

BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

Lord's Supper

The Clearest Promises of God: The Development of Calvin's Eucharistic Teaching by Thomas J. Davis. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1995. Pp. 236. \$52.50 (cloth).

As Davis indicates in his preface, this book is a reworking of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago. Davis, under the tutelage of Brian Gerrish (John Nuveen Professor of Historical Theology Emeritus at the Divinity School, University of Chicago, and now Distinguished Professor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Richmond, Virginia), sets about the task of mapping out the origin and development of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper. This represents a methodological shift from the work of many Calvin scholars, who have assumed an essential continuity in Calvin's thinking on the Lord's Supper from an early period to a later one. For Davis, Calvin's eucharistic doctrine undergoes actual *development*. He argues that we must not take at face value Calvin's own statements that his teaching on the Supper never changed. Consequently, Davis's book seeks to chart the changes and development of Calvin's teaching on the Lord's Supper over the course of the Reformer's career.

First Davis surveys three key nineteenth-century interpreters of Calvin's teaching on the Lord Supper: John Williamson Nevin, J. H. A. Ebrard, and Herman Bavinck. Each of these writers, to greater or lesser degrees, fail to discern the historical character of Calvin's diverse writings on the Eucharist. This in turn has led to a misreading of the documents so that the 1559 *Institutes* becomes

the lens through which Calvin's earlier writings are understood and interpreted. These nineteenth-century interpreters of Calvin's thought also fail to set Calvin's eucharistic concepts within the wider scope of his theology. Bavinck in particular, argues Davis, is guilty of this error. The Dutch theologian treats all of Calvin's eucharistic writings as a single tapestry, including the *Consensus Tigurinus*—a document that Davis believes is decisive for rightly interpreting Calvin's views.

It is not surprising, then, that Davis devotes a separate chapter to the *Consensus Tigurinus*. This work, published in 1549, served as the basis for doctrinal agreement on the Lord's Supper among the Swiss Reformed churches. Since Calvin consented to the *Consensus*, he felt obliged to defend it against attack. Thus, in the face of Lutheran assaults against the *Consensus*, Calvin wrote his *Defense of the Sane and Orthodox Doctrine of the Sacraments*. But here Davis detects a problem. He argues that the *Consensus* "does not . . . correspond to some of things Calvin had written on the Eucharist in previous works" (p. 30). To be sure, in endorsing the *Consensus* we see how far Calvin was willing to bend on his doctrine of the Lord's Supper in order to maintain peace among Swiss churches; nonetheless, the *Consensus Tigurinus* is, in Davis's assessment, more a reflection of Bullinger's thought than of Calvin's. In fact, it does not even represent "a finely balanced juxtaposition" of their respective theologies (p. 56).

Thus Davis maintains that Calvin's defense of the *Consensus*, in order to conform to his views, is actually a misinterpretation or a radical reinterpretation of that work. Calvin's own doctrine presents a "higher" conception of the Supper than the one articulated in the *Consensus*. For what is most distinctive about Calvin's view—namely, that the elements function as instruments through which believing communicants receive the body and blood of Christ, so that they enjoy not only an impartation of Christ's benefits but communion with Christ himself—precisely this, according to Davis, is absent from the *Consensus* (pp. 41ff.).

Davis proceeds to trace out chronologically Calvin's eucharistic teaching, starting with the 1536 *Institutes*, followed by the Lausanne Disputation of 1536 to the *Short Treatise on the Holy*

Supper of 1541, then the various pastoral, doctrinal, and polemical expositions from 1541-1557, concluding with what Davis terms Calvin's mature eucharistic theology: the 1559 *Institutes*, the 1561 *The True Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Christ*, and *The Best Method of Obtaining Concord, Provided the Truth Be Sought Without Contention*.

After the early period of Calvin's eucharistic teaching, Davis concentrates on three important themes in the Reformer's thought, seeking to show how each of these developed in the course of Calvin's subsequent pastoral and theological labors. (1) the Lord's Supper as a source of religious "knowledge," (2) the matter of Christ's "real presence" and "substantial partaking," and (3) the Eucharist as a "means of grace," particularly the issue of accommodation and instrumentality (pp. 147ff., 167ff., 180ff.).

In examining Calvin's mature eucharistic theology, Davis not only returns to the above mentioned themes in Calvin's later writings, he also analyzes the necessity of the Lord's Supper in the Christian life, addressing what is, in some sense, distinctive about this sacrament.

"What we see, then, in Calvin's last eucharistic writings," according to Davis, "is the completion of a journey." In the first stage of his career, "as he wrote on the Eucharist in his 1536 *Institutes*, Calvin flatly and unequivocally denied substantial partaking of Christ in the Eucharist." Yet over the course of years his thinking developed and matured in such a way that he came to claim "as essential those very elements that he had originally denied as part of his eucharistic doctrine." "Substantial partaking" is strongly affirmed. The Eucharist is embraced as an instrument of grace, worthy of the highest honor. Indeed, the Supper presents believers with a twofold gift: Jesus Christ himself and the clearest picture possible of the promises of God for wayward sinners. At the heart of it all is that the Christian knows what makes one a Christian—union with Christ. In the Supper, each believer comes to know Christ as "for you" (p. 212). As for the question: What do Christians receive in the Supper that they do not obtain otherwise? The answer, following Davis's exposition of Calvin's theology, appears to be that "the Eucharist

exhibits God's love in its most personal, most intense, most experienced form" (p. 213).

Davis's book is perhaps one of the best expositions of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the English language. Although his central thesis may be a bit disconcerting to some—did Calvin's thinking actually *change* over the course of years?—Davis's work exhibits the marks of careful scholarship and a close reading of Calvin's many works on the Lord's Supper. *The Clearest Promises* is well written, relatively brief (about 220 pages), and serves as a fine introduction to Calvin's teaching on this most important topic. If Davis is correct and Calvin's doctrine did, as suggested, develop into the higher doctrine of the Supper of his mature years, I find myself with those who wish to follow Calvin along this path. May the covert Zwinglianism that plagues Reformed churches today ever decrease.

—J. Mark Beach

The Body Broken: The Calvinistic Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France by Christopher Elwood. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. xii + 251. \$49.95 (cloth).

In the acknowledgments page of his study, Elwood admits that it became a more "complicated book than I had initially anticipated" (p. vii). Elwood's original interest in the subject of the eucharistic controversy in sixteenth-century France focused upon it as a "print event." He was interested in what the conduct of this controversy by way of the printed page could tell us about the role of propaganda and the press in the sixteenth-century reformation in France. However, in the course of his study, Elwood's focus shifted to the way the symbolization of power was reflected in the controversy and affected the course of events. He became interested specifically in the question how the Calvinist doctrine of the Lord's Supper expressed a new conception of power in human society and the relation between society and the sacred.

Elwood's thesis is that the "eucharist and the meanings attached to it created particular habits of thought and action that shaped the political understanding and commitments of men and women in the sixteenth century. In its Calvinist interpretation, the eucharist created the environment that made social and political revolution possible" (p. 4). The Calvinist understanding of the Lord's Supper effected, according to Elwood, "a semiotic revolution—a revolution that created a conceptual framework for the new, revolutionary modes of social and political thought and activity that convulsed European societies at the dawn of the modern age" (p. 5).

Elwood organizes his study in a chronological manner, tracing the development and stages of the eucharistic controversy in France during the four middle decades of the sixteenth century. The first chapter, however, falls outside the boundaries of this chronology, since it summarizes developments in eucharistic theology and practice that shaped the late medieval period. This chapter provides a fascinating survey of the various facets of the medieval Roman Catholic Church's understanding of the mass and its celebration, not only as a church sacrament but as a social and political event (e.g., festival processions of the consecrated elements through cities and villages). Chapter two commences Elwood's account of the development of the Reformed doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper in France, in the earliest period prior to the influence of Calvin's eucharistic writings. After this chapter on the earliest expressions of Reformed eucharistic theology in France, Elwood treats Calvin's writings of the 1540's in Chapter three, and argues that his emphasis upon "sacramental instrumentality and on the relation of sign and thing signified made possible for his many readers new and potentially revolutionary ways of conceiving of power, its operation, and its relation to temporal authority" (p. 9). Chapter four then reviews the influence of several Reformed writers on the French Reformed Church's understanding of the sacrament. During the period from 1540-1560, Elwood notes that there was a tremendous outpouring of popular pamphlets by Reformed authors on the Lord's Supper. These pamphlets had a

considerable influence upon popular opinion and tended to subvert the interests of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical and secular authority. Chapter five outlines the response of Roman Catholic writers to the eucharistic literature of the Reformed church. In their response, these writers typically argued that the Reformed view, denying the bodily presence of Christ in the sacramental elements, was corrosive of the traditional religious and social unity of France. In Chapter six, which is aptly entitled, "The Eucharist, Reformed Social Formation, and the Ideology of Resistance," Elwood summarizes his argument that the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper precipitated a social revolution in France that had profound implications for the unity of France and the status of its traditional ecclesiastical and political authorities.

Elwood's study is a fascinating mix of theological and social interpretation. Unlike most traditional accounts of the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper, Elwood is not so much interested in the theological doctrine as such as he is in the way its articulation and practice affected the structures of society and the exercise of authority in France. This does not mean that his account of the Reformed view is theologically superficial or uninformed. Elwood provides throughout the course of his argument a comprehensive and detailed account of the eucharistic polemics of the period. In doing so, he painstakingly describes and summarizes the principal features of the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper in its Roman Catholic and Reformed expressions. However, he does so with a particular interest in the way the Reformed view influenced popular conceptions of the exercise of authority in human society and the mediation of God's presence. His interest is clearly not so much upon the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the reformation of the church in sixteenth-century France. Rather, he is primarily interested in the way the Reformed doctrine of the Eucharist, expressed in popular language and dominant among an influential segment of society, illustrates how "religious conceptions operate upon patterns of acting in the world" (p. 167).

It is likely that two kinds of readers will be simultaneously benefited and frustrated by Elwood's work. One kind, readers who are interested primarily in the doctrine of the Eucharist, will be impatient with Elwood's focus upon the doctrine in terms of its social and political implications. Another kind, readers who are interested primarily in the changes in the social and political order in France during the sixteenth century, will be impatient with Elwood's detailing of the eucharistic doctrine and controversies. The strength of Elwood's study, however, is that he holds together the theological and social developments of the sixteenth century in a way that is far closer to reality than the strict separation with which modern readers and thinkers are familiar. He provides a careful delineation of the eucharistic controversies in France during the middle decades of the sixteenth century. But he also considers the way these controversies intersected with developments in the social and political spheres.

—Cornelis P. Venema

The Lord's Supper Is a Celebration of Grace: What the Bible Teaches about Communion by Gordon J. Keddie. Faverdale North Industrial Estate, Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000. Pp. 96. \$8.09.

Gordon Keddie is the minister of Grace Presbyterian Church in State College, Pennsylvania. The contents of this book first appeared as a series of much appreciated articles in the *Evangelical Times*. In the preface to his book, Keddie states that "understanding the meaning of the Lord's Supper is essential to enjoying its blessings." Because he wants his readers to enjoy the true blessings of the sacrament, Keddie devotes the seven chapters in his book to expounding the sacrament's true meaning as God has revealed it in his Word.

This review will briefly touch on the book's seven chapters and highlight Keddie's emphasis in each area of Bible exposition.

1. *Consecration*. When the word "consecration" is used in reference to the Lord's Supper it often designates what an

officiant says of the bread and cup: “This is My body,” and “This cup is the blood of the covenant.” When Keddie uses the word, however, he refers not to the physical *elements* but to the active *participants*. Because the Lord’s Supper is a corporate opportunity for believers to profess their faith in Christ and to have their faith strengthened by the Christ they profess, it is more important for the participants to be consecrated to God than for the bread and wine to be consecrated with special prayers. The Lord’s Supper is not a converting ordinance which is administered to unbelievers. Rather it is a strengthening ordinance which the God of all kindness uses to sustain believers in the way of Christian service. If people are not consecrated to God, i.e., devoted to him and eager to serve him, their participation in the sacrament will be in vain. Keddie laments that “for millions in this world, the Lord’s Supper, or what passes for it in some churches, is often the only religious observance in their lives, and a sadly perfunctory performance at that. Between ‘communion Sundays’ there is often no observable devotion, or even regular church attendance. The rest of life is relentlessly religionless, or even downright irreligious, and therefore effectively devoid of spiritual content...” (p. 17). Keddie’s point is well taken. Jesus didn’t give us the Lord’s Supper to attract nominal Christians to occasional church services. Christ gave us the sacrament to strengthen the faith of true (i.e., consecrated) believers.

2. *Visible Signs*. Here we find Keddie’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper as a means of grace. Grace is an *attribute* of God which comes to expression with the *attitude* of God toward people to whom he chooses to grant unmerited favor. Believers experience God’s grace when the Holy Spirit convicts, converts, changes, and confirms them through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The primary means the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish these things is the preaching of the Word. A secondary means of grace is the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, which sets before believers in a visible way the great truths they hear in the gospel. In a corporate setting, individual believers confess their faith in Christ (proclaim his death and resurrection), commune with Christ (table fellowship), and receive grace from Christ (strengthened by

the Spirit). The visible signs of bread and wine are empty and ineffective if they are received by unbelievers. But if they are received by consecrated believers, they are rich and overflowing with the grace of God.

3. *The Presence of Christ.* In this chapter Keddie addresses the age old question as to if and how Jesus Christ is present at the Lord's Supper. He begins this discussion, not by interpreting Jesus' words, "This is my body" but by setting before us biblical truths which speak of Christ's presence with believers in general. Keddie points out the fact that Jesus is physically risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. As Jesus explained to the disciples in John's Gospel, he has gone away from us to the Father's house. Yet, by his Spirit, who dwells among and in believers, Jesus is not absent from them for a moment. Based on these general principles, we would not expect Jesus to be present in a physical way at the Lord's Table, but to be with his people in a spiritual way. He is present at the Table, not in the host (a reference to the bread) but as the Host who invites us to come and dine. In this way Keddie counsels us to "reject any idea that the Lord is spatially present *in* the elements (transubstantiation) or *with* the elements (consubstantiation)" because these ideas are "mystical sleight of hand, not sound exegesis" (p. 41).

4. *Proclaiming the Lord's Death.* Here we find an exposition of 1 Corinthians 1:26, which says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." The Lord's Supper teaches us the purpose of Jesus' death, namely, that he died for sinners to save them from their sins. That Jesus died a violent death is seen in the breaking of the bread (his body) and in the pouring out of the cup (his blood). That he died a sacrificial death is heard in the phrases, "for you" and "for many." Thus we see that Jesus fulfilled the pattern of sacrifice established in the Old Testament to make good on God's great promise that the Seed of the woman would be stricken on his heel (violent death) on the way to crushing the Serpent's head (redeeming lost sinners and rising from the dead). While Keddie gives proper emphasis to the objective meaning of the sacrament as a visible proclamation of Christ's death, he also

calls those who participate in the sacrament to give subjective (i.e., personal and heartfelt) testimonies to this truth. In other words, believers must not only make sure their theology is right, they must make sure they have a personal desire to proclaim the gospel in their own experience. They must also come to the Lord's Supper ready to grieve over their sins—the sins for which Jesus died—and to rejoice in Christ, who has triumphed over sins.

5. *Self-Examination.* In this chapter Keddie offers some practical advice as to how we may obey the command in 1 Corinthians 11:28, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” Originally this command was addressed to the problem filled church at Corinth. It is encouraging to note that the apostle did not forbid the Corinthians to attend the Lord's Supper because of their problems; rather, he instructed them to work out their problems by means of self-examination so that they might grow through their problems and come to the Lord's Table. That's the focus of self-examination. Though we deal with negative things (our sins and imperfections) our goal when examining ourselves is positive: that we may take our place at the Lord's Table and be nourished unto eternal life.

6. *Discerning the Lord's Body.* Keddie does not take “the Lord's body” in 1 Corinthians 11:29 as a reference to the church as the body of Christ. Rather he interprets it in keeping with the context of communion as denoting Christ's physical body. What, though, does it mean to discern the Lord's body in the sacrament? The Greek word for discern is *dekrino*, “which means to separate in the sense of making proper judgments between what is proper and what is not. In this instance, discerning with respect to the Lord's body means seeing the distinctness of the sacramental use of bread and wine over against their ordinary use in daily life. The Lord's Supper is not just another meal. It is special. It is unique. It has nothing to do with food for the stomach. It has everything to do with food for the soul. . . . Therefore discerning the Lord's body means understanding, in a warm, believing way, what the Lord's Supper symbolizes and teaches . . . and with what humble,

reverent participation and commitment to the Lord it is to be approached” (p. 73). Keddie refers to the Old Testament story of Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, who used the sacred vessels from the Lord’s temple for debauchery in his palace. That night Belshazzar died as Darius the Mede overthrew Babylon (see Daniel 5). Belshazzar did not discern the sacred nature of the temple vessels, and so he experienced God’s judgment. Members of the Corinthian church also experienced God’s judgment because their attitudes were casual and disrespectful. God’s judgment was upon some of them. That’s why some of them were sick and afflicted. The Corinthians’ need to discern the Lord’s body stands as a warning to the church in all generations to receive the sacrament with reverence for Christ and respect for fellow Christians.

7. *Communion*. In this, the last chapter of his book, Keddie introduces us to the to the concept of communion as it appears in 1 Corinthians 10:16, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ. . . ?” The Greek word for communion is *koinonia*, which speaks of a close relationship—a sharing of life and life’s experiences. Keddie encourages believers to see this fellowship in two ways: with Christ himself and with each other. This fellowship with Christ and one another is not automatic. Yet it is genuinely experienced when believers come to the table with love for Christ and one another. And it is the purpose for which the supper was ordained. At a supper the Host (Jesus) and his guests (believers) enjoy a time of fellowship with one another which strengthens the ties that bind them together. “The corporate dimension in the Lord’s Supper is exemplified in the fact, clearly set forth in our text, that there are *three* parties involved: God in Christ, the believer and other believers. It is not a case of ‘him and me,’ but of ‘him, me and you (plural)’! This, not coincidentally, is why the Lord’s Supper is given to the church to administer, and not to the individual Christian to self-administer.” (pp. 91-92). The concept of communion also brings motivation for obedient, Christian living. For if we want our fellowship with Christ and fellow believers to be close and enriching, we will strive, with the Spirit’s

help, to live in obedience to Christ and at peace with our brothers and sisters in God's family.

As I read and considered Keddie's work, I could easily understand why these essays have been collected and published. Here we find a discussion of the Lord's Supper which is both pastoral and practical. While he engages theological issues with respect to the sacrament, Keddie counsels his readers to believe in Christ and to receive from Christ all that he has to offer in the sacrament.

—Roger W. Sparks

The Eucharist in the West by Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J. History and Theology, edited by Robert J. Daly. Collegeville, Minnesota: A Pueblo Book published by the Liturgical Press, 1998. Pp. xxv + 422. \$49.95 (cloth).

Dr. Kilmartin was Professor Ordinarius of Liturgical Theology at the Pontificio Istituto Orientale. When he died in Boston in June 1994, he left among his papers what Robert J. Daly was to transform into this volume. Kilmartin had done much work on Christian Liturgy, particularly the shaping of the *lex credendi* by the *lex orandi*. He wrote this volume as a kind of last word on what he considered to be of the greatest importance in that respect: the Eucharist in the life of the Roman Catholic Church.

This book is useful for two reasons: it contains a helpful historical survey of the doctrine of the Eucharist in the West (from the Latin Fathers through post-Vatican II) and it also contains Kilmartin's attempt to work out a new Eucharistic theology. Thus the book has value for those who would survey what Rome in particular has taught and the direction that some of her modern theologians are seeking to take her. Much of what actuates Kilmartin is disclosed in a little section near the end of the book (pp. 365-68), entitled "Modern Average Catholic Theology of Eucharistic Sacrifice." A lengthy (four paragraph) quote is here helpful to show us the interesting direction that Kilmartin is going in terms of his Eucharistic theology:

It must also be mentioned that the average Catholic theological explanation of the relationship of the sacrifice of the cross to the Eucharist is based on very weak biblical grounds when it appeals to the biblical notion of *anamnesis*. The biblical term is applied to the celebration for memorial feast instituted by Yahweh in order that the participants might recall and share in the blessings of the past saving works experienced by the people of Israel. It is also applied to the Eucharist. But in both cases anamnesis is interpreted to mean objective memorial, that is, the liturgical occurrence of the objectivized presence of the past redemptive work of Christ. In other words the foundation event of his death and resurrection which took place in past time and space is conceived as rendered present on the altar at the moment of consecration of the bread and wine.

However, this interpretation is not supported by careful analysis. For the commemorative feasts of the Jewish tradition are not understood to contain the historical saving events which are commemorated, but rather, are considered to be the media by which the participants of the feasts are, as it were, presented to the foundation event that is commemorated. The return consists in the sharing of the blessings analogous to those imparted in the historical event. Thus the strict theological application of the biblical notion of *anamnesis* supports only the idea that the Christian liturgical assembly is, in some sense, represented to the foundation event of the death and resurrection and, as a consequence, enabled by faith to participate in its salutary effects. Moreover, the witness of the liturgy itself, the classical Eucharistic Prayers, do not furnish support for any other understanding of the biblical *anamnesis*. These prayers point in the direction for the representation of the liturgical community to the foundation event of the new covenant.

The inherent weakness of the average modern Catholic understanding of objective anamnesis as applied to the Eucharist is especially made apparent in the attempts to supply a credible theological explanation of how the past historical saving acts of Christ can be rendered objectively present on the altar in a visible sacramental mode of being. Invariably, what is proposed as a solution only raises further problems for understanding. What precisely is meant by saying that the historical sacrifice of the cross is rendered objectively present on the altar in a visible sacramental mode of being? This is not—and apparently cannot be—satisfactorily

answered by an appeal to an authentic tradition, either of the East or the West. Consequently, one is not theologically (or doctrinally) constrained on the grounds of an authentic tradition to seek a credible explanation of the concept of objective anamnesis. Rather, one is free to evaluate critically the various traditional formulations of the relation of the historical sacrifice of the cross to the eucharistic sacrifice, and to seek out the most satisfactory explanation of this relationship.

Finally, the average modern Catholic theology of the Eucharist displays only a weak integration of trinitarian theology. Most importantly, the theology of the role of the Holy Spirit needs to be thoroughly integrated, and the consequences drawn. In fact, it is the lack of a systematic approach to the role of the Holy Spirit that lies at the basis of the overall weak Western theology of the Eucharist.

The first three paragraphs raise issues respecting the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice and even transubstantiation. The last paragraph poses interesting questions about the direction that Roman Catholic theology may be moving due not only to Eastern contributions but even to the insights of John Calvin on the relationship between Word, Sacrament, and the Holy Spirit.

—Alan D. Strange

The Lord's Supper (expanded edition) by Martin E. Marty. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997. Pp. 88. \$7.19.

Marty is well known to readers of the periodical, *The Christian Century*, serving as its senior editor. He has also taught for three decades at the University of Chicago in the area of church history.

This work is essentially a reprint of Marty's 1980 book, though mildly expanded, offering his reflections on the thoughts and musings of those who participate in the Lord's Supper. This edition makes use of the New Revised Standard Bible for its Scripture quotations (a version unavailable in the book's 1980 edition), and includes study questions at the end of the book. This indicates that the book is to be used for personal reflection,

but especially for discussion among small study groups.

The book does not contain a biblical or theological articulation of the Christian teaching of Holy Communion. For example, one looks in vain for an extended academic or confessional discussion of the theology of the Lord's Supper. But such is not the book's intention. Rather, the book is more of an impressionistic description and reflection on what perhaps goes through the mind of those who prepare themselves for and subsequently participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, Marty writes with a clear theology in mind, as his own Lutheran background and confessional tradition come through "in, under, and around" the text of this book.

The direction taken by the author is evident in the chapter titles: (1) "For You . . . for Forgiveness"; (2) Preparation; (3) The Service; (4) Reflections during Communion; and (5) "In the Morning. . ." (only two pages). Marty draws up throughout the book a number of "scenarios" that confessing Christians have experienced in various times and places—from concentration camps to large and ornate urban church buildings—as they heard the various formulae of consecration and then ate and drank the communion elements. The Lord's Supper is God's gift "for you," and the "you" is descriptive of a wide variety of people, past and present. The Lord's Supper is for forgiveness and divine pardon, effecting the same. Says Marty (p. 10), "The *me* who receives the Lord's Supper is a human who in the presence of God is learning to become more human."

Marty walks the reader through a "typical" congregant's "typical" morning exercise of preparation, with the intention of receiving communion that day. What does he or she think about and mediate on, indeed, what feelings occupy a person, prior to receiving the "supper"—which is hardly a meal at all, in terms of the amount of bread and wine received? Another question: What ought a congregant to feel, think about, and mediate on? Marty asserts that focusing on the "for you... for forgiveness" are the central matters: "everything else follows from it" (p. 31).

The importance of the words of the service as well as of the physical elements is underscored in Marty's discussion. Words

“do” something and thus become instruments and tools of God’s saving message (p. 34). The believer is part of the great plot of the Bible’s story, and the “Lord’s Supper will make the words visible” (p. 35).

The author also notes that both the individual appropriation (and personal offering) and the communal/congregational context should not be played off against each other. “I believe” and “we believe” are both valid confessional expressions.

Marty draws the readers’ attention to the fact that our Lord uses common material elements in the communion experience. Christianity is not so “spiritual” that it neglects or excludes the role that the creation has in the reception of God’s grace. The Christian faith does “touch the ground” (p. 46). Christ is incarnate among us, in this creation, in the congregation. The theological and ecclesiastical battles of the past, as differing Christian traditions sought to define Christ’s presence, were sad spectacles, according to Marty. He is thankful that more and more consensus is emerging in modern times, certainly in mainline churches, about the wording that confesses Christ’s presence in communion. But some may be secretly disappointed to see the reasons for fighting now being undermined.

The fourth chapter is especially thought provoking. Marty raises the question about what the communicant thinks about while the communion service continues. He leads the reader through a discussion of the following possibilities: the feelings experienced, the forgiveness received, the presence promised, and the commitment entailed (pp. 57ff). Obviously, these possibilities reflect both the subjective emotions of the worshiper and the objective truths being presented by the sacrament itself. And, Marty avers (p. 57), “different personality types will react differently” depending on whether they are “sick soul” people or “healthy-minded” people.

Communion is not the time to “clean one’s plate” of existing sins so that the plate may be filled again. For you are still a sinner “by your humanity and your acts” while *at the same time* you stand justified in Christ (p. 59). Thus we are humbled at communion, not coming forward to impress God with our obedience or even

with the boast of our humility. The Lord's Supper is neither the time nor the place to say, "Notice me, God." Instead, we must know our *need* for help, specifically forgiveness and renewal—lest we die.

Marty believes that doctrines are important, but he also believes that all doctrines should be kept in their place. Doctrine "does not save." "God saves" (p. 65). The communicant, then, comes needing food, not a recipe book. The worshiper looks for reconciliation, wholeness, and meaning (p. 69). Indeed, the "gospel" and "justification" are two words for the same thing. Remarkably, Marty says that God, "acting through and because of Christ, creates a new you, a baptized person-in-Christ. That is what it means to be a forgiven person, to experience an act or a motion of divine forgiveness" (p. 70). Here, however, justification as a forensic matter and renewal as the experience of sanctification seem to be confused.

Marty's style is easy and flowing. If readers are looking for a learned treatise on, say, the Lutheran view of Christ's presence, they will be disappointed. But Marty's book forces readers to consider (again) what communicants reflect upon in preparing for and participating in the Lord's Supper, especially as they experience the solemn celebration of receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Moreover, following this reception, how is life different or changed?

As noted earlier, the book concludes with questions for each of the five chapters, with most of the questions being of the subjective variety ("How do you feel about...?").

—Mark D. Vander Hart

A Body Broken for a Broken People: Eucharist in the New Testament, revised edition, by Francis J. Moloney. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrikson Publishers, 1997. Pp. xvi + 212. \$14.95.

The author of this book is a Roman Catholic exegete from the Australian Catholic University in Victoria, Australia. Moloney's work is a sustained plea for the Christian church in general, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular, to rethink

current policies and practices of excluding certain kinds of known sinners from the communion table. Certain interpretations of canonical pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council have led to “an increasing number of Catholics being officially denied” the reception of the Eucharist (p. 10). Moloney is also disturbed that increasing numbers of local pastors are devising their own policies of discipline in their parishes. “No matter how finely tuned a particular pastor may be to the ways of the Spirit in the church, the biblical and theological motivations for or against such practice must be considered” (p. 13). On that point he is correct.

His basic concern is ostensibly pastoral. Moloney is alarmed that the Eucharist is increasingly viewed as a holy meal for morally holy people, rather than the meal where Christ gives himself to the sinful. So he asks whether the authentic traditions of the original church communities viewed the communion event as such. In this context he wrestles with the question of how one weighs the biblical data in light of the entire “authentic tradition of the Christian church?” (pp. 16ff.). This reflects, in part, a typically Roman Catholic dilemma in the sense that both Scripture and church tradition are equally valid authorities. Moloney offers his solution in this way: “The difficult balance between the word of Scripture and the living tradition of the church can only be preserved when full consideration and respect are given to each in its uniqueness, made evident in our respect for the importance of both, in their mutuality” (p. 17).

Moloney’s procedure is to look at the biblical material in the four Gospels (beginning with Mark, since he assumes Marcan priority) and then at Pauline statements in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. He examines passages that presuppose a eucharistic context in the local church in order to see how each author is showing Christ providing food (that is, himself) to a church that is weak, broken, and sinful. Moloney’s conclusion is that the Eucharist should not be withheld from sinners since Christ commanded that the church should celebrate the Eucharist “in remembrance of Me.”

For example, in his description of the Marcan narrative (as well as of the other Gospel accounts), Moloney quite consistently formulates his argument along the lines of seeing the Gospel narratives as reflective of the receptor communities: their questions, beliefs, and practices. So, if the disciples do not wish to distribute the food to the Gentiles, this is a reflection of the fact that among the Jewish element in the early church community—the community in which the Marcan narrative arose—there was great reluctance to include Gentile believers in the community (cf. pp. 43ff.).

Each Gospel writer crafts his Gospel for a particular audience and addresses particular issues. Thus in the Gospel of Luke “there is a notable interest in food and meals” (p. 91). For example, Luke records a series of meals Jesus attended with a variety of persons: Levi the tax collector, Simon the Pharisee, other Pharisees, etc. Jesus willingly and openly eats with all kinds of people, often with those who were known sinners—even with outsiders. Luke’s depictions represent the truth that the church is not composed of “perfect people” (p. 93). Jesus gives himself to the broken and to the sinful, thereby teaching members of the church to accept one another.

In connection with the Fourth Gospel, Moloney has a great deal to say about the giving of the morsel at the Last Supper (John 13:21-28). This is also tied into a eucharistic context. The meal and the discourse progress in the following manner: Jesus loved his own to the end (v. 1); the devil prompts Judas to betray Jesus (v. 2); Jesus becomes troubled and tells the disciples that one will betray him (v. 21); and, upon being asked “who,” Jesus takes the morsel, dips it, and gives it to Judas (v. 26). “As soon as Judas took the bread Satan entered into him” (v. 27). Moloney makes an interesting point when he observes that John 13:18 records Jesus’ reference to Psalm 41:10 (LXX; v. 9, ET). The LXX reads ὁ ἐσθίων while the Gospel’s quotation reads ὁ τρώγων, the less delicate word used for eating in the eucharistic passage of John 6:54ff. This leads to the conclusion (less than convincing, in the mind of this reviewer) that the “morsel is linked with the flesh and blood of the Son of man. . . . These eucharistic hints

would not be missed by the reader,” opines Moloney (p. 140). By extending the symbolism, the church should likewise give communion to sinners of all types, just as Jesus gave “communion” elements to the one who is fully prepared, being prompted by the devil, to betray him. All the while, the other disciples are unaware of what is happening (vv. 22, 25, 28).

To this reviewer, it is an exegetical and theological stretch to take the action of Jesus (i.e., taking a morsel of passover bread) to be a veiled expression of proper communion theology and practice. Here Moloney’s eucharistic theology overrides the immediate events of John 13, and his interpretation comes across as tendentious. Still, he rightly highlights Christ’s great love for sinners, noting correctly the Johannine stress upon Christ’s glorification in his crucifixion (p. 145).

Moloney’s survey of the context of 1 Corinthians 10:14ff. and 11:17ff. is quite good. In looking at 1 Corinthians 10:14ff. Moloney demonstrates how Paul has intertwined the teaching that the eucharistic meal has both a vertical dimension (Christ unites us with himself in the meal) and a horizontal dimension (all of the community partakes of the same meal). But Christ gives himself to a community that is composed of both “the strong” and “the weak” members (pp. 159-164). This sets the reader up for what is said in 11:17-34. The Lord’s Supper is observed “in remembrance” of Jesus Christ (said twice). “Paul’s twofold use of this liturgical formula is an important challenge to the Corinthians to shed their petty divisions based on a distinction between those who have more and others who have less” (pp. 168, 169). By breaking their own bodies and shedding their own blood, the Corinthians would thus remember Christ.

Moloney understands the words “the body of the Lord” (11:29) as having a dual reference, namely, to the communion elements that present Christ’s body and blood and to the church members (the usual phraseology being “the Body of Christ,” which is not used in 11:29). In any case, the problem in the Corinthian church was that members were not practicing in their lives what they ostensibly proclaimed in their cult. This is what they should think about as they “examine” themselves. Says

Moloney, “The Corinthians could not claim to be ‘the body of the Lord’ (the church) as long as they did not ‘discern the body’ (equally the church) in those lesser creatures, the poor, abandoned, and unworthy, whom they were excluding from the eucharistic table” (p. 175).

In chapter seven Moloney brings together his several lines of argument to make his plea—the core issue being stated already at the end of the previous chapter: “Circumstances and legislation that canonize division and exclusion need to come under scrutiny” (p. 176). He pleads, then, for the church to look at the historical data concerning Christ’s person and work. Beyond that, the church must also look into its own history as the “Spirit of Jesus lives on in the post-Easter communities” (p. 179). Moloney says that the New Testament is itself a product of Christian experience (p. 180). Meanwhile, the question of divine inspiration of Scripture is left hanging. While it is true that the New Testament arose in the context of early church history, the New Testament is not a product of Christian experience, at least not at its very root. The New Testament documents also share in that unique description given by the apostle Paul when he describes “all Scripture” as being “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Moloney’s chief concern is this: Since the Gospel records show that “Jesus shared his table with sinners and outcasts, with the broken, and that he spoke boldly of such sharing as a sign of the inbreak of God’s presence as King” (p. 184), the church today must follow in this line and remove all hindrances to such sinners from sharing in the Eucharist.

For all the force and passion of Moloney’s argument, however, he does not want his position to be misunderstood as advocating that the Eucharistic table become some sort of “free for all.” That caveat comes late in the book. He recognizes that one cannot completely ignore the texts that call for purity in the church community (cf. 1 Cor. 5 and Hebr. 6:1-8). But he argues that the church has too often excluded people for doctrinal reasons and not moral ones (p. 196). Thus Moloney would continue to defend “exclusion from the Eucharist of those who knowingly, willingly, consciously, deliberately, and freely break

‘communion’ with those who believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and Savior” (p. 196). Yet we must never forget, he avers, that the “Eucharist is always a gift of the Lord to his failing community” (p. 196). This is too often lost today, he says.

Moloney’s approach is a blended use of both narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism. He writes, “It is not enough to ask what a narrative is telling the reader; one must also ask why the story is shaped in a particular fashion. A careful reader is interested not only in what is said but also in how it is said. Literary shape can also determine message” (p. 45). No longer is it acceptable to read the Gospels as giving us insight to see the “historical Jesus.” Here is where Moloney, at times, borders on saying that the Gospel authors create episodes in the life of Jesus to express a theological and pastoral point for the benefit of their particular church community (“Matthew,” “Mark,” etc., are not actual authors). Redemptive-history, as that is carried out by Jesus Christ, begins to fade into the background as the biblical writers’ theology moves to the foreground.

One wonders if Moloney has tried almost too hard to make the valid point that indeed Christ gave himself for sinners. The Scriptural witness shows that Christ’s work—and therefore the sacrament of the Supper—was for the sick, not the healthy. It came to save sinners, not the righteous. He sustains the weak, even while he denounces and excludes the hypocrites. Moloney gets that valid point across, but he reaches too far into some passages to try to make the point (e.g., the giving of the morsel, John 13:21ff.). The Lord’s Supper was instituted for those who are truly displeased with themselves for their sins and yet trust that their sins are forgiven them for the sake of Christ and that whatever infirmity remains in them is covered by his passion and death. The Lord’s Supper was also instituted for those who desire more and more to strengthen their faith and amend their life. But hypocrites and all those who do not come to God with sincere hearts eat and drink judgment to themselves (Heidelberg Catechism, *Q/A 81*).

The book has many references in the footnotes, demonstrating that Moloney has read widely in this particular

area. This helps the interested reader to pursue the subject further, should he or she so choose.

An egregious printing error can be found on the front cover of the book, where the writer of the Foreword is identified as “Léon X. Dufour,” whereas in fact his name is Xavier Léon-Dufour. The book includes a select bibliography list, as well as indices of authors and ancient sources.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

Remember Jesus: A User's Guide to Understanding and Enjoying Holy Communion by Steve Motyer. Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain, Christian Focus Publications, 1995. Pp. 175. \$6.99.

Steve Motyer lectures in the area of New Testament studies at London Bible College. He has designed *Remember Jesus* as a popular handbook to guide believers in a fuller understanding and greater enjoyment of the Lord's Supper.

The book divides into three sections. The first deals with questions that have long surrounded the Lord's Supper. The second section is billed as “Back to the Basics.” The last part applies some of the principles stated in earlier sections. An interesting conclusion displays hymns suitable for a Lord's Supper celebration.

Controversy has long surrounded the Lord's Supper. The reformation confessions elaborate these doctrines for good reason. Motyer tries to spread a note of peace over these controversies without unduly compromising Protestant positions. Although an Anglican who prefers to call the Supper by the name “Eucharist,” on sacramental questions Motyer appears to stand in the tradition of the Reformers whom he cites with some frequency. Many of the concerns of this book are familiar to those in Presbyterian and Reformed circles. The questions he raises have been asked before. His answers are biblical, confessional and reflect practices that hark back to the early church.

The book is quite practical, theologically balanced, and replete with advice on participation in the Supper. The union of

Word and sacrament is emphasized. Motyer exhorts the participant to listen to the Host at the Supper. Participants should also pay attention to relations with fellow guests, especially difficult relationships. The partaker ought to have one eye upon the future and look forward to the resurrection. In addition, the author tells us that all things must be done with thanksgiving. Motyer's conclusions are expressed in a fresh and engaging manner, which is one of the better features of this book.

The most interesting section is found in part two. Motyer suggests that the Eucharist is a prophetic sign. He sees parallels and examples in some of the signs employed by Old Testament prophets. Jeremiah's breaking of the pot before the elders of Jerusalem and Hosea's marriage to an adulterous woman are examples of what the author means by "prophetic sign." Motyer says, "I find it most helpful to apply this line of thought to the Eucharist. This gives an answer, I believe to the vexed question, 'What actually happens to the bread and wine'"(p. 109)?

He argues that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ spiritually as these elements become a prophetic vehicle of God's grace and power. We eat the symbols as if we were eating the flesh of Christ. Motyer thus expresses in a fresh way the venerable truth of the Reformed confessional heritage, such as the Heidelberg Catechism's *Q/A* 76.

The author's hope is that the various traditions of Christ's church, from Roman Catholic to modern Pentecostals, can unite around the sacrament by seeing it as a prophetic sign. He wishes the Supper to become an area of unity rather than division. Will this little book achieve this goal? Probably not! But the irenic spirit with which it is written commends this book to believers of diverse denominations and theological traditions.

Motyer's volume should serve as an antidote to the neo-Zwinglianism one finds in some churches today. Moreover, the popular style of the book makes its ideas accessible to the person in the pew. It's the sort of work that could grace the shelves of a church library. The preacher will also find some stimulation along

this well-traveled path and some new ways of expressing old truths.

—William H. Kooienga

A Stewardship of the Mysteries by Frank C. Senn. New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999. Pp. viii + 239. \$16.95.

This book is a collection of articles, sermons, and addresses that deal with various aspects of a theology of preaching and of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) in several Protestant traditions, as well as that of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Some of this material was penned some two decades ago. The author describes this volume as "a collection of reflections and suggestions on the management of the word and the sacraments at the center of the church's life and mission." Dr. Senn himself obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame in liturgical studies. He is also the pastor of an Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Evanston, Illinois.

The book's title takes its cue from I Corinthians 4:1, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." Senn regards stewardship in a broader way (care for all the Lord's resources), as well as in a narrower sense (the exercise of the pastoral office in the life of the church). He says, "Stewardship gives expression to the fact that the church and the world are not unconditionally at human disposal, but that they are the Lord's" (p. 3).

This work is divided into four parts. The first part ("Formed by the Word") focuses on the role of the (preached) word in the life of the Christian church. He rightly observes that the "mission of the church is not to grow itself, but to proclaim the gospel of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (p. 6). He adds, "The Holy Spirit works faith in those who hear the word; no preacher or catechist can create faith in another."

In his first chapter ("The Word Becoming Flesh: Preaching that Changes the Church") he calls preachers back to explaining the "old, old story of Jesus" from the biblical text. Personal storytelling belongs elsewhere. The second chapter ("The Process

of Making Christians”) deals with Christian initiation and the growth of the Christian initiate. Senn draws our attention to Matthew 28:16-20 with its threefold focus: make disciples, baptize, and teach the nations. Baptism marks the line between disciples and non-disciples (p. 29). But following baptism there must develop a deepening of faith commitment. The author contends that we do not need more church members but more disciples of Jesus Christ. Likewise, we do not need more “church growth” but more faith formation “adequate to the demands on Christian life and witness in today’s world” (p. 33). Senn spells out the goal of Christian initiation in his third chapter (“Examples of Mystagogy”)—that goal being the disciple’s full incorporation into the eucharistic fellowship of the community. This third chapter is a collection of four sermons that deal with eucharistic frequency (Senn advocates weekly communion), the manner of celebration, as well as the pastoral effect and the missiological impetus of the sacrament of the table.

Part two of the book is entitled, “Approaching the Table.” In this section Senn examines a variety of aspects of the eucharistic celebration. Chapter four deals with “Recovering Our Eucharistic Roots.” Senn explores familiar ground in looking again at the Passover origins of the Lord’s Supper. The *pesach* lamb was a communal meal for all. Furthermore, eating is never wholly utilitarian but often has a symbolic, occasionally reverent, value attached to it. All the more is this true for the Lord’s Supper, which is (among other things) an eschatological meal in which the future is anticipated in the present.

In the fifth chapter (“The Presentation of the Gifts: the Offertory Reconsidered”), Senn discusses Luther’s excision of the offertory and the reasons for it. Presentation of gifts (money, bread, wine) reminds us of the fact that all creation is fallen, but it is sanctified when it is received in thanks and devoted again to God and his use. Chapter six (“Toward a Different Anaphoral Structure”) is a more technical essay dealing with the tripartite form of the Anaphora over against the older bipartite form.

The third part of Senn’s book builds on his earlier discussion under the heading, “Communion with the Lord.” Chapter seven

presents a survey of how the various Protestant traditions responded over the centuries to the question of the frequency of communion. The medieval Roman church had frequent celebration of the Mass with communion, but very few participants. The Protestant Reformers preferred frequent communion (weekly was the ideal for Bucer and Calvin; Zwingli was an exception), with as many communicants as possible participating. Most Protestant traditions ended up with quarterly celebrations (some, monthly). At the chapter's end, Senn raises several thought-provoking questions: Is our observance of communion truly a celebration, a festival? What kind of eucharistic discipline is appropriate so that the mentally and emotionally incapable are not excluded, while at the same time scandalous and unwholesome persons are not included (p. 120)? Is the multiplication of many services really a good thing if that is done to cater to the individualistic tastes and preferences of the worshiper? Do not many services undermine communion by separating congregation and Eucharist? Luther wanted a *single* mass each Sunday (cf. the practice of the ancient church and many other ecclesiastical traditions). Senn concludes the chapter with the comment, "This is a great deal of tradition to go against!" (p. 121).

Developments in Roman Catholic practice are traced in chapter eight. Senn discusses a variety of reasons why the number of communicants dropped off precipitously in the Western church, the chief reasons being the increasingly elaborate celebrations of the mass and greater superstitious beliefs about the elements and consequent fears of mishandling the bread and wine. Participation in communion increased somewhat after Trent (p. 128), but the pageantry of the mass also increased. Tragically, the reception of communion became in effect a private devotion of the faithful, divorced from the eucharistic prayer of the mass itself. The clergy prayed for the people; the people came only to receive the wafer, on the tongue, while kneeling. The Second Vatican Council's reforms stressed the participation of the congregation as the liturgy of the people. Senn offers his own thoughts on how the Roman church might

address a current problem, namely, that of a shortage of priests, suggesting that the church ordain those lay members who have a genuine call to serve the church and that the rule regarding celibacy be relaxed (p. 136).

“The Cup of Salvation” (chapter nine) engages the reader in a reflection upon the use of the common cup in communion settings. The use of individual cups to receive the wine is a relatively recent innovation (ca. 1890 in Maine, then spreading to Reformed and Free churches, p. 141). The symbolism of all participants using one cup is readily apparent, and such use is still common in several communions. The use of an individual cup for each communicant arose because of the fear of spreading disease (e.g., TB), and such fears are current because of the spread of the HIV-virus and AIDS. This raises related pastoral and ultimately theological questions. For example, what happens when persons known to be infected with HIV join in celebration of communion? What posture should a church take when homosexuals participate with other members of the congregation? What theological and pastoral questions arise when some church members then abstain from participation? Senn warns against hysteria over AIDS and urges that pastors use pastoral persuasion with anyone who might want to practice self-excommunication (p. 149). He also raises the interesting question concerning our North American attitudes and cultural biases about pollution (what is “dirty”), coupled with our individualism, and how these have influenced the use of individual cups in communion.

In chapter ten, Senn explores the various issues surrounding “infant communion,” particularly as that issue developed in the Lutheran churches. He is qualified to do so, since Senn served on the Joint Committee to Study Communion Practices during the 1970s when the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church were engaged in union discussions. Senn reports that while it is recognized that first communion followed quickly upon the baptism of infants in the early church, the practice fell off as a realist view of the bread and wine developed. Church leaders were afraid that communicants, particularly

children and especially infants, might spill the communion elements (hence the withholding of the chalice from communicants as well). Lutheran practice in fact varies widely in terms of the age of first communion, all the way from infancy to about age ten (or fifth grade) or even later. Senn also provides the readers with a summary of the paper (No. 109) produced by the Education and Faith and Order sub-units of the World Council of Churches, *And Do Not Hinder Them: An Ecumenical Plea for the Admission of Children to the Eucharist*. Furthermore, the issue has come up again in ELCA and in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (pp. 169, 170). The movement is toward communing those who are baptized.

Having surveyed modern discussions, Senn then engages in a syncretical discussion to arrive at some conclusion. He believes that the “way forward” would be facilitated by understanding the *theology* of the early church and why it practiced infant communion. Senn follows Geoffrey Wainwright at this point, particularly his understanding of the Supper through images of the messianic feast, the advent of Christ, and the firstfruits of the kingdom. The argument here is that the Eucharist is a meal that demonstrates the church’s unity (even creates that unity!). It anticipates Christ’s return (indeed, Christ’s presence in the bread and wine anticipates his *parousia*). And the fruit of communion should be the demonstration of what the firstfruits of the kingdom look like. Cyprian tied John 3:5 and 6:53 together to arrive at the conclusion that both baptism and communion were necessary for salvation. Thus if infants were baptized in the early church (and the documents indicate that they were), then “it would have been inconceivable to baptize infants without communing them” (p. 169). Senn favors communing children but tying it in with both familial and pastoral guidance. Beginning at age four he suggests that a program of regular instruction regarding the meaning of the sacraments be implemented. “There is never a time when Christians should not be returning to the catechism to discover again, and ever more deeply, the meaning of the sacraments” (p. 170).

The fourth section of the book deals with the overarching topic “Stewardship for the World.” Senn’s purpose in these last several chapters is to call our attention to the aftermath of participation in the Lord’s Supper, that is, what follows once the congregation is dismissed to go back into the world.

Chapter eleven (“The Care of the Earth and Eucharistic Elements”) explores the practice of reservation of the communion elements among the various Christian traditions. There is the expectation that there should be “leftovers” in terms of the bread and wine that could be available for those who come late, those who are sick, homebound, or dying. This question is more fully explored in chapter twelve (“Holy Communion Outside the Assembly: Two Models”). Tied in with this is the idea that the elements are created from the earth itself, which is a gift of God. Focus upon the material (matter) of the earth arose during the medieval period when sacramental realism, joined with Aristotelian categories, drew attention to the bread and wine and their consecration into divine substances. Senn is rightly critical of the veneration of the elements of communion. Proper use of communion bread and wine does not consist in gazing upon them in worship but rather in consuming them with faith in the context of the whole congregation of God’s people. More than that, there is an ecological side to communion in that the bread and wine come onto the Lord’s Supper table as the result of man’s industrial efforts. Thus grace makes use of nature to address the believer, who is not only a spirit but also a body. He writes, “Communicants cannot have received the life-giving gift of grace through the sacramental bread and wine without returning to the world to celebrate the world’s sacramental potential as the means of communion with God” (p. 188). A true communicant is thus committed to a proper care of the whole earth.

Senn concludes his book (Chapter thirteen) with a sermon (“Stewards of the Mysteries of Christ”). This sermon was delivered by Senn at the ordination of a friend. Although the sermon is not quite an exposition of a biblical text (three readings are mentioned), in the context of this message Senn reminds the

hearers (and the readers as well) that a minister is not first a servant of the church but rather a servant of Christ. On judgment day it will be Christ who gives the final commendation of those who have served him as stewards of divine mysteries.

Throughout this book Senn shows a good knowledge of church history, both ancient and Reformation periods. There is a wealth of information here that covers a wide spectrum of the Christian church world. This is a decided strength in this book. Almost every question taken up in the several chapters has an historical survey. Senn thus writes as a “catholic” author who is very much interested in what the church at large, and in its earliest centuries, practiced and also the reasons for its practice. This sets the context for his theological reflections.

One can sense the author’s Lutheran theology “in, under, and around” his discussion, but he writes with respect for other Christian traditions, and there is much that Reformed readers can greatly appreciate from what Senn discusses. His central concern is that the preached Word be central in the life of the church and equally that the communion celebration be a genuine, divine meal enjoyed by the whole congregation of the Lord. He pleads with his readers that we not give into the modern temptation to surrender the divine means of grace and replace them with “insights” drawn from communication-theory or a “high-tech form of revivalism that is part of the pragmatic can-do, quick-fix, semi-Pelagian ethos of American culture” (p. 207).

By touching upon such a wide range of topics in this book, Senn opens himself up to the criticism of not delving deep enough into any given area (e.g., the issues of infant communion). Admittedly, each topic could be explored in greater length. Yet the discussions are generally balanced and thought provoking. One need not agree with Senn at every point to profit much from this work.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

An Answer Vnto Sir Thomas Mores Dialogue by William Tyndale. The Independent Works of William Tyndale, edited by Anne M. O'Donnell and Jared Wicks. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000. Pp. xlix + 496. \$79.95 (cloth).

This is a painstakingly edited version—employing original style and spelling—of William Tyndale's refutation of Sir Thomas More's *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*. Tyndale resolved in the early 1520's to make the first English translation of the Bible from the original languages. When Tyndale was executed in Belgium in 1536, he had “rendered half the Hebrew Bible and all the Greek New Testament into clear and vivid English” (p.xxii). Miles Coverdale finished Tyndale's work and a short three years later Henry VIII, who had agreed in Tyndale's condemnation, ordered a copy of the Tyndale/Coverdale Bible chained to every desk in the Anglican Church. In this, Tyndale and his vision triumphed.

Cuthbert Tunstall, then Bishop of London, had included Tyndale's 1526 translation of the New Testament on his list of prohibited books and later commissioned Thomas More to read heretical works and dispute them in English. So in 1529 More published his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* for the Bishop, addressed more to the laity than to the leaders of burgeoning Protestantism in an attempt to bring and keep the laity in line and to inoculate them against Protestant heresies. Not long after Tyndale responded to More, though Tyndale was coming increasingly under official condemnation and More was Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor. Tyndale's *Answer . . . [to] More* provides an excellent window into the convictions of the English Reformer, addressing many of the issues that divided Rome from the Reformers

While Tyndale seeks to defend Protestantism across a broad range of topics—justification by faith alone, Scripture alone, divine election, etc.—what he says about the sacraments and worship is most germane to our purpose. Tyndale argues that even as Old Testament ordinances (circumcision, the paschal lamb, the Sabbath, temple sacrifice) “degenerated into good works to win divine favor” (63/27-68/5), so too with the sacraments of the New Testament at the hands of Rome.

Tyndale taught that the sacraments do not cause grace. Rather, “Baptism shows forth the death and new life of repentance from sin, while the Lord’s Supper signifies that Christ’s body was broken and his blood shed for our sin” (p.xxxiii). Tyndale tended in a Zwinglian direction, though he insisted on the necessity of the Spirit’s work in the sacraments, like Calvin. Tyndale also showed why that the other “sacraments” of Rome were not sacraments at all. Tyndale also sought simple worship, arguing against images and the idolizing of the saints. In short, Tyndale in answering More on the question of sacraments furnishes us with a position neither entirely Zwinglian nor Calvinistic. This book will be of value primarily to scholars though it also has in its prose a wonderful bite to it, entertaining to all who enjoy theological dispute.

—Alan D. Strange

Bij brood en beker. Leer en gebruik van het heilig avondmaal in het Nieuwe Testament en in de geschiedenis van de westerse kerk. Edited by W. van ’t Spijker, W. Balke, K. Exalto, and L. van Driel. 2nd edition. Kampen: Uitgeverij de Groot Goudriaan, 1999. Pp. 457 hardcover, bibliography and name and Scripture indexes. ISBN 9061406625. Gld. 75.00.

The authors of these essays labor(ed) within conservative Reformed circles in the Netherlands. They offer samples of a contemporary Dutch confessional-historical reflection on the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The authors, in the order of their appearance, are J. P. Versteeg, J. van Genderen, K. Exalto, W. Balke, T. Brienens, C. Graafland, A. G. Knevel, and W. van ’t Spijker.

The first edition of this volume appeared in 1980. It belongs to a multi-volume set, accompanied by a volume on baptism, another on the church, and another on spirituality. Plans call for a fifth volume on eschatology. By the time this second edition appeared in print, Prof. Dr. J. P. Versteeg had passed away. This second edition contains a one-page expansion of material contained in the chapter dealing with “The Lord’s Supper in the

19th and 20th centuries” (tucked at the very end of the book, designed to accompany material on p. 323).

The heart of the book consists of essays that examine the Lord’s Supper throughout various periods in church history. These historical studies are preceded by J. P. Versteeg’s fifty-eight page exegetical analysis of the New Testament teaching on the sacrament, and concluded by W. van ’t Spiker’s fifty-seven page pastoral meditation on the classic Reformed liturgical formulary used for the administration of the Lord’s Supper.

The ten historical essays cover the early church, the medieval church, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Scotland (the Erskines), the Dutch Second Reformation (represented by 17th and 18th century writers G. Voetius, W. à Brakel, and J. Verschuur), Willem Teellinck, Petrus Immens, and Dutch developments in the 19th and 20th centuries.

English readers of this review would be served best by reviewing several of the treatments of material unavailable in the English language.

One helpful feature of J. P. Versteeg’s exegetical essay is his extensive discussion of the significance, both in the ancient world and in the life of Jesus, of table fellowship. The Lord’s Supper was instituted in the context and as part of Jesus’ last meal before his death, an important consideration for understanding the essence of the Lord’s Supper. This consideration opens the way for the author’s detailed comparison and analysis of the various narrative reports given by the Gospel writers, of the words spoken by Jesus in connection with the bread and the cup, and of the meaning of “fellowship” in connection with the sacrament. “With bread and cup we remember how redemption is anchored in the past, we proclaim how redemption is experienced in the present, and we anticipate how redemption will be completed in the future. That comprehensiveness of the Lord’s Supper constitutes the richness of celebrating the Lord’s Supper” (p. 64).

Two essays by C. Graafland present a thorough overview of Dutch post-Reformational thought on the Lord’s Supper.

Influenced significantly by English Puritans, Gisbert Voetius (1589-1676) set forth both ecclesiastical practices and personal

spiritual practices connected with the Lord's Supper, the former in his *Politica Ecclesiastica*, the latter in his *Exercitia Pietatis*. He devoted extensive attention to preparing for the sacrament and to post-sacrament meditation and preaching. Voetius led the way in squaring off against the spiritualism and anti-ecclesiastical emphasis of Jean de Labadie (1610-1674), who saw the church as full of unconverted people, with whom then it was impermissible to go to the Lord's table. The meaning and function of the sacraments became the center of dispute between Reformed theologians and Labadist perfectionists and separationists.

Perhaps the most popular among Dutch Reformed writers during this period was Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711), whose frequently reprinted work *LOGIKH LATREIA, dat is Redelijke Godsdiens*t has now appeared in English as *The Christian's Reasonable Service* (four volumes translated by Bartel Elshout, published by Soli Deo Gloria Publications). Brakel's arrangement of material is most worthy of reflection. After Christology he treats Ecclesiology, and thereafter Soteriology. Early in his discussion of Soteriology, Brakel devotes two chapters to the Lord's Supper, including attention to preparation, celebration, and reflection (vol. 2, chapters 40-41). Graafland observes that in comparison to Calvin's unified vision of the objective and the subjective, of doctrine and life, of the ecclesiastical and the personal, Brakel's work evidences a tension, a certain dualism (p. 259) between objective doctrine and spiritual piety or practice. Repeatedly Brakel reminded his readers that the sacraments signify and seal the *promise* of the covenant—an emphasis strong enough to garner him the descriptive title of “covenant theologian.” The appropriateness of this title is confirmed by the full title of his work, *The Christian's Reasonable Service in which Divine Truths concerning the COVENANT OF GRACE are Expounded, Defended against Opposing Parties, and their Practice Advocated as well as The Administration of this Covenant in the Old and New Testaments*.

The Labadist controversy raised the issue of who may go to the Lord's table, especially in terms of the apostolic warning in 1 Corinthians 11 against eating and drinking unworthily. Graafland points out that in answering this question, Brakel, and after him,

J. Verschuur, mistakenly applied this text to the *state* of the unconverted individual, whereas the apostle is addressing the *condition* of the Christian congregation. Put another way: Paul's concern is not *who* may partake of the Lord's Supper, but rather *how* such partaking should occur. Nevertheless, with as much vigor as Brakel opposed the unconverted coming to the sacrament, he insisted that believers may not stay away from the Lord's Supper.

Johan Verschuur (1680-1737) may be characterized, on the basis of his *Bevindelijke Godgeleerdheid*, as the most experimental Dutch theologian of the eighteenth century. Together with W. Schortinghuis (1700-1750), Verschuur belonged to "the Groningen pietists," whose experimental (bevindelijk) influence spread across the northern provinces and into Germany's East Friesland. Verschuur went beyond Voetius and Brakel in explaining salvation more in terms of inner experience, although it is interesting that he organized the whole of Christian doctrine around the idea of the kingdom of God.

In connection with preparing for the Lord's Supper, "the Groningen pietists" taught that the minister was to judge the spiritual state of his church members as a prerequisite for their coming to the table. Consistent with this view of the sacrament was the custom of a four-week preparation for the Supper, during which pastoral and home visits were conducted throughout the congregation and multiple sermons were preached, with the aim of assisting members in evaluating their spiritual state of conversion. By charging the ministers with responsibility for distinguishing the holy from the unholy, Verschuur and the Groningen pietists had moved closer on this point to Labadism than had Voetius and Brakel.

Graafland concludes his survey of these Second Reformation Dutch theologians by observing a development whereby attention in connection with the Lord's Supper gradually moved away from Christ and his redemption to the Christian and his status of worthiness for partaking of the Lord's Supper. This was accompanied by a shift of attention from the table itself to the preparation, especially to self-examination. This, Graafland

argues, demonstrates the increasing influence of Labadism and the increasing spiritualizing of salvation. To the degree that the life of faith is viewed as an inner phenomenon, to that degree the “objectivity” of the sacrament possesses less significance (p. 278).

In his second essay Graafland covers nineteenth and twentieth century developments in the Netherlands in connection with the Lord’s Supper. Among the orthodox pietists, the widespread reticence to partake of the sacrament led to other irregularities, such as disconnecting public profession of faith and table participation, and using the Lord’s Supper apart from the church’s official oversight and regulation. As the twentieth century came to a close, calls to confident table participation were sounded among conservative Reformed people, statistics on table participation were discussed at church synods, and the issue arose as to whether a professing member who did not come to the table could serve in church office.

The twentieth century was marked by another prominent development, reaching far beyond the Dutch churches, namely, the liturgical renewal movement. With remarkable narrative skill, Graafland describes with nuanced sensitivity the liturgical and ecumenical conversations between Roman Catholics and Protestants, especially the Reformed, in the Netherlands. He frankly identifies theological developments on both sides, showing how both sides have significantly and essentially redesigned their respective doctrines of the Lord’s Supper. Common to both is a revised definition of redemption, one where the person is no longer simply the recipient, but also the active participant in redemption (akin to the typical Roman Catholic notion of cooperation). In the Lord’s Supper, the congregation has an active, creative function in the representation of Christ’s work and presence. No longer are human salvation and the Lord’s Supper understood in terms of God’s justification of the ungodly through faith in Christ alone. At bottom, the difference between the Reformed confessional teaching and the modern theological perspective represented in the liturgical renewal movement may be described as the difference between application and participation. The Reformed

confessions teach that in the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit applies to the believer the finished work of Christ and all the benefits deriving from that completed work. Formulations arising within the contemporary liturgical renewal emphasize that in the Lord's Supper, the congregation "does" something constitutive for salvation, and the church participates in bringing salvation to realization within the modern world. Articulate resistance to this theological shift has come from G. C. Berkouwer, H. N. Ridderbos, and A. A. van Ruler.

"The classical Lord's Supper Formulary" is the closing essay, constituting the book's pastoral climax. W. van 't Spijker leads us on a delightful meditative journey through this liturgical form, one of the longest in use among Reformed churches worldwide. Part of his introduction to the history and origin of the Formulary includes an explanation of its function as a tool of *church polity*. Many have forgotten that the pathway to the Lord's table is one of ecclesiastical supervision, examination, and protection. Participation at the Lord's table is a matter of the church's positive exercise of discipline.

The Formulary contains elements drawn from the entire Christian liturgical tradition. The features that may incline some to see it as eclectic may rather be viewed as contributing to its catholicity. Moreover, its strongly pedagogical character justifies describing it as "the official preaching of the church with regard to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper" (p. 374-375). Whereas many consider the classic Baptism Formulary the best known of all the Reformed liturgical treasures, this Lord's Supper Formulary is surely the most beautiful.

The first half of the Formulary calls the congregation to personal self-examination as part of preparing to come to the table, an examination of personal sin and misery, of personal confidence in Christ alone, and of personal resolve to live in gratitude. Hear the clear tones of the Heidelberg Catechism! Employing the sacrament to our comfort requires precisely the same three things as living and dying in the gospel's comfort. Notice the unity between the church liturgy and her confessions!

The focus of self-examination is not on the worthy partaker, but on worthy partaking—an important emphasis given the history of Dutch Reformed orthodoxy. Proper self-examination consists in a true knowledge of ourselves before the face of God (echoes of Calvin!) and a true knowledge of the sacrament as a sign and seal of God’s gospel promise. We learn to know our sin and misery out of the law of God administered by Christ, a knowledge deepened by his cross, the emblem of divine wrath against human sin and at the same time the sign of divine grace unto human redemption. Our Reformed forefathers therefore liked to speak in this connection about “the evangelical unworthiness which cuts more deeply than the unworthiness that is born merely of the law” (p. 383). This means that even when we “see” our unworthiness before the cross of Jesus Christ, we also “see” Christ-for-us, our true comfort and only righteousness.

Most delightful and truly helpful is van ’t Spijker’s commentary on the Formulary’s description of salvation (pp. 384-386). The Formulary echoes Luther’s discussion, in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, of the gospel coming to us in the form of a promise. The classic Lord’s Supper Formulary here emphasizes the central datum of the Reformation: “God has placed himself in relation to man, and continues to do so, in no other way than by the Word of promise. And the opposite is also the case, that we can place ourselves in relation to God in no other way than in the way of faith in the Word of his promise. He doesn’t care about works and he doesn’t need them either. . . . But this is what he needs, that we count him truthful in his promises” (p. 385). The Lord’s Supper provides the believer with a sign and seal of this sure promise, that God has forgiven us all our sins and has imputed to us Christ’s perfect righteousness. In the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, faith is directed to *that* promissory good news!

Because this is primarily a collection of historical essays, the book offers little discussion of the relationship between one’s theology of the Lord’s Supper and one’s view of creation and culture—in other words, between the sacrament and the believer’s faith-obedience in the world of daily life. But in this

historical analysis, other significant theological and practical issues associated with the Lord's Supper that tend to occupy the attention of Bible students and of church elders could have been usefully traced, such as the implications of Judas' participation at the institution of the Lord's Supper and the proper elements to be used in the Lord's Supper.

The book is a well-bound, sturdy hardcover, decorated throughout with attractive prints of woodcuts, relief sculptures, iconography, and title pages drawn from classic works by leading churchmen. It remains puzzling why the endnotes of some chapters are appended directly to the chapters, while the endnotes of other chapters are placed at the end of the book.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

The Oxford Treatise and Disputation: On the Eucharist, 1549 by Peter Martyr Vermigli. Translated and edited with an Introduction and Notes by Joseph C. McLelland. The Peter Martyr Library Volume Seven. Volume LVI Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies. Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2000. Pp. xlvi + 304. \$45.00 (cloth).

Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) was a Florentine humanist, an Augustinian monk, and finally a Reformed theologian, serving the Protestant cause as a contemporary of Calvin. Vermigli, having earned his doctorate after being thoroughly schooled in the Thomistic method and the rigorous Augustinianism of Gregory of Rimini, was ordained to the priesthood in 1525. After laboring in a variety of influential posts within the Roman Catholic Church, enjoying numerous promotions and the like, Vermigli, while prior of San Frediano at Lucca—a most important charge—came to a crisis of conscience when the Inquisition was established in Italy in July of 1542. A month later Vermigli fled Lucca, journeyed across the Alps, and at Martin Bucer's invitation soon found himself in Strasbourg. He labored there for the next five years, lecturing on the Old Testament and then on Romans. In 1548, having received an invitation from Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, Vermigli came to

Christ Church, Oxford, as regius professor. After serving the Protestant cause there for some fifteen years Vermigli returned to Strasbourg in 1553, and a few years later went to Zürich, where he lectured and published his writings on various books of the Bible. He labored in Zürich until his death on 12 November 1562. Vermigli was a Reformed theologian with an international reputation. His importance and influence within the Reformed community extended well into the middle of the seventeenth century. He left behind a large literary corpus.

Thus it is a treat to have Vermigli's writings made available for modern scholars and others interested in the works of this sixteenth-century Reformed theologian. Indeed, we enthusiastically commend the work of the editors, translators, and publishers in making available in this format Vermigli's numerous writings, some of them for the first time. This particular volume, the seventh in *The Peter Martyr Library*, consists of the twin texts "Treatise on the Sacrament of the Eucharist" and "A Disputation on the Sacrament of the Eucharist." It is the first volume in this series devoted exclusively to Vermigli's eucharistic theology—one of the major doctrinal preoccupations of his career.

While in England, in the course of lecturing on 1 Corinthians in 1549, Vermigli held a disputation at Oxford on the Eucharist. As the editors explain in their Preface, this book "represents Vermigli's first public theological debate as a Protestant theologian" (p. xii). Indeed, his reputation as a first-rate theologian was "first established at the famous Eucharistic debate of May 1549 when he single-handedly defended the Protestant understanding of the Lord's Supper against three Catholic opponents" (p. xiii).

It is far beyond the scope of this review to summarize Vermigli's teaching on the Lord's Supper, except to note that it exhibits the influence of Bucer and ends up showing strong affinities to Calvin's position. For example, while seeking to avoid reproving either Luther or Zwingli, Vermigli, nonetheless, distances his position from both of these Reformers. He denies that the body of Christ may be crassly connected with the bread "so that he is contained in it naturally, corporeally, and really" (p.

121). Vermigli thus rejects the Lutheran position outright: the wicked do not “eat” of Christ’s body, and the body of Christ is not “everywhere”; neither is it “scattered through everything or in many places” (p. 122). Meanwhile, Zwingli’s views are likewise suspect. Vermigli believes that it is legitimate and necessary to speak of “a sacramental mutation of the bread and wine.” The cup is the *cup of the Lord*. What is offered to us is not merely holy, but holy of holies. It is incorrect to pretend that what is received in partaking of the elements is nothing more than bread and wine. “Therefore [Zwinglians] have no right to say that this change is a little thing, since it is of great moment.” Although we ought not to “cling too much to symbols,” a remedy is easily found, for Scripture teaches “that Christ is joined to us by an excellent union when we communicate, so that he dwells in us and we in him” (p. 122). “Therefore we must not remove from bread and wine this change by which they are made effective signs of the body and blood of Christ, that is, through which the Spirit of the Lord works in us powerfully and extraordinarily provided we are endowed with faith and piety” (p. 123).

Moreover, through communion we are “incorporated in Christ.” True union with Christ follows as an effect from contact with the elements, a union that is neither fictitious nor imaginary. We are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones. Communicants are incorporated into him “through the sacraments and by faith”—which means “there comes a kind of entrance of Christ into us, and a spiritual contact, which Paul had in mind when he said to the Galatians: ‘Yet now I do not live, but Christ lives in me.’” The presence of Christ, then, is “spiritual” but not “fictional.” “For we declare and insist that these symbols signify, offer, and most truly exhibit the body of Christ, although spiritually. . . .” (p. 124).

This volume contains a helpful introduction by the translator which sets Vermigli’s work in its historical context, introducing readers to Vermigli’s opponents and also to his eucharistic theology as such. The work also includes a Scripture index, an index of names, including classical and patristic references, and a

general subject index. All in all, this handsome book bears all the marks of a well-executed project.

—J. Mark Beach

What Happens in Holy Communion? by Michael Welker. Translated by John F. Hofmeyer. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Cambridge, U.K.: SPCK, 2000. Pp. xi + 194. \$18.00.

Michael Welker, professor of systematic theology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, offers in this study a thorough examination of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He does so not only in the light of biblical and confessional traditions, but also in the context of recent ecumenical discussions regarding different views of the sacrament of holy communion. His aim is to present a theological and practical understanding of this sacrament, which is both consistent with the reformational tradition but anxious to overcome unnecessary divisions within the church over its meaning and administration. He notes, for example, at the close of his introductory chapter, that it is his purpose to "commend" the Reformation's insights while at the same time giving "a more just treatment" to emphases in other church traditions (24).

The outline of Welker's book is shaped by the language of the Scriptural passages which deal with the Lord's Supper (chapter headings include phrases like "do this," "this is my body," "in the night in which he was betrayed," and so on). The twelve chapters are grouped into three parts: the first treats the Lord's Supper as a symbolic meal in which believers give thanks to God; the second focuses upon the sacrament as holy communion in which the presence of Jesus Christ is celebrated; and the third considers holy communion as a feast which celebrates the peace of reconciliation, the hope of the new creation, and the joyful glorification of the Triune God. Contrary to the tendency of various traditions to focus too narrowly on one or another dimension of the sacrament's significance, Welker emphasizes throughout the richness and varied significance of the Lord's Supper. Consistent with the emphases of present ecumenical discussions, the three parts of Welker's study

correspond to the trinitarian structure of the sacrament: thanksgiving to the Creator (*eucharistia*), union and fellowship with the crucified and risen Christ (*anamnēsis*), and joy, peace and hope in the Spirit (*epiklēsis*).

In the first part of his study, which deals with the Lord's Supper as a symbolic meal, Welker accents the reformational insistence that the sacrament is a symbolic meal enjoyed by the gathered community of believers. For this reason, one of the more problematic aspects of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the mass is that it draws a sharp distinction between the consecration of the sacramental elements and their distribution and reception by the believing community. Rather than an active participation in the enjoyment of a thanksgiving meal, the mass focuses upon the sacrament as a renewal of Christ's sacrifice and an offering to God. Unlike the Passover meal, which was the historical occasion for the institution of the Lord's Supper, this meal should be celebrated more frequently (the Supper is more than a New Testament version of the Old Testament Passover). As a thanksgiving and fellowship meal, it obliges its participants to receive all those whom the Lord receives, including those who may seem unacceptable and unworthy.

When he considers the disputed issue of the presence of Christ in the sacrament, Welker begins by noting that the sacramental elements, bread and wine, are more than "mere" symbols. These elements not only visibly represent Christ, but they also mediate his presence and call believers to a thankful recognition of his work on their behalf. According to Welker, the idea of Christ's *personal presence* through the mediation of the sacramental signs is a common starting point of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. Indeed, it is the basis for the realization of a new consensus between these traditions that goes beyond the polemics and disagreements of the sixteenth century. So long as Lutheran and Reformed agree that a personal presence requires a *bodily* presence or being there, it will be commonly admitted that Christ's "essential being" and "the fullness of his person" are given through the sacrament. Within this part of his study, Welker considers the nature of Christ's cross or sacrifice as it is

proclaimed and remembered in the sacrament. The cross, he argues, should not be understood as a “compensation” for human sin or a “satisfaction” of God’s justice. Rather, it represents the costly love of God in exposing self to suffering on behalf of sinners.

The concluding part of Welker’s book addresses the significance of holy communion as a feast which celebrates the reconciliation of all things, including the peoples of the earth. The sacrament is, in this respect, a symbol of hope and expectation for the renewal of all things and the restoration of the peace of the entire cosmos. As such it obligates its participants to be agents of peace and reconciliation, as well as witnesses to the hope of the world’s re-creation by the enlivening power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

As he develops his argument in these three parts, Welker offers a number of interesting and controversial suggestions regarding the administration of the Lord’s Supper. He suggests, for example, that, because the sacrament is a symbolic meal, it ought to be accompanied occasionally by the community of faith eating a fellowship meal. He also maintains that, in certain circumstances, elements other than bread and wine may be used, provided they represent basic nourishment (bread) and festive drink (wine). As a sign of the communion with Christ, it ought also to be open to all, even as the first Supper occurred “in the night he was betrayed” and included Judas who betrayed the Lord, Peter who denied him, and the disciples who also abandoned him. Children, likewise, should be admitted as an acknowledgement of the inclusive fellowship which is the church.

Welker’s study is worth reading, if for no other reason than he provides a stimulating and provocative treatment of the sacrament against the background of recent ecumenical discussions. One of the valuable features of his study is an appendix, which lists the most important documents representative of these discussions from 1931-1990. Though Welker does not write on the basis of an orthodox view of the Scriptures or the Reformed confessions, his Reformed sensitivities are evident in his treatment of the Lord’s Supper. His

study must be read critically, however. For on some subjects he misses the mark rather widely and presents positions that are radically at odds with the doctrine of Scripture and the confessions. This is especially the case when he deals with the nature of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross and the issue of the proper recipients of the sacrament.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Varia

A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World by Marva J. Dawn. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. Pp. viii + 377. \$18.00.

This volume is a fitting follow-up to Marva Dawn's provocative work *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (1995). In *A Royal "Waste" of Time*, the author shows us that worship is a royal activity since it is directed to the King of kings and Lord of lords. As such, it is anything but a "waste" of time. More particularly, Dawn, who is adjunct professor of spiritual theology at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, addresses the worship wars that plague so many churches. Thus, with this book, she earnestly attempts to help churches to reflect biblically and theologically about liturgical issues, to offer tools for conversation between opposing-sides on worship matters, and to urge worship leaders to ask better questions regarding worship itself. In the face of the disagreements that universally afflict churches on worship and the revisions taking place, Dawn expresses concern that "so many decisions are being based on criteria other than the most essential—namely, that God be the Subject and Object, the Infinite Center, of our worship."

Dawn observes that in the eyes of the world the worship of God is simply a royal waste of time—it serves no practical purpose and makes no contribution to society. But is the world right? Dawn's answer is an emphatic, no! In fact, she challenges the utilitarian vision that is the impetus behind such criticism, a

vision that some conscientious Christians inadvertently or implicitly adopt, leading them to gear worship for unbelievers. But the purpose of worship, she writes, “is not to gain numbers nor for our churches to be seen as successful.”

Our worship must be aimed at and launched in a different direction: *God* ought to be worshiped, and for one simple reason: he “deserves it.” The worth of God is the entire reason for worship. Indeed, Dawn’s primary concern, as was the case already in *Reaching Out*, is that worship “lead to genuine adoration of God and faithful formation of his people.” Likewise, as was true in *Reaching Out*, Dawn seeks “to counteract the current push for worship to be the means by which people are attracted to God.” Thus both of her books on worship follow a different path than the “seeker-driven” model.

Yet, Dawn is not pleading for cultural irrelevancy in our worship. She certainly doesn’t believe that authentic worship is isolated from the world of unbelieving neighbors. In fact, her book calls the church back to “being church for the world.” But Dawn has in mind something far grander than crafting a well-thought-out worship service that unchurched folks will appreciate. She calls the church back to community, back to God as the center of the church’s communal existence, back to God’s splendor and to preaching the splendor of his love and mercy, back to the resurrection.

Dawn shows us that the church doesn’t need to “technique” worship. Rather, the church needs her Lord at the center of her life. The church must change from the inside out—becoming more hospitable in her daily life, more courageous to witness, more loving toward her neighbors, and more tactful to speak the truth in love.

What is more, worship is not a matter of “taste.” Says Dawn, the church mustn’t play the role of “vendor,” offering wares for the varied preferences of religious “consumers.” This sends the wrong message to needy human souls. God isn’t merchandise; Christianity isn’t for sell. Consequently, Dawn argues vigorously and persuasively against congregations dividing the Body of Christ into two styles of worship on Sunday morning, the

“traditional” and the “contemporary.” But Dawn is also not pleading for the traditional in opposition to the contemporary. Her burden is more fundamental. Rather than pit traditional and contemporary worship against one another, Dawn bids us to ask ourselves whether our worship preferences are merely a matter of taste. If *taste* determines worship, *God* is no longer our primary concern. It is nothing short of ridiculous to think that God likes to be worshiped only according to our tastes in a particular given time and cultural setting, with a particular instrument or no instrument, using hymns and musical styles from a particular century, and in a particular language. When we absolutize our own tastes, we deny the authenticity of the worship of fellow believers throughout the world.

The book consists of six parts. Part I examines pop spirituality and our postmodern setting, that is, the culture in which the church finds herself and into which she is called to witness and preach. Part II deals with worshiping God, with an accent on the splendor of God; indeed, God must be at the center of the church’s communal life. Parts III-V address the need for the church to learn to BE CHURCH, inasmuch as the church is not a place or a building, or an hour on Sunday morning; instead, church is *what we are* as those “called out” (“*ekklesia*”) by Christ into a way of being in the world to the glory of God and the blessing of our neighbor. BEING CHURCH is a life formed by Scripture. As such, the church’s communal life is distinctive, for God himself is the center of its worship. Part VI examines the implications of the above. The church best serves her neighbors by authentically “being church.” Worship equips believers for faithful service, even for the sake of the world.

Readers will find much to ponder and appreciate in *A Royal “Waste” of Time*. I appreciate the book not because I agree with everything the author says or share her overarching theological perspective, but because she is asking the right questions and sets up an agenda for discussion that cannot help but be fruitful.

—J. Mark Beach

Lifting the Veil: The Face of Truth by William Edgar. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001. Pp. vii + 136. \$10.99.

William Edgar, Professor of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia, PA), has written an apologetic gem. In this slender volume, Edgar assays to “lift the veil” and disclose “the face of truth,” particularly to our post-modern culture. Recently, sadly, some Christian apologists have sought to address the post-modern descent into the abyss of irrationalism by arguing for the recovery of Enlightenment rationalism. They may not put it as boldly as, “We need to return to the good-old days when science reigned supreme, when truth was empirically established and when absolutes were undisputed.” But some Christian apologists these days seem to think that they must first make men empiricists or modernists or rationalists before they can proclaim the gospel. Edgar, thankfully, is not afflicted with this need to lead persons to modernism before leading them to Christ. Here is an apologetic that is presuppositional, or, as Edgar puts it: “Though it is not a book of succinct answers to the long list of objections to the Christian faith, it does provide certain answers by getting first at the root of things” (p. 4).

Edgar does not get at the root of things by using terms like “ontological Trinity” and “self-attesting Christ of Scripture.” He rather gets to the root of the problem of evil (and responses believing and unbelieving), the possibility of truth and its knowability, the question of origins, the challenge of science, and other large questions by addressing people where they are, in the humanities, arts, sciences, and popular culture. He moves deftly from a discussion of Max Planck to a recent film to the paintings of Paul Cézanne. Some of us love it—I must confess that I do—when apologists “talk that apologetic talk” and use terms like “epistemologically self-conscious, *Weltanschauung*,” etc. There is certainly a place for it. There is also a place for what Edgar does in this book: using the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the lyrics of Bob Dylan, and the writings of Camus and Sartre to discuss theodicy. Except he does not call it theodicy. This is an intelligent—yet never technical—book that ranges from Plato to

Kuhn and Monet to Warhol in which Edgar again and again points from every vantage to Christ. To be sure, this book is unlike much that goes under the name of a transcendental apologetic: impressionistic, almost offhanded at points, never offensive or in your face. This may be a model of *sauviter in modo*.

Is this book, though, with its elegant erudition and refined reasoning too subtle as an apologetic, i.e., does it fail to be *fortiter in re*? I do not think so. That it may strike us as somewhat tame for an apologetic in this tradition may say more about us than this book. One might at points wonder if this is not the pre-evangelism approach of Schaeffer who was, after all, greatly influential on our author. But, again, I think not. I think, in several respects, he avoids Schaeffer's errors, though the antithesis is muted at points. I think that this is an applied apologetic that does not compromise truth and challenges unbelief at its root, doing so with love, compassion, and sweet reason, yet firmly and convincingly.

Edgar's style is truly delightful and some of his insights approach poetry in the felicity of their expression. He well understands the false dichotomies that afflict us on every hand, especially pertaining to truth: Truth is neither personal (as post-modernists would have it) or propositional (as modernists would have hit)—rather it is both. The truth is a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. And he alone can quench our thirst for meaning, significance, etc. He alone can save us from our sin. He alone is the Lord. Edgar is not an empiricist who thinks that the “facts speak for themselves,” nor a rationalist who believes in absolutes outside of God and who believes that God can be reduced to a syllogism.

Edgar points us time and again to the Scriptures—God's revelation—and invites us to believe. He rightly understands that God is incomprehensible and that we cannot fathom his ways. We can worship him, though, who is only wise and who understands what we do not. More than that, we know that he is not only great but is also good and it is that very goodness that leads us to repentance. Nowhere is that goodness manifest more than in the face of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the face of

truth, the truth that though we have done our very worst (in Adam and in our own miserable lives), our Father has given us his very best in his Son by whose merits and mediation we receive all the blessings of heaven. This is a book to give to unbelievers so that they may be challenged to believe and repent. This is a book for believers to read so that they may know better how to deal with unbelievers and to rejoice at all that they have as those who abide in the Truth.

—Alan D. Strange

ReViewing the Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film by Peter Fraser and Vernon Edwin Neal. Focal Point Series. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000. 187 pp. Index. \$12.99.

“One problem we seem to have in the modern American church is an inability to accept the world as it exists. We prefer tidier stories with cleaner resolutions and air-brushed images of ourselves rather than the harsh snapshots that catch us as we are, blood of Jesus or no blood of Jesus” (p. 19).

With this tiresome brickbat, the authors open their discussion of the relationship between Christianity and film. An oft-repeated accusation among evangelical movie defenders, whose proof I kept seeking as I read the book, and even now whose truthfulness is more dubitable than before. Here’s why.

The implication of this claim is that movie producers are seeking to show us the real world with all its dirty, unresolved dilemmas—to show it like it is. By contrast, many Christians dislike being entertained by graphic portrayals of reality, especially real sinful actions, most particularly profanity, illicit sex, and violence. So the book’s basic premise is that whereas Hollywood advocates reality, the church defends morality. It’s time for Christians to grow up.

For these authors, growing up means, among other things, that we learn to understand movies as an art form, like paintings, poetry, and plays. “Film, as is true of all art forms, should create or reflect a world that rings true, a world fallen and in need of grace, a world in which the only hope for resolution and individual salvation *is* the Gospel” (p. 34). To be genuinely

artistic, films need to be *truthful*. The most fundamental measurement Christians can apply to a movie is the question: Does it lie? This, the authors insist, is the crucial artistic question.

The authors claim that Christians tend to respond to films by rules and not by principles. Rules permit misdeeds to be quantified—the number of swear words, whether nudity occurs, the number of violent scenes. But, these writers reply, quantification is not a mark of goodness. Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* uses the word *nigger* over two hundred times (leading many American libraries to remove the book), yet the novel actually promotes racial reconciliation: Huck’s best friend is the slave Jim, and the devotion of friendship will not permit Huck to return Jim to slavery. There is a place, say the authors, for violence and sexuality in art, if art is to be truthful (p. 66). After all, this feature and texture characterizes the Old Testament. “The problem is not so much the presence of violence and sexuality in film; the problem is how and why the violence and sexuality are played out as they are. Unfortunately, here is where Christians need to think in terms of principles and not rules. Each film needs to be viewed according to its own special design” (p. 67).

The power of cinema lies in its iconographics. The symbols on screen look like what they represent. As with theater, real people represent other people. In connection with theater productions, “[w]e see the limitations of the set and the textures of costume and makeup. Not usually in film. In film there is seeming reality. The type of symbolism inherent in film is called iconic. Things are represented by other things like them” (p. 100). “A child does not discriminate as an adult does between the play and the reality behind the play. The play is the reality” (p. 102).

But when it comes to movies, the questions with which many Christians struggle are these: What *is* cinematic truth and where is a movie’s truth to be found? How can we understand what a movie is *saying*? What constitutes a *cinematic lie*?

To answer these questions, the Christian community will need more than this book supplies. We will need further instruction in learning to describe and understand the contours of cinematic reality. For in the debate between some Christians

whose general stance toward contemporary cinematography is one of approval and other Christians whose overall attitude is one of aversion, the demarcation may be differing views of cinematic reality and artistic truthfulness. What, in fact, are we seeing when we see a film? Does a movie express multiples levels of reality, and therefore of truth? How does one evaluate the fictional reality of cinema in terms of truth-categories?

For example, is the 1997 movie *Titanic* truthful or deceitful? The film is about . . . well, let's see now, just what *is* the film about? Is it *really* about the ship Titanic that sank in the north Atlantic in 1912?

In the scene where Jack and his friend are standing on the bow looking at the dolphins swimming ahead of the ship, the dolphins are Pacific white-sides, not any species found in the Atlantic. Later, when Rose was threatening to jump, Jack spoke to her of the man-made lake near his hometown of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, where he had gone ice fishing—but the lake was filled in 1917, five years after Titanic sank. Another time, Rose is telling someone about Freud's ideas on male sexuality—but in 1912 Freud had not yet published *The Pleasure Principle* (1920), and before then his work had relied solely on studies of females. (You'll find a sizeable catalogue of movie mistakes, including more than one hundred twenty-three in *Titanic*, at <http://www.movie-mistakes.com/links/topfilms.htm>.)

Anyone with a firm grasp of the history of early twentieth-century oceanic species, Belfast shipbuilding, Wisconsin geography, and Freudian psychology will be in a good position to evaluate the artistic—i.e., cinematic—truthfulness of the movie *Titanic*.

Such knowledge helps demythologize the medium of film. And that's the enterprise we Christians really need to undertake. For with their tedious criticism of the church's queasiness, the authors perpetuate the suggestion that the medium of film is truly capable of portraying "the world as it exists," and that movie editors are merely splicing "harsh snapshots that catch us as we are." Such assumptions are simply wrong because they are reductionistic. Historiography presents the archivist's *interpretation*

of reality. Similarly, cinematography presents the producer's *interpretation* of reality. No camera can possibly "catch us as we are," because every camera decontextualizes and thereby limits its subject. Every photograph re-presents an isolated reality. Movies simply do it faster, and the edited series of fast-moving images constitutes and communicates a *conjured* or *fictional* reality, which needs to be distinguished then from "real" reality.

Knowledge of cinematography helps to demystify movies, if only by helping us understand the language of cinematic communication, including that of various movie genres. To most movie viewers, *Titanic's* "mistakes" are just as acceptable as those talking animals in *Aesop's Fables* are to most readers. Fortunately, several parts of the book under review supply a beginning knowledge to help us in the project of demythologizing the medium. The technical analysis, in chapter 2, of the language of film is helpful. Using numerous illustrations taken from movies old and new, the authors introduce us to the techniques of shot composition, photography, motion, editing, sound, acting, and story. The project of demystifying movies is advanced when the authors observe that "much of film's power to move us and create meaning grows out of its editing, the manner in which images are spliced together. It is through editing that the filmmaker often tells us how to understand what we are being shown" (p. 53).

However, comparing contemporary cinematic violence and sexuality to the violence and sexuality described in the Old Testament seems breathtakingly shallow. Given its biblical context, how does the "truth" of David's adultery with Bathsheba compare with the "truth" of Jack's backseat fornication with Rose in *Titanic*? Given its covenantal-historical context, how does the "truth" of Israel's slaughter of the Canaanites compare with the "truth" of the bloody carnage shown in *Rambo* movies? If the best answer available is that contemporary movies show how our culture worships sex without consequences and bloodshed as self-expression, then the real question becomes: Do we need to learn that "truth" visually? Given the power of film, *should* we?

Unfortunately, there is in this book an unresolved ambivalence toward Hollywood's movies. Few would deny Hollywood's pervasive hostility against the Christian faith, an anger both formed by and formative of the Western cultural revolution of the 1960s. Yet, any analysis of this anti-Christian hostility in contemporary film remains undeveloped in this volume. Rather, we receive a series of mixed signals.

After discussing a number of features characteristic of the horror/slasher genre, illustrated with mention of movies like *Scream*, *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and *Nightmare on Elm Street*, one writer comments: "I wouldn't recommend that anyone go to any of the films just mentioned, but I think it is a mistake for Christians to dismiss them without thought. These films teach us some very valuable lessons about our world. In particular this horror/slasher genre teaches us that many young people are simply afraid of the consequences of the sexual freedom they have been pushed to accept" (p. 83). Even the ever-popular romance genre (such as *Titanic* and *Pearl Harbor*) helps us recognize "how desperately all people long for a fellowship that transcends common human experience. People are lonely and long for permanence in love, and so they long for God, sometimes at the same time running from Him" (p. 91). The bad contained in many movies can serve to remind us that Hollywood's dreams can never come true in a fallen world desperately needing to embrace Jesus Christ.

Sadly such conclusions do not really comport with the Bible. To say that the cinematic portrayal of various sins illustrates how such sinners are yearning for God, and that such portrayals can actually serve to remind us of Hollywood's emptiness, strikes one as a strange doctrine of sin and a naïve view of the serviceability of evil. This is like saying that idolaters are really religious people and can help us learn how empty paganism can be. One would have thought the Bible describes fornicators and adulterers as rebelling against God rather than longing for him. Apart from Christ, sinners hate God and their neighbors.

Underlying these misleading conclusions is a seriously mistaken understanding of Philippians 4:8, one that turns the text

on its head! We are told that this text requires not that we condemn violence and sexuality in art wherever it is found, but rather that we promote and dwell on art's positives—the good, true, noble, and praiseworthy. I'm unaware of any Christian who condemns violence and sexuality in art wherever it is found. The issue is violence and sex *portrayed in film*. And the unstated conclusion, that if you can justify viewing the sculpture of *David*, then you shouldn't object to cinematic frontal nudity, simply does not follow. Moreover, a careful reading of Philippians 4:8 will show that the apostle is encouraging us to distill “whatever is excellent and praiseworthy” *not from what is bad* (namely, sin) nor from portrayals thereof, but only from what is *true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good repute*. To argue that cinematic portrayals of sinful actions are or can be true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good repute, from which portrayals we must learn excellent and praiseworthy lessons, is to beg the question. That circuitous logic is precisely what disturbs many Christians about some Bible-based justifications for watching movies that portray sinful actions.

At one point, the book acknowledges that God seems to have abandoned the film industry and surrendered it to its own depravity. Yet, surprisingly this admission is followed immediately with the claim that Christians have a kind of cultural obligation toward the film industry (to be salt and light). The church must influence film production as it has done throughout the centuries for other arts.

One solid contribution Christians can make to this cultural enterprise is to continue demanding that entertainment elevate public tastes and cultivate common virtue by, among other things, not glamorizing sin and licentiousness. Yes, in real life some people do not exercise self-control, over their tongues or their sexuality. But movie producers are quite capable of capturing such realities by indirection and suggestion, and should in this way seek to satisfy the demands of cinematic art. Nobody should expect movies to ignore the “real” reality of sin. However, because sin's *ugliness* and sin's inevitable *consequences* are part of that reality, films should move us to be repelled by such ugliness

and frightened by such consequences. The reality is that many sinners see their sin as glamorous and free of consequences. So the truthful question becomes: When the techniques, or form, or content of cinematic entertainment imitate such glamorous and pain-free sin, who really is refusing to accept the world as it exists, preferring air-brushed images rather than harsh snapshots?

The strength of the authors' analysis would have been doubled if they had interacted with the writings of other contemporary religious critics of the film industry. The strength of its bibliography is the list of resources useful for understanding the "language" of film. Noticeably absent, however, are references to well-documented presentations by religious writers like Michael Medved (*Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values*), Quentin Schultze (*Television: Manna from Hollywood?, American Evangelicals and the Mass Media*), and Leland Ryken (*The Liberated Imagination*). Finally, the editor(s) should have repaired the repeated use of the nonstandard adverb "irregardless" and several grammatical blunders.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

A Confessing Theology for Postmodern Times. Edited by Michael S. Horton. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000. Pp. 256. \$17.60 (cloth).

The title of this book is in some ways quite accurate. It is a book whose chapters address the subject of what a confessing theology would look like in the context of the contemporary intellectual world. It addresses the peculiar challenges to Christian theology which are characteristic of "postmodernism." In other ways, however, the title might be regarded as a little misleading. The chapters, each written by a different author, do not offer in any substantive sense a confessing theology. Rather, they address the contemporary challenges and opportunities for the construction of a confessional theology. This is, accordingly, a book that addresses questions of theological method and prolegomenon. It does not pretend to provide an example of the

kind of theology that the majority of authors argue we need in the present context.

The chapters of the book are the fruit of an informal conference held in the summer of 1998 under the auspices of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals (ACE). Each of the participants in the conference authored a presentation related to the general theme—how a contemporary systematic and confessional theology could be formulated upon the basis of the historic norms and resources of the Christian tradition. According to the editor, Michael Horton, Associate Professor of Apologetics and Theology at Westminster Seminary in California, the aim of the conference was to explore the way in which “the practice (indeed, the very idea) of systematic theology in a postmodern context” could be pursued (p. 10). All the participants in the conference were committed to this aim with the exception of Edgar McKnight, author of *Postmodern Use of the Bible*, who presented the case for and challenge of postmodern literary theory to the assumptions of historic Christian theology. In his introduction to the book, Horton notes that this conference was the first in a projected series of studies. Subsequent conferences will consider different topics or theological loci beginning with the doctrine of God.

In his brief introduction to the various contributions of the authors, Horton indicates that they address the prospects for “new efforts in systematic and dogmatic theology which take serious account of three factors: (1) our resources (Scripture, as well as our own historical theologies); (2) our challenges (knowing that this is hardly external to the process of interpretation itself); (3) our opportunities (knowing that both naïve optimism and narrow pessimism continue to intimidate some from pursuing a critical-constructive path)” (p. 11). These three factors are addressed in the three major divisions of the book.

Part One of the book consists of three chapters on the subject of resources. Each of these chapters addresses the question of the foundational sources and norms for Christian theology, particularly for a systematic or dogmatic theology.

Charles P. Arand, who teaches systematic theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, writes the first chapter on the subject, "The Church's Dogma and Biblical Theology." J. A. O. Preus III, president of Concordia University in Irvine, California, contributes a chapter on "Sources of Lutheran Dogmatics: Addressing Contemporary Issues with the Historic Christian Faith." The third chapter is authored by Richard A. Muller, who teaches historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, and deals with the subject of the "Sources of Reformed Orthodoxy: The Symmetrical Unity of Exegesis and Synthesis."

In Part Two of the book, several chapters are included on the challenges to the construction of a new systematic or dogmatic theology in the postmodern era. The first of these is a provocative contribution by Edgar V. McKnight, "A Defense of a Postmodern Use of the Bible." This is followed by a chapter by Richard Lints, who teaches theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, on the subject, "The Vinyl Narratives: The Metanarrative of Postmodernity and the Recovery of a Churchly Theology." D. G. Hart, professor of church history at Westminster Seminary in California, contributes a chapter on "Overcoming the Schizophrenic Character of Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition." This part of the book concludes with a chapter by R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, "Reformist Evangelicalism: A Center Without a Circumference."

Part Three of the book includes several chapters on widely diverging themes, all of them collected under the rubric of opportunities for a construction of systematic theology in the face of the challenges of postmodernism. The first of these chapters is written by David P. Scaer, professor of theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, and addresses the question, "Is Reformation Theology Making a Comeback?" Paul F. M. Zahl, dean of the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, writes a chapter on the subject, "Full Circle: 'Confessing' Mainliners." The editor of the book, Michael Horton, writes a chapter on "Yale Postliberalism: Back to the Bible?" Paul R. Raabe, professor of Old Testament at Concordia

Seminary in St. Louis, addresses the subject, “Reintegrating Biblical Theology and Dogmatics.” This section is then concluded with a chapter by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, on the theme, “Redemption and Resurrection: An Exercise in Biblical-Systematic Theology.”

I take the trouble to list all of these individual contributions to this study to illustrate the remarkable breadth of subjects addressed, as well as the number of competent authors representing different wings of the evangelical and confessional churches in North America. One benefit of reading this collection of essays is the sampling it provides of the thinking of some of the keenest theologians in North America who represent the vitality of the confessional traditions of historic Lutheranism and Calvinism. I also list these contributions to justify my decision not to attempt a summary of the thesis and arguments of each of the chapters. The articles are too wide-ranging and densely argued in many instances to allow for a simple summary in a review such as this.

The one significant weakness of this collection of essays is the absence of a more substantial introductory essay. Throughout the book, the intellectual world identified as “postmodern” is everywhere assumed but never actually defined in any systematic and careful way. The reader is left to surmise or induce from a number of scattered comments what postmodernism is. Though its reality is taken for granted, the reader is left somewhat unsure as to what it might be. As a result, little or no attention is given to the idea that “postmodernism” may not be so much “post” as a continuation in a new and more radical vein of the basic worldview characteristic of modernism since the Enlightenment.

The failure to provide a more comprehensive sketch of what the authors mean by postmodernism is highlighted by the absence in these essays of any sustained consideration of a question that postmodernism raises—are the claims of Christian theology *true*, and if so, in what sense are they true? Postmodernism is often thought to be a development that “opens the door” to an orthodox and confessional theology

precisely because it maintains a strict relativism. Because no one has a corner on the truth, and because there are no objective and rational standards that warrant our beliefs—every worldview and intellectual position has a privileged and protected place. A confessional theology, which is derived from Scripture and articulated in terms of the great confessions of the Reformation, is simply, from the standpoint of postmodernism, one example of a faith community articulating its belief system. However, there are many other such belief systems, each of which has its own coherence and integrity from within its particular worldview. A plurality of worldviews, not one of which is objectively “true,” is affirmed. The question of truth is necessarily bypassed. The opportunity postmodernism affords Christian theology, therefore, is also accompanied by the perilous concession that a confessional theology expresses only the peculiar perspectives of a single faith community. Though postmodernism invites the formulation of such a confessional theology, it also demands that it relinquish the claim to be true in any normative sense. This collection of essays, though it occasionally grapples with this important question, does not address it in an altogether satisfying answer.

Despite these limitations, I highly recommend this collection of essays to anyone who shares the authors’ interest in and commitment to the task of a contemporary construction of a biblically responsible and confessionally rooted systematic theology.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Religion, Pluralism, and Public Life: Abraham Kuyper’s Legacy for the Twenty-First Century. Edited by Luis E. Lugo. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000. Pp. 385. Index. \$28.00.

Two historical realities, three academic organizations, and twenty-one authors come together in this stimulating discussion whose relevance may well continue long into this new century.

The two historical realities are, on the one hand, the life and work of the prominent Dutch theologian and statesman, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), and on the other hand, the

ineluctable sociopolitical challenges facing contemporary democratic societies around the globe. Pooling academic and organizational resources were the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship, Princeton Theological Seminary, and the Center for Public Justice. These twenty-one essays arose out of a conference held in February 1998 at Princeton Theological Seminary to commemorate the centenary of Kuyper's Princeton Stone Lectures, published as *Lectures on Calvinism*.

The opening set of four essays introduces us to Kuyper by locating him within his own time. In "Abraham Kuyper: Puritan, Victorian, Modern," James D. Bratt draws together with sparkling narrative style various historical influences that brought about a key shift in intellectual history during Kuyper's generation (though in contrast to its title, the essay moves from Victorian to modern to Puritan influences). Peter S. Heslam draws on his doctoral work to examine the Dutch-American theological connection memorialized by Kuyper's 1898 visit to Princeton, where the "wellsprings" of American Presbyterian theology (B. B. Warfield) and of Dutch Reformed theology commingled to resist the corrupting spirits of the day. Our readers should take careful note of Heslam's comparative analysis of Warfield and Kuyper on the issues of evolution, apologetics, and the relation of science and faith. Dutch historian and professor Jan de Bruijn reminds us in his essay that "anyone who wishes to understand Kuyper's complex character and the contradictions that were both his strength and weakness cannot ignore the fact that this Calvinist was a dyed-in-the-wool Romantic, with all the qualities this implied" (p. 46). Kuyper's remarkable sensitivity for historical development and political symbols enabled him to fill the roles he did. Those roles included, as Mary Steward Van Leeuwen informs us, being a husband and a father, one whose persisting journalistic and political interest in family, class, and gender was driven both by a passion for democratic justice and by a fear of the corrosive effects upon marriage and family of public democracy.

One can appreciate the difficulty of arranging these essays by observing the overlap among the remaining sections. Four

contributions comprise Part II, “Theology and Public Discourse,” followed by four more under the rubric “Spheres of Justice and Civil Society,” then three pieces assigned to “Religious Pluralism and the Demands of Democracy,” leading to four essays in the area of “Globalization and the Emergence of a Transitional Society.” James W. Skillen wraps up with a concluding essay, “Why Kuyper Now?”

Perhaps we can incite you to pick up this book best by summarizing some remarkable conclusions constructed, documented, and applied throughout these essays.

No fewer than three essays contain in their titles the phrase “sphere sovereignty,” a Kuyperian notion to which I was introduced some years ago with the help of repeated chalkboard drawings in the college classroom of Dr. Gordon Spykman. In one way or another, most of the pieces in this collection analyze or apply Kuyper’s teaching on sphere sovereignty—its root or its fruit—because each of them examines some facet of either the comprehensiveness or the integration of Kuyperian thought. As Richard Mouw notes in his very useful reflections on the matter, Kuyper’s teaching on sphere sovereignty has been refined, through constructive criticism, into a “hermeneutic for modal discernment” that can help us sort out the complexities of our modern social existence. According to John Bolt, Kuyper’s doctrine of sphere sovereignty underlies his affinity to Pope Leo XIII in their shared antipathy to socialist/collectivist solutions to the problems faced by the working poor, and may make a solid contribution to formulating an effective American public theology. In fact, Elaine Storkey claims that the decisive feature of Anglo-American culture has been its failure to grasp Kuyper’s sociopolitical insights, especially his principle of sphere sovereignty which offers a valuable critique of and foundation for understanding and ordering human institutions.

The usefulness of these insights is well illustrated by the helpful introduction to the political-philosophical thought of Johannes Althusius (1557-1638) by Free University of Amsterdam Professor of Political Philosophy Henk E. S. Woldring, in his essay “Multiform Responsibility and the

Revitalization of Civil Society.” Society consists of many different spheres of human activity, each in need of its own autonomy and authority, each united by the principle of subsidiarity which views the role of the state in a way that transcends both libertarianism and collectivism. As Alexis de Tocqueville observed, there is a hierarchic order of state and civic associations insofar as the state uses the system of law to create conditions where these associations can enjoy their own rights and fulfill their own responsibilities. The state, according to Woldring, should actively support its citizens by the rule of law, by upholding basic social standards, by providing infrastructural networks, by creating the preconditions for health care and education, and by defending the cause of the poorest and weakest in society.

The correlate of sphere sovereignty is sphere universality, a notion that M. Elaine Botha wishes to emphasize in the face of contemporary problems emerging in postmodern, pluralist, globalist social theory. A Christian social philosophy should highlight boundaries and limits that differentiate institutions; but in an effort to engage postmodernism and pluralism, it should also formulate the multiplicity and multivalence embedded within God’s creation, within God’s law, and within human society.

Though Kuyper eloquently praised the Calvinist-Puritan roots of the American experiment in human liberty (John Witte, Jr.), he allegedly showed incredible naiveté in extolling European cultural and intellectual superiority while largely ignoring the plight of Native Americans and emancipated African slaves in America (Peter J. Paris, who in 1998 summoned Princeton to disassociate itself from Kuyper’s anthropological views). This latter contribution marks a turn in the book, where now we are offered treatments that vigorously reject aspects of Kuyper’s sociopolitical philosophy (Peter Paris, H. Russel Botman, who calls for a recontextualization of Reformed theology for a post-Kuyperian worldview), that largely ignore Kuyper altogether (M. Thomas Thangaraj, Daniel J. Elazar), or that extend Kuyper’s principle to fit the dimensions of modern global political theory (Bob Goudzwaard).

In an essay plunked in the middle, unrelated to issues of public theology or social philosophy, Harriet Harris challenges the consensus among historians that B. B. Warfield and Kuyper shared the same view of Scripture. For Kuyper, Scripture's authority had to be experienced in relation to Christ himself; it had to be experienced internally. Because this authority cannot be based upon the external phenomena of Scripture, it cannot be demonstrated or proven. Scripture "comes to life through the power of the Holy Spirit in the soul of those who experience the living Christ, and it is the Word of God only as it does so" (p. 141). Though Kuyper agreed with Warfield that the biblical autographs were infallible, Harris finds this element in Kuyper's doctrine of Scripture both unclear and inconsistent with his wider thought. With regard to his doctrine of inspiration, Kuyper attempted to develop a subjectivism that was not individualistic, something Harris terms "a collective subjectivity," mediated by the one Holy Spirit in a way that refracts light away from the Bible toward Jesus Christ, the true content and Subject of Scripture.

We close by noting several curiosities, and registering our sincere commendation.

Kuyper's legacy is vigorously and variously championed in North America among a number of academic institutions, schools like Dordt College, Redeemer College, or the Institute for Christian Studies. Both the conference and this resulting volume could have been strengthened by dialogue with academicians associated with these schools, if only to clarify, expand, and deepen our recognition of Kuyper's full teaching.

A second curiosity involves the matter of sources. These essays scarcely mention any non-translated Dutch sources or writings of Kuyper. Specifically, no author interacts with Kuyper's monumental multi-volume works of *Gemene gratie* and *Pro Rege*. The ideas found in these works have nurtured and sustained continuing use of Kuyper's thought in North America as much, if not more than, his Stone Lectures. Peter Heslam may be right that in sponsoring the 1898 Stone Lectures, Princeton gave Americans the essential Kuyper. However, to employ a

favorite Kuyperian metaphor, because any fruit severed from its root will soon wither, careful examination, among North Americans, of the exegetical-theological roots of Kuyper's sociopolitical thought is long overdue.

We commend the editor, Luis E. Lugo, and the publisher, William B. Eerdmans, for making these essays available. The fruit of their labor is indeed tasty, pleasant, and nutritious.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Changes in the Years 1950 to 2000 by Iain H. Murray. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000. Pp. x + 342. \$13.26 (cloth).

In this work Iain Murray undertakes to describe and document the serious weakening in the evangelical front in the British Isles and North America that took place during the period of 1950 to 2000. The main point for Murray is that evangelicals in these crucial years at the end of the “Christian” Century have given up its distinctive definition of what it is to be a Christian. He avers that the main catalyst of change in policy for evangelicals in Britain and America was their acceptance of the main ecumenical pre-condition that no person's claim to be a Christian may be questioned. The main question is thus, for Murray, “What is a Christian?” (cf. Chapter 6).

The book starts out by showing how liberal theology in the person of Friedrich Schleiermacher divorced faith (“feeling, intuition and experience”) from doctrine (“truth”) (cf. pp. 5-8). “In his separation of the intellectual content of Christianity (the objective biblical revelation) from Christian ‘feeling’, Schleiermacher seemed to provide a means whereby the essence of Christianity could remain unaffected, no matter how much the Bible was rejected” (p. 11). This perspective is what makes ecumenism possible, as Murray points out (p. 3): “The first assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948 offered membership to ‘churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour’, but expressed no concern whatever about how these few words should be interpreted. Rather there was the

assurance, 'the basis is not a creedal test to judge churches or persons'. The only belief which appeared to be sacrosanct was that the Christian standing of all participants should not be open to doubt." The rest of the book traces out how evangelicals from the 1950's onward began slowly to accept that it is possible to be a Christian without holding to evangelical convictions, and thus, accepting the main presupposition of liberalism and ecumenism.

In reaction to the narrowness and isolationism of fundamentalism the 'new evangelicalism' sought to promote evangelical truth more broadly. This is evident in the policies of Harold J. Ockenga and E. J. Carnell at Fuller Seminary whose aim it was "to see a renewal of evangelical witness in the mainline denominations" (p. 21). To achieve this Fuller had to obtain the accreditation of the American Association of Theological Schools, that is to say, they had to be accepted by the largely non-evangelical American theological establishment (p. 22). The only way to gain this wider acceptance was to tone down the evangelical distinctives (pp. 188-89). This desire for 'intellectual respectability' ultimately led to a serious undermining of the doctrine of Scripture in the Evangelical community as a whole (cf. Chapter 7).

One of the main promoters or catalysts of this new openness of the 'new evangelicalism' was Billy Graham. He had a broad policy of permitting a wide range of personalities of very diverse convictions, including some Roman Catholics and some liberal Protestants, to support his evangelical crusades and to appear with him on the platform. This is already evident at the 1954 Greater London Crusade at Harringay and the 1957 crusade in Manhattan, New York (pp. 29-35). The co-operation of evangelicals and non-evangelicals at Billy Graham's crusades have led to the blurring of the lines which traditionally distinguished the two. Even his method of evangelism, the "invitation" system, encouraged a certain superficiality in the call of the gospel, neglecting the importance of repentance and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. This system equates "coming to Christ" with "coming to the front" (p. 51). Saving faith is here reduced to

a physical decision, and rebirth to the answering of the altar call. This had lead many who were not truly regenerate to view themselves as “saved” because they had “come forward” in a crusade (pp. 51-54). Thus was clearly a jettisoning of the biblical, supernatural view of what it meant to be a Christian. A Christian became now one who has made a decision for Christ.

This weakening of the biblical idea of a Christian, as well as the tendency to blur the lines between evangelicals and non-evangelicals by Billy Graham set the stage for the downgrading of evangelical distinctives in Britain. It was his 1954 Greater London Crusade at Harringay (pp. 33-35) which prepared the way for the Anglican Evangelicals at NEAC 1 (Keele) in April 1967 to “repent and change” their “narrow partisanship and obstructionism” (Stott, p. 42). The Anglo-Catholic Archbishop Ramsay in his opening address “reminded his hearers that ‘experience’ goes before ‘theology’, and he made it clear to the congress that if evangelicals were really prepared to play a full part in the life of the Church of England they must turn their back on their old exclusiveness, ‘We are all called as Christians and as Anglicans to be learning from one another’” (p. 43). It was John R. W. Stott and J. I. Packer who lead the way in accepting this new challenge of ‘Co-operation without Compromise’ (p. 89). But as Murray goes on to indicate this new approach has lead to a serious eroding of a clear evangelical stance (cf. 88ff.). This erosion was so thorough that at NEAC 2 (Nottingham) in 1977 the very term “Evangelical” became problematic (pp. 108-109). David Wells (p. 109) explains this change as follows: “at its heart was the change from an essential confessional movement to one that, on its own terms and through its own ecclesiastical culture, had become transconfessional [that is, ready to embrace divergent beliefs].” So it was that evangelicals like James Barr, and J. D. G. Dunn began to question the authority and verbal inspiration of Scripture (pp. 181-185).

One of the shifts Keele brought, which Murray criticizes, is the movement to regard baptism as “the visible sign of a Christian” and the necessary imperative flowing from this that we must practice unity with all the baptized (pp. 99, 101). For

Murray, this is a clear break with the Reformation and a movement toward Anglo-Catholicism, even a movement toward Roman Catholicism itself. The movement towards Rome was also evident in America with the signing of ECT in which some evangelicals participated, most noticeably J. I. Packer (pp. 221-241).

Murray does a fine job in showing how Evangelicals, in general, have compromised the truth in their search to have a broader voice. The book is very well documented, and presents a good picture of where the truth has been jeopardized by even those who are regarded as conservative Evangelicals during the last few decades. In light of this I believe it is an important book and ought to be read if one wishes to understand the current plight of the church in the West.

However, I judge there to be at least one serious flaw in Murray's analysis, for the author does not escape what may be called the Achilles heel of evangelicalism: the reduction of full biblical truth and confessional Christianity to the narrow banks of soteriology. Murray, in reducing his analysis to the proper definition of a Christian, does not do justice to the way in which the fullness of biblical truth is compromised. Indeed, his own approach is itself a compromise so distortion is introduced into the analysis and critique of evangelicalism he offers. Murray, in following Lloyd-Jones, makes experiential soteriology fundamental to ecclesiology. Soteriology, then, takes precedence over ecclesiology (cf. Chapters 6 & 10). That is why he seems to have no place for the sacraments as a means of grace (cf. pp. 99-101). This low view of the Church is endemic in evangelicalism and in my judgment constitutes its main problem.

The problem is not who is a Christian and who is not—which seems to be Murray's concern—but who is faithful to the whole of Scripture. No one will deny that even Christians often can and do compromise the truth. And that is what we have to emphasize—a robust obedience to all of Scripture that includes a proper view of the church as the *Mater fidelium* and of the dictum *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. It is only within the fullness of confessional Christianity that all biblical truth gets its rightful

place. We should contend for nothing less. Murray falls short in this book by reducing the issues to a narrow soteriological focus. When we apply a much fuller criteria we see that certain evangelicals, if not evangelicalism, has departed in many areas from biblical truth (cf. annihilationism, and the openness of God).

—Jacques Roets

Christians in a .com World: Getting Connected Without Being Consumed by Gene Edward Veith, Jr. and Christopher L. Stamper. Focal Point Series. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000. Pp. 192. \$12.99.

Here we have a well-written primer on the newest information medium: the Internet.

The authors work up an informed history of computer technology, a balanced narrative with just the right blend of anecdotes and techno-speak. They take us by the hand through ISPs, MUDs, and FAQs, introducing us along the way to floppies, laptops, cyberspace, and hyperlinks. Through it all, we learn how the computer multiplied to become the Internet which has grown into the World Wide Web.

Such balance continues in their evaluation of the good and the bad, the promise and the pitfalls, of the Internet. Because these writers are thoroughly familiar with their subject, they are well equipped to describe this technology in terms of its function within the context of cultural development, intellectual philosophy, and social properties. The Internet signals the demise of the gatekeepers, those guardians of information production, information publication and dissemination. Everyone now owns a printing press, a radio station, a movie production studio. There are no walls in cyberspace. Nor are there dictators. Everything from news stories to greeting cards is decentralized by the Internet. The playing field is level—the little guys now walk on Wall Street while working at home. But the Internet can also lead to isolation, loss of inhibition, information overload, and to immersion in one's "virtual" identity.

The book closes with a rousing summons to Christian awareness. With varying degrees of success, Christians have employed for the cause of Christ and the truth the communication media of print, radio, television, and film. But with the democratization of information that has resulted with the Internet, Christians have a golden opportunity to participate in a global cultural conversation. As with every technology, the promise of the Internet lies not in its capacity to save, but in its capacity to serve—both God and our neighbor.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman