Book Reviews

PATHWAYS OF WISDOM: HUMAN PHILOSOPHIES AND THE PURPOSE OF GOD **Maurice Sinclair**

Apollos (IVP) 2010 pb 324pp ISBN: 978-1-84474-425-1

How should Christian faith interact with human reason? And what should the Christian do in the face of non-Christian systems of thought, whether secular or religious? These are questions with which the church has grappled almost since its inception, and it is one of no less vital importance for the church today. Should one reject outright any system of thought which does not explicitly carry the label 'Christian', on the basis that since Christ is our wisdom we have no need for it? Or is human reason in fact the 'real deal': for our faith to stand up at all, must it be submitted to the tests of human reason? And what of other religions and thinkers from other faiths? Do they have anything to contribute from which we can learn? These are the issues which Maurice Sinclair seeks to address in this book, and does so navigating skilfully between the Scylla of fundamentalism and the Charybdis of surrender to the world's wisdom.

By any reckoning, Sinclair's project is ambitious, covering western, Christian and Islamic contributions to human knowledge up to the present, while at the same time not ignoring those of other faiths and systems of thought. He provides a very helpful overview of western thought from Plato to the present day. Particularly interesting and stimulating are three additional ingredients not always provided in such surveys. First, Sinclair traces the interaction of the early church with the prevailing philosophies of its time, showing how our forefathers in the faith grappled with the issue of Christ and culture. Secondly he follows the passage of ideas and knowledge from the ancient world to Europe in the middle ages, and also considers the contributions of individual Islamic scholars in their own right. He goes on to bring these perspectives right up to the present, with a consideration of the influences at work both on the Middle Eastern and the Western mind of today, something Sinclair is particularly well suited to do given his teaching position at the Alexandria School of Theology. Finally, while Sinclair provides a way-in to a breath-taking quantity of material, he never loses his anchor in the present, and thoughtfully and carefully considers each contribution from the perspective of the modern day Christian. Indeed the book ends with two chapters considering how one might address the challenges of proclaiming the gospel of Christ relevantly and faithfully in the modern world.

The book is clear, easy to read, and engagingly written. Owing to the vast breadth of material covered in the book, Sinclair necessarily relies a great deal on secondary sources. While this is no doubt a necessity, it would still have strengthened the arguments and points made to cite and quote more primary sources. The book is nevertheless a fascinating study, and well suited to pastors and indeed any Christian thinking through how the church might better proclaim the gospel the multicultural and multi-faith environment in which today's church finds itself.

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WORKING WITHOUT WILTING: Starting well to finish strong
Jago Wynne
Nottingham: IVP, 2009 192pp £8.99pb ISBN: 1844743721

What do trout, trampolines and the Tardis have to do with being Christian in the workplace? You'll have read this book to find out. But those chapter headings give a flavour of Jago Wynne's writing: the interesting imagination of a daydream doodle combined with the alliterative clarity of a management consultant. It makes for a great read!

The book is brilliantly organised. At the end of every chapter left brainers can enjoy stories of real people, while the 'I-get-excited-by-Excel' types will relish the diagrammatic summaries and flow chart recaps. It's comprehensive, too. You'll find everything from what to do in the first week to how to handle retirement or redundancy, all with practical Christian wisdom. There is down to earth biblical teaching on coping with colleagues (from the annoying to the attractive), how to handle stress, when to change jobs, how to view money and many more real working life questions.

I think the challenge for a book like this is to successfully make the link from genuine Scriptural principles to the real circumstances of the workplace; sadly many workers don't know their Bibles and many pastors don't know the workplace well enough to deeply apply Christian living Monday-Friday. But Jago Wynne has clearly worked hard to listen to real people in real jobs, which combined with his own experience, makes for a book full of scenarios that ring true. Expect to recognise many of the issues raised!

His handling of Scripture is generally excellent, too. Rather than just focusing on the Bible's specific teaching on work, Jago ranges widely, with many passages on general Christian discipleship being well applied into the workplace context (e.g. Matt. 6: The Sermon on the Mount; 1 Cor. 8-10: Giving up rights for others; 1 John 2-3: our identity as God's children). This helpfully reinforces his thesis that we don't switch off from being a Christian whilst at work, striking a blow against secular compartmentalisation. The direct copycat applications from Bible heroes (be like Daniel, Jeremiah, Joseph) might make some folk nervous as a method, but each example is controlled by wider biblical principles and so generally proves helpful.

Would I change anything about this book? Perhaps the length. I fear the wide-ranging scope may cause some workers to wilt before they hit page 192, despite the clear format. People are increasingly busy, and I fear some may become so bogged down in the specific scenarios that they never reach the excellent biblical theology of work that comes in the concluding few pages.

That said, we mustn't dumb down Christian thinking and resources in this vital area. The excellent 20 page IVP booklet '*Christ@work*' doesn't cover all that needs to be said about how to be Christian for the bulk of our waking hours! So perhaps the solution is to read this with a friend, or a book group, or a spouse, or a workplace prayer meeting—starting well to finish strong.

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HEROES
Iain H. Murray
The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2009 £15.00hb 320pp ISBN: 978-1-84871-024-5

These are not potted biographies but Murray extracts valuable traits from each hero. Consequently, we meet the erudite Jonathan Edwards and learn the abiding relevance of his teaching which many other heroes read. Next, comes the wonderful George Whitefield. The antagonism of both Anglicans and Arminians produced, in him, a desire to, 'simply preach the gospel and leave others to quarrel by and with themselves'. Murray stresses his amazing catholicity. Whitefield asks, 'Are you of Christ? If so, I love you with all my

heart.' Now comes John Newton. Reader—if you have not already—relish a biography of this godly man. We are told Newton read a lot, counselled wisely: a ride would do more good than his counseling—and taught that God often works patiently, so should all ministers.

Have you heard of Thomas Charles? He preached with the despised Methodists; he practically started circulating schools; helped set up the Bible Society and so produced a people 'to the praise and glory of his grace.' You have never heard of Hewitson and Kalley? How excellent to include unknowns among heroes. Again, Charles and Mary Colcock Jones were unknowns to me. Read of their amazing work among slaves (thought by some at that time to have no souls) and analyse Prof. John Murray's apologia for slavery.

Lastly, comes the superb Charles Spurgeon whose preaching reached 5-6 thousand in the Tabernacle while the printed sermons reached another 25,000 a week and produced a holy prayerful people—'apostolic piety revived'. Uneducated, he owed his learning to a Calvinistic cook, Mary King, and to reading the Puritans! From this source, says Murray, 'his mind was stocked with the truths for a lifetime of ministry.'

A footnote says some biographers are too hard on Newton's father—yet Newton writes to Fawcett that he was persuaded of his father's loving him, 'but he seemed not willing that I should know it'; Murray uses 'disinterested' incorrectly (p194) and perhaps he should not have quoted Spurgeon who was clearly wrong in saying that Christ instructed 'each' disciple 'with patient care'.

The heroes have much in common. They all appear to be Calvinists (although there is a strong acknowledgement that Arminians are Christians and John Wesley is given a reasonable press); all were undoubtedly men of prayer whilst their love for their saviour produced in them a deep love for their fellow men. We should thank God for such heroes and like Spurgeon be,

> '...carried clean away,
> Praising, praising all the day.'

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BEING FAITHFUL: The Shape of Historic Anglicanism Today
The Theological Resource Group of GAFCON
London: The Latimer Trust, 2009 154pp £8pb ISBN: 9780946307999

In June 2008, The Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON) was hailed as one of the most significant developments in worldwide Anglicanism for many years. It was seen as constituting a clear signal from so-called 'traditionalist' Anglicans that they wished to distance themselves from both the tenets of theological liberalism and its practical outworking in church life.

On 29th June 2008, the participants in GAFCON issued a Statement on the Global Anglican Future, which described GAFCON as 'a spiritual movement to preserve and promote the truth and power of the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ as we Anglicans have received it' and as 'a movement in the Spirit'. The Statement launched 'the GAFCON movement as a 'fellowship of confessing Anglicans', The Jerusalem Declaration serving as 'the basis of the fellowship'. The Declaration was described in the Statement as 'a contemporary rule…to guide the movement for the future' and was set out in full within the body of the Statement.

In September 2009, a Commentary on the Declaration was published under the title *Being Faithful: The Shape of Historic Anglicanism Today*. The Commentary was prepared by the Theological Resource Group of GAFCON and in its published form, it is supplemented by a document entitled *The Way, The Truth and The Life*, which consists of a number of papers written by members of the GAFCON Theological Resource Group and describes itself as a 'handbook, to serve as a theological introduction and definition for GAFCON'.

To understand the GAFCON movement and its theological reference points and to gain some insight into the nature of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, it is necessary to read the Statement, the Declaration, the Commentary and *The Way, The Truth and The Life* as a whole, which was no doubt the intention behind their publication together under the banner *Being Faithful: The Shape of Historic Anglicanism Today*.

In his Foreword to this compilation, The Most Revd Peter Jensen, Archbishop of Sydney and Secretary of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, remarks

that 'as the GAFCON Statement and the Declaration are increasingly referred to as a canon of contemporary faithfulness to the Scriptures, the Commentary will become a key resource for churches'.

The Commentary does reveal a great deal about the theological basis of the GAFCON movement and the currents of thinking at work within it. However, the Commentary does not shed light on all aspects of the Declaration and where comment is expressed on particular clauses of the Declaration, there are a number of respects in which 'faithfulness to the Scriptures' appears not to be the decisive, shaping influence.

The documents comprising *Being Faithful* are notable, in particular, for their treatment of the means of salvation, the atonement, the nature of orthodox Anglicanism, and Roman Catholicism.

When addressing the means of salvation, the Declaration (Clause 1) refers to salvation 'by grace through faith' (the phraseology, incidentally, of the 1994 'Evangelical and Catholics Together' Statement). It does not affirm justification by grace alone, through faith alone. In the Commentary, (p. 28) Article XI of the Thirty-nine Articles is rightly alluded to but the Commentary omits the crucial word 'only' (which is, of course, present in Article XI). Article XI states that 'we are justified by Faith only' and that this 'is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort'. Justification by faith alone is a fundamental and distinguishing doctrine of authentic Anglicanism. George Whitefield described it as 'the doctrine of the Scripture and of the Church of England'. However, it is not explicitly affirmed in the Declaration or its Commentary.

Related to this, neither Clause 1 of the Declaration, nor the Commentary, affirm the doctrine of imputed righteousness and the phraseology actually adopted in both places is ambiguous, blurring the distinction between justification and sanctification. In particular, the 'fruits of love' and 'ongoing repentance' referred to in Clause 1 are not clearly identified as the products alone of new, regenerate life in Christ. As presently drafted, Clause 1 could be assented to by those who wrongly see sanctification as a process evidencing the believer's ongoing justification before God and who therefore deny the biblical doctrine of justification (which refers exclusively to God's objective, forensic judgment concerning a sinner's standing before him). The reference to the 'fruits of love' is

all too reminiscent of the phraseology used by John Henry Newman in *Tract 90* (e.g. 'faith working by love is the seed of divine graces' and 'Divine influences… are the first fruits of the grace of justification').

With regard to the atonement, the Commentary, (p. 44) states that 'In his body Jesus bore our sins, his atoning death on the cross won for us our salvation by restoring our fellowship with God'. While this is correct, it fails to affirm the penal, substitutionary nature of Christ's death.

The Commentary and accompanying papers refer extensively to 'Anglican identity'; 'orthodox faith and practice', 'tradition and churchmanship', 'legitimate diversity', 'authentic Anglicanism', 'Anglican orthodoxy' and 'the Anglican via media'. However, there is no identification of what is, in the final analysis, the necessary core of Anglican belief. The Introduction to the Statement indicates with reference to public confession of the Apostolic faith that it is 'not a test of orthodoxy for all Anglicans', and that 'we are most emphatically not suggesting that those who do not subscribe to the same confession are thereby any less faithful Anglicans.' If this is a reference to the 'public confession of the Apostolic faith' then there is a fundamental problem. Since there is a clear doctrinal core to what it means to be a faithful Anglican, those who do not accept that core are not faithful Anglicans.

Section 1.2.2 of *The Way, The Truth and The Life*, refers to relationships with other churches (*Being Faithful*, p. 101). Reference is rightly made to the fact that the Thirty-nine Articles are normative, but later in the same section it is asserted that 'Anglican Orthodoxy' 'is eager to participate in ecumenical dialogue and partnerships, with Roman Catholics…and the Orthodox'. While there might be no objection to certain forms of dialogue with Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, it is impossible to think that biblically faithful Anglicans can enter into ecumenical dialogue or partnerships with Roman Catholics or the Orthodox Churches. For example, historic Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism have fundamentally conflicting doctrinal positions on essential matters to do with the nature of authority and the means of salvation and the Roman Catholic Church has anathematised truths which protestant evangelical Anglicans affirm to be essential.

In the discussion of 'Anglican orthodoxy' in the Commentary (pp. 101-102), the 1994 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together' Statement is cited, making the

point that 'the deepest…division is between theological conservatives…who honour the Christ of the Bible and the historic creeds and confessions, and theological liberals and radicals who…do not', and that this division splits the older Protestant bodies and the Roman Catholic communion equally, from the inside'. To the extent that this is relied upon to assert that all 'theological conservatives' can and should stand together, against 'theological liberals and radicals', then that is something to be challenged. There are equally deep and legitimate doctrinal divisions between protestant evangelical Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism and these should not be under-estimated or overlooked for the sake of the battle against theological liberalism.

The Commentary states that Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics may differ on 'various matters' and yet 'uphold orthodox faith and practice' (p. 60). However, the Commentary does not explain what is intended by the phrase 'various matters'. It is plain that salvation by grace alone, through faith alone is at the heart of 'orthodox faith' with the consequence that protestant evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics cannot differ, as they do, on the nature and means of salvation and still be said to 'uphold orthodox faith' together. A similar point arises (Commentary, p. 63) which recognises the existence of disagreement 'over some important issues' among those who are 'united in making the Jerusalem Declaration'. Again, where there is clear and obvious disagreement about the nature and means of salvation, it cannot be asserted that those making the Declaration are in truth 'united'. Page 63 also recognises 'the possibility of coming together' but surely there must first be a rigorous examination of whether or not there really is a clear basis for unity founded upon the evangelical truths of the biblical gospel. Where such agreement does not exist, then any professed 'unity' is in reality false.

Readers searching for an unequivocal affirmation of those biblical doctrines forming the core of protestant, reformed, evangelical Anglicanism will be disappointed. *Being Faithful* rightly highlights the existence of a false gospel in the shape of theological and moral liberalism (p. 3). However, formalism, ritualism, and Romanism are also antagonistic to the true gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. In the pursuit of true spiritual revival they too must be counted as false gospels.

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Chairman of Church Society Council

GOD'S LYRICS: Rediscovering worship through Old Testament songs
Douglas Sean O'Donnell
Phillipsburg, New Jersey; P&R Publishing Co, 2010 211pp ($15.99) £9.99pb
ISBN: 978-1-59638-172-8

Should Christians rejoice when God sends his enemies to hell? If all our instincts cry 'No!' (Ezek. 18) this book asks us to reconsider. If all God's works are good, why not sing praise for all that he does? The author, Senior Pastor of an Illinois 'New Covenant' church, does not pose the dilemma as unbearably as my first question; but on his logic something like it seems unavoidable.

The subtitle hardly prepares us for what follows; are we not already overwhelmed with books, courses, celebrities and conferences all 'rediscovering worship'? This book has three special features.

First, it examines six Old Testament 'lyrics', some clearly designed for singing—from Moses (Exod. 15, Deut. 32); Deborah (Judg. 5); Hannah (1 Sam. 2); David (2 Sam. 22); and Hab. 3). Highlighting their main themes, the author finds much common ground.

Second, under that spotlight he compares some classic hymns with the USA's 'Top 50 Contemporary Christian Choruses', based on Christian Copyright Licensing statistics. These overlap considerably with what UK evangelicals sing; the transatlantic emphasis is rarely a problem.

Comparisons are not all one-sided; Stuart Townend's 'In Christ alone' is commended for its subject-matter. But Mr O'Donnell does not spare the worst excesses of shallow self-absorption on weekly display in many churches. Songs purportedly all about Jesus turn out to be no such thing, conveying nothing about his person, work, words or even name. Yes, here are some examples.

Third and most striking, he searches old and new 'lyrics' for themes of divine judgement, and for signs of consequent joy in that judgement. To signal the dearth of hymns on God's wrath is no new complaint; to focus on being glad when his enemies are drowned, routed or otherwise destroyed—this is the book's distinctive message. Is it a necessary corrective, a provocative discussion—starter, and a basis for new writing?

If we always re-phrase, re-interpret or ignore the harshest Psalms, by what authority do we thus tame God's word? Are there limits on what Christian congregations are expected to sing? This survey could have been enriched by noticing David Preston's paraphrases, which fairly and even poetically reflect the fiercer denunciations of evildoers by that other David whom we often claim as our model.

But have you recently encountered 'And will the judge descend?', 'When you, my righteous judge shall come', or 'Great God, what do I see and hear', let alone any contemporary equivalents? If we commonly leave such questions to preaching or prayer rather than full-voiced song, are 'God's Lyrics' against us?

Agree or not, this book deserves a hearing above the many babel-sounds passing for worship today, not least from those thinking of changing or shredding their hymn-books. Its final pages feature six of the author's own texts, with tunes, based on his chosen Scriptures. We may quibble with some details while respecting his willingness to demonstrate what he means.

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JOHN STOTT: A Portrait by his Friends
Chris Wright (ed.)
Nottingham: IVP, 2011 224pp £9.99hb ISBN: 9781844745166

This collection of short essays by John Stott's friends and protégés was originally conceived as a posthumous tribute and has been published to mark his ninetieth birthday in April 2011. The editor, Chris Wright, was invited by Stott to take over the leadership of the ministries that now form Langham Partnership (known in the USA as John Stott Ministries), and is now International Director of Langham Partnership International.

Thirty-five contributions paint a picture of the man they have known. They are 'many brushstrokes, one portrait' and describe the early and formative years, his time at All Souls and influence within the Church of England, his international influence, his wider interests, the study assistants and 'the final lap'. The most varied section includes the wider interests of bird-watching, caring for the environment, and renewing church music. Of course the different parts overlap because no man can be so neatly divided.

John Stott's influence has been both wide and deep. Contributors consistently speak of his clarity, faithfulness and power as a teacher of God's word; of his remarkable efforts in equipping the churches in each continent to speak for Christ clearly, faithfully and effectively; and of his legacy of movements which continue to mobilise Christians with the gospel. Those who knew him best were deeply impressed by his character. Time and time again they speak of his astounding gift of friendship, his humility, iron self-discipline, love for children and Christ-like love for people.

This is a portrait not a biography. The works of Dudley-Smith (1999-2001) or Steer (2009) should be consulted for the facts of Stott's life and work. This is a portrait not a critical evaluation of his work. Critics exist already, and objective analysis must wait for the passage of a little more time. And finally, this is a portrait not a shock exposé. It is an exposé, but there is no shock. As Chris Wright observes, Uncle John is like a stick of seaside rock that is the same all the way through. I found this fond portrait to be a gripping and inspiring read, that made me want to follow Stott's example of devotion to Christ, and to thank God for this most remarkable man and his ministry.

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IRON SHARPENS IRON: Leading Bible-oriented small groups that thrive
Orlando Saer
Fearn, Christian Focus, 2010 142pp £6.99pb ISBN:9781845505752

Orlando Saer, minister of a church in Southampton, has had many years experience of leading Bible-oriented small groups in Cranleigh Baptist church, Surrey, and within the Co-Mission group of churches. He writes from experience.

This makes for a practical, hands-on guide to leading small groups. It would be particularly useful for readers new to leading small groups or who wish to change the culture of small groups within a church. That said it has also proved a useful refresher for those who have been leading Bible-oriented small groups for a number of years.

Saer divides his work into six chapters of uneven length. In the first he persuades the reader that small Bible study groups are an excellent way to hear God speak. He is honest with the pitfalls and warns 'they can turn into little more than social groups' (p.14). He argues that this is the reason they must be Bible-*centred* (my italics) in order to become a good place to hear from and speak to God.

The next two short chapters focus on preparing to lead the group. Both the leader preparing to lead and the art of managing the group dynamics are addressed. These chapters would be particularly useful for new leaders. There is a particularly helpful section on the life-cycle of a group. Here Saer works to persuade the reader to close a small group once it has reached its natural end. He manages expectations well.

Chapter four deals with writing Bible studies and is, rightly, by far the longest, most detailed section of the book. The author spends time carefully explaining how to understand a Bible passage and apply it to yourself. This material is excellent but would have been much improved had Saer included an exposition and shown his working to model the process.

The same chapter covers how to craft questions. Again this is very helpful material and Saer grounds example questions in a variety of Bible verses. However one can't help thinking that had he expounded a passage earlier in the chapter he could now be building a model study around his exegesis. A benefit of dotting around the Bible could have been that the full range of biblical genres was covered. This is not the case. Saer crafts example questions mainly from Old Testament narrative, gospels and New Testament epistles. Poetry and prophecy appear once each, and neither wisdom nor apocalyptic are included. The chapter feels like it has fallen between two stalls and should have either concentrated on a single passage or covered the whole gamut of Bible genres.

Finally Saer explains how to actually lead the study and how to do personal work among a group. It is excellent that this comes at the end of the book reflecting the necessary work before a study can be led.

This is a useful book, easy to read and ideal for (especially new) Bible study leaders. However the section on crafting a study felt bitty because it moves around the Bible so much and doesn't model exegesis of a single passage. That

said, there are other basic hermeneutics books and so as part of a training programme or wider library Saer's small volume would prove very helpful.

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THE BREEZE OF THE CENTURIES: Introducing Great Theologians—From the Apostolic Fathers to Aquina
Michael Reeves
Nottingham: IVP, 2010 152pp £8.99pb ISBN: 978-1-84474-415-2

Conscious of the ever-increasing demand to live in the moment, Reeves presents a popular introduction to the standard theologians of the first 'half' of church history: the Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. For each Reeves furnishes some engaging biographical details and a précis of his major extant works. Alongside inline references, each chapter closes with concrete suggestions on where to begin further reading in the primary and secondary sources (and a summary timeline of the events and works narrated).

While Reeves treads very familiar ground, his presentation has many benefits for the iGeneration. It is designed to equip and *enthuse* novice readers to approach these famous names, with the Introduction offering an attractive rationale for engaging foreign bygone eras. Each chapter is a useful length, giving sufficient detail without excessive weight. Reeves regularly shows how past contexts and heresies have relevance for later debates and for today's circumstances, while also navigating occasional difficulties. Aside from two barely-visible formatting hiccups, the slim volume is charmingly presented. And Reeves invokes some delicious turns of phrase to minimize any tedium. As he characterizes Athanasius (p. 63), Reeves transparently offers 'pastorally concerned theology'.

There is, of course, no little irony in seeking out the voices of the past, only to recast them in modern words and idioms. Yet this seems unavoidable as Reeves entices timid novices to brave the original authors. Experts may quibble over precision issues of what is included and excluded, but this lay reader appreciated Reeves's desire and success in bringing a fresh breeze to reintroduce old heroes. Watch out for the companion volume, showcasing Luther to Barth, due early 2011.

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ENGAGING WITH CALVIN Aspects of the Reformer's legacy for today
Mark D. Thompson, ed.
Nottingham: Apollos (IVP), 2009 329pp £19.99pb ISBN: 978-18447-43988

The half-millennium of John Calvin's birth in 1509 has been an occasion for a wide range of interested parties to produce articles, monographs and conference papers devoted to him and his legacy. It will be some time before they are all available, but already it is possible to discern a topic worthy of a doctoral dissertation—how Calvin was viewed 500 years after his birth. When that dissertation is eventually written, an important place will have to be reserved for this symposium, held at Moore College in Sydney during the great anniversary year and published with remarkable despatch by InterVarsity Press.

Most of the twelve contributors are (or were) at Moore College itself, and only two come from outside Australia—both of them from the United Kingdom. The volume is therefore a testament to the high level of scholarship and reflection of which Moore College can now boast, making it without doubt the leading theological institution in the Anglican Communion. *Engaging with Calvin* shows that Australian Evangelical Anglicans have not merely come of age but have taken the lead within their own church, and possibly within the wider Reformed world also. The standard of the essays printed here is uniformly high, and the editor is to be congratulated for having managed to put the collection together as quickly as he has, without sacrificing the quality of the individual contributions. That in itself is an amazing achievement, for which he must be heartily congratulated.

The opening paper is by Peter Adam, principal of Ridley College, Melbourne, which sets the stage for what is to follow and gives the reader an excellent introduction to the scope and spirit of Calvin's legacy. It is followed by Michael Jensen on Calvin's hermeneutics, who brings out the centrality of Christology for everything that Calvin wrote or taught. That theme recurs throughout the volume, most notably in Mark Thompson's extended exposition of Calvin's doctrine of Christ the mediator, which he rightly sees as central to his entire theological enterprise.

Paul Helm introduces us to aspects of Calvin's relationship to (ancient) philosophy, and the generally philosophical bent of the symposium is reinforced

by Oliver Crisp on intercessory prayer, David Höhne on providence and Andrew Cameron on ethics. Calvin does not easily fit into a philosophical mode, as these contributors readily acknowledge, but he had a good deal to say about all of these things and it is refreshing to find them treated in a concise but systematic manner.

More directly theological are Robert Doyle on Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity and Martin Foord on his interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:4: 'God wills that all should be saved.' The latter essay takes us through an amazing range of medieval and Reformation exegetes, placing Calvin very firmly in his historical context. If there is a weakness in this collection, it is the relatively thin treatment of Calvin's Biblical exegesis, even though it was the basis of his systematic theology. Naturally, there are references to particular verses in almost every chapter, but despite Dr Jensen's treatment of his hermeneutics, there is no comprehensive study of Calvin the exegete and the relevance of his methods for today. Also lacking is any serious engagement with Calvin's political views, despite the great importance of these ever since the sixteenth century.

Eye-opening for many will be John McClean's analysis of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, which will strike many modern Evangelicals as dangerously close to Roman Catholicism because of his insistence on the 'real presence' of Christ in the eucharist. Of course, everything depends on how that is understood, and Dr. McClean makes it clear that Calvin differed from both Rome and the Lutherans without succumbing to the kind of radical Zwinglianism which is standard fare today. This is the chapter that will set most otherwise sympathetic readers on edge, and the editor is to be congratulated for having included it.

The symposium is rounded off by personal reflections on the reputation of Calvin and Calvinism in the past generation by Peter Jensen, and by an interesting historical study of Calvinism in Australia by Colin Bale. Both of these deserve to be widely read; the first, because it is a painfully accurate assessment of so much of what is wrong with the current state of theology in the Protestant world, and the second because it adds a dimension to church history of which few will be aware.

The book has been produced with astonishing speed, but this has meant foregoing an index, which is an essential tool in a work of this kind. There is a

list of references to Calvin's works (though not to Scriptural texts!), but that is as far as it gets. It is perhaps unlikely that there will ever be a second edition, but if there is, this omission must certainly be put right. Readers who are forced to go through the entire text looking for particular people or subjects will surely not begrudge the extra month or two that producing such aids to research requires, and we must plead with both Moore College and the publishers not to make this mistake again.

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SHOULD CHRISTIANS EMBRACE EVOLUTION? Biblical and scientific responses
Norman C. Nevin, ed.
Nottingham: IVP, 2009 220pp £9.99pp ISBN: 978-18447-44060

For most people, including Christians, arguments about biological evolution seem somewhat esoteric. The secular world accepts Darwinian evolutionary theories more or less without question, and most Christians go along with this, thinking that there is no real conflict between science and faith. Of course, they repudiate the atheistic approach of Richard Dawkins and his ilk, but they also tend to think of so-called Biblical creationists as eccentric and do not take them seriously. This book is an attempt by some of the latter to get Evangelicals (at least) not only to see that they have a case to make, but also to recognise that their 'creationist' option is the only one a Bible-believing Christian can legitimately adopt.

Much of what they have to say is undoubtedly true and this fact ought to be recognised by all sides in the debate. They are right to insist that Darwinian evolution is not absolute truth and is always open to modification and falsification. To cling to it as dogma is as unscientific as to reject it out of hand, a fact which needs to be more widely understood than it is. It is also true that Christian faith imposes certain beliefs on those who accept it, whether or not those beliefs can be demonstrated in a scientifically respectable way. For example, we are committed to saying that the world was created by an intelligent designer, although this belief does not force us to accept any one theory of 'intelligent design'. We also have to believe that the human race is descended from a single couple, who sinned against the will of God as that had

been revealed to them. To say that Adam and Eve were merely two 'humans' among many, who were chosen by God for a special purpose, is to deny the universality of the fall and the essential unity of our race.

At the same time, we must also remember that the Bible is not a textbook of biology and cannot be used to arbitrate disputes about things like the age and significance of the fossil record. The opening chapters of Genesis were designed to be understood by those for whom they were first written, and must be interpreted accordingly. To do otherwise is to distort their meaning and make them say things that the author could not possibly have intended. Biblical scholars may debate what that meaning is, but it seldom brings in any serious reference to the natural sciences which were unknown to those for whom the text was originally composed.

Of course, there is a unity of truth that specialists in different disciplines ought to try to discover, difficult as that often is in the highly specialised academic world we live in. If this book demonstrates anything, it is that many scientists and theologians are barely on speaking terms with each other. Unfortunately for the cause of truth, much of the book is a polemic directed against Dr. Denis Alexander and his Faraday Institute in Cambridge, and at times the arguments take on the flavour of a personal vendetta. Dr. Alexander is probably wrong about all kinds of things, but so are most other people, and to attack his opinions as somehow un-Christian does not get us very far. His theory that at some point a pair of *homines sapientes* became *homines divini*, when God spoke to them and revealed himself to them, is odd in itself and definitely out of line with the Bible, but this does not discredit 'theistic evolution' in the way that the authors of this book claim.

Most of the scientific contributions to this volume are written with the caution and restraint one would expect of them. They point out the difficulties that Darwinism faces and argue that alternatives must be considered in the light of the facts, and they avoid taking pot-shots at those who think differently. Unfortunately, there are also a number of essays by dogmatic and dogmatising theologians, who are prone to make exaggerated and sometimes quite un-Biblical claims under the guise of defending the authority of Scripture. The most obvious of these is the extraordinary assertion that, after the fall of Adam and Eve, God 'cursed the ground' in such a way as to bring pain, suffering and death

into existence for the first time. This makes no sense, and is contrary to the divine command to Adam to eat everything that the created world had to offer. Even in the garden of Eden, that would have meant killing the animals first, and we have to believe that the existence of the food chain is part of the natural order, not the consequence of Adam's fall.

It must also be said that some of the Biblical exegesis put forward by these people is simply bizarre. It is one thing to argue that the creation narratives are not demythologised versions of similar Babylonian material—that is probably true and can be defended on perfectly sound exegetical grounds. But to say that Genesis 1 cannot be an anti-Babylonian text because it was written by Moses, who grew up in Egypt and therefore knew nothing of Babylonia, is taking things too far. Most of Genesis deals with events in Mesopotamia, not in Egypt, and whoever wrote it must have been familiar with its customs. The irony here is that that has long been argued by conservative scholars, who have used it as a reason for accepting the historical antiquity and reliability of a text which Moses could not have invented, precisely because of its Babylonian flavour. In trying to make out their case from the Bible, some of the contributors to this volume have allowed themselves to get carried away by their anti-evolutionist rhetoric, and by insisting that their readers must choose between them and their enemies (whom they regard as effectively non-Christian by definition) they are liable to do their cause more harm than good.

The fact of the matter is that the Bible does not compel us to reject evolutionary theories any more than it obliges us to accept them. Theistic evolution of some kind remains a valid option in the current state of our knowledge, and if it is eventually disproved (as it may be) it will not be by the kind of appeal to Biblical creationism found in this book. Theologians and Evangelical scientists need to find a common language and come to agreed positions that allow for the possibility that further discoveries in the natural world may cause them to be revised or abandoned later on. God's Word must certainly be honoured, but as it is, and not as some of these creationists would like it to be.

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SIGNS OF GOD'S PROMISE: Thomas Cranmer's Sacramental Theology and the Book of Common Prayer
Gordon P. Jeanes
London: T & T Clark, 2008 £24.99pb 305pp ISBN: 978-0-567-03189-1

The Book of Common Prayer is one of Thomas Cranmer's five greatest legacies for the Church of England—alongside the Thirty-Nine Articles, the reformed Ordinal, the English Bible, and the witness of his martyrdom. Yet his doctrine of the sacraments remains hotly disputed territory. The archbishop wrote frequently on this vital theme, not just in his public liturgies but also in scholarly and polemical treatises. Gordon Jeanes, a liturgical specialist, puts those texts back under the microscope in this revision of his 1998 doctoral thesis. It makes few allowances for the general reader, with numerous lengthy quotations, often in medieval English, Latin or Greek without translation. Jeanes is particularly strong on Cranmer's liturgical sources in constructing the Prayer Book, whether Lutheran, Reformed, Mozarabic, Sarum or Eastern Orthodox. He also shows how Cranmer's view on the sacraments was influenced by reformed contemporaries such as Peter Martyr, Martin Bucer, John Calvin and Henry Bullinger. The final chapter is one of the most stimulating, offering a detailed commentary on the Prayer Book's much-neglected baptismal rite, thus helping to fill a gaping hole in the abundant Cranmerian literature. Jeanes takes us deeper into liturgical texts and contexts than others have done, but the focus of his monograph is inevitably more liturgiological than theological. For readers eager to engage with Cranmer's evangelical vision and doctrinal passion, Ashley Null's *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love* (OUP, 2000) remains unsurpassed.

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FORGIVING THE IMPOSSIBLE
Greta Randle
INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2010 £7.99PB 144 PP ISBN: 978-1-84474-433-6

In one sense this is a really easy read—a very real and engaging personal narrative. In another sense it is a very difficult book to read and not an enjoyable experience.

Greta Randle tells her own story, one of persistent child sexual abuse at the hands of a trusted family friend who was also the pastor of their church. What believer wants to read about that? We would all want to think that this could not happen. But it did and it does. It took Greta until mid-life to begin talking about it and in the meantime the aftermath of those childhood experiences had meant misery and depression not just for Greta but for other family members.

The book details the decades of emotional turmoil. The link between anger and depression is well-made, as is the critical link between forgiveness and the start of the healing process. It is in the book's favour that this is no glib 'winning-through' story: the healing itself is painful and slow. But there is a reality about it which will encourage the hearts of readers who have had similar experiences or who endeavour to help victims of abuse. The effect of the writer's struggles on her husband and on her marriage is bravely and honestly told. Victims nearly always produce other victims.

Emotions are complex and individual. There is a limit to the extent to which we can ever understand how others feel. And there is vast individual difference in responses to even very similar experiences. So the book might leave some readers disturbed and dissatisfied. Even so, it is a story that had to be told. Silence and denial on this issue only help the perpetrators of evil. And the book is not all heartbreak; there remains the unbreakable thread of Christian hope.

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1 & 2 SAMUEL (Apollos Old Testament Commentary 8)
David G. Firth

Nottingham: Apollos, 2009 614pp £24.99 ISBN: 978-1-84474-368-1 978-0-8308-2508-0

Reading a new commentary often involves a combination of expectant curiosity about how the author will approach the Biblical text coupled with a marathon runner's determination simply to make it to the end. Happily, reading Firth's interesting and lucid commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel has been worth the effort.

Firth begins with the expected introduction dealing with critical background issues such as date, authorship, and major themes. After discussing the leading

critical scholarly views, Firth suggests that the book was written sometime under the divided monarchy (perhaps during the reign of Hezekiah) by some unknown author, who carefully complied and shaped previously recorded information into one unified composition. Firth particularly emphasises the artistic and well-planned compositional techniques used by the author in presenting the narratives.

The commentary then proceeds through the text in units of approximately chapter-length, each section beginning with a clear English translation followed by abbreviated technical notes. Most readers will probably just skip over the technical notes, which are obscure without reference to the Hebrew text of Samuel. The bulk of the discussion of the passage is focused into three large sections: form and structure, verse by verse analysis, and an explanation which attempts to situate the passage in its biblical and theological context.

The strength of the commentary comes in Firth's willingness to read the text as a coherent and unified narrative, rather than attempting to dissect it into various source materials. Such an approach enables him to find evidence of literary artistry that other scholars might miss. For example, there seem to be some chronological discrepancies in the text, but Firth argues that the author has purposefully reordered some stories, to present thematically related material together or to increase the dramatic tension in the narrative. The last few chapters of 1 Samuel provide an example of the latter technique. David has been living in exile with the Philistines, and it appears that he will have to fight in their army against Saul and the Israelites (1 Sam. 28), but if he does so his role as God's anointed successor to Saul may be in jeopardy. Before resolving David's dilemma, however, the author tells of Saul's encounter with the spirit mistress of Endor (1 Sam. 28), which actually occurs after David has been dismissed from the Philistine forces by the majority of the Philistine lords (1 Sam. 29). The real chronology is indicated by the location of the Philistine forces in each passage, and by plotting their geographical movement from the coast to the Jezreel valley, an ancient Israelite could understand the actual chronology of the events. Firth's comments in such cases are insightful and helpful.

There are a few weaknesses in the work, however. The stated goal of this particular commentary series is to combine the best of critical scholarship with an ability to apply the texts in our modern context. Firth shows how certain

passages fit into their local contexts and even how they are understood within a New Testament framework, but he rarely offers much concrete application. In addition, Firth has a few unique but unconvincing interpretations. For instance, in the David-Bathsheba-Uriah story (2 Sam. 11), Firth attempts to demonstrate that David's motivation for adultery and murder was not lust followed by cover-up (the common interpretation) but instead that David's actions were rooted in some unstated rivalry against Uriah. Nevertheless, Firth's comments make it clear that the consequences of David's inappropriate use of power remain whatever his motivation.

In spite of these weaknesses, Firth has produced a good commentary, the particular strength of which is his excellent analysis of the narrative artistry and unity of 1 & 2 Samuel. For this contribution, his work will prove valuable for anyone studying, teaching, or preaching this portion of scripture.

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THE READING AND PREACHING OF THE SCRIPTURES IN THE WORSHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH Volume 7: Our own time Hughes Oliphant Old

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010 734pp £24.99/$45pb ISBN: 978-0-8028-1771-6

At last, Dr. Old has managed to bring his mammoth work on preaching and worship to a magnificent close with the seventh and most difficult volume of all. His mentors wanted him to complete his study with a survey of 'our own time', but as he indicates at the start, how difficult it is to assess one's own contemporaries! On top of that there is the fact that in our day Christianity has exploded in the developing world, making any general survey almost impossible to attempt with any assurance that it will be either objective or comprehensive.

Wisely, Dr. Old has decided to stay within his own comfort zone and select preachers whose life and work he can examine in some depth. He himself is a Presbyterian from South Carolina, and the first part of his book centres around men who relate to either or both of those subcultures. There is a whole chapter dedicated to Billy Graham, of course, but many others are also treated at some length. This is particularly valuable for outsiders, who may have a rather

distorted view of popular American preaching which Dr. Old does his best to correct. He himself leans to a conservative, Reformed approach, but he includes liberals and Roman Catholics in his survey and is not afraid either to praise or to criticise those whom he disagrees with, for whatever reason.

His general approach is to give a potted biography of a preacher and then examine a typical sermon, pointing out its characteristic features of style and commenting on their respective strengths and weaknesses. In many cases he has known the preachers personally, and this gives the book added authority as a source for our understanding. He is not an admirer of charismatics or of the megachurch, but he devotes a chapter to each and treats them fairly. He generally avoids televangelists, but there is a remarkably sympathetic portrait of Oral Roberts, which non-American readers will find fascinating. The great omissions are Bill Hybels of Willow Creek and John Piper, which is surprising, given their prominence in those circles. The only time Dr. Old puts a foot slightly wrong is when he devotes a chapter to 'black preaching'. He should have called it 'African American preaching' instead, partly because it is what black Americans prefer, but also because there are plenty of black people outside the USA who are not covered in this chapter.

Having said that, he does devote considerable space to Black Africa, as he also does to Latin America and East Asia. A particular strength of those chapters is that he does not confine himself to a few well-known names but goes in search of significant preachers who may be little-known outside their homelands. It is hard to know how far they represent preaching in the developing world because Dr Old relies to a considerable extent on his own contacts, but the ignorance of most Western people is such that almost everyone will find these sections helpful and illuminating.

There is also a section devoted to British preachers, but although it would be hard to quarrel with the names Dr. Old has selected, most British readers will find this chapter somewhat puzzling. He also pictures the 1950s and 1960s as a time of doom and gloom in the UK, which is an exaggeration. In fact, the church was growing for much of that time and it was during those years that the ministries of men like John Stott and Dick Lucas were having their greatest impact. Dr. Lloyd Jones was also still in full flight at Westminster Chapel, but he is covered at the end of the previous volume, apparently because Dr. Old finds

him a little old-fashioned for inclusion in 'our time'. He includes Nicky Gumbel, which is interesting, but compares him to Paul Macartney, of all people! One wonders which of the two will be more surprised. He also gets some of his facts curiously wrong—John Stott, for example, is not an aristocrat as Dr. Old seems to think, nor is the Lucan Presbyterian Church where Trevor Morrow preaches in Dublin. (It is in Lucan.) These are perhaps minor points, but he could easily have asked someone like Sinclair Ferguson to read this section through and avoided such obvious errors.

Nevertheless, there can be no denying the fact that Dr. Old has completed a monumental survey of preaching and worship which will be of immense value to the church in years to come. We are thankful that he has lived to finish it and hope that it will be widely read and used by those whose business and passion it is to preach and teach the Word of God.

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