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## Editor's Notes

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Several of the articles and reviews in this issue deal either directly or indirectly with Christology. The person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ should always be central to both our theological thinking and our devotional lives. Behind the profound thinking of the greatest teachers of the church – Augustine, Calvin, Owen, Warfield to name a few – was an even more profound personal devotion to Christ. It is essential that those of us who preach and teach stay close to Christ. A recent book that can help us in this is Don Carson's *For the Love of God* (Leicester, IVP, 1998) – a series of daily meditations based on Robert Murray M'Cheyne's Bible reading calendar. M'Cheyne has been a devotional tool that many of us have used and therefore it is refreshing to have Carson's incisive thoughts on one of the passages in the family readings. As one would expect from Carson these meditations are gems of exegetical and devotional insight. On every passage he sheds some redemptive historical light and usually has some brief application that avoids cheap moralising. I'm not sure how usable this book would be for many church members. He can use words that may send some to a dictionary and some of the meditations verge on saying the obvious from the passage, but overall a very helpful book to use in one's devotions and one that will help to keep us daily focused on Christ.

Sometimes a devotional time, especially in the morning, needs a kick-start. Several years ago it was recommended to me to read a few pages of a classic devotional work before turning to the Bible and prayer. I have found reading some of the Banner of Truth's Puritan classics to be helpful in this way. RJK Law's simplified abridgements of John Owen are excellent devotional reading. Owen is one of my favourites and these books make him easily accessible and more immediately rewarding. The most recent of these is Owen on the Holy Spirit. I challenge anyone not to find this a tonic to the soul. Of a similar nature is Grace Publication's Great Christian Classics series. Number 19 in the series contains extracts from George Smeaton's *The Holy Spirit* and Owen's *Communion with the Holy Spirit*. Oliver Rice has done a good job abridging and simplifying these works. Reading these books is a reminder that we are very small people standing on the shoulders of the giants who have gone before us.

As the century and millennium nears its end we are still waiting for God to send revival. Revival must always be a passion for us. Iain Murray's historical works have put us all in his debt and his latest book is no exception. *Pentecost Today?* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1998) seeks to go beyond describing revival historically, as so many books on the subject do, and to give a theological foundation for revival. Murray rightly argues the case for revival from a redemptive-historical perspective and sees our expectancy for it grounded in the exaltation of Christ. Strictly speaking revival happens after Christ's ascension as a central aspect of his meditorial reign when the Holy Spirit, having been given to the church at Pentecost, continues to be given to the church in varying measures. Murray argues that the expression "baptism of the Spirit" can be used for more than the initial reception of the Spirit or for a subsequent crisis experience and appropriately describes the fuller measures of the Spirit that churches and Christians can expect in the new covenant era. All this is illustrated with historical examples. He especially engages with the theology of revival of Charles G Finney and its powerful

impact on evangelicalism today. The book concludes with a helpful chapter on six things that happen when revival comes: there is renewed confidence in the word of God, there is a more definite understanding of what it means to be a Christian, the gospel advances rapidly, there is a new appreciation of the Christian ministry, communities are impacted and corporate worship is transformed. In my own church we have been using each of these points as a focus for our weekly prayer meetings. Prayerfully read this book for a reminder of the big thing that our ministries should aim for.

For something very different but not unrelated read Nick Davies' *Dark Heart – The Shocking Truth about Hidden Britain* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1997). Davies is not a Christian, but he has written a book that deliberately echoes what William Booth did in *In Darkest England* (1890). Based largely on his own personal investigations, Davies offers us a deeply disturbing picture of our society and particularly its underclass. What he describes is not nice – child prostitution, drugs, violence, the sheer emptiness of life for many people. The picture of the church he draws is not attractive – it is largely irrelevant, shut up or overwhelmed with the problems. For Davies the root of the problem is economic and the book offers little hope other than changes in government policy. Which brings me back to Murray's book. While there are practical things in social policy that Christians should be concerned about, ultimately the only answer to the dark heart of Britain is the triumphant advance of the gospel through whole communities. Without this the picture can only get darker. William Booth understood this but sadly Nick Davies does not.

Let me recommend a book on the millennium. Richard Kyle's *Awaiting the Millennium* (Leicester, IVP, 1998) is a thought-provoking history of millenarianism from the beginning of the church until the present. His sweep is impressive, covering everything from the millennial views of Montanists, Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchists, the Papacy, Taborites, Spiritual Franciscans, Camisards, Shakers, Mormons, Muslims, Dispensationalists and many others. As this list reveals, he goes beyond orthodox Christianity and shows the impact of millenarianism in the world at large. This is a book that will help you keep a sensible historical perspective in an area where there perspective is all too often lacking.

Finally, two personal notes. First I want to mark the imminent retirement of Alan Gibson as General Secretary by expressing my deep appreciation for his encouragement and assistance in this aspect of the BEC's ministry. Without him this journal would not be what it is. On behalf of all our readers I want to assure Alan of our prayers for him as he continues to serve the Lord in years to come. Second, congratulations to Nick Needham, a member of our editorial board, on his appointment as lecturer in church history at the Highland Theological Institute.

This issue of *Foundations* sees the beginning what I hope will be a regular feature. It is vital that pastors keep up to date with the latest biblical literature, especially commentaries. With this in mind I have asked two respected evangelical theological teachers to each undertake an annual literature review. In this issue Philip Eveson, principal of the London Theological Seminary, gives us a review of Old Testament literature. In the autumn, Alistair Wilson of the Highland Theological Institute will give us a review of New Testament literature. If these reviews prove popular and helpful they will become an regular feature. We will also continue to review other books that are of interest. I would appreciate your comments and suggestions on this or any other aspect of *Foundations*.