

REVIEWS

Shaping up: Re-Forming Reformed Worship Ernest Marvin, United Reformed Church, London, 2005 ISBN 0 85346 238 0

The Reverend Ernest Marvin is probably best known for the Passion Play, *A Man Dies*, which he co-wrote with Ewan Hooper. He has also written *Odds Against: Young People and the Church*. Now retired, he has given us his reflections on re-forming Reformed worship. Not surprisingly, he discusses the attitudes of young people, including himself as a boy, to worship.

David, he tells us, came only occasionally to Church but he never sang the hymns. When asked why, David replied: 'I only sing when I'm happy and I'm never happy in church'.

Mr Marvin responds to those who find worship boring. 'It will always be the case that worship for some will be "boring" simply because it deals with matters or concepts totally outside their present experience or immediate interest. That some are bored by it does not invalidate it, just as a Mozart symphony is not invalidated because many would be bored by it. We must take this into account before we concentrate on making our acts of worship more entertaining and user-friendly.'

He tells the story of the young Bristol gang leader who, accidentally hearing the Hallé Orchestra rehearsing a Mozart symphony, was enthralled by it and demanded, 'Why didn't no-one before tell me it was like this?' There can be a similar response to authentic worship.

This is a helpful rather than a radical book. It is based on his experience as a minister in varied situations. It is also based on wide and perceptive reading. The chapter headings are themselves inviting. Here are some:

Worship: Adoring or Anodyne?
A Great Leap Backwards
The Church's Secret Treasure

The Hymn Sandwich
Reforming Childish Religion

There isn't a boring page in this challenge to the Reformed Churches.

Henry R Sefton
Aberdeen

Scottish Piety: A Miscellany from Five Centuries A C Cheyne, Dunedin Academic Press, Edinburgh 2007 ISBN 978-1-903765-78-4

In his Preface, Professor Cheyne points to a curious gap in Scottish historiography. 'Very little has been said about what religious men and women would have considered their deepest concerns'. He goes on to explain the purpose of his miscellany. 'The aim of the present anthology is to rescue from possible oblivion the views of the world which motivated and sustained Scottish Christians in past days'. Thus we are presented with a variety of prose and poetry from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, each item illumined by Alec Cheyne's comments.

The collection is not just of historical interest. It could be regarded as a devotional aid appropriate for different moods and occasions. It includes quite a number of prayers. We are given: a Prayer before Work from John Kerr, a University Prayer from Robert Leighton, Morning and Evening Prayers from John Baillie and a Prayer from Iona by George MacLeod. There are several metrical Psalms and many Paraphrases. The nineteenth century selections include hymns by George Matheson and Horatius Bonar.

Much of the above will be familiar to many readers of this anthology. But this reviewer found much that was not familiar. Alexander Henderson is remembered for the National Covenant of 1638. It is good to have an extract from one of his sermons. Another Covenanter, Samuel Rutherford, is represented by a 'Rhapsodical Meditation', part of his introduction to a collection of sermons. The Seceder, Ralph Erskine, will appeal to some with his poem 'Smoking Spiritualised'.

There are biographical and autobiographical extracts depicting George Wishart, Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Chalmers, Alexander Duff, David Livingstone, Henry Drummond, Mary Slessor and John Reith. There are testimonies from William Robertson Smith and James Moffat.

By this Miscellany, Professor Cheyne has bequeathed a beautiful legacy.

Henry R Sefton
Aberdeen

Protestant Piety in Early-Modern Scotland: Letters, Lives and Covenants, 1650 – 1712 edited by David George Mullan, Scottish History Society, Edinburgh 2008 ISBN 0-9067245-24-9

The Scottish History Society was established in 1886 and adopted as its motto 'Colligite Fragmenta Ne Pereant'. This latest volume rescues examples from various sources of Covenant Piety. The documents here presented show the importance of personal as well as political covenanting in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The collection is prefaced by a helpful introduction by the Editor. He includes information about the writers, most of whom are not well known. Archibald Johnston of Wariston is remembered as one of the compilers of the National Covenant of 1638 and much of his Diary has already been published. The extract given has not been published hitherto and covers the period 6 January to 23 March 1650.

The text here is included in the Wodrow manuscript in Edinburgh University Library. Johnston has much to say about his personal covenant with God but also wishes to include his wife, his children, and his children's children in the covenant. Comments abound about sermons as do citations of Scripture. What also emerges is the centrality of the Lord's Supper in the development of his piety.

This collection includes personal covenants by James Nasmyth 1688, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik 1692 and William Gordon 1699. There are also letters 'written by Mr John Welwood while he was preaching up & downe Scotland in the years 1675, 1676, & 1677'. Welwood refused all accommodation with the government and was effectively an itinerant preacher. There are also several autobiographical fragments collected here.

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The Regional Furniture Society Journal Vol. XII 2007: Furniture in Churches Editor: David Jones, University of St Andrews. (Available from Mrs Gail Pinn, 124 Swan Street, Sible Hedingham, Essex, CO9 3HP)

Stephen Jackson, National Museums of Scotland, contributes 'Kirk Furnishings – The Liturgical Material Culture of the Scottish Reformation'. It offers a serious examination of changes to worship through surviving material and artefacts. Illustrated is Communion in the round, and 'The Catechism' and 'the Black Stool', 18th century paintings by David Allan show worship in context. Surviving 16th and 17th century pulpits, an 18th century Precentor's chair from Biggar, and dished alms stools from Cromarty are identified.

Peter Stone – 'Recent Initiatives to Increase Awareness of Significant Church Furniture' suggests the way ahead and a guide for RFS Members acting as furniture advisors to churches.

The editorial highlights the current threat to church interiors once merely tampered with and suggests local churches, chapels, and meeting houses are among the last places in which locally distinct furniture may be found in quantity.

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