



Reviews



Scottish Piety: A Miscellany from Five Centuries, A. C. Cheyne, Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2007, pp. xix, 145, ISBN 9781903765784. £13.95

A. C. Cheyne was the much respected and indeed loved Professor of Church History of Edinburgh University from 1964 to 1986 and Principal of New College. Shortly before his death in 2006 he completed this work for which many will be profoundly grateful. In his Preface, Cheyne wrote: ‘... 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 ... by directing attention to their more private assumptions, attitudes and practices, and the lifestyle which grew out of them’. His aim is triumphantly fulfilled in the selection and comments which follow.

The collection starts with a poem by William Dunbar (‘probably his country’s greatest poet before Burns’) and ends with a prayer from George MacLeod. In between, grouped in centuries, is the kind of selection which only a scholar with Cheyne’s encyclopaedic knowledge of Scottish church history and appreciation of literature could have compiled. Surprisingly touching extracts from unexpected sources (like the Scots Confession or the 1564 *Book of Common Order*, the National Covenant, Ralph Erskine’s “Smoking spiritualised”[!], Stanley on Livingstone, A. W. Mair, and Edwin Muir) are included along with writings from major figures but also lesser known schoolmasters, ministers and minor poets.

Each extract is followed by a brief comment from Cheyne on the author and on its setting and significance. These comments will remind his former students of his mastery of the English language and of his wit as well as his erudition and more generally will offer readers what is almost a history of Scottish spirituality.

One is a little weary of much contemporary reference in the media to the alleged unlovely, arid, anaesthetic heritage of Calvinism or Scottish Presbyterianism, usually from people who have never read a word of Calvin or been near a Presbyterian church. Many of the extracts here give the lie to such judgments and invite a more informed view.

A similar point is made in an excellent Introduction by Cheyne's friend and successor, Professor Stewart J. Brown, reflecting on Cheyne's (not wholly uncritical) valuing of the Calvinist tradition, and including a short appreciative biography.

An older generation found great inspiration from John Baillie's *Diary of Readings*. It would not be surprising if a new generation, interested in what made Scotland what it is today, found a parallel inspiration here.

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Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI); translated from the German by Adrian J. Walker, London: Bloomsbury, 2007, pp. xxiv, 374, ISBN 9780747592785.
£14.99

When I told my wife that I was reading a book on Jesus by the Pope, she asked mischievously if it had the "imprimatur". Of course it has no such thing. How could the leader of the world-wide Roman Catholic Church require a certificate to reassure the faithful that his book contains no heresy? However, right at the beginning Benedict makes it plain that this is no *ex cathedra* statement but an expression of his personal search 'for the face of the Lord'. He is also content for this to be his contribution to the continuing debate about Jesus. He states plainly: 'Everyone is free to contradict me.'