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The sublimest calling which man can attain on earth is that of preaching the Word of God.

—J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNE

We preachers humour fancies instead of trying to crush them. We act like a father who gives his sick child a cake or an ice, or something else that is merely nice to eat—just because he asks for it; and takes no pains to give him what is good for him; and when the doctors blame him says, "I could not bear to hear my child cry." . . . This is what we do when we elaborate beautiful sentences, fine combinations and harmonies, to please and not to profit.

—JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, HOMILIES ON ACTS

BOOK REVIEWS

SCRIPTURE IN THE THEOLOGIES OF W. PANNENBERG AND D. G. BLOESCH: AN INVESTIGATION AND ASSESSMENT OF ITS ORIGIN, NATURE AND USE

Frank M. Hasel

Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang Publishers (1996)

European University Studies Series

337 pages, paper, \$57.95

This is a masterful work, written by a young American-educated pastor currently serving a German congregation. That Frank Hasel finds time to also write scholarly material is quite amazing in itself.

Hasel provides an in-depth treatment of two of the most influential theologians in the English-speaking world: Wolfhart Pannenberg and Donald G. Bloesch. He examines their respective backgrounds, their lives as Christian thinkers, their academic work in general, and finally, their overall development of the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

I am impressed with the author's ability as both theological analyst and "interpreter." As a former student and long-time friend of Donald G. Bloesch, I found Hasel's understanding and treatment of Bloesch's work extremely accurate and eminently fair. Regarding Pannenberg, on whose writings I am certainly not an expert, I found myself enabled to see where his thought was going, often for the first time. He manages to clarify Pannenberg's positions in

ways that are sometimes clearer than Pannenberg does himself!

Hasel's concern for both theologians is that the "message" has been made so authoritative that the text of Scripture suffers loss in the process. In Pannenberg's case this has meant a commitment to the historic resurrection of Jesus Christ as the "normative revelation" of God's promised future for the human race without giving adequate attention to the reliability of the New Testament apostolic writers themselves. Pannenberg's espoused objective is to "put people in touch" with the eschatological "hope" which is "revealed ahead of time" in Jesus without requiring them to resort to "faith" that would in any way compete with or displace "reason." In his treatment of Jesus, the doctrine of resurrection and the doctrine of God himself, Pannenberg ends up sounding rather orthodox even though his doctrine of Scripture would not necessarily lead him to such conclusions.

Hasel sees the gospel as a "package-deal" in which the New Testament message comes within the framework of human fallenness, God's atonement, the provision of covenant "promises" and "requirements" and the help of the Holy Spirit. Does the resurrection message itself hold up for "reason" if the package itself, which is primarily Scripture, is not also sustained by God himself in some sort of trustworthy sense? If Scripture only "evolved" over time, as a kind of human compilation of writings about God, why can't facets of the Christian message (e.g., its ethical teaching on abortion and homosexuality) simply evolve into a shadowland of actual contradiction? This, of course, is what has actually happened in many mainline denominational contexts in our own day. Hasel argues that Pannenberg errs in not making the authority of Scripture an actual part (albeit secondary) of the message of Scripture itself. He argues that if Jesus' resurrection saves us and gives

us true hope, we still end up largely abandoned to our own devices if we live under "reason," which is always subject to "rationalization."

Hasel is also concerned for Bloesch, but in quite a different sense. While Bloesch makes room for a serious doctrine of inspiration, in both the formation and origination of Scripture, not just in its ability to communicate the divine message of salvation in Christ, Hasel still contends he "begs the question." But how? Is the only content of Scripture's message Jesus? Or is it historic, orthodox doctrine? What is the actual *means* God uses to bring salvation to us by the Spirit? Is it not the Scripture itself? Must we then also put trust in the Scriptures and give heed to them? As an example of this point Bloesch rejects evolution and affirms divine creation regarding persons, yet still seems to waffle on the actual historicity of Adam and (so far) does not hold to a worldwide flood, a literal tower of Babel, etc. But on what basis can he make such distinctions? Why are the miracles of the Old Testament "saga" while miracles of the New Testament are "fact"?

While Hasel is appreciative of much that Bloesch has written he is not satisfied that his views on the authority of Scripture succeed in giving the church a solid, reliable, and consistent hermeneutic for fully developing its faith. The bottom line for Bloesch is always, "The Holy Spirit shows us." By this Bloesch means he shows us "in Scripture as witnessed to in the various streams of church tradition." But how exactly can we side with certain traditions over other traditions?

Hasel's commitment to the covenantal nature of Scripture convinces him that there is a "plan" which involves God's own commitment to "historicality." This assures us that there is historical reliability in Scripture, behind which the Holy Spirit illumines the truth revealed in Christ. Though Bloesch's theology nowhere *rejects* the sort of plan

Hasel seeks, he argues that Bloesch falls short in fully grasping this and articulating it adequately as a key to his exposition of the content of biblical revelation. For example, do we reject certain parts of the Old Testament as "historical" simply because modern interpreters find conflicts between them and "accepted" scientific theory (i.e., our academic culture)? Or do we have biblical and theological reasons, dictated by the Scriptures themselves, for not taking certain things as historical? Hasel challenges both Bloesch and Panneberg, as well as each of us, to wrestle with this question with a decided focus on the latter, rather than with a capitulation to the former.

All in all, this is an extremely stimulating book. (The footnotes alone are a veritable gold mine!) If you are a pastor and frequently visit the world of serious academic theology then this book will prove to be a helpful tool. It doesn't answer all the questions but it does direct our attention to the places that still await further exploration.

Lance Wonders
Academic Dean
Antioch Christian School
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

FAMILY MINISTRY: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

Diana R. Garland
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1999)
627 pages, cloth, \$34.99

The jacket of this new work boldly claims that "Dr. Diana Garland has written the finest work available in family ministry." Is this InterVarsity publishing hype or a fair claim? I have to say, given my less than comprehensive exposure to works in this particular field, that I agree with the claim.

To combine a distinctly Christian sense of family with an understanding of the modern complexities of life in the West is a challenge. Garland faces it squarely in a comprehensive 627-page work! She brings experience in both the church and the academy to the task and it shows throughout. Careful research and serious reflection stand out as hallmarks of her approach. Pastors, professional counselors and even ordinary interested readers can profit from this encyclopedic volume.

Part One presents "The Context for Family Ministry." Here social science is well used to give a description of the modern concerns of family life. Garland interacts with physical and social space as well as culture. She then develops the stages and phases of family life and looks, very helpfully, at characteristics of strong families. This is followed by an excellent historical section that looks at the history of families. She even has a chapter titled "A Socio-economic History of the American Family." This material might well put off some whose view of the family in America is rigid, but it must be read. Churches, and those who lead them, are too often ignorant of the development of the nuclear family concept in America. What part did the Industrial Revolution play in family life? What was family life really like in the idyllic 1950s? We have far too many romantic notions about family life for our own good, and the church that wants to minister effectively in the new century needs a new approach to understanding family life in order to show compassion to broken and struggling families as it ought. This historical sub-section concludes with a look back at family in the early church, in historic Roman Catholicism, in the Protestant Reformation, in the Enlightenment, in non-European cultures, and finally in recent history.

The fourth section of Part One is both the most useful and potentially (for some) the most controversial portion

of Garland's work. It is titled "Biblical Foundations for Family Ministry Today." I can't say enough about how stimulating I found these seventy pages. Consider this list of topics she addresses in this section: "Jesus' Life: A Transformation of 'Family,'" "Family As Vocation," "The Role of Community in Family Support," "Jesus' Teachings by Word and Example," "Going Home Versus Leaving Home," "Family Images for Christ," "God and God's People," "God As Covenant Partner," "God Can Use All Kinds of Families," "Family Living As a Means of Discipling," and "Family Life Has Fruit to Bear."

For some years I have preached on family life, in a number of diverse settings. I have found, over and over, that if I truly preach the biblical texts on family, in a richly biblical context, this material always seems to be helpful, as well as somewhat controversial. The Scripture, simply put, cannot be made to fit comfortably with traditional models of family life as many of us have known them. And the church must not simply defend traditional middle class American models of family life and expect to be biblically prophetic and faithful.

One example must suffice. Is there an "ideal" biblical family model revealed in Scripture? Garland thinks not, and I completely concur. She notes, properly, "The Scriptures record not only many kinds of family structures through which God has worked throughout history; but also that God has used families with all kinds of 'dysfunctions,' quirks and downright sinfulness" (345). The simple act is that God has used all kinds of families, flawed and otherwise, down through recorded history. To set one model before the church as "right" is a tragic mistake made by scores of well-intentioned evangelical church leaders. Garland has a helpful table on page 345 that lists some of the various family models revealed in Scripture (e.g.: extended household, polygamous marriage, marriage separated by

work, interracial/intercultural, marriage between believer and unbeliever, single-parent [widowed] families, adult children and their parents, etc.).

What then is the role of the Christian church in terms of family and witness? Consider Garland's well-crafted and theologically thoughtful answer:

In essence, the Christian church is to give witness to a whole new social order, the kingdom of God, not simply to repair the old. That can happen either by establishing an alternative community that strives to model that new order, or by attempting to transform society—or both. Both choices communicate that it is clearly time for a new way, the way Jesus promised for those who are his followers.

For this reason, family ministry does not simply change the oil or tinker with the timing, so to speak, so families will run more smoothly. We are proposing a whole new transportation system for life. Families "transport" us from life to death. Family members are those with whom we share the journey.

Clearly, this perspective of family ministry is quite different from what might have grown as an offshoot of the community mental health movement. We are envisioning families quite differently from what our society means by family. We are making up the language with terms like *faith-families*. In a practical sense, perhaps language and envisioning do not change the tenacious realities with which people are currently struggling. Nevertheless, alternative realities begin with new vision and new rhetoric (Brueggemann 1978). The task of family ministry in our day may in essence be prophecy, evoking an alternative to the definitions of family and community of our society. Prophetic ministry seeks to penetrate despair so that new futures can be believed in and embraced (380).

This type of insight can be demonstrated again and again by quoting from Garland's outstanding guide. If you are a leader in the church and if you teach on family ministry at all you must read this book. There is simply nothing like it to my knowledge. In fact, if you are concerned at all about the huge volume of family material that is being produced by evangelicals, much of which is neither biblically sound or theologically careful, then you need this book. This is not a book just for specialists. Family books sell very well in our day. Most of us know the family is in trouble. We thus buy books looking for help. This is not necessarily a good sign, however, since most of these popular books offer simplistic and unbiblical advice. Garland will help you think through family-related issues, which in the end is the *beginning* of true reformation.

EDITOR

THE GOSPEL MYSTERY OF SANCTIFICATION

Walter Marshall

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books (1999)
247 pages, cloth, \$25.00

The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification fits the definition of a classic once offered by a wag: "It is often reprinted, frequently purchased, and too infrequently read!" Sad, but true. This generation, having feasted on best-sellers by Perretti, Lucado and Jenkins/LaHaye, has tasted little of the pure water of the past, the very best marrow of sound divinity.

Walter Marshall (1628-80), born at Wearmouth, County Durham (England), was educated at Winchester College, and New College, Oxford. He was appointed vicar to the parish of Hursley in 1661. In time he declared for the presbyterian form of church government and was cast out of his parish. A personal friend of the godly Richard Baxter, it

was said of him that "he profited greatly by his own preaching; from its efficacy on his own heart he attained to very uncommon degrees of faith and holiness." Eventually Marshall was called to be pastor of a congregation in Gosport, Hampshire, where he wrote this most profitable book, posthumously published in 1692.

The British Museum Library has more than a dozen editions of this work, ranging from a first edition to a third large-type edition of 1887. Various editorial changes have been made over the years, all attempting to clear up minor confusion in the text. The author's style has been called "obscure." The arrangement of his work is considered by many not to be the best. Both charges are undoubtedly true, but the reader must not, therefore, be put off by these facts. There is always reward for patience, and there will be ample reward for patiently plowing through Marshall's dense but sensible counsel.

Percy Ruoff, in an introduction to an earlier edition of this volume (1954), noted:

The beauty of Marshall's book is that he makes the doctrine of our union with Christ our starting point in the Christian course. What a new direction would be given to the spiritual struggles of thousands if they could but receive the teaching which Marshall seeks so earnestly to inculcate.

A little bit of Marshall's own story will shed light on the book itself. For some time Marshall had a profound dread of divine displeasure. His soul remained in a state of perpetual mourning. To find comfort he sought out several friends, including Richard Baxter of Kidderminster (1615-91). Baxter informed Marshall that he understood the spirit of his writings and that he was too legal. Marshall also sought the counsel of Thomas Goodwin (1600-80), the eminent patriarch of Independency. It was to Goodwin

that Marshall opened his heart, telling him of certain sins that greatly troubled his conscience. Goodwin, in response, told Marshall that "he had forgotten to mention the greatest sin of all, the sin of unbelief, in not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins, and for the sanctifying of his nature." This reply brought home to Walter Marshall's heart, by the Spirit, the truth of the grace of God. He saw his mistake clearly. He had been trying to commend himself to God on the basis of his own righteousness. He now saw that at the root of true sanctification lay faith alone. He set about preaching Christ and joy in the Holy Spirit. The result is this amazing work!

Marshall does something that is not altogether common among writers of his era. He reveals the feelings and trials of his own heart in considerable detail. He errs, perhaps, in making his own trials a kind of universal pattern for the life of others. At the same time, the reader gets a powerful glimpse of the work of God in a sincere soul. Personally, I fear that this kind of heart religion is all too uncommon among modern Reformed writers.

What is the key to Marshall's understanding regarding "the gospel mystery" of Christian living? In three words—union with Christ. Sanctification, or Christian growth in godliness, is inseparable from true union with Christ by faith alone. This means that justification and sanctification are inseparable. Holiness involves both the mind and the soul actively pursuing Christ through the Word and by the Spirit. The aim of life for the true believer is always holiness. And true holiness must be deeply rooted in our union with Christ alone. By faith are we actually able to see our past, present and future in such a way that we have a clear conscience and a powerful means of grace (xix).

This strong and persistent witness to the place of union with Christ has caused some in our time to criticize Marshall as unbalanced. I think the criticism is totally unjust.

William Cowper, who had his own struggles mentally and spiritually, once wrote: "Marshall is an old acquaintance of mine: I have both read him and heard him read with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he maintains are, under the influence of the divine Spirit, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness."

The book consists of fourteen directions and a sermon on justification (Romans 3:23-26). The author lays out his counsel carefully and methodically. This is a strength. In this particular edition Dr. Joel Beeke, an outstanding contemporary student of Puritan theology and practice, provides a very clear and useful Introduction that summarizes and analyzes each direction. This material is worth the price of this new edition alone!

Joel Beeke rightly notes five lessons this book has for the church in our day. Each of these has to do with the way in which certain truths are inseparable in their proper relationship. Each is vital to the biblical reformation so needed today. These are worth noting, in such a review as this, since they urge the reader to actually read Marshall. The five inseparable truths that Beeke notes are: (1) The Inseparability of Union with Christ and Sanctification. (2) The Inseparability of Justification and Sanctification. (3) The Inseparability of Christ and His Word. (4) The Inseparability of Mind and Soul. (5) The Inseparability of the Sacred and the Secular.

Perhaps the best way to encourage you to not only own a copy of Marshall's classic but to read it, and read it again, is to let the final paragraph of Beeke's helpful Introduction conclude my comments:

It is true, of course, that we are to press for increasing knowledge of our Savior, and ought never to be satisfied with what we have attained. Nevertheless, as Marshall repeatedly emphasized, if you are a believer, you are united with Christ.

What you need is not a new experience, but to draw more deeply upon Christ. The emphasis in Marshall's writing is always upon understanding and living by that which God has already so gloriously given in Jesus Christ. Marshall did not proceed by promoting dissatisfaction. Rather, he started and ended with satisfaction in and with Christ. Christ alone is sufficient (xxv).

EDITOR

**POWER PREACHING FOR CHURCH GROWTH:
THE ROLE OF PREACHING IN GROWING CHURCHES**

David Eby

Inverness, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications (1996)

192 pages, paper, \$15.99

I have seen the Church Growth Movement up close and very personally. I had the privilege of taking church growth classes, during the infancy of this now burgeoning movement, with the most popular writer and teacher of them all, C. Peter Wagner. Pete was, if anything, charming, earnest and very exciting to interact with day by day in the classroom. He also lacked a clearly thought out theological framework, something which seems almost always to be missing in the advocates of this sociological emphasis to missions and discipleship. He carried a *Scofield Annotated Bible* and clearly was reacting to the bankrupt dispensational framework of interpretation he had been taught as a younger man. This, combined with his experience of Pentecostal phenomena in Central America, was reworking his entire approach to missions and evangelism. The result, now thirty years later, is not surprising if you listened to Peter and paid attention to what he was saying in those days.

I still recall the day Wagner came to class, having visited the famous fundamentalist church, First Baptist of Hammond, Indiana, the previous day. Having heard Jack Hyles,

the famous soul-winning pastor, Wagner pronounced to the class that if the then infamous Archie Bunker, the white racist character of the television sitcom, were to become a Christian this would surely be the church he would join! I suppose I agreed at the time, being new to all of this impressive homogeneous unit business. Having thought more deeply about the New Testament, I have since come to question the paradigm and the entire basis for defending it. This personal story is told to explain why David Eby's book is so valuable.

Eby connects, solidly and plainly, the role of biblical preaching to the result of church growth, both spiritually and numerically. He believes, as I do, that the message and the method for growing churches are revealed in the New Testament. We are not, in other words, given a message and then left to our own good sense to make disciples any way we please. One cannot read the Acts of the Apostles without recognizing that "preaching" was the means God used, in formal and informal ways, to reach people with the message of Christ. This was done one-on-one, in smaller groups, and in massive public meetings. Whatever the circumstances, what they were doing is described by the word used over and over: "preach." This is no accidental, or unimportant, piece of information. A careful study of 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5 will reveal that the message was simple, but clear, and the method was also simple and clear. It was the message of Christ and it was to be preached!

The author of this book is a seasoned pastor who studied hundreds of volumes on the Church Growth Movement before he wrote this eminently helpful book. He is committed, obviously, to reaching people with the gospel and to growing a church God's way. This book is not, therefore, a harsh critique from an armchair theorist. Eby will stoke the fires of true evangelism and encourage you to not settle for unresponsive churches.

True revival always brings powerful preaching. One of the reasons we have settled for such weak preaching in our time is that we have seen little or no real revival, which restores Spirit-anointed preaching to its proper place. Eby understands this truth. His book will show you what is wrong with Church Growth thinking as well as what is right with preaching the gospel with dependence upon the Spirit alone. Read it if you are a pastor. Give it to your board if they are clamoring for techniques that will guarantee statistical growth in your church. If your church has already committed itself to this popular method and strategy then read it and consider what you should do very prayerfully. This is truly, as evangelist John Blanchard has noted, "a searching analysis [that] uncovers both the problem and the solution."

EDITOR

SPIRIT EMPOWERED PREACHING: INVOLVING THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR MINISTRY

Arturo G. Azurdia, III
Inverness, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications (1998)
192 pages, paper, \$15.99

The work of true preaching must absorb the interest and passion of God-called ministers almost every day of their lives. Sometimes it will even awaken them in the night with an ever deepening realization of the humbling question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once noted, "To me the work of preaching is the highest and greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called." How could any God-called herald of the gospel not agree? And yet how can anyone who preaches regularly not be profoundly aware of how infrequently they know "the sweet piercing of the

Spirit" through which the preached Word lodges with great effect in the hearts of their hearers?

Preaching, in the past century, clearly underwent significant change. Not all of this change was for the better. In our era most evangelical pulpits are filled by ministers who dispense data and biblical information as counselors or motivators. People are, in the midst of so much information, starved and confused. What is missing, I believe, is the burden which is felt when true preaching happens. There is no "woe" in our modern sermons. And there are few who hunger to experience it, not even knowing what it is.

What is needed in the West, now more than ever, is biblical reformation and true revival. This book profoundly addresses the need for both. It puts the right texts with the right theological emphasis (and balance) and does it with clarity. It points the reader to "Christ and him as crucified" as the theme of the whole Bible. If you are not a preacher I urge you to read this book just to understand what it is that preaching is meant to do in your life and that of your church. Reading this book might cause you to pray for your pastor as never before.

Art Azurdia will convince ministers, if they have open minds and teachable hearts, that they need more than good material and good outlines. He will convince them to seek and ask for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). He does not disdain the hard work of careful study, especially of biblical exegesis, but he will convince pastors to seek God for the witness and power of the Spirit upon their ministry.

What was once called "unction" is the actual burden of this book. Is there any demonstration of the Spirit's power and ministry that needs to fall upon both preacher and hearer as the Word is opened? Azurdia argues that there is and that this missing dimension must be sought and restored to the work we preachers do in our public ministry of the Word.

Written by a faithful pastor who has been used by God to build a healthy, living congregation, this is one of the most important books on homiletics to come along in my lifetime. The author has exegetically and theologically demonstrated what I have long wished for someone to write. I tell every pastor friend I have, and anyone else who will listen, this book is an absolute must if you are called to preach the gospel! I have promised several teachers of preaching that if they read this book, and then do not make it mandatory reading for their students, I will pay for the book and buy them lunch! So far none has required me to buy the lunch.

EDITOR

LIGHT AND HEAT: THE PURITAN VIEW OF THE PULPIT

R. Bruce Bickel

Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria (1999)

188 pages, paper, \$14.95

One of the happy providences of recent publishing is the plethora of significant Puritan studies that have appeared. Soli Deo Gloria, a small but forward-looking publisher, has fast become the leader in reprinting English and American Puritan classics. But SDG has not limited itself to reprinting classics. They have published several significant new books in recent years, including this outstanding volume on Puritan preaching. If the Puritans were anything, they were great preachers of the Bible. As Spurgeon said of Bunyan, so it can be said of Puritan ministers, "If you prick him he will bleed Bibles."

Bickel expresses a proper concern for the paradox that exists in modern evangelical churches, where the inerrancy of the Bible is defended rigorously while the preaching of that same Bible is often held in low esteem. He decries the

fact that modern preachers want to be "enablers" or "facilitators" rather than "preachers." He believes, rightly, that Bible studies, small groups and share times often replace the central role of preaching in modern churches. The reason this is so, according to Bickel, is that we have a generation of ministers who have a clouded vision of ministry and no clear conviction regarding the place and importance of the preaching event itself. The answer to this dilemma lies in looking back, at least to some extent, rather than merely looking at present practice and where it is taking us. This Bickel does by giving us a well-written, concise and popular overview of the Puritan approach to preaching.

The book is laid out in two parts: "The Puritan View of the Pulpit" and "The Focus of the Gospel in Puritan Preaching." After establishing the view the Puritans held, which quite simply was very "high," the direction, demands and duties of the minister are considered under the rubric of a Puritan model of ministry. The title of the book is accurately taken from statements regarding the content and manner of Puritan preaching. Here is one such example:

The Puritan's concern was light and heat—light from the pure Word of God to penetrate the darkness of the heart and soul of the hearer, heat from the pathos and passion of the heart and soul of the preacher to bring about conviction. The main work of the gospel ministry, according to the Puritans, was to preach the saving efficacy of the redeeming work of the holy Sovereign (30).

The content of Puritan preaching was always consistent with *the theological conviction* behind it, namely that the conversion of the sinner was "the sovereign work of Divine power; thus they preached that all self-effort or resolve would be vain unless grace actively operated to assist" (30). For this reason the Puritan minister did not believe evange-

listic preaching was fundamentally different from regular preaching. The ordinary ministry of the Word of God would bring evangelistic fruit, in God's time and place, if it aimed properly at the hearts of the hearers.

The demands of Puritan ministry were also high. This is a note desperately needed in our time when far too high a percentage of ministers are morally and ethically unfaithful. The minister must first take care to "preach to his own heart" before he preaches effectively to the hearts of others. Piety in ministers was crucial in this paradigm, for as saintly Richard Baxter put it, "If the work of the Lord be not soundly done upon your own hearts, how can you expect that he bless your labours for the effecting of it in others?"

In the second part of *Light and Heat* Bickel addresses the Puritan focus upon the essential elements of the gospel message. Where we have reduced the gospel message to a simple acknowledgment of the truths contained in Romans 3:23 and John 3:16 the Puritans had a richer and more nuanced theology which included distinct doctrines of God, man, sin, Christ (his person and work), repentance and faith, and assurance. Bickel provides a basic, accurate and readable assessment of how the Puritans viewed each of these doctrinal concerns in terms of their pulpit work.

Three preachers (Charles Bridges, C. H. Spurgeon and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones) who did not live during the Puritan era are presented as models of Puritan pastoral practice in preaching. They are effectively used to show that historically Puritan ministry still existed in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The basic model is neither time-bound nor culturally captive. Why? Because the Puritan model, as Bickel ably demonstrates, has so much in it that is profoundly rooted in the Scriptures. For this reason it is timeless in the end. And for this reason modern ministers need this book to give them a solid introduction to the nature and scope of faithful preaching. Whenever God has

led the church into deep biblical reformation and granted her outpourings of true revival he has always given her true, faithful preachers of the gospel. We desperately need such ministers in our time. This little book could make a great contribution to this recovery. It is valuable in every way.

EDITOR

CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING: REDEEMING THE EXPOSITORY SERMON

Bryan Chapell

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker (1994)

375 pages, cloth, \$27.99

Bryan Chapell taught homiletics for a number of years but he is certainly not your typical theoretician. If you have heard him preach, as I have, you immediately sense that he practices in preaching what he teaches in his written work. His passion is to preach Christ and he excels at it.

This particular volume, now some six years old, has earned the praise of a number of noteworthy Reformed voices; e.g., James Boice, J. I. Packer, Steve Brown, R. C. Sproul, and Hudson T. Armerding. It presents a complete perspective on the work and art of expository preaching tackling both the aims and methods of this approach. It is both theological and practical, without watering down or surrendering either.

The central point Chapell makes is that the whole of Scripture has a redemptive aim, or purpose, thus this is the way the preacher should preach it. If Christ is the focus of the Bible then preaching must always lift up Christ. Chapell will show you why this is to be done as well as how to do it. He will convince you that the text has priority, but never in a way that detaches a particular text from the overall biblical redemptive categories which govern the Bible.

In Part Three, over forty pages are devoted to what Chapell calls "A Theology of Christ-Centered Messages." This is the heart and soul of the book and this is what distinguishes it so wonderfully from almost any other contemporary book on homiletics. This section alone is worth the price of the book. Pastors should not only read this material but discuss it with their peers. You will need to work intentionally at making this paradigm fit into your actual preaching experience. It will be worth your effort.

Paul Kooistra, another teacher of preaching, comments, "It has always been a problem for me that available preaching texts were either strong on theology or strong on technique. I have been unable to find one that brings both together as this textbook does." I agree with Kooistra, without reservation. This is a most important book. It is one of my five or ten most valuable books on homiletics.

EDITOR

**EVANGELICAL ELOQUENCE:
A COURSE OF LECTURES ON PREACHING**

Robert L. Dabney

Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth (1999)

361 pages, paper, \$8.99

Modern books on preaching appear and disappear annually. Few stand the test of time and fewer still will be useful beyond the newest fads in homiletics. *Evangelical Eloquence* is already an exception to this rule, having been reprinted several times over the course of 130 years.

Robert Dabney (1820-98) served as pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Tinkling Springs, Virginia, before becoming professor of church history and then professor of theology at Virginia's Union Theological Seminary. He served the famous Stonewall Jackson as chaplain during the War

Between the States and later taught theology at Austin Theological Seminary in Texas, which he helped to found. His best known works are his *Discussions* and *Systematic Theology*, both of which have been reprinted in the past twenty years or so.

Dabney draws upon a number of ancient resources including Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's *De Oratore*, Horace's *Epistle to the Pisos*, Quintilian's *De Institutione Oratoria*, and Vinet's *Homiletics*. He also makes use of more recent sources, at least recent to his own era, including three extremely useful volumes: J. W. Alexander's *Thoughts on Preaching* (a wonderful book in its own right), W. G. T. Shedd's *Homiletics*, and Samuel Miller's *On Public Prayer*.

Dabney prepared these chapters in order to produce what he thought would be a fitting textbook for his classes in preaching. Several features stand out in the work. First, Dabney rightly keeps Christian character at the forefront of the work of the true preacher. This is so rare in our day that the reprinting of such a work is warranted by this fact alone! Second, Dabney's theory of preaching seeks to limit the preacher *strictly* to the Sacred Scriptures. He writes in his preface:

If my readers rise from the perusal with these two convictions enhanced in their souls—that it is grace which makes the preacher, and that nothing is preaching which is not expository of the Scriptures—my work is not in vain.

Lectures in the book include titles such as "The Preacher's Commission," "Cardinal Requisites of the Sermon," "Constituent Members of the Sermon," "Sources of Argument," "Rules of Argument," "Division of the Argument," "Persuasion, Style, Action," "Modes of Preparation," and "Public Prayer."

But can true preaching be taught at all? Dabney writes

that "if the orator is born, his oration is not. That at least must be made" (13-14). He adds, "The assumption that the preacher's sacred attitude is above rhetoric reveals ignorance of the nature of true art" (15). Art, notes Dabney, "is adaptation; it employs proper means for a worthy end; it is but wisdom in application" (15). He reasons that the real option for the serious preacher is "not between art and nature, but only between art wise and art foolish, art skilful, or art clumsy" (16-17).

So what exactly did the apostle repudiate when he wrote, "My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:4), or "We speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:13)? Dabney argues that Paul's disclaimer here has to do with the spurious and unworthy art of the Greek Sophists. In their system "logic and diction prompted by vanity and falsehood, and misguided by a depraved taste" (17) drove the rhetoric. While Paul attacked this, he reasons, he did not preach without method! He concludes, "Let us make our sacred rhetoric just his, so far as it was primarily taught him by the Holy Spirit and taught him by his high culture and pure devotion" (17-18). Personally, I wonder if true preaching is taught by "high culture." Does this mean "popular culture" has no place in the work of communicating the gospel through preaching? Surely, in an age overcome with rapidly passing fads and pop culture, we should be leery of over reliance upon pop culture, but does this mean we pay no attention to it at all? Dabney's caution, however, is well expressed in his concluding wish: "May we ever be content to exhibit Bible doctrine in its own Bible dress" (29)!

Dabney understood well the concern of Paul, who wrote of his own commission to preach: "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not

with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power" (1 Corinthians 1:17). He reveals, consistently, that gospel preaching involves speaking from a soul filled with Christ and truly godly character, into the souls and consciences of hearers. Preaching has this true authority, an authority that comes from God. True preachers must seek for it and labor to preserve it at all costs. It is precisely this emphasis which makes Dabney so greatly needed in our own time. Little or no attention was given to these matters in twentieth-century books on preaching. If there is to be reformation in the twenty-first century then we desperately need the type of preaching R. L. Dabney argued for in the nineteenth century.

R. L. Dabney, a famous evangelical Reformed pulpit voice in mid-nineteenth-century America, left a considerable, and most profitable, legacy in his writings. This volume, originally titled *Sacred Rhetoric* and published in 1870, was initially reissued by the Banner of Truth in 1979 as *R. L. Dabney on Preaching*. Its reappearance in this new form will allow it to be a great resource for a new generation of preachers. I pray many will read it. At the price of this volume, for 362 pages, every preacher surely can afford to buy a copy. I intend to encourage them to do so.

EDITOR

**PREACHING THE LIVING WORD:
ADDRESSES FROM THE EVANGELICAL ASSEMBLY**

Dick Lucas, Alec Motyer, J. I. Packer, et al.

Inverness, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications (1999)
224 pages, paper, \$17.99

A rich and profitable Evangelical Ministry Assembly, with the focus on various aspects of preaching and pastoral ministry, has been held annually in London for

the past fifteen years or so. This conference can now impact preachers far beyond London with the publication of this excellent volume of some choice messages from these annual gatherings.

After a foreword by David Jackman, cochairman of the EMA, the book includes thirteen chapters. R. C. Lucas, who as much as any one is the human force behind these gatherings, gives a helpful introduction to Romans 8 titled "More Than Conquerors?" Jim Packer offers "Some Perspectives on Preaching" and "The Problem of Paradigms," which is one of his more intriguing written works.

Most of us who have preached for long find the subject of hell to be one which we would rather not discuss, much less preach to a congregation. Yet we are met with the stubborn evidence of the teaching of Jesus himself, who spoke so often of hell, warning his hearers to escape its torments. If you have ever wanted help on dealing with this subject in the pulpit, Bruce Milne's chapter, "Preaching Hell," is both sane and practical.

Then there is the problem of preaching from the Old Testament. We are always in need of general direction that will help us handle this daunting task. Alec Motyer, one of the foremost conservative Old Testament scholars of our generation, gives us a helpful work on "Preaching from the Old Testament." Motyer, a veteran of these issues, cites four problems preachers face who want to deal honestly with the Old Testament. First, there is the problem of criticism. Second, there is the loss of a sense of unity in seeing how the Old Testament is part of a whole Bible. Third, Motyer sees the existence of moral problems as a challenge for preaching from the Old Testament (e.g., the imprecatory Psalms, Elisha and the bears, etc.). Fourth is the confusion sometimes created by prophetic schemes in the Old Testament. The central question Motyer wants us to face is this: What did it mean in Israel to be a believer? Listen to how

he answers this question. It is, quite honestly, one of the most helpful practical responses you will ever come across.

Let us imagine a conversation between a typical Old Testament believer and his son. The believer has been to the altar of God with his sin offering, and has come home.

His son asks, "Where have you been?"

"I've been to the tabernacle."

"What did you do?"

"I brought a sin offering."

"What did you do with it?"

"I laid my hand on the head of the beast."

"Why did you do that?"

"Because that is the way that you appoint a substitute."

"What did you do then?"

"I plunged the knife into it and the blood was caught by the priest."

"Why?"

"It is symbolic of a life laid down in payment for my sin."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that God has accepted the animal in my place and my sins have been forgiven."

"How do you know that your sins have been forgiven?"

"Because that is what the Lord has promised."

I suggest that this piece of imaginary conversation does, in fact, accurately represent both Old Testament thought regarding salvation and the practical, personal and religious outworking of that theology. The people of the old covenant, like the people of the new, were justified by faith, resting on the promises of God as those promises were exposed to them. When they offered sacrifices they were not looking forward, as if saying to themselves, "This is a picture or shadow of the true; the perfect sacrifice is yet to come." God's promises were given to them in relation to the sacrifices they were told to offer (Leviticus 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31, 35). In the course of time, however, a genius named Isaiah was inspired

by God to see that ultimately only a Person can fully substitute for persons (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) because (Isaiah 53:7-9; Hebrews 10:5-10) only a person brings to the transaction a consenting will, matching the defiled will, the central citadel and cause of sin. Consequently, when the Lord Jesus thus offered the one sacrifice for sins for ever (Hebrews 10:12), he was bringing the reality of the sacrifices to their full reality. It was not that the symbolic became the literal, nor that the unreal became the true, but that the reality became the full reality it was always intended to be (112-14).

Peter Jensen, a popular theologian-minister from Australia, contributes three wonderful chapters on faith: "The Nature of Faith," "The Assurance of Faith," and "The Life of Faith." These are both practical and thoughtful contributions. David Jackman looks forward, asking what the church will be like in the new century, in his chapter, "A Church for the 21st Century." Scripture and subject indices are included.

This is a wonderful book for modern preachers. I would much rather have been in London to hear these addresses (I like London even if I have no excuse to be there) but second best is better than missing the Assembly altogether! Thanks to Christian Focus for investing time and money in books like these, which have a limited market in terms of large sales numbers. Faithful pastors should rise up and thank the publishers.

EDITOR

SMALL TALKS ON BIG QUESTIONS: A HISTORICAL COMPANION TO THE CHILDREN'S CATECHISM

Selah Helms and Susan Thompson
Dundas, Ontario (Canada): Joshua Press (1999)
208 pages, cloth, \$27.99

One of the greatest needs in our own time, if we are to see true reformation, is to give back to the church the best of her tradition of faithfully catechizing her children. I still remember a not-so-discerning member of my church, nearly twenty-five years ago, protesting in an open congregational meeting that I was taking the church to Rome by introducing catechetical instruction to our curriculum. Sadly, such ignorance still abounds in many large and influential churches in our time.

One of the most frequently asked questions I receive from fathers and mothers in churches across the United States is this: What do you recommend we use to teach our children? (In some cases their church is looking for helpful material, but far too often the parents who raise this question are alone in their pursuit!) I have often recommended Sinclair Ferguson's wonderful *Big Book of Questions & Answers* (Christian Focus Publications, 1998). I will now add to this recommendation the present volume with great joy.

Small Talks on Big Questions grounds children in doctrine by using the stories of the Bible and church history. What a novel and brilliant idea, huh? Where have we been for the last one hundred years? Evangelicals have never produced more wonderfully illustrated, well-conceived children's material *with less doctrinal content* than in the past fifty years or so. This book is an excellent corrective to this tendency and is a giant step in the right direction.

The authors of this fine book are women with a passion to teach children well. Selah Helms is a homeschooling mother of four whose husband Donald is a pastor in Texas. Susan Thompson, an attorney, has a professed interest in doctrine and church history that was first sparked by a leadership conference conducted by the very fine ministry of Bible Study Fellowship. The book is replete with original illustrations wonderfully done by graphic artist Caffy Whitney, whose husband Donald is professor at Midwestern

Baptist Theological Seminary (Kansas City, Missouri) and is known to many readers of this quarterly.

The book is built upon the little book, *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*, patterned upon the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. It includes four units of material based upon the big biblical and doctrinal themes of God, the Fall, Atonement, and Our Response to the Gospel. Dr. Jonathan Gerstner, professor at Knox Theological Seminary (Florida) and the son of the late professor of theology, Dr. John Gerstner, contributes an excellent Foreword. The author's Introduction alone is worth the price of the book. Here the rationale for the book is clearly stated along with suggestions on how best to use the book. After a brief section containing several endnotes there is a bibliography that is quite amazing in itself. It has both breadth and sagacity. Parents would do well to read some of these suggested titles!

I can't remember when I have been quite so excited about such a practical book for teaching children. By all means get this book! Use it in your own home if you have younger children. (Grandparents should give one to their children to use, as I intend to do!) If you are a pastor get copies for your church and begin to teach your people how to instruct their little ones. Perhaps the next generation will be better prepared from childhood to spark true reformation in the churches.

The publishers of this volume are new in the field of Christian publishing. Joshua Press, begun two years ago, is led by the watchful vision of Dr. Michael Haykin (Editorial Director), a frequent contributor to these pages. Let us pray that God grants Michael, and the leadership of Joshua Press, many years to produce such needed resources for the church catholic.

EDITOR

WRITINGS OF THOMAS E. PECK

Thomas E. Peck

Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth (1999)

Three Volumes, cloth, \$79.99

The church is in great debt to the founders and present trustees of the Banner of Truth Trust for giving back to nearly two generations the writings of older divines who spoke with an evangelical clarity and theological vigor rarely heard in our times. In the reprinting of these three volumes, over 1,200 pages, the Banner has once again introduced great Christian exposition of the older sort to a new generation.

Thomas E. Peck (1822-93) was a Presbyterian preacher, writer and professor at Union Theological Seminary, Virginia. He was a leader in the same school of thought associated with Robert L. Dabney (who was his colleague at Union for a time) and James H. Thornwell. Dr. Peck's successor at Union, C. R. Vaughan, wrote of him that "As an expositor of truth, as an exegete of Scripture, he was probably without a rival in his day." (Volume Three in this set includes a twenty-four-page biographical sketch of Peck written by C. R. Vaughan.)

The writings of Thomas Peck are characterized by what I call evangelical warmth, true devotional piety and sharp intellectual reasoning. Indeed, one of the great lessons men of this era offer to us can be seen in their marriage of piety with theology, a marriage sadly lost in much of the theology of the twentieth century. At times Peck is unduly accepting of a theological methodology that is wedded too rigidly to a particular philosophical system. At the same time he always attempts to build his reasons upon the text of Scripture. My challenge is quite simple: Before theologians of our era reject men such as Thomas Peck out of hand, as either too dated or too philosophical, they should offer something

equally sensitive to the authority of Holy Scripture.

These three volumes take up a number of interesting and helpful themes. In Volume One we are given one of the most helpful of all the works contained in the set: "The Relations of the Gospel to the Poor: Christian Living." If nothing else we must observe how Peck's older confessional theology produced genuine concern and action on behalf of the poor. By the early twentieth century this emphasis had been virtually lost to most evangelicals who reacted so strongly against liberalism within the mainline denominations that they sadly set the "social agenda" aside.

The largest portion of material in Volume One (over 240 pages) takes up the subject of public congregational worship in the church. Peck, not surprisingly, defends and unpacks the celebrated regulative principle of worship often defended by the Reformed tradition. Some of his arguments will not, in my view, bear the full weight of the text he appeals to, but the contemporary church could surely use a dose of this kind of material just to get iron back into its weakened bloodstream! This same volume also includes brief and interesting biographical sketches of both Martin Luther and Blaise Pascal.

Volume Two contains the most straightforward theological and historical material of the three volumes. (Dr. Peck also taught church history.) Here subjects such as probation after death, science and its relationship to biblical revelation, the doctrine of Christ, and the nature of the Apocalypse are taken up with some degree of attention. The essay, "The Reformation in the Sixteenth Century Contemplated in Some of Its Causes and Results," makes for quite inspiring reading. A critique and appreciation of Philip Schaff's important three-volume set, *The Creeds of Christendom* (often reprinted and well worth owning and using), can also be found here. The tenor of Dr. Peck's approach to theological controversy, in contrast to Philip

Schaff's well known gentleness and catholicity, is seen in a sentence such as this: "Our author's charity [i.e., Dr. Schaff's] is also large—too large" (2:245). What follows is nothing less than several pages filled with the older anti-Catholic tone of the times in which Peck lived. My problem is not so much with his opinions, most of which I actually share, but with the type of rhetorical style he uses. Many uncritical readers will read this kind of material, but lack the necessary discernment regarding our own times in church history to take the wheat from the chaff.

Volume Three contains the most practical and pastoral material of the set. Here we find more than 175 pages of exegetical material on Acts followed by seventeen useful and thoughtful sermons. Another twenty sermons conclude the volume. Modern preachers could learn a good bit about doctrinal preaching from reading these kinds of sermons. Pastors would not, however, be well served by beginning to preach in exactly the same manner and style next Sunday.

The publication of this set should be met with great joy by those who love biblical reformation. This is true for several reasons. First, we no longer have to scrounge dirty, old second-hand bookshops looking for a greatly overpriced used set of Peck's valuable writings. Second, the aforementioned marriage of piety and intellect is well worth seeing and recapturing. Third, the practical value of dealing with subjects not often associated with the system of thought held by Peck will go a long way in serving the church in our time as she strives to do theology in a better way. Having said all this I also offer one warning, intended especially for younger pastors. Do not try to build your ministry solely on reading valuable books such as these. Add some Peck to your reading of serious evangelical theologians from our own time. The benefits of both will be better if you follow such an approach.

EDITOR

**JESUS & THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL:
A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF N. T. WRIGHT'S
JESUS AND THE VICTORY OF GOD**

Carey C. Newman (ed.)

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1999)

320 pages, paper, \$22.99

Another book on the historical Jesus? Enough already. That was my initial response when I first picked up this new volume. After looking at the descriptions on the cover and reading the preface and table of contents I was, however, hooked. Finally, I thought to myself, a readable and evenhanded critique of the important work of a popular scholar whose writing intrigues anyone remotely interested in the field of serious modern New Testament study.

N. T. Wright has become, over the past decade, one of the most widely respected New Testament scholars in the field. His massive ongoing work on the meaning of the New Testament, set in its historical context, has given us a lot to ponder regarding Jesus and the kingdom of God. Seminars, conferences and entire sections of the annual meetings of both the Society of Biblical Literature and the Evangelical Theological Society have been given over to workshop discussions of his impressive work. Now InterVarsity has given us a serious multiauthored work on the thought of N. T. Wright, edited by Carey Newman, who serves as academic book editor at Westminster/John Knox Press and adjunct professor of New Testament at Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville.

The current "third quest" of the historical Jesus may put off many who read this publication, but the subject should not be avoided simply because it has been pursued by liberal theologians who are presupposed to reject much of the historical credibility of the New Testament. Wright is a case in point. An affable, erudite and spiritually minded man,

Tom Wright profoundly roots his arguments in the text of the New Testament. He is not in conflict with the essential elements of the doctrinal faith of the church, and seeks to root the message of Jesus and the kingdom of God in Israel's history and its first-century context. He is particularly interested in how the prophetic hopes of the first-century context colored the story of Jesus and the early Christian believers.

This volume limits itself, circumspectly, to the one most important work (so far) written by N. T. Wright, his *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Fortress, 1996). Wright's earlier volume, which is volume one in a series, is titled *Jesus and the People of God* (Fortress, 1992). Many of us await, with real interest, the forthcoming volumes in this ongoing work (six have been planned).

Wright takes on every side in his *Jesus and the Victory of God*. He takes on both the liberals, who defend the Enlightenment approach, as well as some evangelicals, who think theological concerns for Jesus protect them from serious historical research and thought. He believes the questions about the historical Jesus must be faced squarely. For Wright investigations of Jesus are no different from serious historical studies of other figures of antiquity. What this means is that certain questions must be honestly faced, such as Who was Jesus? What were his aims? Why did he die? Too many of us have answered these types of questions only in a theological way without considering the historical issues, which, for Wright, do not fundamentally clash with the most basic theological reasons eventually articulated by the confessing church. Simply put, Wright in no way denies the theological affirmations of a statement such as The Apostles' Creed!

Editor Carey Newman, in commenting on both Wright's scholarly ability and writing goals, notes:

The sheer audacity of the projected six volumes is only

exceeded by the copious, sophisticated and nuanced arguments contained within the first two already in print. The sovereignty with which Wright moves through both primary and secondary sources is breathtaking. The reader senses that Wright has read and dissected absolutely everything relevant to the subject and most everything that is tangential. Wright's prose is lively, metaphorical and clever. More often than not, his critique of others is as winsome as it is devastating (15).

But what is more striking about Wright's work, Newman goes on to say, "is [his] apologetic and prophetic tenor. Apologetically, he proposes and defends a completely new historiographic paradigm" Second, Newman writes:

Prophetically, he boldly announces the presence of this new hypothesis, challenging and inviting others to adopt it and all the while warning of the dire philosophical and theological consequences of languishing in the mire of other historical explanations (15-16).

Few will (can?) read *Jesus and the Victory of God* easily upon first effort. Craig Blomberg's opening essay in this volume is a great place to start. He provides an overview of Wright's methodology as well as a "road map" for getting through the fourteen large chapters of this daunting book. Was "restoration eschatology" a prominent feature of first-century Judaism? Craig A. Evans tackles this issue. Essays on the death of Jesus, the eschatology of Jesus, the preaching of Jesus (in terms of its ethical import) help the reader grasp some big ideas of Wright and their implications.

The volume includes a healthy interaction, from several different perspectives, on the relationship between historiography and theology. The writers of these essays include C. Stephen Evans, Luke Timothy Johnson, and Alister McGrath. Their views clearly differ, which makes for both interesting and extremely helpful interchange. Finally,

there are two responses—the first by the theologically liberal historical Jesus critic Marcus Borg, who has great respect for Wright and vice versa, and from Wright himself. Newman offers a conclusion which seeks to show how all of this impacts the church's Christology.

Wright himself, in his introduction to *Jesus and the Victory of God*, states that the historical Jesus is still widely misunderstood. He observes:

I have come to believe that these questions are vital, central, and as yet not fully answered; and that a clearly worked out historical method, and a fresh reading of first-century Judaism and Christianity, will point us in the right direction (quoted on page 16 in Newman).

This multifaceted and illuminating overview of Wright's proposals will open the door to a new field of serious study for many readers. From the standpoint of systematic theology, philosophy and New Testament studies, it is a well-conceived and well-written volume. Usually it is best to read original material *before* reading critiques of that same material. In this case most readers will find this volume a good beginning for reading Wright. After you wrestle with this book try to digest the arguments of *Jesus and the Victory of God* firsthand.

EDITOR

**THE BOOK OF REVELATION: THE NEW
INTERNATIONAL GREEK TESTAMENT COMMENTARY**

G. K. Beale

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans (1999)

1245 pages, cloth, \$75.00

It is difficult to *genuinely* review a commentary of 1245 pages in a few hundred words. A review is not so much called for here as a general introduction. Such an introduction must either endorse or reject the work in terms of the audience the reviewer writes for. Since the audience of this quarterly is primarily church leadership (i.e., academics, pastors and laypeople who read and impact the life and thought of local churches), I will try to show you why this volume is worth the exorbitant price of \$75. (Since this reviewer has Scots blood I advise you to get it at a discount, if possible!)

The New International Greek New Testament Commentary series, published by William B. Eerdmans, is generally outstanding. This volume is no exception. In fact, it is one of the best yet released. The series aims at interacting with current scholarship at a very high academic level. This includes reference to recent articles and monographs as well as published commentary research in the original biblical languages as well as modern languages other than English.

Greg K. Beale is professor of New Testament and director of the Th. M. degree program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. (He will, however, soon be coming to Wheaton College where he has been given responsibility for establishing a new Ph.D. program in theology.) This is not his first published work and one hopes for much more from his pen in the years to come. His more popular book, *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* was a wonderfully insightful book.

The unique contribution of this commentary is *not* Beale's millennial view, which might best be called modified amillennial. (His view parallels the popular position of the late Reformed commentator William Hendriksen.) What genuinely makes this volume singularly unique in the field is that Beale interprets the text by continual reference to the Old Testament Scriptures and the Jewish exeget-

ical traditions warranted by careful secondary study. Even the slightest allusion to the Old Testament is explored in great depth. In addition Beale is always rooted in theological reflection throughout. He does not, in other words, treat the book independently of the canon.

Another important contribution of this learned volume is that the author shows throughout that Revelation is not simply about the future but a book about how the church should live in the present for the glory of God. This focus must be recaptured by those of us who teach the church, especially in the new millennium and in the wake of more than one hundred years of failed futurist speculation!

Because this is a highly academic work it engages the problems scholars must deal with throughout the Apocalypse. What is the literary character of Revelation? What background issues need to be considered more carefully to interpret it more accurately? How are we to understand many of the seemingly obscure (at least to us) metaphors used by John? In short, Beale interprets the book by internal biblical evidence, not by seeking for modern parallels in our present age. This alone makes the book both academically important and practically useful for church leaders of all sorts.

While this commentary will be a stretch for many readers I recommend you give it a try. (Non-Greek readers will certainly be in deep water.) It is better, however, to aim higher, and get something from what is being said, than to aim lower and gain very little in the use of a commentary. If I recommend one comprehensive, careful and exegetically sound commentary on Revelation it will now be that of Greg Beale. No reader will agree with Beale at every point, nor should he. But to ignore such a work would be a great tragedy. The Introduction alone is worth the price of the book. And from there it only gets better and better.

*LIFE ON THE VINE: CULTIVATING THE
FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY*

Philip D. Kenneson

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1999)

246 pages, paper, \$14.99

Books on spirituality are being published faster than the stores can order them. I am not sure how many are actually being read but there can be no doubt that such books are hot sellers in the present market place. Christian books on spirituality are also hot items. Some are shallow and insipid. Others are overly mystical and thus not very biblical. Some are balanced, theologically sensitive and carefully nuanced. Philip Kenneson's work clearly fits into the last category.

Kenneson, who is associate professor of theology and philosophy at Milligan College, in Tennessee, comes from a Disciples Church background. Those from a more confessionally Reformed or Lutheran tradition rarely interact with writers from this tradition. And writers from this tradition rarely interact with the historic church as Kenneson does. This failure to "listen" to other traditions is a sad loss.

Kenneson takes up each of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 and explores what each means in its context. He then does what books of piety and devotion rarely do well. He relates how this particular Spirit-wrought quality should be understood in light of present Western culture, which militates so strongly against its coming to expression in our daily lives. This is what makes this book so unique—it is a careful study of biblical and theological concerns done with a watchful interactive eye, always cast upon the culture of our time. This is how devotional theology ought to be done. Both Catholics and evangelicals commend this book. You will understand better why this is so if you read it. Recommended for well-trained readers as

well as ordinary men and women of God!

EDITOR

*JESUS AND THE RISE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY:
A HISTORY OF NEW TESTAMENT TIMES*

Paul Barnett

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1999)

448 pages, cloth, \$29.99

Paul Barnett, an outstanding contemporary evangelical scholar who has become widely known only in the past few years, has again written an immensely useful book that both scholars and ordinary readers will profit by. (This is at least his fourth published work; another is an excellent commentary on 2 Corinthians in the well-known New International Commentary on the New Testament series.)

This well-conceived volume is something like a New Testament introduction, and yet it is also a thoughtful critique of the contemporary search for the historical Jesus. From the birth of Jesus to the beginning of the messianic community Barnett tells the story with a clear style that reads well. He puts the New Testament in the world of the Romans and the Herods, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the revolutionaries and the believing Jewish disciples who followed the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. He believes, in short, that the way to best understand the New Testament is to understand its context and background. Of course he is right. If the Jesus Quest has done nothing else it has forced us to put the New Testament into its proper historical context. That alone is a great service if the process leads us to trust the Jesus revealed in the New Testament more simply but thoughtfully. Barnett makes an extremely positive contribution to this process.

Ben Witherington suggests that we have in Paul Bar-

nett's work a worthy sequel to F. F. Bruce's efforts to write a *history* of the New Testament period. Barnett does this without losing his focus, which is on both history and Christ, the God-Man. There is, he shows, no gulf between the historical Jesus and the Christ of Christian faith. Students who will have to face the radical conclusions of the Jesus Seminar will be well served by this important book. For that matter, pastors who think the Jesus Seminar has nothing good to offer us, which is of course an overstatement in one sense, ought to read this as well. Your preaching will only be improved if you understand the historical framework of the texts you are preaching from week by week.

This is a wonderful book. It can be used as a text in classes, both in college and in the local church (if the class is serious enough to study). I value this book personally and will use it again and again.

EDITOR

THE WAY OF LIFE

Gary D. Badcock

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans (1998)

147 pages, paper, \$12.95

The evangelicals have virtually lost their once clear understanding of vocation (Latin: *vocare*, meaning "to call"). In its place the twentieth century gave us the more popular idea of only two kinds of work, one sacred (missions, ministry, various types of Christian work) and the second *secular* (trades, professions, homemaking, etc.). Some of us still remember being told, "You work only at your secular job in order to make the money that is needed to support your family and the work of the church." This is, to say the least, pietism gone very bad. But this type of contemporary usage is not uncommon in the history of the

church either, since in the Middle Ages the term vocation was used almost exclusively for religious work.

Gary Badcock, a lecturer in theology and associate dean of the faculty of divinity at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, has put the concept of vocation back where it should be—at the very center of Christian life and experience. He does this by drawing upon biblical texts, historical and theological resources, both Catholic and Protestant, and finally, contemporary stories and illustrations that are well used to apply his understanding. A consideration of several prominent theologians is a helpful part of this short volume—Martin Luther and the important twentieth-century Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, who was greatly indebted to Karl Barth.

Badcock's thesis is quite straightforward and simple—the Christian's vocation is essentially a call to love both God and neighbor. He concludes: "If I had to distill the whole of this little book into a single brief sentence, it would be this: 'The Christian calling is to love'" (108). Badcock reasons that only Christian love can provide an adequate answer to the question, "What will I do with my life?" It is in dealing with this simple thesis that Badcock does some of his very best theological reflection. He demonstrates how Protestantism, especially through the "baleful influence" (11) of the Lutheran theologian Anders Nygren, made faith the central theme of its tradition rather than love. Nygren, in supporting the idea that human sin really does offend God and that human righteousness can contribute nothing to earn any favor with God, ends up teaching, in fairly typical Lutheran fashion, that God's love has nothing to do *with anything* good in the creature. But human beings are the objects of God's love because of creation, for "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Add to this baleful theological influence the modern emphasis on *agape*

that says that true Christian love sees no virtue in its object and you have the brew, which adds to the confusion we have about vocation. The Catholic tendency toward a "justification by love" doctrinal emphasis has often fostered this Protestant reaction.

But how should we respond to this problem? Badcock writes, "... there is no doubt that Christian love is self-giving, it is not self-giving for no end. The whole point is that it recognizes the worth of what is loved: the neighbor is a creature of moral worth..." (112). The problem of vocation can thus be answered only in terms of love, and this love must be determined solely by the way of Christ. Badcock writes, "Ultimately, there is nothing else in theology worth knowing or clinging to; 'God is love'... [sums] up in three little words what the entire vast corpus of Christian theology is really all about" (112). But it is precisely this point that has been so profoundly missed in recent conservative Protestant theology. He concludes:

But what if its (i.e., theology's) real content were not primarily intellectual but moral? What if its fundamental reference was not truth but relationship? What if theology, rightly conceived, were not knowledge in the first instance at all? At this point, the Christian theological tradition can easily fail us, and we are thrown back upon a more original, one might say also more authentic, experience of the God of Jesus Christ. Only the encounter with God, who is love, can mediate the sense of vocation as love in the world—love alone, whatever the cost. What will I do with my life? I will, above all else, follow the way of Christ (113).

From this biblical foundation for understanding vocation as a calling to love, the author then moves us to the cross. Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow

me" (Mark 8:34). Badcock adds, "People have no need to look far to find their cross, for on Jesus' lips such words mean one thing: giving up one's self for others" (113). Service for Christ always makes such demands upon the followers of Jesus. If we would follow we must love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us and be salt and light in this present dark world. Here Luther's own theology provides a solid foundation for serious reflection since we must turn to others in love precisely because the cross bids us to die to both self and sin. Badcock does show that the great contribution of Luther's thought at this point is that he applies this theology to everyday work and relationships. The great weakness is that Luther relates this to law, given the strong law/gospel paradigm he developed, not to the kingdom of heaven, which is where the New Testament puts it. Simply put: Christian vocation, viewed theologically, is a sharing in the mission of Jesus in the world. Vocation, seen in this way, is a manner of life, indeed *the way* of true life. In this understanding Christian vocation is not reduced to one's occupation because Christian vocation is not essentially about what one *does* but about what one *is* in Christ.

James I. Packer notes on the back cover of the book that this is a "health giving book—one to be grateful for." I concur. Pastors need to read this book and teach their flocks the truth of Christian vocation before another century produces more of the sad fruit we saw in the last.

EDITOR

THE WORKS OF JONATHAN EDWARDS
VOLUME 17: SERMONS AND DISCOURSES, 1730-1733

Mark Valeri (ed.)

New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press (1999)

480 pages, cloth, \$80.00

Some scholars have met publication of the works of Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), by Yale University Press, with much interest. More pastors and church leaders should have the same interest. Sadly most don't even know of the Edwards project. Tucked away in a small office just off the Yale Divinity School Library a group of full-time workers, assisted by scholars from various seminaries and colleges, regularly toil to make the voluminous writings of America's greatest philosopher-theologian available to this generation. (Most readers may not even be aware of just how much of Edwards' work has never been published at all!)

This present volume contains eighteen sermons from the years 1730-33, a time when the young Edwards was serving his new congregation in Northampton. (He had succeeded his grandfather in becoming senior minister there.) It was also the time just prior to the beginnings of revival in October 1734. In these sermons the young Edwards turned his attention to the political, social and economic activities of his flock, seeking to make his preaching directly applicable to the daily life of his people.

This volume contains the classic sermons "God Glorified in Man's Dependence" and "A Divine and Supernatural Light." It also contains a good number of previously unpublished sermons. Some of the titles included are: "Practical Atheism," "The Dangers of Decline," "Stupid as Stones," "Born Again," "Self-Examination and the Lord's Supper" and "The Duty of Charity to the Poor." The titles alone give you some idea of what Edwards was doing prior to the years of revival.

The sermons included in this volume demonstrate the development of Edwards' mind and method as a preacher of the gospel. The reader discovers the early thought of Edwards on several great themes that characterized his sermons theologically for all the years to follow. He opens up themes such as the depravity of the unregenerate, the

importance of gospel humiliation as an exercise of the redeemed soul and, of course, the absolute necessity of a radical conversion from the spirit of this age to true godliness. There is no room here for easy believism!

The editor of this volume, Mark Valeri, is the Ernest Trice Thompson professor of church history at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. He notes, helpfully, that during this period of time "Edwards came to see revival as the only solution to the social and moral ills of his time." This perspective is all too uncommon in our time. Reading Edwards seriously and carefully will at least force ministers to consider this thesis and its validity.

As with other Yale editions in this series, an extremely useful and incisive preface describing the period these sermons cover is included. Edwards is described by Valeri as "a revivalist who preached famous sermons throughout New England; a polemicist who wrote learned treatises in support of experimental Calvinism—and a pastor of the church in Northampton, Massachusetts" (3). He adds that this volume, as with others in the series, stays with a *thematic* focus and thus "concentrates on a period that was marked by Edwards' maturation as a local pastor" (3). In Valeri's introduction a helpful discussion of the Puritan approach to the relationship between moral agency and spiritual conversion is presented.

One of the things that makes Edwards' sermons so useful is the manner in which he related all theological inquiry to practical matters for the soul. As an example, the final sermon in this volume, titled "The True Christian's Life a Journey," ends with an exhortation that I found quite important for the people of God in the twenty-first century. Edwards writes:

... let Christians help one another in going this journey. There are many ways that Christians might greatly help and

forward one another in their way to heaven: by religious conference and otherwise. And persons greatly need help in this way, which is, as I have often observed, a difficult way. Let Christians be exhorted to go this journey, as it were, in company, conversing together about their journey's end and assisting one another. Company is very desirable in a journey, but in no journey so much as this. Let Christians go united, and not all out by the way, which will be the way to hinder one another, but use all means they can to help one another. This is the way to be more successful in traveling and to have the more joyful meeting at their Father's house in glory (446).

An extremely helpful general index and an index of biblical passages conclude the volume. I wish these volumes were more financially accessible to the average pastor. They really are worth the money, in spite of the steep price. If you can afford it this would be a wonderful volume to purchase.

EDITOR