

# Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

Corts, Thomas E 1999 – Henry Drummond. A perpetual Benediction

T & T Clark: Edinburgh. Hard Cover, xxxiii + 141 pages. Price: £18.95

Reviewer: Dr G M J van Wyk

Henry Drummond is not a familiar name to most South Africans. Perhaps this Scottish evangelist, professor and writer is neither well known in his native Scotland nor in America, but, as Thomas E Corts writes, "A hundred years have dimmed but not erased memories of Henry Drummond". Drummond was and is up to this day an appealing figure in the church, because people experience the best of scholarship and spirituality through this remarkable nineteenth-century man. Drummond was appealing for his time because he brought together the effective power of a revival speaker, the sincere defence of this religious point of view, as well as an advocacy of the theory of evolution. The clarity of his writing, the depth of his spirituality, his genius for friendship, his astute scientific mind, his genuine interest in others and his mysterious aloofness are qualities that are remembered to this day. Amidst the Victorian crisis of faith and the twilight of an age of optimism, this was the kind of religious leader people were longing for.

The great theme of Drummond's life was to know Jesus Christ and make him known to others. Drummond travelled widely and exerted a remarkable influence on many students, ministers of religion and missionaries. But the one thing for which Drummond is remembered, is his classic devotional writing *The Greatest Thing in the World*, an essay on 1 Corinthians 13. By the time of his death in 1897 this little writing had become a classic, translated into many languages of the world. This is also one of only a few Christian books that have never been out of print for over a hundred years.

This book brings together a range of expert studies of Henry Drummond and his work to paint a picture of a distinctive personality. The authors appraise Drummond's work on science and Christian faith, his place in the rise of evangelicalism, and his efforts to confront a new generation with a thoughtful, world-aware Christianity. The essays in this volume are brought together to commemorate the centennial of the death of Drummond. This hardcover book is presented in a fine style. The body of the book is made up of papers that were delivered at *The Henry Drummond Centenary Symposium*, held at the New College, University of Edinburgh on March 14, 1997, and at the *Henry Drummond in America-Centennial Celebration*, held at the Beeson Divinity School of Samsford University on October 16-17, 1997. The essays that make up this part of the book are: *The religious world of Henry Drummond* by Alexander C Cheyne, *Henry Drummond, evangelism and science* by David W Bebbington, *Henry Drummond (1851-1897)* and "*The greatest thing in the world*" – Henry Drummond on love by Robin S Barbour, "*Apples of gold in pictures of silver*" – Henry Drummond and "*words fitly spoken*" and *Henry Drummond: from Scotland to America with love* by Thomas E and Marla Haas Corts. The foreword to the book is written by Timothy F George and the introduction by Thomas SE Corts. Five appendices make up the rest of the content. The volume is rounded off with selected references, a chronology of significant events in the Drummond's life and history, and an index.

The book is recommended to a wide audience and can help to broaden South Africans' understanding of Scottish and American Christianity, evangelism and spirituality in general.