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# Book Reviews

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## 1 Peter

Wayne Grudem

IVP, TNTC, 239 pp £3.95

Having appreciated over many years the previous Tyndale commentary by the late Alan Stibbs, I felt somewhat nervous about reading this replacement volume by Grudem. However, I assure you that this is a competent, conservative and challenging commentary. What is particularly pleasing is the priority the author gives to exegesis of the biblical text rather than to the sources or setting of 1 Peter. Grudem keeps closely to the Greek text and his exegesis is reasonably thorough. In many places, he challenges the adequacy of English translations and is not afraid to question established interpretations. More controversially, he argues cogently in 1:2 that the word 'elect' ('chosen') is used in the Greek only as an adjective and not in a verbal sense. Furthermore, he argues that this word is nine words distant from the phrase "according to the foreknowledge of God" which Grudem then takes as modifying the whole situation of the readers (v 1). This implies "that their status as sojourners, their privileges as God's chosen people, even their hostile environment in Pontus, Galatia, etc were all known by God before the world began...all were in accordance with his fatherly love for his own people. Such foreknowledge is laden with comfort for Peter's readers" (p 50). Similarly, the phrase 'to obedience...' in verse 2 he refers to the daily obedience of believers, not initial saving obedience to the gospel. The word is used in the former sense in

1:14, probably 1:22; cf Rom 5:19, 6:16, 2 Cor 7:15, 10:5-6, Philemon 21 and Hebrews 5:8. "No clear examples of *hypakoe* meaning 'initial saving response to the gospel' are found (Rom 1:5 and 15:18 are ambiguous)" (p 52).

You may not always agree with the conclusions but the commentary will challenge you to examine afresh and in greater depth the text and message of this epistle. Only occasionally does the author refer to other commentaries but he cites more frequently ancient biblical and extra-biblical texts. Grudem thinks it is essential for believers "to accept a particular interpretation...not because some expert has given his opinion in favour of it, but because they have seen for themselves the evidence which supports that interpretation, and the evidence has convinced them" (p 10).

In addition to 155 pages of exegesis, there are 23 pages of introduction, three pages of useful analysis and outline and a useful appendix of 37 pages supplementing the exegesis of 3:19-20, Christ preached through Noah.

## The Message of 1 Peter

Edmund P Clowney

IVP, *The Bible Speaks Today*  
234 pp £5.50

We are informed in the General Preface to this book not to expect a mere 'commentary', that is, a work which only elucidates the text. Rather, the series in which this work appears, is "characterised by a three-fold ideal: to expound the biblical text with accuracy, to relate it to contemporary life, and to be readable" (p 5).

There are 11 pages of introduction (pp 15-25) and 7 pages of appendix (pp 227-234) dealing with subjects like

'Resident aliens' — literal or figurative? Living Rock — living water; The office of elder in the New Testament.

In an easy-to-read style, the author explains the meaning of the text and spends time in its detailed application. One example is in 1:1-2 where he devotes 17 pages to these two verses. The treatment of passages like 1:13-2:3 (pp 63-81) also contain some memorable, striking statements like 'Christians must be addicted to the Bible' (p 78), 'Peter commends a milk product that is free from additives. The word of God abides without preservatives' (p 79). This is a splendid book which pastors can encourage their members to use to great profit in personal and group Bible study.

Grudem's commentary is deliberately more academic and detailed in its exegetical work. One cannot leave his commentary without having been challenged by the biblical text. Clowney's book provides us with a responsible and straightforward exegesis with much more helpful and contemporary application. For several weeks I have used both books for personal Bible study and found them helpful and complementary. I would not like to be without either of them now. Buy these two commentaries for they will help to give you a better understanding of 1 Peter and, at the same time, provide you with a lot of important, suggestive material for preaching.

## **The Universe Next Door**

*James W Sire*  
IVP, 246 pp £5.95

Although printed in America in 1976, this is an updated and expanded guide book to world views. Written from a

clear biblical perspective, the author outlines the basic beliefs of theism, deism, naturalism, existentialism, Eastern thought, Marxism and secular humanism.

The value of the book is three-fold. Firstly, it includes within one reasonably priced book the major world views and philosophies of our contemporary situation. For this reason it will be a useful reference book. Secondly, the book should help preachers to communicate the Word more relevantly and effectively by making us aware of the radically different answers being given in our world to key questions such as, What is the nature of the world around us? What is a human being? What happens to a person at death? Why is it possible to know anything at all? How do we know what is right and wrong? What is the meaning of human history? Thirdly, this book is useful in the way it exposes 'serious flaws' in all unbiblical world-views; 'none of them...', argues James Sire, 'can adequately account for the possibility of genuine knowledge, the facticity of the external universe or the existence of ethical distinctions. Each in its own way ends in some form of nihilism' (p 217). The answer, concludes the author, is not found in 'the self nor the cosmos, but the God who transcends all — the infinite-personal God in whom all reason, all goodness, all hope, all love, all reality, all distinctions find their origin. It provides the frame of reference in which we can find meaning and significance'. A useful book although not always easy to read.

—Dr Eryl Davies MA BD, ETCW