

REVIEWS

Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries

T. H. L. Parker

T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1986; 239pp., £14.95, hardback;

ISBN 0 567 09365 4.

The title of Dr Parker's latest book invites comparison with his earlier work on Calvin's New Testament Commentaries. As the author himself explains, the scope of this book differs from the former in that it is less concerned with technical matters and is more concerned with 'the substance' of Calvin's exposition.

The first chapter is the most technical, describing Calvin's three forms of exposition - Commentaries, Lectures and Sermons. Dr Parker points out their different characteristics and tells us how they came to be recorded. Much has been written on Calvin's Commentaries and Sermons, but 'Calvin's lecturing is an aspect of his activity which has largely escaped study.' Dr Parker's account will doubtless go a long way to fill the gap.

Chapter Two deals with Calvin's doctrine of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. There is an outline of *Institutes* II:ix-xi, setting out Calvin's view of the similarity and differences between the two testaments and his conviction that the testaments are one in substance and differ only in their outward form or administration. The various images Calvin uses when speaking of the differences between the testaments are also explained. Calvin's concept of the law as a schoolmaster to Christ is also illustrated. The whole chapter is drawn together by a section examining some of Calvin's principles of interpretation as seen in the light of his understanding of the two testaments. Dr Parker deals with Calvin's attitude to allegory, his use of anagogical and typological forms of interpretation and his aim to understand the intention (*consilium*) of the author. This section I found somewhat disappointing. In my opinion Calvin's repudiation of the allegorical method in favour of the literal-historical and unitary sense is much more radical and has greater significance than Dr Parker's account would seem to imply.

The remainder of the book goes on to describe the way Calvin interprets the three major genres of Old Testament literature covered by his Commentaries, that is history, law and prophecy.

Chapter Three, 'The Exposition of History', describes Calvin's expositions of Old Testament history in terms of his favourite theme of the childhood of the Church. Other topics dealt with are Calvin's aptitude for reconstructing the actual course of events behind the biblical text, and his attitude to Old Testament miracles, visions and angels. Brief mention is made of his use of the principle of accommodation in the explanation of Old Testament problems. The chapter closes with extended quotations from Calvin's commentaries illustrating his use of individual stories and character studies as a basis for moral teaching and exhortation.

Chapter Four on 'The Law' deals, not with Calvin's concept of law, but his method of expounding and arranging the legal material in his Pentateuchal Harmony. The whole chapter is simply a description of the way Calvin has arranged and grouped the various moral, political and ceremonial laws around the

Decalogue, as expositions of it, and repeats Calvin's comments (abridged) as found in his *Harmony*. Dr Parker singles out Calvin's exposition of the first and the eighth commandments; the others are dealt with in outline form in an appendix. For those unfamiliar with Calvin's *Harmony*, this chapter will give some idea of Calvin's procedure, but no critical assessment is attempted.

Chapter Five is entitled 'The Exposition of Prophecy'. Such themes as Calvin's ideas of the prophets as interpreters of the law, covenant and election, prophetic visions and Calvin's historical exegesis of the prophets are treated. Calvin's doctrine of inspiration, a thorny problem touched on earlier (p. 65), receives fuller treatment here. Dr Parker, as elsewhere, rejects the idea that Calvin should be thought of as holding a doctrine of verbal inspiration and inerrancy. However, he also warns against 'watering down Calvin's doctrine of Scripture as the complete Word of God' (p. 188). Dr Parker does not tell us what this means, but he thinks it not inconsistent with the admission of errors in Scripture on Calvin's part (p. 192). This whole treatment I found somewhat inadequate and confusing. The question of verbal inspiration is dismissed far too summarily and on very weak grounds. It is most puzzling when Dr Parker, at the close of this section, writes, 'The solution of the problem posed by Calvin's doctrine is of purely academic interest' (p. 193f). It would seem to me that Calvin's doctrine of inspiration is extremely important for understanding his Old Testament commentaries as well as his method of interpretation.

Another theme dealt with in this chapter is Christ in the prophets. Dr Parker observes that '... even when there is no Christological interpretation, this is precisely what he is thinking of' (p. 194). Finally Dr Parker gives an account of Calvin's application of the prophets to the needs of the Church in his own time. We are reminded that Calvin, even as an Old Testament scholar, never lost sight of the fact that he was a servant of the Church and that for him biblical exposition must always serve the Church's needs.

All in all I found this book rather disappointing, more so as one expects so much from the pen of one who has such high status in Calvin scholarship as Dr Parker. This book lacks the excitement of some of his earlier books. More importantly it lacks their depth. Apart from the first chapter there is little that the reader of Calvin's commentaries could not gather for himself. Perhaps this is because it attempts too much in too brief a space, and so tends to be rather sketchy in its treatment of important issues. Next to no attempt is made to assess the significance of Calvin's expositions. No doubt, because of Dr Parker's high status in the realm of Calvin studies, future scholarly work on Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries will have to refer this book. However, its usefulness for the more scholarly reader is severely limited by the almost total absence of any references to secondary material. With only one or two exceptions, the footnotes are confined to references within Calvin's own writings. Moreover no bibliography of secondary material is given. On the other hand, there are many fully referenced quotations from Calvin's commentaries which make it a handy source book. For the reader with a less scholarly interest in Calvin and who is unfamiliar with Calvin's Old Testament expositions it will give some introduction.

Tony Baxter
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A Commentary on the Minor Prophets, Volume 2: Joel, Amos and Obadiah

John Calvin

Geneva Series of Commentaries, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1986; 513pp., £6.95, hardback; ISBN 0 85151 474.

This is a reprint of Volume 2 of the Calvin Translation Society edition of Calvin's Commentaries on the Minor Prophets in five volumes originally published in 1846. The body of the Commentary is divided up as follows: Joel, 128 pages; Amos, 266 pages; Obadiah, 39 pages. The biblical text (AV/KJV) is supplied at the head of Calvin's comments and in a parallel column Calvin's own Latin translation is given. A translation of Calvin's Latin version (as modified by his comments on the text) is also given towards the rear of the book.

The CTS editors saw fit to supplement Calvin's comments by the addition of copious footnotes, and there is also an addendum at the rear of the book in which longer supplementary comments of difficult texts can be found. These footnotes serve various purposes. Sometimes they give alternative renderings of Calvin's Latin, at other times they either add to Calvin's comments where the editor thought them lacking, for example in the meaning of Hebrew words and the historical or geographical background to the text, or support Calvin's interpretation from later scholarship. These footnotes have been criticised, but I have often found them useful. They sometimes throw light on Calvin's own comments which at times can be obscure. They naturally reflect the concerns and scholarship of the mid-nineteenth century, and should be used with care. There is no index to this volume, as the index to the Minor Prophets set is found in the fifth volume.

Although Calvin's Old Testament expositions are usually referred to as Commentaries, many of them are in fact transcriptions of Calvin's expository lectures delivered originally in the Academy of Geneva. Calvin lectured in Latin, but since many of his audience were not too skilled in the tongue, his language is very simple, though it always retains the elegance characteristic of his other writings. This brings me to my major criticism of the book which concerns the quality of the translation itself. It is very literal and inelegant, in places so literal that it makes bad English which reads very awkwardly. Here are a couple of sentences taken at random, 'Taken away shall not be the sceptre from Judah ...'; 'Since God then had raised up this intestine putridity, ought you not to have been at length seriously affected, and to have returned to a right mind?' Such a translation does little justice to the elegance and simplicity of Calvin's Latin style. Apart from the translation, the language itself is now somewhat dated.

However, this criticism aside, Calvin's brilliance as a commentator still shines through, and we can only repeat what C. H. Spurgeon said of Calvin's commentaries, that 'they are worth their weight in gold'. Calvin's praises as a commentator have been frequently sung, but can never be sung enough. Calvin always seeks to understand his text, in the first place, according to its literal-grammatical meaning. However, he does not stop there, for, having got to the meaning of the text, he then seeks to draw out its meaning and implications for the Church and for Christian living. As one scholar put it, 'Calvin's Commentaries are written with one foot in the first and the other in the sixteenth cen-

ture.' Though this does not mean that his applications have no relevance for us today. Some of these applications, it is true, are related specifically to the times of the Reformation and the struggles of the Church at Geneva (for example, Amos' clash with the priest Amaziah becomes a picture of the Reformers' contest with the papacy). But even then they provide us with fascinating glimpses and lessons into how Calvin applied the Old Testament as the Word of God to the needs and problems of his own times. Even in such cases Calvin never strays from the literal meaning of the text, and his applications always arise out of it.

Calvin's exposition of the first and second chapters of Joel is interesting for his rejection of the allegorical interpretation which understood the locusts in chapter one as four kingdoms. His interpretation Joel 2:28-3:21 provides us with a good example of his Christological exposition of the prophets. According to Calvin, to limit these predictions to the return from exile, as Jewish expositors do, or to the coming of Christ, as Christians do, is to misunderstand them. The prophet speaks of both, for 'the Jewish restoration is but a prelude of that true and real redemption afterwards effected by Christ' (p. 113f). Thus Calvin is able to give a Christological interpretation while retaining the literal-historical sense. Calvin's exposition of Amos 9:11ff is an admirable example of the way he found Christ in the Old Testament. The commentaries on Obadiah show Calvin's critical acumen in exercise. In his introduction he recognises the similarity between Obadiah and Jeremiah 49. Far from shaking his faith in the verbal inspiration of scripture, he finds confirmation. 'The Holy Spirit could, no doubt, have expressed the same things in different words; but he was pleased to join together these two testimonies, that they might obtain more credit.' Having noted this similarity Calvin goes on to make use of it in the body of the commentary for resolving difficulties of interpretation and grammar (*c.f.* for

Thus the great strength of these Commentaries is their exegetical tact and their warm, personal application to the people of God. Hence it will be pastors and Bible teachers who profit most from them. Many of those who attended the original lectures were men who were preparing for the pastoral ministry. Calvin adapted many of his comments to their needs. Again private bible students will also find them useful for grappling with the biblical text and its application to their lives. If further testimony to the value of Calvin's commentaries is required perhaps that of Arminius will be sufficient: 'Next to the study of the scriptures, which I earnestly inculcate, I exhort my students to read Calvin's commentaries. ... for I affirm that he excels beyond comparison in the interpretation of scripture ...'

Tony Baxter
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A Commentary on the Minor Prophets, Volume 4: Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Haggai

John Calvin

Geneva Series of Commentaries, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1986; 411pp., £5.95, hardback; ISBN 0 85151 477 4.

The general comments made above on the second volume of this series are applicable to the present volume. The commentary is distributed as follows: Habakkuk, 145 pages; Zephaniah, 131 pages; Haggai, 73 pages.

In my opinion, Calvin's commentary on Habakkuk is among the best on the Minor Prophets. Calvin penetrates deeply into the prophet's spiritual experience and maps it out for us. His deep anxieties over the condition of the nation, God's seeming indifference and his eventual triumph of faith, provide Calvin with much material for warm spiritual application. There are many valuable lessons on prayer and the spiritual conflict with temptations, doubt and unbelief. Almost an entire lecture is devoted to the exposition of the doctrine of justification in Habakkuk 2:4, reminding us that Calvin's dogmatic work is not confined to the *Institutes*.

The commentary on Zephaniah shows the fundamental place that scriptural exegesis occupies in Calvin's idea of Reformation. For Calvin it is the exegesis of scripture that must uphold the Church through the storm and guide it along the way to restoration. What Karl Barth said with respect to Calvin's New Testament commentaries is appropriate here: 'How energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks (Zephaniah too!), and the man of the sixteenth century hears.'

The commentary on Haggai is the first on the post-exilic prophets. It is evident that Calvin had a particular love for these prophets. He sees in their situation many parallels with the state and progress of the Reformation. In describing the worldliness, slothfulness, loss of zeal and frustrated hopes of the post-exilic Church, he is describing a parallel situation in his own day. To quote Calvin, this whole history is 'a mirror' and 'the prophet not only spoke to the men of his age, but was also destined, through God's wonderful purpose, to be a preacher to us, so that his doctrine sounds at this day in our ears, and reproves our torpor and ungrateful indifference . . .' (p. 326).

As with all Banner of Truth books, these volumes are very handsomely bound.

Tony Baxter
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A Commentary on the Minor Prophets, Volume 5: Zechariah and Malachi

John Calvin,

Geneva Series of Commentaries, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1986; 712 pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 85151 476 6.

This is the final volume of the Banner of Truth's reprint of the Calvin Translation Society's (CTS) edition of Calvin's commentaries on the Minor Prophets. The Commentary is divided as follows: Zechariah, 440 pages; Malachi, 173 pages.

The general remarks on Calvin's method of commentating etc. made above in my review of the second volume of this series, are applicable here. This volume, since it completes the series, contains the three indices to the set, to Hebrew words, to passages of Scripture, and to topics. As were all the indices in the CTS edition of Calvin's Commentaries, they are detailed and useful. It is a shame that there is not the same detail in the indices to the Torrance translation of Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, which by comparison are rather scanty.

There is little room in a review of this size to say much about the actual contents of these commentaries. Zechariah gives full scope to show Calvin's soberness as an exegete. He refuses to be carried away by undue allegorisation - unless the text demands it - and consistently avoids speculative interpretations. Malachi, on the other hand, gives scope for him to develop some of the great themes of his theology of grace. Thus he spends almost two lectures, about 20 pages, expounding the themes of election and reprobation in Malachi 1:2-5. Both these commentaries - especially Zechariah - provide good examples of Calvin's principles of prophetic interpretation.

Suffice it to say that these commentaries will be found invaluable to pastors and all those seeking to grapple with the theological and spiritual import of God's Word.

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The Psalms

David Dickson

The Geneva Series of Commentaries, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1985; xxv + 1026 pp., £9.95.

The second reprint of this volume of the Geneva series of commentaries is to be welcomed. Combining as it does two volumes in one (in fact, originally published as three), it is remarkably concise in appearance, and not at all difficult to handle.

Dickson's commentary, which appeared first in the 1650's, is a devotional classic. The archaisms of the language may be daunting to some, but these should not discourage the reader, since the style is neat and not at all ponderous to read. One leaves the book feeling uplifted rather than exhausted.

The Psalms are unapologetically interpreted as referring to Christ and the Church, and are applied to the life of the Christian believer. Although this means that many questions are overlooked, such as their original setting and

purpose, it does give them a relevance for today which is immediately apparent. The author's style, of making a list of points to be learned from each section of the psalm, is helpful. Comments are also made on the Psalm headings; quite correctly so, since they are a part of the text and have something to teach us. This is in welcome contrast to some recent scholarship (and translations) which has tended to ignore them. Unfortunately, however, the writer gives us only one brief page of general introduction to the Psalms.

The tendency of the commentator to spiritualise the message of the Psalter can be devotionally helpful, though at times it does verge on ignoring what the text says. Such a propensity to read Christian truths and experience into the text has its limitations. For example, the God who gives good to the hungry (Ps. 146:7) is seen as a reference to God supplying *believers* with the needs of body *and soul*. This may be a Christian truth (perhaps inspired in this case by the Sermon on the Mount?), but I am not sure that this is what the Psalm is saying.

In recent years, the Psalms have been the object of a great deal of scholarly research and interest. While not all the conclusions of this work have been helpful, a great deal of it has. In particular, it lets us understand the original, living context of Israel's hymn book. Some modern commentaries can be dry and technical, however, and lose the rich devotional spirit of the book. A combination of both aspects is needed, for both student and preacher alike, and if this commentary was used in conjunction with one offering more of the results of modern scholarship, the reader would find it of great benefit.

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On The Thirty Nine Articles: A Conversation With Tudor Christianity

Oliver O'Donovan

Paternoster Press (for Latimer House, Oxford), Exeter, 1986, 160pp., £5.95, paperback, ISBN 0 85364 435 7

The challenge of coming to terms with a confessional basis laid down in an earlier and very different age is not confined to Churches in the Reformed tradition. All who seek to do justice both to a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century formulary and to a modern biblical faith will find it instructive to accompany the Professor of Moral Theology at Oxford as he converses with the Thirty Nine Articles. It is a book devoid of the apparatus of scholarship (no annotation, bibliography or index - although a useful appendix prints the Forty Two Articles of 1553 and the Thirty Nine in their original orthography), but rich in theological wisdom and insight. The method, which is organized without being systematic, grouping the Thirty Nine under ten heads for discussion, is well suited to retain the reader's interest.

I particularly appreciated the recurrent strain of reflection on the identity and genius of Anglican belief. 'It ... has never been ... the genius of the Church of England to grow its own theological nourishment, but only to prepare what was provided from elsewhere and to set it decently upon the table There was nothing particularly 'middle' about most of the English Reformers' theological positions - even if one could decide between what poles the middle way was supposed

to lie. Their moderation consisted rather in a determined policy of separating the essentials of faith and order from adiaphora.'

Professor O'Donovan is fond of 'tension' and 'dialectic', which help to produce a balanced evaluation. He is also fond of 'mystery', and occasionally (*e.g.*, on justification and on universalism) the clarity of the Articles is obscured by over-sophistication. At one or two points the obvious is overlooked (*e.g.*, the lack of reference to ordination in Article 23), and attempts to improve the Articles unconvincing. This is most noticeable on Article 17 ('Of predestination and election'), which cannot be made to speak of the election of 'a community, but not its individual members' (*cf.* 'those whom ... out of mankynde'). The Westminster Confession's chapter is misinterpreted by reading a temporal 'first ... then' distinction into it, and is apparently credited with speaking of the predestination of 'named individuals'! The predestinarian ghost that animated all the magisterial Reformers will not be exorcized in this fashion.

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Created in God's Image

Anthony A. Hoekema

Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1986, 264 pp., £12.95 hardback.

ISBN 0 85364 446 2.

The Psalmist's cry, 'What is man?' has been an unanswerable question for the godless thinkers of the ages. It is an ever-relevant question. Existentialism in the twentieth century has recognised that man's existence is more important than his essence, but still cannot find a satisfactory answer. Rather it has tended to despair.

Created in God's Image is a welcome affirmation of the Christian position and a carefully argued defence of the biblical truth. In his preface, Hoekema, Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, outlines his thesis. 'Central to the biblical understanding of man is the teaching that men and women were created in the image of God. I will present the image of God as having structural and functional aspects, as involving man in his threefold relationships - to God, to others, and to nature - and as going through four stages - the original image, the perverted image, the renewed image, and the perfected image.'

After a chapter on the importance of our doctrine of man, he discusses man as a 'created person', recognising this as a paradox. Man is a 'creature' totally dependant upon God but yet is a 'person' with the power of self-determination and self-direction. Scripture shows both these facts to be true. Even in salvation 'God must regenerate but man must believe'.

Hoekema then makes a careful study of the biblical teaching on this 'imageness' and gives a historical survey of the views on the subject of such figures as Irenaeus, Aquinas, Calvin, Barth, Brunner and Berkouwer. In a theological summary he shows how man was meant both to mirror and to represent God. 'Since the image of God includes the whole person, it must include man's structure and man's functioning.' After a short, illuminating chapter on 'self-image', there is a full discussion of the Fall. This deals with the origin, spread, nature and

restraint of sin. In arguing for a historical Fall, Hoekema points out that while the garden may be symbolic that does not mean it is not real. Sin he defines as 'a perverse way of using God given and God reflecting power'. This means, of course, that all sin is against God himself. But the Fall did not destroy the image of God that is man; it affected his function rather than structure. The book concludes with chapters on the 'Whole Person' - a psychosomatic unity - and on 'The Question of Freedom.' Both are helpful discussions.

I found this an interesting, stimulating and illuminating book. It is a work of scholarship but very readable, since all theological and philosophical terms are clearly explained. It is also a practical book. Professor Hoekema continually emphasises the practical importance of the doctrines he is discussing.

A comprehensive bibliography, general index and index of Scriptures used, make it an ideal textbook and reference work. It is of value to preachers, students and thinking laymen.

*John Wilson
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A Karl Barth Reader

Rolf Joachim Eiler and Reiner Marquard (eds.)

T. & T. Clark Ltd., Edinburgh, 1986; 117pp., £4.95, paperback;
ISBN 0 567 29131 6.

'Prepared for the Barth centennial, this selection from Barth's writings serves admirably as an introduction to his thinking for those who have neither the time nor perhaps the desire to plunge into his bulky output for themselves' (Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 'Translator's Preface', p. vii). Most readers will perhaps fall into both categories! This book could well be used as a kind of 'Day by Day with Karl Barth'. Some 'days' will be more inspiring than others!

The reader who would never dream of calling himself a 'Barthian' will be interested to hear Barth say: 'I myself am not a "Barthian" ... Make as little use of my name as possible. There is only one relevant name' (p. 112). The reader may not agree with the precise manner in which Barth developed his Christology. He will, however, learn from Barth as he respects Barth's intention of being Christ centred: 'Jesus Christ ... my own concern in my long life has been increasingly to emphasize this name' (p. 114). Similarly, the reader with misgivings about Barth's doctrine of Scripture will learn from Barth as he recognises Barth's concern with letting the Bible speak: 'The Bible speaks only when we let it speak the first word' (p. 9).

The preacher can learn from Barth's concern 'that not so much my sermon but the text it follows may really sink in and go with you' (p. 3). The theologian should never forget that 'Christian theology is good ... when ... it is ... service in which one learns constantly: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30)' (p. 16). We must all heed Barth's warning that our day 'cannot be a good age if the gospel of Jesus Christ ... is silent and no longer to be heard in it' (p. 82).

The book contains a 'Karl Barth Chronology' (pp. 115-116) and a list of 'English Translations of Barth's Works' (p. 117).

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Clinical Theology: A Theological and Psychological Basis to Clinical Pastoral Care

Frank Lake, abridged by Martin H. Yeomans

Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 245 pp., £12.95, paperback;

ISBN 0 232 51676 6

This is a careful, radical abridgement of Frank Lane's vast book of 1282 pages first published in 1966. Martin Yeoman's, a Methodist minister, has been a Clinical Theology seminar tutor for over 20 years. He has sought to retain the particular aspects of the original work which have been of most value to pastoral counsellors over the years.

For those of us who knew Dr Lake in person and profited from the training offered in the seminars, this book still breathes the personality of its author, with his rich use of language and his amazing perceptiveness into the heart of a problem and a person. Above all, his warmth and Christian compassion for those who hurt in any way shine through.

In the first chapter on 'The Christian Service of Listening' he introduces us to the key to all his understanding of the synthesis between theology and psychological theory. Even if people grasp little else from his writings, they will gain much from the stress on the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ to understand and enter into our deepest emotional pain. He points to the resources made available to us through the humanity of Jesus, especially his experience of dereliction, and through his death for us, so that he can write: 'Christ, as Redeemer in the week of his passion bore upon his own person and in his own spirit every form of anxiety known to man or borne by him' (p. 13). In addition the Christian has the resources of prayer, Holy Communion and the preaching of the Word. Preachers may be encouraged by Dr Lake's assertion that 'there is a genre of preaching which can reach down to the heart of the psychoneurotic and psychotic problems and open them up to the resources of God' (p.16).

Both in his writing and in his therapeutic work, Dr Lake was a man who relied on the Holy spirit to make real the liberating truth of justification by faith, without which the pastoral counsellor cannot function.

Martin Yeomans has helpfully separated off into a new chapter Dr Lake's understanding of the dynamic cycle as a model in theology and psychodynamics. He described the normal pattern of interpersonal relationships as consisting of four factors, in dynamic relation to one another and in sequence. They are: (1) acceptance, which ensures our very sense of 'being'; (2) sustenance of the personality which results in the degree of 'well-being' experienced. These two input dependency phases of personality development are followed by two output ones of: (3) status, which implies motivation to care for others as one has been cared for; and (4) achievement of the task appropriate to the person. This model was fundamentally divergent from those used in classical psychology and psychiatry and was derived from Dr Lake's study of the 'spiritual dynamics' of our Lord, especially in John's Gospel. Thus Christ is the 'norm' for the study of the 'normal' man.

The remainder of the abridged edition selects from the voluminous recording of case studies sufficient content to highlight Dr Lake's understanding of personality disorders or psychiatric illness, viz. depression; hysterical, schizoid

and paranoid personalities; and anxiety and related defensive reactions. (Mr Yeomans has omitted the chapter in the original on homosexuality). Pastors will find the Appendix on Pastoral Recording of a case history of practical help in the task of discerning, with the Holy Spirit's aid, the real needs of those who seek them out to talk.

Those who buy this book may be grateful that Martin Yeomans has included the original Glossary and may also wish to have a dictionary at hand in places! Dr Lake's unique conception of 'figures and charts' may only confuse and irritate some readers, who will be glad to find the number included in the abridged edition reduced very considerably. I am glad that this book has been published in a more readable abridgement. It should be weighed against the current spate of books on 'inner healing' and counselling.

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The Power of the Pulpit

Gardiner Spring

The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1986. £5.95.

Gardiner Spring was ordained pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City in 1810 and remained there for sixty two years. Only a man of profound conviction and with a lively sense of the treasures of God's Word could have sustained a ministry in one place that long. In this volume he affirms that 'the pulpit has power'; and he proposes to show 'the constituent elements which invest it with this moral influence', by pointing out 'the duties of ministers ... to make full proof of the power with which it is invested, (and by specifying 'the obligations which rest on the church of God to give it its due place and importance'.

The author almost apologises for obtruding himself as he neared the thirty-eight years of preaching in one place, but he went on to preach other twenty-four years there after that! Looking at the date of the book's first publication, 1848, it is difficult to think it was written so long ago; it dates remarkably little.

The first five chapters are devoted to discussing the fact that the pulpit has power, and chapters six to nine to the constituent elements of the pulpit's power, namely truth, uttered by a living teacher, in the name and by the authority of God, and accompanied with his mighty power. He asserts that ear-gate goes far deeper than eye-gate; which is surely true, and wonderfully confirmatory to a preacher. 'Preaching', he says, 'is the most economical method of spreading the Gospel, and the work of the living teacher is more impressive and affecting than other forms of communication.' He compares Whitefield's sermons read, with Whitefield's sermons preached, and emphasises the necessity of the supreme assurance of God's authority, since preachers are ambassadors for Christ. 'The pulpit is associated with the mighty power of God in the conviction and conversion of men.'

The duty of preachers to make full proof of the power of the pulpit is that of preserving a single eye to the task, and he warns of the dangers of popularity. It is not the favour of the people we seek; we seek not yours, but you,' and he quotes Charles II expressing surprise that John Owen listened to the tinker John Bunyan

preaching. Owen replied, 'Had I the tinker's ability, please Your Majesty, I would most gladly relinquish my learning.' A diligent ministry is a happy one, but calls for unwearied diligence, 'it grows as it goes' (Lucretius). 'We are not responsible for our talents, but for the diligent use of them.' Everything therefore must be subservient to the pulpit, taking pre-eminence over every other department of ministerial labour.

The preacher's personal life is discussed, and the need to concentrate on the immediate subject in hand, and to work hard at it, biblical themes being capable of sustaining a high degree of interest, as to the preacher, so to his hearers. Let the preacher *feel* his subject! Every minister loves to preach to an attentive audience, and the best remedy for an inattentive audience is to give them something to attend to.

Ministers must be men of prayer. The law of the pulpit is that we are 'labourers together with God.' And we need guidance as to the choice of subjects. As to preparation 'there is no preparation like that of the closet.' Piety of life in private will tell in the pulpit. The Earl of Bath spoke of the 'goodness' of Mr Whitefield. Some defects depend on natural temperament, and those with fewest imperfections are not always the best men, whereas the reverse can be true also! He instances the foibles of Martin Luther, but traits of character are to be looked for, which carry conviction to the public that preachers are men of God. Jesus is our model. 'All things are lawful but all things are not convenient.' It was said of Basil Nazianzen that 'his words were thunder, his life lightning.'

The remaining chapters deal with, The Responsibility of Ministers, A Competent Ministry to be Procured, Ministry Compared with other Professions, Fitting Education for the Ministry, The Pecuniary Support of Ministers, Prayers for Ministers, The Consideration due to the Christian Ministry, The Responsibility of Enjoying Christian Ministry.

The book contains a wealth of epigrams and allusions, but beyond these there is this great burden to preach the Word, which is seen as the greatest task in the world, an opinion which the reviewer fervently shares. Practically all Christian fruitfulness flows from the ministry of the Word, much of it from the pulpit, so that the preacher in these days needs an enhanced estimation of his task. This book provides it.

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