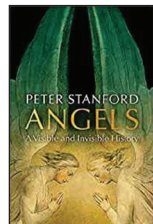


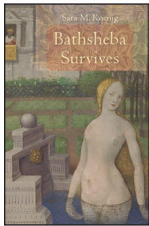
Queen Victoria's Archbishops of Canterbury
Michael Chandler
Sacristy £17.99 pbk
9781789590562

Only six men led the Church of England during Victoria's long reign: William Howley, John Sumner, Charles Longley, Archibald Tait, Edward Benson and Frederick Temple. This detailed, erudite book provides good biographies of each, probing their personal lives and previous careers, but more importantly showing how the church evolved in policy and character through the 19th century. For Howley flourished in the age of the stage-coach, when England population was still dominantly rural; and Temple knew the coming of the motor car, and the rapid growth of industrial cities. The Victorian church had to react to the growing knowledge of the enlightenment, especially science (including Darwinism) and biblical criticism, and it often failed to do this well, preferring convoluted legal battles to civilised debates. Similarly, the fission between 'high' and 'low', evangelicalism and what became Anglo-Catholicism (the Oxford Movement), was never easy to handle. Some archbishops, notably Tait, were more decisive than others – though all had their beds of nails. This readable and comprehensive work is recommended as a carefully crafted and helpful addition to the history of the Anglican church.
PETER CLOUGH



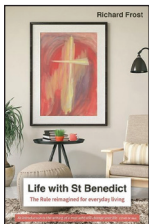
Angels
Peter Stanford
Hodder & Stoughton £20 hbk
9781473622104

It is an oddity of our day that belief in angels has grown when belief in God has declined. As Peter Stanford's book shows, the idea of the winged messengers is a very old one in human thought – found way before Judaism and Christianity. Angels were key to the incarnation narratives and to the giving of the Qur'an to Muhammad. They fired the theology of Martin Luther, but annoyed John Calvin, who felt their role contributed to the developing cult of Mary. They inspired great art by artists such as Raphael and the poetry of John Milton. Stanford has produced a very comprehensible book about their place in religions and in culture. Though he refers to the Robbie Williams' hit 'Angels', he unfortunately missed a trick by not examining the lyrics, which speak to our pick and mix spirituality. (Williams' song has become extremely popular at funerals, with its ill-defined appeal to angels speaking to something in the life of the bereaved.) Stanford's book is a thoughtful, thorough and balanced approach to its topic.
CAVAN WOOD



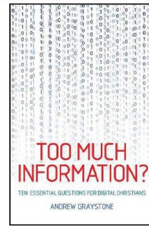
Bathsheba Survives
Sara M. Koenig
SCM £19.99 pbk
9780334058540

Was Bathsheba a helpless victim or an unscrupulous seductress? Were the church fathers right to consider her story an allegorical representation of Christ and his church? Bathsheba appears in only seventy-six verses of 2 Samuel, and so much of her story is left unexplained that she has been an object of speculation for centuries. Koenig's discussion of the extent and variety of interpretation ranges from the Rabbinic attempts to flesh out the story to its appearance in modern popular song. Along the way there is a detailed examination of the medieval church's obsession with sexual sin, with its iconography of the beautiful seductress, and the Reformation period in which Bathsheba becomes merely the object of David's sin. Koenig does not just focus on the relationship of David and Bathsheba, but includes discussion of the death of their first child and the motivation of Bathsheba's grandfather Ahitophel, which was of great interest to scholars in the Enlightenment period, as was her role as Queen Mother in 1 Kings. The shifting focus of interpretation of this enigmatic story down the years reveals as much about the history of Christianity as it does about the text itself.
KIRSTY ANDERSON



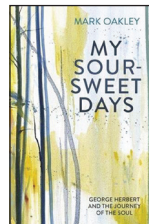
Life with St Benedict
Richard Frost
BRF £9.99 pbk
9780857468130

This is a handbook for those who would like to incorporate the discipline of the Rule of St Benedict into their lives. These teachings are divided into 'everyday reflections' with each one beginning with Benedict's instructions for those living in monastic communities, followed by a reflection for 'ordinary, everyday Christians'. Emphasising the importance of the reading and recitation of the psalms for the Benedictines, each day ends with a psalm to read, followed by a suggestion for reflection and prayer. Readers may find some of Benedict's instructions to those living in community rather harsh, for instance those making mistakes in a psalm 'must make satisfaction there before all' and likewise if arriving late for meals or prayers. The author does not always address these issues but rather modifies them to suit modern life. Nevertheless there is much to learn here about how we should live a balanced and disciplined Christian life, which is exemplified with the helpful check list of the five areas of life in which we can find that balance.
MARIE PATERSON



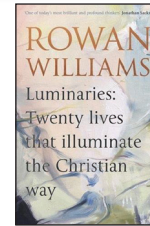
Too Much Information?
Andrew Graystone
Canterbury Press £12.99 pbk
9781786221599

This lively book about twenty-first century digital culture is subtitled 'Ten Essential Questions for Digital Christians'. I think of myself as a modern believer, and I enjoyed reading it. I found myself alternately provoked, challenged, troubled and entertained. Andrew Graystone does not provide ready answers on how Christians should live with or without the internet. The book is not about the joys or otherwise of social networking. It doesn't paint our modern world in black or white. It does explore, through well-told stories, facts and philosophy, some of the extraordinary things about interconnected culture today, and what it means to be an authentic disciple in a digital age. I particularly enjoyed the chapter on what it means to be a person rather than a machine, the chapter on who owns my information, the chapter about the church, and the chapter about being a good digital neighbour. Graystone's style is engaging, intelligent and witty. It is a book I will want to talk about with my friends. In my opinion, it should be required reading for all in positions of church leadership and those in training to be so. I wholeheartedly recommend it.
HOWARD ROWE



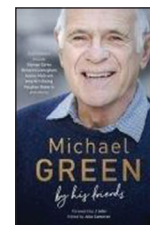
My Sour-Sweet Days
Mark Oakley
SPCK £9.99 pbk
9780281080328

All those familiar with A *Splash of Words* will welcome another book of poetic commentary by Mark Oakley. They will be equally enthusiastic about this work on George Herbert. Oakley has chosen forty of the poet's works. Following each is a helpful commentary on the poem as well as a reflection on the deeper, more spiritual aspect. Not for nothing was George Herbert considered the greatest devotional poet in the English language and within this excellent choice of poetry the reader is able to appreciate the sheer variety in his moods, from playful to humble, from secure to doubting. The themes embrace love, anger, despair but at bottom, a deep-rooted belief; we are aware he is totally honest about his faith, often shown in conversation with a loving God. This is a lovely volume to own, ideal to dip into and a great source for meditations and sermons. It would also make excellent reading for Lent, with its emphasis on spiritual journeying. The subtitle 'George Herbert and the Journey of the Soul' is very appropriate.
MARGARET TINSLEY



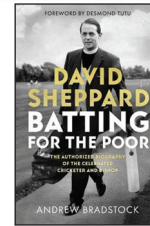
Luminaries
Rowan Williams
SPCK £12.99 hbk
9780281082957

This new offering from the prolific pen of our former archbishop provides twenty insights into the lives of Christians who have made important impacts through history. These vignettes or essays are not strictly biographical. Rather, they focus on how the individuals set out to *decipher* Christianity within the context or the culture of their times. Thus, they are luminaries as well as leaders; they help us make sense of a perplexing world. Williams' choice is interesting – from St Paul to Oscar Romero, the late 20th century martyr. Augustine of Hippo and Augustine of Canterbury – two contrasting saints – are included; Cranmer and Tyndale represent the time of Reformation; and for the 19th century, Williams has chosen William Wilberforce, Florence Nightingale and, surprisingly perhaps, Charles Dickens. Michael Ramsey and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are solid and predictable 20th century luminaries. Collectively, this is an excellent anthology of lives, a book that takes the reader beyond biographical facts into the territory of theological reflection. Like each luminary he has selected, Williams shows the light of the gospel within the complexity of human life.
ALICE BURDETT



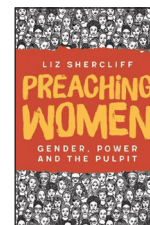
Michael Green by his friends
Julia Cameron (ed.)
IVP £16.99 hbk
9781789741148

Michael Green, who died last year, was a man of rare gifts. An evangelist, a scholar, a priest, a writer of apologetics and a leader in Anglican charismatic renewal, his influence, like that of his contemporaries David Watson and John Stott, has helped to change the church. This collection of essays takes us through all of his life, illustrating how being a faithful minister was costly to him and his family. He was a man who was infectious in his love for his Lord, giving out copies of his evangelistic books as he lay in hospital in his final weeks. The influence he had on evangelists was impressive – he wanted evangelism to appeal to both the head and the heart. He was a mentor to Britain's best known evangelist J. John, who writes movingly about Green's influence on his life in the foreword. Green was a man of great contradictions – humble, yet sometimes so determined that he did not fully listen to the concerns of others. True saints often do have clay feet but, if they are obedient to their Lord, they can achieve much in the power of the Holy Spirit.
CAVAN WOOD



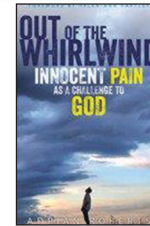
Batting for the Poor
Andrew Bradstock
SPCK £19.99 hbk
9780281081059

This fine book is the authorised biography of David Sheppard (1929-2005), England test cricketer and Anglican bishop. After his evangelical conversion at Cambridge, Sheppard gradually realised his true vocation and retired from cricket, at the height of his fame and fortune, to seek ordination. He served with distinction in the deprived inner areas of London before appointment as Bishop of Woolwich in 1969 and Liverpool in 1975. As a priest he consistently preached and practised the social gospel and his books, *Bias to the Poor* and *Built as a City* bear testimony to his concern for urban priority areas. He was the guiding influence behind the famous 'Faith in the City' report which drew the ire of Mrs Thatcher and her government. At Liverpool, his partnership with Archbishop Derek Warlock was a model of modern ecumenism which has seldom been matched. This detailed and well-researched biography provides a succinct history of the Anglican church in the late 20th century but, more significantly, provides a readable and attractive portrait of a sporting and Christian hero – an example for our age. It is highly recommended.
LEONARD RICKARD



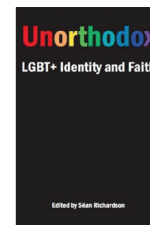
Preaching Women
Liz Shercliff
SCM £16.99 pbk
9780334058380

An ambitious book – asserting that (and why) women preachers need to find their voices as women, and how to go about it. It also includes a chapter on hermeneutics, one on hearing Bible women, a method how to construct a sermon, sermon excerpts and questions for reflection, all in 168 pages. Much of it, e.g. the contention that women preachers are heard differently by virtue of their gender, and its implications, I found convincing; we do need a book (or more) on women preachers. Some of it, e.g. the chapter on hermeneutics, read like lecture notes. I tried the 'method' described in the penultimate chapter, which takes as sermon sources an awareness of experience, position, culture and tradition, and it led to a useful gathering of the building blocks of my sermon. I share some of the author's experiences of patriarchy but not others, and to get the most out of the book, it might best be read and discussed by a group of women preachers, with maybe even a man present? I dislike the cover: lots of different smiling young women and not one grey hair, which is a form of sexism in itself.
GERTRUD SOLLARS



Out of the Whirlwind
Adrian Roberts
Sacristy £9.99 pbk
9781789590678

Subtitled 'Innocent pain as a challenge to God', this book starts with a brief outline of the book of Job. The first chapter describes the author sitting with his very sick and much-loved son who is dying from uncontrollable seizures in a hospital ward. Hal suffered from severe brain damage whilst still in the womb and whilst he can drink and chew food, he communicates only non-verbally with his loving carers who do everything else for him. The opening pages tell of the impact on the author of Hal's arrival in the family, then moves to discuss in depth how God came to create a world where some inhabitants face the possibility of inconsolable distress. This philosophical/ theological issue is addressed with clarity and depth. The thinking is rigorous, the language is non-technical, and the weighty end-notes give thoughtful summaries of philosophers from Aristotle to CS Lewis. This academic philosophy is followed by a heart-stopping dream (from Hal's bedside) reflecting Job's vision of God in the whirlwind, as the author draws together his search for a loving God in a created order given free will and prone to sin. A powerful read!
CHRISTINE McMULLEN



Unorthodox: LGBT+ Identity and Faith
Sean Richardson (ed.)
Five Leaves £7.99 pbk
9781910170601

This book contains stories of fourteen people, all based in Britain, with a commitment to their own religious tradition and/or their relationship with God. They also share 'Unorthodox' sexual or gender identities. They are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender – but many prefer to describe themselves as 'queer' - originally an abusive term for homosexual men but now used by people about themselves to signal their acceptance of being a sexual outsider. Their religious backgrounds vary - Hindu, Sikh, Moslem, Jewish and Christian; but their stories have common themes. The struggle to accept an unorthodox nature, often leads to depression and/or struggles to be 'normal' due to internalised hostility to queer people in their 'orthodox' communities. For those from ethnic minorities, racism and having a religion and culture also 'unorthodox' in the UK made their search for their true selves harder. And they all know that true self cannot ignore God or religion. This book tells how God does not abandon those who seek, from whatever nation, tribe, people or language – and however queer we are.
PETER D TOON