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*A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership*  
Volume 9 • Number 1 • WINTER 2000

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## BOOK NOTICES

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*John H. Armstrong*

***A GODWARD LIFE (BOOK TWO):  
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY DAILY READINGS***

John Piper

Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Press (1999)

399 pages, cloth, \$16.99

*J*ohn Piper is one of the most powerful voices in our time for God-centeredness and missions. He is also a great writer, a poet with considerable ability, and a pastor who teaches his flock by both the spoken and the written word. Week-by-week he writes a column for his church newsletter, "The Bethlehem Star." Those columns have been collected, edited and now published. This is the second volume of these readings. There is a treasure here of thoughtful, reflective and immensely helpful confession. You will be greatly encouraged by these writings.

***PURITAN EVANGELISM: A BIBLICAL APPROACH***

Joel R. Beeke

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books

52 pages, paper, \$5.00

*P*uritan evangelism, variously defined and studied, gets a fair and even-handed treatment in this little booklet. Here Beeke looks at the message, method, and disposition of Puritan evangelism. The Puritans were not satisfied

to get the doctrinal matters right without also addressing the practice, which must also conform to biblical pattern. Joel Beeke is one of the best students of Puritan faith and practice in our time. If you are not convinced by everything he says you will at least have a better understanding of the way that the Puritans really did evangelism while remaining serious Calvinists.

***CHRIST'S LAST DISCLOSURE OF HIMSELF***

William Greenhill

Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria (1999)

211, cloth, \$19.95

If you use a "red letter" Bible, which I do not, you will quickly notice that the last words printed in red appear in Revelation 22:16-17. Here are recorded the final spoken words of Jesus regarding his life and ministry. Jesus completes his speaking by inviting everyone who hears and thirsts to "come." Puritan William Greenhill (1591-1677), best known for his large commentary on Ezekiel (published by Banner of Truth), was also a part of the famous Westminster Assembly and was of Covenanter persuasion. Here he expounds this rich text in twelve sermons that are immensely readable and very profitable.

***BIBLE INTERPRETERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY:  
A SELECTION OF EVANGELICAL VOICES (1999)***

Walter A. Elwell and J. D. Weaver (eds.)

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker (1999)

445 pages, paper, \$24.99

We need to understand not only the past but the present. Baker is a publisher that has provided a num-

ber of resources that help contemporary leaders bridge this divide and accomplish both. And Walter Elwell is a major contributor to this plethora of insightful and helpful resource volumes released in the past fifteen years or so. Add this one to the list.

The thesis behind this present volume is that the reader can best understand evangelicalism by gaining an understanding of the lives and written work of those interpreters who have directly influenced it. Each entry includes an examination of the life and legacy of the interpreters by providing biographical facts, theological developments and evaluations. Thirty-five scholars, both living and deceased, are chosen. Some of these include J. C. Ryle, John A. Broadus, Geerhardus Vos, A. T. Robertson, Oswald T. Allis, A. W. Pink, William Hendriksen, Merrill C. Tenney, E. J. Young, Merrill F. Unger, F. F. Bruce, George Eldon Ladd, Bruce M. Metzger, Leon Morris, Walter C. Kaiser, Gordon D. Fee, Donald A. Carson and N. T. Wright. The list, you must confess, is intriguing. And I have listed only eighteen as a sample.

***JOHN CALVIN: STUDENT OF THE CHURCH FATHERS***

Anthony N. S. Lane

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker (1999)

304 pages, paper, \$29.99

A growing interest in the church fathers has marked the past decade or so of evangelical life and thought in America. This is a good sign of health in the church. Sadly, far too few of the Reformed school realize how deeply indebted John Calvin was to the writings and theology of early church writers. This volume will correct this problem and aid the necessary connections that readers should make.

Specific themes are explored showing, for example, Calvin's knowledge of the Greek fathers, his use of Bernard of Clairvaux, his use of the fathers in his *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, and the sources he used in his Genesis commentary. A comprehensive annotated bibliography is also included. Highly recommended for serious students.

### *LEARNING IN CHRIST'S SCHOOL*

Ralph Venning

Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth (1999)

284 pages, paper, \$6.99

Venning (1621-74), an English Puritan who was forced from his ministry in Southwark by the infamous Act of Uniformity (1662), is a clear and graceful writer. This book plainly demonstrates his rich theological and devotional style. He gives an account of growth in the grace of God that follows the Johannine description of "babes," "little children," "young men," and "fathers." He sees these as four distinct stages through which learners (disciples) pass in the school of Christ the great teacher. All are encouraged to make progress, regardless of where they presently are in their journey. Originally published in 1675 and reprinted last in 1823 this new edition should be welcomed with much joy.

### *THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ERA: EXPLORING THE BACKGROUND OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY*

James S. Jeffers

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1999)

352 pages, paper, \$19.99

What was life like in the time of Jesus and the apostles? This informative volume presents various aspects of the Greco-Roman world that actually influenced the life and thought of believers in the early church. What kinds of things influenced the daily life of normal Christians in the first century? What did these people eat for dinner? What was apartment life in Rome really like? This is the type of book that can make much of the New Testament come alive for the reader. James Jeffers is associate professor in the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola University and teaches ancient history at California State University. He also authored the more technical, but highly useful, volume, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Fortress).

### *THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: A COMMENTARY ON GENESIS-MALACHI*

David A. Dorsey

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker (1999)

330 pages, cloth, \$34.99

The statement on the back of this helpful volume notes: "In modern writing, various markers—italics, bold type, punctuation, parentheses, and so forth—are used to indicate emphasis and clarify meaning." The authors of the Old Testament did not have or use such devices, writing out of an oral culture as they did. So what is the proper emphasis in certain texts? How do we understand the structure and style of certain Old Testament material? Dorsey, professor of Old Testament at Evangelical School of Theology in Myerstown, Pennsylvania, guides the reader into this subject with great care and sensitivity.

*CRITIQUE OF MODERN YOUTH MINISTRY*

Christopher Schlect  
 Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press (1995)  
 21 pages, paper, \$3.00

"If we are the light of the world, we must not pattern ourselves after the world," writes Christopher Schlect (13). But that is precisely what Schlect says we have done in building contemporary youth ministries around a suspicious set of presuppositions not rooted in Scripture. This is an essay that will offend those who defend contemporary youth ministry uncritically, yet it is a desperately necessary polemic if the church is to again pursue serious reformation in overall ministry. If you are convinced, as I am, that Christian education ministries for children in the local church ought to be built around fathers and mothers leading in the home, then this book will help you in that perspective. If you are convinced that what we are now doing is correct it will disturb you. Either way you ought to read this little booklet. In fact, get other leaders to read it with you.

*SPIRITUAL JUNK FOOD: THE DUMBING DOWN OF MODERN YOUTH MINISTRY*

Cathy Mickels and Audrey McKeever  
 Mukilteo, Washington: Wine Press Publishing (1999)  
 253 pages, paper, \$12.95

A fuller, much more disturbing treatment of the same subject as above, the authors provide a devastating exposé of the shallow philosophies that undergird most youth ministries. Shallow, watered-down psychobabble has clearly infiltrated most of what passes for ministry to teens today. The result is a generation of young people who

have been led to believe they have saving faith in Christ. Multitudes of our youth "feel good" about a profession that is shallow at best, and deceived at worst.

I am often asked: "Why do most of our kids leave for the world after high school, especially when they have had the best we can offer to them in high-powered youth ministry?" I answer: Precisely because they never left the world in the first place, having only a thin veneer of Christianity which covered an otherwise shallow soil of an unregenerate heart. It is time for reformation in this controversial area of local church ministry. Michels and McKeever will help you think through these issues.

*HYPOCRISY: MORAL FRAUD AND OTHER VICES*

James S. Spiegel  
 Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker (1999)  
 173 pages, paper, \$14.99

The single most common statement of opposition to believing in Christ and following him is, "The church is filled with hypocrites." Yet evangelicals, who ought to face up to the charge more honestly, very infrequently address the topic of hypocrisy. The author, a professor of philosophy at Taylor University, provides us with a critical look into the darker side of human motives. The book is both theoretically and practically helpful. The author helpfully defines hypocrisy "as complex phenomenon with a variety of manifestations, but it essentially involves an inconsistency between one's actions and what one believes, says, or does" (145). Pastors could stand to preach on this subject more often. Perhaps such preaching would prepare the ground for true revival.

***THE PASSIONATE PREACHER: PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED  
SERMONS OF ROBERT MURRAY MCCHEYNE***

Michael M. McMullen (ed.)

Inverness, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications (1999)

332, cloth, \$26.99

Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-43), who died at the age of twenty-nine, may well have accomplished more in a short space of time than almost anyone else in English-speaking church history. This young Scotsman is best known for his famous *Memoir and Remains* which has been used singularly to touch generations of Christian leaders over the past 150 years. No one should miss reading it. Now we have a previously unpublished collection of fifty-eight of McCheyne's sermons. McCheyne's sermon on types of Christ includes twenty from the Old Testament. Don't let the false use of biblical types turn you from the value of their proper use. McCheyne is a useful guide.

***YOU IN YOUR SMALL CORNER:  
THE ELUSIVE DREAM OF EVANGELICAL UNITY***

Mark Johnston

Inverness, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications (1999)

184 pages, paper, \$9.99

Evangelicals did not do well in the past century in terms of addressing the need for outward and churchly expressions of church unity. We talked a lot about it, at times, but we did next to nothing. Johnston points the way forward, by tackling the biblical and practical issues head on. This is a wise and practical little book.

***THE END OF ALL THINGS: A DEFENSE OF THE FUTURE***

C. Jonathin Seraiah

Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press (1999)

208 pages, paper, \$12.00

The past century was filled with a plethora of false teaching regarding the return of Christ. Having passed the turn of a new millennium we now face either a new opportunity for a return of sanity in these areas or a groundswell of even more ridiculous doctrinal error. Sadly, a new kind of preterism (which holds that many events prophesied in the New Testament were fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.) has arisen that corrects one error with an even more serious one. Several writers have tried to answer this rigid preterism (called "pantelism" by Seraiah) but none has done the thorough job presented by this important book!

In short, rigid preterism (or "pantelism") teaches that Christ has already returned! It denies the final return of Christ in judgment at the end of this present age. This is, simply put, heresy, as Jonathin Seraiah ably demonstrates. I highly recommend this volume to anyone who has read any of the material presently calling for a new prophetic reformation in the church. The error of this new idea is that of Hymenaeus and Philetus (cf. 2 Timothy 2:16-18) who claimed "that the resurrection has already taken place."