Book Reviews

Calvin and His Times
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Potchefstroom University for
Christian Higher Education,
Potchefstroom 2520, Transvaal,
Republic of South Africa
154pp Rand 7.50

This is a well-written, readable but
authoritative work on the famous
reformer's life and work, providing
also a wealth of insight relating to
the period.

There are 21 chapters beginning
with Calvin as a student in Paris,
then contrasting him as a humanist
student and, later, as a student of
the Bible. Calvin's conviction that
the Church needed to be reformed
and his attempts at reformation,
particularly in Geneva, are detailed
over 15 chapters. Other chapters
deal with his married life,
bereavement and his last years.

The value of the book is enhanced
by a glossary of terms (pp.147-151)
and two pages of bibliography. This
is a book for church leaders but also
one we can recommend to our
church members for their profit and
enjoyment.

Pulpit and People
Edited by Nigel M. de S. Cameron
and Sinclair Ferguson
Rutherford House Books,
Edinburgh
148pp.
Casebound: £11.90 Limp: £8.90

Here is a book written in honour of
William Still, Aberdeen, whose
influence on younger generations of
ministers and churches in Scotland
over the past forty years has been
considerable.

Sinclair Ferguson's biographical
introduction to William Still is
interesting but somewhat too brief.
I suspect that the self-effacing
subject of the biography may have
ordered it this way! One important
message, at least, is underlined by
the biographer: "He took a radical
decision: Abandoning the Saturday
night 'rallies' he began a meeting for
prayer instead. The effect was in­
stantaneous and numerically
dramatic. Between one Sunday
evening and the next, the congrega­
tion at the evening service dropped
by between two and three hundred...
But Mr. Still had stumbled on
something which was to leave an
indelible impression on him ... the
challenge to become a man or
woman of prayer, to share in the
very nerve of the church's life ... From
that time until today, his
ministry has been to smaller rather
than to large congregations ... he
has set his heart on quality, even if it
should be at the expense of quantity ..."). (pp.3-4).

The book is divided into three
sections. In the first section, James
Philip provides an historical survey
of expository preaching. His con­
clusion is that "even in the best
evangelical preaching ... e.g.
Charles Simeon ... and Charles H.
Spurgeon ... it was the classical,
Puritan tradition, which grew out of
the Artes Praedicandi of the Middle
Ages that was followed, rather than
the simple homily of the Reformers
and those who followed Calvin's
practice of systematic, consecutive exposition of the Scriptures in 18th, 19th and indeed in the 20th centuries ... have been conspicuous as exceptions rather than the norm. It is to be hoped that those in our own day who have the vision of the dynamic potential that this method represents will exercise an increasing influence on the preaching ministry of the late 20th century ... Without this, the process of decay in the life of the Church is likely to continue, and its future history likely to be short” (p.16).

The next article is by Douglas F. Kelly on The Recovery of Christian Realism in the Scottish Expository Ministry Movement. This is a challenging, penetrating chapter as the writer warns that historically the Church has been tempted to veer away from a real knowledge of God in Christ by going astray on one of two different directions, namely, ‘liberal’ idealism and ‘conservative’ nominalism. But in God’s providence William Still and his Scottish expository school of ministers have given themselves to exercising a theologically realist ministry because this was scriptural and their major strength was in their “wholesale commitment to both the absolute authority and the full inspiration of the Holy Scriptures” (p.22). Other features of this Scottish expository school include the realistic way “it faces the high cost of letting the whole Christ through the whole Word loose in our whole lives” (p.24), the “cutting out of panicky, evangelistic gimmicks” (p.25) recognising that “the truest, deepest evangelism is carried out in the non-dramatic, regular course of preaching through the various books of Scripture in the week-by-week, consistent ministry of the local church ... oiled and set on fire through the prayers of believers ...” (p.27) and, finally, its high view of the corporate church.

Nigel Cameron then writes on Preaching and the Logic of Authority, demonstrating the necessity and consistency of submitting unreservedly to the authority of the Bible.

The second section contains three articles by David Wright (Word, Ministry and Congregation in the Reformation Confessions), Howard Marshall (Church and Ministry in 1 Timothy) and Francis Lyall (Concerning Confessions). These three chapters are helpful, although predictable.

In the final section of the book there are seven chapters on Building the Church Today (George Philip), The Reformed Doctrine of Sonship (Sinclair Ferguson), Psychological Aspects of Inner Healing (Montagu Barker), Reflections on a Biblical View of Man and Nature (Rowland Moss), The Children for Christ (Douglas Macmillan), The Problem of Apostasy in Hebrews (Henry Tait) and Suffering: A Study on Romans 8:18-30 by Brian Moore. All these contributions are basic, clear and stimulating but the reviewer was particularly impressed by Sinclair Ferguson on ‘Sonship’ and Douglas Macmillan on ‘Paedo-baptism’. The latter deserves a wide readership among Paedo-Baptists as it is a clear, forthright exposition of the subject. A good book with plenty to stimulate and challenge.

The Editor
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"Speaking the truth in love." Ephesians 4:15

I recall how a good friend once told me that he was somewhat disappointed, because in my exposition of the second chapter of this Epistle to the Ephesians I had not once mentioned Calvinism as I worked through the chapter. My simple reply to him was, The text does not mention that term. My friend was so much in the grip of a party-spirit that he was becoming doubtful of my position! A party-spirit is generally the result of approaching the truth in a purely intellectual manner, and also being governed by prejudice which is often the result of one’s upbringing. Truth must produce passion, and in a truly Christian profession there is emotion and feeling. A truth which is only held in the intellect becomes hard, and arid and dry; and a man of whom this is true can never speak the truth in love.

D.M. Lloyd-Jones