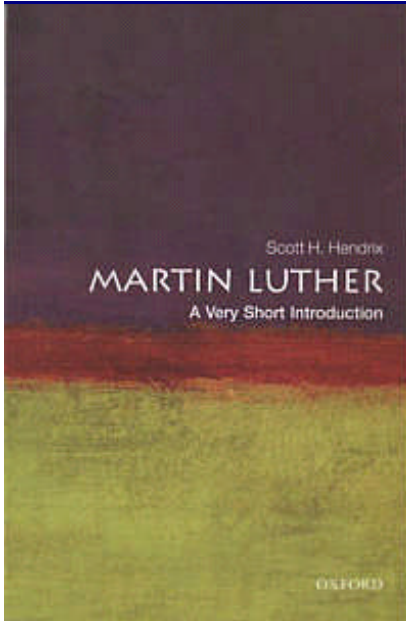


Biographies/Writings: Saints & Notable Christians

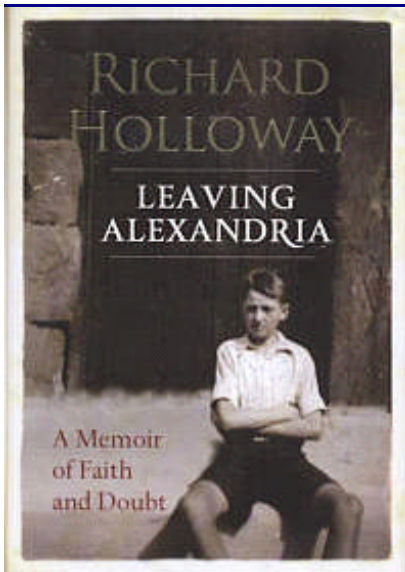


Martin Luther: A Very Short Introduction

by Scott Hendrix
publ by Oxford University Press (OUP)
in Paperback
at £7.99 (978-0-199-57433-9) 21/10/2010

This book is one of a series of - Very Short Introductions. - In it Hendrix, who is an acknowledged expert on the Reformation, concentrates on selected scenes from Luther's tumultuous life, on his relationships and on his faith. It is not a comprehensive biography of the man, but the figure that emerges is nevertheless a more rounded, complex figure than appears in many previous biographies. Hendrix corrects some spurious reports and inaccuracies as well as questioning many of the received historical conclusions. Luther is a more complex figure than the heroic rebel and reformer of popular belief. His intention was not a complete reformation of Christian doctrine and practice, but to attack the prevailing corruption of Catholic dignitaries of the time and to question the authority of the Pope. This - Very Short Introduction - is a satisfyingly and intimate portrait of a controversial historical figure.

Notes by [John Irvine](#)



Leaving Alexandria

A Memoir of Faith and Doubt

by Richard Holloway
publ by Canongate Books from Gardners Books
in Hardback
at £17.99 (978-0-857-86073-6) Summer 2012

Richard Holloway was Bishop for Edinburgh until he stood down in 2000. This is his autobiography. He first left his home town of Alexandria at the age of 14 when he went to Kelham Hall, an Anglican seminary, training him for monastic life. Instead of taking this route to the priesthood he became a parish priest and later bishop. There have been a few 'Leaving Alexandria' moments on his journey, the last of which is still to come. -

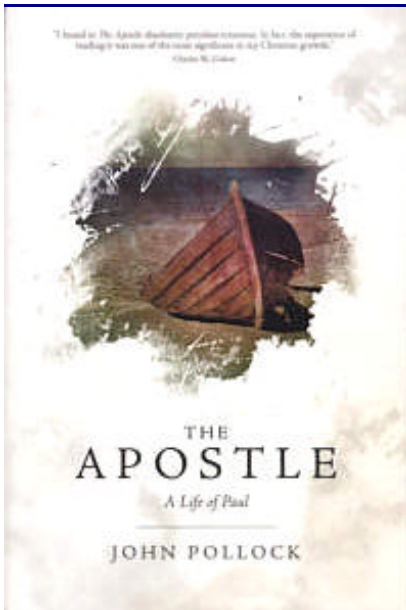
What shines through most in his book is Richard Holloway's warmth, sensitivity and honesty. Throughout his life he has grappled with trying to be real in the face of people's expectations of him, and his expectations of himself, when so often in the church there is a sense that we ought to have and promote certainty about what we believe. This account gives the reader, as well as the writer, the permission to acknowledge the truth in the heart of all of us, that we don't know everything and when it comes to faith in God we don't know with categorical certainty very much at all. -

This is anything but a book about hopelessness. On the contrary, mixed with sadness and disappointments is a great sense of freedom that comes with facing the world and yourself with honesty. -

Despite obvious frustrations and at times anger with the church and its attitude towards women and gay marriage in particular, there is still warmth towards the positive aspects of church communities. -

Would Richard Holloway do things differently if he was beginning again – I expect he would, but this doesn't feel like a story of bitterness or regret. I feel humbled, challenged and inspired by having been allowed a glimpse into Richard Holloway's journey.

Notes by [Kathy Bland](#)



The Apostle

A Life of Paul

by John Pollock
publ by David C Cook/Kingsway
in Paperback
at £11.99 (978-0-781-40573-7) Jan 2012

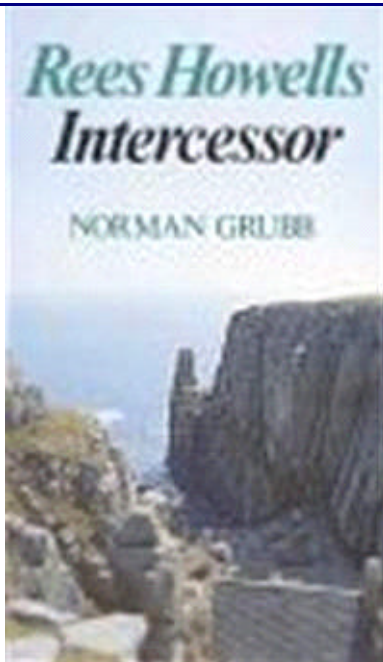
Long ago I read the 1969 edition of this title from Hodder and Stoughton and the impression it made remained with me all these years, so that I was only too willing to read it again in this new edition from David Cook. -

Just the name John Pollock as author is a recommendation – I have several of his books on my shelves. -

So much has been written about Paul, and there is a lively interest in him at the moment. John Pollock's book tell his story as a biography, and in so doing he has had to conjecture what happened to Paul in periods where no records exist. These times are clearly set out and because they are written with a deep knowledge of the man, help to make the story complete. -

While reading you feel as if you 'know' this man. You travel with him in imagination, suffer with him in his trials and rejoice in his tribulations.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)

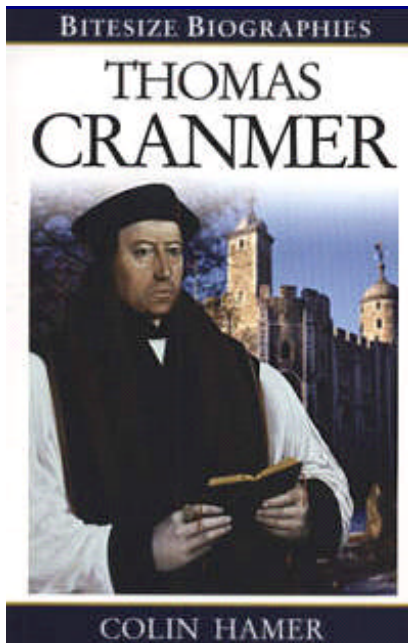


Rees Howells: Intercessor

by Norman P. Grubb
publ by Lutterworth Press from Gardners Books
in Paperback
at £10.25 (978-0-718-83027-4) May 2003

Told with simplicity, humanity and humour, this is the best-selling biography of the great Welsh preacher and founder of the Bible College of Wales.

Notes by [publisher](#)



Thomas Cranmer

Bitesize Biographies

by Colin Hamer
publ by EP (Evangelical Press)
in Paperback
at £5.99 (978-0-852-34773-7)

Summer 2012

Hamer has produced a really useful short guide to the life of Thomas Cranmer. It has only one hundred and twenty six pages which include; a timeline, nine chapters, recommended further reading and a very helpful glossary of some of the terms used. -

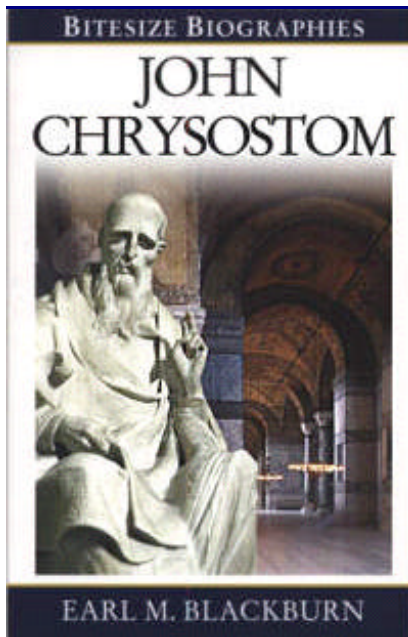
Hamer's aim is to "assess his (Cranmer's) life from the perspective of a twenty first century evangelical'. (Page 12) Cranmer is seen in the context of his massive contribution to the English church scene of today, especially of the Anglican Church. -

The book is a real eye opener to life in the sixteenth century church. Cranmer's journey to becoming the leader of the church in England is laid out along with the scheming of his enemies which eventually resulted in him being burnt at the stake. -

This is a 'warts and all', account of Cranmer's life; his secret wife, his failure to stand up to Henry at times, his misreading of people and situations are all written about. Alongside that there are recorded his accomplishments in regard to making the Bible available to all, his reforms and finally his heroic death. -

This is an easy book to read; it will inform you about one of the most turbulent times in English church history, and will leave you thanking God for men like Cranmer.

Notes by [John Macaulay](#)



John Chrysostom

Bitesize Biographies

by Earl M. Blackburn
publ by EP (Evangelical Press)
in Paperback
at £5.99

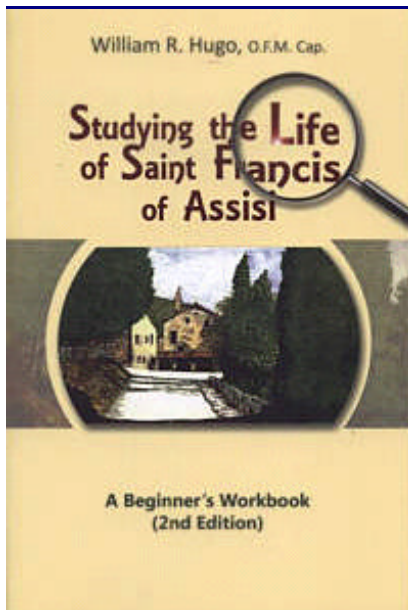
(978-0-852-34772-0)

03/03/2012

In the space of 128 pages and eight chapters, the author sets Chrysostom's life and ministry in its religious, political and historical contexts. - Chrysostom's life is sketched, including the various conflicts and betrayals that he experienced as he followed Christ. His journey from hermit to bishop of Constantinople, to being classed as one of the great Church Fathers is briefly described. Blackburn deals with John's beliefs and lifestyle both of which would bring him into conflict with the emperor and other bishops of the Eastern Church. - Chrysostom is known in church history as one of the defenders of the Christ's deity and of Trinitarian theology. His contribution to the theology and development of the Orthodox Church is something that has kept him to the forefront even today. - He was regarded as one of the best preachers of his time and contributed to the development of modern day homiletics and hermeneutics. Blackburn notes, 'sixth-century churchmen began regularly referring to him as 'Chrysostomos' which is Greek for 'golden mouthed.' (Chrysostom is the anglicised form of the Greek.) (page 10.) -

This is a good short introduction to Chrysostom; it is also a good refresher for those who may have forgotten some of their church history.

Notes by [John Macaulay](#)



Studying the Life of St Francis of Assisi

A Beginner's Workbook (2nd Edition)

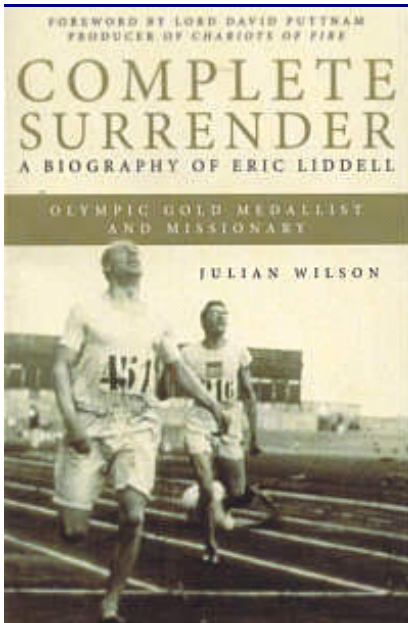
by William R. Hugo, O.F.M. Cap.
publ by New City
in Paperback
at £14.95 (978-1-565-48397-2) 2011

There can be few figures from the history of the church more admired, followed or studied than St Francis. Yet for most of us our acquaintance with St Francis is limited – at best - to reading one of the many biographies about him or – at worst – to a Sunday School knowledge of his life as being devoted to animals and the poor. For those serious in their Franciscan studies – not least Franciscans themselves – something more robust is needed. -

William Hugo has produced a workbook that connects the serious enquirer after Francis with the primary sources. His is a rigorous academic approach that is designed to enthuse and test the questioning and evaluative skills of the student. - The book is divided into two main sections. The first is designed to equip the reader with a range of tools with which to adopt a critical approach to Francis who – after all – tends to be perceived through rose tinted glasses. The second section is a masterful collection of worksheets that guide the student through the key features, personalities and events of Francis' life as revealed through the primary sources to which Hugo refers. -

The result provides the student of Francis with a demanding yet supportive framework through which to study the saint. Hugo's accessible style and systematic approach is worthy of imitation by other academics, not least theologians. It would make studying the patristics much more engaging.

Notes by [David Ford](#)



Complete Surrender: A Biography of Eric Liddell

Olympic Gold Medallist and Missionary

by Julian Wilson
publ by Authentic Media
in Paperback
at £7.99

(978-1-860-24841-2)

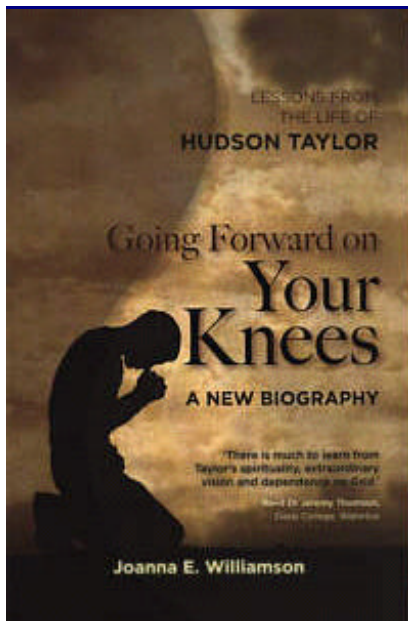
02/02/2012

An apt book for this Olympic year. Autobiographies are not usually my first choice but I really enjoyed this one. It is about Eric Liddell the Olympic gold medallist who refused to run on a Sunday. This book tells about his childhood, then the time up to the Olympic Games and after when he continued with missionary work in China eventually dying in an interment camp just before the war finished. -

What I got out of this book was the way he touched lives, (non Christian as well as Christian), he wasn't a great speaker but by the time he had finished everyone understood his message. -

I must admit I had never heard of this man, but this book opened my eyes to how you can affect other people not by preaching but just how you live your life. He was a very special man.

Notes by [Julia Bennett](#)



Going Forward on Your Knees

Lessons from the Life of Hudson Taylor

by Joanna E. Williamson

publ by Authentic Media

in Paperback

at £7.99

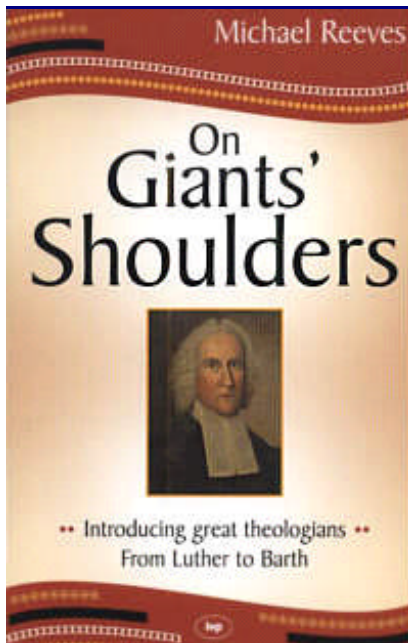
(978-1-850-78961-1)

07/07/2011

As a teenager, I avidly read every word of the two volumes recounting Hudson Taylor's life-story. - Hudson Taylor in Early Years - and - Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission - were each over 500 pages long and reading them had a dramatic effect on the direction of my life. So, as I picked up this 'new biography' of Hudson Taylor I did wonder whether such a relatively slim volume (152 pages) could possibly do justice to this great missionary. But Joanna Williamson has pulled it off, and this is just the perfect book for the modern reader. Joanna quotes extensively from the two books mentioned above, and most of the quotations are Hudson Taylor's own words. So we learn directly from him how God used the many 'hard things' in his life of service in China (including bereavements, poor health, lack of funds and personality conflicts in his team) to shape him and increase his faith. In one time of extreme trial he writes, 'these trials would be crushing anxieties if we were to bear them. But the Lord bears us and them, too, and makes our hearts so very glad in Himself ... that I have never known greater freedom from anxiety and care.' The book describes not only his personal journey of faith but the formation of the great missionary society The China Inland Mission, now known as Overseas Missionary Fellowship. -

At the end of each chapter, key learning points help the reader to apply the lessons from Hudson Taylor's life. So whether you are in Christian leadership, involved in ministry or simply want to know God better, this is an inspiring read. If you read this book, you will be challenged in your prayer life, your attitude to suffering, your vision for mission and in many other ways. I can wholeheartedly recommend it.

Notes by Jackie Rowe



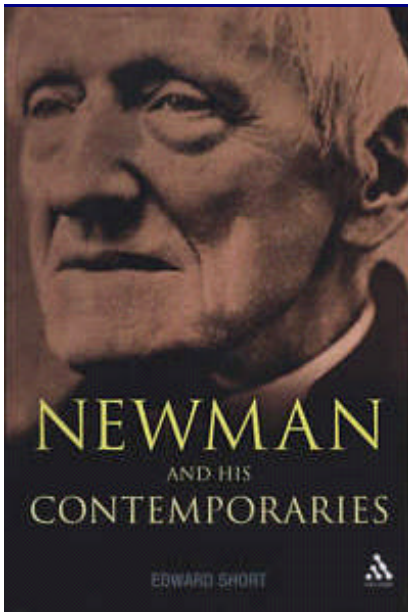
On Giant's Shoulders

by Mike Reeves
publ by IVP(Inter Varsity Press)
in Paperback
at £8.99 (978-1-844-74495-4)

21/01/2011

Having enjoyed Michael Reeves' earlier work - *The Breeze of the Centuries* - I have been looking forward to this sequel. -
Previously Reeves considered the theologians of the Early Church, now, in - *On Giants' Shoulders* - , he introduces the reader to the authors of some of the most significant reformation and post reformation theological works. Spanning the period from Luther to Barth Reeves provides an enticing introduction to such momentous works of Theology as: John Calvin's - *The Institutes of Christian Religion* - , Fredric Shleiermacher's - *The Christian Faith* - and Karl Barth's - *Church Dogmatics*. - -
As with - *The Breeze of the Centuries*, *On Giants' Shoulders* - begins with a thumbnail sketch of the theologian placing each in their historical context. Reeves then supplies a brief introduction to the scope of their work and considers at least one of the publications that they are famous for. In his conclusion Reeves suggests an accessible route into the writings of these theological giants before gracefully leaving the reader to explore further. -
Once again Reeves' points out that this book is not meant to be a book of 'great Christians' and has thus deliberately left out the likes of John Bunyan and John Wesley. - *On Giants' Shoulders* - is designed to be an accessible introduction to some of the greatest theological works produced within the last five hundred years. It is also designed to encourage its readers to go beyond this simple introduction and tackle the works of theology it describes. As such Reeves has done a superb job and I commend - *On Giant's Shoulders* - as a worthy successor, and complementary volume to - *The Breeze of the Centuries* - .

Notes by [Steve Langford](#)

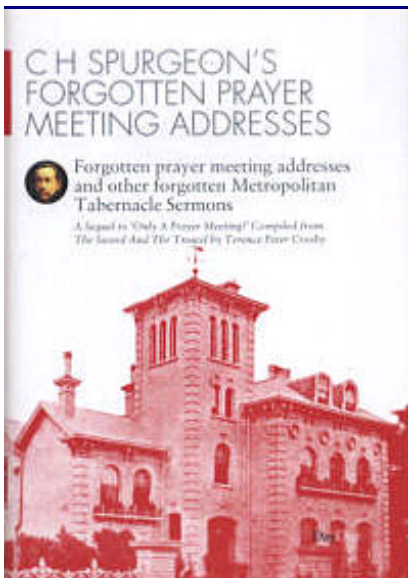


Newman and His Contemporaries

by Edward Short
publ by T&T Clark imprint of Continuum
in Paperback
at £18.99 (978-0-567-02689-7) 23/06/2011

There has naturally been of late a flood of books concerned with J.H.Newman. His beatification has been the focus of this renewal of interest in the apologist, theologian, religious, cardinal and beatus. Edward Short's book avoids any narrowness by describing the relationships between his subject and the numerous contemporaries with whom he had to do. It is perhaps a mark of 'our' ignorance that he felt it necessary to include a 'Select Biographical Index' so that the reader may have some idea of who these people were. Sadly there is little sympathy for some of them in these pages.

Notes by Ian Gibbs



C.H.Spurgeon's Forgotten Prayer Meeting Addresses

.....And Other Forgotten Metropolitan Tabernacle Sermons

by Terence Peter Crosby
publ by Day One Publications
in Hardback
at £15.00 (978-1-846-25238-9) Summer 2011

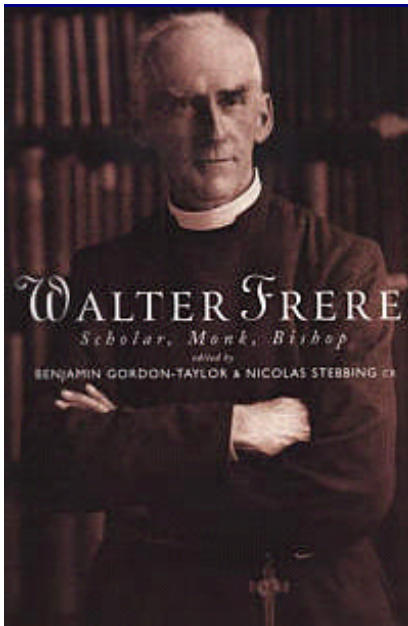
This is an excellent introduction to the writing of C H Spurgeon. Here are thirty-eight addresses by the prince of preachers which have been largely forgotten as they have been out of print for over 100 years. -

Nearly half of the addresses were given at the Monday prayer meeting of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. These addresses are short – no more than four pages in length. Not surprisingly the main theme is prayer but many other subjects are covered. For instance there is a very helpful talk on the Trinity and a stirring gospel challenge called 'Are You Saved?' -

The rest of the addresses are a collection of sermons which were preached in various locations. These give good examples of Spurgeon's wonderful ability to interest, educate and challenge. A highlight for me was his message on John 6:37 in which he reconciles the doctrine of election with the universal gospel invitation. Both are taught in the Scriptures, says Spurgeon, so both should be believed and preached! -

If you have never read any C H Spurgeon then this is a good place to start. You will see, in microcosm, his deep theological and pastoral style. You will enjoy his illustrations and anecdotes and above all you will be challenged by his searching application of God's word.

Notes by Alan Hill



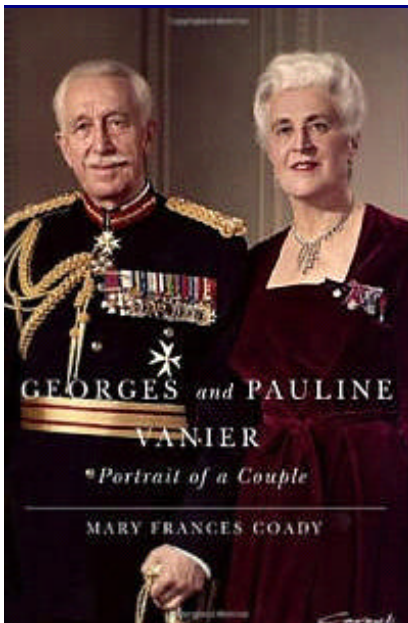
Walter Frere

Scholar. Monk, Bishop

Edited by Benjamin Gordon-Taylor & Nicolas Stebbing
publ by Canterbury Press imprint of Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd
in Paperback
at £18.99 (978-1-853-11868-5) 2011

Walter Frere is an unjustly neglected figure in the history of the twentieth century church. The editors have done us a service in collecting a varied and impressive variety of contributions. Frere was scholar, bishop and co-founder of the Community of the Resurrection – but there is so much more. Frere would seem to have taken to heart the maxim: 'you can achieve a great deal if you are willing to allow somebody else to take the credit!'. At long last the extent of the influence exercised by this 'backroom boy' is available to us!

Notes by [Teresa De Bertodano](#)



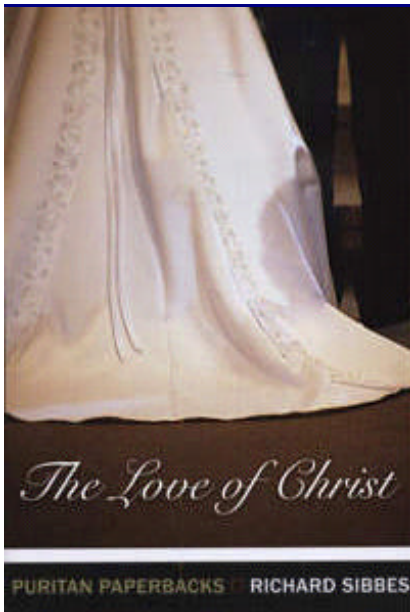
Georges and Pauline Vanier: Portrait of a Couple

Footprints Series

by Mary Frances Coady
publ by McGill-Queen's University Press from Gardners
in Hardback
at £25.99 (978-0-773-53883-2) Sep 2011

It is rare for a double biography to deal equally well with both subjects. Mary Frances Coady has produced an outstanding portrait of one of the most remarkable marriages of the twentieth century: a partnership between two great Christians whose life of service culminated in the appointment of Georges as the first French Canadian Governor General of Canada [1959-67]. - Coady's book is also a very readable history of the first half of the twentieth century. The Vanier's were the embodiment of the fruitful coexistence of French and English culture – their partnership produced five children, including Jean Vanier of L'Arche.

Notes by [Teresa De Bertodano](#)



The Love of Christ

Puritan Paperbacks

by Richard Sibbes
publ by Banner of Truth Trust
in Paperback
at £6.50 (978-1-848-71144-0)

Oct 2011

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) was a well known Puritan Pastor who was known as the 'heavenly doctor'. This work is twenty sermons preached by him on Song of Solomon 4:16 to 6:3. -

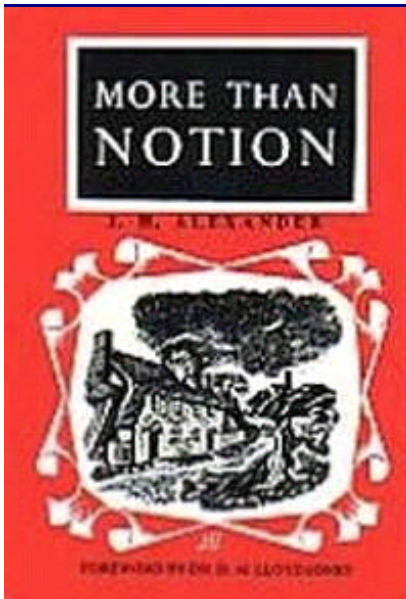
For Sibbes the Song of Solomon is 'nothing else but a plain demonstration and setting forth of the love of Christ for his church, and the love of the church to Christ.' In taking this line, Sibbes was following that taken by the reformers starting with Luther himself. These sermons are therefore full of Christ's love for us and full of encouragement for us to love Christ. -

As is common with the Puritans, each sermon covers a huge range of subjects. For instance one sermon covers the work of the Holy Spirit; Mortification of sin; The need for our Christian life to result in good works, and How we know whether God has answered our prayers! -

Reading Sibbes is like drinking a glass of fine expensive wine – it is best done slowly and thoughtfully. This takes time and effort, but there is a wonderful reward: helpful teaching the like of which is rare today. -

So let me encourage you to buy this book. Then, once you have a free evening, switch off your mobile, find a comfy armchair and immerse yourself in - The Love of Christ - . You will not be disappointed!

Notes by [Alan Hill](#)



More than Notion

by J H Alexander
publ by Zoar Publications
in Paperback
at £4.99 (0-904-43579-2) Jan 1977

This book has been my favourite for some forty years. Now I can review it with the tempered enthusiasm of an experienced Christian. -

What is it about? -

It is the autobiographical and biographical accounts of a number of evangelical reformed Christians living in various parts of England during the 19th Century. They were from a varied cultural class background, from the poor to the rich, from the highly educated high class, to the lowly working class illiterate. They did not form a denomination, although many of them had some Anglican connection. Within, however, this group of Christians an extraordinary bond of unity developed over many years. This unity arose from their common faith in the scriptures, but more particularly from a common inward experience of the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts. The correspondence between them, consisting of many letters, are painstakingly collected, preserved by the author, and published in this book. We have therefore an insight into the spiritual experience of these saints, and it is their sincere, fervent, and authentic evangelical experience, which rings out so powerfully. -

What is the book's appeal? -

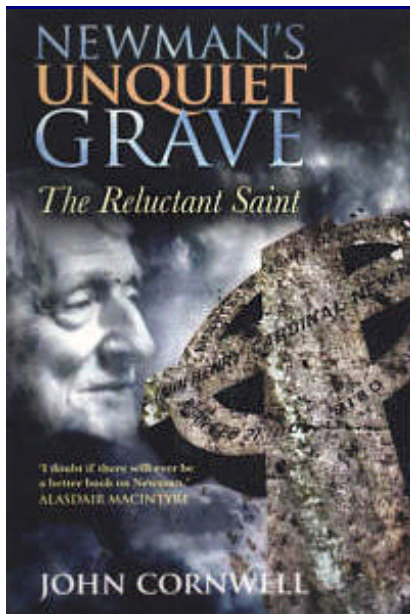
Its appeal to me, the reviewer, is of a deep spiritual nature. When Henrietta Gilpin, one of its subjects, exclaims, 'What? Now? In 1832 is there any religion like this really existing? Are there any living in these days to whom the Lord really and sensibly speaks, and to whom He manifests Himself in this beautiful manner? I thought all such things had ceased since Bible days.' -

Her searching questions are my questions, the searchings of my heart as it hungers and thirsts for that same religion. For here the Lord really and sensibly speaks and manifests Himself in this beautiful manner even in the pages of this book. 'True religion is more than notion, something that must be known and felt.' From theology to heartfelt truth, is a quest that I recommend to all my fellow pilgrims, for I am walking this way, and you too, thirsty ones, can join this quest. Here springs of living water rise to cheer your thirsting souls - -

Only available from Christian Bookshop, Ossett, West Yorkshire - see details on our Bookshop Directory. - -

Review by Jim Corney, Cardiff.

Notes by [Guest reviewer](#)



Newman's Unquiet Grave

The Reluctant Saint

by John Cornwell

publ by Continuum

in Paperback

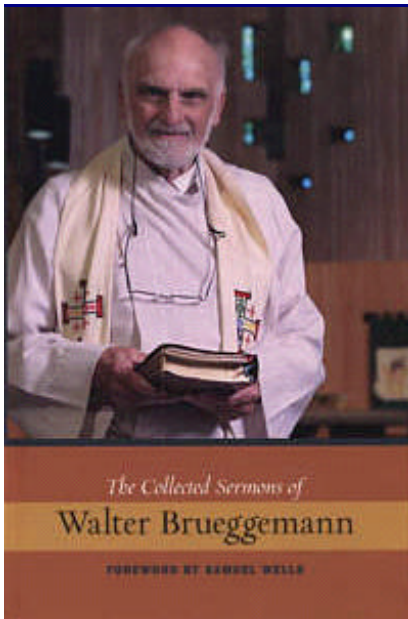
at £10.99

(978-1-441-17323-2)

15/09/2011

The author of this biography has undertaken the daunting task of giving an account of the life and work of John Henry Newman, a renowned Anglican priest who became a convert to Catholicism and eventually a cardinal in the Catholic Church. He is assisted in this by the inclusion in the text of many excerpts from his subject's own letters and sermons. These show Newman to be a deeply introverted person, prone to self-analysis of a highly critical and unflattering nature, and yet one capable of forming many close bonds of friendship. Although regarded by some as equivocal and controversial, Newman is clearly portrayed here as a person of scrupulous honesty and deep religious conviction who followed his conscience in the face of virulent adverse criticism and the accusation of apostasy. Among other things, this very readable book serves to whet one's appetite to learn more about the intriguing and complex person who is now known as Blessed John Henry Newman.

Notes by [Alexandra Irvine](#)



The Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann

Foreword by Samuel Wells
publ by Westminster John Knox Press from Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd
in Hardback
at £19.99 (978-0-664-23445-4) 16/09/2011

'The bad news is that if you stay in the rat race, even if you win, you're still a rat. The good news, dear brothers and sisters, is that we are made in the image of God and are not rats.' -

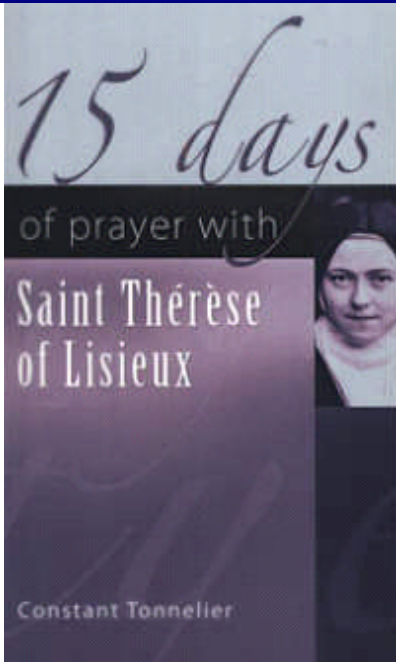
Such is the perceptive and incisive style of Water Brueggemann's preaching. Since first discovering him in 2006, he has become the single greatest influence on my preaching. Here, in this book of 67 sermons the earliest of which dates from 1972, we have access to a wonderful collection that reveals the full extent of Brueggemann's quite breathtaking oratorical and exegetical skills. -

The uniqueness of Brueggemann is his ability to cut through the fog of exegesis and communicate powerful scriptural truths with a clarity that at times has reduced me to tears. Constantly faithful to the text, Brueggemann is simultaneously constantly faithful to his context and it is this pairing of the relevance of scripture to current events that makes him one of today's most effective preachers. -

Brueggemann has written scores of books, primarily on the Old Testament, and not all of them are readily accessible to non-academics. Readers familiar with Brueggemann may therefore find their perspective on him broadened and deepened by the joyously accessible style of his preaching. His context, of course, is America, and at times this can be slightly frustrating to a UK reader for whom not all his references and anecdotes make sense. -

That aside, this book is hugely rewarding, particularly for anyone who has the weekly task of putting a sermon together. If there is anyone who can revive the art of preaching – or the joy of sermon reading – it is Walter Brueggemann. A must read for all preachers.

Notes by David Ford

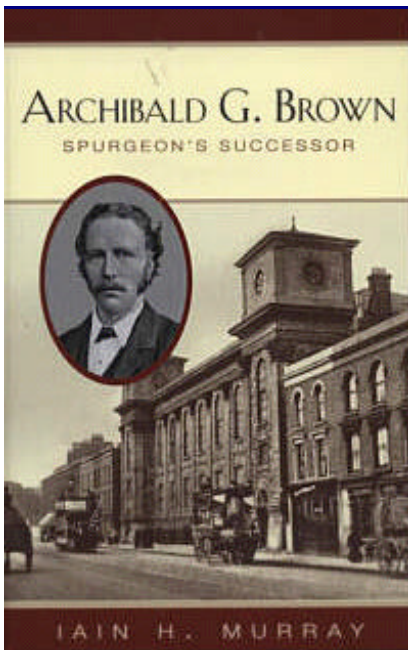


15 Days of Prayer with Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

by Constant Tonnelier
publ by New City
in Paperback
at £8.95 (978-1-565-48391-0) 2011

St. Thérèse of Lisieux lived for only twenty-four years, nine of these passed in a Carmelite monastery. Yet, in spite of this brief life passed in obscurity, her autobiography - *The Story of a Soul* - is a bestseller and her influence has spread worldwide. Since her canonisation in 1925 she has become one of the most admired and loved of saints. This book brings together Thérèse's own thoughts and reflections on life with a continuous explanatory commentary by the author. Thérèse's - *Little Way* - is firmly rooted in confidence and love. 'To love until we die of love' is her prescription for a happy life. Anyone setting out on a spiritual journey need not travel alone. This book is a perfect companion and guide.

Notes by [John Irvine](#)



Archibald G. Brown

Spurgeon's Successor

by Iain H Murray
publ by Banner of Truth Trust
in Hardback
at £16.00 (978-1-848-71139-6)

Oct 2011

Mr. Murray has done the Christian world a great service by writing this biography of Archibald Brown. Mr. Brown was one of the great pastors and preachers of the late 19th and early 20th century yet today he is hardly known. This probably because up to now no complete biography of this life has ever been written. - Archibald Brown came from a wealthy family. But instead of following his father into banking he served the Lord as pastor in several churches in Central London and South Africa. His most notable work was in the East End of London where there he built a church to hold 3000 people whilst still in his twenties. At the same time he personally led extensive relief work to the poor and needy.

Mr. Brown was a contemporary and great friend of C H Spurgeon. He trained at Spurgeon's pastor's college and some years after Spurgeon's death served as pastor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. -

Like Spurgeon he loved doctrines of grace and loved preaching the gospel. He was, by all accounts a moving and powerful preacher who had the great heart for the lost. Few spoke with more tenderness and compassion. -

Mr. Murray writes in an engaging and interesting way. He does not just give us the facts but draws out lessons for us today. There are fascinating sections about apostasy, revivals, sermon preparation and the use of musical instruments in worship. -

I heartily recommend this biography. It will give you a glimpse of a man in love with his Saviour and on fire for the Lord.

Notes by Alan Hill