

disciplinary categories. For instance, Davison describes the reception of Aristotle's works as provoking a 'crisis' of 'science and theology' (p. 118), and parallels this with nineteenth- and twentieth-century challenges. But what we call 'theology' tended to be treated *as a science* in medieval Europe, certainly by Aquinas; by the nineteenth century, however, theology was losing that status, while the emerging *natural sciences* were extricating themselves from metaphysics, thereby setting the discipline apart from its medieval and early modern predecessor *natural philosophy*. Elsewhere, tucked away in the footnotes, Davison errs in a distinction which is crucial to modern epistemology, 'between synthetic knowledge, where the truth of what is said resides in the terms themselves, and analytic knowledge, where the truth of what is said rests on observation' (p. 203, n. 3). The reverse of that formulation is true. These points aside, Dr Davison is an erudite guide to the literature and the subject. I recommend his book for theology students and the general reader.

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**J. Stephen Yuille, *Looking Unto Jesus: The Christ-Centered Piety of Seventeenth-Century Baptists* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2014), pp. xxiv + 96. £10.00**

After a period of relative quiescence, the past decade has witnessed surging scholarly interest in seventeenth-century Baptists in Britain and Ireland. Inaugurated by Stephen Wright's meticulous examination of *The Early English Baptists, 1603–1649* (2006), this resurgence of interest has produced studies of many prominent Baptist leaders including Hanserd Knollys, Thomas Grantham, Benjamin Keach and William Kiffen. To this growing catalogue one may now add J. Stephen Yuille's *Looking Unto Jesus* (2014), a devotionally-oriented examination of two lesser-known early English Baptists. Yuille is the pastor of Grace Community Church in Glen Rose, Texas, and his ministerial background reveals itself here through regular

pastoral asides and the text's frequent division into sermon-style sub-headings. Writing from an unapologetically confessional perspective, Yuille makes clear that his intention is both to inform and to edify sympathetic Christian readers: 'My prayer is that the Lord will use the following chapters to heighten your appreciation of Puritan (and early Baptist) piety and, above all else, point you to "the unsearchable riches of Christ"' (p. xxiv).

With that goal in mind, Yuille begins by arguing for the perpetual ecclesial relevance of Puritan piety and then presents and analyses two seventeenth-century works, both written by dissenting Baptist ministers. The first is a sermon by Thomas Wilcox – who is not to be confused with the more famous sixteenth-century Thomas Wilcox – and the second a dialogue by the Welsh Fifth Monarchist Vavasor Powell. Yuille attempts to demonstrate how both pieces exemplify a distinctively Puritan and 'Christ-centered piety' which emphasizes learning to 'behold Christ in his manifold roles and relations' (p. 91). Readers should be aware that the pair of Puritan works are reproduced in their entirety and thus constitute approximately one half of the book. This is not necessarily a criticism – for many, the inclusion of the original material will surely enhance the book's appeal. But the relative lack of original content in this slender volume may trouble those who already have access to the seventeenth-century works being considered.

The pieces by Wilcox and Powell are presented as representative works of Puritan devotional writing, and Yuille's accompanying essays serve to guide the reader through their content. Both emerge from and reflect a Restoration ecclesial context that appeared hopelessly compromised to religious dissenters like Wilcox and Powell. Wilcox opines that 'in this day many poor souls' are 'tossed to and fro' by inadequate understandings of Christian religion. Both authors are particularly concerned with the challenge of distinguishing false professions of faith from the genuine expression of the same. Powell's imagined dialogue highlights the challenge by imagining Christ conversing with three archetypal figures: the contrite publican newly awakened to a sense of his own sin; the self-righteous Pharisee hardened in his spiritual pride; and the apprehensive saint searching for assurance. Distinguishing between true and false faith was, of course,

an abiding Puritan concern, and throughout the book Yuille usefully highlights places in which Wilcox and Powell articulate common Puritan themes. Fully aware that his subjects are not well known even to those familiar with English Puritanism, Yuille frequently supplements his analysis of Wilcox and Powell with citations from more famous Puritan exemplars like John Owen, Richard Baxter, Thomas Watson and Richard Sibbes. This has the effect of placing Wilcox and Powell within a wider theological-historical context and demonstrating that their views were not idiosyncratic or bizarre. In this way, then, the book functions as something of a roadmap to Puritan practical divinity more generally and will be potentially useful even to those without a particular interest in the opinions of Yuille's chosen subjects.

As helpful as this material is, one criticism of *Looking Unto Jesus* pertains to Yuille's handling of two important historical labels, 'Puritan' and 'Baptist'. The appropriate use of labels challenges all historians, but the problem seems to especially bedevil historians of early modern religion. Unfortunately, in the present volume, the taxonomic knots are never sufficiently untangled, and it is ultimately not clear how Yuille understands the relationship between 'Puritans' and 'Baptists'. At times, the latter seem to be categorized as a subset of the former: Thomas Wilcox and Vavasor Powell, for example, are described as 'two lesser-known Puritans' (p. xxiii). Yet elsewhere Yuille suggests that the two groups represent distinct communions with overlapping emphases: 'seventeenth-century Baptist piety and Puritan piety intersect at numerous junctures' (p. xxiv). But if 'Baptist piety' and 'Puritan piety' represent two separate things that can be compared and contrasted, it is confusing to then read in a footnote that Yuille intends the term 'Puritan' to refer to a distinctive Christian piety that 'transcends the divide that exists between those of differing political and ecclesiastical views' (p. xxiv). Given the notoriously slippery nature of the term 'Puritan', Yuille's discussion here would have benefited from a more careful and thorough explanation of how these labels are being used.

This somewhat problematic use of terms, however, does not compromise the book's intended aims, and *Looking Unto Jesus* can function as an accessible introduction to Puritan devotional writing. For those sympathetic to Yuille's confessional stance, his numerous

pastoral asides and footnotes will be welcome applications of seventeenth-century piety to the twenty-first century church. For those standing outside of this confessional circle, Yuille's contribution may help to communicate some sense of why so many have been moved by early modern devotional writing.

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