
Editor's Notes

Elsewhere in this issue I have an article on evangelistic catechising. There is also a related article by Robin Weekes on the *Alpha* and *Christianity Explored* courses. In these notes I simply want to direct your attention to some other catechising materials, particularly for instructing children and families and adult Christians. On the whole subject of catechising **Tom Nettles** has many good things to say in *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts* (Calvary Press 1998). Here Nettles introduces the place of catechisms in Baptist church life with an introduction that helpfully spells out their benefits. Contrary to what some might think catechisms are not only the preserve of Presbyterians and have played a vital role in shaping Baptist spirituality and life. Evangelical Press has published a useful introduction to much of the Shorter Catechism entitled *Firm in the Faith* by **Dennis Hustedt**, a South African pastor. There is a student's book and an accompanying leader's guide. The catechism has been reduced to 52 questions and answers for each week of the year. Each chapter has some questions on a passage of Scripture, a memory verse, an exercise and an action point. I am not quite sure who it is aimed at. It would be useful with older children, but it seems a little too basic for thoughtful adults. Much shorter, but very helpful is **William E Payne's** *Life Transforming Truth* (Joshua Press 2001). This is a short, ten chapter introduction to the doctrines of grace. Although not called a catechism it could be used to catechise new or older Christians in doctrine. Also very good is *Light for Life* (CPO/FIEC 2000). This is a repackaged version of an older FIEC publication explaining its doctrinal basis. Written by members of the FIEC Theological Committee it presents the essentials of the evangelical faith in a clear and compelling way. Each chapter has questions to aid understanding and application. This would be very useful in small group study. On a much grander scale is *Guilt, Grace and Gratitude* (Banner of Truth 2001, two volumes) by **George W Bethune**. Bethune was a minister in the (Dutch/German) Reformed Church of America in the 19th century. He had a much blessed ministry in churches around and in New York. This book is his sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism. They are full of good things – doctrinally solid, spiritually rich, practically applied. Tragically Bethune died before he completed them, but they are to be treasured nevertheless. If you are not familiar with the Heidelberg Catechism (its opening question and answer is one of the most wonderful in all confessional literature) read these volumes. There are two catechetical works I would like to recommend for children. *Small Talks on Big Questions* (Joshua Press 1999) by **Selah Helms and Susan Thompson** is a very useful tool. Each section has several questions from the *Children's Catechism*, a Bible story, a story from church history, some relevant Bible verses and some questions. But the book I am encouraging everyone to get is *Training Hearts, Teaching Minds* (Presbyterian & Reformed 1999) by **Starr Meade**. In this book there is a chapter on every question of the Shorter Catechism, each of which is divided into a day of the week from Monday to Friday. On each day there is a one paragraph family devotional on the theme of the question with appropriate Scripture passages. We have been using it in my family and it is just right. At the time of the terrorist attacks on the USA we were dealing with the decrees of God. It was all very relevant and led to interesting after dinner discussions on the sovereignty of God and

evil. Even if you don't have children around I recommend this book as an excellent resource for household devotions. And if you are a Baptist like me you can just amend or skip the appropriate bits.

If you haven't read it yet let me draw your attention to **Iain Murray's *The Unresolved Controversy*** (Banner of Truth 2001). I warmly recommend this booklet which is the published version of an address Mr Murray gave at the Shepherd's Conference in California. It is really a summary of his book ***Evangelicalism Divided*** (Banner of Truth 2000). This is a very important book that deserves a much fuller review than I can give here. Suffice it to say that while I agree with some of Murray's reviewers who say that he hasn't given enough credit to positive developments within Anglicanism (i.e. Proclamation Trust, Reform, etc.), overall Murray has exposed a deep fault-line at the heart of contemporary evangelicalism. The attitude of evangelicals to non-evangelicals is crucial to the future of the movement. Where Murray is so good is on the explanations of this division among evangelicals—the question of what is a Christian and fully appreciating the significance of the reality of sin, both in ourselves and in others. This booklet and the book on which it is based need to be seriously considered by all evangelical leaders.

Finally let me say a word about this issue. Broadly the theme is mission within our culture in Britain. Our rapidly changing culture demands that we think carefully about how we do mission. For those of us in pastoral or evangelistic ministries these are challenging and exciting times. I want to particularly recommend David Smith's article that I heard when it was first delivered at this year's Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference sponsored by Rutherford House. I found to one of the most thought provoking things I have recently come across. Not only does it contribute to the on going debate about the biblical basis of revival, but it also makes us think about what it means for Christ to build his church in our culture today.

BEC Theological Study Conference 2002

IMPROVING WORSHIP — worship as God intended it

Hebron Hall Christian Conference Centre near Cardiff

Tuesday 5th to Thursday 7th March 2002

Cost: £90 (£50 for day visitors)

Speakers: Iain D Campbell, Jonathan Bayes, David Montgomery,
Gwyn Davies, Jonathan Stephen and Graham Harrison

Chairman: Stephen Clark

Style and content of worship vary greatly. How can the Bible help us worship in the way that pleases God? The British Evangelical Council Study Conference is for ministers and others with a serious and informed interest in theology. Participants read the papers beforehand, so that at the conference there can be purposeful discussion from which we learn for our spiritual benefit and for the good of our churches.

A leaflet about the conference can be obtained from Rev. Reg Burrows, 32 Common Road, Wooler, NE71 6PB (tel. 01668 281263; e-mail: reg.burrows@btopenworld.com).