

REVIEWS

Calvinus. Authentic Calvinism. A Clarification

Alan C. Clifford

Charenton Reformed Publishing, Norwich, 1996; 94pp., £5.95; ISBN 1 9526 716 03

This is an unusual book but it debates an all-too-familiar field. The main text is not from the author at all, but is a collection of extracts drawn from a wide range of writings by Calvin. The collection successfully aims to resource the ongoing discussion on the scope of the atonement in Reformed thought. The author claims that the anthology is full but not exhaustive. This is a modest disclaimer, since it is a most valuable selection and includes most texts cited by both main parties to the debate. Not all the passages bear directly on the question of whether Calvin may be cited for or against the 'high orthodoxy' view of definite atonement classically found in John Owen's *The Death of Christ*. Some quotations, for instance, may only illustrate that Calvin believed strongly in the 'free offer' of the gospel or that he held to the idea of common grace. But Clifford's claim that Calvin makes universal-sounding statements too strong to reconcile with Owen's approach seems formidable. Equally it suggests that whilst Calvin's work predates the classical differences between parties in the Reformed tradition, the subject was not quite as alien to the great Reformer as we might think. A surprising side benefit of the study also shows that Calvin was missionary in heart and advocated personal evangelism.

The author supplies a spirited introduction defending Amyraut and his successors, who challenged the seventeenth-century Calvinist 'high orthodoxy' with its belief in limited atonement. It is some time since Amyraut found an advocate, but the case presented here is more than worthy of such a distinguished figure. The argument will certainly rumble on yet, but all parties will have to take account of this little but forceful book. The resource value just about justifies the price.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College

No Other Name. Can Only Christians Be Saved?

John Sanders

SPCK, London, 1994; 315pp., £12.99; ISBN 0 281 04744 8

Kicking and struggling, Evangelicals are at last being dragged into the cockpit of debate that our context of pluralism has prepared. Are we really

required to believe that only card-carrying, *bona fide*, self-aware Christians will find a place in heaven? You will not get a more interesting and passionate negative evangelical answer to this question than from John Sanders here. He has done his homework and come up with some interesting, mainly lost, facts. The most important of these is that we face a much richer variety of Christian approaches to the question than most Evangelicals realise. It is not, as many think, a straight head-to-head between 'exclusivism' (only conscious faith in Christ can save), 'inclusivism' (there is implicit as well as explicit faith which can save *because* of Christ) and 'universalism' (no problem, because all are saved anyway). The summaries in brackets are mine, not Sanders'. This is important, because his are much more nuanced, careful and thought out. The point is that besides these standard categories we also find strong arguments for the idea that God will communicate saving revelation to whatever person seeks him. The notion of a universally accessible revelation is found not only in Thomas Aquinas but also, more surprisingly, in such respected evangelical apologists as J. Oliver Buswell and Norman Geisler. But you could also decide for the 'final option' position that everyone encounters Christ in the moment of death, though it is easier to adopt this view if you are a Roman Catholic.

Then there is the position based on the 'middle knowledge' of God – the knowledge of what people would do *if* they had the gospel. On the grounds of such knowledge of individuals, God could rule people into salvation – but he might rule many more out (so we have two theories here, not just one). Or, if you prefer, you could opt for 'eschatological evangelization'. This is not the doctrine of purgatory, as Sanders rightly notes. The view holds that everyone has the opportunity of hearing the gospel even if this means hearing it after death. Paradoxically it draws on the spirit of both inclusivism (opportunity must be universal) and exclusivism (but it can only be through the preached gospel). The New Testament support may be stronger than you think!

There are other theories, but these are enough to make the point. Sanders states and evaluates the biblical support for all of them and lays out lists of distinguished advocates for all of them. He himself adopts an inclusivist position based on the notion of a universally accessible salvation. And you will go far to hear a better case. Granted, Sanders is driven by a sympathy for Arminian-Wesleyan theology carefully refined into a composite of foundation assumptions: (a) a universal, divine salvific will, (b) universal human ability and (c) universal opportunity. But he also has no difficulty at all in assembling a formidable galaxy of theologians and Christian thinkers from all traditions to support his

choice. He is able to cite Edward Pusey as saying that only the 'most rigid' Calvinists state with certainty that the majority of human beings will be damned. And amongst the advocates of inclusivism may be found Reformed writers such as W.G. Shedd and A.H. Strong.

There are many criticisms that one could make. For instance, allying inclusivism to Arminianism, and thus severing it from the Reformed doctrine of preservation and perseverance, may generate more doubt than hope concerning the ultimate salvation of billions of people. But weaknesses like this should not stand in the way of the reader. Anyone, of any persuasion, embarking on a study of this serious and vital subject could enormously profit by starting with Sanders.

By the way, his teaching post is at Oak Hills Bible College in Minnesota, not at a similar-sounding Anglican college in the UK.

Roy Kearsley, South Wales Baptist College

A Theology as Big as the City

Raymond J. Bakke

IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 1997; 221pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 8308 1890 1

As in all cities, there are in Rotterdam many places where canals flow under roads and motorways conduct traffic across metro-train routes. When one is going one direction by train or car it is a very different world to the one immediately below where boats and bicycles go by. In my city you can walk two streets and find a different world – whether of offices, commerce, or residential... Caribbean, Chinese, or Turkish and Moroccan.

The genius of Ray Bakke is that he understands these different worlds and through his worldwide ministry of teaching and consultancy can extend the biblical, ecclesiastical, historical and cultural maps with which we as pastors are operating. Whereas 'Urban Christian' successfully mapped out his understanding of urban mission, his latest book is about how to draw that map (page 11). This is a book of biblical theology on the city and it draws extensively upon his historical, ecclesiastical and cultural insights. The chapter notes (pp. 208-21) serve to amplify the text and point to other sources for enquiry, but it is a pity that there is no index.

The biblical tour begins with a personal history and special words of appreciation for his mentors, Charles Simeon, an English ecclesiastical evangelical, and Moses, an Egyptian-educated emissary! The following two chapters concentrate on Genesis and remind us of the corruption of the city. As we proceed, it is apparent how much the author is a pastor and has had to learn to preach through the whole Bible. In the process, he has

developed ideas on leadership, vision, the family, partnership, culture, missionary methods, spirituality and ethnicity. The final chapter takes the reader on an historical tour of his heroes who worked the boundaries of faith and culture.

This is not an academic text-book with specialised research and definitive conclusions. Instead, the author has set out to provide pastors and missionaries with a tool-kit that enables the Bible to inspire indigenous ideas in their own particular context, church and culture. I would challenge any reader to turn these pages and not to find something new, creative and inspiring. The main motive of this book is not to provide well-worked theological treatises but rather new frameworks for understanding the urban world, leaving the reader to fill them in.

The essential thesis is that the whole Bible (using the language of Lausanne) is God's gift to reach the whole city in the whole of God's world. However, migration and mobility and ever more rapid social revolutions threaten to leave the church theologically land-locked and pastorally unprepared to reach the new urban world as it is. The theological constructs of most churches tend towards definitive positions that either accept or reject. Dr Bakke has tried to keep 'very basic themes in balance' and recognises certain polarities in the Bible that we should be careful to hold in tension. For example, we need a healthy balance of creation/redemption, truth/love, individuality/community, unity/diversity and certainty/mystery. The real quest of this book is to seek a sustainable spirituality for urban ministry that will survive beyond a generation. He has provided us with a theological map that integrates the Bible, church, city (or context) and history (or tradition) through one's own experience.

Personally, I prefer to think of theological reflections as a 'trialogue' between the Bible, church and city / context integrated by experience (and the leading of the Holy Spirit). In this way, history/tradition belongs to a third dimension behind each of these three poles. The Bible is at the apex of the 'trialogue' as the supreme test of rule and conduct (something which Dr Bakke readily admits). In my previous ministry in a Glasgow housing estate, the story of Nehemiah building the walls with those left behind became an inspiration to many. Today in Rotterdam the mission of Paul in Acts and the image of Antioch with its multicultural leadership team (chapter 13) correlate better with our context.

This is a book for pastors and people who are thinking theologically about the urban world in which we live and it offers a map without which we cannot afford to travel.

Robert Calvert, Rotterdam

Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth

Jeffrey Satinover

Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1996; 280pp., £17.99; ISBN 0 801 05625 X

Jeffrey Satinover is an American psychiatrist who has psychoanalytic training. In addition to having a distinguished psychiatric career he serves on the National Physicians Resource Council for Focus on the Family and on the Board of Governors of Towards Tradition, an organisation of Christians and Jews dedicated to re-establishing traditional standards of morality in America. His book is a significant contribution to the homosexual debate and deserves to be widely read. British readers, and perhaps particularly Scottish readers, should try to assess this book, taking into account the socio-cultural background of the author. In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association (APA) voted to delete homosexuality from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, a globally recognised classification of psychiatric disorders. Moreover, two of the American Psychiatric Association's committees, the committee on abuse and misuse of psychiatry, and the committee on gay, lesbian and bisexual issues, have attempted to create a climate in which psychiatrists endeavouring to offer treatment to (consenting) homosexuals wishing to become heterosexual are accused of unethical behaviour and of misusing psychiatry. When one combines this with the excessive and uncritical response of the American media to research suggesting a biological basis for homosexuality, Satinover's book, whatever one thinks of its validity, should certainly be seen as a courageous enterprise.

The book is divided into two sections. The first entitled 'Gay Science' reviews the background to the APA's decision and reviews recent biological research on the nature of homosexuality with considerable, some would say perhaps undue, emphasis on genetic research. Section two is entitled 'Straight Mores' and includes bold reaffirmation of the reality and the significance of sin, as well as accounts of both secular and Christian treatments on homosexuality and a chapter on homosexuality and Judaism. The final chapter puts the homosexuality debate in the context of what Satinover calls 'The Pagan Revolution', in which he contrasts a Christian monotheistic world view with the theology of paganism, *i.e.* gnosticism, which he views with good reason as having had an enormous influence on contemporary society.

This book has many strengths. For example on the causes of homosexuality Satinover unequivocally asserts that these are multi-factorial: 'it is neither exclusively biological nor exclusively psychological but results from an as yet difficult to quantitate mixture of genetic factors,

intra-uterine influences (some innate to the mother and thus present in every pregnancy, and others incidental to a given pregnancy), post-natal environment (such as parental, sibling and cultural behaviour), and the complex series of repeatedly reinforced choices occurring at critical phases in development'. In refuting the over-simplification of scientific and especially genetic reductionism he balances this by acknowledging that traditional Christian views can easily be over-simplified, for example in merely asserting that 'people choose to be homosexual'. Satinover's argument that the APA's change of stance on homosexuality was driven by politics rather than science is a compelling one, and indeed he ably succeeds with his own aim in the first section of his book which is to 'guard against the grossly over-blown claims of interest groups who misuse science for political ends'. In so doing he makes some telling points. One of these is the notion that in the last few decades people have usually resisted the idea that their behaviour is driven by unchangeable biological factors. This has been highlighted in feminist arguments over the differences between men and women and arguments over racial differences in IQ. Satinover points out, however, that, running counter to this trend, most gay activists, at least in the USA, are fiercely determined to prove a biological basis for their lifestyle, presumably in an effort to free themselves from any stigma. Satinover's response to this is to assert that science cannot contribute to the moral question, a view shared even by eminent secular scientists, e.g. J. Bancroft ('Homosexual orientation – the search for a biological basis', *British Journal of Psychiatry* 164, 1994, pp. 437-40). Other strengths include Satinover's emphasis on the importance of acknowledging the reality of sin, which he manages to do while still recognising the reality of forgiveness. His overview of Christian healing ministries is helpful and balanced and (of particular interest to the reviewer) shows how some of these embrace what is valuable in psychological world-views, whilst discarding what is unhelpful.

There are two main weaknesses of this book. The first concern is the chapter on secular treatments of homosexuality. Satinover claims that evidence for treatment aimed at changing sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual was 'more impressive than realised'. In the reviewer's view he singularly fails to make the case for this. The studies he cites as evidence for the efficacy of treatment are of dubious scientific value and are largely individual case studies and descriptive reports. The outcome studies he reports are largely uncontrolled case series which any critical scientific reviewer would tear to ribbons. The studies certainly *suggest* that some people's sexual orientation may be changeable, but do not provide compelling scientific evidence for this. This weakness is made all the more

noteworthy by the fact that Satinover uses his able critical faculties very effectively in his assessment of the biological literature on homosexuality, but seems to suspend them in his analysis of the psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic literature and treatment. Some of his assertions are debatable. For example, cognitive behavioural psychotherapists would take great issue with his claim that the psychotherapeutic treatment of homosexuality is as successful as psychotherapeutic treatment of depression. In the reviewer's view this is simply not true. The second weakness of the book is the paucity of counsel on how to live as a Christian with homosexual orientation if one is not healed of it. Although the author emphasises the possibility, and indeed the joy of healing, it is the reviewer's experience that, in this area as in many others, some people simply do not experience healing and have to struggle with serious problems all their lives. It would have been helpful from someone as wise and as experienced in this area to have heard more on how to cope with and live with these struggles.

These criticisms notwithstanding, I have no hesitation in recommending this book. It deserves to be widely read, particularly by Christians wanting some understanding of the literature on the biology of homosexuality and how this has been misused, particularly by politically correct media groups and gay rights activists.

Tom M. Brown, St John's Hospital, Livingston

You Have Stept Out of Your Place. A History of Women and Religion in America

Susan Hill Lindley

Westminster / John Knox Press, Louisville, 1996; 384pp., \$35; ISBN 0 664 22081 9

In this first narrative history of women and religion in America, Susan Hill Lindley has tried to span a wide range of American women's religious experiences and contributions presenting the story from the colonial period through to the mid-1990s. She cites the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church as the catalyst which urged men and women members of religious orders to return to the teaching of Christ and the gospel and to find their roots. This influenced American women, Protestants, Jews and Catholics, who, prompted also by the resurgence of the women's movement in the early 1960s and 1970s, set out on a path of liberation. The result was an explosion of research and publications about women and their roots. This work is an attempt to draw together some of the results of that scholarly explosion, highlighting the two-sidedness of

women's lives over four centuries. Lindley demonstrates sensitively how, just as religion in the traditional sense has influenced the lives of American women through its institutions, values and sanctions, so women themselves have significantly affected American religion. The experiences of feminist-minded pioneer women who led the way out of women's culturally subordinate roles are interweaved with those of 'ordinary' women, who in their roles in their homes, churches and social communities were equally important. We are given an account of ethnically diverse female experience in various geographic, racial and denominational backgrounds. *You Have Stept Out of Your Place* shows how twentieth-century feminist women have found a new freedom through gradual change but still encounter opposition about religious leadership. The book also shows how American women have come to appreciate what women through the centuries accomplished through traditional roles. Susan Lindley has depicted this changing role of women over four centuries with great thoroughness. This is a book which captures the imagination so that one looks forward to seeing how women's role will further metamorphosise, as Lindley forecasts.

Janet L. Watson, Worcestershire

Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt & Certainty in Christian Discipleship

Lesslie Newbigin

SPCK, London, 1995; 105pp., £7.99; ISBN 0 281 04915 7

The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America

Edited by George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996; 369pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 8028 4109 0

Re-Visioning Mission: The Catholic Church and Culture in Postmodern America

Richard G. Cote

Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1996; 191pp., \$14.95; ISBN 0 8091 3645 7

Anthropology for Christian Witness

Charles H. Kraft

Orbis, Maryknoll, NY, 1996; 493pp., n.p.; ISBN 1 57075 085 8

At first glance, these four books may seem unlikely bedfellows. However they have a common underlying concern as they struggle with issues of effective contextualisation of the gospel in a variety of modern settings.

Proper Confidence is pure vintage Newbigin. Those familiar with his writings may find this volume more a variation on a theme than a totally new melody. Nonetheless, this is a spell-binding distillation of his work. I was fully engaged, mind and heart, from beginning to end, and was sorry to get to the last page. Not that I would endorse every sentence. But Newbigin combines a sure touch with the humility that invites the reader into dialogue and discussion, so that one emerges thoughtful, sometimes, disturbed, sometimes disagreeing, but always provoked to weigh up carefully what he has to say. Indeed, there are some typically insightful observations that are both especially urgent and especially painful for Evangelicals to ponder, particularly if we are among those Evangelicals who confuse form and meaning and pour energy into defending the indefensible. Newbigin incisively shows the unsustainability of both liberalism and literal fundamentalism, while insisting that 'to know Jesus must be the basis of all true knowledge'. Christians are gladly, in faith and obedience, to tell and live the gospel story of Jesus Christ. This is a book which deserves the very widest exposure.

The Church between Gospel and Culture is a collection of essays from sixteen different contributors. Like all such collections, there are some untidy bits, and some essays are outstanding while others did not strike me as quite so valuable. It is a measure of Lesslie Newbigin's importance as a seminal thinker in our generation that this book (along with a number of others) has flowed out of 'The Gospel and Our Culture' *Network*, which in its turn came as a response to Newbigin's earlier writing. While written for the North American setting, there were great stretches of this book that resonated for me with the British scene in general and the Scottish scene specifically. The authors struggle with the central questions how the gospel interfaces with contemporary culture, and how the church is to inculcate the gospel without becoming conformed to the world and hostage to a secular culture. How can we disentangle what is biblical from what is British (or seventeenth-century, or Enlightenment, or Victorian, or respectable middle class, or whatever)? How can the church live out its life and calling in a way that bears clear testimony to the Lord of the church and also be comprehensible and accessible to folk outside? These are, of course, questions of the greatest significance for us in Scotland today. Perhaps only foolish or blind Christians would deny that we are in a situation where the missionary nature of the church in its encounter with the world needs most urgently

to be recaptured. This is not light reading and sometimes raises more questions than it answers. But it is stimulating, thought provoking, and well worth reading.

Re-Visioning Mission may appeal to fewer of the *Bulletin's* readership than the previous two books. That may be inevitable in that Richard Cote is addressing the specific context of North American Roman Catholicism, and the particular needs of the Catholic Church, from within a Catholic understanding of the nature of the church and of its life and mission. The recent waves of Hispanic immigration into North America have had a deep impact on the church, at the same time as many traditionally Catholic communities have shed their loyalty to it. Perhaps for the first time in centuries, this Church must ask how all its life, its functions, its sacraments, its activities, can be harnessed to the missionary task of reaching those outside as well as succouring those within, all among those formerly confidently regarded as belonging already. Cote uses the concept of marriage as a paradigm for the relationship between faith and culture. He grapples with the problem of those who no longer follow traditional patterns of Catholic lifestyle and yet for whom he believes there must still be room within the Church. While I respect what he is trying to do, I do not think he succeeds very well, not least because of the way in which he uses Scripture. In attempting to shake loose from culturally-influenced formulations and traditions, he may unconsciously be shaped by new cultural influences in his espousal of mysticism and ambiguity.

The last of the four books, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, is also profoundly concerned with understanding the cultures within which we must incarnate the gospel. Charles Kraft has written and taught steadily over many years. Many in the missionary community in particular have good reason to be immensely grateful for his contribution in his field, and I am sorry that rather few in the 'home ministry' have ransacked the insights of anthropologists such as Kraft, Hiebert and Hesselgrave. Perhaps in recognising today that 'the mission field' is no longer geographically determined but among the unchurched wherever they are to be found, including our doorstep, the valuable tools prepared by Kraft and others will be appreciated and utilised to great benefit. This particular volume is a comprehensive presentation of Kraft's approach to anthropology from the worldview of Scripture. He is a passionate practitioner, so his concern is not to stun with theory, but to facilitate effective gospel ministry. I believe he succeeds, and that this is a book which deserves to be widely read and widely applied.

Rose Dowsett, OMF International

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