

*Life and faith in rural Britain...*

# COUNTRYWAY



## Book Reviews

*Love in Thin Places: Confessions of a Cathedral Chaplain*

David Grieve

Sacristy Press, 2019

ISBN: 978 1 78959 014 2

Durham Cathedral, where David Grieve is a chaplain, is a favourite cathedral of mine, and St Cuthbert's shrine is a real 'thin place' for me. Grieve clearly shares my experience of having encountered God here, and his poems give us a glimpse of that 'felt presence'.

Grieve's poem *An Active Memory* reflects on the connection we can feel now to this saint from the past: 'You [Cuthbert] once the keeper of sheep, are still gathering a flock for Christ'. We are all part of the 'great succession'.

For those of us familiar with Durham Cathedral this collection of poems is like visiting an old friend. For those who haven't yet discovered that building, there is still much in this book that will speak to you. We get a glimpse of both special and ordinary moments in the Christian year. There are personal reflections on issues of the day as well as memories from the past.

This is an enjoyable book that can help you to connect with God, a reminder that 'God is, all of the time. God just is'.

*The Geese Flew Over My Heart*

Lyn McCrave

Sacristy Press, 2019

ISBN: 978 1 78959 017 3

This short book of poems is profoundly moving as the author shares her experiences of life and of God. Lyn does not shy away from the difficulties of faith: the times when it can be hard to see or experience God in the events unfolding in our lives; the times when God seems absent and we feel as if we walk through the wilderness alone. And yet when she has reached 'the end, the hard place', Lyn can eventually say, 'Truly God is my rock and my strength'.

This is a book for quiet reflective reading, taking time to savour the language as we move into prayer. A book to return to both when we need solace and when we want to celebrate God in our lives.

*Mere Discipleship: Growing in Wisdom and Hope*

Alister McGrath

SPCK, 2018

ISBN 978 0 281 07994 0

‘There is no area of our life in which we are excused by God from the need to work out our discipleship.’

This book challenges the reader to think about what it means to be a disciple, exploring different ways in which we can understand our faith whilst acknowledging that there will always be mystery as well.

Alister McGrath is the Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at Oxford University and Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, and is therefore well-placed to respond to the challenge to Christianity of the New Atheists. McGrath explores how worship, the Creeds and Christian books, combined with our own experience of the world, can help us to understand and develop our faith. He looks at different authors such as CS Lewis and Dorothy L Sayers to see how their writings and experience can help us to develop and grow in faith.

The author asserts that looking at life through the lens of Christian faith can help us to see things as they really are rather than something we have constructed. This is not about blind faith; as a scientist McGrath is clear that faith and science can co-exist: ‘Revelation is not about the violation or usurpation of human reason but, rather, is a demonstration of its limits.’

This is not a quick read, it is a book that will stretch and challenge. St Paul urged his readers to be transformed by the renewing of their mind (Romans 12:2); this book will help us rise to that challenge.

All reviews by Revd Elizabeth Clark, National Rural Officer for the Methodist and United Reformed Churches

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