patristic era', etc.) are largely artificial in their construction, and that they do not allow for the activity of the church during the first few centuries in the canonization of the Scriptures. He spends considerable time in discussion of Irenaeus and Tertullian and their ideas about the *regula fidei*. Williams notes that the 'canonization of Scripture' was a rather untidy affair, but he believes that the conclusions as to what was and was not canonical were accurate.

The author notes that at the outset Scripture and tradition were perceived as compatible. It was only during the later Middle Ages that extrabiblical traditions began to become gigantic and to be placed on a par with the Scripture (p. 88). In the patristic era, the Scriptures and tradition were seen as supporting each other in defense of the true faith. The last part of the book cites various passages from the patristic period, showing how these sources may be of great value even in churches which have not been overly interested in the great tradition.

Dr Williams' book is introductory in nature, not written for the specialist in patristics, but especially for those from what he calls a 'free church' Protestant background, who have taken their stance on the canonical Scriptures. His book endeavours to show that tradition is not the bugbear that it has sometimes been seen to be. He shows that the magisterial Protestant Reformation was unable to jettison the patristic tradition (p. 122), but instead made great use of it, and that traditional Protestantism is more indebted to the patristic writings than has often been realized. The book is essentially irenic in tone and makes a good introduction to the subject. My main criticism of the book is that it is almost *too* irenic; one wonders why a Protestant Reformation was ever necessary, if the faith held by the Protestants was so firmly embedded in the tradition. The problem, of course, lies with later developments in the church and the rise of the extrabiblical traditions mentioned above, but some of these very traditions were seen as an outgrowth of statements in the writers of the patristic period. His book does provide a needed corrective to the artificial 'time lines' that Protestants sometimes impose on the history of the church and of the canonization of the New Testament, and as such it makes a welcome contribution. For those who are beginning to explore this area, Dr Williams' book will be a good introduction.

*Bruce A. McDonald, Texas Wesleyan University, Fort Worth, Texas*

## **The Faith of the Outsider. Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story**

Frank Anthony Spina

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005; 206 pp., £9.99

ISBN-10: 0-8028-2864-7; ISBN-13: 978-0-8028-2864-4

This scholarly study of the insider and outsider is a necessary contribution to understanding and communicating the gospel in the age of globalization. For the first time since the fifth century, Christianity has become a non-Western religion. The Western world which represents only 13% of the world's population is in the process of giving way to the church in the majority non-white world. We live in an era that promotes inclusiveness, multiculturalism and the popular acceptance of religious diversity as supreme values. The tension between insider and outsider is one that every reader and preacher of the Bible has to engage with.

Evangelical Christians, as much as anyone else, need help to read the Bible from a wider cultural perspective and this is what this volume offers. The one and only God/people of God is a thread that runs through human history and finds its fulfillment in Israel's Messiah and the subsequent reign of God. The very idea of God's chosen people is one that is almost scandalous in an age that tries to be accepting. The same may be said about the biblical claims concerning the uniqueness of Christ. The 'scandal of particularity' in the election of Israel as God's chosen people in the Old Testament and of Jesus Christ in the New is prominent here.

If 'Israel's divinely engendered exclusivity... is part of the Old Testament's warp and woof', how is it possible that the world's peoples can be reconciled through the exclusive election of Israel? How truly inclusive is the gospel mediated through a Jew? The objective behind the exclusive election of Israel was to be inclusive. God's exclusive election of Israel's ancestors had an inclusive purpose: the blessing of all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3). We are helped to respond to such questions by this study of six Bible passages. The author respects that in Scripture 'the bottom line is that the story itself and the manner in which it is told are determinative for getting the meaning of the narrative' (p. 11). He is able to interpret what is not being told as much as what is.

Though Esau was an outsider in terms of divine election and promise, he displays as much of grace as any Israelite insider ever did. Tamar was an outsider who is still obscure but we discover how she acted in a manner that was decisive for the future of God's people and God's world. 'Though not one of the elected insiders, she saw to it that the chosen

people's mission stayed on course' (p. 51). Rahab, Naaman and Ruth are described (together with the sailors and Ninevites in the Jonah story) as the most unlikely of outsiders to come to a profound insider's faith.

There is only one story from the New Testament and the focus is on the Gospel of John, where no outsider would have been any more unlikely than the Samaritan woman at the well. The author explains that she not only gives us 'a window into that important Gospel but also helps us understand the roles of insiders and outsiders in the other Gospels as well' (p. 11). The outsider theme is clearly at the core of the New Testament message.

This volume will be a valuable reference guide with a separate section of detailed notes on the biblical passages discussed and three indexes (names and places, subjects, Scripture references). The book is very accessible and refined by the author having preached on these passages in a variety of churches. I highly recommend it to all preachers and students of the Scriptures.

*Robert Calvert, Scots International Church, Rotterdam*

### **Lord and Servant: A Covenant Christology**

Michael S. Horton

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2005; 282 pp., £16.99

ISBN-10: 0-664-22863-1; ISBN-13: 978-0-664-22863-7

Michael Horton is Professor of Apologetics and Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. Building on his well-received *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama*, this is the second in a three-volume project which takes up key themes in theology and explores them in covenantal and eschatological perspective. The book is in three parts.

Part One, entitled 'Lord', begins with a 'covenantal prolegomenon' in which Horton argues that the covenant of grace is the place where a Stranger really does meet us. He then discusses the character of God, especially as his attributes are seen in action, expressed in the strong verbs of Scripture. In the covenant which this God establishes with his creatures there is real partnership, but the Lord of the covenant always retains his transcendence and so anthropological analogies in the drama must not be read as limitations on Lordship. Horton then turns to reflect on creation, which was by the speech-act of the triune God. In the covenant of creation, nature is affirmed in its integrity, neither divine nor demonic; the other can be completely different *and* good.



In Part Two, 'Servant', he develops a biblical anthropology, suggesting ways in which this might interact with recent perspectives on the postmodern self. He insists on the historicity of Adam and Eve as indispensable to theology, and he defines the image of God in humankind as official, ethical and eschatological. He then looks at the Fall. Adam failed the trial, and covenant solidarity in him now means collective human estrangement. Throughout this section, Horton is concerned that we begin with the biblical story and allow ourselves to be told who we are, rather than beginning with metaphysical questions about human nature.

Part Three, 'Lord and Servant', opens with a systematic-theological treatment of the two natures of Christ and the importance of this for salvation. Jesus is both covenant Lord and Servant, because only Yahweh can save and because the covenant of our creation must be fulfilled in the meritorious human life of the Saviour. Horton then deals with contemporary challenges to sacrificial atonement and defends the view that God bears his sentence himself, the judge and the judged. In his final two chapters he adopts the rubric of the threefold office and develops his argument largely in terms of biblical theology. After a treatment of the Prophet as mediator, messenger and messiah, he turns to the Priest and his active self-offering in life and in death. He concludes with the King, the one who on the cross defeated the powers and who has now taken up his rightful Lordship. One day he will hand the kingdom to the Father, as the faithful representative of his covenant people.

Horton will raise the profile of federal theology with this volume and bring it to a new audience. Along the way important historical debates are revisited and issues in contemporary theology are addressed. Some of this assumes a measure of familiarity with past and present discussion, and those like me who are not well read in recent philosophical and systematic theology will find some of the terminology opaque. Among the many comments which might be made, let me offer just two general and positive ones.

First, Horton shows how much of theology can be organised covenantally. He uses covenant as an architectonic scheme. Like any architectonic structure, covenant does not always need to be visible, so it can underlie and unify much of biblical revelation without its specific vocabulary always explicit on the surface. Scattered through Horton's book, here are some of the themes which covenant unites for him: transcendence and immanence, freedom from the world and for the world, epistemology and ethics, Christology from above and from below, Christology and pneumatology, *historia salutis* and *ordo salutis*, the

judicial and the relational, I-experience and we-experience, the personal and the cosmic, the already and the not yet, and so on!

Secondly, the book is refreshingly oriented to Scripture. Horton the systematic theologian engages the sacred text himself, sometimes at length. He also invites mainstream biblical scholars like Walter Brueggemann and N. T. Wright into the discussion. Most significantly, he draws from the riches of his own biblical-theological tradition. There cannot be many scripts where Geerhardus Vos and Meredith Kline are cast alongside Sallie McFague and Jacques Derrida. It is probably not Horton's fault that the shift from one voice to another is not always smooth, as these are people who do not speak one another's languages. If I may suggest that systematic theologians are from Mars and biblical theologians are from Venus, perhaps they can learn to talk to each other on Planet Covenant, a place for strangers to meet.

There is one index combining subjects and names, but no Scripture index and no bibliography. Perhaps these omissions will be made good in the third volume. We look forward to the completion of this project and also to a spin-off book. A footnote here alerts us to a 'labyrinthine' chapter on the Trinity which had to be pulled from the original draft and which will be published separately.

*Alasdair I. Macleod, St Andrews Free Church, St Andrews, Fife*

### **The Greatest is Charity: the life of Andrew Reed, preacher and philanthropist**

Ian J. Shaw

Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2005; 432 pp., £18.95

ISBN-19: 0-85234-593-3; ISBN-13: 978-0-85234-593-1

Andrew Reed (1787-1862) was a congregational minister in the east end of London, in one congregation, from 1811 to 1861. With C. H. Spurgeon's famous ministry beginning in 1854, Shaw asserts, 'As a preacher Andrew Reed stands amongst the front rank of his generation' (p. 380).

His fifty-year ministry was devoted to 'the ordinary means': 'Biblical preaching, consistent prayer, faithful pastoral work and godly living' (p. 220), as his convinced road to the best of blessings. He took in almost 2500 new members, most being converted under his preaching, and there were periods that can be recognised as true 'revivals'. Reed longed for revival and examined the subject very closely, including warnings against revivalist methods (as advanced in that era by Charles Finney).

Pastorally, Reed was often 'limited' to counselling people affected by his own gospel preaching. There were many of them and he was gifted in it. No one was seriously troubled that home visitation was not his regular practice, with so much else to do.

Reed himself viewed gospel preaching as his own priority, but he was probably better recognised publicly for his charitable work. His stature can be seen in the success he made of both.

He saw the gospel constraining him to care for society's neglected. Huge numbers of people were in desperate straits then, especially in London. Reed responded by founding three institutions for the care of orphans, and eventually two others: for the disabled, and for the terminally ill. All three categories were very poorly provided for by the state. He attracted many eminent supporters for each project, including Queen Victoria herself. Each institution was established in cooperation with people from other ecclesiastical persuasions, as he bore no spirit of competition. However, doctrinal differences did eventually arise, resulting in divisions. Shaw does not present Reed as a man without fault, yet his remarkable qualities predominate. He was a superb administrator, with no self-importance.

Some of the establishments he founded are still traceable today, including one, now bearing Reed's name, in Cobham where I live. It tends to be regarded as 'a smart private school', but keeps some provision for needy boys, attuned to its origins as an orphanage.

This book is a skilled telling of a life full of activity. Ian Shaw brings masses of detail together but there is an enjoyable flow to the story. Only when explaining Reed's (to us) unusual funding methods for all five charities did the detail feel slightly repetitive.

Shaw includes chapters devoted to issues of theology or policy that concerned Andrew Reed. This is helpful for our instruction and to appreciate Reed's qualities (his activism was firmly gospel-based).

Although Reed did make some errors of judgement, the lasting impression is of a man with a true heart for God. Shaw's book is a lifelike portrait, not avoiding 'warts', but there are few to be seen. Quotations from Reed's own diaries show a man very sensitive to his own faults in the light of the holiness of his Lord, but diligently setting out to rectify them, in God's grace.

In hardback, with good quality production, a highly readable text, full endnotes for sources, and a useful index, this is an accessible biography, at an ideal standard for the more advanced Christian. It is a story that should also interest some involved in social welfare.

Ian Shaw has done us a service with this book, as have Evangelical Press. Andrew Reed was neither a Scotsman, nor a Presbyterian, but he was clearly a man worthy of anyone's attention. We need to hear more of the many remarkable 'unknown' men of both past and present.

*David D. Miller, Cobham Presbyterian Church*

## **Standing on the Rock: A History of Stirling Baptist Church**

Brian R. Talbot

Stirling Baptist Church, Stirling, 2005; 185 pp., £10; No ISBN

Brian Talbot, whose important study of the making of the Scottish Baptist Denomination *The Search for a Common Identity* (Paternoster, Carlisle, 2003) began as a thesis for the University of Stirling, has put Scottish Baptists and many others further into his debt by this detailed and lively account of a church which has reached its bicentenary. As in many Scottish towns, the origins of the church in Stirling are tangled and sometimes obscure, Scottish and English varieties of polity interweaving in a sometimes bewildering way. Talbot carefully sets the birth of the church in its Scottish ecclesiastical context, and traces what can be discovered of the little Bible-loving but fissiparous bodies that carried the Baptist name in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first outstanding name associated with the churches is that of Malcolm McMillan, pastor of the 'English' church from 1829, whose brothers founded the publishing firm. In 1850 the now mostly united church called James Culross, who remained for 20 years and under whose ministry a strong church was built up, which moved into its own building in Murray Place in 1854. Culross, a friend of Spurgeon, eventually became President of Bristol Baptist College.

The next pastor was George Yuille, who combined a successful ministry with the Secretaryship of the Baptist Union. John Shearer, William Charteris (a distinguished Army Chaplain) and John Rigley continued the succession of activist and evangelistic pastors. Then Talbot tells us the stories of the church under the leadership of well-remembered men, Donald McCallum and James Taylor, culminating in the adventurous move to the renovated former South Church of Scotland in 1989, and the expanding ministries encouraged by the present pastor, Alasdair Black.

But the story of the church cannot be confined to ministers' biographies. Over the two centuries there have been many devoted and talented women and men whose prayers and vision have sustained and

broadened the work of Stirling Baptist Church. The church has a proud missionary record, with a remarkable number of members going to serve in a variety of overseas posts. In 1995-1996 missionary giving accounted for 21% of the annual budget. Daughter churches at Cornton and St Ninian's have been established and sustained in recent years, and the church has played its full part in Baptist life in the county and the nation. There are many examples of co-operation with other churches in the town in evangelistic and sometimes civic matters.

Stirling Church is a growing Baptist church, with its outreach among marginalised people in the Town Centre, and its current staff of four pastors and an administrator, using an imaginatively developed central building and being willing to allow church plants to develop in the suburbs. Talbot tells the story in careful detail, using minutes, press reports and a general background of Scottish and local historical sources. He bravely ventures into accounts of controversies, and he brings the story up to the moment of publication, which entails many references to living persons. That he does this with both honesty and tact increases the value of the book. The portraits of Pastors are the only illustrations and convey a sense of change over the years. The differing fashions of ministerial dress are nicely illustrated, perhaps especially in the rather ethereal photograph of Alasdair Black!

The book is clearly set out and well indexed, but the type is very small and may deter those whose eyesight is not perfect. Despite that, this is a model history of a local church, and will one hopes be read far beyond Scottish Baptist circles.

*Derek B. Murray, Edinburgh*

### **The Triune God and the Charismatic Movement: A Critical Appraisal of Trinitarian Theology and Charismatic Experience from a Scottish Perspective**

Jim Purves

Paternoster, Carlisle, 2004; 232 pp., £19.99

ISBN-10: 1-84227-321-3; ISBN-13: 978-1-84227-321-0

In this important reworking of his doctoral dissertation, Jim Purves seeks to refine the Trinitarian model that has traditionally shaped Scottish theology. Purves' thesis is that Scottish theology's Nicean, Calvinistic grid errs by considering God ontologically rather than economically, thus relegating the Holy Spirit to little more than an epistemic agent. While Purves' chronicling of this development (chapters 2-4) and his

exploration of several Scottish responses to it (chapters 5-7) is stimulating, the true value of his work lies in his presentation of a Charismatic corrective to the situation.

The foundation for this corrective is laid in the book's opening chapter, where Purves commendably systematizes and classifies the concepts that guide the Charismatic Renewal movement. Most importantly, Purves details the central emphasis of that movement upon the 'ontic actuality of God', which he describes as '*the becomingness of God towards us in His own Being*' (p. 22, emphasis in original). Although this ontic actuality occurs through the Son, as well, the primary present experience of it is through the Spirit and is 'suprarational', for while it is not a purely rational experience, neither is it irrational or contra-rational. Rather, this suprarational experience of God precedes and enhances the rational revelation of him in Scripture.

In his final chapter, Purves uses these concepts to construct a Trinitarian model that accounts for the experience of Charismatic believers and corrects the mistakes of the Scottish tradition. First, Purves argues for a 'bifocal symmetry' that gives equal attention to the ontic actuality of the Son, seen in the Incarnation, and the ontic actuality of the Spirit, met in Charismatic experience. Second, Purves stipulates that, in his ontic actuality, the Spirit works primarily to draw believers into deeper communion with Christ. Thirdly, Purves details the 'twofold procession of the Spirit' that underlies this model (p. 227). In the first instance, there is a procession of the Spirit from the Father to the Incarnate Son. In the second instance, 'there is a procession of the Spirit from the Father to humanity whereby, in being brought by the Spirit into an increasing degree of proximation to Christ, we are enabled by the Spirit to anticipate Christ's relationship with the Father through the Spirit' (p. 227).

In this Trinitarian model, one glimpses the fundamental difficulty of Purves' work, for therein, Purves rejects the *filioque* position, that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. In explicating his model's twofold procession of the Spirit, Purves speaks of the Spirit received by believers as proceeding only from the Father, which results in a separation between the Son and the Spirit that has manifold implications. Simply stated, is the connection between the apprehension of God through the Spirit and the revelation of Christ in Scripture necessary or only incidental? If believers receive the Spirit only from the Father, than the Triune God can be apprehended by the suprarational work of the Spirit independently of the 'rational' revelation of the Son in Scripture. This possibility is embodied in Purves' own work, which

contains multiple references to interviews with individual believers regarding their personal experience, yet not a single scriptural citation. For Purves, in accordance with his Trinitarian model, apprehension of the Triune God can be pursued without recourse to scriptural reflection.

As Purves concedes, 'This work is not an easy read' (p. xvii). Strangely, although footnotes are given to explain some fairly common expressions, much more complex terms and concepts are used with neither comment nor explanation. The glossary at the conclusion of the work is sparse and many concepts remain unexplained, creating significant barriers to a wide readership profiting from this work.

If one is seeking a cogent presentation of the guiding theological concerns of the Charismatic movement, Purves provides a wonderful and thoughtful resource. If one is seeking greater clarity on the mysteries of the Trinity, other resources would prove more helpful.

*Stephen G. Myers, New College, Edinburgh*

## **The Westminster Confession of Faith: A Study Guide**

Rowland S. Ward

New Melbourne Press, Melbourne, 2004; 304 pp., AU\$16

ISBN-10: 0-9586241-8-6; ISBN-13: 978-0-9586241-8-3

The first edition of this book was published in 1992 under the title, *The Westminster Confession for the Church Today*. A second edition, revised and expanded, was published in 1996 under the same title as this third edition, which has also been revised and expanded. For the purpose of his 'analysis and commentary', the author uses his own 'verbal modernisation' of the text of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (henceforth '*Confession*') 'as adopted by the Church of Scotland in 1647'. The author is a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

This book is not aimed at an academic audience but at 'Christians who want a balanced understanding of the Christian faith as understood in the Reformed tradition'. Nor is it in any sense an objective, impartial text, seeking to weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of the *Confession*. The author's intention is not to subject the *Confession* to critical analysis, or to discuss ways in which the *Confession* might be challenged or improved. Rather, it is a work of advocacy and promotion, unashamedly partisan in its support for the *Confession*. Those who want a volume which will summarise the teaching of the *Confession*, together with a clear and simple explanation of its intended meaning, will find this book to be very helpful.

Each chapter begins with the text of one or more sections from the *Confession*. This is followed by a brief commentary, often providing some historical background as well as explanation of the theological points at issue. Towards the end of each chapter there is a section entitled 'Thoughts from Other Minds', where the subject under discussion is addressed by a quotation from one of the other Reformation Confessions, or from a famous scholar in the Reformed tradition, such as Calvin, Turretin, Ames or Bavinck, or from a modern writer, such as John Murray, Palmer Robertson or Carl Trueman. Finally, there is a series of questions for discussion, intended to ensure that the reader has understood the key points.

Throughout the book there are boxed sections in which the author addresses the theme under discussion, making reference to modern debates and stating his own view on the matter. For example, there are sections of this type on 'The Inerrancy Debate', 'Characteristics of Some English Translations' and 'Election and Reprobation: Some Important Points'. These sections, like some of the main commentary itself, are informative in respect of making clear the author's opinion, although not all of those within the Westminster tradition would agree with his analysis.

The appendices are also useful, including as they do a short summary of the form of subscription to the *Confession* in the various Presbyterian churches, an index of subjects covered by the *Confession* and by the *Larger Catechism*, together with a detailed 'Select Bibliography'.

This book will be useful for those who want an introduction to the *Confession* and its teaching. It will also be useful in the training of office-bearers in the Presbyterian churches. In the view of this reviewer, however, it would have been a stronger book if it had faced up more honestly to some of the difficult issues, without immediately rushing to the defence of the authors of the *Confession*. In other words, if it had given more recognition to the fact that Reformed theology is a developing movement and not a system which was finally codified and finalised in 1647. In a day when so few value our historic Presbyterian *Confession*, there is a natural tendency to leap to its defence at every turn but to admit to some of its weaknesses is not incompatible with a recognition of its value.

A. T. B. McGowan, *Highland Theological College, Dingwall*



## The Richness of Augustine: His Contextual and Pastoral Theology

Mark Ellingsen

Westminster/John Knox, Louisville, KY, 2005; xiv+216 pp., £13.99  
ISBN-10: 0-664-22618-3; ISBN-13: 978-0-664-22618-3

Mark Ellingsen has produced a fine study of Augustine which will be a benefit to anyone who picks it up. It is not for the faint-hearted, it must be said. This is primarily due to its subject matter: the theology of perhaps the greatest post-apostolic theologian does not make for light reading. It is also a comprehensive treatment of effectively the whole range of theological *loci*. Thus one coming to this study without an awareness of theological topics and some knowledge of church history will find the work slightly daunting. But it is nonetheless very rewarding. Ellingsen does an excellent job of writing on these matters. His prose is clear, and he writes with the authority of one who knows both Augustine and Augustine scholarship well. He also writes as one with a personal interest in the African father, and this comes through in almost every page of the book.

The volume contains twelve chapters. These cover (Introduction) Augustine's place in church history, (1) his African context, (2) his exegetical and theological method, (3) God/Trinity/Christology, (4) creation and providence, (5) sin and atonement, (6) salvation and predestination, (7) the church, (8) sacraments, (9) eschatology, (10) social ethics (the two cities), and a final chapter (Conclusion) which reflects on the ecumenical implications of Augustine. Following these, Ellingsen produces a chart which outlines how Augustine handled various *loci* – Christology, faith and reason, etc. – by offering brief statements summarizing his position on each one and stating the context of its use (for instance, proofs for God's existence would be used in apologetics).

The work is quintessentially one of contextualization. What this means, because of Ellingsen's keen interest to be useful to his readers, is that one not only finds Augustine's theology analyzed in careful detail with the African's context in mind but also one finds the content of Ellingsen's study set within a twenty-first century context. Thus, for instance, we find him discussing as a matter of real significance for ethnicity the question of whether Augustine may have been black. We also discover him treating justification under headings such as 'Justification: Protestant-like Themes' and 'Justification: Catholic and Orthodox-like Themes'. Such an approach will likely bother some – particularly those of a more historical bent who would prefer that the

question of whether Augustine would side with Protestants, Catholics or Orthodox on a given issue be passed over as anachronistic. But, like it or not, it is an indication of Ellingsen's aims and his interest to produce a volume that might be useful to Christians living today.

Context, in fact, is not only characteristic of Ellingsen's approach. He argues that it is characteristic of Augustine's theology as well. Ellingsen holds that a careful examination of Augustine's thought reveals that it can be best understood as contextually patterned. In other words, he emphasized particular ideas in his dealings with particular opponents, even to the point of seeming dialectical. Ellingsen uses this fact to propose, at the end of the volume, ways in which Augustine may be of use to the twenty-first century church, namely, by providing it with a *modus operandi* for doing ministry.

It is important to stress this practical aspect of Ellingsen's study in order to give a clear sense of what the work is. It is not a straight historically-oriented analysis of Augustine's theology. It is, rather, a study which – clearly the work of someone steeped in Augustine's thought – is concerned to produce a practical outcome. Ellingsen wishes to take Augustine and make him useful today. Considered in this light, this reviewer feels he has produced an exceptional study of the great church father.

*Jon Balsarak, University of Birmingham*

### **A Short Course in Christian Doctrine**

George Pattison

SCM Press, London, 2005; 180 pp., £19.99

ISBN-10: 0-334-02978-3; ISBN-13: 978-0-334-02978-6

George Pattison is the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford University. For fourteen years he served as an Anglican parish priest. This book is based on an introductory course in practical theology he taught at Aarhus University, in Denmark. He claims it was written it for those working in the church, not academics. Unfortunately its flawed foundational premise, its assent to contemporary philosophical and theological notions, and its difficult prose leave *A Short Course in Christian Doctrine* vulnerable to critique. Employing a novel definition of 'doctrine', Pattison presents a discourse on Christianity's witness in the modern context, as it relates to a number of salient topics: the concept of doctrine itself, Trinitarian ontology, the sacramental nature of the universe, the significance of incarnation, the church's activity in history, its place within culture and its role in ethics and politics.

Pattison challenges the classic, objective understanding of doctrine as 'the sum of the knowledge that a person has to believe to be true if he or she is to be saved and to enjoy the fellowship of the Church' (p. 4). He uses the term to denote the subjective, existential process of teaching itself. Thus, his discussion of 'Christian doctrine' addresses the manner in which this 'dynamic communicative event or practice' takes place (p. 86). While it sounds commendable, Pattison's approach ignores the objective sense in which doctrine or 'teaching' (*didache, didaskalia*) is spoken of in Scripture (Matt. 7:28, Eph. 4:14, 1 Tim. 4:16, Rev. 2:14), and the fact that traditionally 'doctrine' has included ethical as well as dogmatic, propositional teaching. Conflating doctrine and practice leads him to disparage the traditional view as antiquated and insufficient. While stressing the importance of contextual relevance in ministry, for instance, Pattison insists that 'Doctrine is not defending a set of unchanging and timeless truths' (p. 49).

The author engages robustly with figures like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Georg W. F. Hegel, Sallie McFague and many others. Indeed, his knowledge of modern thought and culture is impressively broad. However, his eagerness to privilege new ideas over traditional, biblical ones should make readers who prize the latter cautious. His view of the cross exemplifies the danger of his method. Like a growing number of Christians, Pattison denigrates a sacrificial understanding of the atonement. He takes cues from historian and philosopher René Girard, who claimed the identification of scapegoats is an unhealthy sociological pattern that perpetuates violence. 'Where the church persists in interpreting the death of Jesus in sacrificial terms', Pattison concludes, 'we may suspect that the lesson has not yet been learned' (p. 98). Never mind that the Fourth Gospel refers to Jesus as 'the Lamb of God', or that Paul affirms he was put forward as a *hilasterion* or 'sacrifice of atonement' (John 1:29, Rom. 3:25). To his credit, Pattison regretfully admits not having a sufficient grasp of biblical studies to bring its perspectives to the questions he addresses (p. 2). Readers should not underestimate the implications of this candid admission.

Aside from these problems, some may find the book's language overly esoteric. For example, Chapter 4 ('The God in Time') contains an involved discussion that wrestles with the ideas of Edward Schillebeeckx, Paul Tillich, Søren Kirkegaard and others, and deals with the respective meaning of 'sign', 'sacrament' and 'symbol' as applied to Christ (pp. 83-93). Elsewhere Pattison introduces terms like 'perichoresis', 'structures of destruction' and 'self-presencing' without much definition or explanation. For a project that aspires to serve 'those concerned with the practice of

Christian communicative action rather than its theoretical analysis' (p. 2), this *Short Course* is surprisingly recondite. It holds some intriguing insights and prescriptions, and may benefit more discerning readers who want a sampling of modern trends in theology and philosophy, but those seeking a straightforward survey of historic creeds and doctrines are advised to look elsewhere.

*H. Chris Ross, University of Edinburgh*

## **Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship**

Rekha M. Chennattu

Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, 2006; 212 pp., £14.63

ISBN-10: 1-56563-668-6; ISBN-13: 978-1-56563-668-2

Rekha Chennattu argues that Johannine scholars have traditionally overlooked the role of covenant in assessments of John's conception of discipleship. Chennattu endeavours to fill 'this lacuna by pursuing a threefold objective: 1) a detailed exegetical analysis of the discipleship narratives and discourses (chs 1, 13–17, 20–21); 2) an investigation of the OT motifs behind the presentation of discipleship; 3) an examination of the function and relevance of the discipleship paradigm for the Johannine community' (p. xv).

Chennattu opens the first chapter with a review of the thirteen most important scholarly works on discipleship in John between the years 1970–2000. The remainder of the chapter is given over to a detailed analysis of John 1:35–51 in which the author argues that 'essential elements of the OT covenant relationship' are reflected in such features as the 'abiding motif', the knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah, the call to witness, the renaming of disciples, and the promissory basis of discipleship. Chennattu concludes, 'the evangelist uses the occasion of the call stories to present a paradigm of discipleship as a covenant relationship' (p. 49).

In chapters 2–4 the author endeavours to bear out this thesis through examination of John 13–17 and 20–21. Chapter 2 devotes fifteen pages to a survey of the dominant features of 'covenant making and covenant relationship' in the Old Testament then argues in the remainder of the chapter that 'chapters 13–17 constitute a covenant renewal ceremony' analogous to those found in Deuteronomy and Joshua 24 (p. 68). After a consideration of how this motif plays out in the Farewell Discourse as well as its role in the broader Gospel narrative, Chennattu turns to a more thorough analysis of John 13–17, in chapter 3. She attempts 'to bring to light that the Johannine presentation of discipleship is a Christian

rereading of the OT metaphor' (p. 88). In the fourth chapter, Chennattu examines John 20-21 arguing that these chapters present the fulfillment of many of the covenant promises made by Jesus in chapters 13-17, such as his return to the Father, the conquest of the world and the coming of Jesus to his disciples. Jesus' resurrection and glorification issue in his gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples to 'reaffirm the permanent presence of the covenant God and Lord' and to empower 'the community for a fruitful accomplishment of its mission' of making God known and loved (p. 177-8).

The fifth and final chapter raises the question of the purpose for which the 'Johannine community' cast Christian discipleship in terms of a covenant relationship. Introducing recent analytical methods from social-scientific criticism, Chennattu argues that the 'Johannine community' appropriated the covenant concept, a central Jewish identity marker in the first century, as a means of redefining the community's identity in the wake of its expulsion from the synagogue in the post-Jamnian period. In other words, the Gospel employs the covenant concept as a way of affirming that Christians, not Jews, are the true people of God.

The investigation of Rekha Chennattu into discipleship in the Fourth Gospel is thorough and persuasive. Her analysis of select contexts in John repeatedly benefits from the considerable attention devoted to the Old Testament background. Regrettably, her final chapter veers into the all-too-common theorizing about a hypothetical 'community' that stands behind the Fourth Gospel. This is unfortunate. Such an otherwise fine study might more profitably and fittingly have been rounded off by a consideration of the import of the covenant-discipleship theme for the church today, perhaps in a particular cultural context.

*Gerry Wheaton, St Andrews*

## **Healing and Suffering: Biblical and Pastoral Reflections**

Keith Warrington

Paternoster/Authentic Media, Milton Keynes, 2005; 219 pp., £8.99  
 ISBN-10: 0-85234-593-8; ISBN-13: 978-0-85234-593-8

Keith Warrington is the Director of Postgraduate Studies and Senior Lecturer in New Testament at Regent's Theological College, Nantwich. In this interesting book he sets out to answer a broad range of questions about healing and suffering. Our Lord's healing ministry is covered thoughtfully, and put into context; further questions are tackled from Acts, Paul's epistles and James, and the role of the Holy Spirit in human suffering is well summarised. There are good insights and helpful

comments, such as that the use of touch by Jesus in healing was not merely an expression of sympathy, but indicated 'an authority to transform without being tainted' (p. 60) and resonated with Old Testament imagery of God's power at work.

The level of treatment is basically that of a Bible college, and the book's readability suffers from the style being close to that of the lecture, in places too dense ('his healing ministry encapsulated his integrative mission to humanity in its weakness', p. 20) and in others too colloquial ('but it's enough for Jesus', p. 94). The frequent biblical references are indexed, but the five-page contents list is the only guide around the book. However all the questions answered are listed there in full, and it is possible to use the book to deal with a particular question in some depth. This means that a certain amount of repetition is experienced when the book is read sequentially.

This volume carefully avoids some of the obvious difficulties posed by books on healing to those who have faced long-term illness or disability with Christian faith and courage, by stressing the supreme place of the will of God in such matters, and that answers to heart-felt questions may not be given in this life. Yet it is still not an easy book for such people to read, because there is a constant underlying assumption that God does indeed heal today (pp. 10f.). This is proved not so much theologically as by a stream of anecdotal evidence that sometimes strains credulity. The stories are often from Warrington's own ministry, or received by word of mouth; there are no names given, nor dates, nor are there any footnotes allowing access to medical authentication. The reader has to decide whether the marauding lioness really was struck by lightning (pp. 132f.), or the friend supernaturally healed from facial injuries (p. 56), or whether the expensive object purchased actually caused demonic activity (pp. 78f.). We all live post-Hume, and miracles must present their credentials; it is not unbelief but integrity that scrutinises the historical, scientific and indeed linguistic evidence. For instance, *eutheos* ('at once') in John 6:21 could indicate a miracle ('immediately' at the port), or just the sense of relief that with Jesus in the boat, in the ensuing calm, they were soon ('in no time') at their destination. Also more than once Warrington cites 'healing' which led to no continuing faith in Christ (cf. p. 27 with pp. 68, 35), which seems difficult to square with what our Saviour intended (e.g. at Mark 5:34) when he said, 'Be made whole!' Jesus normally granted healing in every sense, of both body and spirit.

A great deal of spadework has gone into this volume, but it is hardly 'an outstanding book' as claimed by R. T. Kendall on the front cover. It

assumes the present continuation of all the charismatic gifts, and is likely to be most consulted within Pentecostal circles.

*John R. de la Haye, Wick, Caithness*

## **The Character of Theology: An Introduction to Its Nature, Task and Purpose**

John R. Franke

Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005; 206 pp., £9.99

ISBN-10: 0-8010-2641-5; ISBN-13: 978-0-8010-2641-6

This book is an excellent and stimulating resource (and discussion starter) for anyone interested in the current state and future directions of evangelical theology. Well written, it offers a fresh, constructive, and informed proposal for a distinctively evangelical theology that is grounded in Scripture, follows in the Reformed tradition (while also engaging ecumenically), and is shaped by moderate postmodern thought. Further, it is written to be ‘accessible to beginning theology students... as well as those in the church who are seeking alternative approaches to theology that will better serve the emerging church of the twenty-first century’ (p. 10).

While a subtitle on the book’s cover calls this a ‘Postconservative Evangelical Approach’, a measured response to this label is in order. Franke clearly incorporates some aspects of postmodern thought (the helpfully explained linguistic and non-foundationalist turns), and with this offers evangelicals an approach somewhat parallel to that of post-liberals. Yet Franke is clear that ‘theology is never to be conformed to postmodern or any other type of reason but rather to bear faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ’. Thus he argues for a theology reflecting a ‘non-foundational and contextual approach that promotes an open and flexible construal... that is inherently self-critical and reforming’ (pp. 8-9). Thus ‘postconservative’ means an approach to theology consciously seeking to lead conservative evangelicals through and beyond some of the more problematic aspects of liberal reason; meaning here enlightenment or modern philosophical assumptions which the conservative evangelical theological enterprise has so often incorporated, at times uncritically, into its own agenda. Postconservative thus means a theology which self-consciously emphasizes the central Reformation principle of continually reforming. To Franke, such a postconservative evangelical theology becomes

an ongoing, second-order, contextual discipline that engages in the task of critical and constructive reflection on the beliefs and practices of the Christian church for the purpose of assisting the community of Christ's followers in their missional vocation to live as the people of God in the particular social-historical context in which they are situated (p. 44).

Reflecting the title, the book's five chapters are: (1) Doing Theology Today, (2) The Subject of Theology, (3) The Nature of Theology, (4) The Task of Theology, and (5) The Purpose of Theology. Yet refreshingly, Franke doesn't just talk to us about theology (theological method). While throughout the book unpacking and explaining his definition, Franke also does theology and therein offers some fresh and promising proposals.

In Chapter 1, along with his definition of theology, Franke explores aspects of the postmodern context that would seem to free evangelical theology to be itself and serve its God-intended purpose. From this he offers a welcome sketch of the current theological landscape, and particularly sharp is his interpretation of current issues, tendencies and debates engaging evangelicals.

Chapter 2 focuses upon the subject of theology, God who is Trinity. Within which, classical two-nature Christology serves as the basis for Franke's insightful and promising discussion of the indirect nature of revelation; that is, as 'hidden' within the ordinary. In Chapter 3 Franke then argues for the contextual and thus ongoing nature of theology, including biblical interpretation. As a helpful case-study he examines Origen.

Chapter 4 directs the theological task to the service of the church, and shows, given the nature of Scripture, how Scripture, cultural context and tradition should be brought together in an ongoing corrective and constructive dialogue. This discussion of Scripture and tradition leads Franke into fresh insights toward redressing the Catholic/Protestant divide. Chapter 5 shows us why theology matters. It demonstrates how theology is intended to assist the church in mission; and herein the concept of community and community-building is central.

Of course, few of the broader programmatic points Franke offers are new. He, Grenz and others have been working on this kind of project for well over a decade. Nevertheless this book does not simply recast older material. Specifically promising to this reviewer are the fresh insights offered on the hiddenness of revelation, and following on, a non-foundationalist construal of the nature of Scripture.

While we may find ourselves disagreeing with Franke on some points, overall this is an important book on theology that deserves to be



read by anyone interested in the church and mission into the twenty-first century.

*Darrell Cosden, International Christian College, Glasgow*

### **Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches**

Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth (eds)

IVP Apollos, Leicester, 2005; 336 pp., £16.99

ISBN-10: 1-84474-077-3; ISBN-13: 978-1-84474-077-2

The Psalms have had a special place in the affections of both Jews and Christians throughout the ages. Read, preached, chanted or sung, they move the heart and stir the soul as well as any other part of Scripture. Full of meaning to the ordinary Christian, they are of course at the centre of debate among scholars today regarding the interpretation of Scripture.

The aim of this book is to bridge the gap between basic introductions to interpreting the Psalms and more specialized literature. However, the problem is that basic introductions satisfy those who want something basic, and specialized literature satisfies those who want something specialized, but the question is how many people are there who really want something pitched between the two? This volume is really too specialized to be popular, but too basic to be of real value to the serious scholar.

Nevertheless, the editors of this book are both serious Old Testament scholars. Johnston is Old Testament Tutor and Director of Studies at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford (Anglican), and Firth is Old Testament Tutor and BA Course Leader at Cliff College, Sheffield (Methodist). Johnston contributes a chapter on the theme of distress in the Psalter, and Firth a chapter on the importance of teaching in the Psalms. Altogether, some fifteen chapters are grouped into four sections.

The first part attempts to set Psalms interpretation in context, both of current study and of Ancient Near Eastern prayer genres, and the second part explores certain key themes within the Psalter, such as distress, praise, the King, and the cult. The third group looks at various interpretation issues such as teaching, ethics and body idioms, and the fourth group considers different interpretative traditions in relation to matters such as the structure of the Psalter, the Qumran, the evangelists and the Targum Psalms.

Like many books containing numerous contributions from various people, this volume is far from uniform. The chapters are of a similar depth, but are of very variable quality and worth. Probably the most helpful chapter is that written by Jamie Grant, Lecturer in Biblical

Studies at Highland Theological College, Dingwall, on the tremendously important theme of the King in the Psalter. Grant deals with such issues as genre and kingship, anonymous kingship, canonical kingship, continuing kingship and Psalmic kingship in a very clear and most refreshing style, and concludes that when we read the royal psalms christologically, we see a picture of Jesus the King as both our representative and example. Seeing the significance of kingship in the Psalter gives us a fuller understanding of the humanity of our Messiah and a fuller awareness of the piety that should typify our lives day by day.

Taken as representative of current Psalms scholarship, this book is a readable synopsis of what is going on. However, taken as a thermometer of current evangelical scholarship, it is a reminder of how much things have changed during recent decades. The fundamental problem with this volume is that, again and again, it betrays a very low view of Scripture and the modern approach that studies the Bible as if it was an ordinary book, and fails to recognize its many distinctive qualities as the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God.

In short, this book is a fair summary of contemporary Psalms scholarship, but of little use to most readers.

*R. Jeremy Brooks, Salem Baptist Church, Ramsey, Cambs*

## **Contours of Christology in the New Testament**

Richard N. Longenecker (ed.)

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005; xiv+345 pp., £16.99

ISBN-10: 0-8028-1014-4; ISBN-13: 978-0-8028-1014-4

This volume is a survey of the basic features of New Testament Christology. Chapter 1, 'Jewish Messianism and Early Christology' by William Horbury, tackles the question of pre-Christian Jewish messianic expectations in relation to New Testament christology.

Chapter 2, 'Jesus as the Alpha and Omega of New Testament Thought' by Ben Witherington, asserts that Jesus is both the basis for and focus of New Testament theology. Witherington attempts to establish this point by exploring the narratological shape of Paul's christology.

Chapter 3, 'Christological Materials in the Early Christian Community' by Richard N. Longenecker, explores primitive christological material embedded in the New Testament. Longenecker analyzes the passion narratives, eschatological traditions, the sayings source Q, and early confessional material.

Chapter 4, “Who Can This Be?” The Christology of Mark’s Gospel’ by Morna D. Hooker, examines material in Mark’s Gospel including the prologue, the kingdom, Mark’s story, and Mark’s purpose.

Chapter 5, ‘The Vindicated Son: A Narrative Approach to Matthean Christology’ by Terence Donaldson, employs a narrative-critical approach to explicating the christology of Matthew’s Gospel. According to Donaldson, the benefit of a narrative methodology over a study of titles is that it allows us to find christological significance in non-titular material. Overall the Matthean narrative is about the tested and triumphant Son of God.

Chapter 6, ‘The Christology of Luke’s Gospel and Acts’ by I. Howard Marshall, examines the array of images of Jesus in Luke-Acts. Marshall discusses four important questions about Luke including: subordination, inactivity of the exalted Christ, a two-stage christology, and the language of divinity. He concludes that Luke’s christology has two main foci of ‘Christship’ and ‘Lordship’.

Chapter 7, ‘Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John’ by Richard Bauckham, situates the christology of the fourth Gospel in relation to Jewish monotheism. In Bauckham’s view, John’s christology is that of ‘divine identity’ or that Jesus participates in the identity of God. According to Bauckham, John does not compromise Jewish monotheism, but he radically redefines it in light of Jesus the Son’s relationship with the Father.

Chapter 8, ‘The Christology of the Early Pauline Letters’ by Douglas J. Moo, embarks on a brief analysis of the early Pauline letters (Galatians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Corinthians, and Romans). Moo rejects a chronological method, using Romans as a template, a study of the titles of Jesus, and narrative approaches. Instead, he prefers a threefold method of salvation-history, stages in Jesus’ life, and titles used to describe Jesus.

Chapter 9, ‘The Christology of the Prison Epistles’ by Ralph P. Martin, discusses Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians. Martin discusses the Christ Hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 that turns cosmic christology into a moral exhortation. Passages such as Colossians 1:15-20, 2:13-15 are given a solid treatment. He finds in Philemon *koinonia* as ‘life in Christ’. And Martin expounds the majestic blend of christology and ecclesiology in Ephesians.

Chapter 10, ‘Christology in the Letters to Timothy and Titus’ by Philip H. Towner, reviews christological material in the pastoral epistles. Towner sees the centre of the epistles as being the use of ‘saviour’ and the ‘epiphany’ motif. He concludes that 1 Timothy emphasizes the

humanity of Christ, 2 Timothy emphasizes the promise of resurrection and vindication, and Titus emphasizes Jesus' co-equal status with God.

Chapter 11, 'The Son of God as Unique High Priest: The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews' by Donald A. Hagner, combs through an assortment of themes in Hebrews including the deity and humanity of Christ. According to Hagner, the christology of Hebrews is a source of encouragement for Christians in dire circumstances.

Chapter 12, 'Catholic Christologies in the Catholic Epistles' by J. Ramsey Michaels, outlines the teachings of James, 1-2 Peter, Jude, and 1-3 John. Michaels find in these epistles an emphasis on the Lordship of Jesus.

Chapter 13, 'Stories of Jesus in the Apocalypse of John' by David E. Aune, looks over the images of Christ in the Revelation of John. Attention is paid to the literary and narrative features of Revelation. Aune detects two main depictions of Jesus as the Son of Man and the Divine Warrior, both of which provide descriptions normally reserved for God.

Some essays are better than others (e.g. Donaldson, Bauckham, and Marshall). Overall this is a helpful volume and ideal as an introduction to Christology.

*Michael F. Bird, Highland Theological College, Dingwall*

## **A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics**

David Jasper

Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 2004; xii+148 pp., £12.99; ISBN-10: 0-664-22751-1; ISBN-13: 978-0-664-22751-7

This book is clearly a revised form of lecturer's notes, as indicated in the introduction. However the substance and presentation of the book is good, and very useful for both students and those wishing to refresh or develop their understanding.

On a wider stage it is a tribute to the fact that the study of literature which once was the *handmaid* to biblical studies has now become the totality. This is a problem in the training for ministry given by the universities, highlighted in a recent debate in the General Assembly regarding the alterations to the content of the Bible Examination in the training of ministers.

From an examination of the website of Glasgow University I note that the author has been described as a post-postmodern thinker. Such a definition will annoy some, confuse others and cause consternation amongst those who understand the concept. These ideas are borne out by

his areas of research and signs of his own understanding appear in this volume, e.g. his appreciation of Heidegger, etc.

The summaries of each chapter are helpful as are the questions and the full bibliographies.

However I am concerned that there is little on the hermeneutics of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, especially since one of Jasper's areas of research was Anthony of Egypt. Also there is no review or survey of the Christian Fundamentalist position. Unless one accepts Barth as emblematic of the Reformed position, there is little on that tradition either, especially in its modern incarnation.

A more global view would aid this work, but if its aim is to be sold to students at Glasgow and anyone else interested, it works. There is comment on the idea that the West is in a post-colonial stage but there is little to reflect the theology of Africa and Asia, apart from the usual references to Liberation theology (guaranteed to raise a groan in some!)

In Jasper's favour he is very keen on Thistleton, and he clearly writes with integrity and clarity. To reiterate: this book will be a great help to anyone seeking an introduction to the subject. The author does what he sets out to do.

*Robert Pickles, Parish of Orwell and Portmoak*

### **The Water and the Wine: A Contribution to the Debate on Children and Holy Communion**

Roger Beckwith and Andrew Daunton-Fear

The Latimer Trust, London, 2005; 77 pp., £3.50

ISBN-10: 0-946307-54-7; ISBN-13: 978-0-946307-54-8

The authors of this work are to be congratulated for providing, with such economy of space, a clear review of the landscape against which the issue of the admission of children to communion can be considered. The Old Testament and Jewish background, the New Testament teaching and the practice of the church from earliest times to the Reformation are all given some space within the 77 pages of the book. The text is generally well supplied with bibliographic references and notes and would provide a start to more serious, in-depth reading of the subject. The book is clearly expressive of the authors' intentions and is easily readable.

The book argues for a particular practice: that of infant baptism with the admission to communion after confirmation at adolescence. While admitting that the New Testament witness would support alternative practices and that the church has exhibited these in various times and places, the authors argue for a return to, or maintenance of, the position

adopted by the Anglican Church at the Reformation. This rests on the components of baptism, namely, water, repentance, believing and the Holy Spirit, all being necessary and only fully represented in baptism taken together with confirmation. Various New Testament texts and patristic writings are adduced to support this position, which is predicated upon a definition which is not argued in the book but taken axiomatically, that an infant cannot be a believer because he cannot hold his faith intellectually nor affirm it verbally. On this basis, infant baptism is, in itself, incomplete until the intellectual and verbal components are provided via confirmation.

At this point, the authors are limited by their otherwise admirable brevity. It would help the reader to be guided through some of the philosophical difficulties which the book's position raises. If the baptism of infants is only completed at confirmation, for perhaps 12-14 years of the child's life, the sacrament of baptism cannot be complete. What theological grounds and precedents are there for incomplete sacraments or a sacrament which takes years to administer? Is the candidate only partially baptised? If so what are the authorities for such a view? Regrettably, the authors do not adequately address these important questions.

Related to this is the issue the book raises about the status of children. Because the authors place such great emphasis on individual repentance and confession of faith, which they say infants lack, junior members of the church occupy some sort of reduced status which should make them incommunicate. They also do not necessarily behave well at communion: 'small children sometimes spitting out the consecrated elements and older ones larking about...' (p. 38). The suggestion in the book that this is equivalent to the adult misbehaviour at Corinth which is reproved by St Paul, seems to this reviewer somewhat doubtful.

The argument in the book does tend to drift. In Chapter 3, it is argued that infant initiation is incomplete because it lacks the elements of repentance and faith. By the end of Chapter 5, the requirement of learning the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments before confirmation is endorsed. By Chapter 6, the reader is told that the eucharist 'is not intended for all churchgoers, but is a privilege of the committed'. How committed the adults must be and whether a child could be sufficiently committed, the authors do not say.

All in all, however, the book is a useful map of the landscape over which the authors chart a course which turns out to be over quite difficult terrain.

*Kevin Scott, St James Episcopal Church, Inverleith, Edinburgh*

## **Jesus' Revelation of His Father: A Narrative-Conceptual Study of the Trinity with Special Reference to Karl Barth**

Damon W. K. So

Paternoster Theological Monographs, Carlisle, 2006; 348pp., £24.99  
 ISBN-10: 1-84227-323-X; ISBN-13: 978-1-84227-323-4

This book explores the doctrine of the Trinity by combining scriptural investigation and doctrinal analysis. Damon So argues that this work 'attempts to draw out the theological significance of Jesus' birth, baptism, ministry, death and resurrection as given by Matthew's narratives in a study of Jesus' revelation of his Father, his Lordship and the Trinity'. He succeeds in clearly articulating the theological importance of the events of Jesus' life as they relate to the concept of revelation and the doctrine of the Trinity.

The introductory chapter discusses the recent interest in the doctrine of the Trinity, and So's methodology (which seeks to explore the Trinity through a narrative study of Jesus' revelation of the Father in history). Chapter two examines both the divinity and humanity of the person of Jesus Christ, and primarily draws upon the work of Karl Barth to elaborate the revelation of God the Father as witnessed in the unity and communion of Jesus with the Father as described in Matthew 11:25-30. This revelation of God is expounded by So with an analysis of Jesus' revelation of his Father through his words (in chapter 3) and Jesus' revelation of his Father through his actions (in chapter 4).

Although the first chapters specifically discuss the revelation of God through the person and actions of Jesus Christ, in chapter 5 So addresses the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The following chapter explores Christology and Pneumatology with reference to the writings of James Dunn, Geoffrey Lampe, Edward Irving and Karl Barth. The book ends with an analysis of the humanity, divinity, and authority of Jesus Christ as presented in the Bible, by discussing the Incarnation and articulating the notion of *person*. So's understanding of revelation based on the gospel narrative and his trinitarian articulation of Christology leads to 'a refined Christology with a paradigmatic shift beyond Chalcedon' as his understanding 'seeks refinement via a shift in *methodology* and *conceptualisation*'. He argues that his use of the biblical narratives to ground Christology and the exploration of the Trinity is a methodological shift away from the current division between biblical studies and doctrinal theology found in academic study. With regard to the shift in conceptualisation So argues that his articulation of the category of spirit and the concept of conformity in spirit, in relation

to the discussion concerning divinity and humanity of Jesus, offers a novel approach to Christology.

This book (based on a Ph.D. thesis) attempts to discuss and answer two questions. First, how does Jesus Christ reveal God the Father? Second, what is the content of Jesus Christ's revelation of God based on the concrete words and actions of Jesus as presented in the Bible? Detailed biblical study combined with rigorous doctrinal investigation provides clear answers to both of these questions. The primary strength of this book is So's impressive biblical and doctrinal research that is intelligibly analysed and articulated; though brief summaries at the beginning of each chapter, as well as a Scripture index, an author index and a subject index, are also helpful. This book is a valuable resource for laity, pastors and students who seek to explore the doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Jesus Christ through biblical and doctrinal investigation.

*Heather Paige McDivitt, Wingate University, North Carolina*

### **Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 1: Prolegomena**

Herman Bavinck (trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt)

Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003; 685 pp., £25.50

ISBN-10: 0-8010-2632-6; ISBN-13: 978-0-8010-2632-4

There are a select number of books whose release requires more of an announcement than a review. The translation of Bavinck's magisterial *Reformed Dogmatics* is just such a work. Bavinck (1854-1921) stands as one of the most influential theologians in the Dutch Reformed tradition and this work is his *magnum opus*. Bavinck is best known as standing, along with Abraham Kuyper, whom he succeeded at the Free University in Amsterdam, at the headwaters of the neo-Calvinist movement. This re-emergence of orthodox Calvinism came with an emphasis on the engagement with culture, from politics and social work to philosophy and the modern sciences. Neo-Calvinism has borne immense fruit and there are reasons to believe that its influence is only increasing (one might note some of the fruit of the tradition in the 'Reformed epistemologists' Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff).

Bavinck's *Prolegomena* is in many ways a standard Reformed treatment of the subject, with the sole structural novelty of a brief history of Western dogmatics. Bavinck begins the volume by defining dogmatics as a scientific study of 'the knowledge that God has revealed in his Word to the church concerning himself and all creatures as they stand in relation to him' (38). Then follows the examination of the method of dogmatics, and the excursion into its history. Bavinck then examines the *principia*



or foundations of dogmatic theology. Still following the Reformed orthodox pattern, he divides this into an external principle (*principium externum*), which is God revealing himself in nature and (especially) Scripture, and an internal principle (*principium internum*) which is faith brought about by the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Bavinck's greatness is not his theological novelty – his answers are not significantly different from the earlier work of Polanus, Maccovius or John Owen – but in his unsurpassed ability to engage with honesty the intellectual currents of his time as a representative of orthodox Reformed thought. Bavinck is in constant dialogue with Kant, Hegel and Leibniz on the one hand, and Harnack, Troeltsch, Schleiermacher and Ritschl on the other. The seamlessness of this engagement is due in large part to the governing principle of *per fidem ad intellectum*: understanding comes through faith. Thus he defines dogmatics as a 'science', but then redefines all science to stress its necessary subjectivity (*contra* positivism), so that all knowledge begins with elements of faith. He denies the Cartesian notion of innate ideas, positing that all knowledge is entirely dependent from outside of us (*principium externum*); acknowledging at the same time with Kant that all our knowledge is subjective. This does not lead to pure subjectivity, however, due to the *principium internum*: faith brought about and sustained by the Holy Spirit. We are at no point left to ourselves and so Bavinck leads us away from the dominant models of modernist philosophy and its theological fruit – the same fruit, incidentally, we are still reaping.

There are certainly moments Bavinck appears a man of his time – offering lengthy discourses on now obscure theologians, and the absence of interaction with the watershed that emerged with Barth's writings. Yet his text remains in many ways fresh and, translated into eminently readable prose, is a strong statement of the adequacy of evangelical teaching – and Reformed theology in particular – in the light of the philosophical pressures of that day. Today, as idealism has been succeeded by phenomenology and her children, positivism by pluralism, and the 'linguistic turn' dominates analytic philosophy, Bavinck provides a model of listening to and learning from the challenges that are always pressing the theologian and biblical scholar, emerging with the confidence attached to old answers made new.

*Joshua Moon, University of St Andrews*

## **Beyond Salvation: Eastern Orthodoxy and Classical Pentecostalism on Becoming Like Christ**

Edmund J. Rybarczyk

Paternoster Press, Milton Keynes, 2004; 353pp., £24.99

ISBN-10: 1-84227-144-X; ISBN-13: 978-1-84227-144-5

'Despite their historical and cultural differences, Eastern Orthodox Christians and Classical Pentecostals share some surprising similarities.' This back cover first line captures the thesis of this book.

One of the Paternoster Theological Monographs, this is a bold attempt to find significant common ground between two groups seemingly miles apart in the Christian spectrum – one ancient, one recent. It is certainly a bold undertaking, yet the writer is well qualified. He is a minister with the Assemblies of God and he has a strong Eastern Orthodox heritage (as his name might suggest). Moreover, his research is meticulous.

Whilst forms of worship are obviously very different between the two groups, is the heartbeat essentially the same? The author reckons it is and sets out to prove it.

His introductory chapter sets the scene: 'similarities and suspicions'. He wishes to deconstruct the suspicions and demonstrate the considerable (and surprising) similarities between the two traditions. Moreover, his 'study is written with the conviction that both Orthodoxy and Pentecostalism have a great deal to learn from each other' (p. 20). He entertains a view that John Wesley provides a historical bridge from Pentecostalism to Orthodoxy, yet concludes that Wesley alone cannot account for the 'remarkable similarities' between the two traditions.

There follows an examination of Eastern Orthodoxy from chapters two to five, beginning with historical roots in Athanasius and Palamas, then working through anthropology and Christology, with the focal point being at all times the key Orthodox concept of 'theosis' – becoming like God, the goal for every Christian believer, indeed every human being (made in God's image). 'Orthodox anthropology is suffused with ontological dimensions. Human beings cannot rightly be understood apart from their ontological makeup as reflections of God's own Trinitarian identity' (p. 77). Discussions of the image of God and iconography are closely connected.

Rybarczyk goes on to examine Pentecostalism from chapters six to nine. He begins with the doctrinal and historical roots and moves to a discussion of Pentecostalism's anthropology followed by its theology of sanctification. He discovers in Pentecostalism, as in Orthodoxy, a

'communion with God' centre. Pentecostalism moves beyond justification and forgiveness to focus on sanctification and transformation. In Christ and by the Spirit, God effects real ontological change in humans, just as in Orthodoxy, to become progressively like Christ, like God.

And thus the writer discovers significant theological and, perhaps particularly spiritual, points of contact between two Christian traditions that seem on the surface to be miles apart.

His conclusion in chapter ten roots the fundamental similarity in anthropology, since such need for communion with God is, of course, based on the nature of humanity as God created it. Indeed, Rybarczyk finds an 'anti-intellectual character' (p. 316) in both traditions, for in both there is an 'ardent hunger for God's presence. Both groups have exhibited an incredible desire to involve the entirety of their beings in communion with God. One cannot so desire this communion and limit one's Christian experience to thinking or doing' (p. 311).

In terms of evaluation, I have to agree with the reviewer who wrote: 'an exceptionally well done piece of analysis'. The writer spent eight years working on this project (his wife receives special thanks!). It is thorough and he writes as someone with a deep working knowledge of both traditions. The book is, moreover, readable, particularly in the section on Pentecostalism where one finds a variety of 'inspirational' spiritual anecdotes. Rybarczyk also conveys a sense of spiritual passion, infused by the traditions themselves.

In terms of value to the church, this is self-evident. Furthermore, Rybarczyk also puts forward the suggestion that Pentecostalism may serve as a 'via media between Orthodoxy and Protestantism, especially along experiential lines' (p. 329).

Questions that will occur naturally to readers include: Can we really envisage such disparate groups working together at local level? Do these points of contact exist only (or largely) where the theology of both is at its best, evangelically speaking, truest to classical form? In liberalized forms, do these contacts begin to evaporate? Indeed, even in their classical forms, are there not still some fairly significant 'gaps' between them? (For example, Orthodoxy's Christology is incarnation-centred, whilst Pentecostalism's is cross-centred.)

And what about the other Christian traditions? Does Rybarczyk somewhat caricature 'Protestantism' in general as based on an essentially legal model? (The author might be surprised, and interested, to know that Calvin referred to prayer as an 'intimate conversation' with God). How do

other Christian traditions resonate with the 'communion with God' core of these traditions?

Finally, on a personal level, I must add that I have found the book inspiring me to a deeper communion with God – perhaps worth the purchase for that alone.

*Oliver Rice, Bow Baptist Church, London*

### **Land, Faith and the Crofting Community: Christianity and Social Criticism in the Highlands of Scotland, 1843-1893**

Allan W. MacColl

Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2006; 240pp., £45

ISBN-10: 0-7486-2382-5; ISBN-13: 978-0-7486-2382-2

*Land, Faith and the Crofting Community* is the fruit of Allan MacColl's doctoral work at Cambridge University and represents an immensely significant reappraisal of the role evangelical Christianity played in the years of destitution, eviction, emigration and agitation in the Scottish Highlands.

MacColl is responding to the received caricature of Highland Calvinism as a repressive force, which, in this context, led the clergy to side with the landed interests and encouraged passivity amongst the oppressed poor. This view has been taken for granted by subsequent historians who have sought to interpret it rather than challenge it. Donald Smith, for example, advanced the view that it was the Calvinistic doctrine of Providence that led the clergy to preach acquiescence to the injustices perpetrated by the landlords. Hilton Boyd identified classical Calvinism with a theology of atonement. This theological concept, he claimed, became so strong in the 1850s that it led to the notion that societal improvement could come only through embracing suffering. Social concern would require the more incarnational emphases of liberal theology.

MacColl has done a thorough job of refuting the consensus. His careful research acknowledges both the presence of differences of opinion in all the churches and a development in the evangelical response to the land question.

Whilst Providence was acknowledged in bringing famine and hardship, the clergy in the main confessed ignorance as to the reasons. Nor did belief in Providence inevitably encourage passivity, for the church was active in famine relief and in advancing proposals for land reform.

At a basic level, the faith of the people provided an intellectual framework for critiquing the actions of the landowners. Liberationist rhetoric alluding to freedom from bondage in Egypt and a call to possess a proper land was common.

More subtly, evangelicalism was so pervasive in the nineteenth-century Highlands that it helped to shape a distinct sense of Highland identity. For men like John Kennedy of Dingwall the Highlanders' allegiance to Calvinism set them apart from the rest of the nation and even the southern section of the Free Church. Alongside this sense of being a 'peculiar people' there developed communitarian beliefs regarding the people's right to the land of their fathers which arose from the Bible.

MacColl traces a growing willingness of the Free Church (in most cases the *de facto* 'parish' church) to engage in the political process. He demonstrates that the increased willingness of ministers to be spokesmen on behalf of their people was highly significant during the 'The Crofters' War' of the 1880s.

None of this new confidence to champion justice for their people derived from liberalism. It was the most conservative part of the Free Church led by men such as Gustavus Aird that was most committed to reform and eventually pressed for action on land redistribution that went beyond the Crofters' Acts.

Whereas previous studies have focussed almost exclusively on the clergy, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community* breaks new ground in assessing the contribution of elders and Christian poets. There is also a review of the involvement of non-Presbyterian churches with smaller followings in the region such as Roman Catholic, Baptist and Congregational churches.

MacColl has provided us with a scholarly work that is of huge benefit to all with an interest in the Highlands and the land issue. However, its relevance extends beyond that particular area of interest. He has unearthed a rich seam of experience to be mined by all who are interested in the ethics of Christian social action. Here were Calvinists increasingly persuaded that they had a calling to be a prophetic voice speaking out against the landed classes of the day. They were, however, no less persuaded that they must honour Romans 13:1: 'Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities for there is no authority except that which God has established.' The experience of Christian leaders seeking to be faithful within this tension is of lasting value.

MacColl as a student for the ministry in the Free Presbyterian Church was always running the risk of being too close to his subject to retain objectivity. However, the tone throughout is balanced and scholarly and

his verdicts, in the main, judicious. *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community* is a most readable work written by an able scholar, sympathetic to his subject matter. It deserves to become widely read and used.

*Ivor MacDonald, Kilmuir and Stenscholl Church of Scotland, Isle of Skye*

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